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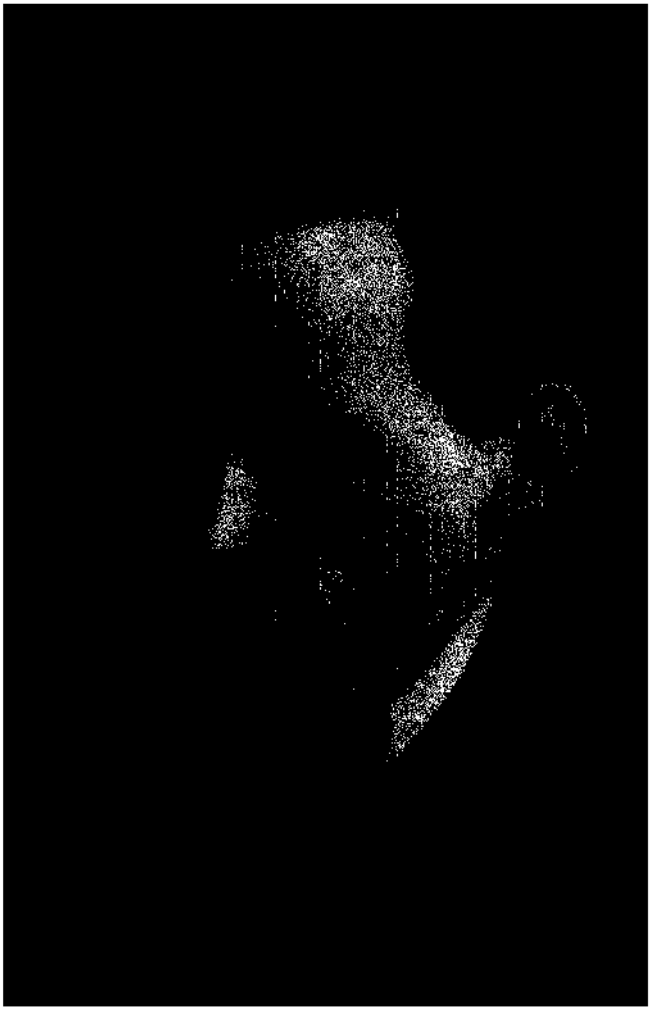

Photo by Mrs Percy Wallis

PHILIP SNOWDEN IN 1902.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

Philip
Viscount Snowden

VOLUME ONE
1864-1919

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BY THE tDINBURGH PRESS, TDINBURGH

To

MY WIFE

TO WHOSE DEVOTED CARE

AND WISE JUDGEMENT

I OWE SO

MUCH

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INTRODUCTION

AN Introduction to a book of memoirs gives the opportunity to the writer to explain why it has been written, and to apologise for all its shortcomings.

I have noted two statements which frequently occur in essays on the subject of autobiography. One is that every man has a life-story to tell, and the other is that no autobiography is ever a really bad book. I express no views on the first of these statements, and as to the second I can only hope that my effort will not prove an exception to the universal rule.

I have undertaken the task of writing about myself and my public work for two main reasons. A public figure cannot escape from intrusion into his personal history and private affairs. A public man is rightly subject to criticism and comment on his public actions. His character and the mainsprings of his conduct are things which can only be understood by those who have an intimate personal knowledge of him.

I have in full measure that characteristic of a Yorkshireman which hates intrusion into his private affairs. I have never taken the trouble hitherto to correct inaccurate statements about my life which have appeared in innumerable newspaper and magazine articles. They mattered little. But if the private life of a public figure is to be exposed in print the story might as well be accurate, and no one is better qualified to give them than the person actually concerned.

I have, therefore, devoted perhaps a disproportionate amount of space to the story of my early life. I have

done this for reasons beyond that which I have just given. The circumstances of a person's birth and upbringing are largely the formative influences of his adult life. I am not going to decide the debatable question whether heredity or environment is the more important in the formation of individual character. I am fully conscious that though I inherited many of the physical and mental qualities of both my parents, my political and religious views and my likes and dislikes are due largely to my early associations and influences.

The effect of geographical surroundings on the character of the inhabitants has often been discussed. Where Nature has made conditions which demand a hard struggle to wrest a living from her, a strong and independent race is bred.

It was among such a people that I was reared—a sturdy, honest, blunt, outspoken type. My birthplace was on the edge of the Bronte country. A few miles of wild moorland separated my parish from Haworth. The character of the inhabitants has been softened by a generation of contact with the outer world, but in a modified form the type described by the Brontes still survives.

I have written at some length of the conditions and the lives and work of the people I knew in my early years for another reason. The present generation needs to be reminded of the progress which has been made in the last seventy years in the industrial and social conditions of the people. We rightly condemn the serious evils and hardships and inequalities which still exist, but I have no patience with those who say that things are no better or are worse than formerly. If they could be put back to the common conditions of my childhood they would know better. We ought not to be satisfied with the progress which has been made, but it should

be recognised and looked upon as an encouragement to continue to work for a far greater advance.

My main purpose, however, in writing these reminiscences is that they may, perhaps, be of some use to the students of a period which has seen the greatest and swiftest political change in British history. For forty years I have been closely associated with a movement which in that time, from the humblest and most unpromising beginnings, has attained to the position of a great political Party, won the adherence of millions of votes, and twice been the Government of the country.

I may be pardoned for stating my qualifications to write the story of this romance. In the days when the Socialist movement was confined to practically a handful of enthusiasts—" poets and fools ", as Charles Bradlaugh called us—despised and rejected, ignored or treated with ridicule and contempt, I went through the length and breadth of the land preaching this gospel in the market-places and at street corners. In those early days the Independent Labour Party was the active propagandist of Socialism. I joined that body just after it was formed. I was a member of its National Council for over twenty years, and six times was elected to be its National Chairman. I took part in the formation of the Labour Party, an association of the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Socialists and the Trades Unions, and served for years on the Executive of that body. For nearly a quarter of a century I sat in Parliament as a Labour member, and was a member of the two Labour Governments.

I mention these matters in support of my claim to know as much as any man now living of the inner history of the Labour Party. I have shared in its struggles and disappointments, its victories and defeats. I know its weaknesses and its strength. I have seen the magnificent

devotion of its men and women, whose sacrifices and heroism have brought them no personal reward in fame, but whose work is embodied in the success of the cause for which they freely gave their best. I have witnessed the internal wranglings of leaders and aspiring leaders from which the Labour Party, like every other democratic movement, has never been wholly free. I have had the painful experience, after forty years of association with the Socialist movement, of seeing its political expression, the Labour Party, temporarily eclipsed as a Parliamentary force. But the fundamental principles for which that Party has stood, if the Party can command wise and courageous leadership, will ultimately triumph. Given that essential condition, the Labour Party will re-establish its political position, and rise again to power and influence.

Apart from the story of my early years, the two volumes are devoted to the rise and progress of the Labour Party and its Parliamentary work. I have written only of matters with which I have been associated, incidents I have witnessed or of which I have a personal knowledge. The volumes make no pretence to be a political history of our own times, except in so far as the Labour Party has shaped or influenced political events. I have not dealt with such contemporary questions as Irish Home Rule and the controversy on the House of Lords. These are matters for the general historian. I have thought it desirable to write at some length about the Labour Party's attitude to the Great War. On this question the British Labour Party was divided, as were the Socialist parties in all the European countries. We had our Majority and Minority sections. The Members of Parliament who belonged to the Independent Labour Party all, with two exceptions, took up the Minority position, refusing

support to the continuation of the War unless every effort were made to seek peace by negotiation.

The passing of time has removed the acerbities which naturally existed during the War, and one is now able to estimate the attitude and actions of parties and individuals without passion or prejudice. It was highly creditable to the Labour Party that, when the War ended, its ranks were closed and recrimination was buried. For historical purposes I have been obliged to deal with the differences of opinion on the War which acutely divided the Labour Party, but I have endeavoured to state the respective attitudes of the two sections as fairly as I could.

No doubt the War had a great effect on the fortunes of the Labour Party, but that was not so much due to its own virtues as to the follies of its opponents. The Labour Party should be eternally grateful to Mr. Lloyd George, for it was his action in continuing the Coalition Government after the War which gave such a stimulus to the Labour movement at succeeding elections. The popular dissatisfaction with the record of the Coalition in the 1919-22 Parliament in the matter of social reconstruction, and, especially when compared with the great expectations which had been created by Mr. Lloyd George's promise of " a land fit for heroes ", swung a great mass of working-class voters to the support of the Labour Party. So great and rapid was the advance that, in two years after the downfall of the Coalition Government, the Labour Party, with the support of the Liberals, became the Government of the country. That was an event I had not expected to see in my lifetime. But I do not deal with these matters in this volume. I have thought it well to close it with the end of the War and the Coalition Election of December 1918. I have reserved for a second volume the story of the

advent of the Labour Party to office in 1924, its early downfall, its resurrection five years later, and the astounding catastrophe of 1931.

I have never kept a diary. I now much regret not having done so. If I had, my task in writing these volumes would have been greatly eased. I have a fairly good memory, but the best memory becomes dim after years, and one's recollection of events, and especially of the details, is not always reliable. I have checked my own recollection of the matters with which I deal by reference to contemporary records, and this has brought vividly to my mind incidents and events which had been forgotten. I have very full notes, made at the time, of the formation of the two Labour Governments, and of the tight corners in which the Labour Governments so often found themselves, and of personal consultations and negotiations. I realised from the beginning of the crisis of 1931 the importance of keeping a personal record of all that transpired, and these, supplemented by official records and a still vivid recollection, have enabled me to give in the succeeding volume a complete and reliable account of those events which had consequences upon British political history which have not yet fully developed.

I have realised in writing these recollections that the task of an autobiographer is a difficult and delicate one. The biographer has an advantage which the person who writes of events in which he has taken part is denied. The latter must constantly remember that he is open to the charge of egotism and vanity if he claims credit, even when he is justly entitled to do so. The biographer is free from such restraint. In another respect the autobiographer is in a difficult position. He must write of persons with whom he has been in intimate relationship. He cannot be quite frank in his estimate of them

unless his honest opinion of them is wholly favourable. And that can never be entirely the case. The best of us have our weaknesses and failings. If a true character sketch is to be given it must be full and impartial. Otherwise it loses all historical value. If in what I have written of political associates and colleagues I appear to be unfair, harsh and vindictive I should be deeply grieved. I have tried hard to be just, and to lean to generosity rather than to severity. I have usually confined myself to relating the incident baldly, leaving the readers to draw the inference.

I make not the least claim to any literary merit in these writings. I have aimed at telling my story in a plain and simple way, as if I were relating it to friends around the fireside. I have tried, but without much success, to keep the events in something like chronological order. I have often been beguiled into anticipating later happenings which arose out of the events with which I was dealing.

However, here is the first half of my story, and I can only hope that the indulgent reader may find something of interest in it.

CHAPTER I

My Early Life

I AM a Yorkshireman. I was born in the moorland parish of Cowling in the West Ricling on the 18th July 1864.

In the days before the advent of modern means of communication the village of Cowling was isolated and remote. To the south hundreds of square miles of wild and desolate moors stretched away as far as the Derbyshire hills, and on the west the ridges of the rugged Pennines separated the parish from the neighbouring county of Lancashire.

Remote and almost inaccessible as the place must have been in former times, there is evidence that the Romans and, later, the Saxons and Danes had penetrated into these wild regions. Stone weapons, worked flints, bones and other relics of pre-historic settlement are occasionally found under deep, thick layers of peat.

The evidence of Saxon and Danish settlement can be traced in place-names, and in dialect words of Scandinavian origin. By the time of the Norman invasion the parish must have become permanently settled, for it is one of the few places in the district which is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Collinge, a name which Dr. Whittaker, the historian of Craven, thought must have been given to it owing to the existence of coal in the peat deposits on the moors.

From the reign of Edward I contemporary records make frequent reference to the place. Lord Clifford of

Skipton Castle must at one time have exercised a feudal lordship over the parish, for we find that six bowmen went from Cowling to Flodden in 1513 under his banner. It is evidence of the fact that there was little migration from the district until recent times that the surnames of the six yeomen who went to Flodden were still common in the village in my boyhood days. When I first went to Parliament there was a policeman on duty in Palace Yard, whose name was Scarborough. Being interested in names, I made enquiries and found he was the son of a Cowling man who was a direct descendant of a Nicholas Scarborough who went from Cowling carrying a bow to Flodden Field.

Up to the early years of the last century Cowling was difficult of access from the neighbouring districts. The roads were pack-horse tracks, going up hill and down dale, as was the custom in the construction of these roads, in order to give the horses changes in the burden of the loads upon their backs and sides.

At the beginning of the last century a number of enterprising men constructed a turnpike road from the West Riding to East Lancashire. This road is still one of the main thoroughfares between the two counties, and it says much for the prescience and foresight of the makers of this road that, with very few improvements, it meets the needs of the vast motor traffic which now passes over it.

This road was made by one of the greatest Englishmen who ever lived, the famous " Blind Jack of Knaresborough "} He was blind from his childhood, but his affliction does not appear to have been any handicap to his remarkable capacity. He constructed roads over many parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, and they remain today as monuments of his genius. In constructing this road across the moor through Cowling

[1] For a full account of Blind Jack (John Metcalfe) see J S Fletcher's *The Making of Modern Yorkshire,* and Samuel Smiles' *Lives of the Engineers*

he encountered great difficulty on account of the boggy nature of the ground. He accordingly hit on the plan of binding together small bundles of ling and heather, and these bundles were placed in transverse layers on the surface of the bog and were firmly pressed down. The device was completely successful, and this method of treating marshy ground became the regular practice. The road over Cowling Moss to which he first applied this method is perfectly firm and dry to this day.

When completed, this road was used by the coaches working between York and Liverpool. Our parish was on the Pennine watershed between Yorkshire and Lancashire, and this new road passed over it. It was a rough journey in stormy weather. I have heard my mother and others talk of a great storm which lifted the coach and its passengers over the wall of the road into the field behind the house in which she lived. This was on an Old Christmas Day, 6th January 1839.

Four miles beyond Keighley the wide valley of the Aire is divided by a chain of hills. The road to the left passes through Cowling. There is nothing attractive in what man has done to make this village. Grey stone houses, without even the relief of a garden, line the road. There has been very little change since I was a boy. But the natural situation of the village is very impressive. On the left there rises to the height of over a thousand feet a long and massive crag. The motorist with an hour to spare should, at the entrance to the village, turn into the old pack-horse lane by which the summit of the crag can be reached. He will be repaid by the sight of one of the finest views in England. Below is the wide and rich valley through which the river Aire slowly meanders. To the left the view extends far away to the Craven highlands, with Ingleborough and Penn y gant in the background. To the right Rombalds Moor stretches her

ICKORNSHAW.

wide expanse of heath and heather. Close behind is the vast extent of moorland where the silence is never broken except by the cries of the wild birds and the occasional bleating of sheep.

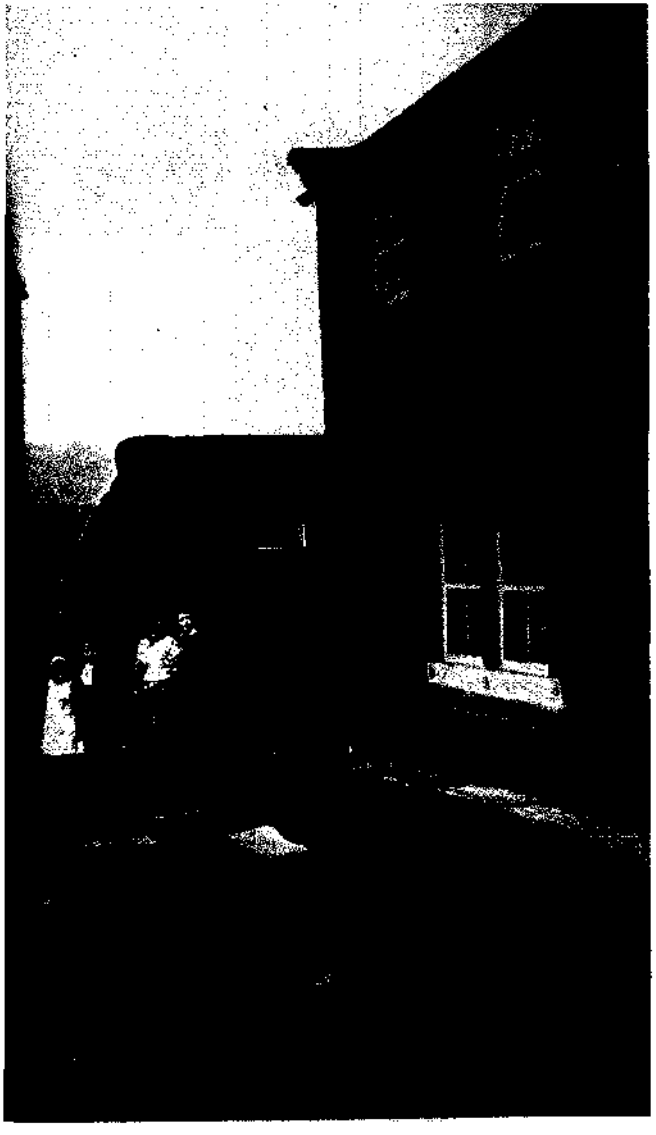
Returning to the main road and proceeding in the direction of Lancashire, shortly after passing through the roadside village, there comes into view, nestling peacefully in the deep valley through which the beck runs, the village of Ickornshaw, the place in which I spent the greater part of my boyhood. In the days before the main road was made, Ickornshaw was the centre of the life of the parish. A few years ago, when the village came into temporary notoriety, there was considerable controversy as to the origin of its name. Correspondence came to me from all parts of the world, and particularly from the Scandinavian countries. The question was, I think, conclusively settled by a letter from a Swedish professor who brought much learning to bear on the derivation. In slightly varying forms the name is fairly common in Sweden and Norway, and is a combination of words meaning *squirrel* and *wood.* Before the controversy arose the English Place-Name Society had published in its little book, *The Chief Elements used in Place-Names,* this derivation: " Ikorni, old Norse, meaning squirrel as in Ickornshaw (Yorkshire) ". Within my recollection the valley below Ickornshaw was well wooded, mainly with magnificent oaks. I do not remember squirrels, but no doubt they did exist in the wood before the population invaded their solitude.

The evidence of Norse occupation of this part of Yorkshire is not confined to place-names. In my boyhood the dialect was universally spoken. It had been preserved in this remote part in all its original purity. Its syntax was perfect. There were no solecisms such as are common where dialect has been diluted in more populous districts

where people from various parts have mixed. The old forms of the plural had been preserved, as in " een " for eyes, " ratten " for rats, " stocken " for stockings. The past tense by the addition of " en " was used, as in " putten ". A story is told of an imported schoolmistress who tried to break the use of this form by the children. She gave them a lesson to write in which the word " put " frequently occurred. Her native assistant reported that " they had getten it right except Tom Smith, who had putten putten where he should have putten put." Mr. Bayldon, for forty years vicar of Cowling, of whom I shall have more to say later, was a distinguished Norse scholar. He was the author of an Anglo-Icelandic Grammar, which was the standard textbook on the subject. He traced a great many rare dialect words used in the parish through Anglo-Saxon to Icelandic origin.

An interesting incident was related by the late Mr. Slingsby of Carleton, near Skipton, who in his day was a noted mountaineer, which showed the affinity of Norwegian and the West Riding dialect. He was mountaineering in a remote part of Norway, in the days before it became a show place, in company with a Norwegian professor. They enquired from a farmer if he could get them a guide. The farmer said he knew of nobody who was available except a youth, and he was " gaumless ". That word stumped the Norwegian professor. " It's all right," said Mr. Slingsby, " I understand. It's a Yorkshire word meaning half-witted." I don't know if the word is used outside the West Riding and East Lancashire.

It is a great loss that dialect, so full of expressive words unknown to ordinary English, should be destroyed by standardised school teaching, and by the foolish idea that it is not polite. I always speak it in its broadest form when I am among my own people in my old home.



THE COTTAGE IN MIDDLETON COWLING, WHERE I WAS BORN.

The parish of Cowling is divided into three hamlets—Cowling Head, Ickornshaw and Stothill. The first two named were the " top-end" and the last the " low-end". The bitterest antagonism used to exist between the top-enders and the low-enders. The first School Board election in the parish, which I well remember, was fought on the issue of which end should have the new school. The top-enders won. The old-time rivalry has long since disappeared, and now they all live happily together.

On the hill-side above the hamlet of Ickornshaw there is a row of old stone houses known as Middleton. It was in the top house of this row that I was born in a two-roomed cottage. The house still stands, and it is inhabited by a bachelor namesake of mine and old schoolfellow, who keeps it as spick and span as any house-proud wife could do. He is proud of the distinction he believes I have given to his humble dwelling, and is always ready to welcome visitors inside and to show them his collection of stuffed birds and animals.

This row of thirty or forty cottages has a record which cannot be equalled by any village in the land. It has sent to the House of Commons no less than three members. Mr. Albert Smith, who sat as Labour member for Colne and Nelson, is a second cousin, and Mr. Tom Snowden, who sat for Accrington for a time, is a distant relative.

When does a child begin to remember? I am a little bit suspicious of persons who have vivid recollections of things that happened when they were two years old. Nothing which I saw or heard when I was so young fixed itself in my mind. The earliest recollection I have, and I must have been between three and four, was of being lifted by the doctor on to the long kitchen-table and told to open my mouth and put out my tongue. It appears that my mother had discovered that I was tongue-tied. I distinctly remember the doctor saying that he

wouldn't cut it as I should probably break the tie when playing with something in my mouth, and in any case it was not likely to be a hindrance to me. It has not been!

Another incident which happened when I was just short of six I mention for two reasons, because it is, I think, a good instance of how the very young child-mind can have events clearly and indelibly stamped upon it, and also because the incident illustrates the determined character of the village population. The houses in Middleton had to get their water supply from a well-spring in a field behind the row. This spring had been freely used from a time beyond living memory. The agent of the local landowner demanded payments for its use. The villagers refused. One morning the news came that men were walling up the well. Off marched the women led by a powerfully built woman called Rachel, whose bare arms looked able to fell an ox. When they reached the well, Rachel, without any argument, picked up the agent and put him into the well. When he was sufficiently soaked she took him out. The work of closing the well stopped, for the workmen were not disposed to invite further attention from Rachel and her cohorts.

This, of course, was an outrage which the agent must avenge. No police proceedings were taken, but a few days after the whole village was aroused at five o'clock by the beating of kettle-drums. During the night a great stone, which was to block up the well, had been brought in a wagon from the quarry nearby. A big crowd was soon on the spot. The factory whistles got no response that day. News of the " rioting " spread to the neighbouring villages, and people flocked in to take part in the excitement. All the boys played truant from school that day. I remember it all so well. It was a beautiful June day. The crowd was very good-humoured, but very determined. No attempt was made to proceed

with the closing of the well. The agent of the landlord evidently feared for his safety, for in the afternoon a score of policemen were drafted into the village. I can see them now mounting the crest of the hill from the woods. Later a squad of navvies with pickaxes over their shoulders turned up. But no attempt was made to close the well, and towards evening the police and navvies quietly stole away. The villagers obtained hammers and broke up the huge block of stone, beat it into sand, and it was distributed among the houses and used for sanding the floors, which was a common practice in those days. Thus ended a day of great excitement and enjoyment with a complete triumph for the villagers. No further attempt was made to close the well.

The industrial revolution was late in penetrating this parish. It was not until about twenty years before my birth that hand-loom weaving disappeared. In my boyhood all the older people had been hand-loom weavers. The industry had been carried on mainly *in* the cottages in which the families lived.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth there lived in the village a man named Abraham Binns, who must have been a progressive character. He was the first man to drive over the new turnpike road. Impressed by the overcrowded conditions in the cottages, where the one bedroom was filled with hand-looms and spinning-wheels, he built what was called " a weyving-shop ", a large room in which a number of hand-looms could be accommodated and the weaving done there. He brought Wesleyan Methodism into the village in 1795, only ten years after John Wesley had founded the sect, and he started a Sunday School and conducted it at his own expense until he died in 1815.

There was another benevolent man who did good work in the same way. He was known as " Binny o' Kits ".

His real name was Benjamin Snowden, but in those days and up to a much later period hardly anybody in the parish was called or known by his christened name. It was " Tom o' Jim's ", " Jack o' Sarah's ", " Jo' o' Bill o' Bob's ", and sometimes by his farmstead, as " Tom o' t' Windhill ", and not infrequently by a nickname. My kinsman, Mr. Keighley Snowden, in his novel *The Web of an Old Weaver,* a charming story of the social life of the people in this parish in the hand-loom weaving days, has made " Binny " one of Kis principal characters. His fine Christian life made him very respected. He passed away long before my time, but I often heard stories of his kindness and charity.

The housing conditions in the parish in these days, which were common to all hand-loom weaving villages, were terrible. My father had an uncle who had lived through these times. He was an old man when I was a boy, and I often sat for hours on a small stool at his feet listening to the stories he had to tell. Although the poverty of the people was extreme, they seemed to get a fair amount of enjoyment out of their lives. They were not subject to the discipline of the modern factory. They regulated their own hours of labour. It was the custom to send in their finished pieces once a fortnight, and it was the common practice to take things very easily in the first week, and then to work day and night the second week in order to complete the work they had on hand. It was quite a common thing for the bedroom of the cottage to contain five or six hand-looms, and in this room the weaving was done; and in this room the whole family, which was often very large, had to sleep. The death-rate must have been very high, but as a great deal of the time of the hand-loom weavers was spent in the open air this counteracted to some extent the appalling housing and sleeping conditions.

From what I learnt of these conditions from the stories told to me by the survivors of this period, I should think that the people of the village suffered less during " the Hungry Forties " than those who had come under the terrible factory conditions brought by the industrial revolution. The conditions in the parish were bad enough in all conscience. Their food was rough, but wholesome, and porridge was the staple diet. It was, to use a phrase I often heard to describe those days, " Porridge and Stop! "

There were, of course, no factory laws which were applicable to the home hand-loom weaving industry. The children were brought in very early to help in the work. I had an old uncle who often used to say in those days when School Boards had been introduced and children talked about " standards ", that he was in the third standard at eleven years of age; his first standard being nursing, his second standard spinning weft on to bobbins, and the third standard working the hand-loom!

By the time I was born hand-loom weaving had entirely ceased, both in the cottages and in the weaving-shops, although a few hand-looms were still to be seen in some of the cottages. I remember that my father had kept his hand-loom, and when we were children he sometimes worked it in the bedroom, buying remnants of woollen yarn from the factory and weaving them into cloth for family use. The yarns, of course, were of various colours, and I remember a petticoat he made for my mother of such a variety of colours that Joseph's coat would have appeared a dull and drab affair by comparison.

My father, whose name was John, was one of a family of five. His parents both died comparatively young, and these five young children were boarded out with farmers in the parish. This was in a sense very fortunate for these children, because they were sure of good food

and enough of it. They all lived to grow up and to marry and have families.

The first Snowden came into the parish in the early part of the eighteenth century, and reclaimed a small farm from the moor. It was understood that he had come into this remote district to escape from justice, having been mixed up in a poaching affair. From enquiries I have made I believe he came from the neighbourhood of Goole. He reared a large family of lads. On his mother's side my father came from two old Cowling families named Binns and Whitaker. There are records that the Binns family was settled there in the fifteenth century.

My father was a man of unusual natural ability, and if he had had opportunities I am sure he would have made his way in the world. He somehow managed to get some education as a boy, although I do not remember ever hearing him say how or where he got it. There were two or three " Dames' Schools " in the village, and it was probably at one of these that he learnt to read; but it is much more likely that it was the Sunday School that gave him his love of reading. He must have become a fairly fluent reader when he was quite young, for I have heard him relate how a number of hand-loom weavers contributed a halfpenny a week to buy a copy of the weekly *Leeds Mercury,* which was then sevenpence, and with these coppers he was sent to a village four miles away each week to get the paper; and then the subscribers to this newspaper met in a cottage and he read the news to them.

The *Leeds Mercury* in those days was a Radical journal. Those were times of great political and social excitement. The Chartist movement was affecting the industrial population, and the agitation for the Repeal of the Corn Laws was at its height. They were dangerous times

for those known to harbour Radical opinions. Throughout the West Riding, as well as in other parts of England, men were being arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for alleged sedition and political conspiracy. This group of Radical-Chartists in Cowling had to take precautions against the attentions of the constable, and when they gathered together to discuss politics and hear my father read the paper for them they shuttered the window and sometimes placed a scout outside to watch for the constable. I have heard my father relate that, as a youth, he was often taken with some of the older weavers to Chartist demonstrations as far away as Halifax and Huddersfield, walking the twenty miles each way. He was present at the memorable Chartist Demonstration on Skircoat Moor, Halifax, which it was estimated eighty thousand persons attended from all parts of the West Riding. Halifax was a hotbed of Chartism. Twice Ernest Jones was a Parliamentary candidate for the borough, but, as the working class was unenfranchised, success was hopeless. A leader of the Halifax Chartists was one John Snowden, who lived, highly respected, for many years after the break-up of the Chartist movement.

I was brought up in this Radical atmosphere, and it was then that I imbibed the political and social principles which I have held fundamentally ever since.

My mother, whose maiden name was Martha Nelson, was one of a family of eight, all of whom were reared and lived to old age. She, too, was an exceptional woman, full of shrewd common sense, and broad and generous in her general outlook. On her mother's side she was descended from a family named Emmott, who had been farmers in the parish for several centuries. In the Poor Rate assessment for the parish for 1658 John Emmott was the largest ratepayer, being assessed for the sum

of is. 9d.! The Nelsons were a comparatively recent importation into the district, and nothing is known of them beyond the belief that my mother's grandfather, the original Nelson, was a migrant from Scotland.

My parents were closely associated with Wesleyan Methodism, and devotedly attached to the local Chapel. Although these were days when narrow religions were very general, my father and mother were both liberal in these matters. My father had a brother who was a very strict Baptist, holding strong views about " election " and eternal damnation for the unrepentant. I remember many an ardent discussion between these two brothers on theological questions. After a discussion had been going on for some time, and my uncle had defended his Calvinistic beliefs, my mother would put an end to it by saying: " You say that God loves us as we love our own children. Do you think I would put one of my children into hell fire? No! not how bad he'd been! " There seemed to be little left to say after this statement.

I was the youngest of three children, the two elder being girls. In my young days our parents were very poor. In the early years of their married life trade was very bad following the Crimean War. This long period of trade depression was known as " Owd Nick Panic "— " Owd Nick " being the Czar of Russia. My father did not earn more than 15s. a week. Having a young family, my mother was unable to work in the mill, but she supplemented the family income by spinning weft on a hand-wheel at home. Although we were so poor, I do not think that I ever lacked food. My mother saw to that. Our food consisted of porridge and milk, which in those days was sold by the local farmers at three-halfpence the quart, and boiled puddings, with what was called " sheep-head broth ". When my elder sister was **old** enough to look after the house, my mother returned

to the mill as a weaver, and this improved the financial position of the family.

There was no money for buying newspapers or books, but by some means or other, how I cannot remember, I managed when I was able to read to get a collection of penny story-books, comprising such classics as *The Little Woodman and his Dog Cces ar, Jack and His Eleven Brothers, Anne and Her Eleven Sisters,* and *Maria Martin, or the Murder in the Red Barn.* Later, when circumstances became more affluent, I had a penny a week pocket-money, which I spent on a serial publication then appearing, entitled *Black Bess, or the Knight of the Road, the Story of Dick Turpin, Tom King, Claude Duval,* and *Sixteen-String Jack.* This was a most thrilling story. Each number ended with Dick Turpin, or one of the other heroes, escaping through a secret passage at the inn as the constables were coming up the stairs. This reading might not be described as of a very elevating character, but, as Lord Morley once said to me when I told him of my liking for such reading, " Well, it may not be the highest form of literature, but it is at least interesting."

There was a library of two or three hundred volumes in connection with the Sunday School, but the books were mainly theological. My father in the days when we were young had little money to spend on books, but he managed to get a moderate collection. He was particularly fond of poetry, and possessed himself of copies of Burns, Byron, Shakespeare, Young and Milton. He knew all Burns' principal poems by heart, and he used to recite to me " Tarn o' Shanter ", " Man was made to Mourn ", "The Cotter's Saturday Night ", etc., and great parts of Byron's " Childe Harold" and other poems. My father had a remarkable memory, much better than I ever had. I never could remember much of a sermon, but he could go through the sermons he

had heard point by point, criticising the argument and the form and the construction of them. He ought to have been a preacher, and probably would have been if the circumstances of the family had not prevented him from obtaining the necessary books. He had a remarkable knowledge of the Bible, and was always ready to illustrate an argument by the apt quotation of a verse from scripture. I owe much to him and to my years of Sunday School training of my own knowledge of the Bible, which is, I believe, above the average.

The Sunday School and the Chapel, and, I regret to add, the public-houses, were the centres of what there was of social life in the parish. There was a good deal of drinking in the village in those days, and far too many of the men were in the habit of going " on the spree ". There has been a wonderful change in this respect, and the village is now a model of sobriety. My maternal grandfather, Peter Nelson, at one time kept a beer shop. He was a bit of a humorist, and he christened it " The Grinning Rat ". An appropriate picture was painted on the signboard.

I remember this grandfather. I would be about eight when he died. He was a fine-looking man with a full white beard and snowy white hair. The only distinct recollection I have of him was on one summer evening when I was playing in the village street I saw him coming unsteadily along. He had been spending the day with boon companions at " The Black Bull ". He saw me and shouted: " Come here tha little devil. Thar't our Martha's lad." I had the advantage, and managed to evade him. One of his cronies was a notorious character known as " Gerdy ". " Gerdy " was always playing practical jokes when he was sufficiently sober. When my grandfather kept " The Grinning Rat " he had a small farm attached to the building. One evening just before

milking-time Gerdy got on to the hay-loft, and when my grandfather was milking in the quietness of the mistal a sepulchral voice came from the loft: " Peter, this night shall thy soul be required of thee!" My grandfather dropped his milk-pail, and hastened into the house to tell that his end was coming that night. His family was summoned to see the last of him. My mother, who was then married, was sent for, but she declined to go. She said: " It's all nowt. I believe it's Gerdy at's been making a fooil ov him." When matters became really serious Gerdy confessed.

My grandfather's end was not less dramatic. When he was on his death-bed the people from the Chapel came to sing and to pray with him. They told him that the love of Jesus could grant forgiveness to the vilest sinner at the eleventh hour. They quoted the precedent of the thief on the cross. He listened to them, and then said: "Well, I don't know whear I sail go to when I dee. I've never been a religious chap, an' I'm not going to alter at t' last minute to save mi soul. I'm not sich a coward as that. I'll see it through, and face whatever happens to me." I have often heard my mother tell this story, not without admiration. She was no believer in death-bed repentances.

In my boyhood days the belief in " boggards " (ghosts) still survived. A number of lonely farmhouses were shunned at night because of their evil reputation. There is a spot on the highway, just before reaching the lonely moss, which until recently was believed to be haunted. I remember one Saturday afternoon when I was a boy a woman came down from the high road into Ickornshaw in a state of panic. She related, when she had sufficiently recovered to tell her story, that at a spot which we recognised as this haunted place she had accosted a woman who, on being spoken to, had vanished

before her eyes. Many years after, my next-door neighbour, who was a most reliable person, told me that one evening he was taking a walk near this spot. A man passed him on the footpath, and my friend remarked to himself that the man would just get over the moss before dark; when the stranger, only half a dozen yards in front of him, disappeared. The spot where the figure vanished was at the side of a stream which ran under the road. We have it on the authority of Burns that ghosts dare not cross a running stream. I have an open mind about ghosts. I am certainly not a sceptic, " There are more things in heaven and earth than have been dreamt of in our philosophy."

The reputation of this place once gave two young lads in the village the opportunity to play a practical joke. It was the universal practice in those days for the villagers to fetch their milk from the farmhouses. A man in the village, known as " John o' Phineas ", fetched his milk every night from the farm near this haunted spot. On dark nights he was always on the look out for ghosts, and used to rattle his milk-cans so vigorously as to frighten every ghost in the neighbourhood. These two young chaps decided to play a joke on John. The wall bordering on the footpath was about two feet high, but the ground dropped some feet on the other side. The two fellows got behind the wall and, as John approached rattling his cans, one got on the shoulders of the other and they raised themselves as John was passing. The sight of this terrifying apparition sent John into a panic. He screamed out, dropped his cans, and rushed back the three-quarters of a mile to the village. He told how he had seen the ghost behind the wall, and it was six yards high!

In the early part of last century there was no Episcopal Church in the parish. It was not until 1845 that a

COWLING, FROM THE CRAG.

church was built. The parish of Cowling had up to that time been part of the ecclesiastical parish of Kildwick. The Kildwick Parish Church, which is widely known as " The Lang Kirk o' Craven ", was an offshoot of Bolton Abbey. The township of Cowling had for centuries the right to nominate two churchwardens to the Kildwick Parish Church, but I cannot discover that there were any adherents to the Episcopal faith. About 1840 the parish of Kildwick was divided, and Cowling was made an independent ecclesiastical parish. Up to that time the Nonconformist chapels had supplied the spiritual needs of the village. Away on the hillside there is still a small Baptist Church which is one of the oldest centres of Nonconformity in the West Riding. The Baptist Church here appears to have been founded about the beginning of the eighteenth century by one David Crossley, who had a great reputation in his day as a preacher, and was the friend of John Bunyan and George Whitfield. George Whitfield wrote of him: "He is a man—I am a babe in Christ." So far as I can gather, this Baptist Church was the only place of worship in the parish until the end of the eighteenth century, when Methodism was introduced into the village by Abraham Binns. The first Wesleyan Chapel was erected in Ickornshaw, and it was to this Chapel that my parents were attached.

I cannot at all remember when I first began to attend the Sunday School in this place, but I have the happiest recollections of years of constant attendance there. I have still prize books in my possession which show that I was never absent from the school once over a period of five years. In the early days of my Sunday School life the practice still survived of devoting half the time of the lessons to spelling. This was a survival of the days when the Sunday School filled to some extent the

purpose of a day school. I am afraid that the religious instruction I received there did not altogether destroy the spirit of mischief which I possessed in a very large measure. On at least two occasions I got into serious trouble through my proclivity to play practical jokes. All the classes were assembled in one large room, and the noise of so many scholars reading and spelling at the same time made a deafening sound. One Sunday in the middle of the lessons I quietly stole up to the Superintendent's desk and rang 'his big bell. There was an instant hush, and before I had time to slip back to my place in the class the culprit was discovered. I was lightly let off with a severe reprimand.

But my next delinquency was of a more serious nature. My father was then Superintendent of the school, and also took a class, in which I sat. Sitting behind him, I pinned up the two tails of his coat, and he, quite unconscious of the liberty I had taken with his garment, went away to discharge his duty as Superintendent in that undignified attire. I was, of course, discovered, and this was a matter too serious to be overlooked. A special teachers' meeting was called to consider what should be done with me. They considered my case, and finally came to the conclusion that I was hopeless, that I was " a limb of the devil ", and that it was no use trying to exorcise the evil spirit which possessed me. They did not even hand me over to my father for chastisement, and I escaped with no greater punishment than the verdict of the teachers as to my spiritual depravity.

The great event of the year in connection with the Sunday Schools in the village was the annual Charity Service or Sunday School Anniversary. These services were held on Feast Sunday, or " Rush-bearing " as it was still called. The village Feasts in those days were occasions of great local activity. For weeks the house-

wives were busy cleaning up their cottages—not that they needed much cleaning up, for they were always kept spotlessly clean—and some days before the festival arrived they busied themselves in baking tarts and other pastries, making plum puddings, and roasting sirloins for the entertainment of visitors who came from far and near to attend the Charity Services and to meet their relatives and friends. A stage was erected in the Chapel, and on it there sat the girl members of the Sunday School, who all wore white dresses. They formed the choir, and sang hymns and choruses with a gusto which shook the rafters of the Chapel.

The two following days were devoted to secular enjoyment. The boys and girls of the Sunday School and the Band of Hope went in procession through the village, and were afterwards regaled with buns and coffee in the gala field. That was a great time for us, and when the event was over we felt there was nothing to live for but to look forward to next year's Feast.

I was not only a regular attendant at the Sunday School, but equally at the Chapel services. I rather liked these religious services. I cannot say that the sermons were of a high intellectual order. They were generally given by local preachers, with an occasional visit from the stipendiary minister. There was one local preacher who used to come from a place some miles away whose sermons I enjoyed. We called him " Warm off t' bake-stone " because he often began his sermon by saying, " You're goin' to get it warm off t' bake-stone this morning ". He was a plasterer's labourer, and he never had any education. His pronunciation of some of the names in the lessons he read gave me a good deal of amusement. He was very much the style of the famous Sammy Hick, the village blacksmith, who had as a preacher a great reputation throughout the West Riding

of Yorkshire. My local preacher's sermons had what one might call the Hell Fire touch. For half an hour he dangled me and the others over the mouth of the pit of hell, and he did it so graphically as to make me actually smell the fire and brimstone. He left me in no doubt as to what my ultimate fate would be unless I departed from my evil ways. I am afraid I never missed much sleep through contemplating my future destiny. That was the advantage of having parents who were too liberal in their religious views to approve such a theology as that.

After the evening service it was the practice to hold a Prayer Meeting, and I usually stayed to this of my own free will. I got to know the prayers of each worshipper off by heart, as they were a string of lines from hymns and verses of scripture. But there was no doubt about the sincerity of these simple-minded people, and I still entertain for them feelings of respect for their genuine piety and devotion.

The heartiness of the singing at these religious services was a great attraction to me, and I learnt to love the fine old hymns, a love which I still reverently retain. And I never hear sung " O God, our Help in Ages Past", " Jesu, Lover of My Soul", " Rock of Ages ", " All Hail! the Power of Jesu's Name ", " There is a Land of Pure Delight ", without feeling a glow of religious fervour. Religion was to these humble weavers a real thing, and I would not for the world have attempted to shake their earnest faith by casting any philosophical doubts upon it. But there was one hymn which was sung in those days about which I used to ponder. It was:

" There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."

I wondered in my childish mind how a fountain could be supplied from the blood of one man, and still more how bathing in a flood of blood could remove evil stains. I hope that this gruesome hymn with its repulsive imagery has been expunged from the hymn-books, so that the children of this generation will be saved from the perplexities which so troubled my childish imagination.

Each winter a week of special Revival Services was held in the Chapel. These services were always largely attended. There was one preacher who came every year to these services, and he always preached the same sermon from the text, " a brand plucked from the burning ". By frequent repetition he had made this discourse into something of a masterpiece in terrifying appeal, and at the end of the sermon there was usually a procession of " brands " to the penitent-form anxious to be plucked from the burning. During the week's revival most of the youths and young men went through the process of conversion, although I am afraid it was not lasting, for most of them were ready to be re-converted next winter; but I knew cases where lives were permanently changed, and the men became lifelong pillars of the Church. One winter all my mates " got converted ", and I was feeling rather lonely. So I decided to join them; but alas! as I was proceeding to the penitent-form, my father, unaware of my intention, stopped me and said it was my bedtime, and I had better go home. What would have happened if I had succeeded in my purpose I don't know. I might have become a Wesleyan minister, possibly a President of the Conference. What trivial incidents may sometimes change the course of a person's life!

The Parish Church had been built for twenty years when I was born, but it had never succeeded in attracting a congregation by breaking through the entrenchments

of Nonconformity. The vicar of the parish was the Reverend George Bayldon, to whom I have already referred. He was vicar of the parish for forty years. He was a very scholarly man, and was said to have a thorough knowledge of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish and Icelandic, and a considerable knowledge of Arabic and Chaldaic. He possessed some private means, and he had probably settled down in this parish because his work as vicar was so light that he had plenty of leisure for pursuing his scholastic studies. He was very popular in the village, notwithstanding, perhaps because of his agreeable attitude to the Nonconformists. One woman in the village attributed his personal popularity to the fact that he was " a teetotaller and a yoller " (Liberal).

The only active part he took in the life of the village was in connection with the Temperance Movement. He was the man to whom the boys went when they wanted " to sign teetotal ". Mr. Bayldon was the only person in the village who took a daily newspaper, and when the boys wanted paper for their kites it was to Mr. Bayldon they went on the pretext of signing teetotal, but really to beg for an old newspaper. I was one of the boys who paid him rather frequent visits on this errand, and I was always afraid lest he should ask me if I had broken the pledge, but he never did, and seemed to be satisfied by finding one more pledge-card taken from his book.

He had no regular congregation at all. The church building was allowed to get into a very dirty condition. One of the aisles of the church was used for sitting-hens. " Pym *o'* Cossy's ", the son of a notorious village character, was the bell-ringer, for which he received no remuneration, but instead was permitted to keep pigeons in the belfry. Pym never went into the church after his task was done; but immediately he had finished his

bell-ringing he climbed up the rope to the belfry and spent his time with the pigeons. There was no Sunday School in connection with the Church, and no Church choir. Mr. Bayldon used to watch from one of the windows of the vestry to see if any congregation was coming, and if no one turned up on the stroke of eleven he made his way through the back door of the church down into the woods below. If a person happened to come, the vicar would meet him at the entrance and say: " Well now, we are not having much of a congregation this morning. Perhaps you would like a very short service? I think we may dispense with the sermon, or at any rate I can give you a text, and perhaps make a few words of comment upon it."

Mr. Bayldon, of course, had difficulties with the Bishop, who sometimes enquired why he never presented any candidates for Confirmation. When things got too warm, Mr. Bayldon would go round amongst the young men and women of the Nonconformist Chapels and get them to prepare themselves and come with him to the Bishop's Confirmation Service at Skip ton. The two things that induced the sturdy Nonconformists to be confirmed in the Established Church were their personal regard for Mr. Bayldon, and the fact that he always provided them with a very excellent luncheon when the Confirmation Service was over. In the later years of his incumbency Mr. Bayldon ceased to reside in the parish altogether, and only came back at week-ends, in case anybody should turn up for the Sunday Service. In spite of all this he was much respected in the parish, and an oil-painting of him hangs on the walls of the Liberal Club in the village.

The vicar who followed Mr. Bayldon was of a very different type. He has related some of the difficulties he experienced in trying to get on with the villagers. At

one time he got himself into serious trouble by taking the unpopular side of a local question which was considerably exciting the villagers. " In spite of police protection/' he has said, " I was made to feel the effects of the local indignation. My doors and windows were stoned, and on one occasion a gun was fired through my study window." The villagers at first showed little respect for him, and one form of showing that was for the children and big boys to address him by his Christian name. He would be greeted by a chorus of " Well, Joe! ", and on one occasion he took the law into his own hands and thrashed a few of those who had addressed him in that manner. But he soon learnt to love the people of Cowling for their sturdy characters and benevolence, and found a high standard of literary knowledge among the people. I may add that his residence amongst them converted him from being a High Tory into an ardent Radical. I understand that the Church is now in a fairly prosperous condition.

I have referred to a local character called " Owd Cossy ". He was a very old man when I was a small boy, but stories about him lingered long after he had passed away. He had a great fund of sarcastic humour—a form of humour which is peculiar to the West Riding of Yorkshire. He had a son who had something of a reputation as a writer of dialect poems. On one occasion a horse dragging a heavy load on the highway through the village, as we say in Yorkshire, " stalled "—that is, he would not move. It was out there a long time and attracted quite a little knot of villagers. At last Owd Cossy came along and said: " I will make it go ". He went to the horse's head and appeared to whisper something in its ear. Off it went, to the admiration of the crowd of villagers, for the distance of about a mile, when it came to a rise in the road. It " stalled " again. The driver

sent back for Cossy to come and exercise his hypnotic gifts upon the horse. But he was too wise. He preferred not to risk the reputation he had gained.

Another story of Cossy which is still often related in the village was about one of the frequent quarrels he had with his wife. On one occasion his wife Susannah left him and went to her mother's house. She expected that Cossy would soon become penitent and send for her to come back. But he never did, and at last she had to admit her defeat and return to him unsolicited. Not wanting the neighbours to see her return, she went very early in the morning before Cossy had got up. She found the cottage quiet, and all around still. Susannah knocked, gently at first, and then louder, with more or less endearing requests for admittance. She had thoroughly roused the neighbourhood before Cossy made any sign. " Who is it? " he whispered from the bedroom window. " Aw 11 let thee knaw who it is if tha' doesn't look sharp an' oppen t' door," exclaimed his exasperated wife. " Aw can hear a woman's voice," replied Cossy, shyly, " but aw'm nut bahn to coom deawn in t' neet time an' let a strange woman in. Aw'm a daycent married man, an' mi wife's away, an' ye'd better goa back wheer yo've coom frae." Susannah had to wait on the door step until Cossy, who knew perfectly well it was she, thought fit to let her in.

At the time I was ready to go to the day school there were two schools in the village. Both of them were conducted by men on their own account. In those days there was no compulsory attendance at school, and not half the children of school age received any education at all. The one to which I went was conducted in the Church school, which had been hired by the schoolmaster. It consisted of one large room. The desks were fixed to the wall along the three sides of the room, and forms

were placed in the middle of the floor for the younger children. It was a dreary place. There were no pictures or charts or any decorations on the walls. I well remember the day when I first went to school. I was put on the front form in the middle of the school—a form which stood about a foot high, and was called the " A.B.C. Form ". I was not long on that form, and I clearly recollect the afternoon when I was promoted to the form behind, which stood about six inches higher.

I do not remember much of the next three or four years I attended this apology for a school. The school fee was threepence a week for the older scholars, and twopence for the young ones, and we paid for our own copy-books. The curriculum was very limited. The schoolmaster sat at the head of the room on a high stool at an old-fashioned desk on high legs.

The course of instruction was limited to reading, writing and arithmetic. I doubt if the master's knowledge extended beyond these subjects. But he could write—one of those copper-plate hands which have gone out of fashion. Each class in turn was assembled round the master's desk for the reading lesson. We used the books for so long that the lesson became not a reading lesson, but a recitation we knew by heart. I must have made rapid progress from the infant form to the top desk, for I have no recollection of passing through the intermediate classes. We used well-thumbed little black arithmetic books published by Thorn's of Dublin, which did not carry us beyond vulgar fractions, simple interest, and Tare and Tret. The date 1872, when I was eight years old, was indelibly impressed upon my brain from the number of times I wrote it in my copy-book. An hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon were devoted to the writing exercise. Each page of the copy-book had an engraved heading which served the double purpose

of teaching moral precepts and showing how to write copper-plate. At the foot of each page we wrote our own names and the date. That is how I came to remember 1872 so well, and how I became something of an authority on proverbs and sage advice.

It was about this time that I first went into the oratory business. I was a Band of Hope boy, and I was invited to give a recitation at one of the entertainments. My father, who was one of the best elocutionists I have known, took me in hand and trained me with some effect. My recitation extolled the virtues of bright, cold water, and its delivery was a tremendous success. But what impressed this occasion on my memory was not any oratorical triumph, but a very sordid reward. After the entertainment the crowd waited in the chapel yard and showered pennies upon me. When I got home I counted over five shillings in coppers. After this I became a regular star turn at the village entertainments, though I *do not* remember when my eloquence touched the pockets of my audience to the same extent. It has very often been said by those who have written about my early life that I used, when quite a boy, to make political speeches. I do not remember doing this, at least not my own speeches. It is true that at election times my sisters used to deck me out with yellow ribbons (the Liberal colours), and out I went, collected an audience and recited extracts from the speeches of contemporary politicians.

After the passing of Mr. Forster's Education Act, a few progressive persons in the village started an agitation for the adoption of the Act. It met with little opposition, except from the farmers who were terrified at the prospect of an increase in the rates. The Act was adopted, and the school I attended was taken over by the newly formed School Board. Steps were taken at once to build new

school premises. A trained master was appointed, and a new era in child education in the village was opened up.

I was between ten and eleven years old when this change took place. It brought me into a new world of learning. We were taught in a new schoolroom, which by comparison with the dingy old place we had left seemed like a palace to us. The walls were covered with maps and pictures. Our curriculum was extended to include grammar, geography, history, elementary mathematics, and the simple sciences. We were never troubled with the religious question, for, in order to avoid all controversy, the Board from the beginning banished the Bible from the school, not because they were irreligious, but because they believed that the teaching of religion was best carried out by the sects in their own Sunday Schools. I was always top boy in the school, and it may be of interest to those who have only known me limping along on sticks to learn that I could beat any boy in the parish three years older than myself at running and jumping.

It was the usual thing for boys of my class to be sent half-time to the mill on reaching the age of ten. By that time the circumstances of my parents had so improved as to make that unnecessary. But, apart from that, my mother would never have allowed me to go half-time. She regarded the system as inhuman, and used to say: " No child of mine shall be dragged out of bed at half-past five in a morning! " This half-time system has now happily been abolished, but I can remember when children began to work in factories at eight years of age. From every point of view the practice was an unmitigated evil. It was impossible to educate children who had been at work in a factory from six o'clock till noon. And in the economic sense the half-time employment of children did not pay either parents or employers. I used to tell a true story to illustrate this. There was a factory

overlooker in a West Riding town who had five children. When the eldest, a girl, reached half-time age, she was put in the factory under her father. She was paid the standard rate of wages, eighteen pence a week. After three weeks she stopped coming. The employer called her father into the office to explain her absence. The father said: " Well, it's like this. That week when she had to get up at hawf-past five she moaned and groaned and made sich an awful din that she wakened all t' other childer, and before breakfast time they used to eyt more treacle and cake than eighteen pence come to."

To return to my school life. When I was twelve and a half the School Board asked my father if he would like me to become a pupil-teacher. They caught them young in those days! I was appointed. It will throw some light on school conditions then if I relate that at that age I was at once put in charge of a class of forty boys and girls, not much younger than myself, in a separate classroom. I had seen so much of the master's efforts to enforce discipline that I felt I must emulate them. I had in my class a boy called Little Phineas, the son of John o' Phineas, who believed in ghosts. I do not remember what serious offence Little Phineas had committed, and whether I thought it was due to moral degeneracy following the banishment of religious teaching from the school. But I came to the conclusion that I must do a little of that on my own account. So I turned Little Phineas with his face to the wall and made him say his prayers. This breach of the regulations of the Board came to the ears of the head-master. He came into the classroom, and, before the boys and girls, conducted an enquiry into the charge against me. He found me guilty, and ordered me to take my cap and go home. A letter followed to my father saying that if he wished his son to remain in the service of the Board I must appear

before them that night when a Board meeting would be held.

Young as I was the seriousness with which my conduct was being regarded gave me a feeling of the ridiculous. I appeared before the Board, and mustered as much of an appearance of penitence as I could manage. I was gravely admonished, and informed that the Board would take my case into consideration with any extenuating circumstances which might be put forward, and that sentence would be promulgated 'in due course. My mother defended me, as mothers will, and told a member of the Board who lived opposite to us that it was a pity that a lot of men supposed to be intelligent had no more sense than to spend their time on such a silly business. My mother always had a fondness for mischievous lads. I have often heard her say: " I reckon nowt of these quiet 'uns. They'll never mak' owt aht. Give me a lad wi' some life and spirit in him. He'll get on in t' world.'' I don't think my mother's intervention in this affair helped me very much, but at any rate it relieved her feelings. A few days later I received the sentence passed upon me, which was that I be suspended from the service of the Board for fourteen days.

I did not mind this at all. The weather was fine, and it was more agreeable to spend my time in the woods and on the moors. I returned at the end of a fortnight, but to safeguard Little Phineas from further outrage my class was put into the main room where I was under the eye of the master.

The pupil-teacher in those days had a hard time of it. He had to take charge of a class for all the school hours. He had to be at school every morning at seven o'clock for instruction from the head-master, and was given home lessons which occupied him all the evening. Among my fellow pupil-teachers was one who has since made for

himself more than a local reputation. He became the master of a small school away on the moors a few miles from Haworth, the home of the Bronte family. Here he found surroundings wholly congenial to his temperament. He was the pioneer of nature-studies in the day schools. Instead of keeping his scholars cooped up in the school all day poring over dull and dry lesson books, he took them out on the moors to find " sermons in stones and words in the running brooks ". He believed with Russell Lowell, that if Nature tells us nothing we learn nothing man can teach. He became a great authority on the Bronte literature, and American tourists came to him in great numbers. He was always delighted to take them out on the moors and show them the places the genius of the Bronte sisters has immortalised, and to learn something of the atmosphere from which they drew their inspirations. His name is Jonas Bradley. He is still living at a ripe old age, though long since retired from teaching. The last time I called to see him he was making his porridge, stirring them (porridge is always " them ", not " it " to a Yorkshireman) with a thibel. This led to a discussion on the derivation of the word " thibel ", for Jonas is very proud of the dialect, which he has done much to preserve in this moorland parish.

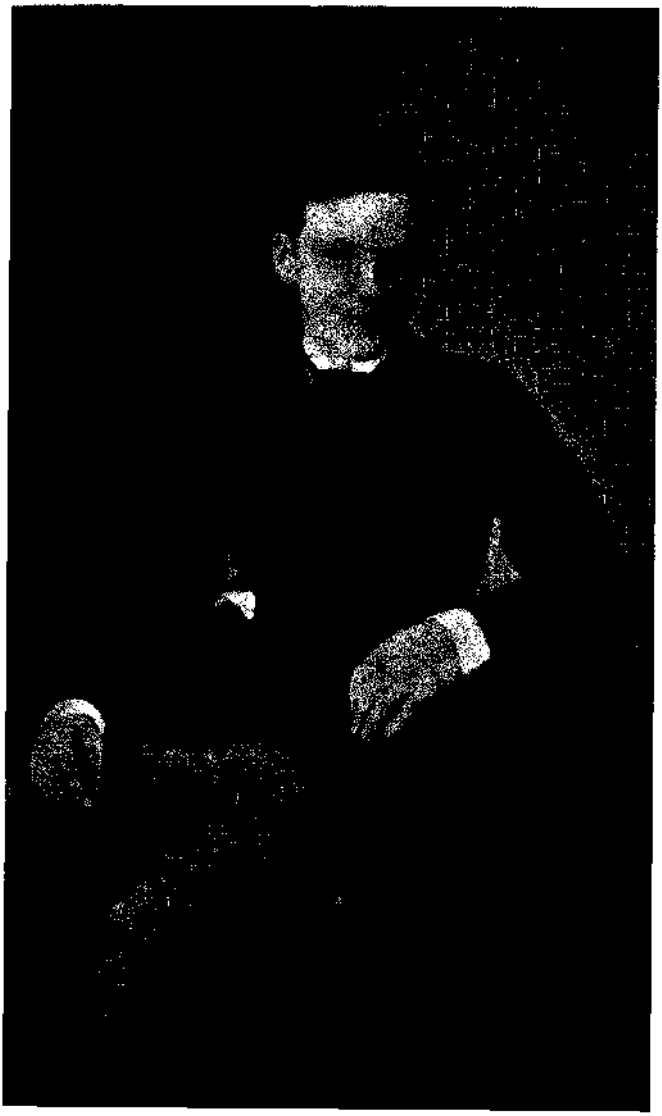
After the incident of Little Phineas I must have settled down and given no occasion for further complaint about my conduct, for I cannot remember that any further regrettable incident marred my career as an embryo schoolmaster. Three years later, however, circumstances over which I had no control arose which cut short my career as a pupil-teacher, and deprived the scholastic profession of my services. I have already reflected on the fact that events which at the time appear trivial often turn the course of our lives. If the firm by whom my father and sisters were employed had not become

bankrupt, I should have been a schoolmaster, spending my life in the, to me, uncongenial work of teaching. It is a curious thing when you think about it that my future should have been shaped by the misfortunes of a firm with which I had nothing to do. And many people's lives are determined by happenings of an accidental nature.

The closing of the mill necessitated my parents* removal from the village. At that time the town of Nelson, five miles over the Lancashire border, then little more than a village, was attracting people from the West Riding, where the woollen trade was very depressed. I was taken there by my parents, and my school days came to an end. I was then fifteen years old. I had acquired a sound elementary education. I had a good knowledge of arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, elementary mathematics, a fair acquaintance with English literature, some slight knowledge of Latin, and enough French to read and write a letter.

The problem of finding me something to do in Nelson at once arose. I had no desire to return to teaching. My father had the idea that I should make a lawyer, but the family means were not likely to run to that. He took me to see a local solicitor, who put an end to all ambitions in that direction by telling us that it would cost £2000. My father would have been prepared to spend the few hundred pounds he had saved, but £2000 was beyond the means of a poor weaver. This lawyer had some reason for discouraging us for I know now that he greatly exaggerated the cost.

I eventually settled down to a job in an insurance company's office. It was a very good job. My wages were good and the hours were short. My life for the next few years was uneventful. Nelson was a hot-bed of Radicalism. At that time, which was before the extension of the franchise to the counties, there was a very



PHILIP SNOWDEN IN 1880
AGED 16.

active political life in the district. The voteless condition of the working men made them the more determined politicians. The area in which Nelson was situated was in the old constituency of north-east Lancashire, represented at that time by Lord Hartington, afterwards the Duke of Devonshire, the man who dreamed he was addressing the House of Lords, and woke up to find he was! Although still in my teens, I was a very keen politician, and never missed a meeting held in the district. I remember, when the House of Lords suspended the County Franchise Bill, walking in a procession holding aloft a banner with the words: " Down with the House of Lords " inscribed upon it. That was fifty years ago, and the House of Lords is still like Johnny Walker. It has not been my lot to help in " ending " this archaic institution, so I have made my personal contribution to "mending "it!

The Disestablishment question was a very lively issue in those days. The Liberation Society held many meetings in the district, and they aroused intense interest. I never missed one of them. The chief Liberation speaker was a Baptist minister from Huddersfield, the Reverend George Duncan. He was one of the best platform speakers I have ever heard, witty, pungent, argumentative. He wrote to me not long ago, and told me that though he was over eighty he preached twice every Sunday. On weekdays he put in full time as the head of the theological department of Foyle's well-known bookshop. It is more than fifty years since Mr. Duncan came to Nelson to speak on Disestablishment. It seems to me now as though it happened in a previous existence. It is curious how a political question excites great inteiest for a time, and then becomes a dead issue. The present generation has never heard of the Disestablishment of the Church of England. This, no doubt, is due to the

emergence of social and industrial problems into the sphere of politics.

The district of Nelson, on the passing of the County Franchise Act, was merged into the Clitheroe Division. At the Election of 1884, my father, who had been a keen politician all his life, was first entitled to vote when he was fifty-five years of age. Since then, by successive extensions of the franchise, the electorate has increased from three millions to twenty-six millions. The first member for the Division was Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth, a well-known Liberal member of Parliament in his day, with whom I came into close personal contact twenty-five years later. He was Chairman of a Royal Commission on Canals on which I sat, and we spent together over three years investigating this question.

It was about this time that I was first introduced to the Protectionist controversy. It had been " dead and damned " for forty years when a Nelson manufacturer made an effort to resurrect it. He was Mr. W. Farrer Ecroyd, a member of an old Liberal and Quaker family, who had become a Churchman and a Conservative. He became M.P. for Preston, and raised the question of Protection in many able speeches in the House. At that time there were too many people still living who knew from personal sufferings the evils of Protection, so Mr. Ecroyd hid this advocacy of the old Protection under the attractive name of Fair Trade and Reciprocity. Mr. Ecroyd's campaign fizzled out, but when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain revived it under the name of Tariff Reform twenty years later he often paid a tribute to Mr. Ecroyd's earlier efforts.

My introduction to Mr. Ecroyd's policy came about in this way. He addressed a meeting on the subject in Nelson. I well remember his arguments, later so familiar in the speeches of Protectionists. He himself was in

the Bradford light dress trade, and he gave a gloomy account of the way in which it was being ruined by French competition. He claimed that a duty of thirty shillings a piece was necessary to enable the Bradford manufacturers to meet the competition of their French rivals. The sequel to his address was crushing. When question time came there rose one Samuel Smith, himself in the same trade. " Mr. Ecroyd ", he said, " tells us that he is being undersold by the French by thirty shillings a piece. If an English manufacturer is now making a profit of four pounds a piece couldn't he meet French competition by being content with a profit of fifty shillings a piece? " Mr. Ecroyd replied that if he were making a profit of four pounds a piece he could well afford to do so. Mr. Samuel Smith was ready with his retort. " It's no use Mr. Ecroyd trying to bluff me. I will give him chapter and verse about Nelson manufacturers who are today selling pieces in the Bradford market at four pounds profit/' Mr. Ecroyd said it was no use continuing the discussion, and the meeting closed. This was my first experience of a controversy in which I was destined to take a prominent part.

In those days I heard a number of famous people. Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant were at the height of their popularity. They had just been prosecuted for the publication of the Knowlton pamphlet on birth control. Bradlaugh was also conducting a campaign for the abolition of perpetual pensions. This was a proposal which appealed to individualistic radicalism. I heard him speak on the subject, and I can see him now as he stood on the platform. He was a massive figure, with a fine head and a powerful voice, and in declamation he was a tremendous force. I also heard him in a public debate with a local Congregational minister in the neighbouring town of Burnley on the topic, " Has or Is Man

a Soul? " The subject was far too abstruse for my comprehension, and the only thing I remember about it was Bradlaugh's admission that for once he had met an opponent who was worthy of his steel. Mrs. Besant at that time had not turned to Socialism, but even on such a subject as birth control she showed herself a superb orator.

In those days there still survived a few men who had been leaders in the Chartist movement. One of these was Mr. George Lomax, a Manchester man, who was a very popular Temperance and Radical speaker. I often heard him. As a young man he had been an eye-witness of the massacre of Peterloo. I heard him tell the story, and he finished a graphic description of the affair by saying: " As I saw the cavalry striking down unarmed and peaceful people I swore eternal enmity to Toryism and all its ways."

Another of the Chartist leaders I heard was Thomas Cooper, who had been a prominent figure in the Movement in the forties. He was a very old man when I heard him. He had gone quite blind. His hair fell upon his shoulders, and he looked a patriarchal figure. Some years ago I picked up a second-hand copy of his autobiography, and inside I found an original letter which had been sent by Cooper to a lecture secretary at Dumfries. It is written in a most beautiful hand. Cooper had written to this secretary to complain about the liberty which had been taken with his name. He had evidently been addressed as T. Cooper. " I want you to understand that my name is not T. Cooper. Nor is it Thos. Cooper. It is Thomas Cooper." I have a good deal of sympathy with this rebuke, for I have often had occasion to feel aggrieved at the liberty secretaries and others took with my name.

I was not so absorbed in politics in my young days as

to be indifferent to my future. I was not content to be a clerk in an insurance office all my days. I began to look round. Somebody called my attention to the possibilities of the Civil Service. I looked up the examination papers. The Excise Service seemed to me to be within my educational attainments. I rubbed up my school knowledge, which had become rusty from four or five years of neglect, and passed the examination. I was first sent to Liverpool to be initiated into the mysteries of gauging and surveying breweries and distilleries. At the end of six weeks I was called before the Collector, a nice old man with a long white beard, and examined on my proficiency. I satisfied him that I was competent to assess the amount of duty a brewer or distiller should pay, and then received my parchment commission as a " gauger and surveyor of Inland Revenue". I was put to temporary work in the Tax Office, where I first learnt the difference between Schedules A and D. I little dreamt then that the day would come when I should have the unwelcome task of fixing the rates of Income Tax. Verily we never know what is in store for us!

I much enjoyed my six months' stay in Liverpool, It is a city which possesses every attraction. It had Free Libraries, a fine Art Gallery, ran courses of scientific and literary Public Lectures and excellent Concerts. It was here I heard Sims Reeves and Madame Patti for one and sixpence. I heard Miss Fanny Moody make her *ddbut* in Opera with the Carl Rosa Company, which was then at the height of its popularity. At this time, fifty years ago, Miss Vesta Tilley was a leading music-hall star, and a prime favourite in Liverpool pantomime. The great dramatic stars of the time visited Liverpool, and I never missed the opportunity of seeing them. I saw the Robertsons, and that inimitable comedian

Mr. J. L. Toole; but the actor who impressed me more than any other I have seen was Mr. Barry Sullivan. I saw him in many Shakespearian plays, but the outstanding recollection of him was in the *Gamester.* I have never seen such a powerful piece of acting as Barry Sullivan's in that character. The moral degradation as the gaming habit grew upon him and as the passion irresistibly possessed him were depicted with terrifying realism. Mr. T. P. O'Connor knew Barry Sullivan very well, and we often spoke of him. " T. P." shared my opinion of Sullivan as an actor, and agreed that he was one of the finest tragedians of his time, and worthy to rank with Salvini. I have seen all the well-known Shakespearian actors of the last twenty-five years, but not one of them, in my opinion, compares with Barry Sullivan in presence, voice, elocution, and interpretation.

I was particularly interested in the theatre in those young days for I had ambitions to become an actor, and at one time seriously thought of running away from home to go on the stage. Only my ignorance of how to get into the profession saved me from carrying out my desire.

My first appointment was to Aberdeen Revenue Collection. Nothing could have suited me better. I had never been fifty miles away from home. I had revelled in Scott's novels. From the pages of his romances I had pictured a Scotland of " wild heath and shaggy wood, of mountain and of flood " and of red-haired kilted outlaws. I had my first glimpse of Scotland from the windows of a railway carriage on a dull winter morning. I can well recall my sense of disappointment when I saw a country not half so beautiful as our own Airedale. My disappointment had deepened when I got to Aberdeen and I had not seen one kilt and only three redheads!

The Orkney Islands are attached to Aberdeen for revenue purposes, and 1 spent two years in these regions. These years were among the happiest of my life. I had always a liking for out-of-the-way places, and the Orkneys gratified me in that respect to my heart's content. My revenue work carried me all over the islands, which provide the zoologist and the archaeologist with abundant material of interest. On every island there are Picts' houses, Runic inscriptions, and other relics of a prehistoric age, and the antiquarian can explore ruined castles, palaces and churches, each with a not inglorious past. The winters, too, had their attractions. There was a certain fascination in being, through stormy weather, shut off for days from communication with the outside world. This isolation throws the inhabitants on their own resources. The Orcadians do know how to be sociable. Dances, concerts and parties make the long winter nights pass pleasantly.

We formed a Dramatic Society, and I made something of a reputation as an amateur actor. The local newspaper was quite eloquent about my performances. Its " Dramatic Critic " wrote: " Mr. Snowden is a young gentleman who has early succeeded in catching the manner of playing old men's parts. The elder Farren did the same from boyhood and so did Charles Mathews. It is no mean praise, of course, to connect Mr. Snowden with these past masters of the Art, yet it may safely be said that in perfect aplomb, in a dexterous manipulation of voice, and in easy grace of style, he may not inaptly be called a promising pupil of these veterans." I left Orkney with real regret, and I shall always retain the happiest memories of the days I spent in these entrancing islands among the descendants of " the yarls and vikings who of old went forth under the raven banner of the North to fill the Southern Seas with

wondering dread ". Ever since I left I had longed to return. Four years ago I did so. I found the place changed in many respects. There are motor-cars and a cinema! Some of my old friends were still living; others had gone to lands far distant. The Orkneys have little to offer to ambitious young men. Only a deep attachment to the place keeps them there.

I spent a couple of years in the city of Aberdeen. I was not then in the least interested in Socialism. Indeed, I doubt if I knew of the existence of the Socialist movement. There must have been a small Socialist organisation in Aberdeen at that time, for I remember, rather dimly, strolling into a small hall attached to a restaurant in Castle Street where a meeting was being held. The speaker was a short, burly man with a big, bushy beard, who spoke with a foreign accent. I learnt afterwards that he was Prince Kropotkin, a Russian exile, though at the time the name conveyed nothing to me. His address was on the philosophic basis of Anarchism, and so far as I can remember it advanced the arguments which he elaborated later in his great work *Mutual Aid.* But what I remember most clearly about this meeting was the audience, who seemed to me a queer-looking lot. They were mostly long-haired, unkempt, and collarless. Years after, when I got to know some of these early Socialists, I understood. They were in revolt against all conventionalities and they regarded white collars, cropped hair and clean shaving as marks of bourgeois respectability. It was about this time that I heard Henry George. I remember this meeting much more clearly than the other. This was a crowded meeting in the old Music Hall. Just before then *Progress and Poverty* had been published, a book which had made a tremendous impression in the United States and Great Britain. Henry George was having something of a

triumphal tour through Scotland. The Scottish Radicals had been captured by the theories he had advanced in *Progress and Poverty*. No book ever written on the social problem made so many converts. Economic facts and theories have never been presented in such an attractive way. Although Mr. Henry George was not a Socialist, his book led many of his readers to Socialism. Keir Hardie told me that it was *Progress and Poverty* which gave him his first ideas of Socialism. Henry George, he felt, had claimed too much for the results of the appropriation of the economic rent of land, and had not appreciated the importance of capitalistic exploitation.

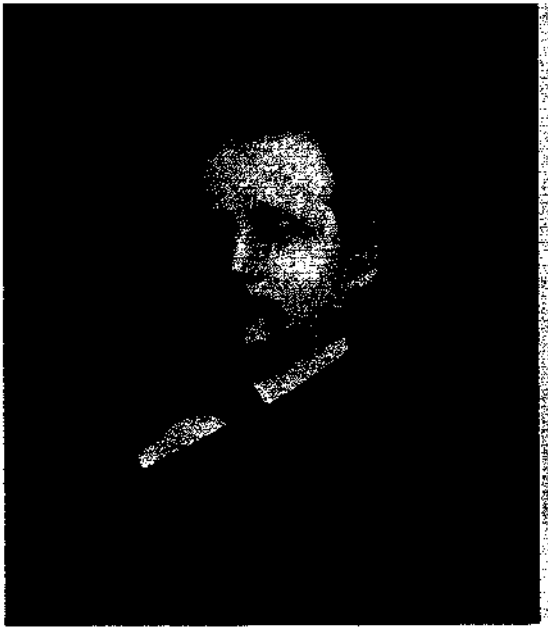
Henry George had a very impressive platform style. In appearance he was of middle height, well built, had a full, brown beard, and would have passed for a Nonconformist minister. His style of speaking was conversational, rather than oratorical. His address on this occasion was devoted mainly to dealing with a pamphlet he had discovered written about the *beginning of* the nineteenth century by a Professor of the Humanities in Aberdeen University. In this pamphlet the theories expounded and elaborated in *Progress and Poverty* had been put forward, and Henry George paid a compliment to the city of Aberdeen for having so long ago produced a pioneer of land reform.

After this period in Aberdeen I was moved south. Nothing noteworthy occurred during the remainder of the years I spent in the Revenue service, except an incident which is interesting because of the persons who were associated with it. One day I was strolling over Salisbury Plain on business bent when I heard shooting in the distance. I went in the direction of the sound, and came upon a partridge shooting-party. I asked to see their licences, and four out of the five members of the party were without. It turned out to be Mr. Walter

Long's party. At that time Mr. Long was Financial Secretary to the Treasury in the Conservative Government of the day. It was not a very comfortable situation for Mr. Long, holding that position, to be discovered leading a party who were evading the Revenue law. He was terribly annoyed, and threatened to report me to the Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue! The outcome was that the delinquents appeared later in the police court and were fined £5 each. Instead of receiving a reprimand from the Chairman, the Board made me a present of five pounds for my zeal.

Over twenty years later this incident had its reverberations in the House of Commons. To relieve the tedium of an all-night sitting, my Parliamentary colleague, Mr. W. G. Anderson, to whom I must have told the story, related it. Mr. Walter Long was in charge of the Bill under discussion, and to my amazement he remembered the incident and had somehow for long known I was the person who had hauled his friends before the magistrates. He treated Mr. Anderson's disclosure with good humour, and said that he was annoyed with me, not for discovering that his friends had no licences, but because I had disturbed the birds! Strange things happen in the world, but I little thought when I first encountered Mr. Walter Long on Salisbury Plain that we should meet again as fellow-members in the House of Commons.

I enjoyed the years of my time in the Civil Service. The work was congenial. I should have been happy to spend my life in that occupation. The pay was poor in my days, but there were prospects of steady advancement to a man of capacity. The attraction of the Civil Service to a man without much ambition, and who is content with a moderate income, is the security of the employment. The uncertainty of his occupation is the bugbear of the



MY FATHER.

MY MOTHER.

ordinary workman and the clerk today. The relief a workman and his wife feel when he gets a regular job was felt by a Yorkshire woman who told her neighbour that her husband had got work. " It's killing work," she said, " but, thank God, it's regular."

I seemed to be settled in life when again the fate which moves in a mysterious way ordained a change, which eventually brought me into the turbulent waters of politics where I have been tossed about for the last forty years.

My father died in 1889 at sixty years of age. He died, as most of us would prefer to die, very suddenly. He had not been well for some weeks, but there did not appear to be anything serious the matter with him. He woke up during the night, gurgled, and died without speaking. Shortly after his death my mother went back to live in Ickornshaw. My sisters had married, and there was nothing to prevent her from going back to her old home, her old friends, and the chapel to which she was devotedly attached. My parents had always been thrifty, and she had managed to save enough to keep her in the modest comfort which satisfied her needs.

Two years later I suffered a misfortune which eventually compelled my retirement from the Civil Service. When stationed at Plymouth I met with a slight accident. At first it seemed nothing serious, and the later developments were due to neglect.

I had always been healthy and active, and I thought the trouble would pass away. An acute inflammation of the spinal cord supervened, and left me with the loss of the free use of my legs. I returned home to my mother. The idea that I was to be permanently crippled never entered my mind. In a little time I improved so far as to be able to walk laboriously with the aid of a stout stick. I found that walking was good for me. In

all sorts of weather I hobbled through the lanes and over the hillsides of the Yorkshire parish. After a time I became convinced that full recovery was not likely to come. It is strange but true that this conviction brought neither grief nor despondency. I calmly resigned myself to what could not be helped.

For two years my position in the Civil Service was kept open for my return. At the end of that time when it was evident I should never fully recov.er the use of my legs I was retired, to the regret of my superiors. How little one can forecast the future. Neither they nor I ever dreamt that in thirty years from that time I should be the political head of the State Department in which I had served for a time in the humblest position.

I now began to think what I should do to earn a livings My material wealth consisted not in abundance of riches, but in the fewness of my wants. I might have settled down, with plenty of excuse in my condition, to an uneventful life in this quiet village, earning enough for my modest needs by occasional contributions to periodicals. But I had no inclination to waste my life, so I turned to an old love. I had kept up my education during my years in the Civil Service, so I began to read for the law examinations with the idea of going to the Bar. But that was not to be. I was caught up in a movement which was to absorb my interest and activities for the rest of my life.

CHAPTER II

The Birth of the I.L.P.

A NATIONAL Conference of Labour and Socialist Organisations was held at Bradford in January of 1893, at which the Independent Labour Party was formed. This was the most important political event of the nineteenth century.

A brief reference to the early efforts to secure representation in Parliament may be useful towards an understanding of the later developments. For thirty years before this historic Conference was held, spasmodic efforts had been made to obtain the direct representation of the working classes in Parliament. The first organised effort with this object took place at the General Election of 1874. The Trades Unions were very dissatisfied with the attitude of the Liberal Government to the legal position of Trade Unionism. In 1869, at the instigation of John Stuart Mill, an organisation was formed under the name of the Labour Representation League to carry on a national campaign to secure the return of working men to Parliament. It does not appear to have been the intention of this League to form a Party which would be permanently in opposition to the Liberal Party. Mills' idea was that, if the working classes put forward working-men candidates and threatened the Liberal majority, the Liberals would be glad to come to terms and provide opportunities for the return of working men. At the Election of 1874 the League placed twelve working men in the field, and of these Thomas Burt and Alexander MacDonald were

elected for Morpeth and Stafford respectively. After this initial success the League gradually declined. Both Burt and MacDonald were officials of the Miners* Union. They were paid by the Miners' Union while members of the House of Commons. Burt sat continuously in Parliament as the representative of Morpeth for over fifty years. He was a very highly respected member of the House. He was associated with the Liberal Party during the whole of that period, a/id at one time held office as an Under-Secretary in a Liberal Administration.

The Trades Union Congress first met in 1868, and the agenda of this Conference contained no reference to Labour Representation or to any other political matter. In the following year politics entered the Conference; and in 1874, when the question of Labour Representation was first raised, the Congress decided that it was unwise and undesirable to pledge itself to any course of action in respect of Labour Representation in Parliament. Two years later, however, at the Congress of 1876, a change in the Trades Unions' attitude to political action was shown, and the Conference passed a resolution calling upon Trades Unions to do the utmost in their power to return competent working men to Parliament. Nothing definite followed on this resolution for ten years, when it was decided to set up some machinery to secure Labour Representation, and the Labour Electoral Committee was formed.

Meantime the Social Democratic Federation, which was carrying on an active propaganda for Socialism mainly in London and a few provincial towns, had tested the amount of popular support for their movement by putting forward three candidates at the Election of 1885. John Burns, who was then an active Socialist of a very extreme type, stood for Nottingham as a Social Democrat, and polled 598 votes. Two other Socialist candidates

ran at Hampstead and Kennington, and one polled 57 votes and the other 32. By 1885 the Liberal Party had seen the necessity of admitting Labour Representatives, and they allowed the Trades Union a clear run in a number of constituencies. Eleven working class members were returned, mainly miners' representatives. They did not take up an independent position in Parliament, but associated themselves with the Liberal Party. In return for this Liberal support at the Election of 1885, the Labour Electoral Association openly advocated the support of Liberal candidates. Three years later, the first election contest on independent Labour lines was fought by Keir Hardie in Mid-Lanarkshire, but he was not successful. The contest aroused very wide interest, and gave a great impetus to the movement for Independent Labour Representation.

The outcome of this Election was the formation of the Scottish Labour Party, which, with the impetuousness of youth, put forward eight candidates at the Election of 1892. They polled very small votes, and none of them was returned. At this Election, however, in England three Independent Labour candidates were successful, namely John Burns, Keir Hardie and J. H. Wilson. Keir Hardie's victory in West Ham created a tremendous sensation. His success, however, was due to the fact that the Liberals in the constituency had refrained from putting forward a candidate, and Hardie received the support of the Radicals.

The years 1888 and 1889 saw the rise of the new Trade Unionism. In 1889 the famous London Dock Strike took place, which brought its leaders—Tom Mann, Ben Tillett and John Burns—into national notoriety. These events gave a great stimulus to the agitation which was taking root in the industrial districts of the North of England and Scotland for independent Labotfc-

Representation. This movement was particularly active in the West Riding of Yorkshire and Lancashire. In 1891 the Bradford Labour Union was formed, mainly owing to a strike at the Manningham Mills, and the Union quickly obtained a paying membership of 3000. In the following year (1892) this Union put forward Ben Tillett as Parliamentary candidate for West Bradford against the sitting Liberal member, a local manufacturer who had made himself very unpopular by his opposition to the workers in the strike. Tillet came within 557 votes of being elected.

These various Labour Unions had no national association, and by the end of 1892 it was felt that these local organisations should be merged into a National Party. So steps were taken to call a Conference, which met at Bradford in January 1893. To this Conference delegates from these local unions, the Fabian Society (which at that time was doing considerable propaganda work among the Radical Clubs), and the Social Democratic Federation, were invited. There were 115 delegates present at this Conference, and among them was Mr. George Bernard Shaw, representing the Fabian Society. He played a conspicuous part in the discussions of the Conference. Mr. Keir Hardie, fresh from his success at West Ham, was elected Chairman of the Conference.

The discussions and decisions at this Conference are interesting as showing what was in the minds of the delegates. There were among the delegates some who were afraid that if the new Party were to put the Socialist objective too prominently it might deter people from joining it who were in favour of Labour Representation, but who were not yet definitely Socialists. When it came to the vote, however, these timid opportunists were a small minority, and a resolution was carried by 91 votes to 16 that the object of the Party should be " to secure

the collective and communal ownership of all means of production, distribution and exchange". From the beginning, therefore, the Independent Labour Party was a definite Socialist organisation. Mr. Bernard Shaw announced that the Fabians were willing to do all they could to help the organisation of Labour in the face of local Liberalism, but the Fabian Society could not merge itself into this new Party. He believed, he said, in the Fabian policy of permeation, and pursuing that line he was on the Executive of a Liberal Association and intended to stick to it.

The original programme of the Independent Labour Party as formulated at this Conference showed that, notwithstanding its declaration of Socialism, it had not altogether shed its Radicalism. Among the items included in the programme was the abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords! Other items were the abolition of overtime, piecework and child labour, a forty-eight-hour working week in all trades and industries, provision for the sick, disabled, aged, widows and orphans, the abolition of indirect taxation and a graduated income-tax. The taxation items were not quite definite enough for Mr. Bernard Shaw, who moved an amendment for the taxation to extinction of all unearned incomes. This amendment was carried with only one dissentient, and it continued to appear for many years as a plank in the programme of the Independent Labour Party. Thus was the I.L.P. launched.

It was hoped by its opponents that the new movement would soon share the fate of previous efforts to establish an independent Labour Party, but it soon became evident that this new Party had a vitality which its predecessors had not possessed. It had seized upon the industrial centres of the North of England and of Scotland, which had a long tradition of robust radicalism. It was not

hampered by an official association with the Trade Unions. The local organisations which had hitherto conducted their propaganda independently had now a national organisation and a common national policy. Socialism now for the first time attracted popular attention.

About this time Robert Blatchford was attracting recruits to the movement by his vigorous Socialist writings. He had established *The Clarion*, a weekly Socialist and literary journal, and written *Merrie England*, a popular textbook on Socialism written in the simple and vigorous English of which he was such a master. This book, which extended to two hundred pages, was published in a penny edition, which had a sale of a million copies. In these years Mr. Blatchford gave invaluable help to Socialist propaganda. No man did more than he to make Socialism understood by the ordinary working man. His writings in them had nothing of economic abstruseness. He based his appeal on the principles of human justice. He preached Socialism as a system of industrial co-operation for the common good. His arguments and illustrations were drawn from facts and experiences within the knowledge of the common people. Socialism as he taught it was not a cold, materialistic theory, but the promise of a new life as full, sweet and noble as the world can give.

In these years Mr. Blatchford lived in Manchester, and he was mainly responsible for the formation of the first Manchester Labour Union. He was no speaker, and many stories are told of his platform failures. Shortly after the I.L.P. was formed he was invited by the Bradford Labour Union to come forward as a Parliamentary candidate for one of the divisions of that city. He came to address an adoption meeting. After two or three attempts to speak he stopped short and pulled a fountain pen out of his pocket and held it up. "I

cannot speak," he said, " but I can write." This brought a demonstration from the meeting which no speech could have evoked. Mr. Blatchford is still living, hale and hearty, his mental powers undiminished at the ripe age of eighty-three. I saw him recently, and we talked of those grand and inspiring times of forty years ago. Only the men who were in the Socialist movement in those days can know the great part Robert Blatchford took in making it popular, and of the personal devotion he inspired by his writings.

CHAPTER I I I

My Early Socialist Days

AMID all this political excitement aroused by the propaganda of the I.L.P., it was impossible for anyone interested in politics to remain unaffected by it. Isolated as I was in my remote village, my knowledge was derived from newspaper reports. But an opportunity soon presented itself to me of taking sides in the controversy. The Liberal Party in the village were very excited by what was going on, particularly by the I.L.P. attacks on the Liberal Party. Assuming that I should be in opposition to the new movement, being known as a good Liberal, I was invited by the local Liberal Club to speak on Socialism. I was wise enough to realise that I ought to know something about the subject ere I ventured to speak upon it. I began to read up the question of Socialism. I had all my time free, but I had little money to buy books. I first obtained a copy of Kirkup's *Inquiry into Socialism.* This was a fair and impartial statement of Socialism written by one who was sympathetic, but not an adherent. The reading of this work showed me that Socialism was not the stupid and unscientific thing it was represented to be by its opponents. I was not so much converted to Socialism by the book as clarified. I found in Socialism ideas and aims which I had for a long time held in a vague and indefinite form. My interest in the question had been keenly aroused. I was fervently anxious to study the subject fully. I sold two hundred volumes of literature I had accumulated, and

bought books on Socialism. It was a revelation to me to discover that there was such a mass of literature on the subject, both American and English.

I bought and carefully studied, among other works, Hyndman's *England for All* and his *Historical Basis of Socialism,* which he claimed were the first works on scientific Socialism published in English. They were based on Marx's *Capital.* I did not find these books so interesting and instructive as other volumes on the subject which I read. I derived much help and information from the Fabian Essays and the Fabian Tracts, and from the books of Edward Carpenter—*England's Ideal* and *Civilisation, its Causes and Cure,* and from the writings of an American Socialist, Lawrence Gronland, *The Co-operative Commonwealth* and *Our Destiny.* I found particularly useful the two works by a German critic of Socialism, Dr. SchafHe, entitled *The Impossibility of Social Democracy* and *The Quintessence of Socialism.* Those two volumes state the case against Socialism with remarkable ability and force, and are entirely free from the misrepresentation and prejudice which mar most of the books written against Socialism. I have always made a point of reading the case against my own views, for I hold that one cannot understand or defend his position unless one is familiar with the whole case against it.

I collected quite a library of old Radical and Socialist books and periodicals and pamphlets dating from the days of Hunt and Owen down to modern times. I obtained copies of all the early publications of the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, and reports of the public debates on Socialism between Hyndman and Bradlaugh, and Hyndman and Henry George, and the famous four nights' debate between Annie Besant and Foot. All these publications I devoured with avidity, and in time became saturated

with Socialist teaching. But, if I may say so, I owed most of my grasp of Socialism to thinking out these problems for myself. I used to lie awake for hours at night turning over the problems and trying to find the weak places in the solution until I felt assured the case was invulnerable.

While I am on this subject of Socialist literature, I may make a confession which most Socialists would make if they had the courage to do so. I have never read Karl Marx. I have read many synopses of his teaching, and that has been quite enough for me. I have met a few men who claim to have read and studied the three huge volumes of *Das Kapital,* but the fact that they were still alive makes one inclined to cast some doubt upon their claim. Neither Keir Hardie nor William Morris derived their Socialism from Karl Marx.

My late comrade, Bruce Glasier, in his fascinating book on *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement,* relates an incident which shows how little materialistic philosophy and abstruse economic theories have done to inspire Socialist teaching. At a meeting addressed by William Morris in Glasgow he was asked: " Does Comrade Morris accept Marx's theory of value? " Morris' reply was emphatic, and has passed into the records of the movement as one of the best remembered of his sayings: " l a m asked if I believe in Marx's theory of value. To speak quite frankly, I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm damned if I want to know." Then he added:

" Truth to say, my friends, I have tried to understand Marx's theory, but political economy is not in my line, and much of it appears to me to be dreary rubbish. But I am, I hope, a Socialist none the less. It is enough political economy for me to know that the idle class is rich and the working class is poor, and that the rich are

rich because they rob the poor. That I know because I see it with my eyes. I need read no books to convince me of it. And it does not matter a rap, it seems to me, whether the robbery is accomplished by what is termed surplus value, or by means of serfage or open brigandage. The whole system is monstrous and intolerable, and what we Socialists have got to do is to work together for its complete overthrow, and for the establishment in its stead of a system of co-operation where there shall be no masters or slaves, but where everyone will live and work jollily together as neighbours and comrades for the equal good of all. That, in a nutshell, is my political economy and my social democracy."

I have given this rather long extract because no words could better express the spirit and the aim of the early Socialist movement in Great Britain. It derived its inspiration far more from the Sermon on the Mount than from the teachings of the economists. Mr. A. E. Fletcher, who was editor of the *Daily Chronicle* in the nineties of the last century, and who was later a Socialist candidate for Glasgow, records an incident which shows the religious background of the Labour movement in those days. It happened during the miners' lockout in 1893. The police were informed that there was the likelihood of a riot in a Yorkshire mining village. A large body of police were hurried to the place. What did they find? There was a long procession of locked-out miners, not drawn up in battle array, but slowly wending their way to a meeting in the Methodist Chapel, and as they went along they were sending up to Heaven's throne the words of that grand old hymn:

" O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come. . . . "

Oh that the Socialist movement of today could recapture

the spiritual exaltation and religious faith of those early days!

I am afraid I have wandered far away from the invitation of the Cowling Liberals to address them. The outcome of this preparatory reading was that I gave my lecture; but, instead of its being the denunciation of Socialism which had been expected, it was an exposition and defence of Socialism.

My chairman was the man who had conveyed to me the invitation to give the lecture, and at the end he professed his conversion to Socialism, though I am afraid he backslided later when I began to attack the Liberal Party.

My lecture brought the discovery that there were a number of young fellows in the village who had been in the habit of surreptitiously going down to Keighley to attend Socialist meetings. There they had heard Ben Tillett and Tom Mann, and other fiery evangelists of the new gospel. Now they came into the open. My mother's cottage became the headquarters of the rebels. We used to meet every evening and talk of the " wonderful days a' coming ". The neighbours began to be curious about these nightly gatherings and questioned my mother as to what was being said and done. She replied that all the talk she heard was about how to do folks good and make the world better. It happened that these young fellows were the mainstay of the Liberal Club in the village, and the management were unwilling to alienate their financial support. So I was again invited to speak in the Club, and gave them a stronger dose of Socialism. It was not our Socialism to which these Liberals mainly objected, but to our attacks on the Liberal Party.

An incident occurred which brought me into wider notoriety. A young University woman named Enid Stacy, who was a travelling propagandist for the I.L.P.,

came to lecture in Keighley. She gave an address on the relation of the drink question to the poverty problem. She took up the attitude, which was not a distinctly Socialist position but quite in harmony with the teaching of the old political economists, that as working-class expenditure on drink entered into their cost of living, a sudden abolition of the drink traffic would result in a reduction of wages. Her address led to a correspondence in the local paper, in which her argument was vigorously combatted by the temperance people. One of the correspondents cited the case of Cowling, which he alleged proved that teetotalism had greatly improved the condition of the people. I was brought into the controversy, and in a series of letters to the Local Press I gave a graphic account of the social conditions of the village. I maintained with all the zeal of the new convert to Socialism that teetotalism and thrift had not solved the poverty problem there. I wrote of the children being taken out of bed at half-past five on wild wintry mornings to work in factories; of mothers who worked in the factories taking out their babies to be nursed by a neighbour; of the unending work of these mothers, who, after the factory hours, did their baking, washing, cleaning and mending.

I was not opposed to temperance, for I had seen how its practice had improved the social life of the village. My point was that under capitalism it was greatly to the benefit of the individual to spend his wages on useful things instead of upon drink, though temperance alone would not touch the root causes of low wages and poverty. The way I put the case in after years, when I often publicly discussed this question, was that drink is an aggravation of every social evil, and, in a great many cases, the prime cause of industrial misery and degradation. The economic waste of expenditure on

drink lowers the standard of living and reduces a great many families to destitution, who, if their incomes were usefully spent, would enjoy a reasonable degree of comfort. Universal temperance would undoubtedly bring incalculable benefits and blessings, but so long as the social system is based upon exploitation the mass of the people will remain comparatively poor. A sober democracy is necessary to achieve the great task of social reconstruction.

Every year I have lived since I began to take an interest in social questions has strengthened the opinion I expressed in a book I wrote twenty-five years ago entitled *Socialism and the Drink Question* that " Drink is one of the most destructive evils, destroying mind and body, which curses the human race." There are many views I put forward in that volume which twenty-five years' experience has led me to modify as to the practical methods of dealing with the traffic, but my opinion as to the gravity of the drink evil has not changed.

The letters I contributed to the local press created a great sensation in the district, and led to enquiries as to the identity of the writer. It was disclosed that " he was a Socialist chap up in Cowling ". This discovery led the Keighley Socialists to hunt me out, and to invite me to come and address one of their regular Sunday evening meetings. I went. It was a great occasion. I was hailed even by the Liberal Press as [11] A New Prophet ". " Here at last," it said, " was a man who could expound the Socialist cause with dignity and yet with fervour, with moderation and yet with vigour." This admiration of the Liberal Press was short-lived. A few weeks later, when I had turned my fervour and vigour against the Liberal Party, it described me as " dealing out ribaldry and indiscriminate abuse as if I were heading a street mob ".

That meeting at Keighley, the first I had addressed away from home, will for ever stand out in my memory. It was an inspiration. It was like a revival gathering. Socialism to those men and women was a new vision, a new hope of relief from the grinding toil and hard struggle with poverty which had been their lot. To me it was the opening of a campaign which during many years I was to carry on throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The news of this " find " spread among the branches of the Independent Labour Party, and invitations to address meetings poured in upon me. A year later the General Election of 1895 occurred. The Keighley Parliamentary Division Labour Party were determined to run a candidate. They had neither organisation nor money; but their enthusiasm laughed at such obstacles. I was to be their candidate. The National Council of the Labour Party, with an equal disregard of practical politics, gave their assent. I made a tour of the constituency and was well received. But, fortunately, my native caution led me to appreciate the situation. I knew that the enthusiasm of public meetings, mostly composed of unenfranchised men and women would not be translated into votes on Election Day. I knew the deep-seated hostility of the powerful Liberal Party in the constituency. A Party only two years old could not in that time expect to have changed the lifelong political views of a majority of the electors. So I continued the campaign up to nomination day, and then persuaded my committee to be satisfied for the present with the propaganda work we had done during the election, save the money we had collected for another time, and not proceed to nomination.

The I.L.P., nationally, at this Election (1895) was in the same position in regard to organisation and finance

as our local Party. The party had been greatly encouraged by three by-elections at which it had put forward candidates the year before. The new party was then only a year old, but with the audacity of youth it rushed in where experience would have advised restraint. The first of these by-elections was in the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield. The I.L.P. branch was newly formed and was very weak in membership. Less than a fortnight before the Election an I.L.P. candidate was brought out in the person of the indomitable Frank Smith, a former important officer of the Salvation Army, later the hero of innumerable unsuccessful Labour contests, and over thirty years afterwards returned for the Nuneaton Division. At this Attercliffe By-election the I.L.P. candidate polled 1249 votes, which was 14 per cent, of the total votes cast.

Immediately after this, by-elections occurred at Leicester and Bristol. At Leicester the I.L.P. candidate was Mr. Joseph Burgess, then a prominent figure in the Party. He had taken a foremost part in the organising of the Conference at which the I.L.P. was formed. Mr. Burgess was adopted as candidate one week prior to the contest. There was no organisation, and the expenses of the Election were raised by collections at the meetings. This contest aroused the keenest excitement throughout the country, which was increased when the result was declared. Mr. Burgess had polled 4402 votes. A little later a by-election occurred at East Bristol. The I.L.P. again entered the field, although there was not even a branch of the Party in the constituency. The Socialist candidate polled 3555 votes, coming within 160 votes of defeating the Liberal candidate, Sir W. H. Wills.

The results of these two by-elections gave a great shock to the Liberal Party throughout the country. It

was clear that a new and powerful competitor for the working-class vote had come into the political field. These results encouraged the I.L.P. to put forward 28 candidates at the General Election which followed in July 1895. All the candidates were defeated. They polled an average of 1592 votes per candidate. Eight of them polled over 2000 votes each, and seven less than 500 each. Mr. Keir Hardie lost his seat to a Tory at West Ham, a result which was hailed with great rejoicing by the Liberal Press. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who stood as an I.L.P. candidate at this Election for Southampton, polled 867 votes. The total cost of these 28 contests was £5600, an average of £200, the greater part of this expense going in meeting the Returning Officers' charges.

The enthusiasts of the movement were disappointed with the results of this General Election. They had been encouraged to expect something better from the enthusiasm of the election meetings, which far exceeded that of other Parties. It must be remembered that the I.L.P. was attracting in the main the young men who were not yet voters. The party was not yet three years old. From its formation it had had to face the open and bitter hostility of the Press, the platform, and the public, with few honourable exceptions. Although unsuccessful at this Election, when all the circumstances are taken into account, the difficulty of weaning the electors from inherited party allegiance, it was a remarkable achievement to poll such a vote against both the old political parties with their organisations and financial resources. In a statement issued by the National Council to the members of the Party on the results of the Election a very interesting observation was made: " We venture to suggest," the statement ran, " that the movement has now reached that stage at which we can afford to dispense with much of the wholesale denunciation which

has hitherto been almost a necessity. To our knowledge tens of thousands are looking towards us kindly disposed. It must be our aim to enlist these under our banner, not by any sacrifice of principle, but by avoiding any unnecessary offence/' That was very necessary advice, for in those early days of the Socialist movement propaganda was divided about half and half between a crude advocacy of Socialism and violent abuse of political opponents.

In spite of the disappointment of the Election, the membership of the I.L.P. continued to grow. At the Annual Conference of the Party after the Election it was announced that 77 new branches had been formed during the year, bringing the total number up to 381. These branches were located mainly in the industrial centres of the North. More than half of them were in Yorkshire and Lancashire. It is interesting to note that there was only one branch in the whole of Wales. Everyone of these branches was an active centre of Socialist propaganda. Open-air meetings were held every Sunday in fine weather, and in winter, when the branch could afford it, inside meetings were arranged. It was the invariable custom to take collections at meetings, though in those early days the sum realised was seldom sufficient to pay the railway fare of the speaker. The deficiency had to be made up from the pockets of the members. I remember an experience which befell a speaker who had come a considerable distance to address two meetings in a Yorkshire town. He was not much of an orator, and his lectures were not very thrilling. He was conscious that he had not been a great success, and, when the secretary asked him how much his expenses were, he said: "Well, Fm fifteen shillings out of pocket, but I think ten shillings is as much as my lectures are worth ". They paid him ten shillings!

The Party quickly developed a large number of local speakers. Many young men who were Nonconformist local preachers were attracted to the movement by the ethical appeal of Socialism. Their experience in speaking was a great help to the Party propaganda. Working men who had toiled all day at arduous work went out at nights into the streets to preach in their simple way the new gospel of emancipation. Men who had never before attempted public speaking were given courage and the gift of effective oratory by the new passion for social justice which consumed them. The movement was something new in politics. It was politics inspired by idealism and religious fervour. Vocal Unions were formed which accompanied cycling corps into the country at week-ends, and audiences were gathered on village greens by the singing of the choirs; then short and simple addresses on Socialism were given. On their country jaunts the cyclists distributed leaflets and pasted slips on gates, and sometimes stuck them on cows, bearing such slogans as " Socialism the Hope of the World ", " Workers of the World Unite ". Sometimes processions were organised in connection with a meeting of more than usual importance addressed by some national speaker. I remember one such procession where the small children were on a horse-drawn lorry, and stretched across the wagon over their heads was a banner bearing the Socialist slogan " Production for Use and not for Profit! "

Though the older Trade Union officials were as bitterly opposed to the new Party as the Liberals, there were many of the younger officials of the unions who were ardent supporters of the I.L.P. These men did great service to the party in these early years. They not only worked for the Party inside the Trade Unions, but gave their week-ends generously to speaking from the

Socialist platform. Among the number were J. R. Clynes, Pete Curran, George N. Barnes, Ben Turner, James Sexton, Ben Tillett and Robert Smillie.

In those early days of the I.L.P. one of its propagandists was Jim Connell, the author of the revolutionary song " The Red Flag ". Connell had been a Socialist for many years before the I.L.P. was formed, and had been associated with the Social Democratic Federation. Speaking of his connection with that body at the I.L.P. Conference at Birmingham in 1S98, when a proposal was put forward for the fusion of the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party, he related some of his experiences. He was one of the founders of the S.D.F., he said, and had been in it for twelve years. He had known for many years he was doing no good for Socialism there, and he only continued a member because there was then no other organisation to which a Socialist could belong.

Connell was a great, big, broad-shouldered Irishman with a delightful brogue, standing considerably over six feet. He had an enormous moustache, dressed in an Inverness cloak and wore a big-brimmed slouch hat. In this attire, with a large red scarf, he made a striking and picturesque figure. He lectured for the I.L.P. branches on two subjects—" The Game Laws " and " From Protoplasm to Man ". He was a great poacher, and knew every trick of the game. He regarded himself as something of an authority on Evolution, and his lecture on the subject was a most erudite performance. Not that he ever delivered it. He never got beyond the introduction, and after two hours' talk he had to stop from sheer exhaustion, with the audience in a state of physical collapse. The coming man was still in the protoplasmic stage.

Connell had written " The Red Flag " when a member

of the S.D.F., and it was taken up by that organisation, but it was not sung to the tune Connell had intended. He wrote the words to go with the tune of " The White Cockade ", but that was not very suitable. It went with a better swing to " Maryland " or " Tannenbaum ", and that is the tune to which the words are now universally sung. Bernard Shaw has described " The Red Flag " as " the funeral march of a fried eel ", but that is, perhaps, due to envy because he has never given the Socialist movement a revolutionary hymn! Connell published " The Red Flag " with a few other poems in a twopenny pamphlet with a preface by himself in which he explained that " the verses were not published to supply a long-felt want, neither were they the products of genius inspired by the midnight oil. The verses had been written in the time for which an exploiting employer had paid this wage slave. The pamphlet had been issued not to bring fame to the writer, but with the object of bringing twopences into the pocket of the impecunious author."

It was a long time before " The Red Flag " became popular in the I.L.P. In those early days the favourite hymns sung at its meetings were Carpenter's " England, arise ", Elliott's " When wilt Thou save Thy People ", and the hymns of Russell Lowell and Whittier.

Before I leave " The Red Flag " I must anticipate an incident which happened thirty years after the days I have been describing. About the time of the General Strike of 1926 I was dining one evening with Lord Beaverbrook and a few others in his room at the *Daily Express* office. " The Red Flag " was mentioned, and I enquired if they had ever heard it. Not one had. So I offered to sing it for them. It happens that I have only two songs in my musical repertoire—" The Red Flag " and " On Ilkla moor ba'at 'at ". I sang " The

Red Flag ", and Lord Beaverbrook was enthused by its revolutionary fervour. He would have me teach him the last verse and the chorus, and in a few minutes he had the words. Then he stood in the middle of the room, and with arm uplifted, with dishevelled hair and blazing eyes, he bellowed forth:

" With heads uncovered swear we all
To bear it onward till we fall;
Come dungeon dark or gallows grim
This song shall be our parting hymn.

" Then raise the scarlet standard high,
Within its shade we'll live and die;
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the Red Flag flying here."

I quite expected to see the newspapers come out next morning with flaring headlines: " The Social Revolution Breaks Out ". " Lord Beaverbrook leads the mob to the barricades singing * The Red Flag \" But the walls of the room were sound proof!

After Hardie's defeat at West Ham he devoted himself to platform propaganda, editing his weekly paper *The Labour Leader* in railway trains and in the cottages of comrades. This is not the place in this volume to give an appreciation of Hardie's work. To him more than to any other individual the bringing of the British working classes to a consciousness of their own power is due. Like all pioneers, he suffered in his lifetime, especially in the early years of his public work, from misunderstandings, misrepresentation and persecution. It is impossible for those who have no personal knowledge of the early days of the Independent Labour Party to understand how bitter was the hostility by which it was assailed from every quarter, and especially by the old leaders of the Trade Unions. I remember Hardie saying to me that when

he first entered the House of Commons as member for South-West Ham the only insulting language he received there was from Liberal-Labour members. Against Keir Hardie, as the outstanding figure of the new movement, this hostility was mainly directed. To a lesser degree every man and woman who joined the I.L.P. had to endure persecution and ostracism. This opposition had the effect of creating a bond of brotherhood between the members of the new Party, which was far more than a compensation for the sufferings inflicted by political opposition. Only those who had the glorious privilege of fighting in those days against formidable odds can ever understand the joy which comes from braving all things, enduring all things for a great vision and a great cause. In the years between 1895 and 1900 when he was out of the House of Commons Hardie's picturesque figure became well known throughout Great Britain from his platform appearances. He had naturally, one would think, a strong physical constitution, but the work of those years undoubtedly undermined his strength. At fifty he looked like an aged man. He died before he was sixty.

In the early years of the I.L.P. Tom Mann became General Secretary of the Party. He was at that time a well-known figure in the Labour movement. He had come into prominence in connection with the Dockers* Strike. He was the most volcanic speaker I have known, and a man of marvellous physical vigour. If Tom Mann had possessed one thing he lacked, namely, steadfastness of purpose, he would have been undoubtedly one of the most prominent men in the Labour Party of today. But he never could remain long associated with one movement. He had not the gift of settling down to one job and pursuing it to success. He was one of the most charming men personally I have known, kind-hearted and generous

and tolerant. I never heard him speak an unkind word of anyone.

He did not long remain Secretary to the I.L.P. His restless spirit kept him on the move. He left the I.L.P. to organise an international union of transport workers. After a short time he left that work to form a new union of unskilled workers in Great Britain. It would make a long list to give all the movements with which Tom Mann has been associated. At one time he was on the point of being ordained a clergyman of the Church of England, but he abandoned the idea, and took a public-house. That occupation he soon gave up, and went off to Australia, and became associated with the Syndicalist movement. He returned to England to carry on his Syndicalist propaganda, but his agitation met with no success. Later he drifted into the Communist Party. Having exhausted his association with every possible movement, there he has remained, but his influence had been destroyed by his lack of consistency. His life has been something of a tragedy, for there has been no man associated with the Labour and Socialist movements who could have rendered greater service to the working classes if he had possessed the essential gift of stability.

The I.L.P. was fortunate in its early days in enlisting the services of a number of men and women of great ability who gave up promising careers to devote themselves to the Socialist movement. Prominent among these were three young University women whose names are still spoken of with affection akin to reverence by the older members of the Party. Their names were Enid Stacy, Caroline Martyn, and Katharine Conway. The Socialist movement in these days had nothing to offer these eager young women but a life of hardship and ill-requited toil. Miss Stacy afterwards married a clergyman of the Church of England. She died shortly after. Her

early death was, no doubt, brought about by the hardships she had to endure in the years in which she spent her days travelling from place to place and her nights addressing meetings in ill-ventilated rooms. Miss Caroline Martyn died after a few years of this work; but Miss Conway, who afterwards became Mrs. Bruce Glasier, still lives after forty years of active propaganda for Socialism.

The husband of Miss Conway, Mr. Bruce Glasier, abandoned his profession as an architect to devote himself wholly to the Socialist movement, although it had nothing to offer him beyond the wages of an unskilled labourer. Mr. Glasier gave thirty years of his life to Socialist propaganda, and he died at an age when, in the natural course of events, many more years of activity might have been expected. Mr. Glasier was one of the most brilliant men I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, and as a conversationalist he surpassed any man of my acquaintance. He never received the popular recognition of his ability and services to which he was entitled.

Miss Isabella Ford and her sister Bessie were two women who deserve to be gratefully remembered for the work they did for social reform over a great many years. The Fords were a well-known and well-to-do Quaker family with Radical sympathies. The father of these sisters was a great friend of John Bright, who often visited the home of the Fords at Adel Grange, near Leeds. Mazzini and other political refugees found hospitality in this home. With such an upbringing as this it was natural for these sisters to be attracted by the Socialist movement, which they joined when the I.L.P. was formed. Before this Isabella and her sister Bessie had interested themselves in the women employed in the tailoring trade in Leeds, whose wages and conditions were deplorable. They had provided a club-room for

them, and had helped them to organise in a trade union. Both sisters were keen suffragists, and Isabella, who was a good speaker, did a great deal of platform work for that movement as well as for Socialism. She became a member of the National Council of the I.L.P., and it was there that I became well acquainted with her. These sisters were noble characters, and their close friendship with my wife and myself over a long period is one of our sweetest memories.

These are some of the men and women to whom the Labour Party of today owes a debt, the magnitude of which it does not realise. They were pioneers " who did their deeds and went away before the bright sun brought the day ". But we, who knew their sacrifice and devotion, will always remember with gratitude the work they did.

After my *ddbut* at the Labour meeting in Keighley, I began to receive invitations to speak from branches of the Party in the West Riding and East Lancashire. When the places from which these invitations came were within easy travelling distance I accepted them; but when the requests became so numerous and from places a considerable distance away, it became a question of whether I should make up my mind to devote myself wholly to the work. My enthusiasm was unbounded, and my desire to serve the cause was intense. There were no financial attractions in making this decision. Up to that time I had taken no payment for my speaking services—not even my out-of-pocket expenses. I had saved a little money when in the Civil Service and was living on that. I was unmarried. There was just my mother and myself. We had a good cottage for an inclusive rent of 2s. 9d. a week, and we could live comfortably on a pound a week. But if I were to give my whole time to the Party I should have to accept some slight remuneration for my services.

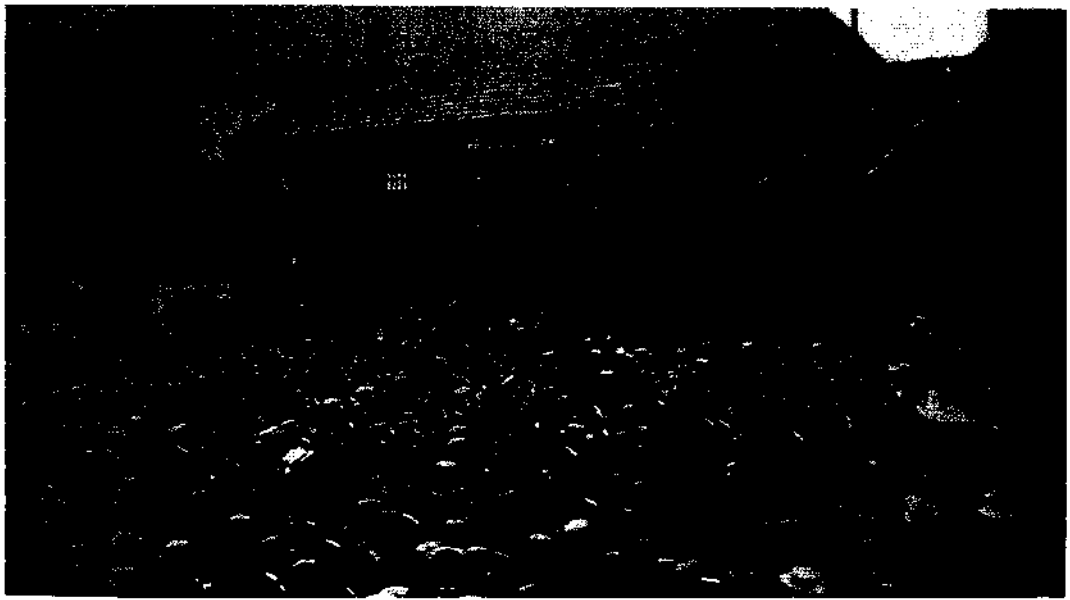


Photo by Edward Horner

SOCIALIST MEETING AT TOWNFIELD GATE, KEIGHLEY.
5th JUNE, 1901.
Philip Snowden speaking.

At that time, and indeed for a long time after, one of the commonest slanders upon the Socialist speakers was that they were in the pay of the Tory Party and were handsomely rewarded for their work. I knew enough by this time of the inside of the Socialist movement to know that there was no likelihood of a fat living out of it. The charge usually made to branches for a lecturer was 5s. and travelling expenses, but I soon learnt from experience that the 5s. fee often went in necessary expenses beyond the railway fare. The usual thing was to take two meetings on Sunday, and one on each of three or four week-nights. This involved a good deal of travelling, and I find on referring to my engagement books that I seldom travelled less than 100 miles in the course of a week, and I often covered twice that distance. This went on for some years, during which I visited every part of Great Britain. As time went on the movement grew in strength, and correspondingly in financial resources. My popularity increased, and I was able to command large audiences, and branches with an eye to business had the temerity to make a charge for admission to my meetings. This was usually successful, and helped the finances of the local branch. For these meetings I raised my fee to 10s., but never during the ten years I was wholly engaged on this work did I average more than 30s. a week from it.

But these were very happy days. It was a joy and an inspiration to meet the men and women of the movement who were so full of enthusiasm, who hoped that the cause for which they were giving their best would be realised in their time, or in their children's days. I usually was given hospitality by one of the comrades, and many touching evidences have I seen of the trouble they had taken to make me comfortable. Often the branch had difficulty in providing accommodation, for

most of the members had no spare bed. I had an amusing experience once at Glossop. I was to give lectures on the market square on four consecutive nights. The branch considered the problem of hospitality. It seemed insoluble. At last one young man said he would try to persuade his mother, who was a widow, to put me up. She was reluctant when approached, but eventually she said she would come to the market-place to see and hear me, and if I seemed a decent chap she would take me in. She made a mistake, and, instead of getting to my meeting, she found herself listening to a black man selling pills! She went away to find her son, and told him that on no account would she put up a negro, and if she did she would put him in the " coal-hole ", which was the proper place for a black man. When she was convinced that she had made a mistake she agreed to take me for the night on trial. I proved quite satisfactory, and was entertained most hospitably for the four days.

In those days the branches were composed almost exclusively of working people. It was rare indeed to find a middle-class person associated with it. In those years of propaganda, constantly moving about among the branches, I was kept in close personal touch with the membership. I knew every branch of the Party, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that I was personally known to all the members. I remember so well the happy times we used to have after a successful meeting when I met some of the active workers in the branch at the home of the comrade with whom I was staying. They listened to my stories of the progress of the movement in other parts of the country, and derived encouragement in their own difficulties and disappointments by the knowledge of the progress of the Party in other places. They were really poor, and what they gave to

the movement involved real sacrifice on their part. There was little of the materialistic spirit in the Socialist movement in those days. Socialism to them was like a religion—the promise of a full spiritual life.

My experiences were often enlivened by incidents of a humorous character. My chairman was usually a local comrade who was quite unaccustomed to public speaking. It was the invariable practice at all our meetings to invite questions from the audience, and an inexperienced chairman would say at the conclusion of my address: " Well, now we are coming to the interesting part of the meeting. We are going to ask you to put questions to the speaker, and he will answer any questions you can put. What Liberals and Tories say is not open to question, but everything a Socialist says *is* open to question/'

I had an amusing experience when addressing an open-air meeting in Bradford. At question time a man would insist that I should give a simple " Yes " or " No " to his question. I pointed out that it was not always possible to do that. " Nonsense," he said, " I can do that." So I used the old chestnut on him and asked him to say " Yes " or " N o " to this question: " Have you given up beating your wife? " I was surprised at the hilarity with which this was received by the audience. In the laughter the man slunk away. The chairman told me that the man, who was well known to the audience, had just come out of prison after doing fourteen days for ill-treating his wife. It is not often that a speaker unconsciously so effectively settles his hecklers.

I met in my peregrinations many original and entertaining characters. One of them was a working man who lived near Bradford. His name was Johnny Coe. He used to say to me sometimes: " I have read about these old martyrs who went to the stake for their religion.

I used to have my doubts about that, but since I became converted to Socialism 1 can understand it. I'd be willing to go to the stake for my Socialism." Johnny was a man who used to meet the speakers and take charge of them until the meeting was over. On one occasion he had to meet Mr. Fred Bramley, who was afterwards Secretary to the Trade Union Congress, but in those days was a humble Socialist propagandist. The place where Johnny Coe lived was called Wibsey, and Wibsey had a reputation amongst its neighbours for not being quite so smart as they were. So when Johnny Coe met Fred Bramley he gave him this admonition: " Now, look here, Fred. Tha' knaws they're an ignorant lot at Wibsey, so don't be trying any of that scientific Socialism. We want no Karl Marx and surplus values and that sort of stuff. Make it plain and simple. Tha' can put in a long word now and then so as to make them think tha' knaws a lot, but keep it simple, and then when tha'rt coming to t' finishing up tha' mun put a bit of * Come to Jesus ' in like Philip does." That was Johnny's way of describing my perorations.

I had, as I have said, ten years of this continuous propaganda work before I entered Parliament. When I look back on these years and recall the hardships I endured I marvel how I stood it. I walked with difficulty, with the aid of a stick, every step a deliberate effort, carrying my bag in the other hand. I made all the journeys alone. I spoke in practically every large town in Great Britain, in most of them very often, and in hundreds of smaller towns and villages. I often had to travel long distances between meetings, and frequently was unable to get food between breakfast-time and evening, except sometimes a railway refreshment cup of tea and a sandwich. Cabs were a luxury we seldom could afford, and I usually had to walk considerable distances to and from the meetings.

In later years I did my propaganda under more comfortable conditions. My meetings then brought a financial profit to the branches, and they could afford to pay me more liberal expenses.

It was the usual thing for our meetings in summer to be held in the open air. I liked speaking in the open air. If a speaker has knowledge of how to use his voice open-air speaking is a healthy exercise. During each summer I addressed on an average five meetings a week, and I went through the season without the slightest hoarseness or voice strain. The secret is in never shouting, always keeping the voice under control, and especially making a pause of a few seconds between each sentence. I have known many of our open-air speakers who have completely ruined their voices by not practising these little arts. From my experience of years of open-air speaking I would like to pay a compliment to the English summer. I don't think that in ten years I had to abandon half a dozen meetings through rain. Often, of course, there was rain, but seldom enough to prevent the meeting from being held.

Open-air speaking requires a different style and technique from indoor meetings. Outside, you must be more familiar with the audience, more conversational, not so serious, and must introduce more jokes and funny stories. Inside, you can argue, present a complete case. You know that your audience has come to hear you, whereas in the open air you have largely a scratch crowd which has to be held by arousing and keeping their interest. I always tried to adapt my addresses to the type of audience and to the local conditions. When breaking new ground for Socialism I followed Johnny Coe's advice and made it plain and simple. When speaking in towns where a lot of Socialist propaganda had been done, I dealt with special aspects of the subject,

such as " The Evolution of Socialism", " Socialism and the Individual", "The Land Question ", "The Moral Basis of Socialism ", " How Socialism can be Established ". I always encouraged questions at the end of the address, and often found, as the chairman put it, that this was the most interesting part of the meeting. There never was any interruption at my Socialist meetings, and the audiences were invariably of the " enquiring mind " type.

I combined my propaganda meetings during part of this time with work on local governing bodies. I had very early been elected a member of the Cowling Parish Council and School Board. There was not much to be done in a small country parish, but I made the work a little more interesting by acting as Honorary Secretary to the Parish Council. This particular service was much appreciated by the ratepayers because it saved them *£10* a year. About 1899 the members of the Keighley Labour Party were anxious that I should come to live in Keighley in order to contest seats for the Town Council and the School Board, but mainly to act as editor of a local Labour paper they were running. My mother and I, therefore, removed to Keighley. I stood for the Town Council and the School Board at the first opportunity, and was elected to both positions. I enjoyed this work very much, and I often thought, after I got into Parliament and saw how few were the opportunities of a private member to do any practical work, that service on a local governing body was more useful than very largely wasting one's time walking through the Division Lobby at the behest of a Party Whip.

I had some rather interesting experiences in connection with my running the Labour Party's weekly journal. I may say that I undertook this work for the

handsome remuneration of 8s. a week, which was paid very indifferently. The paper had a circulation of about 5000 copies a week. I wrote practically all the matter myself, so it kept me fairly well occupied between my lecture engagements. I hope there is no file of this journal in existence apart from my own, for I am sure that a good deal of the matter I wrote was more entertaining than instructive. I was in the habit of writing reports of the meetings of the local bodies in a somewhat satirical vein. On one occasion at a meeting of the Town Council I attended, the Mayor, in reply to some aspersions that had been cast upon his accuracy, appealed to any man in the Council who had known him from childhood to say if he had ever told a lie. I felt that plain prose was not capable of doing justice to this modern George Washington, so, for the first time in my life, I burst into poetry, and wrote a poem on " The Man who Never told a Lie ". It created quite a sensation; and the Mayor died shortly after.

My constant lecturing had made me well known in the I.L.P., and in 1898 I was elected to the National Administrative Council. This began over twenty years' official connection with the Party. During the greater part of my membership of the Council the National Treasurer was Mr. T. D. Benson. Mr. Benson was a Manchester estate agent, and had been brought into the Socialist movement through his knowledge of the deplorable housing conditions in the city. He was of a retiring disposition, and no public speaker. I think we first appointed him Treasurer because we thought he would be useful to guarantee bank overdrafts, a convenience the Council often needed. But we learnt to value him for his high character and useful advice. He was one of those men which movements somehow find, who do invaluable work which never receives public

recognition because it is rendered unostentatiously. In those early days the income of the Head Office was not £500 a year. It was a constant source of anxiety to the Council how to make ends meet, and we were greatly restricted in our efforts to extend our activities. The members of the National Council received only their bare expenses. There was a Standing Order that we were to charge 2s. 6d. per meeting for incidental expenses, but no member ever imposed this burden on the Party funds. It was by sacrifices that the movement existed in those days, and not by the mythical Tory gold of which we had heard so much.

CHAPTER IV

The Formation of the Labour Party

IT had always been the aim of Keir Hardie to form the Trade Unions into an independent political Party in alliance with other democratic bodies. As far back as 1887 he raised this question at the Trade Union Congress. He was known then as a Socialist firebrand, and the Congress gave him little support. The Socialists then organised to capture the Congress, and the next year they nearly carried a motion refusing electoral support to any but Socialist candidates. The following year a motion by the Social Democrats was actually carried by a big majority, pledging the Congress to give support only to candidates who stood for the collective ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. I well remember the sensation the passing of this resolution made throughout the country. The Socialists thought they had captured the Trade Unions, and the plutocrats believed that the Social Revolution was at hand.

It all came to nothing. It was an illustration of the practical worthlessness of Conference resolutions passed by engineering a vote which has not behind it the support of rank-and-file opinion. How often have I seen this happen. My experience of Conferences has taught me to attach very little importance to their resolutions. Of the hundreds of resolutions I have seen passed by Labour Conferences outlining a drastic programme of reform, I can hardly call to mind one which has had any practical

result. Conferences will talk; let them talk. Governments, including Labour Governments, dispose of Conference resolutions. There is all the difference in the world between the licence and irresponsibility of a Conference and the position of a Government which has to face practical difficulties and knows that no Government can move far ahead of public opinion. Nobody knows that better than members of the Labour Cabinets. The rank and file of the Labour Party ought to have learnt that lesson by now. They have had enough experience of the futility of Conference resolutions. Every four years the Party is presented with a new programme, while not one item in the old one has been carried into effect. We had the New Social Order, Labour and the Nation, and we are now being presented piecemeal, with another more revolutionary than the last.

Let me now return to the Trade Union Congress resolutions, which have induced these reflections on programmes in general. Keir Hardie had always regarded the I.L.P. as preparing the way for his aim of a political union of Socialists and the Trade Unions. From the formation of the I.L.P. in 1893 he had worked quietly to that end. The young and active members of the Trade Unions had become Socialists, and they were working in the Trade Union branches with the same object. By 1899 the time was considered ripe to test the Trade Union Congress on this issue. Accordingly the following resolution was put down on the Agenda of the Congress in the name of the Railway Servants Union. It is no secret now that the resolution was drafted by Keir Hardie. I quote it in full as a historic declaration:

> " That this Congress, having regard to the decisions of former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the

co-operation of all Co-operative, Socialistic, Trade Union and other working-class organisations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon in convening a special Congress of representatives from such of the above-named organisations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labour Members in the next Parliament."

This resolution was carried by 546,000 votes to 434,000 against. The majority was small. The opposition realised that this question of Labour representation was now a practical issue. It will be noted that the terms of the resolution did not mention a separate Labour Party. It left that vaguely indefinite. But the delegates knew what was behind it. The real opposition, however, was to the operative part which instructed the Committee of the Congress to seek the co-operation of all Socialist, Co-operative, Trade Union, and other working-class organisations. The Trade Union Congress has always been an exclusive body, jealous of encroachments upon what it considers its own sphere, but always ready to encroach upon the provinces of other organisations. It was never more so than it is today. There is no political question upon which it does not feel required to express its views. This has been a bone of contention between the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party ever since the Labour Party was formed. Attempts have been made to divide the functions of the two bodies without success. The Labour Party is not likely to quarrel with the Trades Union Congress so long as the income of the Labour Party is derived from the Trade Unions.

In accordance with the instructions of the Congress the Conference was called, and it met at the Memorial Hall, London, on the 27th February 1900. The Co-operative Union did not attend, as they had no mandate

from the Societies to take part in a political conference. The three Socialist societies—the I.L.P., the Fabians and the Social Democratic Federation were represented. The Trade Unions had 500,000 members represented, which was but a small proportion of the total Trade Union membership.

I was present at the Conference representing the I.L.P. Other I.L.P. delegates were Keir Hardie, J. Ramsay MacDonald, F. W. Jowett and J. Burgess. This was the first time I had come in contact with the Trade Union leaders. They struck me as being a very common-sense lot, probably quite competent at their own job, but hardly the kind of men you w6uld expect to find at the barricades when the Social Revolution came. Among the platform men was big, genial Will Thorne, whose intervention in the debates I remember chiefly because of a remark he made, that they only kept men in the Unions by putting the screw upon them.

I met John Burns for the first time at this Conference. He was a delegate of the Engineers' Society. By this time Burns had become quite a respectable politician. He was living down his Socialist and Trafalgar Square reputation. His relations with the Socialists were very bitter, and his denunciations of the movement for an independent Labour Party lacked nothing of the vigour which he could command. He was soon on his feet. A resolution had been moved that " the Conference was in favour of the working classes being represented in the House of Commons by members of the working classes as being most likely to be sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour Movement". To this an amendment was moved by Mr. George Barnes of the Engineers' Society to the effect that the Conference was in favour of working-class opinion being represented in Parliament by men sympathetic with the aims of

the Labour Movement and whose candidatures were promoted by one of the bodies included in the organisation about to be formed.

John Burns made a forceful protest against the narrow and exclusive proposal that working men only could represent the working classes. He was " getting tired of working-class boots, working-class trains, working-class houses and working-class margarine. The Labour and Social Movement should not be prisoners to class prejudice, but should consider parties and policies apart from class organisations ". There was a good deal of sound sense in these observations, and the Conference emphatically rejected the proposal that only working men should be regarded as competent to represent the working class.

An attempt was made by the Social Democrats to commit the Conference to a declaration that the new Party should be based on the recognition of the class war, with Socialism as its ultimate aim. This was an illustration of the tactlessness of the Social Democrats, which explained the reason for the failure of their propaganda to make any impression on public opinion. At this stage to commit the Trade Unions to an extreme Socialist programme would have made the co-operation of the bodies represented at the Conference impossible. Keir Hardie, with a true appreciation of the situation, and of the importance of carrying the Trade Unions by stages to the ultimate goal, moved on behalf of the I.L.P. an amendment to the effect that the Conference " approve the formation of a distinct Labour Group in Parliament whose policy must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any Party engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interests of Labour, and an equal readiness to oppose any Party promoting legislation of an opposite tendency ". Keir Hardie's amendment was passed

unanimously, but not before John Burns had intervened to tell the Conference that such a group of Labour members as it was proposed to form already existed. " They had not calledj themselves Independent, they had not worn Trilby hats and red ties, but they had done the work."

It was decided that the name of the new organisation should be The Labour Representation Committee. An Executive of twelve was appointed, seven representing the Trade Unions, two the I.L.P., two the Social Democratic, and one the Fabian Society. The large representation of the Socialist bodies was an unexpected act of generosity on the part of the 'Trade Unions, who had a membership of over half a million represented at the Conference compared with only twenty-three thousand membership of the three Socialist Societies.

The Socialists received further recognition by the appointment of Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald as Secretary. There was no Trade Union nominee for the position. Mr. MacDonald's appointment came as a surprise. At that time he was little known. It has been said that he was elected under a misapprehension. The Secretary of the London Trades Council at the time was a Mr. James MacDonald, a well-known Trade Unionist and Socialist. The story went the rounds that the delegates had voted for Mr. James Ramsay MacDonald under the impression they were voting for Mr. James MacDonald of the London Trades Council. I do not think there was anything in the story. I remember the circumstances very well. There was no interest in the election. In fact the post went a-begging, two other persons having refused it before Mr. MacDonald was nominated. The Conference did not realise the importance of the position in the hands of an energetic man. It considered the post as merely a clerical one. Mr. MacDonald did not so

regard it. He saw the possibilities of the new movement, and set to work to organise it. He freely gave his time and energy to the work. He had one great advantage. An ordinary Trade Unionist would never have made a success of the task. He would have been looked upon by his fellow Trade Unionists as one of themselves, and would have been treated by them with that lack of respect which equals show to one another. But Mr. MacDonald was not one of themselves. They regarded him as a superior person and their " inferiority complex " treated him as such.

What did this Conference actually accomplish? It agreed that it was desirable to set up a Central Committee to which Trade Unions and Socialist Societies could affiliate. It was not intended that this Committee should itself promote Parliamentary candidatures. That was left to the separate organisations affiliated to the Committee, who would be responsible for the election expenses and for the support of the candidate if elected. The Committee should endorse the candidatures thus promoted. The members elected should agree to join a Labour Group in Parliament for the purposes stated in the resolution already quoted. The Committee was to be financed by the payment of an annual subscription of ios. per thousand members of the societies affiliating. It will be seen that at this time there was no idea of forming a Labour *Party.* The name of the new organisation and its declared purpose show that to be the case. The far-sighted promoters of this new body hoped that a Labour *Party* would grow out of this timid beginning, but the rank and file of the Trade Unions, and more particularly the leaders, needed a lot of political education before they grasped that possibility.

The new movement did not begin auspiciously. At the end of the first year only 40 Trade Unions out of

about 1200 then existing had affiliated, with a membership of 353,000. The three Socialist bodies had joined up. The great organisations of the miners and the textile workers stood aloof, looking on the new movement with suspicion and regarding it with undisguised hostility. The first Annual Conference was held in Manchester in February 1901, and I well remember the feeling of despondency which prevailed. It looked as if this new effort was going to share the fate of previous attempts to secure the direct representation of Labour.

During the previous year (1900) a General Election had taken place. It came before the new Committee had had time to get into its work. The I.L.P. had nine candidates in the field, and the Trade Unions four. Of these only two were successful—Keir Hardie at Merthyr and Mr. Richard Bell at Derby. The votes of the I.L.P. candidates showed a remarkable advance over those reached at the previous General Election in 1895, the average vote being 4030 compared with 1572.

The large vote polled by the I.L.P. candidates is all the more striking when it is remembered that the General Election was fought during the Boer War. That shameful episode in our history has been driven out of memory by the infinitely more awful tragedy of the Great War. The I.L.P. was the backbone of the opposition to the Boer War. It incurred the treatment which is always meted out to those who take the unpopular side when passions are excited. I think the Jingo spirit was more rampant at this time than during the Great War. Meetings, public and private, were broken up; peace advocates assaulted and their houses and business premises wrecked; editors of Liberal newspapers who deemed it their duty to oppose the war were dismissed; Christian ministers were hounded from their pulpits for daring to affirm that Christianity and a war of aggression

were incompatible. It was a pathetic thing to see a great nation in such a state of terror because a small State of farmers was gallantly defending its independence against the might of the British Empire. It was in such a national temper as this that the General Election of 1900 was held.

Keir Hardie was again the solitary independent Labour member of the new Parliament. He used to describe himself as the United Labour Party. His return raised a financial problem for the National Council of the L.L.P. There was no payment of members from the National Exchequer in those days. Hardie had no Trade Union behind him, and the newly formed Labour Representative Committee had no funds. The National Council of the L.L.P. set to work to raise by a private appeal a sum of £150 a year towards his support. Dr. John Clifford heard of our effort, and approached some of his friends, and with his help we raised the required sum.

Hardie had no private means. He was running *The Labour Leader,* but that was a burden rather than a source of income. I have a letter from him written to me at this time in which he puts his financial position frankly before me. He paid fourteen shillings a week for rooms in London, his food and other expenses he put at a pound a week, secretarial help and postage cost him fifteen shillings. In addition he had to provide for his home in Scotland, and for clothing and railways fares. To meet these necessary expenses, which his £150 allowance was far short of meeting, he was obliged to take meetings at week-ends and almost nightly during the Parliamentary recess. These were the circumstances of the first Independent Labour M.P.

CHAPTER V

My First Parliamentary Contest

IT was at this General Election of 1900 that I first became a Parliamentary candidate. The National Council of the I.L.P. were anxious that I should contest a constituency where there seemed to be a reasonable chance of success. So they got in contact with the local branch in Blackburn, which on the face of things seemed to be one of the most hopeless constituencies in the country. I was well known to the members of the party in Blackburn, where I had frequently addressed meetings on the Market Square. There was also a branch of the Social Democratic Federation in the town. Both branches of the Socialist parties accepted the offer of my candidature with enthusiasm, and I was unanimously adopted as the Socialist candidate in July preceding the Election.

There was no electoral organisation in the borough, but the Socialists had obtained some success in contesting the local elections, and they had at that time four representatives on the Town Council. The constituency had the reputation of being invincibly Conservative. It was a two-member constituency, and had never returned a Liberal member except once some twenty years before; and the success of the Liberal candidate on that occasion—he was a local man—was not due to his politics, but to the fact that his dog had just before the Election won the Waterloo Cup!

John Morley, a Blackburn man, had been rejected by the constituency in 1869. At the time of my entry into

the field the prospect of making a successful inroad into the Tory predominance was so hopeless that the Liberals had given up the fight. It was in this unpromising field that I made my first effort to enter the House of Commons. I was adopted in July 1900, when it appeared that the General Election would not long be delayed. I waited until the holiday season was over before appearing in the constituency in the capacity of Parliamentary candidate.

On the 10th September I held my first Election meeting. At that time Mr. A. G. Gardiner, the well-known journalist who later became editor of the *Daily News,* was on the staff of the Blackburn Liberal Newspaper. Mr. Gardiner wrote up my election campaign for his paper; and, in order to protect myself against the charge of immodesty, I am going to call upon Mr. Gardiner very largely to describe this extraordinary Election. Mr. Gardiner has given a brief but graphic account of it in his book of character sketches entitled *Prophets, Priests and Kings.* My adoption meeting was held in the largest hall in the town. It was crowded and unanimous. Describing this meeting Mr. Gardiner wrote: "A remarkable impression was made by the Socialist candidate for Blackburn at his first meeting. Mr. Snowden, whether one agrees with him or not, is a man who cannot be ignored. He spoke for an hour and a half without note or pause, and the speech merely as an oratorical triumph was the best deliverance heard in Blackburn for a long time past. It is not probable that he will enter Parliament as the representative of Blackburn, for Blackburn does not like strong meat, but that he will be heard up at Westminster is highly probable/'

The Election came within a fortnight, and I at once began my campaign by addressing ward meetings. The impression made by my first meeting had spread throughout the borough, and from the beginning of the campaign

my meetings were crowded and enthusiastic. The two sitting members for the constituency were both local men, and one of them—Sir Harry Hornby—was a member of a family which for long had been popular in the borough. Neither of these gentlemen had made any impression on the House of Commons, Sir Harry, I believe, never having so much as asked a question. But that did not detract from their popularity in a borough where local connections were of more importance than political knowledge.

As the contest proceeded the enthusiasm and the excitement increased. Near the end of the campaign Mr. Gardiner wrote:

" Whatever be the result of the present Election, the Snowden campaign will remain one of the most memorable events in the history of Blackburn. I can compare it to nothing but those tides of spiritual revivalism that periodically sweep over the land touching the emotions of the multitude to an ecstasy that is as poignant as it is unfortunately shortlived. Mr. Snowden's campaign has touched the lost chord in the heart of Blackburn, and the people have responded to the touch with unbounded enthusiasm to which in my experience neither here nor elsewhere offers any parallel. It is as though the sleepers had awakened, as though a new heaven and a new earth have dawned upon them, as though a great light has burst upon them, dazzling and blinding them. They crowd to Snowden's meetings, not as to a political gathering, but as to a revivalist mission. They tread lightly, sit mute, almost transfixed, rarely applaud until the close, when the enthusiasm breaks forth. They seem entranced like men silenced by the impact of great truths. Ridiculous, you say. Perhaps. And yet there is that about this gathering that refutes the sneer of the cynic. Never in the history of Blackburn has there been such a succession of political meetings, night after night, meetings crowded to the doors and overflowing with men not loafers, not rag and bobtail, but sober, serious men from mill and workshop, forge and warehouse. They are the most significant gatherings I have ever witnessed. They have filled

me with the sense of the gigantic power **that** lies dormant in these silent thousands. What is the secret of this new phenomenon? A month ago Philip Snowden's name was practically unknown in Blackburn. It is Philip Snowden. I went to hear him for the second time on Tuesday night. In the meantime the snowball of his popularity had assumed gigantic proportions. The tale of his wondrous meetings, of the crowds that were present and of the crowds that were turned away, and of the speeches that he made and the enthusiasm they raised, had become the staple of conversation. In the light of developed events I went to take a second inventory of Philip Snowden, and my first impression was emphasised. I have said that Snowden's only stock-in-trade is himself. He has all the qualities that move great bodies of men. Personal magnetism, idealism, conviction, and a strong foundation of practical common sense. There is a further factor that is largely, perhaps chiefly responsible for the extraordinary influence that Mr. Snowden exercises. It is what I venture to call the spiritual quality of the man. He has touched politics with morality, and morality with religion, and has raised the whole subject to a plane above the normal littleness and screeching of Party warfare. Nor is there the faintest trace of portentousness or unreality in this. It rather permeates his speech than intrudes itself in definite phrase. It may be that Philip Snowden is only the comet of the season, a meteor flashing across the dark sky of Blackburn Toryism, but for the moment he is the most striking personality in Blackburn."

As the Election campaign went on, the hope with which we started of polling a moderately good vote gave place to a feeling that a miracle might happen, and we might be successful. Our meetings had shaken Toryism to its very foundations. By way of encouraging the Tory candidates, a speaker at one of their meetings said: " The Tory candidates would each receive 10,000 votes, and Mr. Philip Snowden perhaps 500." This immediately incited the audience to ridicule, and moved Sir Harry Hornby to jump up and declare: " Mr. Snowden will

poll thousands of votes, and if we are over-confident we shall be beaten."

We had not, as I have said, any electoral organisation, but voluntary workers flocked to the committee rooms. The Tories, on the other hand, had one of the best organisations in Lancashire. They relied for success on the local popularity of their candidates, and certainly not upon their public meetings, which were very thinly attended. The appeals they made to the electors were not on political but on local grounds.

The following is a copy of an election bill widely posted on the hoardings: "Vote *(ox* men who have known you all their lifetime, and have contributed to almost everything in the town, from the boys' football and cricket clubs to bazaars of all denominations, and not for a youth of the romancing socialist type." A short time before this Election the two members had issued a statement regretting their inability to make any further contributions that year to football and cricket clubs and the like as they had contributed to 900 bodies within twelve months!

" The Liberals did not put forward a candidate. The local Liberal paper gave me strong support. The Liberals in the main supported my candidature, though not officially. There was no alliance between ourselves and the Liberals, though the absence of a Liberal candidate tended to identify my candidature with that Party. I made it quite clear during the contest that I was in no sense the candidate or the nominee of the Liberal Party. I appreciated support from all parties, but I wanted the support only of men who believed in me and would generally agree with me. If returned I should owe no allegiance to the Liberal Party. If I went to Parliament I should go independent of Liberal Party or Tory Party. I should go to champion the principles in which

I believed against opposition from whatever quarter it came.

I did no personal canvassing during the Election. I never in all the elections I have fought, ever made a personal appeal to a voter to give me his vote. There came to my knowledge from our own canvassers a number of amusing experiences they encountered. A canvasser was trying to get the vote of a stubborn Tory. He would only repeat: " It's no use talking to me. I shall not vote for him." They had a parrot in the room, and after a repetition of this remark the parrot said: " Yah, do!" The wife turned round to her husband and said: "Just harken to t' parrot. It's more sense than tha' has!" An elector who was visited by one of our canvassers said: " Ah, lad, that's t' chap I'm going to vote for," when his missus said: " Tha'rt doin' nowt o' t' sort! Thou were born a Tory, and thou'rt to stop a Tory." The man replied to the canvasser: " Tak' noa notice o' her. She doesn't know what she's talking about."

It had been the practice in previous elections for the Tory Party on the morning of the poll to cover the hoardings with two dialect placards. One ran " Voat for t' two owd 'uns," and the other " Voat for t' owd gam' cock ". This had a reference to the father of Sir Harry Hornby who was familiarly called " t' owd gam' cock ". Knowing that these appeals would be forthcoming, we were ready with our reply, which appeared on the hoardings simultaneously. It ran: " We want a gam' cock thad con feight. Snowden con! He's all reight! " Small incidents of this sort tend to enliven the proceedings of an election contest.

There had been during the campaign a good deal of misrepresentation of Socialism carried from door to door, and on the morning of the poll the Tories came

out with a handbill "Down with Atheism, Socialism and Anarchy!" The opinion was expressed by an experienced canvasser that the canvass had not got me a single vote. "The support given to Mr. Snowden has been won by his own efforts. With another month he would have won another iooo votes, and on a new register a good deal more." It may be pointed out that this Election was fought on an old register, and this had been very much to our disadvantage as we had no machinery for tracing voters who had removed.

The result of the polling was as follows: Hornby (C), 11,247; Coddington (C), 9415; Snowden (Soc), 7095. The vote polled for the Socialist candidate staggered the Conservatives. The much larger vote polled by Sir Harry Hornby than by his Conservative colleague Sir William Coddington is explained by Sir Harry's personal popularity. No less than 1700 votes were split between Hornby and myself. I had 5335 plumpers.

My vote was by far the largest which up to that time had been polled by a Socialist candidate in Great Britain. It is interesting to note that of the 700 members returned at this Election only 16 polled a higher vote than mine. The Election cost us £366, of which £166 was for the Returning Officer's charges. When I went before a local magistrate, who had been a Parliamentary candidate for the borough, to swear my return of expenditure, he said: "This is the first time in the history of Blackburn that a truthful declaration has been signed by a candidate."

I had carried the whole platform campaign on my own shoulders. I have never felt the strain of electioneering. I have gone through a month's campaign, speaking at two or three meetings every night, and come out of it as fresh at the end as at the beginning. I attribute this to long experience of public speaking, and to the knowledge of how to use my voice. But even more perhaps to the

fact that I never had the exhausting task of preparing speeches. I always trusted to the inspiration of the moment, drawing from the stock of accumulated material, and to matters that always arise in the course of a campaign. My long training as a propagandist had made me expert in handling public meetings and in dealing with the hecklers.

My Election campaign in Blackburn, and its striking result, increased the calls upon me for public meetings, and the next six years, up to the Election of 1906, I spent in propaganda. We were now getting large meetings everywhere, and interest in the Labour movement was rapidly growing. Mr. MacDonald was unceasing in his activities to get the Trade Unions to affiliate to the Labour Representation Committee, attending local conferences in all parts of the country for that purpose. The affiliated membership of the Committee would not, however, have grown as rapidly as it did in the next few years, but for an incident which caused great excitement in the Trade Union ranks. In 1902 the Courts decided in the famous TafF Vale case that Trade Union funds were liable for certain actions of individual members committed in pursuance of a trade dispute. This was a momentous decision. It deprived Trade Unions of a protection they had enjoyed for thirty years. In effect this decision meant that it would be impossible to conduct a strike without exposing the funds of the unions to legal confiscation. This incident provided effective propaganda for Labour representation. In a year the affiliated membership of the Labour Representation Committee doubled, reaching nearly the million figure.

During 1902-3 three by-elections took place which greatly improved the position of the movement. The

elevation of the sitting member to the peerage created a by-election in the Clitheroe Division of Lancashire. This was a constituency in which I was very well known. The chief town in the constituency was Nelson, a place where I had lived for some years. The parish of Cowling bordered on the constituency. I had spent a considerable time lecturing in the district, not only for the Labour Party, but also for the Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies. When a vacancy occurred, and it was decided to contest the seat, mine was the only name mentioned, not only by the Socialist Party, but by the leaders of the local Trade Union movement. Two or three local branches of the textile union in the division were already affiliated to the L.R.C. They were very favourably disposed towards my candidature. The National Council of the I.L.P. met to consider the circumstances. The great body of textile workers in Lancashire still stood aloof from the L.R.C. The Council considered that here was a favourable opportunity for the I.L.P. to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards the textile unions, who formed the large majority of electors in the constituency. In the event of the Trade Unionists deciding to put forward a nominee for the vacancy, we decided that my nomination should be withdrawn to allow the adoption unanimously of the Trade Union nominee.

The Trade Unions decided to put forward Mr. David Shackleton, Secretary of the Darwen Weavers' Association. Mr. Shackleton was a Liberal, who had never been identified with the political Labour movement. His adoption as a candidate was approved by a Divisional Conference of Trade Unionists and Socialists. An interesting situation then developed. The constituency hitherto had been overwhelmingly Liberal. The adoption of Mr. Shackleton by the Labour Association created a difficulty for the Liberals. It was realised that a Labour

candidate put forward by the Trade Unionists would attract a large mass of voters who had hitherto supported a Liberal candidate. The Tories were quietly watching developments, realising that if the vote were split between Mr. Shackleton and a Liberal the Tories would stand a good chance of snatching the seat. The Liberals, however, decided to contest the seat, and they approached a number of well-known gentlemen. Up to the day of nomination the Liberals were looking out for a candidate, but owing to the support the Labour candidate had got it was impossible to induce anyone to come forward in the Liberal interest. In the circumstances Mr. Shackleton had a walk over, and thus was effected one of the greatest triumphs which Labour had so far secured.

The action of the I.L.P. in this Election was more than justified by the outcome. It secured the unopposed return of a Labour candidate; it brought the whole of the textile workers into the L.R.C.; and the Labour Group in the House of Commons obtained the addition to their small numbers of a fellow-member of outstanding capacity. Mr. Shackleton was a fine type of a working-class representative. He was a man of striking appearance, of sound common sense, and he proved himself to be one of the most useful members the Labour Party has had in the House of Commons. He quickly made a position for himself in Parliament, and won in a remarkable degree the esteem and confidence of all Parties. As an amusing incident, I may mention that when the question of half-time labour was annually discussed at the Trade Union Congress, and after speeches had been made about the deplorable physical effects of child labour in factories, Mr. Shackleton—who stood over six feet and was built in proportion—would rise and say: " Here you have a specimen of the effects of the half-time system. I began to work in a

factory at eight years of age." Although Mr. Shackleton himself was opposed to the half-time system he had to represent the views of the textile unions, which at that time were opposed to the raising of the age.

The striking electoral victory at Clitheroe was followed next year by successes at two by-elections at Woolwich and Barnard Castle. Mr. Will Crooks was selected to contest the by-election at Woolwich, which he won by converting a previous Tory majority of 2800 into a Labour majority of 3200. Will Crooks, up to that time, had not been well known in the Labour movement outside London, where he had corifined his activities to the Poplar Borough Council and the London County Council. After this Election he began to be much sought after as a platform speaker. Will Crooks was inimitable. We have never had anyone like him in the Labour movement. His speeches were a curious combination of pathos and humour. No matter how often you had previously heard his funny stories, they always came with a freshness that sent the meetings into convulsions of laughter. He never concerned himself with the work that occupied Labour Conferences. I do not remember that he ever attended one; but he was content to do his work on the Poplar Borough and the London County Council, and in the House of Commons. He never troubled about Labour programmes. He was satisfied to be doing the work which lay immediately to his hand.

Six months after this victory at Woolwich a vacancy occurred in the Barnard Castle Division of Durham, which gave Labour its first victory in a three-cornered contest. A few months before Mr. Arthur Henderson had been selected as one of the Parliamentary candidates of the Iron Founders Society, of which he was a member. For some years he had been the Liberal agent in the

Barnard Castle Division, and when the vacancy occurred he came forward to fight it on behalf of Labour. He had the advantage of knowing the constituency thoroughly and of being perfectly familiar with its organisation.

A few weeks before, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had launched his Tariff Reform campaign. The Liberal candidate was somewhat equivocal on this question, but Mr. Henderson made opposition to it the chief topic of his campaign. I was speaking to Sir Charles Stamer just before his death. He owned and ran the only daily Liberal newspaper circulating in the constituency. When the Liberals failed to come forward with an emphatic opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals Mr. Charles Stamer (as he was then) threw the whole weight and influence of his paper on the side of Mr. Henderson, very much to the discomfiture of the Liberals. Mr. Henderson came out at the top of the poll with a majority of 47 over the Unionist candidate and 561 votes ahead of the Liberal. This victory naturally gave a great impetus to the Labour movement. The L.R.C. members of Parliament now numbered five—an increase of three on the number returned at the General Election of 1900.

I now turn back to 1902 to describe a by-election contest in which I took part in Wakefield. This was one of those fights which the I.L.P. had to undertake, not with any hope of winning the seat, but for the purpose of propaganda. At the previous General Election the Conservative candidate had been returned unopposed. There seemed a likelihood that this would happen again, for the Liberal Party in the constituency was in a parlous condition. The National Council of the I.L.P. met to consider the situation, and decided to run a candidate. We had no branch of the Party in the constituency, and

did not know of a single supporter of ours in the whole of Wakefield. My Council colleagues urged upon me to be the standard-bearer of Socialism. I undertook the job, regarding it as part of the general propaganda work upon which I was engaged. Keir Hardie went down to the constituency to look into the situation. He brought back a dismal report. He had not been able to get into touch with a single sympathiser in the town. However, we were adventurous in those days. We sent one of our organisers; he engaged the largest hall in the borough, and I went down to address the meeting in the character of a prospective candidate. We had to import a chairman, and there was not a Wakefield man on the platform. The meeting, however, was crowded and very enthusiastic, and the motion inviting me to come forward as candidate was carried with one dissentient only.

If the Liberals had had any intention of putting forward a candidate they were placed in a difficulty when we jumped the pitch. They finally decided to leave the field clear for myself and the Tory candidate. The Tories selected a Mr. Brotherton, a local man, who afterwards became well known in Yorkshire for his munificent gifts to Leeds University and to local charities. He was a charming man personally—gentle, kind and generous. He knew nothing whatever about politics, and his platform appearances were described by a local newspaper, strongly opposing my candidature, as a gross exhibition of political ignorance. That they may have been, but they were certainly the most entertaining speeches I have ever had to deal with in a political contest.

At that time there were two matters rousing a good deal of public interest—one in connection with the purchase of remounts for the South African War, and the other, contracts for meat. A question was put to

my opponent at one of his meetings about the remounts and the meat scandals. He said he had seen something in the paper about this, but he did not understand it. He would look into the matter and give his answer at the next meeting. His carefully meditated reply is a gem. He said: " I presume that the question implies some grievance against the Government, and I stand here to declare that the present Government is the best of all Governments, and if anybody questions that, I say here that the complaints put before me have been grossly exaggerated. I have seen something about these complaints in the paper, but I have also seen statements explaining them all away. Some complaints have been made that the price of meat was too high; but if a man wants a nice piece of meat, so long as he gets what he likes, even if the price is a bit too high, you are not going to complain if you get the right stuff. And about these horses that went wrong. I wish they would give me the names of the horses that went wrong. I have not been given a single name. I had a horse that went wrong myself only a few days ago." I had a delightful time in dealing with Mr. Brotherton. I admitted that his demand for the names of the horses was a perfectly reasonable one. These horses must have had names, and we cannot admit complaints against anonymous remounts. I demanded to know the name of Mr. Brotherton's horse that had gone wrong before I would believe that a horse belonging to a respectable gentleman like Mr. Brotherton would behave itself in such a way.

Keir Hardie had a friend, a rich American soap manufacturer, who made soap which was well known at that time as " Fels-naptha " soap. Mr. Fels was an enthusiastic disciple of Mr. Henry George. He came down into the constituency to see an English Parliamentary Election fought. He was enthusiastic about my candidature,

and proposed to buy up all the hackney carriages in the city for my use on Election day. When I pointed out to him that we were not in America, and that such a proceeding would be a violation of the law, he demanded that I should allow him to do something which would be legal. So we compromised the matter by allowing him to buy for Election day a score of the most rickety old horses we could find in the city, and these were paraded through the streets on polling day, each bearing a placard " South African Remounts—My Name is Dobbin ", and so on.

A further incident in Mr. Fels' activities at this election may be mentioned as illustrating the millionaire's unwillingness to be duped over a business transaction. Motor-cars were something of a novelty in those days, and I allowed him to hire one for my personal use on the polling day. In the evening he asked if I had paid for the motor-car, and how much it was. I told him I had paid the man 50s. "Fifty shillings!" he said, "but I bargained for forty-five shillings." He returned to this swindle several times during the evening, and many weeks after, when I stayed with a doctor friend in Bradford who had hired the car, and I mentioned Mr. Fels* resentment at being overcharged, he said: "He has written to me five times about getting back that five shillings." This incident shows the curious mentality of a rich man. He was quite willing to hire every hackney carriage in Wakefield, but he was not willing to be overcharged five shillings!

This was the first Election where the support of the Liberal-Labour Members of Parliament was given to a Socialist candidate. I had personal letters of good wishes from all the Liberal-Labour Members of Parliament, including Thomas Burt, John Wilson of Durham, Mabon and John Burns.

The result of the Election was, of course, a foregone conclusion; but I polled much better than we had ever expected, the figures being—Brotherton (C.) 2960; Snowden (Soc), 1979.

My vote included a considerable proportion of Liberals, though it was admitted that many voted Tory. The work of this Election laid the foundations of a Labour Party in the city, and since then it has been represented on two or three occasions by a Labour member.

CHAPTER VI

My Return to Parliament

IN the spring of 1905 I was married. I was then forty years of age. I first met my wife at a Fabian meeting in Leeds. Our wedding took place at Otley-in-Wharfedale on the 13th March 1905. I don't think it ever occurred to either of us that we were tempting fate by being married on a " thirteenth ". At any rate our experience of thirty years of married life has proved that if there is any truth in the " thirteen " superstition there are exceptions to it.

We were married quietly and without advertisement, because it had come to our knowledge that the West Riding Socialists, who were expecting the wedding to take place, were preparing to turn it into a Socialist demonstration. There were present at the wedding my wife's sister, Miss Isabella and Miss Bessie Ford, my cousin and boyhood friend John A. Whitaker of Bradford, and my close Socialist comrade Fred Jowett. That day there began a married life which for thirty years has been a perfect partnership.

In May 1903 Mr. Joseph Chamberlain launched his fiscal proposals. The I.L.P. at once put forward statements explaining the Socialists' view of Free Trade and Protection. Mr. MacDonald wrote a shilling booklet, and I wrote a couple of penny pamphlets which had a large circulation. The I.L.P. branches threw themselves with energy into a campaign on this issue. In addition

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to turning the usual meetings into anti-tariff propaganda, the National Council organised large demonstrations in the principal towns of the country, which were addressed by Mr. MacDonald and myself. These meetings were very successful. The position we took up was that, while we were relentlessly opposed to Protection, we realised that Free Trade was not a remedy for social evils but a condition of industrial prosperity. At the next Annual Conference of the L.R.C. after the launching of Mr. Chamberlain's crusade, a resolution was submitted which stated the opposition of Labour to his proposals. The resolution was moved by me and seconded by Mr. Arthur Henderson and carried practically unanimously. In addition to expressing opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, the resolution set forth a constructive alternative policy for promoting industrial progress, including the nationalisation of land and railways.

At the Annual Conference of the I.L.P., held at York at Easter in 1903, I was unanimously elected National Chairman of the Party. I presided at the next year's Conference held at Cardiff. The chairmanship was an annual appointment, but there was an unwritten rule that the same person might hold the position for three years, subject to re-election by the Annual Conference. I served the full term of three years, when I returned to the position of an ordinary member of the Council. I earned the reputation of being rather an autocratic chairman from the firmness with which I ruled the Annual Conference. It required a strong hand to deal with some hundreds of delegates, most of whom were gifted with a capacity to talk on any topic for any length of time. The agenda of the Conference was crowded with resolutions on every conceivable subject. It was

only by curbing the loquacity of delegates that any progress could be made. There was at the Cardiff Conference a delegate from Huddersfield who was quite a character. When I cut short his speech on the ground of irrelevancy, he asked me if I called myself a democrat. When I answered in the affirmative, he retorted: " So then is the Czar of Russia! "

The whole of the propaganda for Labour representation in the first years of the L.R.C. fell upon the I.L.P. The L.R.C. had no local organisation for carrying on such work. It was not till some years later that machinery was created for propaganda by local Labour Parties. In the early years of the L.R.C. there was a good deal of opposition from the Trade Unions to the movement being identified with Socialism. When an attempt was made in the Annual Conference to commit the movement to a declaration of Socialism the I.L.P. leaders opposed the attempt as they did not consider the time was ripe. The Trade Unions had come into the movement, not as Socialists, but for the purpose of promoting Labour representation, and without defining a Labour programme. In order to prevent some L.R.C. candidates running as Socialists it was made a part of the constitution that all candidates, whether Socialists or not, who received the endorsement of the L.R.C. " should appear before the constituencies as Labour candidates only ".

It was not till the Conference at Liverpool in 1905 that a resolution was passed unanimously declaring " the ultimate object of the L.R.C. to be the overthrow of the present competitive system of Capitalism and the institution of a system of Public Ownership of all the means of Production, Distribution and Exchange ". The Socialist leaven had done its work in the L.R.C, and the new movement from this date became a Socialist Party. At

this Conference the important step was taken of changing the name from the Labour Representation Committee to the Labour Party. This change meant a great deal. The Labour group had now declared itself to be a Party.

I had attended all the Annual Conferences of the L.R.C. from its formation. I had seen the movement grow in membership and increase its influence in the Trade Unions, its conception of the purpose of Labour Representation expanding, but this Conference at Liverpool marked an advance in all these respects greater than any previous Conference had shown. The original idea of the L.R.C. did not go beyond the formation of a group of Labour members in the House of Commons, who would exercise an influence upon the Government on industrial legislation. The Trade Unions had not at the inception of the movement any idea of a Labour Party which would compete with the other political parties for supremacy in the House of Commons. The possibility of Labour becoming strong enough to form a Government did not then enter into the imagination of the Trade Unions. That, of course, had been in the mind of the Socialists from the formation of the L.R.C.

This wider view of the aim and possibilities of the movement was now shown in the fact that a far larger number of Labour candidates had been adopted to run at the next General Election, which could not now be very long delayed. At the previous Election fifteen candidates only had been run under the auspices of the Committee, but at the next Election in 1906 fifty candidates were put forward, out of whom twenty-nine were successful. The miners were still outside the Labour Party, but they returned twelve members at this Election under the old arrangement with the Liberals.

The majority of the Labour candidates returned at this Election had not to face opposition from the Liberals.

There was no arrangement between the Liberal and Labour Parties, but Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who was Chief Liberal Whip, used his influence in some constituencies to give the Labour candidate a straight fight with the Conservative.

The emergence from the Election of 1906 of an Independent Labour Party twenty-nine strong in the House of Commons caused the easy-going politicians of the old school, who had complacently imagined that politics would forever continue to be a game of ins and outs between the Liberals and Tories, to wake up and begin to take notice. Everybody was asking what it all meant, and what the new Labour Party would do. A Party which could win seats in industrial centres like Bradford and Glasgow against the nominees of both Liberals and Tories had clearly a future before it. Organised Labour had begun to realise its power, and was learning how to use it.

Shortly after the previous General Election I had been adopted again as candidate for Blackburn. In the interval I had paid a good deal of attention to the constituency, frequently addressing public meetings there. We had now got together a fairly efficient Party organisation, and we entered upon the contest with high hopes of success. Blackburn is a two-membered constituency, and on this occasion the Liberals decided to put forward a candidate. One of the old Tory members discreetly retired. The result of the previous Election had shown that in all probability he would be defeated if he ventured to appeal again to the constituency. The Tories selected Mr. Geoffrey Drage as their second candidate; the popular Sir Harry Hornby was again their first choice. There was no understanding or arrangement between

the Labour Party and the Liberals; but in the circumstances, with each voter having two votes and only one Liberal and one Labour candidate, a large number of voters divided their votes between the Liberal candidate and myself. The result of the Election was: Hornby (C), 10,291; Snowden (Lab.), 10,281; Drage (C), 8932; Hamer (Lib.), 8892. The explanation of the fact that I polled over 1000 votes more than the Liberal candidate is this. Blackburn had been in the past overwhelmingly Conservative, and the Labour Party had drawn its support very largely from Conservative working men. It was always taken for granted by the Liberals that the Labour Party drew its support only from men who had been Liberals. This was quite a mistake. Many of my most enthusiastic workers were men who had been active Conservatives. I had over 1500 plumpers at this Election, which represented Tory converts, who were not willing to vote for a Liberal. Sir Harry Hornby had 600 splits, which represented the votes of the Liberals, who in no circumstances would vote for a Socialist candidate.

To her own and my great regret my wife was prevented by illness from taking part in this Election. She had already become very popular in the constituency, and was a great attraction whenever she was announced to speak.

This Election, like the one I had previously fought in Blackburn, aroused great enthusiasm, but there was more liveliness on this occasion than at the former Election. The Tories realised that they were fighting for their very existence, and in consequence they imparted a good deal of bitterness into the contest. The old cry of " Socialism and Atheism " was raised, but I had been too long before the constituency for this to have any influence with the electors. The second Tory candidate, as I have mentioned, was Mr. Geoffrey Drage, who

had opposed Mr. Will Crooks at his first contest in Woolwich. Some years later a rather amusing incident occurred at a Labour meeting in Derby I was addressing with Mr. Will Crooks. Mr. Drage was at that time the Tory candidate for Derby, and the chairman, Mr. J. H. Thomas, made a reference to him: "We have beaten him once in Derby, and we will beat him again". Crooks interjected the remark: "And I beat him at Woolwich!" and then I remarked: "And I beat him in Blackburn!" Victors over Mr. Drage seemed to be well represented on that platform.

In those days the pollings at the General Election were spread over about ten days. The pollings in the boroughs were taken on two or three days. The counties followed quite leisurely. The results of the first elections had a considerable effect on the later ones. If the early elections went decidedly in favour of one Party, that considerable number of electors which liked to be on the winning side helped to swell the victories of the Party which appeared to be winning. This spreading out the Election gave the candidates who had been elected in the early days of the polling the opportunity to go to the assistance of candidates where the elections had still to take place. After my election at Blackburn I spent the next few days assisting Labour candidates where the polling had not taken place.

After I had finished helping candidates in their constituencies I paid a visit to my native village of Cowling, where my mother was again living. Somehow the news of my home-coming had reached the village before my arrival. I did not know what was afoot, but the driver of the bus from the railway station to the village four miles away behaved very suspiciously when I alighted from the train. He left his passengers in the bus and disappeared for some time, and it was only later that

I learnt that he had been to the post office to announce the fact that I was coming up by the bus. The result was that I was met by the local brass band, who played the usual " See the Conquering Hero Comes "; and I was taken to the Assembly Hall, where a packed audience was waiting. I had to give them an address, in which I recounted the changes which had taken place in the village from the days when the few Socialists were looked upon as hare-brained curiosities who wanted to pile up all the wealth of the country into a heap, and then distribute it share and share alike amongst everybody. The vicar of the parish, who was a Tory, offered the congratulations of the meeting to me, and proposed that the school children of my old school should be given a holiday to celebrate the return to Parliament of one of the old scholars.

The general result of this Election was an overwhelming victory for the Liberals. The country had had twenty years of unbroken Tory Government. The Tories had secured a large majority at the Election of 1900 on the Khaki issue, and had used it to carry legislation on questions they were under a pledge not to touch. After the Election of 1906 the Tories went back to the House of Commons with a mere remnant of their former strength. They numbered only 158 members in the new Parliament. The Election was a victory for Free Trade, and an overwhelming condemnation of Mr. Chamberlain's Tariff policy, but the enormous Liberal majority was due in the main to a feeling of disgust with the Tory Government. The Liberals had a majority of 270 over the Irish Nationalists, the Conservatives and the Labour Party.

Of the twenty-nine Labour members returned at the 1906 Election, six were nominees of the I.L.P., and of this number five were members of the National Council

of the Party. They were Keir Hardie, J. R. MacDonald, F. W. Jowett, James Parker and myself. The rest of the Labour members were nominees of the Trade Unions; but of the Trade Union members six had been for long active members of the I.L.P. Of the twenty-nine Labour members only four had previously been members of the House of Commons. These were Mr. Henderson, Mr. Shackleton, Mr. Crooks and Mr. Keir Hardie.

X]

PHILIP SNOWDEN IN *1906*,
On entering Parliament.

CHAPTER VII

First Impressions of Parliament

IT is difficult to recall my first impressions of Parliament after nearly thirty years, but I would like to set them down so far as I can remember them, subject to this reservation—that later experience has in some respects modified first impressions. Before my return I had only been in the House of Commons once or twice, and I was wholly ignorant of its ways and proceedings. The new Parliament was called together for the 13 th of February 1906. I went across to the House of Commons the day before Parliament was to meet and was taken in charge by Mr. Shackleton, who showed me round the building and introduced me to such old members as were about the place. The next day Parliament met for the election of the Speaker.

My first experience was very commonplace and unexciting, and when I really became a Member of Parliament I do not know. Neither have I any idea of what particular one of the several little formalities through which I went constituted me a qualified legislator. I know I went through a hard-contested election. I learnt from the newspapers that I had been successful. I had no credentials to show. At the opening of a new Parliament members are taken on trust. They assemble for the election of the new Speaker without having taken the Oath of Allegiance. If anyone of an audacious spirit who could not get through an election successfully is very anxious to have a few days' experience of the life

of a Member of Parliament, there is nothing to prevent him at the beginning of a new Parliament, except the fear of penalties he may invoke, from carrying out the experiment.

The first day of the sitting we crowded the benches, 670 members struggling for seats in a chamber which accommodates only half that number. This sitting is devoted to the election of a Speaker. The new Labour Party appropriated the two first benches below the gangway on the Opposition side. The Irish Party occupied the seats behind. The attenuated ranks of the Tory Party found ample accommodation on the benches above the gangway.

The re-election of Mr. Lowther as Speaker of the House was moved by Sir Wilfrid Lawson. His speech did not justify the reputation he had acquired as a wit. He spoke for only three minutes, read every word of his speech, jokes included. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new Prime Minister, in congratulating the Speaker on his election, betrayed a nervousness which was painful to see. Whether it was the emotion of his first effort as Prime Minister, or whether it was due to the terror with which the presence of the new Labour Party had filled him, I was unable to decide. After the election of the Speaker the House adjourned until next day. The next few days were occupied in the swearing-in of members. I took my place in a long queue of members, and eventually reached a table where I made a declaration of fealty to the Constitution, and wrote my name in a huge book.

I was then free until the following Tuesday, when the House formally met to hear the King's Speech. I used the interval to make myself acquainted with the geography of the House. I met one or two very old members of the House who claimed to know how to take the nearest

course from one part of the House to another, but the new members during the first week or two almost gave up hope of ever understanding the intricacies of the innumerable corridors and lobbies. In the course of time, however, we overcame these initial difficulties, and became well enough acquainted with the bearings of the place to act as guides to our constituents who came up to London and looked upon a visit to the Houses of Parliament as a necessary part of a visit.

The staff of the House of Commons were very much interested in the appearance of this strange phenomenon of a Labour Party. I daresay they thought the respectability of the place was in danger, or that some of the nice jobs there were about the House would soon disappear. The policemen were particularly friendly to the new Labour members. I discovered a number of Labour men among them, and we exchanged mutual confidences. One of them told me that he had been collecting the pictures of the new members which had appeared in the illustrated papers, and he produced from one of his capacious pockets a compact scrap-book into which he had pasted portraits arranged in alphabetical order. " There is a great change in this Parliament, Mr. Snowden ", another policeman remarked to me in the corridor the first day. " You know me then? " I answered. " Yes, sir. I've been looking for this time coming for many years. We police ain't expected to have politics, but I can talk to you, sir. Your Party's needed here." " They may need you for us before long ", I suggested. " Oh well, sir, if it comes to that, you will find that we shall carry you out very gently! "

In the smoke-room and in the inner lobby, in the corridors, wherever members congregated the topic of conversation was the new force in Parliament. The surprise and curiosity so evident in the country at the

return of the Labour members were manifest in the House of Commons too. There seemed to be a general feeling among members akin to that which one experiences before an impending great change. Old members confessed that they did not expect things to go on as before; that for weal or for woe we were beginning a new era in Parliamentary history. It was some weeks before I paid my first visit to the Members' dining-room, as I had been warned by an old member that the prices there were beyond the means of a Labour member. He accordingly put me in the way of obtaining refreshment in a very comfortable tea-room where a meal was beautifully served at the democratic price of one shilling. I may here anticipate developments by mentioning that prices in the dining-room were soon reduced, and a good luncheon or dinner was served for two shillings and sixpence.

Two days after the election of the Speaker by the Commons I was talking to John Burns in the inner lobby when we were startled by the shout: " Make way for the Speaker! " " Now you will have to look serious ", said the new President of the Local Government Board. But it was a sight not calculated to provoke solemnity. There came the impressive figure of the Mace Bearer, followed by the handsome and dignified Speaker, behind whom was the insignificant figure of the train-bearer holding up the long skirts of the Speaker. We stood with heads uncovered while the procession passed, and when we were able to speak again John Burns pressed us to follow into the House and hear the opening prayer, which he described as a most beautiful and touching supplication. We followed, and to almost empty benches a prayer was read that Divine wisdom would guide the deliberations of Parliament and that justice might govern all its actions.

A number of the Trade Union members had shocked their colleagues by appearing in what in those days was

regarded as the head gear of conventionality, namely a silk hat. One well-known Liberal, who had previously worn a silk hat, put on a soft hat, and when reproached for this exclaimed that he did not want to be taken for a Labour member!

The Parliamentary Labour Party met at the beginning of the session for the purpose of electing the officers of the Party. There was a keenly contested election between Keir Hardie and David Shackleton for the Chairmanship. It was expected that with the strong Trades Union element in the Party, an element which at this time had no wish to be identified with Socialism, Shackleton would easily be elected. It turned out, however, that Hardie was chosen by a majority of one. A number of Trade Union members must have voted for Hardie, and they had done so, no doubt, because they felt that his great services in building up the political Labour Party deserved recognition. Shackleton was appointed Deputy Chairman, MacDonald Secretary, and Arthur Henderson Chief Whip.

Hardie was not a success as chairman. Nobody recognised this more than himself. Speaking on this matter some years later, he said: " Nature never intended me to occupy an official position. I think I have shown you that I can be a pioneer, but I am not guided so much by a consideration of policy or by thinking out a long sequence of events as by intuition and inspiration. I know what I believe to be the right thing, and I can and will do it. If I had twenty-one years ago stopped to think what the future would bring I would not have dared to accept the responsibility of entering the House of Commons."

Hardie had not the accommodating spirit which is essential in a successful Parliamentary leader. The humdrum everyday work of the House of Commons was never to Hardie *s taste. During his chairmanship of the Party

he left the arrangement of business, which must necessarily be carried through by conversations with the Government Whip, largely to Mr. Henderson.

In those days the House of Commons met at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and went on until midnight, except for an interval of one and a half hours for dinner.

After the swearing-in of the members had been completed, the House met for business, and this gave me my first experience of Parliament as a Debating Chamber, and also introduced me to the new Ministers. The Government Front Bench in that Parliament was the ablest I have known in my Parliamentary career. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman looked the part of a Prime Minister. The other Ministers included such outstanding Parliamentary figures as Mr. Asquith, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Mr. Haldane, Secretary for War; Mr. John Morley, Secretary for India; Mr. Lloyd George, President of the Board of Trade; Mr. Birrell, President of the Board of Education; Sir Henry Fowler, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and last, but not least, Mr. John Burns, " the first of the ancient lowly to reach the position of Cabinet Minister ", President of the Local Government Board. The Under-Secretaries were a particularly strong team, and included Mr. Herbert Samuel, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Runciman and Mr. McKenna. The only weak Minister in this Government was Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who had been appointed Home Secretary, more, I should think, as a recognition of his services as head of the Liberal organisation in the country than as a mark of his fitness for office. He was supported by Mr. Herbert Samuel as Under-Secretary, who very soon in the new Parliament showed those strong administrative qualities which have distinguished him through all the following years. Though no rival of Mr. Winston Churchill's in the business of letting off

fireworks, he was in those days that gentleman's immeasurable superior in the capacity for grasping and expounding details.

I had not seen Mr. Asquith until then for over twenty years, and the change in his appearance was very striking. Although only a little over fifty years old, his hair was quite white. He had lost the pallor of his younger days. My first impression of Mr. Asquith as a Minister has been modified by subsequent events, but at that time he seemed to lack human sympathy, which alone could touch the responsive chord in those who listened. He was still under the suspicion of the Radical section of the Liberal Party on account of his association with the Liberal Imperialists, and their treatment of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

The first impression made upon new members by the Debate on the Address was that of interminable talk, all with no practical end or aim. It was, of course, far too early to form definite views about Parliamentary proceedings, but one's first impression has been strengthened by all the years of later experience, and that is, that the House of Commons is a place given to much talk and little work. I remember so well that in the early days of this new Parliament, men who had come there for the first time with experience of municipal work contrasted the business methods of these bodies with the unending and unfruitful talk of the House of Commons. Old members smiled at the impatience of the new members. They reminded us of the time when they first came to Parliament full of an earnest enthusiasm to achieve some good purpose; but despair had entered into their hearts, and before the advent of the Labour men, they had resigned all hope of ever being able to move that cumbersome machine at any reasonable rate along the path of reform.

The impatience of the Labour men with the waste of time on the King's Speech was illustrated by an incident which took place on this particular debate. The Speech had contained promises to legislate on Trade Union law, on Unemployment and Workmen's Compensation, and also on Education, Home Rule and a number of other matters of interest to the Labour Party. The Labour Party were anxious to get to business, and they had put down no amendments to the King's Speech. After several days of fruitless discussion, and after a debate about Chinese labour in the South African mines had been in progress for eight hours, Mr. Shackleton, at the request of his colleagues, rose and said: " We are not going to discuss the question. Our minds are made up as to whether Chinese labour is slavery. We have had talk enough, and it is time we got to business. All we want to know about Chinese labour is a statement of what the intentions of the Government are." The effect of thus bringing the matter out of mere empty words into the form of a direct issue had a remarkably impressive effect on the House. It showed that the first effort of the Labour members would be to change the House from a talking shop to a workroom. That incident, I am afraid, shows how little the Labour members then realised the difficulty of achieving such an object.

The new members, the Labour members especially, listened with curiosity and interest to the speeches of the leaders of the several Parties. We estimated their fighting weights and their strategic skill. Mr. Chamberlain, in the temporary absence of Mr. Balfour through his defeat in Manchester, was leading the Opposition. I had not heard Mr. Chamberlain since the days of his matured powers twenty years before. I was amazed and pained by the decline of these powers. The hand of death was already upon him. In voice and vigour

and skill he was but a shadow of the Joe Chamberlain of former days. There were times when he made an effort to score from an interjection or a weakness in an opponent's views, the thing in which Mr. Chamberlain was once an unrivalled master; but the failure of his effort only served to make more tragic the decline from his former skill.

A member of the Government who aroused a good deal of curiosity was Mr. Winston Churchill. Mr. Churchill was a recent convert to the Liberal Party. He had left the Conservatives ostensibly on the fiscal issue, but with that mental agility which has characterised him through all his political life, he had accepted the whole Radical programme. Up to the General Election he had sat in the House of Commons as a Conservative member for Oldham, while at the same time he was the Liberal candidate for North-West Manchester. The new House soon had an opportunity of hearing him in debate.

Mr. Churchill was Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and in the absence of the Colonial Secretary in the House of Lords it fell to him to defend the Government's policy on Chinese labour in the debate on the Address. The subject of Chinese labour was one on which he had spoken a great deal in the country, and he had, therefore, a large mass of material from which he was able to draw. This first speech on the Address was quite a success. It was a far better speech than I had heard him give on a public platform. His voice, his mannerisms, his style, were more in harmony with his surroundings. The slight stammer from which he still occasionally suffers was more pronounced in those days. It has always been Mr. Churchill's practice to prepare his speeches with great care, practically committing them to memory. A few weeks after this speech on the Address, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain again raised the question of

Chinese labour on the Consolidated **Fund Bill.** He had only given Mr. Churchill very short notice of his intention to do this, which left very little time to prepare a speech in reply to Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Churchill told me afterwards that this was the first speech he had ever delivered without committing it to memory.

In a new Parliament there is always competition among the new members to *get in* their maiden speeches as soon as possible in order to impress their constituents. In the Debate upon the Address which I am now describing there was the usual number of maiden speeches, all of which it was quite clear had done service on the Election platform. From a long subsequent experience of Parliamentary debates, I think it is a mistake for a new member to be too eager to impose himself upon the House. I have seldom known a case where a new member has made a success of a maiden speech who has subsequently lived up to the impression first created. There have been, of course, exceptions to this, but they are very rare. What makes an impression on the House of Commons is not eloquence or rhetoric, but a knowledge of the subject on which the member speaks. Eloquence and rhetoric are things which the new member should studiously avoid. Some of the most impressive speeches I have heard in Parliament have been delivered by men who made no pretensions to oratory, but who stated the case in a quiet manner on a subject of which they had full knowledge.

On the second day of the debate two members of the Labour Party made their maiden efforts. They were Mr. Stephen Walsh and Mr. George Barnes. Each of them spoke with the self-possession of men who had had twenty years' experience of the House of Commons. Mr. Stephen Walsh was a remarkable man. He was **familiarly called** by his constituents " Little Steve " on

account of his diminutive stature. His appearance was not impressive, but when he began to speak he immediately arrested attention. There was nothing of the demagogue about him. His speeches had a fine literary flavour, often illuminated by apt quotation, particularly from Shakespeare, with whose writings he was thoroughly acquainted.

Mr. George Barnes was one of the ablest of the Labour members. He was very much the same type of man as Mr. Shackleton, full of sound common sense, and he had a great knowledge of Labour questions. He stated his case in a plain, matter-of-fact style, without the slightest pretension to eloquence. The speeches of Mr. Walsh and Mr. Barnes made a good impression on the House. Mr. Keir Hardie had spoken briefly on the first day of the Debate as the new Chairman of the Party, but his speech was not a success. He justified his own opinion of himself—that nature had never intended him to be a Parliamentary leader. His strength and influence lay in other directions.

The new Parliament contained a number of members of the London County Council. They had come into the House with reputations made by excellent work on that important body. Their first appearances in debate were not impressive. One of them, who had been given the honour of moving the Address, made the unfortunate mistake of introducing a partisan note into his speech, a blunder from which he never recovered during the years he remained a Member of Parliament. There is a tradition that the speeches in reply to the King's Speech should be humorous and non-controversial, and any departure from that practice is regarded as an unpardonable offence.

The Tory Opposition, though small in numbers, made a gallant fight. The Tory Front Bench contained a

number of experienced Parliamentarians like Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour, Mr. George Wyndham, Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, and they were admirably supported by the Back Benches. The Tory Opposition in this Parliament was, I think, the best I have known in my experience in the House of Commons. It played as a team, and every man took his part in the game.

In those days the Irish Nationalist Party were in the House of Commons in full force under the leadership of Mr. John Redmond. There was a small body of anti-Parnellites, comprising the redoubtable Tim Healy and William O'Brien. The Redmondites were a compact and well-disciplined Party. I have known no Party in Parliament so completely under the domination of a leader as the Redmondite section of the Irish Party were. There were never any dissentients in their ranks. The Party contained a number of very able men, including Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor. These two were the only members of the Irish Party who took much interest in questions which were not purely Irish. Mr. Dillon was an exceptionally able Parliamentarian, and if he had been an English Liberal instead of an Irish member he would have undoubtedly obtained a high position in that Party. Mr. T. P. O'Connor had been so long resident in England that he had somewhat lost touch with Irish politics. His long membership of the House of Commons at the time I became a member, secured for him a position of considerable influence. He did not often take part in the debates, but when he did he had always something of value to contribute to them.

Mr. John Redmond was, of course, the outstanding figure among the Irish Nationalists. He sat there on the corner seat on the third bench below the gangway looking every inch a leader, of massive build and leonine head.

He fitted more nearly to one's idea of a leader and an orator than any other man of his time in the House of Commons. He had the speaker's voice, deep, sonorous and resounding. He always spoke deliberately, yet with a power which compelled attention and obedience. He never spoke except upon Irish questions.

Seated immediately below him were Tim Healy and William O'Brien. The relations between the two sections of the Irish Party were in those days very bitter. Healy made frequent attacks on the Redmondite members, though Mr. Redmond studiously ignored them. William O'Brien seldom took part in the debates. He was getting old at the time I first knew him, and it seemed difficult to imagine that this man with the weak voice and quiet manner could have been the redoubtable fighter for Irish freedom which he had been in the stormy days of the Home Rule Movement.

The Labour members quickly adapted themselves to the customs of the House of Commons. There was a practice in those days that when a member left the Chamber he stopped at the Bar and made a profound obeisance to the Speaker. It was rather amusing to see the Labour members, whose advent to Parliament was expected to outrage all the conventionalities, performing this custom with more correctness than the Tory members.

The Labour Party established a practice of holding a meeting of the Party every Thursday, after the business for the following week had been announced, to decide what its course of action should be. Under the constitution of the Party, members were required to vote on all questions in a solid body. At one time there was a clause in the constitution that a member who felt conscientiously obliged to vote against the decision of the group must resign from the Party. About two years

before the Labour Party came to the House of Commons with increased strength, that part of the constitution which demanded resignation where an individual member was in opposition to the majority had been rescinded, but the constitution still required obedience to the decisions of the majority. That condition had been originally inserted in the constitution by the votes of the Trade Unionists, who, knowing that the Trade Union members were likely to be in a majority of the Party, wanted protection against being required to support extreme Socialist proposals.

This rigid condition of the subordinating of the individual opinion to the decisions of the majority was a cause of constant friction in the Party. It came to a head early in the new session on the Education Bill, which raised the question of religious instruction in the schools. The policy of the Labour Party was secular education. There were in the new Parliamentary Labour Party a number of members who either were Roman Catholics or representatives of constituencies where the Roman Catholic vote was very strong. These members felt it to be their duty to defend the interests of the sectarian schools. The matter was settled by the introduction of a " conscience clause ", giving freedom to members of the Party who felt a difficulty in accepting a majority decision either to abstain from voting, or even to go to the length of voting against the majority of the Party. This attempt to reconcile differences of opinion among the Labour members with a desire to maintain an appearance of unity in the House of Commons remained a difficulty, but it was ultimately settled more or less satisfactorily by allowing a certain measure of freedom of action to members.

A very good rule was made in the early days of the Party for avoiding multiplicity of speeches in the same

debate. In a forthcoming debate of some importance, such as the second reading of a Bill, the Party meeting appointed the speakers who should state the views of the Party on the matter under discussion. This was not intended to preclude other members from taking part if there were time and opportunity. This rule, of course, did not apply to the ordinary debates, such as the Committee-stage of a Bill, or discussions in Committee of Supply. It was also the practice to appoint a committee of the Party to prepare amendments on all important Bills. In the first session, although so many Labour members of the Party were new to Parliament, these arrangements on the whole worked very well. The Party meeting was always ready to meet the wishes of a member who wanted to speak particularly on some Bill in which he was specially interested. There was a good deal more liberty given to members than might have been assumed from the rigid conditions laid down in the constitution of the Party.

A year or two before the 1906 Election, the Annual Conference of the Labour Party approved a scheme by which an allowance of £200 a year from the funds of the Party was made to each member elected. This, of course, was far from meeting the expenses of a member of Parliament, and the Trade Union members had an additional allowance granted to them by the Trade Union responsible for their candidature. I should have found it to be very difficult to exist if I had not been able to supplement my Parliamentary allowance by my earnings as a journalist. During the first years I had to maintain a home in the North of England, as well as to meet the expenses of living in hotels and lodgings in London. I had a good deal of sympathy with a few of my colleagues who had no means beyond the £200 provided by the Labour Party. I do not know how they managed

to exist, and I am afraid they suffered a good deal of privation.

We were very much interested in seeing how Mr, John Burns would shape as a Cabinet Minister. We had not long to wait. About a fortnight after the meeting of Parliament, Burns got an opportunity to make his first official oration. It was a great success. The material provided for the purpose was suitable to John Burns' special line. A young Tory aristocrat, with doubtful taste and a bold disregard for the consequences, had been indicting the Right Honorable Gentleman's record. It gave Burns the opportunity to recount his past achievements in the people's cause, from the time when he stood in the dock at the Old Bailey down to the time when he had the honour and privilege of thumping a dispatch box on the Treasury Table in the capacity of a Minister of the Crown. There was not a Labour member in the House who did not feel proud of John Burns that night.

He carried on to the Treasury Bench the oratorical style he had developed in Trafalgar Square and Battersea Park. His manner of speech was as different from that of his official colleagues as the sound of a mountain torrent from the music of a meandering stream. Success did not change John Burns. He wore the same unconventional dress. He was still the outspoken workman, and not the statesman uttering smooth-sounding phrases to lull his hearers to unconsciousness. That was my first impression of John Burns on the Treasury Bench, and though his subsequent performances somewhat altered my views, I prefer to remember the impression he made on that occasion.

CHAPTER VIII

Some Maiden Speeches

I HAD been in the House of Commons three weeks before I made my first speech. A private member—Sir James Kitson, who sat for Colne Valley division of Yorkshire, the constituency I represented later—had won a place for a private member's motion. He put down a motion by arrangement with the Government, affirming the fidelity of the House to Free Trade. This memorable debate took place on March 12 and 13, 1906. This motion was intended to put the Opposition in a difficulty. Mr. Balfour had not yet openly come down on the side of Mr. Chamberlain on the question of Protection. On the day this motion was down for discussion, Mr. Balfour returned to the House of Commons as member for the City of London after his defeat at the General Election. His introduction to the House at the end of Questions was a very interesting event. This was the first time I had seen Mr. Balfour. As he stood at the Bar, waiting to come forward to the table to take the Oath, he looked rather grave. He had come back to a very different House of Commons from that he had left a few months before, and which he had dominated for many years. His Party was now reduced to a mere remnant of its former members. As he advanced to the table, Mr. Jerry MacVeagh, the licensed wit of the Irish Party, cried out amidst loud laughter: " Welcome, little stranger! " Immediately Mr. Balfour had taken his seat he took over from Mr. Chamberlain the duties of leadership of the

Opposition. In reply to Mr. Balfour's question, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that the debate on Free Trade would be brought to a close the following day, the Government having provided facilities for the extension of the time beyond that usually assigned to a private member's motion.

After the mover and seconder of the Free Trade resolution had spoken, Mr. Balfour rose .to continue the debate. His speech was admitted on all sides to be " poor stuff ". He was evidently depressed by the new circumstances in which he found himself. It was certainly not an inspiring situation, after he had led the House of Commons for nearly twenty years, to find himself leading a small minority. Mr. Balfour said that he had never before heard of a Government which had been returned to carry out great legislative Measures raising unnecessary debate and wasting time in picking a quarrel with the Opposition. Mr. Balfour told the Government that if they wanted a quarrel he would be glad to oblige them in the matter. His speech was mainly a series of questions to the Government, questions of such a petty and frivolous character that they roused derisive laughter from the Ministerialists.

When Mr. Balfour sat down it was expected, following the usual practice, that the leader of the Opposition would be followed by a Minister. But no member of the Government rose, and the Speaker called upon a private Liberal member. The Opposition resented what they pretended was a slight upon Mr. Balfour. When the Liberal member had finished his speech, Mr. Chamberlain rose and excitedly complained that the Government had declined to define their own motion. This led to a scene the like of which I became very familiar with in my subsequent Parliamentary experiences. Mr. Chamberlain concluded by moving the adjournment of the

debate. This brought up Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman who delivered a speech which was long remembered as one of the most delightful and brilliant little speeches heard in the House of Commons. He reminded Mr. Balfour that he had come to a very different House of Commons from that which he had left. While the Government were ready to treat the Opposition with respect, they could not be expected to treat seriously such futile and frivolous questions addressed to them. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman concluded his speech with the remark that has become as famous as Mr. Asquith's " Wait and see! " saying: " Have done with this foolery! It would have answered very well in the last Parliament, but it is altogether out of place in this. The tone and temper of this Parliament will not permit it. Move your amendments, and let us get to business/' This telling speech occupied only four minutes, but it was one of the most effective I have ever heard in the House of Commons. It roused the House to a frenzy of enthusiasm.

It was later in the evening of this day that I made my maiden speech. I would prefer to pass over the event in silence, but I suppose I shall be expected to make some reference to it. I was so dissatisfied with it that I have never looked at the report of the speech from that day to this. I had a crowded House, and I have no complaint to make about the way in which I was received. I had, unfortunately, come into the House of Commons with the worst handicap from which a new member can suffer. The newspapers had boomed me as the orator of the Labour Party, and the House was expecting me to live up to the reputation which had been given to me by the Press. There is all the difference in the world between the style of speaking which appeals to the popular audience, and that which makes an impression on the House of Commons.

The subject of the debate was one on which I had been speaking in the country for years; and I had in consequence become very familiar with the case for Free Trade and the arguments of the Protectionists. I did not prepare the speech, but trusted to my knowledge of the subject. In view of my own dissatisfaction with my maiden effort, I was surprised next day to see how undeservedly generous were the Press comments upon it. With one or two exceptions the papers were loud in their praise of the speech. One leading London newspaper attributed to me " the quality of the silver tongue which often the critical and not too indulgent House of Commons could not resist ". Another paper described the speech as being " a contribution to the debate which had all the wider evidence of finished speech-making and sound ability ". A further important London paper remarked that " one of the redeeming features of the evening sitting was the maiden speech of Mr. Snowden, one of the most eloquent of the Labour members. This frail-looking man, thin of face and form, striking because of his sharp features and his preponderating brow, held the attention of the House unbroken/'

Mr. John Foster Fraser was at that time the writer of a Parliamentary sketch for a number of provincial newspapers. Mr. Fraser and his contemporary—Mr. H. W. Massingham—were, in my opinion, the two ablest Parliamentary sketch-writers of that time. Mr. Foster Fraser's comment upon my speech was to my mind a more correct criticism than the fulsome comments of the majority of the newspapers. He said: " We heard Mr. Snowden the other evening, and I think I am reflecting the opinion of the members who heard the speech when I say it was the poorest contribution which Parliament has had from any of the Labour representatives. I dare say Mr. Snowden with his undoubted abilities can sway

a mass meeting. The qualities, however, which turn a mass meeting are not those which appeal to the House of Commons, and rather reluctantly we come to the conclusion that however much we are willing to admire him, Mr. Snowden could bore the House of Commons." Mr. Foster Fraser fully atoned for these true, but uncomplimentary remarks by writing of a later speech of mine these words: " It was a speech which revealed Mr. Snowden as the most able spokesman in the ranks of Labour. He began speaking in an almost empty House, but he drew men away from their drinks, their cigars and their evening newspapers to hear him. There is no other Socialist in Parliament who comes within miles of him as an eloquent orator."

Immediately I sat down after making my maiden speech, there rose from the Tory Benches a young man, sleek and well-groomed, whose self-confidence immediately arrested the attention of the House. He delivered a maiden speech which is still spoken of as the most successful first effort made by any member of Parliament in this generation. This was Mr. F. E. Smith. The speech was a masterpiece of destructive criticism, of irony and satire. It was faultlessly delivered, and every shaft went home. The Tories were sent into hysterical delight, and " even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer ". I cannot remember that I have ever since heard a speech quite like it in Parliament. There was not a word of argument in it in defence of Tariff Reform. It was meant to irritate the Liberals, and in that purpose it was eminently successful. Mr. Smith struck twelve the first time, and he never again succeeded in reaching that number. From one point of view it was perhaps worth while to have enjoyed that " one crowded hour of glorious life ". He made another speech during the session, a speech on the Trades Disputes Bill; but he was dealing with a legal

argument which gave no scope for the kind of gifts he employed in his first speech, and it fell flat.

The new Labour members were naturally very much interested in Mr. Lloyd George, who had been appointed President of the Board of Trade in the Liberal Government. He had entered in 1890, and in the first few years of his membership he had made no marked impression on the House of Commons. He came into public notoriety through his opposition to the Boer War. He had added greatly to his reputation in the previous Parliament by his attacks on the Conservative Government, and was regarded as an advanced Radical. Much was expected from him in the way of giving a Radical character to the legislation of the new Liberal Government. We were looking forward to his first appearance in an important debate. He spoke later on this Free Trade motion. His speech on this occasion was not very successful. He had had prepared for his use a mass of figures dealing with the progress of the country under Free Trade. Mr. Lloyd George is never good in dealing with figures. His debating powers lie in other directions. On this occasion he had the unusual experience of failing to grip the House.

Mr. Bonar Law was not in the House at this time. He had been defeated in Glasgow at the General Election by Mr. George Barnes. He came back to Parliament a few months later, provision having been made for him by the resignation of the member for the Tory stronghold of Dulwich. I do not remember much about him during this session. He took no prominent part in the debates. He had made a reputation for himself in the country as the ablest of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's lieutenants. Later he became very active in Opposition, and was noted mainly for the offensiveness of his attacks upon the Government.

One of the Tory Front Bench men who impressed me

very favourably was Mr. George Wyndham. He had the gift of being able to speak on the spur of the moment, and always with effect. He had been Chief Secretary for Ireland at a very critical time. His death at a comparatively early age was a great loss to the Tory Party.

Among the new Liberal members was Mr. Charles Masterman. Mr. Masterman was something of a Socialist, and so long as he remained a private member he worked with the Labour Party, and was an independent critic of the Government. He was a man of gi eat ability, and the Liberal leaders soon discovered that it would be more convenient for them to stop his freedom of speech, so they gave him a Ministerial appointment. From that time there was a marked decline in Mr. Masterman's independence. He became a mere spokesman and apologist of the Government.

Mr. John Morley, who was Secretary of State for India, was another very interesting personality in the new Government. Like Mr. Birrell, he did not seem to have been born for political work, although I know, from an intimate acquaintance with him which sprang up in later years, that politics had a great attraction for him. It was said that he had an ambition to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I could not well imagine any Government post which would have been less suitable for him.

I made only one more speech during my first session in Parliament, and that was on the Education Bill. I had already seen how unwise it was for a new member to speak too often, and especially when he had nothing new to contribute. I thought it a better policy to make myself familiar with the methods of Parliamentary business, and particularly with the rules of debate. " The Parliamentary manner " is very difficult to acquire. A

speaker cannot indulge in the freedom of the public platform, where he can speak about anything as the spirit moves him. In Parliament he must keep strictly to the subject under discussion, and the tricks of platform speaking do not go down with members who are familiar with them from their own use of these methods. It was two years before I felt quite at home in speaking there.

In this first session the Labour Party succeeded in getting two or three Measures passed in which it was specially interested, including the Trades Disputes Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act. An interesting incident happened in connection with the Trades Disputes Act. The Government and practically the whole of the Liberal Party and a number of Conservative members were pledged to restore the legal status of Trade Unions which had been upset by the Taff Vale decision. Early in the session the Government introduced a Bill to deal with this matter. The Labour Party had succeeded in getting a favourable place in the ballot for private members' Bills, and introduced their own Measure for dealing with the Trade Union situation. The Government's Measure was not regarded as quite satisfactory, and in the course of the debate on the Labour Party's Bill the Prime Minister, apparently entirely on his own, and without any consultation with his Cabinet, announced he would accept the Labour Party's Bill in place of the Government's Measure. I think that this action was unprecedented, as was the Prime Minister's action later in the session on the Workmen's Compensation Bill. This Government Measure did not include domestic servants within its scope. In the Committee Stage, when this matter was being discussed and the Government was opposing the inclusion of domestic servants,

the Prime Minister rose and said that he would accept the Amendment to include them. These two incidents show that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was master in his own House.

The main Measure of this session was the Education Bill. This Bill was in charge of Mr. Birrell. Mr. Birrell was the queerest Minister I have ever known. How he came to be a politician passes my understanding. He used to treat the subject under discussion with a humour almost amounting to levity. He had a most difficult task in putting the Education Bill through the Committee, as it was fought bitterly at every stage by the Sectarian Schools interests. He had for his departmental colleague that impulsive Irishman, Mr. Thomas Lough, the Radical member for Islington. Mr. Lough, by his indiscretions, was a constant cause of embarrassment to Mr. Birrell. I remember one amusing incident of this kind. The Liberals were against imposing upon teachers in the voluntary schools the duty of giving sectarian teaching. The question was raised as to what the position of the teacher would be who declined to give sectarian teaching, and Mr. Lough impulsively replied, " Sack him! " That was an indiscretion which could not be passed over, and shortly after Mr. Lough was " sacked ", and Mr. Birrell was relieved of his embarrassment.

CHAPTER IX

The " Socialist " Budget

HAVING taken some interest in national financial questions, I naturally looked forward to the introduction of Mr. Asquith's first Budget. When twenty years later it fell to my lot to introduce a Budget I looked back with a good deal of envy to the easy task of a Chancellor of the Exchequer when Mr. Asquith held the position. He had to provide for a total expenditure of £140,000,000. The National Debt Service required only £28,500,000. The total for the Fighting Services amounted to £61,000,000, and the whole of the Civil Service vote, including Education, amounted to less than £30,000,000. Apart from Education, there was practically no expenditure on the Social Services. The revenue of the Post Office in that year amounted to less than £17,000,000. What an easy job the Chancellor of the Exchequer must have had in those days! No wonder Mr. Asquith once told me that he regarded the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer as the easiest one in the Government.

Mr. Asquith's first Budget was a simple one. He excused himself from making any elaborate proposals on the ground that he had been *m* office only four months. He estimated for a surplus of £3½ millions, which he disposed of by appropriating half a million to Debt Reduction, abolishing the duty of is. per ton on exported coal, and reducing the tea duty from 6d. to 5d. per lb.

There was one matter of importance in Mr. Asquith's Budget speech, and that was the announcement of the

setting up of a Committee to report upon the practicability of graduating the Income Tax and of differentiating between permanent and precarious incomes. This Committee was appointed immediately under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Dilke. There was nothing of a controversial nature in Mr. Asquith's Budget, and it passed through the House of Commons after very little debate. I took no part in the Budget discussions this year, preferring for the time being to lie low and say nothing.

However, there shortly arose an opportunity for me to state my views on the subject of national taxation. I was called before Sir Charles Dilke's Committee, and I submitted schemes for the differentiation of taxation between earned and unearned incomes, for a Super-Tax, and for the graduation of Income-Tax. When I look back on my proposals in the light of later developments I am amazed at the modesty of my suggestions. But at that time they were regarded as confiscation. These ideas I later elaborated in a small handbook entitled *The Socialist Budget,* As this little manual figured very prominently in the debates on Mr. Lloyd George's 1909 Budget, perhaps it may be interesting to summarise the actual proposals which I put forward. They were described in the Tory press as " Highway Robbery up to Date!"

My proposals included the repeal of the food taxes, namely, the duties on cocoa, coffee, dried fruits, sugar and tea, which at that time yielded an annual revenue of about £13,000,000. The repeal of the Duties on Stamps and the Inhabited House Duties were also suggested. The total taxes to be repealed amounted to about £30,000,000. The additional taxation to be imposed amounted to £72,000,000. Of this sum it was proposed to raise £30,000,000 by the Super-Tax, and the rates suggested were as set out in the following table:—

Income	*Aggregate Amount*	*Rate of Super-Tax in £*	*Revenue*
Between—		*s. d.*	
£5,000 and £6,000	38,000,000	1 0	1,900,000
6,000 „ 10,000	40,000,000	2 0	4,000,000
10,000 „ 20,000	45,000,000	3 0	6,750,000
20,000 „ 40,000	30,000,000	4 6	6,750,000
Over £40,000	30,000,000	6 0	9,000,000
			28400,000
Tax on incomes at present evading tax			1,700,000
Total of increased revenue			30,100,000

An increased yield from the Estate Duties was proposed which would give £17,000,000 a year, and the rates suggested were as follows:—

Class	*Present Rate per cent.*	*Suggested Rate per cent.*
Between—		
£100 and £500	1	1
500 „ 1,000	2	2
1,000 » 10,000	3	3
10,000 » 25,000	4	6
25,000 » 50,000	4i	7i
50,000 » 75,000	5	10
75,000 » 100,000	5i	"*
100,000 » 150,000	6	is
150,000 » 250,000	6J	17*
250,000 » 500,000	7	20
500,000 „ 1,000,000	1\	25
Over £1,000,000	8	5°

Who could have imagined in those days that fifteen years later a Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer would raise the Estate Duties to a figure higher than was proposed in this scale!

The Dilke Committee reported that graduation by a Super-Tax and differentiation between earned and unearned incomes were practicable. These two recommendations were carried into effect by Mr. Asquith in a later Budget.

In the early part of the Session of 1906 a Resolution was moved in the House of Commons by the Labour Party and passed without^ a Division which read " that in the opinion of this House a Measure is urgently needed in order that out of funds provided by taxation provision could be made for the payment of a pension to all the aged subjects of His Majesty in the United Kingdom". Speaking on this motion, Mr. Asquith made a statement which sounds strange today with the national expenditure of £800,000,000, namely, that the prospect of carrying out such a proposal was more remote than it was ten years before, our annual expenditure having in these ten years risen by £40,000,000. The only hope of realising an Old Age Pension lay in retrenchment in Army and Navy Expenditure. This declaration of Mr. Asquith is interesting today for many reasons. In the first place, it shows that he never contemplated an increase of the then annual expenditure beyond the £140,000,000; nor, secondly, any such extension of the social services as has since taken place (today we are spending on the social services more than twice as much as the total national expenditure at the time Mr. Asquith made that statement); and the third interesting point is that he expected to see

a further reduction in the cost of the Army and the Navy.

My own suggestion made in *The Socialist Budget* for an increase of £47,000,000 a year from Super-Tax and Death Duties was accompanied by a proposal for a tax on land values, which I estimated might yield £25,000,000 a year. I may add that my proposed increases of Super-Tax and Estate Duties were not to be regarded as setting a limit to the possibilities in that direction; but the modesty of my suggestions showed that in those days I was sufficient of a practical politician to know that we must move by easy stages.

The legislation of this first session of my Parliamentary life included a number of Measures of first-class importance, although nothing was carried which increased national expenditure. The greater part of this session, as I have said, was taken up with the debates upon the Education Bill. All this work was rendered abortive by the action of the House of Lords, who insisted upon Amendments to the Education Bill which could not be accepted, and the Bill was eventually dropped. Other Measures included the Labour Party's Trades Disputes Bill (which had been accepted by the Government), a very good Workmen's Compensation Act, and a Measure introduced by the Labour Party for the provision of school meals in necessitous cases.

Speaking upon this matter of the output of legislation in the first session of the new Party, Mr. Arthur Henderson said, " in spite of the House of Lords there remained to the credit of the Government an output of legislation benefiting the millions they represented greater than had ever been accomplished in any previous session of Parliament. No doubt it would have been possible for the Government to have accomplished that without the Labour Party, but he might be pardoned if he encouraged in his mind grave

doubts as to whether it would have been done with the same completeness if the Labour Party had been absent. Some share in the credit was due to the Labour men."

The public interest in the Labour Party was maintained throughout the session, and the Labour members were in constant demand for public meetings in the constituencies. Those of us who were accustomed to platform work spent most of our week-ends addressing meetings in the country. Naturally the topic of our speeches was the great work the Labour members were doing in the House of Commons. I remember going to address one meeting, when the promoters said to me: " For Heaven's sake don't talk to us about what the Labour Party is doing in the House of Commons. We have heard nothing else but this from every Labour M.P. who has addressed meetings here during the last four months."

The character of the Labour propaganda had been changed by the advent of the Labour members to the House of Commons. It had now become wholly political, dealing with current questions. The old Socialist propaganda had been abandoned, and with its disappearance a good deal of the idealism had been lost. I have always deplored this change. Socialism had grown by the moral and idealistic appeal. I do not think the Socialist movement has ever recovered the enthusiasm and moral fervour which inspired it in those early days. When a party becomes concerned only with material reforms, and ceases to emphasise the moral purpose behind such reforms—important as material reforms are—it fails in its real purpose of the spiritual uplifting of the masses.

CHAPTER X

Some Parliamentary Personalities

IN addition to the organised Labour Party there were in the House about a dozen miners' representatives who had been returned under a long-standing arrangement with the Liberal Party, which left them a clear run in the constituencies. This miners* group contained a number of men who had been in the House of Commons for many years. Our relations with them were, on the whole, of a friendly character. They usually voted with us on Labour questions, though they accepted the Liberal Whip. They took very little part in the debates, speaking only occasionally, and then upon some matter related to the mining industry.

This miners' group included Thomas Burt, Charles Fenwick, Mabon, John Wilson of Durham and Thomas Richards. At the time I entered the House of Commons Burt had been a member for over thirty years, and by virtue of his long service had become the " Father of the House ". Burt originally entered the House of Commons in 1874 along with Alexander MacDonald as the first Labour members. Burt had a most charming character —kind, gentle and refined. He was very widely read. Like most of the Miners' members he was a Methodist local preacher. I had the privilege of his personal acquaintance, and we often had long conversations on matters outside politics. When I first knew him he was getting on in years, and seldom spoke in the House. Indeed, I remember only one occasion when he made a

speech. He spoke on a Miners' Eight Hours Bill, and his speech was commendably brief and reasonable. The Northumberland and Durham coalfields gave the miners a working day of less than eight hours. Burt did not take up the attitude of hostility to a general eight-hours day, and in his speech he admitted the case for the Eight Hours Bill was applicable to the other coalfields of the country. To the end of his days Burt kept to the custom of wearing the frock coat and silk hat. I have never known a Member of Parliament more highly respected by all Parties—a respect which partook of the nature of personal affection.

Mr. Charles Fenwick was of a different type from Burt, physically more robust and pugnacious. He had been in the House of Commons for many years, and I remember, in a conversation I had with him, his telling me about the changes he had seen in his time in Parliament. When he first entered the House it was the universal practice for members to dress in the evening, the Labour members being the only ones who did not do so. The prices in the dining-room were then prohibitive to poor men, and they had to take their meals outside.

Mabon, as he was universally called, although his real name was William Abraham, was the leader of the Welsh miners. He was quite a character in his way. He had a remarkably fine voice, and I have heard it related that when he had any difficulty with the miners he used to sing Welsh songsTto them, and after that he had no trouble in bringing them round to his point of view. I remember him taking the chair for me and my wife at a miners' demonstration in the Rhondda Valley, and he began by saying: "Now, boys, we'll begin by singing ' Land of my Fathers \" and the miners sang it as only Welsh miners can, Mabon leading the singing. Mabon was made a Privy Councillor, and at

a meeting of the South Wales miners shortly after this honour had been conferred upon him a motion of congratulation was moved. Mabon was a very stout man, and three or four of the other miners' leaders who were sitting on the platform with him were almost equal to Mabon in that respect. The man who moved the vote of congratulation to Mabon said: " We are delighted that His Majesty has conferred this distinguished honour upon our trusted and honoured leader. It is some consolation to receive such recognition for his life's work, in which he has worn himself to skin and bone in the service of his class."

John Wilson of Durham was a strange character. He was morose, taciturn and aloof. He had done a great work in building up the miners' organisation in the county of Durham. He was bitterly opposed to the new Labour Party. He wrote the story of his life, and when I was addressing a Durham Miners' Gala I made some complimentary reference to this book, and mentioned that I had done a review of it for one of the newspapers. John Wilson was sitting on the platform near me, and after the meeting I was told that he had asked a neighbour if he would find out from me where the review had appeared. It would have been easy for Wilson to ask me that question himself, but I suppose he would have felt that he was fraternising with the enemy to have done so.

The Durham Miners' Gala is a unique institution. The speakers at the gathering are selected by the votes of the miners' lodges. I often had the honour of being chosen as a speaker. The occasion is a holiday over the whole coalfield. From the early morning contingents of miners begin to arrive in Durham city, each headed by a brass band followed by the branch banner, on which is painted the portraits of miners and political

Labour leaders. The Gala is attended by 80,000 miners and their wives, who regard it as the great event of the year. An amusing incident happened on one occasion when I was one of the speakers at the Gala. A resolution had been drawn up by the Executive composed of men like Wilson, who were Liberals. This resolution congratulated the Liberal Government upon its great work, and pledged the Durham miners to give them its enthusiastic support. I was called upon to speak in support of this resolution. As could be well imagined, my support was of a very qualified order. I riddled the resolution, and recommended the huge crowd not to place their reliance in the Liberal Party, but to support the Labour Party.

The chairman at my platform was Alderman House, then President of the Association. He was one of the few Durham miners' leaders who, at that time, were in sympathy with the new Labour Movement. He was a boisterous, hearty, good-natured and genial person, and very popular with the men. When he put the resolution after my speech, not one hand was held up in support of it. This placed House in a difficulty. He said: "Well! I don't know what I shall have to do. The Executive will expect me to carry back this resolution endorsed by this great meeting. I dare not face my Executive and tell them that I cannot get a vote in support of it. Do have mercy upon me and let me have the resolution." His pleading was in vain, and the poor chairman had to close the meeting without his resolution; but I am sure that inwardly he enjoyed the episode as much as the meeting did.

I was very popular amongst the Durham miners in those days, as, in company with Tom Richardson (afterwards a Labour Member of Parliament), I had done a great deal of propaganda in the county of Durham

for the Labour Movement. Along with Keir Hardie my portrait then adorned one of the lodge banners.

No individual reputations were made by the Labour members during the first session, with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Shackleton, whose conduct of the Trades Disputes Bill won general admiration. But Mr. Shackleton had been for some years a member of the House and had become accustomed to its procedure. The Labour members were active in the debates, but chiefly in Committee. Many of the Trade Union members were no speakers, and their help to the Party was confined to supporting it in the Division Lobby. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald did not make his maiden speech until some weeks after the session had begun, and then he made a short speech on the prosaic subject of wages in the Government Arsenal. This was not a topic that lent itself to eloquence. He made two or three other speeches during the session, but his activities were confined mainly to putting questions. Labour members were wise in not talking too much, otherwise they might have earned the reputation of bores, and this would have detracted from their influence in the House. The first session ended with the position of the new Labour Party firmly established. It did not win a reputation for brilliance in debate, but for sound common sense, practical business methods and intelligent presentation of Labour's case.

When the new session of 1907 opened, the Labour Party, justified by the Parliamentary experience it had acquired, prepared itself to take a more active part in the general work of Parliament. At the meeting of the Party at the opening of the session the officers of the

Party were reappointed—Mr. Keir Hardie as Chairman, Mr. Shackleton as Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Henderson as Chief Whip.

The King's Speech was one of the shortest on record. The only Measures of importance were a Licensing Bill and a scheme of Home Rule for Ireland. This had been promised in the King's Speech the year before, and it was inserted, not that there was any intention of bringing forward such a Measure, but just to satisfy the Irish members by keeping the question to the front. The Labour Party brought forward two Amendments to the Address—one regretting the absence of any reference to Old Age Pensions, and the other on the subject of Unemployment. The Amendment on Old Age Pensions was moved by Mr. George Barnes, who had long taken a keen interest in this question. The voting on this Labour Amendment illustrated the effect of the Party system on the voting of members. In a House of 670 members only 278 took part in the Division —63 voting for the Amendment and 215 against it. The minority included 51 Unionists. The passing of this Amendment would have been regarded as a vote of censure on the Government involving their resignation. The 215 Liberals who voted against the Amendment were all in favour of Old Age Pensions, but under the Parliamentary system they had to vote against their own views in order to save the Government from defeat.

The Labour Amendment on Unemployment, which was moved by Mr. Will Thorne, expressed regret that, while 5 per cent, of the skilled artisans of the country were out of employment, the King's Speech made no reference to the subject. The Amendment, of course, was defeated, only 49 members going into the Lobby in support of it, of whom 9 were Conservatives.

Mr. Will Thorne, who moved this Amendment, had

come into Parliament at the General Election of 1906, but for a long time before this he had been a prominent figure in the Trade Union movement. He had taken an active part in organising what was called unskilled labour, and had built up a large organisation known as the Gasworkers* and General Labourers' Union. He had also been a Socialist for twenty years, and had been associated with the Social Democratic Federation in its early days. Thorne is not a Parliamentary debater. He has seldom made a set speech, but he is a very good sharp-shooter, and during all the twenty-nine years he has been in the House of Commons he has been prominent at question time. His supplementary questions are always penetrating, and invariably show his intimate knowledge of the matter at issue. He is blunt and rough in manner, but genial and good-natured, and he is respected for his sincerity and honesty by all parties. He has sat uninterruptedly for his constituency of West Ham since 1906, and even the Election of 1931 could not shake his position.

I was looking forward with much interest to the presentation of Mr. Asquith's second Budget. By this time I had become familiar with the House of Commons and experienced no hesitation in taking part in the debates. Mr. Asquith introduced his Budget in April, and it disclosed a realised surplus of over £5,000,000. He made no provision in the Budget for Old Age Pensions. He made no proposal for the reduction of indirect taxation. Mr. Asquith introduced an important new principle into the Income Tax law. Sir Charles Dilke's Committee had recommended that there should be a differential rate of tax as between earned and unearned incomes. Mr. Asquith gave effect to this recommendation.

He kept the normal rate of Income Tax at is. in the £; but when the total earned and unearned was not more that £2000, then the rate of Income Tax payable on the earned portion was to be gd. This had the effect of reducing the amount of tax payable on the earned portion of income by 25 per cent. He proposed additions to the rates of the Estate Duties, which were expected to yield in a full year a sum of £1,200,000. He had a disposable surplus on the old basis of taxation of three and a half millions. The reduction of Income Tax on earned incomes absorbed two millions of this surplus. He allocated £i,555>ooo to the reduction of the National Debt, for that year only. He earmarked this sum for the following year towards a nucleus of a fund for Old Age Pensions.

These were the modest proposals of Mr. Asquith's second Budget. His first two Budgets had made no provision for social reform beyond a sum of £200,000 of increase in the Education Grant in Aid, and a sum of £200,000 for the relief of unemployment. In the course of his Budget speech he had made reference to the urgent cause of social reform. He had said: " This House of Commons was elected more clearly and definitely than any other House in our history in the hope and belief on the part of the electors that it would find the road and provide the means for social reform. To all of us there is nothing that calls so loudly or so imperiously as the possibility of social reform." The lack of consistency between these words and the fact that the Government had so far done nothing to " find the road and provide the means " of social reform caused grave dissatisfaction to the Labour Party.

In the general debate upon the Budget I expressed the disappointment of the Labour Party with the failure of the Government in this respect. My speech, read to-day

in the light of what has been done since then in the matter of social reform, seems a very moderate criticism. I dealt with the social condition of the masses of the people for whom the present Budget gave no relief. I pointed out that there were two million families in this country whose income was below £ i a week. On the other hand, we were told that the capital wealth of the country was increasing by £200,000,000 a year. The Income Tax Returns told the same story of increasing wealth, going mainly to the well-to-do classes. We had been told from the Treasury Bench that in each of the previous five years the wages of the workers had been going down, while the cost of living had been going up. The Labour Party maintained that in these facts the Social problem was presented, and we held it was the duty of Parliament to devise some means by which this increasing wealth should not continue to go to a small section of the community, a section who largely did nothing to produce it. I pointed to the unfair distribution of taxation; over 60 per cent, of the sum raised by National Taxation came from indirect taxation, which was contributed to the extent of four-fifths by the wage-earning class. I criticised the action of the Government in not taking definite steps to institute a system of Old Age Pensions.

There was nothing in my speech to which any Radical could reasonably take exception, but for some reason it put the Radical members into a frenzy of indignation. In the subsequent debate I was fiercely attacked from the Liberal Benches for daring to criticise a Chancellor of the Exchequer like Mr. Asquith, " a strong man conscious of his strength and holding it in reserve, and such a Government as that with which we were blessed—a Government strong in good intentions and with no fear of a dissolution before it".

These sentiments just expressed the reasons for **our**

criticism of Mr. Asquith—that he was holding his strength in reserve and that the Government were not carrying into effect their good intentions. The reason for the strong resentment of the Liberals to my speech was the fact that this was the first occasion on which the Labour Party had boldly attacked the Government. Hitherto the Liberals appeared to have been under the impression that they could rely upon the Labour Party to give an uncritical support to the Government.

The second session of the Liberal Administration was a disappointment. The promised Licensing Bill was not introduced. There was no legislation which aroused acute controversy or excited public opinion. The two main Measures passed were Mr. Haldane's Army Bill and Mr. Lloyd George's Patent Laws Amendment Bill. There was no distinctive Labour Measure passed. A Bill for regulating the hours of labour in mines was introduced, but postponed until the following year. This absence of Measures in which Labour was specially interested had a depressing effect on the activity of the Labour members. The novelty of Parliament had passed away, and the Labour members largely resigned themselves to the humdrum work of passing through the Division Lobby. The poor attendances of the Labour members caused a good deal of anxiety to the Party Whips. In some important divisions on Amendments proposed by the Labour Party not more than eight members were present to vote. Mr. Keir Hardie, Chairman of the Party, was very ill during the greater part of the session, and in his absence the leadership of the Party fell to Mr. Shackleton, the Vice-Chairman. The poor attendance was largely due to the fact that many of the Labour members were Trade Union officials and necessarily much

occupied with those duties during the time when Parliament was in session.

This has always been a weak spot in the Labour Party; but in later years a much larger proportion of the Labour members were drawn from the non-Trade Union classes, who have no other calls upon their time and services. In spite of the fact that there was no Labour or Socialist legislation during the Session of 1907, the Labour Party maintained its popularity with the Party in the country. The return of the Labour members at the Election of 1906 had roused great expectations among their supporters. They were not expected to fall into the habit of the members of the older Parties of regarding the House of Commons as an agreeable place in which to spend their leisure.

In July of this year (1907) two by-elections occurred in which the Labour Party were strikingly successful. The death of the sitting Labour member created a vacancy at Jarrow, and the Labour Party put forward Mr. Pete Curran, a very popular Trade Union leader. Mr. Curran was not only a trade unionist but, from the formation of the I.L.P., he had taken a very active part in Socialist propaganda. There were four candidates at this election —a Labour, a Tory, a Liberal and an Irish Nationalist. The Liberal candidate was Mr. Spencer Leigh Hughes, a journalist whose humorous contributions to the Press were very much appreciated by a wide circle of admiring readers. A man who writes humorous articles is expected to be funny on the public platform, but Mr. Hughes in his election campaign did not live up to his reputation in that respect. He afterwards became Member of Parliament for Stockport, and made two or three speeches in Parliament of a humorous character which pleased his

old colleagues in the Press Gallery and delighted the House generally.

A few weeks after the Jarrow Election a by-election occurred in the Colne Valley Division of Yorkshire. This by-election had a result which requires more than a passing comment. The Colne Valley Division had a reputation as a Liberal stronghold. It had been contested by Tom Mann as a Labour candidate as far back as 1895, but it had been left alone at the two subsequent General Elections. A difficulty had arisen just prior to the vacancy occurring about the selection of a Labour candidate. The local branch of the Party was anxious to adopt a young man who had recently come into prominence as a Socialist propagandist. The Council of the I.L.P. felt that there were other persons who, by their length of service to the movement, had a prior claim to the candidature. The young man favoured by the local branch was Mr. Victor Grayson. Mr. Grayson had served an apprenticeship to the engineering trade, but his powers as a speaker had attracted the notice of the leaders of the Unitarian Church with which he was connected. This body provided the means for Mr. Grayson to enter Manchester University, with the idea of his becoming a minister in that denomination. The unemployed question was at that time very prominent, and Mr. Grayson was drawn into the agitation, and became the mob leader of the Manchester unemployed. His studies at the University were neglected. The Unitarian authorities approached me to use my influence with him to attend to his University work, but I could do nothing with him. The attractions of the Socialist Movement were stronger than the prospects of becoming a Unitarian minister. Notwithstanding the lack of official support from the I.L.P. and the Labour Party, Mr. Grayson entered upon the contest in Colne Valley, running as

a Socialist and non-official Labour candidate. I was the only Labour Member of Parliament who went down into the constituency to support him. His candidature aroused remarkable enthusiasm. He was an unusually attractive speaker. His youth and enthusiasm made a great appeal to the electors. Apart from his powers as a speaker he had a very engaging personality. The result of the election was that he beat his Liberal and Conservative opponents.

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the sensation this Socialist victory created in the country following upon the victory recently won at Jarrow. Old politicians wondered what was really going to happen. It looked as if the Social Revolution was coming. To beat both the Liberal and Conservative candidates in an industrial constituency seemed a portent of what would happen at the next General Election.

Mr. Clynes and myself were Mr. Grayson's sponsors when he took his seat in the House of Commons. No young man ever had such opportunities before him. Success had come to him early and easily. Unfortunately it turned his head. He would take no advice from men older and more experienced than himself. I went down into his constituency a few weeks after the election to a Victory Demonstration. At the request of the chairman of the local Party I had a long talk with Grayson, but I found that he was not prepared to take advice or to listen to reason. He would not join the Parliamentary Labour Party. He told me that one Socialist in the House of Commons, taking an independent line of action, would exert greater influence than the whole Labour Party combined. If he had maintained his independent position and marked out a line of policy to follow in Parliament, with his great powers as a speaker he might have made for himself an influential position in the

House of Commons. But unfortunately he came under malign influences which flattered his vanity and used him as an instrument to sow dissension in the Labour Movement. His victory had made him a hero in the country, and requests to address public meetings showered upon him. Addressing great meetings was more agreeable to him than bending to the work of the House of Commons.

His first speech—the first of not more than two or three he made during his three years* membership—was listened to by a crowded House anxious to see and hear this young man who had come into Parliament in such sensational circumstances. The speech was spoiled by the vein of egotism which ran through it. He declined to work with the Labour Party, who were quite willing to receive him into their ranks. His attendances at the House of Commons were very rare. He registered only 32 divisions out of nearly 300 possible. He spent his time addressing meetings throughout the country denouncing the Labour Party for their apathy on the question of unemployment, and boasting of what he was going to do. He had been a member of the House over sixteen months, and during the whole of this time he had never raised the question of the unemployed. The only occasion when he spoke upon the subject was in a debate on the Labour Party's Unemployment Bill. By this time his associates, who had expected such great things from him, were growing disgusted with his cowardice. They urged him, if he could do nothing else, to raise a scene in the House and get suspended. He came down to the House one day in October 1908 with that intention, but his courage failed him. His friends were enraged and disgusted with him, and said that he must take the action desired the next day. Under this compulsion he turned up, and made

one of the most deplorable exhibitions I have ever seen in my Parliamentary experience. Rising at the end of the Questions, he moved that the business before the House be suspended to discuss the question of unemployment. The Speaker reminded him that the Motion was not in order that day as the Licensing Bill stood first upon the Orders and had precedence over a Motion for the adjournment; but it was open for Mr. Grayson to make his Motion on any day that the Licensing Bill did not stand as First Order. Mr. Grayson persisted, and declared that he could not remain silent when the crisis of unemployment was so acute, when people were starving at this moment in the streets! He felt it to be his duty to permit no other business to be discussed until something was done for these starving people. The Speaker was very lenient with him, and repeatedly pointed out to him that he could get an opportunity at an early date to raise the question. It was not Mr. Grayson's desire to have such an opportunity. He wanted to be suspended, and when the Speaker said that if he continued to defy his authority he would have to ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him, Mr. Grayson, without waiting to be carried out, left the House, throwing a parting shot—that he felt degraded in a company that would not consider the unemployed.

I have seen members suspended whose disorderly action enlisted the sympathy of the House because they were obviously sincere, but Mr. Grayson's action was clearly a piece of hypocritical acting, and caused universal disgust. The man who had been in Parliament for more than a year and had never once raised the question of the unemployed now became a hero to the unthinking mob. He went back to his more agreeable work of addressing public meetings, leaving others to continue to press the claims of the unemployed upon Parliament.

Mr. Grayson's action led to a good deal of dissension in the I.L.P. He had the support of the wild element in the Party. By the time he was permitted by the rules of the House to resume Parliamentary attendance his concern for the unemployed seemed to have disappeared, for during the whole of the following session he never once raised the question. He spent his time as previously, addressing meetings in the country, attacking the Labour Party, and promoting dissension in the I.L.P. All this time he was receiving £200 a year from the I.L.P. Matters came to a head at the I.L.P. Conference in Edinburgh in 1909.

Grayson had refused to appear on the same platform as Keir Hardie, and a reference to this matter in the Report of the National Council to the Conference led to an exciting debate. The Conference, by a majority, decided to refer back this portion of the Report. This virtually amounted to a censure upon the National Council. This was an affront to which we could not submit, and the four principal members of the Council—Keir Hardie, MacDonald, Bruce Glasier and myself—resigned from the Council, to which we had been re-elected the previous day by the votes of the Conference. Our action created a sensation, and when we announced our decision the Conference was stupefied. A resolution was moved expressing extreme regret at the resignations, and making an earnest request for the withdrawal of the resignations. This resolution was carried practically unanimously. But we persisted in our resignations, thinking that it was time a lesson was taught to the thoughtless and irresponsible members of the Party.

At the following General Election in January 1910 Mr. Grayson was defeated in Colne Valley. But it was a testimony to the hold that he had upon the constituency and the personal loyalty to him of his supporters that, in spite

of his utter neglect of his Parliamentary duties, he polled a considerable vote. After his defeat at Colne Valley his popularity in the country declined. He made a precarious living by addressing public meetings, but it was quite clear that a career which had begun with such great possibilities of usefulness had come to an end. After a few years he went to Australia, but he failed to establish a position for himself in the Labour Movement there. Later he went to New Zealand, where he got into some kind of trouble. By this time the War had broken out, and to extricate himself from the consequences of his conduct he accepted the alternative of enlisting in the New Zealand Forces. His health had been seriously undermined by the life he had been living, and shortly after his return to Europe he was discharged from the Army.

In 1920, when I became candidate for the constituency he had represented, I made some enquiries as to what had happened to him, and his greatest friend in the constituency told me this story. He had a letter from Grayson, written from the hospital, in which he said that he was about to be discharged, and he would like to come to stay with him for a few weeks. His friend wrote back to say that he would be very glad to receive him. Grayson replied, fixing the train by which he would arrive in Colne Valley. He never turned up. And from that day to this nothing has been heard of him. I communicated with the New Zealand authorities, and they informed me that Grayson had been in receipt of a War disability allowance from the New Zealand Government. In December 1920 they wrote to his last-known address, asking him to appear for a medical re-examination. No reply was received, and his disability allowance was not claimed. All subsequent enquiries about him failed to elicit any information. It looks as though his disappearance will for e\er remain a mystery.

In spite of his failure in the House of Commons and his many other delinquencies, Grayson retained to the end the loyalty of his friends in a very remarkable degree. His speaking powers were not the least of his attractions. He had the gift of making friends. He was very good company, could tell a good story, and, as he often confessed in public, he enjoyed the good things of this world. I have not, perhaps, conveyed an adequate impression of the attractiveness of his platform speeches. He was essentially the mob orator. He never attempted any reasoned argument. His speeches were always an appeal to the emotions of his audiences. But very early in his career he ruined his voice by its unwise use in outdoor speaking. I have known few men who could make a more effective appeal to the mob. He had considerable natural ability, and if he had devoted himself to the hard work of practical politics he would, no doubt, have become a useful member of Parliament. No man ever had greater opportunities. No man ever cast them aside more foolishly. I have seen many tragedies in the Labour and Socialist Movement. I have seen none so sad as the tragedy of Victor Grayson.

CHAPTER XI

As Others Saw Me

DURING the Session of 1907 I had taken a fairly active part in the Debates and had been the subject of a good deal of newspaper comment and criticism. If, as Keir Hardie said in the letter I have quoted, it is a sign of popularity to be satirised by the comic papers and the cartoonists I had no cause to complain. The Parliamentary sketch writers made me a favourite subject for their humour and satire. My eccentricities were exaggerated, and the public were given an impression of this strange character which had found its way into Parliament, which was not confirmed when they came to see and hear me on the public platform. One of the cleverest and most amusing of such sketches appeared in the now defunct *Weekly Sun* in July 1907, and it may interest my readers if I reproduce it here in full.

THE BOGEY-MAN

" When the new House of Commons was first elected, there was no section of its members which attracted more curious attention than the Independent Labour Group—that new planet which had suddenly risen above the political horizon to perturb incalculably all the other orbits of the Parliamentary system. No one quite knew what manner of men these would be, who renounced allegiance to all other Parties, in order to champion causes whose high altar had previously been the improvised platforms in Hyde Park. But the sensation of wonderment wore off almost as soon as the eye became accustomed to the red tie, which is the badge of the Party. Familiarity quickly dulled the senses to idiosyncrasies and eccentricities

of manner, and accepted them as part of the order of Nature, as if they had been always with us. But there is one member of the Labour Group to whom the House has never grown accustomed, who still excites all the sensations bred of encounter with the unknown and abnormal—a shape, a portent, an apparition. That is Mr. Philip Snowden, the Member for Blackburn. In private life he is an ordinary respectable citizen, carrying an umbrella and practising all the domestic virtues. No doubt, like Shylock, he is ' fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as a Christian is \ No doubt he has * the same hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, and passions '; but he has the gift of suggesting the contrary. When Mr. Snowden first confronted the House of Commons there was that creeping of the blood, that pricking of the skin, that tendency of the hair to stand on end, that cleaving of the tongue to the roof of the mouth which mortality is liable to in the presence of the supernatural. It was the feeling which Macbeth must have had when he first met the Weird Sisters upon the blasted heath. And the odd part of it is, that the feeling has never worn off. Daily contact has not blunted it. Mr. Snowden is still an apparition.

" The effect is quite unconscious on the Hon. Member's part, but many circumstances combine to produce it; for Mr. Snowden is equipped with all the conventional ' properties \ to use a stage term, of the mystery man. He suggests all that the popular imagination has been taught to associate with the eerie and preternatural. Small of stature and frail of frame, with a limp that compels him to lean heavily on a stick as he walks, he regards the world unblinkingly out of a pair of piercing eyes deep-sunken beneath an overhanging brow, across which wisps of lank hair are drawn. The skin is pallid, the cheeks hollow, giving an additional sharpness to the hawk-like nose and the tight-drawn inscrutable lips. And then the hands! Long, thin, and nervous, their fingers twist and writhe and contort themselves like the serpents on the head of Medusa, till shudderingly one draws back instinctively out of their reach. But the impulse is overcome by the fascination of those eyes, that rivet one involuntarily, and reduce one to a

helpless, fluttering prey. Everyone remembers the posters that a little while back adorned the hoardings to advertise a character of sensational fiction known as * Dr. Nikola \ Except that Mr. Snowden's colouring is red and not black, he might have sat as the original of Dr. Nikola; and if ever he entered the House of Commons with a black cat on his shoulder, no one would feel very much surprised. The adjunct would certainly be irregular, but it would be entirely in keeping with the part. Long before he entered the House of Commons, Mr. Snowden was a familiar figure on Socialist platforms in the North of England. How he affects his Blackburn constituents it would be interesting to know. But one cannot wonder that he was triumphantly returned. With those compelling eyes on him no elector would dare to vote for anyone else.

" It would be difficult to forget the impression produced when Mr. Snowden first addressed the House of Commons. The frail figure with the top-heavy bead immediately concentrated rapt attention upon itself. There was no suggestion of self-consciousness or diffidence about the new Member, who was as perfectly composed and at ease as if he had known the House all his life. There was no hesitation in the phrases, short and sharp and pungent, like the dartings of a serpent's tongue, that fell from those thin lips. The pitch of the voice and its modulation were strange almost to uncanniness, and at first the straining ear was baffled by a delivery that seemed like that of one reciting an incantation; and the suggestion was heightened by the restless play of those long, thin fingers as the hands began to be agitated in emphasising gesture. Then suddenly the right arm shot out, and one long, lean finger was pointed accusingly at the opposite Benches. Members started in their seats, as a tribe of savages might do at a witch-hunt, when the witch-doctor has suddenly marked down his prey. It was a positive relief to turn the eye to the robust and entirely normal humanity of Mr. Shackleton, reposing solidly on the same Bench; to the complacent vanities of Mr. Keir Hardie in his flannel shirt and tartan cummerbund; or to the unimpressive rotundity of that worthy gas-worker, Mr. Will Thorne. Their companionship was a comfort, a corrective to the creeps, a refuge from the weird spell that was being cast upon the House. It restored one's confidence to

know that mere creatures of flesh and blood could be the colleagues and associates of this dread presence, which seemed to be exerting all the potent arts of black magic.

" But even if one could overcome the eerie sensations of that first impression, it would be impossible ever to regard Mr. Snowden unemotionally. The fierce, implacable vehemence of his language would forbid that. There are members of the Independent Labour Party with whom one can feel on terms—with whom compromise and even collaboration is possible. But when Mr. Snowden speaks for the Party, one feels that no accommodation is possible—that one is engaged in relentless struggle from which the vanquished cannot hope to escape with his life. There is a searing suggestion of inappeasable enmity and vindictiveness, both in the words and in the tone of the Member for Blackburn. If the simile can be used without offensiveness, his attitude to the existing order of things seem to be very much that of the Miltonic Satan to the Power by which he had been overthrown. Or, again, he suggests a likeness to that grim spirit of the French Revolution, Maximilian Robespierre, * the sea-green incorruptible \ Mr. Snowden may be an entirely kindly man, full of the milk of human kindness. But one pictures for him an environment very different from that of our prosaic House of Commons, with its comfortable citizens passing, with a sensation of greatly daring, a mild resolution in deprecation of the pretensions of the House of Lords. No, Mr. Snowden would be more at home in some wild National Assembly, drawing up lists of proscription against the aristocrats, while proclaiming the principles of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, and setting up a new heaven and earth by their own impervious decree. The background against which that menacing figure should be set is one of fire and sword, red ruin, and the breaking up of laws. One can believe that if Mr. Snowden had his way it would not be by resolution that he would proceed against the House of Lords. He would have a short way with the aristocrats. The eye of imagination sees him with a tricolour cockade stuck in a red cap of liberty, marching before the tumbrils as they carry their victims to the guillotine. But if he cannot cut aristocratic heads off, he can make bourgeois flesh creep. He is an excellent bogey-man."

CHAPTER XII

Old Age Pensions and Unemployment

PARLIAMENT met early in February 1908. The King's Speech contained a pledge to introduce an **Old** Age Pensions Bill. In addition there was a promise to regulate the hours of labour in coal mines, and to amend the Housing of the Working Classes Acts. A Bill to amend the Licensing laws was also promised; and as this was a highly controversial question a lively session was anticipated.

The Parliamentary Labour Party met at the opening of the session for the purpose of appointing officers. Mr. Keir Hardie, who had been Chairman of the Party in the two previous sessions, had let it be known that he would not seek nomination for a further term of office, so for two months before private negotiations had been going on for the selection of his successor. During the later months of the previous session the relations between the Trade Union and Socialist sections of the Party had become rather strained. Writing to me on this subject in the latter part of 1907 Mr. Keir Hardie said:

" My strongest reason for desiring to get out of the Chair is that I may be free to speak out occasionally. In the last Session the Party has practically dropped out of public notice. The comic papers and the cartoonists are ignoring us. A fatal sign! The tendency is evidently to work in close and cordial harmony with the Government, and if this policy be persisted in we shall lose our identity and be wiped out along with the Liberals, and we should richly deserve our fate. By another Session, those of us in the Party who are Socialists

and who believe in fighting will have to get together occasionally on our own account, and if we cannot drag the Party with us we will * gang oor ain gait \"

The dissatisfaction which Keir Hardie felt was also shared by Mr. MacDonald, who at this time expressed doubt whether we should be able to continue to work with " the class-conscious trade unionists ", and whether we should not " cut the painter and seek refuge anywhere except in this distracted little whirlpool of conflicting eddies ". The Trade Union members numbered twenty-five, and the Socialists only five. It was only reasonable, in view of their numerical strength, that the Chairmanship of the Party should pass to the Trade Unionists. Mr. Keir Hardie had been appointed Chairman of the Party purely as a compliment to his long and distinguished service to the Labour Movement. Mr. MacDonald had already made a position in the House of Commons which marked him out as a possible leader of the Party, but the time for his appointment to that position had not yet arrived. The relations between the two sections of the Party would have to become more cordial before a Socialist could be chosen as Chairman. There seemed to be only one possible choice, and that was Mr. Shackleton. Mr. Shackleton was a member who carried great influence in the House of Commons. He would be very acceptable to the Liberals, who regarded him as a man who, while maintaining the independence of the Labour Party, would not be fractious in his opposition. The Socialist members, too, would have been quite ready to support Mr. Shackleton's nomination for the Chair. Mr. Shackleton himself was above any petty intrigues, but he got the impression from some criticism which had **appeared in** the Socialist Press that if he accepted the position he could not count upon the hearty support of **the** Socialist members. This was a very unfortunate

misunderstanding. Realising the claim of the Trade Unionists to the office, there was no man amongst them we would have more willingly accepted than Mr. Shackleton. However, Mr. Shackleton declined to accept nomination, and, after a good deal of private negotiation, the position was offered to Mr. Arthur Henderson, who accepted it. Mr. Henderson held the office of Chairman for two sessions, and without being brilliant he discharged his difficult task with efficiency. He was not loquacious. He never spoke except when the occasion required, and then made a clear, business-like statement.

Early in the session, on the 5th April 1908, the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, resigned his office owing to ill-health. He died a fortnight later. On his resignation the King sent for Mr. Asquith, who accepted the Premiership. The death of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was deeply regretted by all Parties, among whom his personal popularity was undoubted. He was elected to the position of the leader of the Liberal Party when its fortunes were at the lowest point, when internal differences and jealousies made the selection of a more prominent man impossible. He was chosen as a makeshift because he was believed to be so harmless and guileless as to be incapable of doing any harm to any of the rival factions. For years " C.-B." held tenaciously to the position, though abused most mercilessly by a considerable section of the Liberal Press and the Liberal Party. With the reaction against Imperialism which followed the South African War came " C.-B.'s " opportunity, and when the triumph of the Liberal Party came in 1906 he had established an unassailable position as leader of the Party.

I always thought that " C.-B. " was the very type of

what one would expect the Prime Minister to be. In personal appearance he was the sort of man one would like to have for a grandfather or an uncle. He had the faculty of commanding personal affection. He was not brilliant in debate, but he was always effective. He often succeeded in extricating the Government from a difficult situation by simple tact, common sense and humour where a mere genius would have utterly failed. His own personal sentiments were, I believe, very democratic; but he recognised that he was the leader of a very heterogeneous collection of political atoms. He would have gone much further if he could have been sure of carrying his Government with him. His sympathy with and his encouraging attitude to the Woman Suffrage question is one instance of how he was, through the restrictions of his position, prevented from following his own inclinations. The Labour Party in Parliament had every reason to be grateful to him for many acts of a conciliatory nature. I have already referred to the fact that when the Government got itself into serious difficulties over the Trades Disputes Bill, largely it was believed through Mr. Asquith, it was the action of " C.-B. " which avoided a serious clash with the Labour Party.

The succession of Mr. Asquith to the Premiership was viewed with some disquietude by the Labour Party. Rumour had attributed to him and his Imperialist colleagues, Mr. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey, a great deal of influence in the Government, and to that influence it was believed the failure of the Government in the direction of more democratic legislation had been due. Two years before Mr. Asquith became Prime Minister three-quarters of the Liberals in Parliament would have regarded an Asquith Administration as the prelude to a speedy and final disruption of the Liberal Party. His association with the Rosebery Imperialists had made

him distrusted and disliked by the Radicals. His cleverness was admitted, but it was the tendency and character of the cleverness which were not approved. He was regarded as cold and unsympathetic, as autocratic and reactionary. He was not credited with the possession of any of those traits of geniality which are so essential for success in a leader who is brought daily into personal touch with his followers.

But in the two years of this Liberal Administration a change in the attitude of the Radical members towards him had come to pass. Whether the change was in Mr. Asquith I could not say. Maybe those who had judged the man had come to a better understanding of him. Be that as it may, Mr. Asquith had undoubtedly greatly improved and strengthened his position in Parliament in these two years. He had so outdistanced all competitors that there was now no doubt as to the succession to the Premiership. Sir Edward Grey might have been a successful rival had he wished for the position, but Sir Edward Grey was a man who sat " remote from all—a melancholy man ". He was seldom seen in the House, and was probably not even known by sight to some members of his own Party. Mr. Asquith, on the other hand, had been unceasing in his attendance in the House. He had always been ready to assume the duties of Deputy Leader, in fact he had acted all through this Parliament as the " heir-apparent " to the Leadership. He had conducted his Budget and Finance Bill the previous session with great skill, and his speech on the introduction of the Licensing Bill a few weeks before he succeeded to the Premiership had greatly advanced his Parliamentary position. My own opinion of Mr. Asquith at this time was that I believed him to be a sufficiently good Liberal to go far in the way of social reform if he were sure of success

in his attempts. He certainly was not a Socialist, though I remember that about this time he had made a public speech criticising Socialism, in which he gave a definition of Liberalism which would have stood as a very excellent statement of modern Socialism.

Mr. Asquith's penetrating mind had been shown a few weeks before he became Prime Minister in a speech delivered on the Labour Party's Bill to establish the Right to Work. He alone on the Government Benches seemed to see very clearly that partial concessions always must be followed sooner or later by something far more radical. He pointed out in this debate that if the State conceded the right to work, then the community would be obliged to find work. This would compel the State to acquire the means of production. Seeing all that was ultimately involved in the Labour Party's Right to Work Bill, Mr. Asquith gave it an unqualified opposition.

The acceptance of the Premiership gave Mr. Asquith the opportunity to reorganise the Government. He used it to get rid of a few incompetents, and to *giv^* promotion to a number of more or less deserving Ministers. The two promotions which most interested the public were the posts given to Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill. These two were the " fireworks" politicians of the Liberal Government. Both were past masters of the art of hard hitting, which is an accomplishment the public love in a politician. Mr. Winston Churchill was sent to the Board of Trade. The appointment caused some surprise, for Mr. Churchill had had no business training; but the same may be said of Mr. Lloyd George, his predecessor in this office. But general aptitude and industry are better qualifications for a Ministerial post than a previous knowledge of the affairs of the Department. Mr. Lloyd George was appointed to the important post of Chancellor of the

Exchequer. His services to the Government and his popularity with the rank and file of the Party entitled him to this promotion. As Chancellor of the Exchequer it would fall to Mr. Lloyd George to carry through the forthcoming scheme of Old Age Pensions. After he had taken up his new office he told a newspaper interviewer that there would be no difficulty in finding the money.

Mr. Asquith gave two junior posts in the new Government to Colonel Seely and Mr. Masterman. The appointment to office of these members robbed the Radical Benches of the two most fearless Liberal critics of the Government. The attraction of office must be great to induce a private member to resign the freedom of independent speech and action for the fetters of official position. Colonel Seely and Mr. Masterman as private members were two of the most popular men in the House of Commons. Colonel Seely was the sort of man that one could not associate with any conduct which was not honourable and brave. He had left the Tory Party on account of Chinese labour, and he had kept the Liberal Government moving in this matter during the last two years. He had been the champion of the rights of native races, and, so far as a Junior Minister could shape official action, his appointment to the office of Under-Secretary for the Colonies gave the promise of a more humanitarian administration.

The appointment of Mr. Masterman as assistant to Mr. John Burns was a surprise. Mr. Masterman during the first two sessions of this Parliament was a severe critic of the President of the Local Government Board. So recently as when the Labour Party's Unemployment Bill was under discussion Mr. Masterman kicked over the traces, speaking and voting against his Party. In accepting office Mr. Masterman probably thought that he could influence the policy of the Local Government Board on

unemployment better from the inside than as an outside critic. Mr. Masterman, however, was destined for Ministerial office in any case.

Mr. Runciman and Mr. McKenna were promoted to Cabinet rank—the former to the post of President of the Board of Education, and the latter to the position of First Lord of the Admiralty. Mr. Herbert Samuel, who had well earned promotion, was kept as Under-Secretary to the Home Office. This was no doubt due to the fact that it was not considered safe to keep Mr. Herbert Gladstone as Home Secretary without an able Under-Secretary.

In June of this year the Labour Party received a considerable acquisition of strength through the decision of a ballot vote of the Miners' Federation on the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. This was a significant sign of the trend of opinion in working-class circles, as two years previous a similar proposal had been rejected. This decision did not affect the position of Burt, Fenwick and John Wilson, as the Durham and Northumberland miners did not take part in the ballot. This decision brought the number of the Labour Party in the House of Commons to forty-two.

The Labour Party entered upon the Session of 1908 in better sprits. The programme of legislation outlined in the King's Speech promised a more interesting time than in the previous session. The Labour members were aware that their stock had fallen in the country as a result of their ineffectiveness in the previous session. Unemployment was now becoming a very serious matter. The existing State machinery for dealing with this problem had proved altogether inadequate. The Labour Party decided to place upon the paper an amendment to the King's Speech, regretting that no proposal of legislation on the subject

was made. This amendment was submitted by Mr. MacDonald.

It is very interesting to look back on the unemployment debates in the House of Commons in this Parliament, and to contrast the moderate demands of the Labour Party with the provision for unemployment which exists today. In those days there was no unemployment insurance. The Government had in the previous year made a grant of £200,000 to the Local Distress Committee for the provision of work for the unemployed. It was very little that the Labour Party asked the Government to do by their Resolution. They simply demanded an increase in the powers of the Distress Committees which would have involved only a small addition to the existing grants. The House of Commons in these days did not realise the nature of the unemployment problem, nor the obligation of the State to make adequate provision for dealing with it. This debate brought out a number of very interesting speeches. Mr. Harold Cox was at that time Liberal member for Preston. He had been swept into the House of Commons by the wave of reaction against the previous Tory Government. There has been no member of the House of Commons in my time quite like Mr. Harold Cox. Mr. Asquith once said of him that he was the sort of man for whom a special constituency ought to be provided to keep him in the House of Commons. He was almost the sole survivor of the old Manchester School. Mr. Cox was a very polished speaker, and stated the case with which he was dealing with great intellectual force. The curious thing was that Mr. Cox in his younger days had been something of a Socialist. He had written a book on Land Nationalisation, and I believe he collaborated with Mr. Sidney Webb in producing a volume on the Eight Hour Day. In this speech he said that he had been reading a lot of Socialist literature of late, and I suppose that this

had convinced him of the fallacy of the Socialist case. He proceeded to contend that machinery had done everything for the country, " in fact, sir," he said, " the population of Lancashire has been made by machinery " The roars of laughter which greeted this assertion awakened Mr. Cox to its full significance. He recovered himself readily, and explained that his lapse must be attributed to the Socialist literature he had been reading.

I wound up this debate on behalf of the Labour Party, and John Burns, in his final reply, was kind enough to describe my speech as the best I had ever delivered in the House. I do not pay much attention to compliments of this sort, for it is the usual thing in the House of Commons, if a member makes a fairly good speech, to describe it as the best he has ever delivered. I will say this, however, of Mr. Burns' speech, that it was one of the most vigorous and entertaining which I have heard him deliver in the House. He threw himself into the defence of himself and his Department with relish and vigour. His speech overflowed with picturesque words and phrases such as only John Burns could invent and deliver. The speech was so full of parentheses that the beginning of the sentence had long been forgotten before the end was reached. He denounced the evil of indiscriminate charity, and in this connection related a delightful anecdote which I am sure must be taken with a grain of salt. " Telepathy between tramps and casuals", he declared, " can only be known by men like me who have mixed with them. I had had the honour of going with my colleagues in the Cabinet to Buckingham Palace on the occasion of my first Court. I got away to my office, where I doffed my Court dress, and about one o'clock in the morning I thought I would take a walk among these people. I took my place in a long queue of three or four hundred men who assembled

nightly upon the Thames Embankment. I mixed with these men for two or three hours, and I am glad to say they did not recognise me as one who had come fresh from the Palace of His Majesty. I turned up the collar of my coat, pulled my bowler over my eyes, and looked as miserable as I could. At the end of this long queue I, a Minister in receipt of £2000 a year, fresh from my visit to His Majesty's Court at Buckingham Palace, held out my hand and received my pint of soup and pound of bread. Was that a discriminating kind of charity? " The statement that John Burns mixed with a London crowd for two or three hours without being recognised inclined one to be a little doubtful of the precise accuracy of this delightful anecdote.

This reference to his Court dress reminds me of a story he once told me about that Court dress. When he was first returned to Parliament as Member for Battersea the workmen of a well-known Bond Street tailor desired to present him with a new suit so that he could make a respectable appearance in the House of Commons. These work-people approached the head of the firm and asked to be allowed to buy the cloth for the suit, but the proprietor said: "No. I will not sell you a piece of cloth for a suit for John Burns, but I will gladly give it to you." The suit was made and a deputation of the workmen waited upon him and presented him with it. He appeared in it next Sunday morning at his usual meeting in Battersea Park, and one of the crowd said: " Look at him! He's got on a Bond Street suit. He's deserted his class already!" The story continues. When he became a Cabinet Minister, he had not forgotten the kindness of this Bond Street tailor, so he took up the office telephone and asked for Mr. H——, and this conversation ensued:

" Are you Mr. H——, the Bond Street tailor? "

" Yes, sir."

" Well, this is the Rt. Hon. John Burns speaking. Do you remember years ago giving a piece of cloth for your workmen to make a suit for John Burns? "

" I do, with pride," came the reply.

" Well," replied John, " John Burns never forgets a favour. He is now a Cabinet Minister, and he requires the usual turnout for a Cabinet Minister. I understand it costs about £160. Go ahead with the order."

His speech on our unemployment motion highly delighted the House. He paid a rather irrelevant compliment to English boys and girls. The girls, he said, could take care of themselves, " as I am glad to say my wife was able to do this morning when the Suffragettes called ". The racy humour and bombast of the speech captivated the whole House, none more than the Labour Party. It contributed nothing material to the debate. No legislation was needed. Everything in the garden was lovely. Pauperism was decreasing, unemployment was decreasing, wages were increasing, health and length of life had greatly improved, and John Burns was President of the Local Government Board. The House evidently did not accept Mr. Burns' optimistic picture, for in the division which followed on Mr. MacDonald's amendment the Government majority fell to 49. Half the Liberal members abstained from voting, and for the first time in this Parliament the Irish Nationalists voted against the Government.

Anticipating the long and bitter fight on the Licensing Bill, the Measure was introduced very early in the Session. Mr. Asquith's speech in introducing this Bill was a remarkable performance. It was one of the ablest expositions of a Parliamentary Bill I ever heard in the

House of Commons. It might well be studied as a classic example of what a speech on such an occasion ought to be.

Although the Licensing Bill was eventually destroyed by the House of Lords, it is well to state briefly what were its main proposals to show what the country lost by its rejection. In the period of fourteen years from 1909 the Licensing Justices were to reduce the number of licences by about one-third, compensation being paid during the reduction period. After the 5th April 1909 the grant of new licences in any licensing district could be prohibited by a resolution carried by a simple majority of a vote by ballot of the parochial electors. After the termination of fourteen years compensation would cease to be payable for any licences suppressed and option was to be exercisable both as to prohibition and as to the number of licences. The Bill contained a large number of other provisions, but those mentioned were of the greatest importance. If the Bill had been passed the control of the sale of liquor would now have been in the hands of the people. The Labour Party gave the Bill their full support. It conformed to the policy of the Labour Party on the drink traffic expressed in a resolution passed by the Labour Party Conference held in January 1907. This resolution read as follows:

> " That any measure of temperance reform should confer upon the localities full and unfettered power to deal with the licensing question in accordance with local opinion.
>
> " By this means localities should be enabled to—
>
> " *(a)* prohibit the sale of liquor within their boundaries;
>
> " *(b)* reduce the number of licences and regulate the conditions under which they may be held; and
>
> " *(c)* if the locality decides that licences are to be granted to determine whether such licence should be under private or in a form of public control."

This resolution was passed with acclamation.

An indication of the bitterness with which the liquor interests would fight the Licensing Bill was given at a by-election at Peckham shortly after the Bill was introduced. It was one of the most disgraceful by-elections ever fought. The constituency was flooded with the agents of the brewers, and every public-house was turned into a Committee Room for the Tory candidate. Although Peckham was traditionally a Tory constituency, it had been won by the Liberals at the previous Election.

The Parliamentary debates upon the Bill dragged on for months, the Tory opposition fighting the Measure line by line. A vigorous campaign in the country was carried on by the two sides. The Temperance Party and the Churches put up a magnificent fight in support of the Measure. Prominent members of the Parliamentary Labour Party threw themselves into the campaign in support of the Bill with great energy, speaking at meetings arranged by the temperance organisations and the Churches in company with Liberal Members of Parliament. With the exception of the fight on Mr. Lloyd George's famous Budget, I have known no occasion where the country has been so deeply stirred as upon this measure. The Parliamentary opposition to the Bill brought into prominence a Tory member who, up to this time had taken little part in Parliamentary debates. This was Mr. George Cave, who afterwards became Lord Chancellor. Mr. Cave was a quiet, plausible and trenchant debater. He never gave vent to abuse or passion. He stated his case with moderation, and in a quiet impressive way which won the respect, if not the approval, of his opponents. The Tories always put up Mr. Cave when they wanted to be conciliatory.

I remember a rather amusing incident that happened in one of the divisions upon this Bill. One of the Junior

Liberal Whips at that time was Mr. Jack Fuller. How he came to be a Liberal I was never able to understand. He was a brewer, and his official support of the Licensing Bill must have been against his personal views of the Measure. On some minor amendment I was voting against the Government. After the division had been taken he came to me in the Lobby and asked if I had voted against the Government. When I told him that I had done so he whispered in my ear, " And you are damned well right, too ! "

The Budget this year was looked forward to with more than usual interest, on account of Mr. Asquith's promise to institute a scheme of Old Age Pensions. Although Mr. Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Budget was introduced by Mr. Asquith, who had only recently relinquished that office. He had been responsible for its preparation. He presented a glowing account of the prosperity of the country. Our trade, he said, had boomed during the last three years, and this was reflected in an increase in the national income. The previous year he had deliberately Budgeted for a large surplus. He then retained taxes which were not required for the year's expenditure, and the result was that he had a surplus of nearly £5,000,000. He devoted this surplus to a reduction of the sugar duty, which cost £3,400,000, and a sum of £1,240,000 to the cost of a scheme of Old Age Pensions.

In his 1907 Budget Mr. Asquith had given a promise that the Government would deal with Old Age Pensions the following year. In that Budget he had provided a nest-egg of £2,200,000 for such a scheme. In view of this promised legislation in the Session of 1908, I spent the whole of the Autumn Recess of Parliament going

about the country addressing public meetings on this question. I had my fears that the Government scheme when it was produced would not be satisfactory. I wrote a pamphlet setting forth a scheme of pensions of 5s. a week at sixty-five years of age. I apologise for the meagreness of this proposal; but those were days of small things.

It is said that the question of Old Age Pensions was discussed in the reign of Edward VI, who died in the year 1553. By the time King Edward VII ascended the throne in 1902 Old Age Pensions had become a question of practical politics. Between 1893 and 1903 five Commissions and Committees had sat upon this subject. The most important of these was a Select Committee of the House of Commons, presided over by Mr. Chaplin. This Committee recommended that the scheme might be framed to give a pension of from 5s. to 7s. a week to persons fulfilling certain conditions. It was estimated that the cost of such a scheme would be about £11,000,000 a year. The Labour Party accepted the broad outlines of this scheme of Mr. Chaplin's Committee. The fact that Mr. Asquith had set aside for this purpose such a niggardly sum, led us to expect that he was not going to accept the scheme of this Committee. The purpose of our autumn campaign was to create a public opinion which would not be satisfied with such a small beginning as Mr. Asquith evidently had in mind.

This scheme, outlined by Mr. Asquith in his Budget speech, was a great disappointment. The pensions age was fixed at seventy years. In all the discussions which had ever taken place it had never been suggested by anybody that a higher age than sixty-five should be fixed. All the Committees which had reported upon this question had assumed that sixty-five would be the pension age. I suggested at the time that the reason why Mr. Asquith

had fixed the age at seventy was that he had in mind the words of Scripture, that " the age of man is three score years and ten ", and, therefore, nobody would be entitled to a pension who had not outlived the allotted span of life. The total cost of his scheme when fully in operation was expected to be about six millions a year. To have begun at sixty-five instead of seventy would only have cost double that sum. Yet a Government which Mr. Asquith repeatedly said had been put into office to carry out bold schemes of social reform had not the courage to face an Old Age Pensions scheme at sixty-five for the sake of a paltry six millions a year, when during the previous year the amount of income assessed to tax had increased by £37,000,000. In addition to the age limit there were other very objectionable features of the scheme. The pension for each person was fixed at 5s. a week, but in the case of two or more persons living together in the same house the pension would be at the rate of 3s. 9d. per week. No pension would be given to any person who from any source was getting an income of more than 10s. a week. The denial of the pension to those who had an income of over 10s. a week was a particularly objectionable feature of the scheme. It was a penalty on thrift, and excluded from the pension a very large and most deserving section of the community. A man who by self-denial made provision for an Old Age Pension through his trade union or friendly society was penalised. The machinery of the Bill was quite good. The utilisation of the Post Office for the payment of the pension was the proper thing. Apart from the objectionable features mentioned, the Labour Party warmly welcomed this beginning in the hope that the scheme might be improved later. This is what has happened. The scheme which began with a modest expenditure of £6,000,000 a year has been amended from time to time until to-day it is costing £45,000,000 a year.

In the Committee stages of the Bill many of the objectionable features were removed or modified. A person with an income from any source of not more than 8s. a week was entitled to the full pension of 5s. Then there was a sliding scale giving a reduced pension according to the amount of their means up to an income of 12s. a week, beyond which no pension was payable. The clause giving a smaller pension to pensionable persons living together was dropped. On the Second Reading of the Bill a motion for its rejection was moved by that incorrigible individualist Mr. Harold Cox. The whole strength of the Labour Party voted against this motion. The Conservatives were divided—42 members voting for the Bill, 29 against, while 91 did not vote. In the Committee stage the Tories adopted the usual strategy of an Opposition of moving amendments for the improvement of the Bill which they knew would not be carried.

I spoke on the Third Reading of the Bill, and while giving a general support to the Measure criticised its shortcomings. My speech called forth a very vigorous reply from Mr. Loyd George, who protested against the " acrid ferocity " with which I had attacked the Government. I think it was this remark which gave me the reputation for bitterness which has stuck to me ever since, and is used by those who have not sufficient originality to invent a new phrase. I could not have been more severe, he declared, if the Government were robbing 527,000 people of pensions instead of endowing them. This was the first of many encounters yet to come between Mr. Lloyd George and myself. On the Third Reading of the Bill the Tories displayed their real attitude to the Measure. Eleven Unionists voted against the Third Reading and the remainder of the Party took the cowardly course of not voting at all.

After the introduction of the Budget by Mr. Asquith,

Mr. Lloyd George assumed the conduct of the Measure through its further stages. There was nothing controversial in the Finance Bill, but he showed considerable skill and resource in piloting the Measure through Parliament. I took a prominent part in the discussions upon the Finance Bill, and this led to my recognition in the Labour Party as the leader on financial questions. This was shown in a rather amusing incident that happened when about this time I went to address a Labour meeting in Manchester. I saw myself advertised as " The Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour Government of 1920 "—that was twelve years hence. This was not a bad prophecy. This was anticipating an event which actually happened sixteen years later, and it might have been quite correct if it had not been for the intervention of the War.

The greater part of this session (1908) was occupied with the discussions on the Licensing Bill, and apart from this Measure, which was eventually rejected by the Lords, no important piece of legislation except the Old Age Pensions Act was passed. The disappointment that the advent of the Labour Party to Parliament had not resulted in more advanced legislation on social questions showed itself in the by-election results of that year, which was very unfavourable both for the Liberal and the Labour Parties.

The year 1908 was in many respects an unfortunate time for Labour. Trade had taken a turn for the worse. Wages had declined, unemployment had greatly increased, strikes and lock-outs were numerous, and the law courts were busily engaged striking blows at the defensive power of trade unionism. There was a serious dispute in the engineering trade on the north-east coast which lasted for seven months. It was entered upon against the advice of the Trade Union officials, who realised the

impossibility of successful resistance to wage reductions in the then state of declining trade. There was a lock-out in the cotton trade which was also characterised by unfortunate internal differences among the Trade Unions affected. In both these disputes the men ultimately went back to work on the employers' terms. The loss of wages and the depletion of Trade Union funds caused by these two disputes was estimated at between two and three million pounds. In November of this year a Court of Appeal gave a judgment which was afterwards upheld by the House of Lords which struck a blow at the constitution of the Labour Party. The Court of Appeal decided that the compulsory levy upon members of Trade Unions for political representation was illegal.

CHAPTER XIII

An Eventful Session

THE Session of 1909 which commenced on the 6th February and ended on the 3rd December, bringing with it the termination of the Parliament elected in Janaury 1906, was one of the most eventful in parliamentary history. The thing that gave distinction to this session was Mr. Lloyd George's famous Budget. Mr. Lloyd George opened his Budget on the 29th April, and after that there was no room for any interest in legislation other than this Measure. Looking back today, with a Budget of over £800,000,000, it seems difficult to believe that the modest proposals made by Mr. Lloyd George could have excited the interest and roused the opposition which they did. The total amount of the new taxes levied in this Budget was £14,200,000!

These taxes were needed to meet the cost of Old Age Pensions, for which inadequate provision had been made in the previous Budget, and an increase in the Navy Estimates of £3,000,000. The Navy Estimates provided for four new battleships of the *Dreadnought* type. Immediately the cry went up from the Tory Opposition, supported by Mr. Balfour, for eight Dreadnoughts this year and next year as well. A by-election took place at Croydon during this agitation, and, just as the Peckham By-election the previous year had been fought on the cry " Beer! Beer! Glorious Beer! ", the chant at the Croydon by-election was:

" Eight! Eight! Eight!
We won't have less than Eight.
So we'll smash them flat
If they won't give us that.
We will have Eight."

The result of the election was a largely increased Tory vote. This agitation quickly subsided when Mr. Lloyd George proposed to meet the cost of the four new Dreadnoughts by an increase in the Income Tax.

Mr. Lloyd George introduced his Budget in a speech of four hours in length. His voice gave way in the middle of the performance, and there was an adjournment of half an hour. So great, however, was the interest in the proposals he was outlining that the House was crowded during the whole of the speech. As an exposition it lacked the quality of concentration, and too much time was devoted to what was not relevant to the subject-matter.

The proposals of the Budget may be summarised as follows: The general rate of Income Tax was to be raised from is. to is. 2d.; the differential rate for earned incomes up to £2000 remained at od., but was raised to is. on incomes between £2000 and £3000. On incomes over £5000 a Super-Tax of 6d. in the £ on amounts by which incomes exceeded £3000. These changes in Income Tax were expected to yield £4,500,000 in a full year. An increase in the Death Duties was proposed on estates over £5000, which was estimated to produce £4,400,000 in a full year. Liquor licences were raised by £2,600,000 a year and the duties on spirits and tobacco were increased by £3,500,000. Stamp Duties were increased, and a tax on petrol was introduced at the rate of 3d. per gallon. What turned out to be the most controversial proposals of the Budget were three new Land Taxes. A tax of 20 per cent, upon the increment

value accruing to land from the enterprise of the community; an annual duty of |d. in the £ on the capital value of undeveloped land; a tax of ½d. in the £ on ungotten minerals; a 10 per cent, reversion duty on the benefit accrued to the lessor on the termination of a lease. The tax on motor-cars and petrol was to be placed at the disposal of a central body who would make grants to local authorities for the purpose of carrying out schemes for the widening of roads, for making deviations around villages, and for the laying of the dust nuisance; and power was to be given to this central authority to set aside a portion of the money for the constructing of absolutely new roads. These were the proposals of this sensational Budget. Mr. Lloyd George intimated in his speech that the subject of Health Insurance and Unemployment Insurance were under consideration.

An amusing incident happened during Mr. Lloyd George's speech. The House was so crowded that some members had to find seating accommodation on the steps of the gangway. Seated on the first step of the gangway was a Liberal member who was reputed to be a millionaire. When Mr. Lloyd George was announcing the increase in the Super-Tax, this member got up and walked down the floor of the House. This was interpreted by the House as an indication that this member could no longer bear the burdens which were to be placed upon him.

The views on the Budget expressed in the Lobby after Mr. Lloyd George sat down were very diverse. The Labour Party welcomed the Budget as the first real effort the Government had made to grapple with the problem of wealth and poverty. Many Liberal members did not conceal their dismay at the prospect opened up by Mr. Lloyd George's first essay in finance. One Liberal member, who considered the Budget from the

point of view of how it was going to touch his pocket, declared grimly: "He will never introduce another Budget! His reputation is gone."

No Budget in pre-War days ever exposed so many vulnerable points of attack. It was bound to excite the bitter opposition of a large number of vested interests. The opposition of the Income-Tax payers would be incurred by the proposed increase in the tax. The liquor interests would fight the increase in the licence duties to the utmost of their powers. One brewer asserted that these increased licences would mean ruin to half the brewers of the country! The City was up in arms against the increases in the Stamp Duties, and, of course, the landed interests were infuriated by the proposed land taxes. Next morning the Press took a Party view of the Budget. It was denounced in the Tory newspapers without reserve under such headings as "The Red Flag Budget". The Liberal newspapers in their commendaion of the Budget varied according to the degree of their Radicalism, One thing everybody agreed upon, that the Budget was so controversial that it was doubtful if it would be carried without modification.

The Labour Party gave a warm welcome to the Budget, and their general support to it was assured. We regarded it as chiefly noteworthy because it was largely based on the idea that socially created wealth must contribute more generously to national purposes. It followed the lines of a resolution on National Taxation which had been passed at a special Conference of the Labour Party held three months before its introduction. This Conference, over which I presided, laid down the following propositions as the basis of democratic finance:

" i. Taxation should be in proportion to ability to pay and to the production and benefit conferred upon the individual by the State.

" 2. No taxation should be imposed which encroaches upon the individual's means to satisfy his physical and primary needs.

"3. Taxation should aim at securing for communal benefit the unearned increment of wealth.

"4. Therefore taxation should be levied on unearned incomes and should aim deliberately at preventing the retention of great fortunes in private hands."

These general principles were embodied in a resolution calling for the following reforms in the next Budget: A Super-Tax on unearned incomes; special taxation on State-conferred monopolies; increased Estate and Legacy duties; and a really substantial beginning with the taxation of land values.

It will be noted that Mr. Lloyd George's Budget dealt with every one of these points.

I had already in my little book *The Socialist Budget,* and in a pamphlet which had been widely circulated, entitled *A Few Hints to Lloyd George,* and in speeches in the House of Commons, elaborated these ideas. These writings and speeches brought me rather prominently into the debates upon the Budget. Mr. Bonar Law declared that the Budget was really Mr. Snowden's Budget, but he added that he was bound to say, that from many points of view, if Mr. Snowden had framed it the Budget would have been less dangerous. I did not appreciate this compliment to my moderation.

Mr. Lloyd George had said in the course of the discussions on the previous year's Budget, referring to a speech of mine, that I had made a number of suggestions which would be useful to a future Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the first speech I made on this Budget I reminded Mr. Lloyd George of his statement, and congratulated him upon having proved to be such a ready and apt pupil!

There were so many references in the debates by Tory speakers to the similarity between the financial scheme I had put forward and the proposals of the Budget that at last Mr. Lloyd George got nettled, and spoke of my " Socialist Budget " as some obscure pamphlet written by somebody who is not even a member of the Party, and taunted the Tories by declaring that he had drawn his exposition from Lord St. Aldwyn. Though opposing every clause in the Finance Bill which embodied the Budget proposals the Tories concentrated their main opposition on the land clauses. The Tories could always be relied upon to put up a strenuous fight when the landed interests were attacked. The Tory opposition was led by Captain Prettyman, who was a Land Agent and throughly versed in the intricacies of land legislation. Outside the House of Commons the campaign for and against the Budget was carried on with great vigour. Mr. Lloyd George addressed great meetings in the country, in which he attacked the landlords with a violence which would have done credit to a communist agitator. The debates upon the Budget occupied seventy-three days of parliamentary time. It was well known that Mr. Lloyd George had to overcome opposition from the Whig members of the Cabinet, but he has borne testimony to the loyal support given to him by Mr. Asquith, although Mr. Asquith had not much enthusiasm for some of the proposals of the Budget.

The total amount of duty Mr. Lloyd George expected to get from his four taxes on land and minerals was very small. The yield of all the land and mineral taxes was estimated to produce only £500,000 in the first year. It was not, however, the amount of the tax which roused the violent opposition of the landed interests, but the fact that these proposals were rightly regarded as the beginning of an effort to deal with the land question.

The proposed increase in the Death Duties, though opposed by the Tory Party, was not fought very strenuously. Those who remembered, as I did, the tremendous opposition to Sir William Harcourt's very modest increase of the Death Duties were struck by the comparatively lukewarm opposition to Mr. Lloyd George's proposed increase in these Duties. This change in the attitude of the Tory Party on this question was an indication that they realised, if they would not admit it, that large fortunes should make a greater contribution to the national revenue.

The Third Reading of the Finance Bill was carried in the House of Commons on the 4th November, over six months from the date when the Budget had been introduced. The debate on the Third Reading of this Bill in the Commons was marked by a number of speeches of quite unusual merit. Old members of the House of Commons declared that they could remember no debate in the House which had reached such a high level. Mr. Austen Chamberlain moved the rejection of the Bill. He paid a well-deserved compliment to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the readiness which he had shewn to meet some of the criticisms of the Budget. He expressed an admiration which every member of the House felt for the marvellous physical endurance Mr. Lloyd George had displayed during the long and arduous debates on the Budget. Then Mr. Chamberlain became quite eloquent about the wrongs and sorrows of the dukes and millionaires. The landed classes had rebelled against the Budget, not because they objected to pay their fair share of taxation, but because they had been picked out for exceptional and harsh treatment. The Budget, he declared, had been constructed not so much with the object of raising revenue as to punish a particular class which the Radicals had always hated.

I spoke in the debate on behalf of the Labour Party. My speech received generous commendation from both the Liberal and Tory press. Describing this speech, one of the newspapers said: " The speech which attracted the greatest attention was made by Mr. Philip Snowden. It was a concentrated exposition of the aims and dreams of pure Socialism, delivered with such real literary ability and so free from mere rhetoric that it rivetted the attention of men of all shades of economic thought. Mr. Balfour turned round on the Front Bench, sat facing the hon. member eagerly following every word, and the whole House indeed welcomed this new phase of parliamentary debate ". The Bill passed the House of Commons by a majority of 230.

Mr. Balfour seemed to be interested in my style of speaking. He always came into the House to hear me, and sat as described by this press correspondent. The Marquis of Huntly has recently told a story that he asked Lord Balfour (as Mr. Balfour later became) the year before his death who, of all the men he had heard through a long life in Parliament, made the most convincing speeches. Without a moment's hesitation, said Lord Huntly, Balfour answered: " Snowden." " Great Scott! Arthur. Are you serious? " was the comment that came from the astonished Marquis.

There were two remarkable speeches made in the Session of 1909, which live vividly in my memory. The Tories put down an amendment to the King's Speech in February on the tariff question. At that time there was a fierce fight going on in the Tory ranks on this question. The Tariff Reformers had brought Mr. Balfour into line, but a few Conservatives including Lord Robert Cecil still remained unrepentant Free Traders. A few of the more ardent Tariff Reformers had formed a conspiracy to compel the Unionist Free Traders either to get into line

with the majority of the Party, or submit to opposition from Tariff Reform candidates. This amendment had been put down to draw in Unionist Free Traders. The leader of this conspiracy was Mr. J. W. Hills, the mildest mannered man who ever entered into a political intrigue. Stirred by the challenge of Mr. Hills in the debate, Lord Robert Cecil sprang to his feet. Things were getting lively

There is nothing the House of Commons enjoys so much as Party differences exposed on the floor of the House. In this Parliament Lord Robert Cecil occupied a back seat on the Tory Benches. Lord Robert Cecils rising was greeted with a storm of cheering from the Liberal Benches. The Tariff Reformers sat dumb and distraught. There he stood, tall, eager, pale-faced, nervous, looking for all the world like some mediaeval monk. Lord Robert Cecil had already won a place in the House of Commons, not by dazzling intellectual gifts, but by sheer force of character. It is a very difficult position for a member to speak *in* opposition to his own Party, but Lord Robert bravely faced the situation, and speaking slowly, sometimes halting, he expressed his dissension with the policy which was now being forced upon the Unionist Party. He warned his Conservative friends against the dangerous course they were pursuing. He begged them not to exploit the miseries of the poor in a political propaganda. In Colonial Preference he saw grave dangers of imperial friction; in tariff reform he saw simply protection, and protection would lead to the degradation of political life. His speech produced an extraordinary effect. He sat down amid loud Liberal cheers, and a chilling silence from the Conservative benches. He was deeply moved, but the great majority of the House sympathised with him and appreciated his courage. There are few speeches delivered in Parliament which

make a lasting impression, or which are remembered after they have been delivered. But this speech will live long in the memory of all who heard it.

Another speech delivered during this Session created a great impression at the time. Mr. Asquith, years after, told me it was one of the two greatest speeches he had ever heard in Parliament. This was the speech delivered by Mr. Alexander Ure, then Lord Advocate for Scotland. Mr. Ure had made himself intensely hated by the Tories through speeches he had delivered in the country on Mr. Lloyd George's Budget and Old Age Pensions. The Unionist Party, he said, had promised Old Age Pensions, but they never meant to fulfil their promise. The aged poor were nervous and apprehensive lest they should lose their pensions if there were a change of Government, and he thought that these fears were justified. Mr. Balfour, publicly referring to this speech of Mr. Ure's, charged him with having put forward " a frigid and calculated lie, a lie carefully thought out, deliberately coined, and then put into illegitimate circulation ".

It became known during the debate on the Third Reading of the Finance Bill that Mr. Ure was going to reply to Mr. Balfour, and members looked forward to a very exciting encounter. Mr. Asquith told me that before Mr. Ure spoke he was afraid he would not cut a very creditable figure. Up to that time Mr. Ure had made no reputation as a speaker. When Mr. Ure rose on this occasion the excitement in the House was intense. Every seat was occupied. Members sat in the gangway, and filled the side galleries. There is nothing the House enjoys so much as a good stand-up fight. Mr. Ure spoke like a man inspired. Every sentence brought rousing cheers from the Liberal members. The Tories had never expected him to be capable of such eloquence and fighting mettle. Mr. Ure sat down on these words:

" Accusations such as these, couched in language such as this, rarely find any parallel in the history of this country since the days when it was open to a man to defend an attack upon his honour with his own right arm." The scene which followed was indescribable. The Liberals cheered loud and long. After such a speech it was incumbent upon Mr. Balfour to rise at once. I have seldom seen a member present such a pitiable spectacle as Mr. Balfour did on this occasion. His uneasiness was painful to see. His voice was harsh and rasping, and, an unusual thing for Mr. Balfour, he stuck fast for an expression. He made no apology for the language he had used against Mr. Ure. Mr. Asquith briefly replied to Mr. Balfour and expressed his regret that he had not thought fit to withdraw and apologise for the language he had employed, which passed far beyond the licence of political controversy. I have not the experience of parliamentary debates that Mr. Asquith had, but I agree with him that Mr. Ure's speech was one of the greatest I ever heard in Parliament.

After its successful passage through the House of Commons Mr. Lloyd George's Budget was sent to the House of Lords. After six days' debate in that Chamber it was rejected by 350 votes to 75. This debate and division were the most remarkable which ever took place in their Lordships' House. On each day of the debate, at the opening of the sitting, there were long queues of peers taking the oath who had never put in an attendance during this Parliament. Never had there been such an attendance of peers in the long life of this institution.

The rejection of the Finance Bill raised a great constitutional issue. It was at once taken up by Mr. Asquith, who, two days later, submitted to the House of Commons a resolution which read:

> " That the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass into law the financial provisions made by this House for the services of the year is a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the rights of the Commons/'

This resolution was carried by 349 votes to 134. The House of Lords made a hypocritical excuse that they had not in fact rejected the Bill, but their action in refusing to pass it was to force a dissolution of Parliament in order that the country might have an opportunity to express their verdict upon it.

By-elections had been going against the Liberals for some months before, and the Tory leaders believed that if they could force a General Election they would secure a majority which would serve the double purpose of killing the Budget and making way for a Tariff Reform majority. In the General Election which followed, the Tories made great efforts to keep the constitutional question in the background, and to make Tariff Reform and Unemployment the principal issue. They were not in the least anxious to have the Election fought on the question of the right of the House of Lords to decide what taxation the masses of the people should bear. But the Liberal and Labour Parties were determined that the real issue should not be obscured, and they kept the subject of the House of Lords prominently before the electors.

I had as my opponents at this Election in Blackburn two Tories who had been driven out of their former constituencies because of their views on the fiscal question. They were Lord Robert Cecil and Mr. Stewart Bowles, son of the famous Tommy Bowles. The local Tory Party were disunited on the question of Tariff Reform. The late member for Blackburn—Sir Harry Hornby—had remained a staunch Free Trader, and he had the support of a considerable section of the local

Tory Association. Lord Robert Cecil and Mr. Bowles were adopted as the Conservative candidates because of their Free Trade views. I am sorry to say, however, that as the Election contest went on, the Tariff Reform section of the local Tory Association brought pressure to bear on the two Free Trade Conservative candidates so that before the end of the contest it was difficult to distinguish them from Protectionists. There were no special features in this campaign. Lord Robert Cecil and Mr. Bowles were at a disadvantage from the fact that they had both voted against the Old Age Pensions Bill. The only personal incident during the Election was one which roused a good deal of amusement in the constituency. It was a statement made by Mr. Bowles at his opening meeting. Referring to me he said that I " had not the brains to run a fish shop ". I answered this statement by simply saying " I am sure that he has ".

Lord Robert Cecil and Mr. Bowles had been brought into the constituency with the assurance of the local Tories that they would be returned. The late popular member—Sir Harry Hornby—had retired, as, with his knowledge of the constituency, he was certain that if he stood again he would be defeated. Blackburn is a two-membered constituency, and Lord Robert Cecil and Mr. Bowles were opposed by myself and a Liberal candidate. There was no alliance between the Liberals and ourselves; we had separate organisations and separate platforms. But as we were agreed upon the House of Lords issue the Liberal candidate and myself shared equally in the votes of the progressive electors. Our total votes were almost exactly the same. We were returned by a majority of nearly 3000. The two Tory candidates took their defeat very badly. This was the first of the three Elections I had fought in Blackburn where I had had a strong platform opposition to face.

But at no previous Election had my own Party been more enthusiastic, and men who had seen fifty years of political life in Blackburn told me that they had never known the people so stirred as they were in this contest. That was accounted for by the action of the House of Lords.

My wife gave invaluable help to me in this contest. She and I practically alone did all the platform work. She addressed meetings of women (although they then had no votes) every afternoon and took two or three meetings in the evenings. Her speeches, always impromptu, could not have been surpassed in cogency, knowledge, and eloquence by the most experienced male politician. She was immensely popular. A workingman elector said to me: " Tha thinks tha con tawk a bit, but tha con't hod a candle to thi wife ".

The results of this Election throughout the country were not very satisfactory. One would have thought that upon such an issue as the challenge of the House of Lords to the House of Commons the electors would have declared in favour of democratic rights by an overwhelming majority. Such, however, was not the case. The industrial areas were almost solid for democracy, but the landlord-ridden rural areas reverted to their traditional Toryism.

At the time of the dissolution there were 419 Liberal and Labour members of Parliament and only 168 Conservatives. This Election resulted in the return of 275 Liberals, 40 Labour members, and 273 Unionists. The Unionists had a net gain of 105 seats. The Labour Party lost eight seats, including that of Mr. Will Crooks at Woolwich. On the other hand the Party won three seats, including one at Derby, which brought Mr. J. H. Thomas for the first time into the House of Commons. Of the total votes cast in Great Britain the Liberal and Labour Parties had a majority of 286,534. It must be

remembered, however, that plural voting was then in operation, and it was estimated that at least 400,000 plural votes had been cast in favour of Tory candidates. But taking all these facts into consideration, the result could hardly be regarded as satisfactory from the democratic point of view.

The two questions on which the electors were asked to express their views were :

1. Whether the House of Lords should be the supreme legislative body, and
2. Whether the land owners should continue to put public money into their private pockets.

Although these two questions were really the issues on which the electors were asked to express their opinion, the Election was to a great extent a contest on ordinary political lines, with the electors voting for their Party and not for principles.

The result of the Election created a new situation for both the Liberal Government and the Labour Party. In the last Parliament the Government had the command of votes sufficient to defy the Labour Party. The Labour Party was able to bring forward proposals and to force divisions upon them without fear that the consequences of their action might involve the downfall of the Government, an appeal to the country, and possibly the return of the Tariff Reform Party. Now the position of the Parties was changed. The Government were not in a position to disregard 40 votes. On the other hand the Labour Party could not be reckless in its action. It had carefully to weigh not only the merits of each separate question, but it had to determine its action on each question with regard to its effect on the fate of the Government. The new position of parties in the House created a very delicate situation. The Labour Party had

no desire to make the position of the Government more difficult, but on the other hand it had a right to expect as a condition of support that the Government would make a serious attempt to redeem promises they had made on matters of social reform.

The question of a Coalition between the Liberal and Labour was raised. It was suggested that it might take the form of one or two members of the Labour Party joining the Government. But such a suggestion was never contemplated by the Labour Party. Whatever the circumstances of the new Parliament it must leave all its members untrammelled by the restrictions of office. The Party must be free to reconsider and re-adapt its policy at any time should circumstances alter and necessitate change. The Labour Party made it quite clear at the beginning of the session that if the Government would make a reasonable and sincere effort to do all that was practicable on some of the most pressing of the problems of poverty it could count upon the support of the Labour Party.

As it turned out, however, there was little opportunity for general legislation. The King's Speech was confined to a reference to the serious difficulties between the two branches of the legislature, and announced that proposals would be put forward to define the relations between the Houses of Parliament so as to secure the undivided authority of the House of Commons over finance and its predominance in legislation. In explaining the absence of any programme of general legislation, Mr. Asquith said: " So far as contentious legislation is concerned we suggest nothing, and we shall submit nothing apart from the financial provision which is necessary for the public service and proposals dealing with the relations between the two Houses ". The question of the House of Lords overshadowed everything else,

The rejected Budget was re-introduced, carried through all its stages unamended, and was finally passed in the House of Lords exactly twelve months after it had been originally introduced.

At the opening of the Parliamentary Session of 1910 Mr. Henderson, who had been Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party for two years, declined to continue in the position, and Mr. George Barnes was elected Chairman. There was no member of the Labour Party for whom I entertained a higher regard than for Mr. George Barnes. There never was anything of the self-seeker about him, but he was always ready to accept a position of responsibility if it was the wish of the Party that he should undertake it. He was not brilliant in debate, but was always effective. His speeches were full of sound common sense, and he always carried weight from the obvious reasonableness and sincerity of the man. Mr. Barnes and I were always close personal friends, and, though we differed later on the question of the War, we have always remained on terms of most cordial friendship. Mr. Barnes is one of the straightest and most courageous men I have known; one upon whom you could always rely to speak and act according to his own convictions.

In the previous Parliament, owing to their small number, the Tory members had been able to find enough accomodation on the seats above the gangway on the Opposition side. They had on their left hand, separated only by a narrow gangway, the Labour members and the Irish Nationalists. We were able to get a good deal of amusement from this close proximity to the Tory members; we were able to exchange compliments with each other. In the new Parliament the Tories had nearly double their members, and the Speaker pointed out to us that the benches on the Opposition side would only be sufficient

to provide accomodation for the Conservative members and the Irish Nationalists. The Labour Party did not altogether like this proposed arrangement as it might give the appearance of a too intimate association with the Liberal Party, but we felt in the circumstances we could not resist the Speaker's request. So we took the two front benches below the gangway on the Government side on the condition that the Speaker would publicly declare that they were to be allocated to the Labour Party at his suggestion.

The Government lost no time in introducing a resolution dealing with the House of Lords question. This was afterwards embodied in the Parliament Bill. This Bill provided that the House of Lords would have no control at all over national finance; the House of Commons would have the last word in all matters of legislation. The maximum duration of Parliament would be reduced from seven years to five years. The House of Commons discussions on the Parliament Bill were suspended during the summer.

King Edward died in May of this year, and by common consent the conflict of parties on the grave issue of the relations between the two Houses of Parliament had necessarily to be postponed. In the circumstances the Government decided to use the opportunity, so unexpectedly created, to invite the Conservative leaders to see if any agreement by consent on the question could be discovered. The meetings of this Conference occupied all the summer months, and its sittings were resumed in the autumn. It was found impossible, however, to come to an agreement, and the Government decided in November upon another appeal to the country.

In October my wife and I went to America to fulfil an engagement to give a short series of lectures. We were in Pittsburg when the news came of the breakdown of

the Conference and the Government's decision to dissolve Parliament. The American newspapers gave alarmist reports of the political crisis in England, and one evening newspaper in Pittsburg came out with a front-page scare-head in letters an inch deep: " Revolution in England! King George in flight! " The only foundation for the startling news that the King was in flight was, if I remember rightly, that he was on his way from Balmoral to London to be in close touch with his Ministers. I was not much disturbed by these alarmist reports as I was quite aware of the tendency of the American newspapers to exaggerate. I had to make arrangements to return to England at once. My unfulfilled programme of lectures was taken over by my wife. This meant that I should be deprived of her invaluable help during my Election.

When I reached Liverpool I intended to take the train at once direct to Blackburn, but to my surprise I was met on the landing-stage by the Secretary of the Blackburn Labour Party. Instead of going straight to Blackburn, he told me that he thought it would be better if I spent the day in a Liverpool hotel resting after the voyage, and going on to Blackburn in the evening. There was a good deal of mystery about his conduct, into which I made no attempt to pry. When we reached Blackburn, however, the explanation was very obvious. When I emerged from the station to my amazement the great square outside was packed by a dense crowd. Round the carriage was a body of 500 torch-bearers whose torches cast a lurid glow above the heads of the bearers. When we could get a move on these torch-bearers marched in front of the carriage. The route through the principal streets to the market-place was marked by scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm. The side walks through the streets were densely packed, and the large Market Square was filled with a monster gathering. The speech-making

programme which had been arranged was altogether out of the question with such a mighty crowd in such exuberant spirits laughing and cheering and singing, expressing their joy at the homecoming of their candidate. It was estimated by the newspapers that half the population of Blackburn took part in this wonderful demonstration. It was a great start for our Election campaign, which a week later ended in a triumphant victory. This contest was fought exclusively on the House of Lords issue.

For the second time within twelve months the country had decided the issue of The Peers *versus* The People. The Government had received a very definite mandate from the country to place the Parliament Bill upon the Statute Book with the least possible delay. The Liberals and Labour and the Nationalists combined had a majority of 126 over the Unionists.

Owing to unpreparedness, the Labour Party put forward only 56 candidates at this General Election (December 1910), and 42 were returned. The Party lost three seats and won five. Mr. Will Crooks regained his seat at Woolwich, and Mr. George Lansbury was returned for Bow and Bromley. Mr. Lansbury had unsuccessfully contested Bow and Bromley as a Labour candidate at the three previous General Elections. The Labour Party had been very greatly hampered at this Election by a recent decision of the House of Lords which had declared it to be illegal for trade unionists to spend the funds of their organisations on political work.

CHAPTER XIV

Dissension in the Labour Party

THERE was a good deal of internal dissension in the Parliamentary Labour Party in the 1910 Session. The strength of Parties was such that an accidental combination of the Labour and Tory Parties in the Division Lobby might defeat the Government and precipitate another General Election. The last Election had depleted the parliamentary funds of the Trades Union and they were anxious not to force a second Election within a few months. The Labour Party avoided bringing forward motions which the Tories might support, not because they believed in them, but to defeat the Government. This naturally gave the impression in the country that the Labour Party had lost its fighting spirit and had become just a tame adjunct to the Liberal Party. This feeling found expression at the Conferences of the Labour Party and the I.L.P. Mr. MacDonald frankly admitted that the policy of the Labour Party in Parliament was dictated solely by convenience. " The Party could not take the responsibility of bringing about the defeat of the Government and forcing another General Election. The Labour Party was not in a financial position to turn the Government out and go back to the constituencies and spend £50,000/' There was common sense in this attitude, but its effect was to weaken the enthusiasm and fighting spirit of the Party in the country. Mr. Barnes, the new Chairman of the Parliamentary Party held the view also that the Party was not as effective as it should

be. He tried to give it a vigorous lead, but without success. The fear of a General Election had paralysed the activity of the Party. Mr. Keir Hardie at this time publicly declared that " the Labour Party had ceased to count: the Press ignored it; Cabinet Ministers made concessions to the Tory Party and to the Irish, seemingly oblivious of the fact that there was a Labour Party in the House ".

The setting up of the Lords Veto Conference gave the militant section of the Labour Party the impression that the Government were weakening in the attack on the House of Lords. It was feared that this agitation was going to end, like all previous agitations against the House of Lords, in nothing being done, or at the best in a futile compromise. The Labour Party had thrown itself whole-heartedly into the General Election fight on this issue. They had taken the assurance of Mr. Asquith that he would not assume office unless the Cabinet were in a position to deal with the House of Lords, and had accepted the declaration of Mr. Lloyd George that he would not remain in office for a single hour under the humiliation of the autocracy of the Peers. The Parliament Act as finally passed was not satisfactory to the Labour Party. The House of Lords was left with great powers for mischief. Its constitution remained unchanged. There is a promise in the preamble of the Act to introduce legislation later to substitute for the present House of Lords a Second Chamber constituted on a popular instead of an hereditary basis. It is over twenty years since that intention was declared in an Act of Parliament, and nothing has been done to remove from our Constitution such an archaic institution as the present House of Lords.

I am afraid that Mr. Barnes had not a happy time during his year of office as Chairman of the Parliamentary

Labour Party. The circumstances were against the Party pursuing a militant policy. But in any circumstances the Labour Party is a difficult team to drive. I have never envied the man who had that job to do. Though the Party professes to be Socialist it is the most individualist of all the political parties. I remember about this time standing at the Bar of the House when a Labour member was making a rather effective speech. A Tory member turned to me and said: "T U tell you what is wrong with your Party. Individually many of your men are effective, collectively you are weak. You will never make headway as a Party until you learn to play as a team." That remark touched the spot.

The members of the Labour Party in those days who took much interest in Parliamentary work were mainly the I.L.P. members, and those Trade Union members who had their political training in the Socialist movement. The bulk of the Trade Union members, when in attendance, spent their time in the smoke-room or on the Terrace. The position of a Member of Parliament was one they had not reached by their own ability, but by the accident of being a trade union official. Mr. Barnes put the case quite truly when he said that one of the weaknesses of the Party was that they had men who were not makers of the Party but who had been made by the Party. That is true of the Party today.

It must be said in justice that the position of the Labour Party in that Parliament was very difficult. They had really to choose between a Liberal and a Tory Government. There was nothing to be hoped for from a Tory Government but reaction. The Liberal Government in the main was going slowly in our direction. At that time the probability of a Labour Party strong enough to take office had never entered into the mind of the ordinary trade union member. He still regarded the

function of the Labour Party to be to " ginger up " the Liberal Government on industrial questions.

Such a conception of the function of the Labour Party naturally hindered the advocacy of a Labour Party which would ultimately take the place of the Liberal Party. The Labour Party was on the horns of a dilemma. By pressing labour and social legislation on the Liberal Government the Labour Party was enhancing the prestige of the Liberals as a social reform party, and weakening the case for independent Labour representation. It could truly be represented that the Liberal Government would not have gone so far in the matter of social reform but for the pressure of the Labour Party. The Labour Party lost no opportunity of claiming credit for the Liberal social legislation, but I doubt if that argument carried conviction. The Labour Party had not increased its parliamentary representation at the two previous Elections, and as a matter of fact the great majority of the Labour members owed their seats to the absence of Liberal opposition in their constituencies. All these facts go to explain the lack of a more vigorous fighting attitude by the Labour Party. They did not satisfy the militant sections of the Labour Party in the country, who believed that Liberals and Tories were equally the enemies of the people and Socialism was their only hope.

These were some of the difficulties of the Parliamentary Labour Party in those days. The division was between the Possibilists and the Impossibilists. Although I was always on the side of those inside the Parliamentary Party who wanted a more critical attitude to the Liberal Government (and all my speeches in those days show that I pursued that line), I never approved the policy of throwing away opportunities to get as much as I could of what I wanted. To have recklessly turned out the

Liberal Government on some minor question would have been egregious folly. If a General Election had followed upon the defeat of the Government the result would have been that every Labour candidate would have had to face Liberal opposition, and not half a dozen Labour members would have been returned.

Mr. MacDonald was a strong supporter of the policy of co-operation with the Liberals. But he made the mistake of not combining a policy of co-operation with reasonable aggressiveness. He conveyed the impression to the Party in the country that he was willing to sacrifice the independence of the Party for political expediency. He suffered in those days from a failing, which has grown upon him with advancing years, of being unable to make a speech which was not open to any interpretation a person chose to place upon it.

It was in a state like this that the Labour Party entered upon the Session of 1911. Its first business was to elect a Sessional Chairman. Mr. Barnes, with a year's experience of the office was not disposed to take a further term. The Labour Party had always set its face against a permanent Chairman, and had insisted that the Sessional Chairman should not be regarded as the " Leader ". It was considered to be undemocratic. The Party must not permit one man to dictate the policy of the Party. The Chairman was simply the mouthpiece of the Party, stating its decisions to the House of Commons. The Party in its turn was expected to take its directions from resolutions of the Party Conferences. Fortunately it never quite worked out like that in practice. The men upon whom has devolved the practical task of carrying out a Party programme realise how much more difficult that is than passing resolutions in a Conference after a few minutes discussion.

The choice of a Sessional Chairman was always a

matter of private negotiations and bargaining for weeks before the Election. Mr. MacDonald, ever since Hardie had vacated the Chair in 1908, had been regarded as a likely candidate. For reasons which I have already given it was not then considered wise to press his claim against a trade union nominee. When Mr. Henderson vacated the Chairmanship after the Session of 1909 the usual intrigues and soundings went on about a successor. Keir Hardie was strongly opposed *to* MacDonald offering himself for the position. Hardie wrote to me to this effect. From conversations I had with him I think his reason was this. He was at the time much dissatisfied with the absence of a more militant policy by the Parliamentary Labour Party, and he regarded Mr. MacDonald as being largely responsible for this. Hardie wrote to MacDonald saying he ought not to stand for the Chair. MacDonald replied to him in a letter which gave Hardie great offence. I doubt if their relations were ever quite so friendly after this incident. Hardie was in favour of George Barnes, who was willing to accept if MacDonald was not, but he would not stand against MacDonald. Mr. Shackleton pressed Mr. MacDonald to allow himself to be nominated. Mr. MacDonald replied to both Barnes and Shackleton that he was in the hands of the Party. After this " queer things " happened, and when the Party met for the election of the Chairman only the name of Mr. Barnes was submitted.

When Mr. Barnes announced his decision not to stand again at the end of his first term the usual" conversations " began. Mr. MacDonald wrote to me in December 1910 to tell me, in case I should be approached to support him for the Chair, that on no account would he accept the position. " In view of the disloyal action of certain of our colleagues I see no prospect of the chairman being of the least use." A few days later he had changed his

mind, and asked me to make enquiries as to how the land lay. " I could not do this myself ", he said, " as I should be open to the charge that I am working for my own hand. Such accusation could not be made against you! " This I declined to do, as I had always kept aloof from anything of the nature of Party intrigues. The Conference of the Party met at Leicester a few days before the opening of the new Parliament. I had just retired from the Executive of the Labour Party, of which I had been a member for some years, and was not in the private conversations which took place during the Conference on the matter of the Chairmanship of the Parliamentary Labour Party. However, the way was cleared there for Mr. MacDonald, and when the Parliamentary Party met he was elected to the post without opposition. It was understood that a bargain was made that Mr. MacDonald would resign his office as Secretary of the outside Labour Party at the end of the year, and that the position would go to Mr. Arthur Henderson, who had long hankered after the post. That is what actually happened at the next Annual Conference. The post of Secretary of the Labour Party carried with it the Secretaryship of the British section of the Socialist International. Up to that time Mr. Henderson had not been a member of any Socialist body. His credentials as a Labour candidate were derived from his membership of his trade union, which was affiliated to the Labour Party. It would have been incongruous for the British Secretary of the Socialist International not to be a member of a Socialist body, so Mr. Henderson joined the Fabian Society!

This is, perhaps, the place to pay a tribute to the work which Mr. MacDonald had done as Secretary of the

Labour Party. He was appointed to the office at the Inaugural Conference and held tHe position* continuously for eleven years. During the first year he did the work without salary and without clerical assistance. The First Annual Conference voted him an honorarium of twenty guineas! At the Second Conference, when the Party had an affiliated membership of 455,000, it was decided to give him a full-time Assistant-Secretary at a salary of £75 a year One delegate seriously enquired if the funds of the Party could stand this payment! Mr. MacDonald had used a room in his house for office purposes, but in four years the work had become so great that it was decided to engage an office, to increase the office staff, and make Mr. MacDonald an allowance of £250 to cover all office salaries. Five years after the formation of the Party, when the affiliated membership of the Party was about a million, the total salaries and wages of the Head Office amounted to £270 a year. In the meantime Mr. MacDonald's " honorarium " had been increased to £25 a year. It was in this humble and economical way that the Labour Party organisation was built up, and the movement will always be indebted to Mr. MacDonald for the years of able and devoted service he gave to the Party in those struggling days.

When Mr. MacDonald was permitted to engage an Assistant-Secretary at the munificent salary of thirty shillings a week he was very fortunate in the appointment he made. He had become acquainted with a young man named J. S. Middleton—Jim Middleton, as he later became known throughout the movement—who was an active worker in the I.L.P. Movement in Workington. For thirty years Middleton has remained in the post, advancing in salary with the progress of the movement. On him the organisation of the work of the Head Office has fallen, and he has discharged it with an ability which

has won for him the admiration and respect of all who have known his work and worth.

In December 1909 the House of Lords gave a decision of great importance to the Labour Party in what became known as the *Osborne case.* This was an action brought by a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants to restrain the union from using its funds for political purposes. When the Labour Party was formed the trade unions took eminent legal opinion, and they were assured that what they proposed to do was legitimate under the Trade Union Acts. Fortified by this opinion, the constitution of the Labour Party was framed. Most of the unions, before applying to the Labour Party for affiliation, had taken a ballot vote of their members on the question, and also as to whether they were willing to pay a yearly levy for political purposes. This sum varied from sixpence to a shilling per member. Out of this the affiliation fee to the Labour Party was paid, and the rest was available to pay the cost of running parliamentary candidates promoted by the union, and for financing municipal candidates. The decision of the House of Lords covered two main points. Three of the five judges laid it down that politics were outside the legal powers of a trade union; one judge thought it desirable for trade unions to have such powers; and a fifth discovered that it was against the spirit of the British Constitution for a member of Parliament to be pledged to work with any particular Party.

The decision that trade unions were not entitled in their corporate capacity to take part in politics carried with it the conclusion that they could not levy their members for political purposes or use any of their funds for such a purpose. This legal prohibition destroyed the

financial basis on which the Labour Party rested. For twenty-five years before the Labour Party was formed the Miners' Federation had promoted political candidatures and supported members of Parliament out of the trade union funds. The legal right to do so had never been questioned till now. Behind the action were Party motives and Party money. It was an attempt to cripple or destroy the Labour Party. The argument used in support of the decision was that men had joined a trade union for industrial protection, and that it was unfair to compel them to pay for politics with which they might not agree. Briefly put, the answer to that argument is this. The object of trade unionism is to secure improvements in the conditions of labour. It is universally admitted that there are certain reforms which trade unionists need which can only be secured by legislation. Therefore trade unionists must use their political power to influence legislation, and the best means to that end is direct Labour representation.

The *Osborne* decision was at once challenged by the Labour Party and the trade unions. It must be admitted that it was not taken up with the unanimity and enthusiasm which characterised the agitation for the reversal of the law as laid down in the *Taff Vale* decision. That was a case which appealed to every trade unionist. But a large body of trade unionists were not yet supporters of the Labour Party. They still voted Liberal or Tory, often against a trade union candidate.

Immediately after the opening of the 1911 Session, the Labour Party raised the *Osborne* decision in Parliament. A large number of Liberal members had given pledges at the Election to support the Labour Party's demand for legislation. The Government reluctantly introduced a Bill to deal with the situation. It was not satisfactory to the Labour Party, and was withdrawn after a second

reading. In the following Session a new Bill was introduced which finally became law. Though not conceding the full demands of the Labour Party it was a workable compromise. It gave trade unions the right to raise money for political purposes by levies on the members after a ballot vote had been taken. The conscientious objectors of the minority were safeguarded by a provision that they might " contract out " of payment of the political levy by giving written notice. The law remained in that state till 1927, when the Conservative Government altered it from " contracting out " to " contracting in ". The political levy is now paid only by members who have given a written notice of their willingness to contribute. This change had a considerable effect in reducing the yield of the political funds of the unions, and incidentally upon the income of the Headquarters of the Labour Party.

To meet the point raised in the *Osborne* judgment that it was against public policy that members of Parliament should be pledge-bound to support a particular Party, the Labour Conference, on the recommendation of the Executive, altered the Constitution of the Party. Hitherto a candidate had been required to " accept the constitution and agree to abide by the decisions of the Parliamentary Party ". A candidate was called upon to sign such a pledge before his candidature could be endorsed by the Labour Executive. The words I have quoted were deleted and the pledge was abandoned. I don't know that it made much practical difference. I had never found the pledge to be an embarrassment to my independent judgment. Indeed I doubt if I ever signed it. I have no recollection of doing so. General loyalty to his Party, with reasonable freedom to act as his conscience dictates, is all that can be expected from a member.

I have never considered the trade union basis of the

Labour Party as ideal. It has many disadvantages. Keir Hardie never regarded it as the permanent form of Labour representation. It was adopted at the beginning as a matter of expediency and convenience. The trade unions were there, and to turn them into a political party gave at one stroke a mass membership and a financial backing. But it had this grave drawback. The trade unions who found the money for the candidatures naturally selected the officials of the unions as their candidates. Political qualifications were not considered. So it generally happened when a constituency was selecting a candidate and had the choice of a trade unionist whose union was prepared to meet the election expenses and maintain an agent, and a non-unionist of wide political knowledge but without money, that the selection went to the trade unionist. I have seen this happen so often. It was a strong temptation to a local Labour Party to be relieved of the effort of raising the election expenses by voluntary contributions. It must in justice be said that there were many constituencies which were prepared to make that effort to get a good candidate without trade union financial support. And it is fair to add that there have been trade union members who possessed political qualifications of a high order.

In recent years the proportion of trade union candidatures has fallen considerably. The number they can finance is limited, and as practically every constituency nowadays is contested by the Labour Party the cost of the election falls to a much greater extent upon the local Labour Party. But this has brought another evil more dangerous than the financing of candidatures with union money. Ambitious men of means are coming forward as Labour candidates and buying the constituencies. In this matter the Labour Party can throw no

stones at the Liberal and Tory Parties. I do not say that this practice is universal in the Labour Party. Far from it. For one reason, there are not yet sufficient rich Labour candidates to go round; and for another, most local Labour Parties have too much self-respect to be pauperised, and take a pride in raising the election expenses and the costs of local organisation.

All the parliamentary contests I have fought have been financed in that way. Practically all the expenses of the election have been raised by voluntary contributions. During the thirteen years I represented Blackburn I was never asked nor expected to make any contribution to the election expenses, or towards maintaining the local organisation. Of course, I always paid my personal expenses and the cost of visiting the constituency. Much the same thing happened in the other constituency I represented for ten years. While I am on this subject of members of Parliament and their financial relations with their constituencies, may I refer to the matter of subscriptions to local charities, bazaars, clubs and the like. On principle I have always refused to respond to such requests. I believe I have already mentioned that my predecessors in the representation of Blackburn issued a public letter announcing that they could not give any more subscriptions to local clubs, etc., that year as they had already subscribed to over nine hundred! I made a public statement that while I was willing to give the constituency the best of my services I would not be a relieving officer. During the twenty-three years I was in Parliament I do not think I received half a dozen appeals for subscriptions from my constituencies. I remember only two—one was from the choirmaster of a local chapel who was raising money for new hymn-books. He sent me a small memorandum book, and asked me to go round among my fellow-members collecting sub-

scriptions for him! The nature of my reply may be imagined! The other was the case of a parson who called upon me during the Election, begging for a church building fund. He told me my opponents had already given him handsome donations, and when I declined to give him a subscription he went into a violent passion, shook his fist, and said: "You fool! You fool! You will pay dearly for this at the Election! " Apart from my objection to political blackmail, I could see no loss of votes from my refusal, as his parishioners could not very well vote for my opponents and myself!

Partly to redeem a long-standing promise of the Liberal Party, and partly to meet the situation created by the *Osborne* judgment, the Government in August 1911 introduced a Motion to establish Payment of Members. The amount was fixed at £400 a year. I spoke in the debate and took the House into my confidence, giving details of my personal expenditure, which proved that £400 a year was not more than was necessary to meet the expenses of a Member of Parliament representing a provincial constituency. The House seemed to appreciate my homely talk, and I was told afterwards that several members who had intended to support the amendment to reduce the payment from £400 to £300 voted for the £400. I have never regarded this payment as a salary, but as an allowance to meet necessary expenses. We could not have lived during the first five years I was in Parliament on an allowance of £200 a year had not both my wife and myself been able to supplement that income from other sources. It is interesting to note that none of the terrible prophecies which were made of what would happen when payment of members was adopted have been fulfilled. I have seen no decline in the character of members; the " professional politician " is no more in evidence; and the Tory members, who with one or two

exceptions have always accepted the payment, do not appear to have been demoralised by it.

The Session of 1911 will always be outstanding for the enactment of two great measures of social reform—the National Health and Unemployment Insurance Acts. The National Health Insurance Bill was at the time the most unpopular measure ever introduced into Parliament. No man with less energy, tenacity and determination than Mr. Lloyd George could have carried the Bill through in the teeth of the opposition of many powerful vested interests. He had to make many concessions. The influential Friendly Societies had to be conciliated; the great opposition of Insurance Companies had to be bought off by bringing them into the scheme as administrators. The doctors were up in arms and threatened to go on strike. Mayfair demonstrated in the Albert Hall and registered a vow that they would never " lick stamps for Lloyd George ".

The Bill created disunity in the ranks of the Labour Party. We all welcomed the measure as a recognition of the obligation of the State to deal with the grave problem of disablement and sickness. But a few of us were strongly opposed to some of its main features. For the first time there were serious differences between Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues, the I.L.P. members. The Bill was based upon the contributory principle—the employer and the workmen having to make compulsory weekly contributions, the State supplementing these payments.

The division in our ranks was upon this matter of compulsory contributions. The minority of the Party which favoured a non-contributory scheme consisted of Mr. Keir Hardie, Mr. Will Thome, Mr. James O'Grady, Mr. F. W. Jowett, Mr. Lansbury and myself. We were

opposed to exacting contributions from the workers to finance so-called schemes of social reform, because we held that the cost of such schemes should be spread over the whole community. The contributory principle had been abandoned in our Education system, in Public Health Administration, in Workmen's Compensation, and in the recently passed Old Age Pensions Act. Mr. MacDonald favoured the exaction of contributions from the workers on the grounds that for the State to finance such schemes without calling upon the recipients of the benefits for some direct contribution was not Socialism but State Philanthropy. Our differences led to a rather acrimonious discussion in the columns of the *Labour Leader* between Mr. MacDonald and myself, in which I surpassed him in the vigour of my language, but did not equal him in skill in evading the point at issue!

Other objections we had against the Bill were that it placed upon the employer a burden which ought to be borne by the community as a whole, and taxed him for this purpose not according to the profits he made but upon the amount of labour he employed. Opposed as the minority were to the fundamental principles of the Bill, we were able to co-operate with the other Labour members in trying to improve the Bill in its details.

The Unemployment Insurance Bill met with little opposition. It was very limited in its extent, and applied only to a few trades. It was estimated that about *z* millions of workmen would come within its scope, and that the total cost to the State would be £800,000 a year. The contributions of the workmen and employers were each 2^d. per week, to which the State added one-third. The benefit was fixed at 7s. a week to men in the engineering trades, and 6s. in the building and constructional trades. Not more than fifteen weeks benefit could be drawn in any twelve months.

From this small beginning there has grown up in twenty years the gigantic system of National Unemployment Insurance and Relief we have today. Ten million persons are now included in the scheme; its total cost has run up to £100,000,000 a year; benefits have increased to 27s. a week to an unemployed married man with an average family; and contributions from the employer and the workman have quadrupled. I say this now, after twenty years of experience of the National Health Insurance Act and the Unemployed Insurance Act, that these two measures, with the amendments which have been subsequently made, are the two greatest measures of social reform ever placed upon the Statute Book. The Unemployment Insurance Scheme has, I believe, saved this country from revolution in the long trade depression we have had since 1929.

It took some time for the popular opposition to the National Health Insurance Act to die down. The workers were slow in realising that they were getting " ninepence for fourpence ". The Tories exploited its unpopularity at the by-elections, with the result that the Liberals lost many seats. Mr. Masterman, who had assisted Mr. Lloyd George in piloting the Bill through the Commons, shared his chief's unpopularity, was defeated at a by-election at Ipswich, and was undeservedly kept out of Parliament for ten years. In all my political experience I have known nothing more unprincipled than the tactics of the Unionists at these by-elections. They took advantage of the popular ignorance of the Act to misrepresent it in the most scandalous manner. It is a practice in honest politics that when a Measure has become law, no matter how one Party may have opposed it, to give it a fair chance in operation, reserving the right to amend it as experience may dictate.

Mr. Lloyd George used to tell a story in those days of

his unpopularity over the Insurance Act. A body was recovered from the Thames. The rescuers, before trying to revive it, turned it over to make sure it was not Lloyd George! Many amusing stories were told about the working of the Act. I was travelling North one day about this time, and in the compartment were two insurance agents from Lancashire who were connected with its administration. One of them related that he went into a cottage to collect insurance premiums, and saw on the mantelshelf a bottle of medicine. He asked the woman if someone was ill. " No ", she replied, " I'm not ill, but I'm in t' Lloyd George, and I never had a bottle of medicine in my life, so I got t' doctor to give me one to see what it was like! " The other man capped this with a story of a panel patient who got a bottle from the chemist on the doctor's prescription. The man's boy came next morning to get the bottle refilled. " But ", said the chemist, " what has become of the bottle he got last night? " " Oh ", said the lad, " the first dose did him so much good that he swallowed the lot."

CHAPTER XV

A New Tory Leader

IN the autumn of 1911 Mr. Balfour resigned the Leadership of the Conservative Party in the Commons, and Mr. Bonar Law was elected his successor. This appointment had a special interest for me. From my first entry into the House of Commons Mr. Bonar Law as a speaker had attracted me. Why I don't quite know. People used to tell me we had much the same style of speaking. He thought so too. He often used to talk to me on this topic. We exchanged confessions on the art and secrets of speech preparation and delivery. It is well known that he never used notes; but he said to me: " I never rise to speak without having in my mind a clear outline of what I intend to say ". The only break in the smoothly running sentences, sounding like a well-delivered recitation, was when he put his fingers into his waistcoat pocket and drew out a scrap of paper and read a devastating quotation from some Liberal speech. There were no attempts at oratory or rhetoric in Mr. Bonar Law's speaking, no purple patches, not even a peroration. He relied for effect on cold reasoning, hard facts and a bitter tongue. His idea of parliamentary debating was to be unsparing of his opponents. He judged the success of a speech by the degree to which it irritated the other side. That was his policy as the Opposition Leader—not to please but to annoy the Liberals. An M.P. once said to me: " I don't think a man can be a good debater here until he has convinced himself that the men on the other side are a gang of scoundrels ". Without agreeing

that a conviction of that sort is necessary to make a good debater, I do think that Mr. Bonar Law's opinion of the members of the Government when he led the Opposition was not of an exalted order.

A greater contrast than that between Mr. Balfour and his successor could not well be imagined. I would like to quote a sentence from a speech delivered by Mr. Asquith the day after Mr. Balfour's resignation of the Leadership of the Opposition. It is a eulogy which will be endorsed by everyone who knew Mr. Balfour as a parliamentary leader. Mr. Asquith said:

> "I will venture to predict that it will be long before we shall see again in the forefront of political strife a personality so invaluable to his friends, so formidable to his foes, so interesting and attractive to friends and foes alike, or such a unique combination of gifts and powers as has made Mr. Balfour by universal consent the most distinguished member of the greatest deliberative Assembly in the world."

Mr. Bonar Law had none of the gifts and qualities of Mr. Balfour. He lacked the charm, the polish, the rapier skill of Mr. Balfour. Mr. Bonar Law had other qualities. He was a first-rate fighting man of the rough-and-tumble order, and never shrank from the ordeal of battle.

Mr. Asquith did not like Mr. Bonar Law. He made no effort to hide his dislike. Mr. Bonar Law certainly gave Mr. Asquith no cause to love him. Mr. Bonar Law's attacks on Mr. Asquith during the heated debates on the Home Rule Bill were vicious and unrestrained. In the adoption of this attitude as Leader of the Opposition I think Mr. Bonar Law did an injustice to himself. He was not naturally bitter and vindictive. All who knew him privately spoke of him with affection. His colleagues in the Coalition Government, both Liberal and Labour, greatly admired and trusted him. They found him a loyal colleague and a warm friend. I can only speak of

him as I knew him in the House of Commons. I have often spoken of the extraordinary change in his manner which came when he passed out of Opposition to the Treasury Bench. The old style of speaking disappeared. He was courteous to his opponents, conciliatory in his actions, and moderate in his language. I may relate a little incident which shows that it was not the real Bonar Law who spoke when he said that the success of a speech must be judged by the extent to which it annoyed the other side. When I came back to the House in 1922, after four years' absence, I spoke for the first time on unemployment. I made a reasoned, quiet, argumentative speech. The Conservatives were then in office. Bonar Law came up to me after the speech and warmly congratulated me on what he called the great improvement in my style from the old days of sledge-hammer hitting. My speech, he said, was a model of what a House of Commons speech should be. I did not remind him that he, too, had changed from the days when he sat on the other side of the House.

Bonar Law once made a public excuse for the vigour and apparent bitterness of his speeches. He said the violence of his language was the measure of his earnestness and conviction. I was interested in that explanation. No man has been more often criticised for bitterness in speech than I have. What my critics have called bitterness was earnestness or indignation. I cannot tolerate insincerity, dishonesty, deceit and evasiveness in a speaker. Such things fill me with contempt and disgust, which I never make any great effort to suppress. I have several styles of speaking adapted to different occasions. When my opponent is obviously insincere or dishonest he gets the style I have just described. If he be honest, but foolish, I deal with him gently in a light bantering way. But the speech I like to deliver is the quiet, argumentative, expository statement.

CHAPTER XVI

Views on Strikes

THE years 1911-12 were a time of great unrest in the labour world. From the point of view of the condition of the working classes there was ample justification for it. It was a period of trade prosperity. Since the beginning of the century our foreign trade increased by nearly 50 per cent. The Income Tax returns showed a great expansion of trade profits. Prices were rising and wages remained stationary. In the previous eleven years wages had risen on the average by 2^d. a week, and the value of the sovereign had dropped to 17s. 6d.

It is rather difficult for us in 1934 to appreciate the scandalously low wages paid twenty years ago. Professor Bowley estimated that in 1911 there were 8,000,000 men employed in regular occupations. Of this number 2,560,000 earned at full-time rates between 15s. and 25s. a week; 3,360,000 between 25s. and 35s. a week. A Board of Trade Report issued in 1906 gave the earnings in the textile trades as follows: In the cotton industry 40 per cent, of the adult men earned less than 25s. a week; 83 per cent, of the adult women earned less than 20s. a week. In the woollen and worsted, jute and linen industries the earnings were considerably lower. I will not trouble to give the earnings in occupations outside the textile trades, except to mention that the Board of Trade published figures in 1911 showing that 63 per cent, of the railway workers were paid less than a pound a week.

These facts were abundant reason for labour unrest. But they were not a justification for adopting methods to raise wages which were costly to the workers, and on the whole ineffective. In 1911 there were 864 strikes and lock-outs involving 931,000 work-people. The number of working days lost was 10,247,000. All these strikes were conducted under circumstances as favourable to workers as they are ever likely to be in a labour dispute. The result of these strikes was a net increase of £26,000 a week in wages. The advances won in 1911 were largely lost the following year as the outcome of further strikes in less favourable conditions.

The principal strikes of this series were the miners, the railwaymen and the transport workers. There was also a strike of tailors in London which involved a large number of work-people. From the point of view of a strike as an instrument for raising wages, every one of these great disputes was a failure. It was the same with the lock-out in the cotton trade which took place in the same period. The railwaymen went back to work in three days, saved from abject surrender by the intervention of the Government. The miners' strike lasted for five weeks. It exhausted the resources of the union, and again the men were saved by the action of Parliament. The London tailors' strike ended in the complete defeat of the workpeople, who, in a manifesto, admitted they were driven back to work by starvation. The transport workers' strike, which took place in June 1912, was hopeless from the first. The leaders appealed to Parliament to help them. They made offers which betrayed the weakness of their position and the hopelessness of their outlook. The call for a national strike met with little response. The simple explanation was that the strike fever which had been raging for two years was subsiding. It had been cooled by the experience of

its futility as a weapon to be used frequently and recklessly.

I got myself into a good deal of trouble with the Left Wing section of the Labour Movement by my outspoken writings and speeches in opposition to the reckless strike policy. The revival of the strike in 1911 was due to many causes, one of which was the agitation of the Syndicalists, who for some time had been carrying on a propaganda among the trade unions in favour of the General Strike as a short cut to the millennium. This propaganda had made some impression on the young members of the unions, and they had forced many of these strikes against the advice of the union officials. The responsible trade union official does not like strikes. He is always blamed when they fail, and he gets no credit when they succeed. The slogan of the Syndicalists was: " No Agreements, no Boards. Fight employers, fight the capitalists, fight everybody." This is very much the same as the policy of the Communists and Left Wing Labour. The Syndicalists of twenty years ago advocated the General Strike as the instrument for achieving the Social Revolution. There is no difference between the object of the Syndicalists and the Socialist League of today. It is a difference of method only. The Socialist League would overthrow the capitalist system, not by a General Strike, but by abolishing the House of Lords and giving dictatorial powers to a Socialist Government.

I was opposed to the strikes of 1911-13 for two reasons. My views on the question remain substantially unchanged. My first reason was that I do not believe that the strike can ever be effective as a general policy for raising the condition of labour. I believe there are other and more effective means. I would not take away from the workmen the right to strike. Strikes, in the absence of a complete and satisfactory organisation of conciliation and arbitra-

tion, may at times be necessary as the only immediate method of redressing grievances. The policy of labour should be, in my opinion, to keep the strike weapon for use in exceptional circumstances, but at the same time to equip itself with other weapons for use in the sphere of reason, so that the strike may in time be altogether unnecessary.

My second reason for opposing the strike epidemic of twenty years ago was that the strikes threatened to destroy the Trade Union Movement. In these strikes it was not the counsel of experienced trade union officials which was followed, but the wild appeals of the revolutionary spirits. The old policy of the trade unions was to build up strong reserves; to refrain from exasperating the public and the employers by never-ceasing threats of strikes; to exhaust every possible means of conciliation before calling out the men, and then not to do so unless there was a reasonable chance of success. By this policy the unions entered upon the strike with the most useful of all assets, namely, a public sympathy which had been won over by the willingness of the men to use every possible means to avert a strike.

The new policy was to enter upon a strike without any effort to obtain a settlement of the grievances by negotiation; to exasperate the employers by every possible means; to indulge in wild and threatening language, which makes it impossible for a self-respecting employer to meet such " leaders " of the men; to never pay any attention to the rather important matter of preparing some means of support during the strike; and to endeavour to cause as much public inconvenience as possible, by involving the services upon which the public needs and convenience depend.

Many of these strikes were engineered in defiance of the executive. It happened in many cases that when

the officials of the unions found they could not control the men they allowed the men to control them. They allowed themselves to be dragged into the turmoil against their better judgment because they had not the courage to face a temporary unpopularity. This defiance of authority is still a too frequent occurrence in the Trade Union Movement. It is always a deplorable spectacle. The basis of trade unionism is collective action. Its strength and usefulness are derived from acting as a disciplined and united body under constituted authority. When groups act on their own in defiance of the union officials they make executive authority contemptible. There is an end to collective bargaining; and labour as a disorganised, unequipped mob throws itself against the powerfully organised and disciplined forces of capitalism to meet the certain fate of disaster and destruction.

The psychology of the strike is a very interesting study to which little attention has been given. M. Sorel, the intellectual exponent of the Syndicalist doctrine, points out that working-class movements are impelled by two main forces, namely, the emotions and the imagination. These, he maintains, are the strongest, if not the only, impulses which can move the masses to take action against their oppressors. These two forces stir the men into action in other directions than strikes. Most popular movements are inspired by the emotions and imagination. That is the reason why they are short-lived, and are constantly changing their form.

During this period I wrote a book, *The Living Wage*, in which I put forward alternatives to the strike. They were the extension of the system of Conciliation Boards and Arbitration Courts and Trades Boards. I was violently abused and cartooned in Mr. Lansbury's paper for my opposition to the strike policy.

In 1908 the Board of Trade had established a Court

of Arbitration under the Conciliation Act. In 1911, when the epidemic of strikes broke out, the Government set up an Industrial Council " for the purpose of considering and enquiring into matters affecting trade disputes; and especially of taking suitable action in regard to any dispute referred to them affecting the principal trades of the country, or which the parties before or after the breaking out of a dispute are themselves unable to settle ".

In 1909 Parliament passed the Trade Boards Act. This Measure was passed without opposition. It was such a departure from the old idea of non-interference with economic laws that nothing but the absolute necessity of dealing with the universally admitted evil of sweating secured agreement that the experiment should be tried. This has proved to be one of the most beneficial Measures ever placed on the Statute Book. At first its scope was limited, but from time to time it has been extended. Since the strike epidemic of 1912 vast progress has been made in establishing methods of regulating wages and conditions by voluntary negotiations. There are few trades or industries where wages and hours are not fixed by agreement between the representatives of the employers and the workmen.

The Sessions of 1912 and 1913 were practically barren of social legislation. The time of the House of Commons was taken up in endless and acrimonious dissensions on Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment. The Labour Party were unfortunate in the ballots for Bills and Motions. They had few opportunities for raising social and industrial questions. On the debate on the Address in 1913 I was appointed by the Labour Party to move an amendment in the following terms:—

" Having regard to the existing industrial and social conditions of large masses of the people arising from a deplorable insufficiency of wages which has persisted notwithstanding the sustained prosperity as reflected in the statistics of trade and employment and a great expansion of national wealth, conditions which have been aggravated by a considerable increase in the cost of living, this House regrets that Your Majesty's gracious speech contains no specific mention of legislation securing a minimum living wage and for preventing a continuance of such unequal division of the fruits of industry by the nationalisation of land, railways, mines and other monopolies."

This led to an unusually interesting debate. It brought the House down to the study of realities. It will be remembered that this was a time of great industrial unrest. In the previous year 4,000,000 working days had been lost by strikes. A number of young Tories were genuinely interesting themselves in industrial and social questions. They had formed a Unionist Social Questions Committee, of which Mr. F. E. Smith and Mr. J. W. Hills were prominent members. With the aid of outside experts they had been considering these questions for the past two years. They issued a very interesting Report, which was a revelation of the mind of the young Tories who realised that there was no future for a political party in this country which has not something to offer the industrial workers. The Report was interesting in its practical proposals, for they contained nothing to which a labour man or trade unionist would object, though he might differ on minor details. The Report began by laying down a good Socialist doctrine which the writers claimed was good old Toryism, namely, that it is incontestably the right and duty of the State to supervise and control the conditions of employment in the interests of the State as a whole. Mr. Balfour, about this time, in one of the most charming speeches he ever delivered in the House of Commons, laid down the same doctrine. He

said the question which now divides parties is not whether the State should ever interfere to regulate industrial and social conditions, but whether it should interfere in a particular way and at a particular time.

The debate on my amendment gave these young Tories the opportunity to put forward the views expounded in this Report. There were good speeches, but the best and most practical was delivered by Mr. Richard Cooper, the Conservative member for Walsall. Some years later Mr. Cooper retired from the House. His retirement lost to the House a fearless and independent member, one who cared little for party cries, but, realising the facts of industrial and social conditions, was anxious to improve them. In this debate he made a speech which might well have come from the Labour benches. He begged the Government to do something then, while trade was good, instead of waiting till trade was bad and then in a panic adopt an unthought-out policy which would do no good. Those were wise words, and if Governments had acted on this policy a great deal of trouble would have been saved.

In moving this amendment I had a full and attentive House. Although my speech was an outspoken condemnation of existing social conditions, it was warmly cheered by the Unionist members when I sat down, and very generously treated by the Conservative Press next day. One of the leading Conservative journals wrote: " The whole House was impressed by the cogency of Mr. Snowden's speech. He is one of the few men in Parliament who have a personality which grips. The pale face, cold brow, keen eye, the calm steel-like earnestness of the man make him worth listening to, and when he sat down he was cheered by the Unionists as well as by his political allies." The Unionists did not carry their approval of the speech to the extent of voting for the amendment, which was lost by a majority of 158. As a matter of fact the amendment

had been so drafted as to make it impossible for the Tories to vote for it.

The only other opportunity we had of raising the social condition of the people question was in the debates on the Finance Bill. Mr. Lloyd George's 1913 Budget was without any special feature. He neither remitted taxation nor imposed new taxes. The new taxes imposed in 1909 were expected to keep pace in their yield with the increasing cost of the Old Age Pensions, National Health Insurance, Labour Exchanges, and other items on the Civil Service votes. Up to 1913 the growing yield from the existing taxes had been sufficient to meet the increasing expenditure. From 1909 to 1913 the national expenditure had risen by over £40,000,000. In 1914 the cost of Old Age Pensions was nearly double the amount the original estimate had foreshadowed. The State's contribution to Health Insurance had risen £2,000,000 a year. But, unfortunately, the main cause of the large increase in national expenditure in these years was the cost of the Navy. If there was one thing more than another to which the Liberal Government was pledged in 1906 it was the reduction of expenditure on armaments. When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman took office the Navy vote stood at £36,373,000. It was reduced the following year to £31,700,000. In each succeeding year the cost of the Navy went up, and in 1913 it had risen to £46,000,000. In the first seven years of this Liberal Government they increased the expenditure on the fighting services by a sum equal to the cost of the new social reforms they had enacted!

CHAPTER XVII

Disarmament

ON the second reading of the Finance Bill on 2nd June 1913 I moved an amendment on behalf of the Labour Party in favour of the abolition of food taxes, and of finding compensating revenue by increasing the direct taxes on unearned incomes and large estates. The amendment, of course, was not carried. This amendment put the Government in a difficult position, for a Free Breakfast Table had long been a plank in the Radical programme. In replying on this debate Mr. Asquith defended food taxes as a convenient method of securing from the working classes their proportionate contribution to the national expenditure.

The competitive race in Naval Construction, which had begun in 1908 with Mr. McKenna's scheme to build four Dreadnoughts at a cost of £2,000,000 each, was causing a good deal of concern among the Radical and Labour elements in the country. The Radicals were handicapped in their opposition to this menacing increase of expenditure on armaments by the fact that it was being done by a Liberal Government, which was supposed to stand for Peace and Retrenchment.

The Independent Labour Party was so impressed by the danger to world peace of this progressive increase in armaments that it decided to devote the winter of 1913-14 to a nation-wide campaign against Militarism. At that time the organisation for the adoption of compulsory military service was very active, and the I.L.P. campaign

directed special attention to this menace. This campaign was one of the most successful pieces of work which the I.L.P. had ever undertaken. We raised a special fund for the purpose, and prepared and distributed at the meetings a large quantity of telling leaflets against war. Over 200 demonstrations were organised, and these included gatherings which crowded the largest halls in our biggest industrial centres. I gave practically the whole of my time that winter to this campaign, and addressed great meetings in over thirty large towns.

At the Annual Conference of the Labour Party held in Glasgow in January 1914 this question was raised in a motion by the Executive, moved by Mr. Clynes, which " strongly condemned the enormous, ruinous and unnecessary growth in naval expenditure ", and declared that this country " should press by every means in its power for a peace federation including Britain, France and Germany ". In moving this resolution Mr. Clynes said that " during the last twelve months there had been evidence of international good-will greater than they had seen in modern times, and the main spokesmen of the people affected and burdened by great navies had been telling the peoples of the world and their various Governments how much they desired to live in peace, and how anxious they were to arrange terms of enduring friendship. It was at such a time, when all the signs were favourable for practical work and for putting an end to this Godless business, that they were faced with a further increase in the cost of the British Navy." These remarks now read strangely in view of what happened within six months, yet at the time they were uttered they undoubtedly reflected the state of public opinion. At the same time Mr. Lloyd George was giving public expression to similar sentiments, and declaring " that this country should take a bold, independent step to restrict military expenditure ".

Within a few weeks of Mr. Lloyd George making this statement the Government introduced Army and Navy Estimates which showed an increase of just under six millions on the previous year's Estimates.

Three years before, Mr. Winston Churchill had been appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. This was a job after his own heart. If he could have had his way he would have covered the five oceans with British Dreadnoughts. No Two Power standard would satisfy him. I can imagine something of the fight that went on between him and Mr. Lloyd George—the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Lloyd George had to provide the money for Mr. Churchill's ambitions and extravagances. He saw the money which he wished to devote to new social services squandered by Mr. Churchill on naval expansion. There is no doubt that Mr. Lloyd George hated and abominated these increases in naval and military expenditure. But he had been driven to them against his will. I learnt something later of the comparative helplessness of a Chancellor to fight successfully the demands of the heads of the fighting services, backed up by powerful influences, and often getting little or no support from his Cabinet colleagues.

For four years up to this year (1914-15) Mr. Lloyd George had been able to avoid new taxation, the increasing yield of the taxes he imposed in his 1909 Budget being sufficient to meet the increasing cost of his new social services. In 1914-15 the cost of these new social services was to be £22,000,000. But in 1909 Mr. Lloyd George had not calculated upon Mr. Churchill going to the Admiralty. In 1914 the cost of the Navy was £18,250,000 more than in 1909. This upset all Mr. Lloyd George's financial plans, and in his Budget of 1914-15 he was obliged to impose new taxation to yield £14,000,000 a year. This was wholly due to the increased expenditure on

the Navy. The fact that Mr. Lloyd George intensely disliked this was proved by a strong attack he made on naval and military expenditure in his speech on the third reading of his Finance Bill on 23rd July 1914—less than a fortnight before the outbreak of war. The extract is long, but it is worth quoting in view of the fact that ten years later the nations of Europe were spending more on armaments than in 1914, and that the awful experience of a Great War had not brought that sanity to which he hopefully looked forward. Great Britain is now spending twice as much for war purposes as the total national expenditure in 1914.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE ON EXPENDITURE ON ARMAMENTS

" Here in Europe we are spending £350,000,000 a year upon all this machinery of slaughter. Is it conceivable that the House of Commons should regard that as a state of things which can continue? I cannot believe it. It would really make one despair of the common sense of nations to imagine that that state, not of armed peace, but of armament which is equivalent to war, could continue. It is true that it is warfare carried on by means of taxes and all sorts of scientific devices, but none the less it is war between the nations. I cannot help thinking that civilisation, which is able to deal with disputes amongst individuals and small communities at home, and is able to regulate these by means of some sane and well-ordered arbitrament, should be able to extend its operations to the larger sphere of disputes amongst States. When that happens there will be a much better method of raising money for social reform than by taxation. I am the last man in the world to criticise the raising of taxation for social reform. If there is no other means of raising money than by taxation, I say to the rich community that we are bound to proceed to the last penny of our resources in order to save millions of our people from the wretchedness they now suffer. May I also say that I look forward to the time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be able to raise money by being able to say that sanity has

re-established itself amongst the people of the world, and that we are able to save all this gigantic expenditure which is now being entailed by devices for war."

The debate on Mr. Churchill's Navy Estimates took place on 18th March 1914. The early part of the debate was enlivened by a characteristic speech from Lord Charles Beresford of *Condor* fame. Lord Charles was a very popular member of the House. Members of all Parties liked him for his breeziness and outspokenness. One could well understand his popularity with the men of the lower deck. He was no war-monger. I remember him talking to me once about the horror of war. " It is the men who know what war is who hate it most", he said. But, of course, he was a great advocate of a strong British Navy, which he believed was not a provocation of war, but a guarantee of peace.

His speech on the debate with which I am dealing was an amusing attack on Mr. Churchill. Lord Charles could never get over his astonishment that the British Navy should be under the direction of a mere boy who knew nothing about it. During Lord Charles* speech Mr. Churchill sat on the Treasury, his legs stretched out, trying to look contemptuous. This indifference annoyed the gallant Admiral. " What does he know about the Navy? " he asked. " I was fighting for the men on the lower deck when he was at the business end of a feeding-bottle." At this Mr. Churchill gave a terrific yawn. <(I am sorry to bore the right honourable gentleman so much," said Lord Charles. " I and many of his friends have been able to see a long way down the right honourable gentleman's throat." The House laughed, and Churchill was visibly annoyed. He sought revenge later by yawning again more loudly and opening his mouth still more widely.

It was in this debate that I made the longest speech

I have ever delivered in the House of Commons, and the most sensational I have made as a private member. For two or three years a young Quaker Socialist named Walton Newbold, who has a special gift for that sort of work, had been making an investigation into the ramifications of the International Armament Ring, and the financial interests of Members of Parliament in the British armament firms. This material—an enormous mass—was handed over to me. I sorted it out, and knocked all the main points into a speech. It says much for the care and accuracy of Mr. Newbold's revelations that not one of his charges was ever challenged. I think I had better let the newspapers describe my speech in this debate.

" One of the greatest speeches that a House of great speeches has ever known was made this evening by Mr. Philip Snowden. When his spare, rather ascetic figure rose from below the gangway the House had thinned under a previous speaker. In a quarter of an hour it had filled again, and groups of members stood below the bar, as, in a stillness that was almost oppressive, Mr. Snowden launched one of the most terrific and damning indictments that has ever been formulated.

" Not for many years have statements so serious been made across the floor of the House, and, apparently on such categorical evidence. The indictment was so closely framed, and Mr. Snowden's Parliamentary style is so admirable, that the House listened in the silence of keen attention for nearly two hours.

" Mr. Snowden's speech was devoted to the armaments ' ring '. It bristled with names, dates and figures. How the ' scare ' of 1909 was made, the reception of Mr. Mulliner by the Cabinet, was detailed step by step. The expansion of the Estimates followed. The whole of the extra work was given out to contractors, instead of to Government dockyards.

" The result has been the profits of Vickers have risen from £474,000 to £872,000, and are still rising. Armstrong's profits have risen from £429,000 to £777,000, and Beardmore's from **£72,000 to £201,000.**

" Mr. Snowden states that armament shares have risen on the market as a result of Mr. Churchill's speeches, and, regarding the Opposition, he said that he would find it difficult to throw a stone without hitting a shareholder. Amid mingled amusement and irritation, he proceeded to pick out victims—Cabinet Ministers, a President of the Free Church Council, and private members who have been particularly active in pressing expenditure on the Admiralty. He told how a First Lord had described the relations between his department and the firms as far more friendly than ordinary trade relations. He described how the ' ring ' is supplying Austria with torpedoes with which to sink the battleships of this country.

" And then Mr. Snowden concentrated upon the personal links which unite the armaments ' ring ' with the spending departments. Amid strained silence, he cited the case of an ex-Permanent Secretary to the Treasury—who on retirement joined the board of Armstrongs. It was a matter * of suspicion ' —dangerous to the reputation of the Treasury for ' strict probity '.

" The trade paper, *Arms and Explosives,* had explained why ex-public servants were sought after. They ' know the ropes * —* smooth away inconveniences '—are ' in touch with old comrades '—gather * early information '—and as ' kissing goes by favour ' ' the result is good ', though some people might talk about ' corruption '. These phrases from *Arms and Explosives* created a deep impression, especially when Mr. Snowden added that, according to his researches, not one contracting firm for armaments was without ex-public servants amongst its high officials.

" He mentioned the case of an Admiral who had been Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the repository of the most confidential information in the whole range of British strategy, but who on retirement joined the board of Armstrongs, and is now responsible for that firm's Italian works, which builds for the Triple Alliance, presumably against this country.

" According to Mr. Snowden, the whole of the naval secrets —so jealously guarded, by the way, from the House of Commons are now at the disposal of an international concern which is furnishing armaments to foreign Powers. Nor were * dockyard

members ' spared. A delightful speech by one of them was quoted in which complaining constituents were told that their member was really active about contracts, but that he was * not so simple as to shout in the House of Commons \ No, he worked ' quietly, carefully'—calling at the War Office and the Admiralty in order to * get them '.

"As he sat down, after one of the most remarkable Parliamentary triumphs of recent years, a burst of applause broke out from the thronged Strangers' Gallery—an unprecedented demonstration that was instantly stilled by the attendants. A group of Liberals walked along to Mr. Snowden's seat to shake his hand and give him their congratulations. A note was passed along the benches from Mr. Winston Churchill. It was the tribute of a great man to one who had proved the greater. Mr. Snowden bowed his acknowledgements and put the note in his pocket."

The speech made a considerable impression abroad, and I received letters of congratulation from all parts of the world. It was published as a pamphlet in several languages. Alas, the problem of vested private interests in the manufacture of armaments is as serious in 1934 as it was in 1914, and the efforts of the League of Nations to deal with the appalling traffic in arms have so far done nothing to lessen its nefarious activities.

CHAPTER XVIII

Rowdyism in the Commons

I HAVE seen many rows in the House of Commons. The two most turbulent and disgraceful had Mr. Asquith for their storm centre. The first of these took place on the 24th July 1911. The Parliament Bill was passing through its final stages. Mr. Asquith had obtained the consent of the King to create peers if necessary to overcome the resistance of the House of Lords. The Tory Opposition in the Commons were infuriated at being outmanoeuvred. The "constitutional" party had relied upon the Peers to resist any curtailment of their Veto, though the country at the General Election had endorsed the policy of the Parliament Bill.

From the opening of the sitting it was evident that members expected that something lively was going to happen. The Tory benches were packed. When Mr. Asquith entered the House at the end of questions his followers rose to their feet and cheered him. Derisive cries came from the Opposition benches. When Mr. Asquith rose to move the Order of the Day pandemonium broke out. Before he could utter a word members were on their feet shouting and trying to put points of order. The Speaker appealed in vain for a hearing for the Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith sat down occasionally to allow the storm to subside. But each time he rose it broke out with greater fury. Dozens of members were all trying to say something at once. Lord Hugh Cecil, the representative of the culture of Oxford University,

and Mr. F. E. Smith were the ringleaders of the riot. The latter managed to get in a coherent sentence to the effect that he and his noble friend were entitled to apply the same treatment to Mr. Asquith which the Liberals had given to Alfred Lyttleton seven years before. Above the tumult the voice of Lord Hugh Cecil could at times be heard hurling insults at the Prime Minister. Will Crooks, pointing at Lord Hugh, shouted: "Many a man has been certified as insane for less than half what you are doing ".

After half an hour the storm abated on the Speaker pointing out that Mr. Balfour would probably follow the Prime Minister, and unless Mr. Asquith was allowed to speak there would be no chance for Mr. Balfour. Mr. Asquith was then allowed to proceed, but every sentence of his brief speech was interrupted with jeers and insults. Mr. Balfour followed. During the disturbance he had made no effort to restrain the rowdyism of his followers. He made no apology, he expressed no regret, but excused their conduct on the ground that deep and passionate resentment was felt with the policy of the Government.

The howling-down of Mr. Asquith had been premeditated and organised. Lord Hugh Cecil had foreshadowed it in a letter to the *Times* three weeks before. Though Mr. Balfour gave his tacit approval of the conduct of his rowdies, their action was resented by the more reputable Unionists and Unionist newspapers, some of whom publicly expressed their disapproval of the affair.

The second scene I witnessed in the House of Commons, far more violent than the one I have described, happened in the discussions on the Home Rule Bill in November 1912. On a Monday afternoon, when members are late in turning up, the Tories organised an unexpected

division. They had arranged for a full attendance of their supporters to be within call at four o'clock. Sir Frederick Banbury produced a manuscript amendment to the Financial Resolution of the Home Rule Bill. The division on it was taken at once. The Liberal Whips were unprepared, and the Government were defeated by twenty-one votes. The amendment was a vital one, and unless it were reversed it would be impossible to proceed with the Home Rule Bill.

Two days later Mr. Asquith produced a resolution to rescind the Banbury amendment. The debate on this motion proceeded quietly for two hours. There were no indications of the coming storm. A Tory member was speaking, and when making some references to Mr. Asquith there broke out from the Tory benches cries of " Traitor ". The " traitor ", of course, was the Prime Minister. The Speaker intervened and said that if he knew who had used the expression he should call upon him to withdraw it. A candidate for martyrdom was there. The redoubtable Sir William Bull announced that he was the man, and to support his claim he again shouted " Traitor ". He was ordered to leave the House. He received his crown of glory the next evening at a great Unionist demonstration in the Albert Hall, where he was uproariously received as a hero who had said " Traitor ".

After Sir William Bull's expulsion from the House the Tories evidently got together and decided they would have a row. About half-past seven Sir Rufus Isaacs, the Attorney-General, rose to speak. There was no obvious reason why he should be attacked. But immediately he rose the whole Tory Party burst into a chorus: " Adjourn! Adjourn! " The Speaker appealed in vain for order. The chorus gained strength. It was clearly evident that there was a determined conspiracy

to prevent any discussion. Front-bench Tories openly defied the Speaker. The uproar was terrific. Liberals were on their feet shouting and shaking their fists at the Opposition. It was useless to go on, so the Speaker rose and said: "In my opinion grave disorder has arisen." "I think so, too," interjected Jerry MacVeagh. So the Speaker suspended the sitting for an hour.

It was thought that an interval would allow passions to cool. But the Tories employed the hour to revive their strength from the resources of the dining-room. When the House resumed the rowdyism was renewed with greater violence than before. Sir Rufus Isaacs was permitted to say "Mr. Speaker", and no more. A Tory member, Lord Helmsley, rose, but his Tory colleagues howled him down. The Speaker pleaded with the Tory front bench to give a hearing to him. It was all in vain. It was quite obvious that there would be no speaking that evening, so the Speaker adjourned the House till next day. The Tories acclaimed their victory by jumping up, shouting and waving handkerchiefs and papers for several minutes. The Labour members had been silent and disgusted spectators of this scandalous exhibition. It was a revelation to them of the breeding and culture of the "gentlemanly" Party. The Liberals and Nationalists behaved with great restraint throughout the whole proceedings. It was a scene to cause feelings of contempt rather than of anger. As members were walking out of the House, the sight of Mr. Churchill and Colonel Seely together—two former Tories—exasperated the Tories, who assailed them with cries of "Rats! Rats!" Mr. Ronald M'Neill, the seven-foot Ulster Unionist, seized a book from the table and hurled it at Mr. Churchill, who was struck on the side of the face and bruised. The House met next day in a subdued mood.

Shortly after this incident Sir William Bull and Mr. Rowland Hunt—familiarly called Boadicea owing to some reference he had made in a speech to this ancient female warrior—were acting as tellers in a division. Mr. Hunt had just been in trouble with the Tory Whips owing to some act of indiscipline. After expressing his penitence he had been readmitted to the fold. Sir William Bull was very stout and red-faced. As these walked together up the floor to the table, Jerry MacVeagh shouted out: " Behold the fatted calf and the prodigal son! " It was one of the wittiest sallies I have heard in the House.

I remember another instance of disorderly conduct which was not the outcome of premeditation, but of " spontaneous combustion ". Mr. George Lansbury had been returned to Parliament at the second General Election of 1910. He soon made himself conspicuous by asking innumerable questions on every possible subject, and by impulsive interventions in debate. At this time the militant suffragist agitation led by Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, was attracting a good deal of public notice. Their activities had not yet assumed the violent form they did later. A number of women had been arrested for small offences and had gone to prison as the alternative to promising to be of good behaviour. Mr. Lansbury, always the champion of people in distress, put questions to the Home Secretary, about the alleged harsh treatment of these women in prison. I may say that Mr. Lansbury was not alone in taking up the cases of these women, for Mr. Keir Hardie and myself were quite as active on their behalf, until their activities became criminal and alienated all sympathy. In reply to a question which Mr. Hardie had put about one of these prisoners, the Prime Minister made the remark " that these women could walk out of prison

this afternoon if they gave the undertaking asked for ". For some reason this remark put Mr. Lansbury into a state of uncontrolled passion. He was sitting beside me, and he hurled this remark at Mr. Asquith: "It is perfectly disgraceful that the Prime Minister of England should make such a remark! " This caused an uproar. Mr. Lansbury left his seat below the gangway and walked up to the Ministerial Bench, shook his fist in Mr. Asquith's face, and hurled at him a volume of abuse the like of which I have hardly ever heard. " You are murdering, torturing and driving women mad, and tell them they can walk out! It is the most disgraceful thing in the history of England. You will go down to history as the man who tortured innocent women. It is disgraceful to tell women who are in prison on principle that * they can walk out'." And so he went on for several minutes. The Speaker was very lenient with him. He called him to order several times, but Mr. Lansbury was too excited to realise what was being said. Finally he cooled down and turned to the Speaker and said, like a man recovering his senses: " What do you want me to do, Mr. Speaker? " The Speaker replied that he had told him three times to leave the House for grossly disorderly conduct. Mr. Lansbury withdrew. This was one of those scenes which do not arouse the indignation of the House. Members realised the deep sincerity of Mr. Lansbury, and that he had been carried away by his emotions and probably did not know what he was saying.

Mr. Lansbury came more and more under the influence of Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter. By the autumn of 1912 they had captured him completely as an instrument of their policy. At that time they were conducting a campaign of attack on Liberal Ministers and those Labour members who were prominent supporters of women's suffrage. The Conservatives they

left severely alone. Their demand was that the Labour Party should vote against the Government on every question until they were either driven from office or compelled to give votes to women.

This policy was obviously so farcical as not to deserve a moment's consideration. The Pankhursts prevailed on Mr. Lansbury to become its champion in the Labour movement. His action can only be explained if one understands the truth of Mr. Augustine Birrell's description of him. He said: " the trouble with Lansbury is that he will let his bleeding heart run away with his bloody head ". Mr. Lansbury was at that time a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party and of the National Council of the I.L.P. Without a word of consultation with his colleagues on either body, he sent out a circular to all the affiliated branches of the Labour Movement, asking them to endorse the Pankhurst policy. In view of the fact that Mr. Lansbury is now a person of importance and influence in the Labour Party it is well to give fairly fully the story of this attempt by him to dictate the policy of the Labour Party, an attempt which, had it been partially successful, would have disrupted the Labour Movement. The resolution which Mr. Lansbury asked the branches of the Labour Movement to endorse called upon the Labour members of Parliament to vote constantly and relentlessly against the Government from then onwards until they had either driven them from office or compelled them to introduce and carry a proposal giving votes to* women on equal terms with men.

Both the Executive of the Labour Party and the Council of the I.L.P. repudiated Mr. Lansbury's action. There was no response from the branches, so Mr. Lansbury decided to appeal to Bow and Bromley. Without even informing his colleagues on the Council of the I.L.P., although he was one of its Parliamentary members and had been

financially assisted as a candidate by the Party, he resigned his seat to contest the constituency on his policy. He neither sought nor did he receive the endorsement of any National Labour organisation. The Labour Party Executive passed a resolution that his candidature should not receive the collective or *individual* support of the Labour Party. Some days before the Executive passed that resolution, four Labour members of Parliament had given a pledge to Mr. Lansbury to speak for him in the contest, and they felt bound to carry out their promise. Keir Hardie and I were wholly opposed to his policy; we strongly disapproved of his action in resigning his seat. But we were personal friends of his, and we wanted, if possible, to save him from the consequences of his own folly. So we went together to address a meeting on his behalf, making it a condition that nobody connected with Mrs. Pankhurst's Movement should be allowed to appear on the platform. Mr. Lansbury was badly beaten. He paid the penalty of " letting his heart run away with his head "—expulsion from the House of Commons for the next ten years.

There was one other feature in this incident which I must mention, but do not wish to stress. It illustrated a trait in Mr. Lansbury's make-up which the public do not understand. The Report of the Labour Party Executive on this matter said: " He has not observed even ordinary loyalty to his colleagues. From first to last he has gone his own way irrespective of Party wishes ". Many instances could be given of Mr. Lansbury's desire to force himself into a position of leadership in the movement. He has run newspapers, to air his own views and policies, in competition with the struggling official organs of the movement. He started a weekly journal under the modest title of *Lansbury *s Weekly* in competition with the organ of the I.L.P., the *New Leader.* When it was pointed

out to him how mischievous his action was he would not listen, and in consequence he destroyed his own paper and nearly ruined the *New Leader.* When *Lansbury's Weekly* came to disaster, and was finally incorporated in the *New Leader,* Mr. Lansbury made it a condition that he should be given a platform in the *New Leader.*

Mr. Lansbury has many good qualities. He has more vigour than any man I have known except Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Tom Mann. His sincere devotion to the cause of the workers is undeniable. He has seen much of the sordid and hard lives of the poor. He lives among them and sees their struggles and sufferings. His experiences have eaten into his very soul. He hates injustice and tyranny. It was this that drove him to his irrational action on the Women's Suffrage question. He is impressionable and impulsive. He has the fatal gift of fluency. He is like a popular Wesleyan minister—the late Peter Mackenzie—who, when called before a committee of the Conference to answer for the nakedness of his language, excused himself by saying: " Praise the Lord! The words rush out of my mouth before I have time to put their shirts on." I doubt if Mr. Lansbury ever prepared a speech in his life, and if he did I am sure he would never be able to deliver it. There should be room in a movement for all sorts of men, and Mr. Lansbury has gifts which have won for him a warm place in the hearts of many of his countrymen and women.

CHAPTER XIX

About Public Debates

PUBLIC debates used to be more popular than they are nowadays. In my early propaganda days I often took part in them. My first encounter was shortly after I had taken to the public platform. Up to that time I had had no experience of extempore speaking. My addresses were more of the nature of lectures than speeches. They were very carefully prepared and were practically committed to memory. For my first public debate I prepared my opening speech very fully, and I looked forward with some trepidation to the speech I should have to make in reply to my opponent. It was then that I discovered that I had the gift of being able to speak without preparation. I had taken to public speaking rather late in life. I was thirty years of age before I gave my first public address. Up to that time I had looked with something like awe upon the men who could come on to a platform or into a pulpit and hold forth for an hour. That seemed to me to be an accomplishment I could never hope to acquire.

I think, however, it is a very good thing for a person beginning public speaking to prepare his speech with the utmost care. It gives him confidence, and he soon gains facility in expressing his thoughts. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain once said that it was not given to every man to become an orator, but he held the opinion that any man with patient practice could acquire fluency in the expression of his views. This I believe to be quite true, though it assumes, of course, that the person has views to express.

I never had any nervousness in addressing a public meeting, or when speaking in the House of Commons. In my early years in Parliament, with the exception of my maiden speech, to which I have already referred, I always prepared my parliamentary speeches for a big debate with great care. I equipped myself with full notes, though I seldom had the need to refer to them. Men differ greatly in this respect. Some members of Parliament are painfully nervous. We had a case in the 1906 Session of one of our Labour members who had quite a reputation as a vigorous platform orator. For this reason he had acquired the nick-name of " Fighting Mac ". He was a powerfully built man, but he never rose in the House of Commons without his legs trembling violently. On one occasion he had been appointed by the Labour Party, much against his will, to move a resolution on Naval Policy. He had had good notice of the coming debate, and prepared a speech which would take an hour in delivery. When his name appeared on the tape I at once went into the House. I was surprised to meet him coming out of the Chamber. I asked what was the matter. He said: " I have broken down completely. I was too nervous to go on, and I have come out of the Chamber in disgrace/' I felt extremely sorry for him. His constituents were very much disappointed at his failure to maintain the reputation he had made in his constituency. They sent up a deputation to a Committee of the Labour Party of which I was a member, to see if we could do anything to help him to overcome his nervousness. He was defeated at the following Election.

In a later Parliament, a young Tory member confided to me that he wanted to make his maiden speech and he asked for my advice. I recommended him to prepare a short speech, and on no account to speak more than fifteen minutes. He followed my advice, and his speech was quite successful. He often expressed his gratitude

to me for the advice I gave him. He has since become quite a confident and loquacious member. When he used to attack me in the Budget debates, as he frequently did, I almost regretted that I had helped to give him the confidence which then enabled him to be a nuisance to me.

I had three public debates on Socialism with members of the House of Commons. One of them was with Mr. Tomkinson, the Liberal member for Crewe. He was a very likeable man, and I had a great respect for him. On the occasion of the debate sympathy with him was added to my respect for him. The debate was held in his own constituency. He had not the least knowledge of Socialism, and he made a poor show.

My next debate with a member of Parliament was with a different type of man. He was Mr. Arthur Markham, afterwards Sir Arthur Markham, member for a Nottinghamshire Division. Mr. Markham was a large coal owner in the county. He was a man of strong character, and wonderful courage. The only thing I remember in connection with our debate was a remark he made in reply to a quotation I gave from John Stuart Mill. This quotation is well known, and it reads: " I agree with the Socialist writers in their conception of the form which industrial operations tend to assume in the advance of improvement, and I entirely share their opinion that the time is ripe for commencing this transformation and that it should by all just and effectual means be aided and encouraged/' Mr. Markham said that John Stuart Mill could never have made a statement like that because he stayed with his father only three weeks before he died! Mr. Markham had invited me to be his guest after the debate. I was unable to accept, having made other arrangements. Perhaps it is as well that I did not stay with him, for had I done so,

it is likely that whenever I was referred to in his hearing as a Socialist he would have said I could not possibly be a Socialist because I had stayed a night with him! Mr. Markham once gave me a very great shock in the House of Commons. He suffered from heart disease, and that affliction caused his sudden death some years later. He was making a speech immediately behind me. He had a sudden attack of heart failure, and I feared that it was going to be fatal. However, to my great relief and satisfaction, it passed away, and he was able to resume his speech.

The third debate I had with a member of Parliament was perhaps the most interesting of them all. Sir William Bull, the popular member for Hammersmith, after the Election of 1906, became obsessed by the belief that Socialism was making great progress in the country and that a vigorous opposition must be offered to the movement. He started an organisation which he called " The Enemies of the Red Flag ", which he conducted at his own expense. His active opposition to Socialism induced the Hammersmith Branch of the I.L.P. to challenge him to a public debate with me on the subject. It took place in the Hammersmith Town Hall. Both sides were there in strong force. The proceedings were carried out very good-humouredly. I led off, and gave an exposition of the economic basis of Socialism. The line I took was something quite different from what he had expected.. He began his reply by saying that he had been knocked off his feet. The Socialism I had advocated was something very different from that he had expected, and my principles were on a much higher plane than those of the people who preached Socialism at the street corners of Hammersmith. All the points that he had prepared for his reply he confessed were inappropriate to what I had said. So instead of making a speech he put about

a score of questions to me, few of which had anything to do with Socialism. He wanted to know if I was in favour of abolishing the Monarchy and deposing King Edward, and whether I was in favour of the partition of the colonies, keeping out foreign trade, and destroying the legal fabric of a thousand years. I closed the debate with a speech that raised our supporters to a state of frenzy. It all ended very amicably, but I regret to say that Sir William felt his discomfiture so badly that he did not speak to me in the House for weeks after. We became very good friends again, and a year or two after he admitted to me that he had changed his views materially upon Socialism. His main objection to it was a fear of the demoralisation which would result from too much State interference with the lives of the people.

I was somewhat surprised at the temerity of these members of Parliament in taking on these debates. They could not expect to be experts upon these questions, and they faced an opponent who for ten years had spoken practically every night upon the subject. I was quite familiar with every objection which had ever been raised against Socialism, and had an answer to each quite ready. I never cared much for public debates. I doubt if they do much good. The partisans of each side gather together as if it were a boxing contest, cheering their respective sides boisterously. But I doubt if they change anybody's opinions. They were useful to our people because the money paid for admission replenished the branch funds, but in the case of the debate with Sir William Bull the proceeds were given to the Lord Mayor's Cripples Fund.

In 1908 I received an invitation to take part in one of the debates of the Oxford Union. At that time Mr. Charles Lister, the son of Lord Ribblesdale, was an undergraduate, and I think it was to him this invitation was due. He had imbibed Socialist principles and was

active in propagating them amongst the undergraduates. This promising young man died in the war. Lord Ribblesdale, I think, lost two sons, and no heir to the peerage was left. Charles Lister was a very able young fellow, and had he lived he certainly would have made his mark in life. I went down to the Union to support a motion, " that under modern industrial conditions the public ownership of land and capital is essential to the welfare of the community ". This resolution was moved by Mr. R. A. Knox, son of the Bishop of Manchester. He is now widely known as Father Knox. There was a very large attendance of members of the Union. There were two speakers on each side before I rose. The meeting partook very much of the character of a public meeting. The undergraduates cheered their own side, but the proceedings were very orderly. I received great applause when I sat down, and the hopes of carrying the resolution, which before the meeting had never been entertained (for Socialism was very young in the University at that time), had risen considerably. When the voting was taken 214 votes were given for the Motion and 258 against. Charles Lister, writing upon this debate, said that it was difficult to say how far the vote represented the spread of Socialism in Oxford. He inclined to the belief that the large minority was rather a personal tribute to myself than the acceptance of the terms of the Motion.

CHAPTER XX

Royal Commissions and Committees

IN the early part of the Session of 1906, Mr. Lloyd George approached me with an invitation to sit upon a Royal Commission he proposed to set up to enquire into the subject of the Canals and Waterways of the country. I accepted the invitation, and spent three and a half years in the investigation. Like the work of most Royal Commissions, little came of our patient and laborious investigation. In the course of our enquiry we visited Germany, France and Belgium to see what had been done in these countries in the way of utilising canals and waterways for transport purposes. The fact that the railways and waterways were State-owned in Germany facilitated the use of both these means of transport. This avoided wasteful competition, each means of transport taking the traffic which it could most economically handle. The Governments of Germany, France and Belgium received us very cordially, and gave us every facility for our enquiry.

The Commission also visited Ireland. This was my first visit to Ireland, and the tour was most interesting to me. We first went to Dublin, where we took evidence from local authorities and other bodies from the southern and western counties. We had many typical Irish experiences. Much of the evidence tendered was obviously quite unreliable. One of the witnesses was telling us of the vast undeveloped coal resources of County Kilkenny. He gave us some figures of the then output of coal in

the county. On turning to the official statistics of the output of coal for the whole of Ireland we found that the total was far lower than the figure he had given for Kilkenny alone. When faced by this fact the witness calmly said that he took no notice of official statistics. He made his own estimates. The clerk to a County Council came before us. He had prepared no precis of his evidence, and explained that the reason was that the British Government had not provided him with a typewriter and typist! It was always the same. The British Government was always expected to pay for everything. When asked why the local authority had not done certain work the invariable answer was: " The British Government takes millions of money out of Ireland, and she ought to give it back ". The Act of Union had destroyed the spirit of self-reliance. We had plenty of proof that in the latter part of the eighteenth century, under an Irish Government, there was a good deal of public spirit, and great schemes of public works had been carried out. After the Union most of them were allowed to fall into disuse.

After we had taken oral evidence in Dublin we visited some of the country canals and waterways. We took the boat at Banagher and went down the Shannon to Killaloe. It was a tragic sight. On this magnificent waterway—by far the finest in the United Kingdom—we never saw a boat till we reached Killaloe, and the country through which we passed was a scene of desolation. I understand that the Free State Government has carried out a great scheme for the utilisation of the water-power of the Shannon, showing something of the enterprise and public spirit of the previous Home Rule Government of over a century ago.

We had an amusing piece of evidence from Limerick. The railway terminus there was a considerable distance from the docks. To tranship cargoes from the train to

the docks added two shillings a ton to the cost. When we asked why the railway had not been carried to the docks we were told that that would have deprived the local carting agents of their livelihood, and jaunting-car owners of the cross-city passenger traffic I

I made a number of friendships with the members of this Commission, including the Chairman—Lord Shuttleworth. I have sat on many Royal Commissions, but I have never known a chairman more whole-heartedly devoted to this work than was Lord Shuttleworth. Even now, though in his ninetieth year, he is still interested in the subject of our enquiry. I hear from him occasionally, and he has not yet abandoned all hope that something practical may result from his arduous labours.

The late Sir John Brunner was a member of the Commission, and during the long enquiry we became very good friends. He gave me long accounts of the early struggles of the business founded by Dr. Mond and himself. It was the remarkable combination of the keen business man and the able scientist which gave this firm its world-wide reputation. He told me that when they first started business they had practically no capital. He was in debt to his landlady for lodgings, and paid her by giving her Founders' shares in the company they were establishing—a gift which turned out to be a gold mine for the fortunate landlady. He was a believer in trade unionism, and told me that he never had any difficulty in getting on with the trade union officials. When they came before him on deputations he received them cordially, brought out the whisky and cigars, made them feel quite at home, got them into a congenial mood, and then the business was soon settled to their mutual satisfaction. Sir John Brunner was a man with sound Radical principles, and a great advocate and supporter of peace. Some years later, when I made a speech in the House of

Commons on the Armaments Ring, he paid the expenses of its publication in pamphlet form.

Another interesting member of this Commission was the late Lord Brassey. He was a very popular member of the Commission. His dry humour and invariable good temper endeared him to us all. My readers will know that he had sailed the seas in his yacht, the *Sunbeam*, covering 350,000 miles. We were at one time discussing the possibilities of a Forth and Clyde Canal, in order to save sea-borne traffic between Glasgow and Leith the voyage round by the Pentland Firth. Lord Brassey told us, out of unsurpassed knowledge of the seas of the world, that Pentland Firth is the second stormiest water in the world. The stormiest, he said, is the channel between the North and South Islands of New Zealand. I don't know all the rough seas, but I know these two, and I never want to cross a rougher water than the New Zealand channel. Lord Brassey went with us to Germany. He left us rather mysteriously at Rudesheim-on-Rhine. The last we saw of him he was standing on the pier there apparently in charge of two suspicious looking individuals. Two nights before he had made a speech on German naval policy at a dinner given to us at Cologne. When he unexpectedly left us we suspected that he had been arrested by the German authorities as a British spy! However, it transpired that nothing more serious had happened than that he had deserted us to spend a few days with friends at Bingen.

I had not long been a member of this Commission before I discovered that the question of transport could not be effectively dealt with by piecemeal methods. At that time the motor-car was just coming into use, and I saw its great possibilities, not only for passenger traffic but for the transport of goods. I made a public speech in which I expressed my views on this subject, and advocated

large public expenditure on the improvement of the roads and the making of new roads in preparation for this new development. *The Spectator,* commenting upon this speech, said that my suggestion was the first sensible proposal that had ever emanated from the brain of a Socialist!

As an old Civil Servant, I took an interest in Civil Service matters. A reform of the methods of recruitment and of the system of organisation was long overdue. In 1911 I prepared a memorial to the Prime Minister, asking for an enquiry by Royal Commission, and obtained the signatures of over four hundred members of Parliament. Mr. Asquith adopted the suggestion. He appointed a Royal Commission, and asked me to sit upon it. Other members of the Commission were Mr. Clynes, Mr. Samuel Hoare, Mr. Graham Wallas, the Duke of Devonshire, Miss Haldane and two or three University dons. The Chairman was Lord MacDonnell, who had had a distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service. He was a typical Irishman, had a keen sense of humour, was rather disposed to be peppery, but was scrupulously fair. He handled his witnesses with great skill. He and I got on together very well. The most useful member of the Commission was Mr. Graham Wallas. He was a lecturer on Public Administration at the London School of Economics. He was, of course, in his element on this enquiry. Mr. Wallas was a Fabian, and one of the original Fabian essayists. He had, however, not taken an active part in Socialist propaganda for some years. He had devoted himself to his lecturing and to writing. He produced, apart from some smaller books, two large volumes on sociology which are still regarded as classics. On the Commission Mr. Wallas never let a well-informed witness leave the chair until he had pumped him dry.

One day there came before us a white-haired boy who represented the Boy Clerks' Association. He gave the Commission the surprise of its life. He stated the case in the opening of his evidence with a forensic skill which would have done credit to a Chancery barrister. When he came under cross-examination he showed a great alertness, and a complete mastery of every detail of the subject. I was anxious to know something about this remarkable boy. I entered into conversation with him in the interval. He told me he was a Socialist, and a member of the I.L.P. I think he was also a Methodist local preacher. This boy came into the House of Commons in 1929 as Labour member for Wolverhampton. His name is W. J. Brown. He went down in the Labour disaster of 1931. He soon made his mark in the House. He was, in my opinion, head and shoulders in ability above all the Back Bench Labour members. There were few members in the House who were his superiors in logical and incisive speech, and in knowledge of the subject upon which he spoke. I regret to have to add that his influence was marred by an unnecessary aggressiveness. If he returns to the House, as he probably will, there will be a great future for him if he will cultivate the art of making friends instead of alienating people.

I remember one or two amusing incidents which happened on the Civil Service Commission. Just before the time we were appointed, the fight on Mr. Lloyd George's Budget was raging. He was delivering speeches in the country, abusing the dukes and charging them with " living on the fat of sacrilege ". The Duke of Devonshire, who, as I have said, was a member of the Commission, came to a meeting about this time hobbling on two sticks. We asked him what was the matter. " Oh," he said, " it's living on the fat of sacrilege! "

There was another member of this Commission who

was a strange character. I think he had better be nameless. He was the Master of one of the Cambridge colleges. He was a great authority on a certain branch of zoology. He was the type of man I have often met, particularly in business. When you come to know them you wonder however they came to be so successful. The late Lord Leverhulme was that kind of man. I knew him well, and was brought much in contact with him on Committee work. Henry Ford is another instance of the same type. These two men were, I suppose, the most successful business men of their age. And yet in general intelligence they were quite ordinary. I cannot account for their success, except on the assumption that they were endowed with some special gift, like a poet or a musician. The older Rockefeller attributed his success to an instinct for discovering the right man for a job and putting him to it. Leverhulme, I think, had that instinct, for I was amazed to find in talking with him about his staff that he seemed to know them all personally.

My colleague on the Royal Commission would startle us by putting the most irrelevant questions to a witness. I remember one such instance. When his turn came to cross-examine a particular witness who was giving evidence on promotion in the Civil Service, he asked him: " Do you pay your cook's insurance, or do you deduct her share from her wages? " When the Chairman suggested that the question was not pertinent, our colleague explained that he was troubled just then about what he should do with his own servants, and he thought that perhaps the witness could help him to decide!

I remember an encounter I had with Lord MacDonnell which might have given offence to him, but which, fortunately, collapsed amid general laughter. It will be recalled that he was an old Indian Civil Servant. We had been discussing the question of the amalgamation

of the examinations for the Higher Division of the Home Service, the Indian Civil Service and the Diplomatic Service. We were agreed that for the Diplomatic Service the qualifications of a good appearance and polished manners were necessary, but we were divided as to whether this " manners " examination, as we called it, should take place before or after the written examination. I was arguing that it would be better to have the " manners" examination after the written examination. Lord MacDonnell was inclined to the reverse order. He said to me: " Suppose you had a young fellow who had done brilliantly in the written examination, and when he showed himself he was found to be utterly unpresentable. What would you do with him? " " Oh," I replied, " I'd put him in the Indian Civil Service." Fortunately for me, the Chairman had a sense of humour.

About this time I sat upon a Committee which the Home Secretary had appointed to enquire into the Jury System. The Chairman of the Committee was Lord Mersey, who had recently retired from the office of President of the Probate and Divorce Court. He had the reputation of being a gruff and disagreeable person. At the first two meetings of the Committee he and I had a number of minor quarrels. After that we understood each other; and, as Bulwer Lytton says through the mouth of one of his characters: " It's astonishing how much you like a fellow after you have fought him ". Our association on this Committee led to a warm and intimate friendship which lasted to the day of his death. He often used to come across from the House of Lords to the inner Lobby of the Commons for a chat, and we retired to one of the quiet corners and talked about many things. He was much interested in my Socialism, and at his request I gave him copies of books and pamphlets on the subject which I had

written. Acknowledging these, he wrote to me: "I have read with great interest and with much profit to myself the two books and the pamphlets you were so good as to send to me. Some years ago I should have differed from you on many points, but as I grow older I begin to see that the aim and end of life is to improve life's conditions, and that the first step is to lift men up from the misery of poverty."

When Lord Mersey became too feeble to go to the House of Lords my wife and I often visited him at his home in Grosvenor Place. He was most agreeable company, and a charming conversationalist. He greatly liked a good story, and enjoyed telling one at his own expense. He related to us an amusing, but for him a disastrous, experience he had when practising on the Northern Circuit. He was defending an action brought by the owners of a tramp steamer against an oil tanker which had discharged oil into the river. It was alleged by the owners of the steamer that the oil had ignited and burnt up their vessel. Lord Mersey's defence was that this oil was not inflammable and could not have been the cause of the fire. He would give the judge practical proof of that fact. He had brought into the Court and placed upon the table before him a hollow tray. " Now, I have here, Your Lordship," he said, " a bottle of oil taken from the tanker. I will pour it into this tray and apply a match. Your Lordship will see that it will not ignite." He did so, and there was an explosion that nearly blew off the roof of the court-room. " Well," I said, " did you win your case? " " No," he replied, " I retired from it."

I had among my colleagues on this Jury Committee Mr. Judge Parry and a Welsh M.P. who was a solicitor —Mr. Ellis Davies. We three drew up a short Minority Report. We were not in disagreement with the Majority Report, but we wanted to supplement it by some recommendations of our own. We co-operated with the

whole Committee in drawing up the Report, and when we had agreed upon it, and the Chairman was congratulating himself on having got a unanimous Report, I took a paper from my pocket and read our Minority Report. Mr. English Harrison, a member of the Committee, and who, I think, was the President of the Bar Council, said: " This proceeding reminds me of an experience I had when practising at the Bar. I made a final speech, and thought I was making a good impression on the judge. As soon as I sat down, he produced a document and read every word of his judgment."

There were two reforms of the Jury system, beyond those recommended by us all, the Minority wished to make—the abolition of Grand Juries and the abolition of juries in civil actions, except where a man's character was involved. I am glad to see, after twenty years, these two reforms have been adopted.

From 1906 to 1914 I was kept busy on Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees. In 1913 I was appointed a member of a Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases. This was a very unpleasant subject. The medical evidence we got impressed me as greatly exaggerating the devastation of these diseases. Not that I would desire to minimise their gravity. But, according to the doctors, every disease or illness from which humanity ever suffered could be traced to this cause. The climax of this comprehensive indictment was reached when the Head of the Medical School at Cambridge came before us and told us that baldness was often due to syphilitic infection. When this startling statement was made I looked round the table, and, with the exception of myself and another, every male member of the Commission had a head as bald as a billiard ball!

My experience of Royal Commissions and Committees inclines me to accept the popular view that they

are mainly a Government device to shelve legislation. It is true that in these days, when parliamentary business is so congested, there is not time to legislate upon the innumerable subjects which various interests press upon the Government. So to pacify them for the time being the Government gives them a Commission or Committee.

It would be interesting, if not very profitable, to see a return of the number of Commissions and Committees which have been appointed in the last thirty years, showing the length of time each has sat, the number of hours of the time of busy men which have been spent upon them, the cost to the taxpayers, and the number of cases where nothing whatever has been done on the Reports. I think that such a return would show that in the great majority of cases the Commissions and Committees have been a sheer waste of time and money.

Some part of the ineffectiveness of Commissions and Committees is due to the method of selecting the persons to sit upon them. Where the question to be discussed involves vested interests it is the usual practice to appoint members directly representing the various interests. On our Canals Commission, for instance, we had canal company directors, railway directors and dock directors. A Drink Traffic Commission is not considered complete unless it has brewers, club interests, and temperance organisations represented upon it. These interests quite naturally are prejudiced. The result is that we seldom get an unbiased Report. At the best the Report is a compromise; at the worst there are several Minority Reports, which nullify the value of the conclusions . I think that this method of selecting the members is all wrong. They should be appointed because of their independence and their judicial capacity. The place of the man who has a special interest to defend is *in* the witness chair and not on the bench.

CHAPTER XXI

The Woman Suffrage Movement

THE privilege of helping women to win the vote is one that I now look back upon with pride and satisfaction. To the young men and women of today the story is practically unknown and of faint interest; but in view of the possibility, in a world rapidly turning from democracy and personal freedom, of the loss of many of their hard-won liberties, the young women at least should interest themselves in their own political history.

From 1906 to the outbreak of war neither Parliament nor the country was allowed to forget the question of woman suffrage. In the last thirty years of the previous century a band of able and devoted women, mainly of the middle class, had been working for the emancipation of their sex from the educational, professional and social, as well as the political disabilities under which they lived. Their efforts resulted in the opening of the Universities and of the medical profession to women, and their admission to posts in the State and Local Government services. From 1870 woman suffrage commanded a majority of professed supporters in the House of Commons. Seven times a Woman Suffrage Bill had passed its second reading. These parliamentary majorities had been obtained through the strenuous work of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies which had continuously brought pressure to bear upon parliamentary candidates in their constituencies; but it cannot truly be said that, despite the academic support in the House of Commons, there

was a popular demand for the vote for women. It had never been a main political issue. Men on the whole were hostile to it from the selfish dislike of sharing with women the privileges they had won for themselves. Even working men, in arms against their own oppressors, liked to feel there was something a little lower than themselves. The great mass of women were either indifferent or opposed. They had been taught to regard voting as a " man's job ", and were inclined, through age-long training, to meekly adopt the Pauline view of their duties of silence and obedience.

About the beginning of this century the Woman Suffrage Movement suddenly sprang into great activity. The women textile workers of Lancashire and Yorkshire had been roused to a knowledge of the poverty of their labour conditions. This awakening was due in a large measure to the rise of the Labour Party, which was carrying on at this time a vigorous propaganda for political action amongst trade unionists. The women of the unions were called upon to contribute to the political funds, but had not votes themselves. The absurdity of this soon struck them. The campaign of the men gave points to the women. If the use of the vote could give all these things to men it could do the same for women.

I have an amusing pamphlet which was issued by these women workers in their campaign. It addresses a number of questions to working women and supplies the answers. " Why are working women paid five shillings a week and working men twenty-five? " " Why do working women live on bread and margarine while working men eat beef-steak and butter? " Answer to each question: " Because men have votes and women have not!" I would not defend the literal accuracy of this leaflet either in question or in answer, but it served a purpose!

A strong suffrage movement grew up amongst these

women textile workers. It was helped by the older suffrage societies whose members renewed their hope and faith through it, and by the men and women of the I.L.P. which had placed woman suffrage in its programme. Mr. Keir Hardie and myself, both of us keen suffragists, gave a great deal of our time to this movement. It directed its efforts largely to pressing the new Labour Party to give a prominent place in its programme to votes for women.

Mrs. Pankhurst was at this time living in Manchester, and she and her daughter Christabel threw themselves into this agitation with great energy. This was before the formation of the organisation which became so notorious. I knew Mrs. Pankhurst very well; we were colleagues for years on the National Council of the I.L.P. She and her husband joined that organisation soon after it was formed. Dr. Pankhurst was a Chancery Barrister and a great figure in the public life of Manchester—great in the spiritual sense, for, like his wife, he was small of stature, with a high-pitched, thin voice which, on more than one occasion when he was heard but not seen, caused him to be mistaken for a woman. He stood as a Socialist candidate for Gorton at the General Election of 1895 and polled 4261 votes.

When Mrs. Pankhurst was on the Council of the I.L.P. she was a suffragist, but by no means a fanatical one. At that time she was more Socialist than suffragist, and placed high hopes on the Labour Movement as an instrument for securing better conditions for women. In view of her later development this is interesting, for, as we know, she became a jingo-nationalist in the War and a Conservative candidate for Parliament towards the end of her days. The memorial erected to this one-time Socialist and Pacifist was unveiled in 1930 by a Conservative and former anti-suffragist Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin.

I have always thought that the development of Mrs.

Pankhurst into a law-breaking militant was **due** to the influence of her daughter Christabel, whom she worshipped fanatically. Christabel was a very strong-minded young woman with a dictatorial manner. She had great organising ability and was a good, though not an eloquent, speaker. It was her sincerity which compelled respect even when her impertinence irritated. She had a profound belief that all politicians were insincere, that not one of them was to be trusted to keep his pledged word, and that they never gave a reform from conviction of its justice, but only under the compulsion of force. Christabel changed her views about politicians during the War, and at the General Election of 1918 stood as a Conservative candidate for Smethwick and was nearly elected. After this defeat she abandoned politics, and took up lecturing about the Second Coming of Christ.

Mrs. Pankhurst formed the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. It carried on its work unostentatiously for two years, organising small meetings and interviewing Parliamentary candidates. Mrs. Pankhurst had no faith in the Liberal Party, but, after many disappointments, she still had a lingering hope that the new Labour Party might be forced to adopt woman suffrage in its programme. She kept up her membership of the I.L.P.

The Labour Party up to that time had made no declaration on the subject. At the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool in 1905 it was brought forward for the first time in the terms of the following resolution:

> " That this Conference heartily approves of adult suffrage and the complete emancipation of both sexes, and endorses the Women's Enfranchisement Bill introduced into Parliament last session believing it to be an important step towards adult suffrage/'

The terms of this resolution require some explanation. The position taken up by all the woman suffrage societies

was that the disability of sex should be removed. Whatever entitled a man to vote should entitle a woman to do so. This was a very clear and simple formula. Its adoption would ensure that further extension of the franchise would apply to men and women equally. The Women's Enfranchisement Bill referred to in the above resolution was framed *on* these lines. It was true that the Bill would not have enfranchised a large number of women, but it conceded the principle of sex equality. The women were at that time concerned much less with the number of women who would vote than with the fact that women were altogether excluded from the franchise simply because they were women.

This was what was known as the women's point of view; and it was the right one for women to take. Politicians, however, looked at it from the point of view of party interests. To give the vote to women on the then existing qualifications for men would, it was said, enfranchise women property owners, women graduates, women lodgers, women joint occupiers as well as women householders. Hence there arose much opposition from certain Liberal and Labour men on the ground that it would lead to an increase in the Tory vote. Prejudice was created by the widespread allegation that the Bill was deliberately designed to enfranchise well-to-do women whilst leaving working women voteless. This was not true. With all its imperfections the Bill would have given votes to four times as many working women householders as property owners.

It was such prejudice which defeated the resolution submitted to the Liverpool Labour Conference. An amendment to the resolution was carried in the following terms:

" That this Conference, believing that any Women's Enfranchisement Bill which seeks merely to abolish sex disqualification would increase the political power of the propertied classes

by enfranchising upper- and middle-class women, and leaving the great majority of working women still voteless, hereby expresses its conviction that Adult Suffrage—male and female—is the only Franchise Reform which merits any support from the Labour Members of Parliament."

This amendment was carried by 483 votes to 270.

Mrs. Pankhurst, who was an I.L.P. delegate to this Conference, spoke in support of the resolution, and I also supported it. Mrs. Pankhurst declared that for her this question had resolved itself into a life and death struggle. She was terribly grieved at the defeat of the resolution. She wrote the following letter to me a few days after the Conference:

" *2nd February,* 1905.

" DEAR MR. SNOWDEN,

" I felt deeply grieved at our defeat for I felt so confident we should carry the composite resolution up to Saturday morning. I had not sufficiently realised the forces working against us. But I now feel that our temporary defeat is more than compensated for by the adhesion of yourself and other men who are now giving earnest support to this question.

" If you knew how I long to get this *vote* question settled so that women may get to real social work. I am so weary of it and the long long years of struggle first against ridicule and contempt and now of indifference and apathy.

" Still I feel more hopeful than I have ever been for the defeat at Liverpool has aroused much interest among men and women alike.

" We are working to make the Free Trade Hall Meeting a success. Is it possible to arrange for a full report of your speech and later publish it for distribution? We want more literature.

" In conclusion I do want to say how much my daughter and I felt your kind manner on Saturday morning and your understanding words of sympathy. Believe me with all my heart I welcome your help.

" Sincerely yours,

" EMMELINE PANKHURST."

In October of this year (1905) the Women's Social and Political Union came unexpectedly into wide public notice. Sir Edward Grey was to address a great Liberal meeting in the Free Trade Hall on the eve of the Liberal Government's assumption of office. He was to declare the programme of the new Government. Mrs. Pankhurst naturally wanted to know what place woman suffrage had in the Government programme. She arranged that her daughter and Annie Kenny—a factory-worker from Oldham—should attend the meeting and question Sir Edward Grey on the subject.

The two girls sat quietly through the speeches, and at the end Miss Kenny rose to put her question. This was an innovation in a Liberal meeting which could not be tolerated, and especially in a meeting addressed by a front-rank statesman. Those of us who have had experience of public meetings can easily visualise what happened. The stewards and the audience made a pandemonium of what would have been a mere incident if they had had the sense to keep quiet. The two girls were seized by the stewards and the whole audience stood on the chairs and shouted: " Turn them out! " The stewards did so, twisting their arms and kicking them before they hurled them down the steps. Outside they held an indignation meeting, which came to an ignominious end with their arrest for obstruction by the police. Next day they were brought before the magistrates and fined, with the alternative of imprisonment. They chose to go to prison.

This incident acted like a match to paper and began the real militant agitation. Manchester had been the birthplace of many historic movements, but none more amazing than this. The Free Trade Hall incident made a great impression throughout the country. The Press made a great display of it. Thousands of people who had never heard of woman suffrage before had their attention drawn

to it and began discussing it. The value of this sort of publicity was quickly recognized, and the presence of the " suffragettes " was henceforth an expected feature of every important Liberal meeting in the Manchester district. The organisation at that time had very little money and few members, but in 1906 the Pankhursts migrated to London and then began a struggle the like of which the political history of this country cannot show.

The results of the General Election of 1906 had given great encouragement to the suffrage societies which worked on constitutional lines. The spirit of reform was abroad. A large majority of the members of the new Parliament were pledged to support the enfranchisement of women. At the opening of the new session, Mrs. Henry Fawcett, President of the National Union of Woman's Suffrage Societies, whose whole life had been spent in working for the Cause, called together a number of M.P.'s who were known to be in earnest on this question, to discuss with them the proper line of action for bringing woman suffrage before the new House of Commons. Out of this meeting a suffrage committee was formed of which the Hon. Geoffrey Howard, a Liberal member, and myself were joint secretaries.

Early in the new Parliament an opportunity came for testing the House of Commons on this question. A Liberal member, Mr. Dickinson, had won a place in the ballot for private members' Bills, and at the request of the constitutional suffrage societies he introduced a Woman Suffrage Bill. Enormous interest had been aroused both in and out of Parliament, and I cannot remember there having been in my time such a large attendance of members on a Friday afternoon as were present on this occasion. The Bill was a simple Measure which proposed to extend the vote to women on the

same terms as men. A number of Liberals pledged to woman suffrage found an excuse for opposing this Bill because of its limited character. Members of the Government were divided on the question. Mr. Asquith was opposed to, Mr. Balfour was in favour of woman suffrage.

Immediately after the second reading of the Bill had been moved and seconded, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Prime Minister, who was an ardent supporter of votes for women, rose to explain the position of the Government. He spoke in his personal capacity only, as his Government was too divided for him to be able to be its spokesman. He defended the claim of women to the vote on the ground that an increasing number of questions coming before the House of Commons were questions on which the women of the country should be able to express their views. He declared his intention of voting for the Bill, although he disapproved its limited character. The discussion which followed was one of the best I have heard in the House of Commons. It was afterwards described by an opponent as a debate never to be forgotten.

The opponents of the Measure pursued the tactics usually employed on a private member's Bill. They talked it out. The last five minutes of the debate was carried on in a House electric with expectancy, and in the hearing of women in the gallery agonising over the result, by a speaker who carried buffoonery to the point of extremely bad taste. Great indeed was the excitement when just before four o'clock the member in charge of the Bill moved the closure. The Speaker declined to accept it. The Bill was once more " talked out ".

Mr. H. W. Massingham in his " Pictures in Parliament " in the *Daily News* next day gave a generous report of my own part in the debate which perhaps it is not unsuitable that I should quote: " Mr. Snowden's

speech/' he said, " was without question the finest he has yet delivered in St. Stephen's. Mr. Snowden's pleas drew loud applause from every side of the House. He appealed to the axioms of faith in man and in God with a fervour which came strangely after recent slanderous suggestions that Socialism and Atheism are synonymous."

The following Session (1908) another private member's Bill was introduced which passed its Second Reading by a majority of 179, but it got no further.

The attitude of the Government was unsympathetic and very irritating. The House of Commons continued to pass the Second Reading of Woman Suffrage Bills by large majorities, but nothing ever came of them. Even Mr. Asquith, a strong opponent, was forced to admit that it was a disgrace to representative government that the House of Commons should repeatedly declare its desire to enfranchise women and no practical result follow. For four years of this Parliament, the Government with a large majority of its supporters pledged to this reform, paid no attention to it.

Meanwhile the agitation in the country grew formidable. The old constitutional societies enormously increased their membership and extended their activities. Suffrage societies on professional lines like the Women Writers' Suffrage Society and the Actresses' Suffrage League were formed, and organisations on religious lines, like the Catholic Woman Suffrage Society came into existence. An increasing number of sympathetic men enrolled themselves for every sort of service for the Cause.

Mrs. Pankhurst's organisation pursued its militant activities with ever-increasing violence. It had attracted the support of a large number of very wealthy women and money rolled into its coffers. The tactics of this group soon passed beyond the stage of merely inter-

rupting meetings, baiting Cabinet Ministers, raiding the House of Commons, causing disturbances in the Ladies' Gallery, sending unwanted deputations to Downing Street, and smacking the faces of policemen. These minor acts of rowdyism, which were "pie" for the newspapers, obtained for the women the notoriety they desired. Hundreds were sent to Holloway Gaol, where they embarrassed the authorities by refusing to take food. Forcible feeding was resorted to, but was made dangerous and difficult by the struggles of the prisoners. They were kept in prison to the point of physical collapse and then released. Subsequently an Act was passed to deal with these cases of defiance. It was called the "Cat and Mouse Act" because it empowered the Home Secretary to release a prisoner at the point of death through hunger-striking and when she had recovered, to send her back to prison to go through it again. This cruel law had no deterrent effect on the women.

I was once asked to go and see two women who had just been released after prolonged hunger-striking. They were a ghastly sight, apparently dying of their suffering. I was filled with a wondering pity. These women quite clearly were prepared to die—for what? Was it through some strange hypnotic power exercised over them by their leaders? Had they been convinced that the Cause was worthy of martyrdom? Was it a case in which reason had been displaced by emotions and desires transcending reason? I don't know to this hour; but the impossibility of answering these questions to my own satisfaction tempered my criticism of their actions, even when these were foolish and indefensible.

So long as these women confined their activities to such ingenuous performances as tying themselves to street lamps and park railings, throwing leaflets from the Gallery of the House on to the heads of members, or

getting themselves arrested for causing obstruction, the public were more amused than angry, though the opponents of woman suffrage never failed to point to these antics as proof of the unfitness of women to vote. When they began to destroy property and risk the lives of others than themselves the public began to turn against them. The National Union of Woman's Suffrage Societies, whose gallant educational and constitutional work for women's freedom had been carried on for more than fifty years, publicly dissociated themselves from these terrorist activities. But it was little use. The ill-informed public lumped all suffragists together. Politicians, looking for an excuse to withdraw their support, exulted in the disorders for which only a fraction of the whole women's movement was responsible.

But, while depressing the spirits of the real friends of the Cause in Parliament, our efforts to secure the passage of a Woman Suffrage Bill did not lessen on account of these violent actions. We formed in 1910 a committee of members of Parliament drawn from all Parties with the Earl of Lytton as Chairman. This became known as the Conciliation Committee. It was a difficult matter to persuade men of different views to agree upon a compromise, but we succeeded. An acceptable Bill was drafted and put into the hands of Mr. David Shackleton, the member for Clitheroe. We secured from the Government two days of time for the debate. It was a great occasion, and the Second Reading was carried by 299 votes to 190. It was opposed in debate by Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill on the ground that it was not sufficiently democratic.

The Bill got no further that Session. We had prevailed upon Mrs. Pankhurst to call a truce to militancy, and all the suffrage organisations united in intensive propaganda in the country in favour of this Bill. In

connection with this, the largest and most beautiful and impressive procession of women ever seen in this country marched four abreast through the streets of London. The procession was four miles long.

The second General Election of 1910 came, and still women were unenfranchised. This, as things turned out, was the last General Election in which women were voteless. At this Election the Liberals had in their programme the promise of a Manhood Suffrage Bill. Mr. Asquith gave a pledge that the Bill would be so drafted that it would be open to the House of Commons to amend it so as to include women; and if it were so amended Mr. Asquith would accept the decision. In May 1911 we re-introduced the Conciliation Bill. It was again carried on the Second Reading by a still larger majority. Its further progress was stopped when the Government announced their intention to introduce a Manhood Suffrage Bill. No attempt was made to redeem their pledge till July 1912, when a Bill was read a second time. It was not possible to proceed to the Committee stage till the following January.

It will be remembered that Mr. Asquith had *given* a pledge that the Bill would be so drafted that an amendment to give votes to women would be in order, and that if such an amendment were carried on a free vote of the House, the Government would accept the decision. At the opening of the Committee stage the Speaker hurled a thunderbolt which destroyed the Bill and dashed the hopes of the woman suffragists to the ground. He ruled that if the woman suffrage amendments were carried they would so alter the Bill as to convert it into a new Bill. In these circumstances it ought to be withdrawn. Accordingly the Bill was withdrawn, and not re-introduced in an amended form. The truth probably was that the Government had believed the Bill to be so drafted that the woman suffrage

amendments would be in order. The Parliamentary draughtsman had blundered.

Be these things as they may, nothing could relieve the Government from responsibility for the unfortunate catastrophe. They had been considering the Bill for two years, and such an oversight or stupid mistake was unpardonable. Nothing could convince the women that they had not been deliberately tricked. Mr. Asquith's bitter hostility to woman suffrage was cited in support of their behalf, and Mr. Lloyd George had never been trusted on this question by the suffrage societies, although professedly a strong supporter of the Cause. To make matters worse, Mr. Asquith declined to introduce another Bill in place of the one which had been withdrawn, and he refused to see the women whose cause he had betrayed. He added insult to injury by offering to allow time for a Private Member's Woman's Suffrage Bill, after seven such Bills had passed a Second Reading in four years!

The constitutional suffragists were justifiably outraged. This was the treatment they had received for pursuing peaceful methods of agitation! The attitude of the Government was a disgrace to its members. It was a defiance of the oft-expressed will of the House of Commons!

The militant tactics of Mrs. Pankhurst's organisation were resumed with redoubled violence. Mrs. Pankhurst was sentenced to three years' penal servitude for incitement to riot. By resorting to the Hunger Strike she evaded this sentence. She was released and re-arrested almost times without number. Her "martyrdom" aroused her followers to a frenzied emulation. But after six years of this policy the public were getting a little tired of it. A reaction against woman's suffrage set in. For the time being, the outrages which these women were

daily perpetrating—burning buildings, slashing pictures in public galleries, cutting telegraph wires—had put back the chances of woman's enfranchisement. The great work of the non-militant suffragists over a generation seemed to have been destroyed. The militant suffragists had themselves forgotten the Cause in the intoxication of the methods they were using. About this time Mr. Lansbury delivered a speech at a suffragette meeting in the Albert Hall. He was prosecuted for incitement to violence. He was charged under an Act of Edward I I I for " the apprehension of pillors and barrators and wandering robbers ". He was bound over to find sureties, refused, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

The Conciliation Bill again came before the House of Commons. After a two days' debate it was refused a Second Reading by 268 to 221. Two years before it had been approved by a majority of 167. The decline of support must indubitably be laid at the doors of the militant women.

It had been the practice of the militants to harass Liberal Ministers by interrupting them at their public meetings. This practice was now extended to certain Labour members, and strangely enough, considering our unswerving loyalty to the Cause, in particular to Keir Hardie and myself. The reason they gave for this piece of illogicality was our refusal to subordinate every question in which our constitutents were interested to woman suffrage, and to vote steadily against the Government no matter what our views on other questions might be. In 1913 and 1914 almost all my meetings were invaded by these women, and some of them were broken up. Attempts at personal violence were frequently made, and my wife has amongst her souvenirs of our public life several formidable weapons taken from suffragettes on the war-path. One is a lead disc weighing at least a pound, which

was flung at me by a half-demented youth whom the women brought with them to a meeting in Manchester. After leaving another meeting, at which I was actually speaking on woman suffrage, a bottle was hurled at my head. Happily for me, it went past me and through a shop window.

I think the women who upset meetings were a corps specially set apart for this work, for the faces became quite familiar to me in time. It was an awkward business for men to handle rowdy women, and like the police, they detested it. The suffragettes took advantage of this in places where men were of gentler mould than those of the Free Trade Hall gathering; but I recall an amusing occasion when the women were outmatched. The Chairman of the meeting was a woman doctor and a non-militant suffragist—for be it remembered these fanatics frequently broke up the meetings of the older suffrage societies. Anticipating trouble, she engaged as stewards a number of wardresses from a local mental institution who were trained to handle refractory patients. When the trouble started each woman steward quietly took a suffragette in hand, threw her over her shoulder and carried her out of the hall. I never saw anything more neatly done. The interrupters had not expected professional treatment.

The attitude of the National Labour Party remained for four or five years as laid down in the Liverpool resolution I have quoted. The resolution was re-affirmed by an even larger majority two years later at the Belfast Conference. This led to a striking declaration by Keir Hardie. Rising and speaking under obviously deep emotion, he said:—

> " Twenty-five years ago this year I cut myself adrift from every relationship, political and otherwise, in order to assist in building up a working-class party. I had thought the days

of my pioneering were over. Of late I have felt with increasing intensity the injustice which has been inflicted on women by the present political laws. The intimation I wanted to make to the Conference and friends was that if the motion they had carried that morning was intended to limit the action of the Party in the House of Commons, I should have seriously to consider whether I could remain a member of the Parliamentary Party. I say this with great respect and feeling. The Party is largely my own child, and I would not sever myself lightly from what has been my life's work. But I could not be untrue to my principles."

These Conference resolutions did not as a matter of fact limit the action of the Labour M.P.'s, who solidly voted for the limited Bills. In 1910, however, the Conference took a step forward by adopting a resolution moved by Miss Bondfield that any Government Reform Bill which excluded women would be met by the uncompromising opposition of organised labour. It was at the Labour Party Conference of 1913 that the great fight on this question took place. This was one of the most dramatic episodes in my career; and for that reason I may be pardoned for referring to it at some length. I will let the newspapers of that date tell the story of the incident. The resolution before the Conference " called upon the Parliamentary Party to do all in its power to expedite the passage of a Bill during the coming session giving votes to women on a broad and democratic basis ". To this the I.L.P. moved to add " It further calls upon the Party in Parliament to oppose any Franchise Bill in which women are not included ".

This amendment brought the question to a definite issue. Were the Labour Party willing to accept a Reform Bill which gave manhood suffrage and refused votes to women? The opposition to this amendment was led by Mr. Stephen Walsh, the miners' leader. The newspaper report of the debate may now be quoted:—

" Mr. Stephen Walsh made a forceful appeal to the Conference which might be paraphrased thus: * Don't embarrass the Labour members by forcing them to take up an entirely new policy inconsistent with the pledges given by the M.P.'s to their constituents. Were they to be compelled to oppose a Franchise Bill from which working men might derive great benefits simply because it did nothing for the women? '

" Mr. Philip Snowden sprang to his feet at the back of the hall and made a memorable speech. Mr. Snowden swept the Conference away with him. Before he spoke everyone said that the resolution would be carried. When he sat down it was felt that the Walsh party had lost the day. He spoke with passionate earnestness and with driving force. Turning fiercely on Mr. Walsh he accused him of being willing to allow the Labour members ' to steal more votes for men at the expense of the women \

" As Mr. Snowden hammered his points home, every sentence full on the bull's eye, the hum of conversation ceased and everyone in the big room turned towards the speaker. Here was an effort out of the ordinary run. They listened in a silence that could be felt. Not only so, but there was an instinctive movement—a surging up towards him. Every delegate turned in his seat. All those standing moved close up. Viewed from the gallery, it was like nothing so much as the sudden placing of a magnet on a board covered with scattered bits of steel.

" Mr. Snowden had gone far beyond his allotted five minutes, and again and again the Chairman perfunctorily tapped with his pencil; but the Conference was determined to hear Snowden out, and the close of his speech was greeted with an outburst of overwhelming applause.

" When Mr. Snowden sat down the Chairman called for the vote. ' For the amendment, 870.' ' Against the amendment, 437-'

"Who shall describe the scene which followed? Hats waved, delegates sprang to their chairs, women in the gallery clapped hands, and cheers were renewed again and again. It was several minutes before the Conference could proceed to the next business.

" For this result thanks are due to the noble, enlightened

and absolutely convincing plea from Mr. Philip Snowden. It was one of the greatest speeches in the career of a great man; an event to be marked on the toilsome way to freedom with a white stone."

This was one of those rare occasions when one feels inspired. I had no intention of speaking until provoked by Walsh's speech. I realised that to the women in the gallery, some of whom had been working on constitutional lines for fifty years, the issue was of more account than life or death.

When the War came the woman's suffrage societies, both constitutional and militant, suspended their agitation. Women turned their activities into helping the War in various ways, and in very large numbers performed tasks which had been regarded as quite outside a woman's sphere. This made a great impression upon male opinion, and removed largely the opposition to woman suffrage. When the question of Electoral Reform came to be dealt with in 1917 it was impossible any longer to deny the claims of women to political enfranchisement. Mr. Asquith, who had always been a strong opponent of woman's suffrage, announced that he had changed his attitude on the question. He said he had been influenced by two considerations. First the work which women had done during the War, and second the need for women's voices to be directly heard upon the questions of reconstruction which would arise when the War was over. Other life-long opponents of woman's suffrage also announced that they had changed their attitude on the question.

The Reform Bill which was passed in February 1918, conferred the Parliamentary vote upon all males over twenty-one years of age, and gave both the Parliamentary and Local Government franchise to women on more restricted conditions. A woman was to be entitled to the

Parliamentary vote if she had attained the age of thirty years, and was entitled by her own occupation to be registered as a Local Government elector, or if she was the wife of a husband entitled to be registered as a Local Government elector. The woman's franchise on these conditions entitled about nine millions of women to qualify as Parliamentary voters.

Thus, after fifty years of agitation, the sex barrier to political enfranchisement was broken down, and the long-delayed claims of women to justice were conceded.

Ten years later the work was completed by the passing of a Measure which equalised the franchise qualifications of men and women, and gave adult suffrage to all persons over twenty-one years of age—except lunatics and peers! Many of the women pioneers who had toiled so hard to remove the political disabilities of women did not live to see the final consummation of their devoted labours. It had fallen to a Conservative Government to complete this work. I had the satisfaction of following the Home Secretary, Sir W. Joynson-Hicks, in the debate on the second reading of this Bill, as one of the few surviving members of the House of Commons who had taken an active part in the Parliamentary demand for the enfranchise ment of women in the days before the War. I may be allowed to quote the concluding sentences of my speech on this occasion:—

> " I wholly agree with the Home Secretary with regard to the falsification of all the objections raised to the enfranchisement of women in the days when this was an academic question. These objections now seem, after ten years of the partial enfranchisement of women, and when women have sat in the House of Commons for some years, to be amusing, if not grotesque. We were told that women's enfranchisement would destroy the home, would break up family life, would destroy chivalry towards women, that women would all vote together, and the men's vote would be completely submerged. Nothing

of that sort has happened. This Bill consummates sixty years of valiant work on the part of woman's suffrage organisations. It has involved a great effort and much suffering on the part of many devoted women who have felt the indignity of their political disability and the lack of opportunities of rendering public service. We support this Bill because we believe it will widen women's interests and inspire them with a greater sense of responsibility. We support it not merely in the interests *of* the women themselves, but because we believe it will bring a truer comradeship and closer co-operation of men and women in the common task of grappling with the grave national questions which it is the duty of the enfranchised democracy to solve."

The day after this Bill became law, I received from Mrs. Fawcett the following letter, which I deeply appreciated :—

" 2 GOWER STREET,
" W.C.,
"4*th July* 1918.

" MY DEAR MR. SNOWDEN,

" Now that an equal Franchise Bill has become an Act of Parliament I am writing a few lines to convey to you the deep gratitude of the Societies with which I am connected for the invaluable support you have given us all along. I am thinking more especially of the way you held the fort for us in the meetings of the Labour Party, many members of which needed a good deal of converting, but it was largely your influence that made the Labour Party definitely a supporter of woman suffrage. That was a very great step in advance for us. When I am thinking of you I am thinking of your wife and of dear Isabella Ford and am thanking them both. Bless you for all you have done for women's freedom.

" Yours sincerely,

" MILLICENT G. FAWCETT."

Of the many gifted women I have met, Mrs. Henry Fawcett, the widow of the blind Postmaster-General whose work and responsibilities she was permitted to share,

towered head and shoulders above those who have been more publicly memorialised. For dignity, for courage, for loftiness of purpose, for qualities of leadership as well as for the simpler virtues of good comradeship; for a beautiful courtesy and limitless patience, she will be remembered when many are forgotten. Her kindly reference to my wife was not undeserved. She gave the best dozen years of her life untiringly to this Cause, and we worked together for what we believe to be the common cause of men and women—political and economic freedom.

CHAPTER XXII

A Review, 1906-1914

THE end of July 1914 marked the close of an era in the political, economical and social life of Britain. The War came, and when it was over and our minds were free to look around, we saw all things had assumed a new form as though a great earthquake had changed the face of the land. When I look back to the years from 1906 to 1914 it seems as though these years belonged to a former life. Many of the men who then took a prominent part in public affairs have passed away, and their places have been taken by new men who were then unknown.

It is supposed to be a common failing of old age to regard the present times as decadent. But I think no one with a knowledge of pre-War days will deny that they were in many respects happier than those in which we are now living. Life was less strenuous and more free from cares and anxieties. Some of the things we have today, which are regarded as evidence of the progress of civilisation, were then unknown. When I first came to London in 1906 there were no motor-buses on the streets, and the taxi-cab was rarely seen. The horse-drawn buses lumbered leisurely along streets far less crowded than they are today. The hansom cabs added **a** picturesqueness to the streets.

But the country in the decade before the outbreak of **War** was not in stagnation. Progress was being steadily made in all directions. In his Budget speech, three months before the calamity of August 1914 occurred,

Mr. Lloyd George was able to report an unprecedented state of national prosperity. Trade was expanding, unemployment had touched the lowest point in the records, wealth was increasing, and the national revenue was bounding. In the eight years before 1914 our exports had increased by nearly 40 per cent. The assessable incomes of the income tax-payers had risen from £925,000,000 to £1,167,000,000. The wages of the workers, it is true, were very low, but in the years under review there had been substantial additions to their standard of living—Pensions, Health and Unemployment Insurance Grants, and a considerable improvement in National Education. The problem of the poverty of great masses of the population was being attacked, if not courageously, at least in a new spirit and with more energy. Before the outbreak of War there were evidences that all Parties were impressed by the need of social reform, and financial and trade conditions were favourable for carrying out such a policy.

The years 1906 to 1914 were productive of a larger output of beneficial legislation than in any similar period in our history. Much proposed legislation was mauled or destroyed by the House of Lords, but a fine record still remained. The legislation actually passed included the Trades Boards Act, a Measure which has done immeasureable good in improving the wages and conditions in what were called the Sweated Industries; a Miners' Minimum Wage Act; the Act establishing the Labour Exchanges; the Old Age Pensions Act, and the National Unemployment and Health Insurance Schemes; the incorporation in our Taxation System of the important principle of graduation and differentiation of the Income Tax. These Measures, when first adopted, were not ambitious, but they provided a foundation on which a great system of social services has been built.

The membership of the House of Commons has almost completely changed since the 1906 Parliament. There are only twenty members in the present House of Commons (1934) who sat in the 1906 Parliament. The members of that Parliament are mostly dead; some are still living, but have gone out of politics; quite a number are now in the House of Lords. Of those who occupied the Tory Opposition Front Bench the only survivor is Sir Austen Chamberlain. Only four members of the present Government (1934) were in Parliament in 1906. Mr. Baldwin came into Parliament in 1908, in succession to his father. For many years he remained an obscure Back Bench member, giving no promise of ever achieving the parliamentary position he has since attained. The two General Elections of 1910 greatly altered the composition of the House of Commons. Quite a number of men who are still active in political life came into Parliament at these Elections. Only two of the forty members who formed the Labour Party in the 1906 Parliament are now in the House—Mr. Arthur Henderson and Mr. Will Thorne. In the intervening twenty-eight years Mr. Henderson has sat for no less than five different constitutences. Mr. Thorne has held his seat in West Ham without interruption since he was first elected in 1906. Mr. J. H. Thomas did not come into Parliament till 1910, and since then has sat continuously for Derby.

When I close my eyes and picture a full House of Commons in 1906 I see many faces which deserve to be remembered. On the Labour benches I recall the striking figure of Keir Hardie in the corner seat below the gangway; the burly form of Mr. Shackleton sitting beside him; the black hair and beard of genial Will Crooks; the diminutive figure of Mr. Clynes modestly retiring into some inconspicuous seat; " Little Steve " Walsh, the Wigan miner, the most intellectual of the miners'

members; John Hodge, the steel-smelter, and one of the greatest trade union organisers; Mr. Fred Jowett, the Member for Bradford, whose head always attracted attention in the Strangers' Gallery, where they thought he was some German professor who had wandered into the House of Commons; Mr. George Barnes, admired and respected by all for his sound common sense and practical knowledge; and others who are not forgotten by their living friends and comrades.

The most striking change from the pre-War to the post-War Parliament is the disappearance of the Irish Nationalist members from Westminster. They were a party of over eighty members, and a strangely assorted lot. They had among them some men who would have been ornaments to any legislative assembly. Some years before my time in Parliament the Irish Party had been split on the Parnell question, and in 1906 there was a small band, some half a dozen members I should say, who did not follow Mr. John Redmond. This small group contained Mr. Tim Healy and Mr. William O'Brien. Tim Healy was the most cynical, sarcastic, witty and biting speaker I have known, and withal he could move the House of Commons to pity by the recital of the wrongs of his native land. He was a man whom the most experienced debater would hesitate to cross. He had done what every M.P. should do if he wants to make himself an efficient parliamentarian; he had thoroughly studied procedure and rules of debate, and was always on the alert to find the weak places in the drafting of Parliamentary Bills. He was a devout Catholic, and in the debates on Mr. Bin-ell's Education Bill ardently championed the cause of the Catholic day schools. He poured contempt on the quarrel between the Anglican Church and Nonconformists on the question of religious instruction in the day schools. He wanted to know who

Mr. Cowper-Temple was. He supposed he was one of the British apostles. And as for the Anglican Prayer Book, he had been to the library of the House of Lords and he found it was a schedule to an Act of Parliament. The last time I saw Tim Healy it was in very different circumstances. He was no longer the open and avowed enemy of the British Constitution. It was at a dinner-party at Buckingham Palace. He was then Governor-General of the Irish Free State, the representative of the Crown in Ireland. He was then an old man, weak, and obviously in poor health. The old Tim Healy was but an interesting memory.

The Redmondite Party was, as I have said, a motley crew, kept under severe discipline by the iron will of the leader. The Party contained a number of middle-class and professional men, but in the main consisted of Irish farmers and shopkeepers. A remarkable character among them was Mr. Swift MacNeill, who was a professor of constitutional law and history, and, I believe, a Protestant. He had a thin, squeaky voice and a nervous manner. He was a complete encylopaedia of political history, and on the spur of the moment could give the facts and dates of any political event. Mr. Asquith always accepted Mr. MacNeill's authority on these matters. He had also a ready wit. I remember a smart impromptu retort he once gave to Mr. Birrell. Mr. MacNeill had asked him when the Government intended to introduce an amending Bill to a certain Act. Mr. Birrell replied that the Act had only just been passed, and he could see no reason for an amending Measure so soon. " On the principle that a stitch in time saves nine ", quickly retorted Mr. MacNeill.

I must mention a young man who, for a few years, was associated with the Nationalist Party, though he does not come within the period with which I am now dealing.

His name was Mr. T. M. Kettle. His was one of the most brilliant intellects I have ever encountered. He published a volume of delightful poems and essays. As a debater he had something of Tim Healy's cynicism and sarcasm, but none of Healy's bitterness. His shafts were always delivered in a genial and good-tempered way. When speaking of Socialism he said: " I agree with everything in Socialism, except its principles ". He was a very handsome man. To the great grief of all who knew him he died when still a young man. His father had been prominent in the Irish Nationalist Movement in the stormy days when the faction fights between the Irish Nationalists were at their bitterest. During an election contest Mr. Tim Healy and Mr. William O'Brien were on opposite sides. They were both announced to address a meeting at the same hour. On their arrival they found the only available platform was a wagonette. Mr. Healy addressed half the huge crowd from one side of the wagonette, and Mr. O'Brien the other half from the other side. When Mr. O'Brien sat down Mr. Healy saw Mr. Kettle rising to speak. " A kitchen utensil ", announced Mr. Healy. In the uproar which followed Mr. Kettle could not get a hearing. In the first lull Mr. Healy roared out, " but without a spout ". That finished Mr. Kettle.

The Nationalist Party at that time contained two out of the very few real orators I have heard in the House. By oratory I mean not debating, not making a clear and impressive statement, not the style of speaking in which Mr. Balfour and Mr. Asquith excelled. By oratory I mean lofty sentiments expressed in noble language, using a beautiful voice as a skilled musician touches the strings of the violin; an appeal which strikes a sympathetic chord in the hearts of the audience. It is difficult to express what I mean, but I may say that the difference between

oratory and first-rate speaking is the difference between noble poetiy and finished prose. An essential of real oratory is the obvious sincerity of the speaker. Without that conviction the most eloquent language gives only the impression of artificiality. The two Irish members who, in my opinion, had nearly all the gifts which make real orators were John Redmond and Joseph Devlin. I have already given my impressions of Mr. Redmond as a speaker and parliamentary leader. Mr. Devlin owed much of his effectiveness as a speaker to his voice. It was of different timbre to that of Mr. Redmond. Mr. Devlin's voice was of the emotional sort. He could play on the sympathies of his hearers or rouse them to laughter by sallies of wit or sarcasm in which there was no trace of bitterness. He had genuine democratic sympathies, and was idolised by the Belfast workers, on whose behalf he had done great work. Tim Healy's description of him as a " Duodecimo Demosthenes " is still remembered.

I have sat in eight Parliaments and known six Prime Ministers. I have no hesitation in saying that the Liberal Government of 1906 contained a larger number of able men than any Government I have known. I had not the privilege of knowing the House of Commons in the days of Gladstone and Disraeli, and can make no comparison between the statesmen of those days and those I have known. But the Governments of post-War days have seemed to me second or third-rate, both collectively and individually, beside the men who occupied the Treasury Bench in the Parliament of 1906. There were Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. John Morley, Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Haldane, Professor Bryce, Mr. Birrell amongst the Cabinet Ministers; and able Under-Secretaries, who have fulfilled the promise of those years, like Mr. Churchill, Mr. Herbert Samuel and Mr. Runciman.

The Tory Opposition contained men of long Parliamentary experience and of established position in British politics. Mr. Balfour was in the prime of his great intellectual powers. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was there for a short time before illness wholly incapacitated him. New members of that Parliament, who saw him for the first time, could form no conception of the man he had been in the fullness of his powers. There were other men on the Front Opposition Bench who were able, some of them indeed formidable debaters. Sir Edward Clarke, one of the most distinguished lawyers of his day, was there for a short time, but he was driven out of Parliament because of his unwillingness to accept the new fiscal policy of Mr. Chamberlain, to which by that time practically the whole Tory Party had been committed. I only heard him make one big speech, and that was when he spoke in the famous Free Trade debate in March 1906. It was a great speech, and one which required courage to deliver. He opposed the Chamberlain programme because of the hardship it would inflict upon the poor. After that speech his position in the Tory Party became intolerable, and in the July following he resigned his seat as member for the City of London, and was succeeded by the notorious Sir Frederick Banbury!

I met Sir Edward Clarke some years after his retirement. I went down to speak for the Sutton (Surrey) Co-operative Society, and when I mounted the platform I was surprised, and a little disconcerted, to see him sitting on the front seat. I wondered what could have brought him there. He lived in the neighbourhood. He came into the ante-room after the lecture to speak to me. He told me he had been keenly interested in the Co-operative Movement for fifty years, and had been a friend and co-worker of Judge Hughes, still gratefully remembered by co-operators for his great services to the cause.

In these pre-War days Sir Edward Carson was an outstanding figure among the Tory Opposition. He naturally took the lead in the exciting debates on the Home Rule Bill in 1913-14. He never restrained his language nor spared his opponents. He is the only member I have known who successfully defied the ruling of the Speaker. He had charged the Government with lying—a very unparliamentary expression. He was asked to withdraw, which he flatly refused to do. The Speaker, knowing that if he took the usual course of asking Carson to withdraw from the House there would be an awful row (for tempers were high and nerves frayed in those hectic times), wisely allowed the incident to pass.

Edward Marjoribanks, in his *Life of Carson*, draws a picture of a kindly nature, a warm friend, an attractive personality, and a hater of shams. This is an opinion of Carson which is held by all who know him intimately. But it is hardly the impression which a person would form who knew Carson only in the House of Commons. His appearance was somewhat sinister, but he had such a charming Irish brogue that his appearance was forgotten in the fascination of his voice. His speeches were not well arranged, and were more of the sort that counsel would address to a jury who were more likely to be influenced by an appeal to their emotions than to their intellects. I remember a talk I had with a very eminent judge, and the conversation turned on lawyers in Parliament. I expressed surprise at the number of lawyers who came into the House of Commons with a great reputation at the Bar and who were failures in Parliament. Referring to Carson, he said: " The gifts which have made him a great advocate are not those which appeal to the House of Commons. There, Party prejudice prevents a man from being appreciated at his real worth. In the Courts, Carson's quiet insinuating manner has made him

formidable as a cross-examiner and irresistible with a jury." I believe that the bitterness and venom with which he attacked the Liberals on Home Rule was due to genuine conviction that they had taken up that question to get the votes of the Irish Nationalists.

Many men have been called the " last of the Victorians ". We had in the pre-War Parliament a member who, if not the last of the Victorians, was certainly a survivor of that era, and who carried into the nineteenth century the ideas and customs and styles of the Victorian period. That was Mr. Henry Chaplin. He was strangely out of place in a modern Parliament. He first entered the House of Commons in 1868 when Disraeli and Gladstone were political gladiators. He was the ideal type of an English country squire, both in appearance and in manners, ever courteous to his opponents and dignified in all his actions. He had remained a Protectionist when the Tory Party became Free Trade, and enthusiastically welcomed Mr. Chamberlain's resurrection of a policy which the great Tory leader, Mr. Disraeli, had pronounced to be dead and damned. He spoke in the ponderous style in which Parliamentary debates were conducted in the previous century, and years after the death of Queen Victoria, when referring to the existing Government, spoke of it as " Her Majesty's Government".

At the Election of 1906 he was defeated after sitting for the constituency for thirty-eight years. His defeat was one of the greatest surprises of that memorable Election when so many Tory statesmen went down. Mr. Chaplin was defeated by one of the strangest characters who sat in Parliament in my time. His name was Arnold Lupton. He had fought his election mainly as an opponent of vaccination. For some time before the Election he and his wife had nursed the constituency. They worked it on bicycles. They would go out to a village, spend the

afternoon in house-to-house canvassing, horrifying the women with tales about the terrible consequences of vaccination; and then, in the evening, go round the village with a big bell he carried, collecting an audience which he and his wife addressed on the green. A good story was told of the amazement caused by the defeat of Mr. Chaplin by such a candidate. Just before the General Election a Liberal agent from Lincolnshire was at the National Liberal Club. He was asked about the prospects of the Liberal candidates in the county. " We shall win every constituency in Lincolnshire, except Chaplin's seat. We cannot win that with such a candidate." A few weeks after the Election this agent was again at the National Liberal Club, and he was congratulated upon the Liberals winning Chaplin's constituency. " We didn't win it; it was an act of God ", he said. Shortly after his defeat a safe seat was found for Mr. Chaplin at Wimbledon. The Opposition leaders gave Mr. Chaplin occasionally an opportunity of speaking, more to humour him than for any useful contribution he could make to the discussion. He lived in the past, and the problems which had come into politics were beyond his understanding.

Mr. Arnold Lupton was lost to the House of Commons at the following Election. His Parliamentary efforts did not secure the abolition of the Vaccination Acts. He suspended his anti-vaccination activities during the War, and turned his energies into opposition to the War. In this connection he got into trouble with the authorities. He issued a leaflet, if I remember rightly, protesting against foolish prosecutions under the Defence of the Realm Act. He was brought before the stipendiary at the Westminster Police Court. For some reason he summoned me to give my opinion as to whether the circulation of the leaflet was calculated to bring about our defeat in the War. The prosecution was just silly, one

of the many instances in those times of weak-minded officials, dressed in a little brief authority, asserting their importance. The opening speech and the evidence took only a few minutes, and Mr. Lupton began his speech. He had spoken for an hour before the luncheon adjournment, and resumed his speech after the reassembly. About three o'clock, after he had gone on for another hour, the magistrate, who for some time had been showing impatience, asked him if he had nearly finished. Mr. Lupton suggested that he might go on till five o'clock that afternoon, and continue his speech next day. The magistrate cut short his speech, and sentenced him to six months' imprisonment. It was a brutal sentence. Mr. Lupton was nearly eighty years of age, and physically like a skeleton. But, like many thin and cadaverous persons, he must have had a strong constitution, for he survived his imprisonment.

I am very often asked if I think the House of Commons has improved or deteriorated in the last thirty years. It is difficult to say. In many respects it is just the same. It contains quite as many bores, and members are just as prone as ever to talk for talking's sake. Members dress in a much more free-and-easy way than formerly. Thirty years ago the frock-coat and silk hat were very generally worn. The advent of the Labour members did a good deal to break down conventions. I remember an old member telling me that before 1906 he had never seen a pipe in the smoke-room. In the 1906 Parliament Tommy Bowles outraged tradition by appearing in the House in a suit of white ducks. I find this item of news in the Press of the 12th June 1906: " This afternoon a new sartorial milestone was passed. Mr. Philip Snowden, the Labour member for Blackburn, sat among his political confreres wearing with entire unconcern the first ordinary straw hat ever seen within the precincts of the Mother of Parliaments."

I am inclined to think that on the whole the speaking today is not up to the average level of thirty years ago. Most certainly the number of good speakers is smaller than in the pre-War Parliaments, and I add, without hesitation, that in all the post-War Parliaments there have been far fewer men of outstanding qualities. Providence has evidently, in the composition of the House of Commons, answered that part of Browning's prayer: " Oh, God, make no more giants," but has forgotten to fulfil the other part: " but elevate the race ".

There were some private members in the 1906-14 Parliaments who excelled in debating power. Lord Hugh Cecil may be regarded as a pre-War Parliamentary figure, for in later years he has taken little part in the House of Commons proceedings. In those days Lord Hugh was one of the few members who really debated. Lord Hugh has never attained Ministerial rank, and one can quite understand the reason. He has the " cross-bench " type of mind, and could never be the slave of official policy.

I consider the two best debaters I have known in the House of Commons to be Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. Ellis Griffith. Mr. Robertson was a Scotsman who had made his way in the world by sheer native ability. He was a poor lad, the son of an Arran crofter. Although he was very modest and usually reticent about himself, he once told me something of his life. He was entirely self-educated. He became one of the most cultured men of his time. He was a great Shakespearian scholar, an authority on philosophy, and a leading writer and speaker on rationalism. At twenty-two he became the editor of a Liberal newspaper in Edinburgh, and here he came under the influence of Charles Bradlaugh. He took an active part in public debates on Secularism, and it was this training which made him a formidable debater. In the House of Commons he would tear an opponent's

case to shreds with remorseless logic. Later he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, and that was his undoing as a Parliamentary debater. There was no scope for his gifts in that position. He was never meant to be the mere spokesman of a Government Department.

Mr. Ellis Griffith was a Welsh member with a gift for light banter and humorous sarcasm. He was not such a solid debater as Mr. Robertson. His speeches were not less effective, but in a different way. He, too, was made an Under-Secretary, and the responsibility of office seemed to deprive him of his natural gifts of humour and irony. By his official appointment the House of Commons lost an inimitable debater for a very ordinary Under-Secretary.

About 1911 there came into the House of Commons a group of four young Scotsmen, who had been founders of the Young Scots Society. They were Mr. J. M. Hogge, Mr. W. R. Pringle, Mr. A. McCallum Scott, and Mr. Ian Macpherson. From the first they made their presence felt. Though Liberals, they all, with the exception of Mr. Macpherson, took up the line of independent criticism of the Government. Mr. Macpherson had an eye on office, which he very soon attained, rising to the position of Chief Secretary for Ireland. He has not fulfilled the promise of his early years. Mr. Hogge was able, but somehow he failed to make an impression on the House. Mr. McCallum Scott was a strange character. He always struck me as having the typical Scottish metaphysical mind. He spoke with great deliberation. He seemed as though he was laboriously dragging out his words, not from his head but from his chest. He took a prominent part in the debates on woman's suffrage, of which he was a strong opponent. His argument was that in the last resort the enforcement of law depended on physical

force, and, therefore, only those who were capable of employing force were entitled to vote.

Mr. Pringle was the best instance I have known of determination triumphing over initial failures. His early speeches were not successful. He suffered acutely from nervousness which was painfully obvious. He was not dismayed by failure. He spoke often, but always briefly. As he put it to me, he would be satisfied if he could make one good speech in five. He worked tremendously hard, making himself familiar with the measures before Parliament and getting complete mastery of the rules of the House. He became one of the ablest debaters and best-equipped Parliamentarians in the House.

Three of the four members of this Scots group died young. Mr. Macpherson, now Sir Ian Macpherson, is the only survivor. McCallum Scott, who had joined the Labour Party, was killed in an aeroplane smash in Vancouver.

Keir Hardie's Parliamentary career ended with the outbreak of war. With one interval, he had been in the House of Commons for twenty years. He was not a success in Parliament, and that he fully realised. He never captured the House of Commons. It was not his place. He was not the politician, but the prophet and the seer. Compromise was not in the man's nature. He was the unsparing iconoclast who sought to break the illusions and conventions of his generation. He had set before himself an ideal which he pursued regardless of the hostility and opposition of enemies, and often with scant regard for the criticism and advice of his friends.

But, withal, he was the greatest product of the democracy of our times. I had the great privilege of being intimately associated with him for over twenty years, and that acquaintance is one of my most cherished

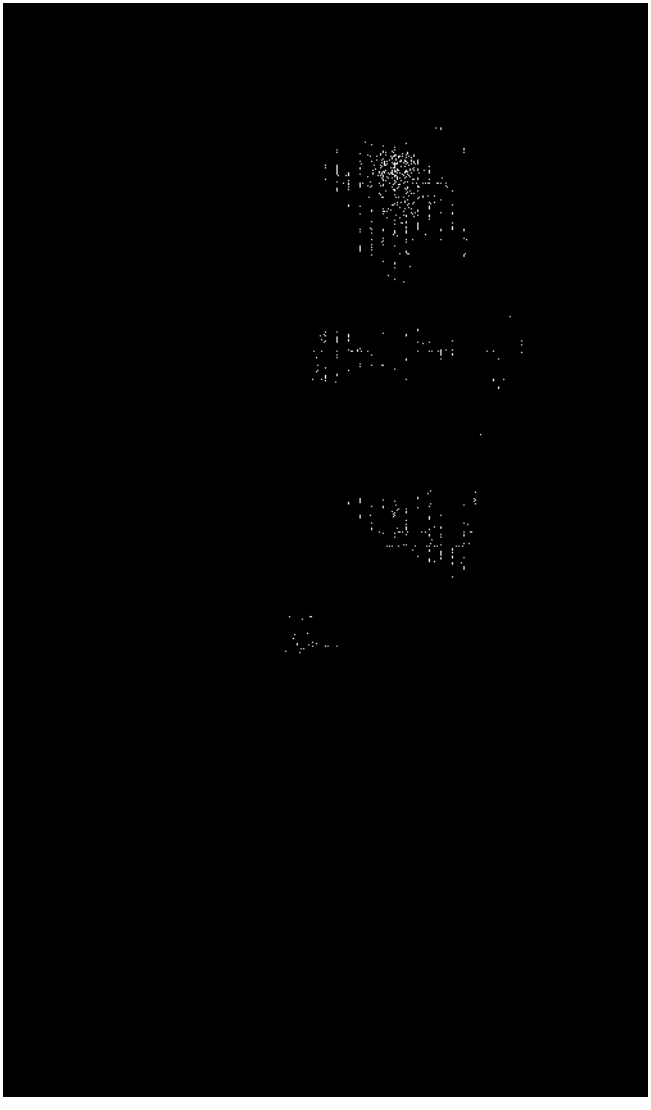

Photo by Speaight,

JAMfcS KLIR IIARDII-

Born, August 15th, 1856. Died, September 26th, 1915.

memories. I am proud to believe that I enjoyed his confidence in an unusual degree. He wrote to me once when I had been away from the House of Commons for two or three days, " What has become of you? You are the only man whose presence here I miss." He usually wrote to me when he was on a speaking tour, telling me of his experiences and how he found the movement.

Keir Hardie owed nothing to the schools and Universities. He had no schooling as a boy. He taught himself to read from the chap-books in the stationers' shop windows. He told me once what drove him to learn to write. When a youth, he went to join the Good Templars. He was unable to sign his name on the membership pledge, and he was so ashamed that he set to work to learn to write. Later, when working in the pit, he taught himself shorthand by marking the characters with bits of coal *on* the whitewashed walls. Yet, in spite of his early disadvantages, he became a well-educated man. Although he had a marked Scottish accent, his English, both in conversation and in public speech, was perfect. He used none of the solecisms which so often mar democratic oratory. His speeches were not those of the politician, but of the man with a mission and a message. His fine, rugged appearance, his powerful and resonant voice, the character of his popular addresses, brought to one's imagination the old Hebrew prophets thundering forth denunciation of the evils of their day and prophesying the coming of a better time.

The moving impulse of Keir Hardie's work was a profound belief in the common people. He believed in their capacity, and he burned with indignation at their unmerited sufferings. He was no theoretic dogmatist. He never argued on the platform the economic theories of Socialism. His Socialism was a great human conception of the equal right of all men and women to the

wealth of the world and to enjoyment of the fullness of life. Though he repudiated the dogma of the " class war ", his appeal was invariably to the workers as a class. The fact of the class war he admitted, but he did not believe that its ruthless prosecution was the way to establish Socialism. He appealed to the working classes to realise their duty to act their part as citizens; and this, he believed, they could best be taught by organising themselves in a Labour Party. It was his class-consciousness which made him contemptuous of any attempt at patronage from the well-to-do. I remember on one occasion meeting a West Riding manufacturer in the Lobby of the House of Commons in a state of great indignation. He told me he had just tried to speak to Keir Hardie, who had cut him dead. " Think of that! " said this plutocrat. " And I once subscribed five pounds to the election expenses of a Labour candidate! "

" The apparel oft proclaims the man." Keir Hardie's dress was characteristic. His unconventional attire was worn for several reasons. I have heard it said that in his younger days he was something of a dandy, and the dress he assumed in his later lifetime—the flannel shirt and collar, the rough tweeds (the coat, vest and trousers usually of different patterns), the big slouch hat and Inverness cloak—was worn as much probably because it made him conspicuous as because it marked him off from the conventional. A well-known Quaker thought fit, when Hardie first entered Parliament, to offer him some practical advice and to warn him against the temptations to which he would be exposed in the House of Commons, and he concluded by saying: "And above all, James, never alter your clothes". There was a wealth of wisdom in that advice. If Keir Hardie had changed into conventional dress it would have been regarded as a falling from grace.

I have often wondered what he would have done if he had lived to become a Minister, and what his response would have been to the Command to go to Buckingham Palace in " frock-coat and silk hat ". I am sure if he had dressed up in these symbols of respectability he would have looked handsome and dignified. Once, however, I did see him in a starched collar. He apologetically explained that he had been to his brothers wedding, and he had made that limited concession to conventionality. Once, too, he did discard the tweeds and flannel shirt. He was in Paris with a friend, and Jaur6s sent them tickets for the opera. They assumed that evening-dress would be essential. His friend was equipped in that respect, but the problem of providing Hardie with dress clothes was difficult. They took the head waiter into their confidence and asked him if he had a spare suit. He had a coat and trousers, but no vest. That difficulty was overcome by Hardie wearing a broad silk sash. In that attire he went to the opera, and he and his friend were the only two men in the theatre in evening-dress!

It is said to be impossible to argue with an optimist. It is more difficult to shake the faith of a prophet. Hardie profoundly believed himself to be inspired with a mission. After the declaration of the poll in an election in which he had been an unsuccessful candidate, he said to a gathering of his supporters: " I come from a race of seers, and I see clearly in prophetic vision the day, not fifty years ahead, when the cause for which we stand will be triumphant ". He lived to see the Labour Party grow to such strength as to make others with duller intellects and clouded vision see the probability of his prophecy being realised. He had a strong grain of superstition in his nature. He was the only man I have known who claimed to have a certain conviction that he had lived in a former incarnation, and who had some remembrance

of incidents of his former life. He had a touching sympathy for the helpless. I have seen his eyes fill with tears at the news of the death of a devoted dog. He carried to his end an old silver watch he had worn in the mine, which bore the marks of the teeth of a favourite pit pony, made by a futile attempt on its part to eat it. Though thirty years had gone, he still spoke of that dumb friend with an affection one shows to the memory of a lost child.

He never talked of religion, though I believe he retained his Church membership to the end. He had no sympathy with the pretences and unrealities of mere religious profession. It was not necessary for Keir Hardie to parade his religion. His life was the expression of a deep religious faith. A mutual friend once said to me: " I f Hardie were the most blatant atheist I should still regard him as the most religious man I have ever known ". " I do not know ", Hardie once said to me, " what they will say about old Keir Hardie when he is dead and gone. But this at least I hope they will be able to say—that, with all his faults, he always fought for his own class/' And that, indeed, those of us who knew him can say.

The strenuous life which Hardie lived after he took up public work undermined a naturally strong constitution. At forty he looked twenty years older than his age. At fifty he was old and grey, almost white. At times in the eight years before the outbreak of war he had serious attacks of illness which necessitated long absences from the House of Commons. The shock of the War was too much for his enfeebled body. At first he called up all the resources of strength left to him, and spoke and wrote against the War with something of his old energy. The merging of the Labour Party in the war-mad crowd, the personal attacks of his old friends and comrades, and the temporary destruction of all he had worked for and

hoped for finally broke him down. After six months of lingering illness, he died on the 26th September 1915, having just passed his fifty-ninth year. Few men have crowded so much into a short life. Few men have had so great an influence on the political life of the country. In the day when the common people enter into the Promised Land no name deserves to be more affectionately and gratefully remembered than Keir Hardie.

Before leaving recollections of the pre-War Parliaments, may I make a comment on the prospects of the Labour Party as they appeared before the outbreak of War. Between 1906 and 1914 there had been three General Elections and twenty-eight by-elections in which the Labour Party had put forward candidates. The results of all these elections showed little indication that the Labour Party was making headway among the electorate. At the two General Elections of 1910 the Party lost eleven and gained eight seats. At the twenty-eight by-elections, nearly all three-cornered fights, the Party won three seats, and lost two seats they had previously held. In the eight years from 1906 to 1914 the Labour Party had not increased the strength of its parliamentary representation. It looked as if the Party was destined to remain a mere group, depending for what representation it had upon the goodwill of the Liberals in a number of constituencies. As far back as 1903 Mr. Sidney Webb, whose political prophecies were usually very accurate, had expressed the belief that the British Labour Party was not likely ever to become so strong as to be a successful competitor with the Liberals and Conservatives for office. Even up to 1914 it looked as though Mr. Webb's forecast would prove to be true. But the War completely changed the situation. The Coalition of 1919-22 practically destroyed the Liberal Party, and gave Labour its opportunity.

CHAPTER XXIII

An Interrupted World Tour

IN the spring of 1914 my wife and I received a pressing invitation to come out to New Zealand in the autumn to help in the National Prohibition Campaign.

We had long, in a vague way, looked forward to some day taking a leisurely trip round the world. My wife was already a seasoned traveller. In the previous six years she had visited the United States on ten separate occasions, speaking in forty of the forty-eight States of the Union. But since our marriage we had never had a real holiday together. We finally decided to make this New Zealand invitation a reason for carrying out our long-cherished desire to see the world.

We made arrangements to leave England three months before we were expected in New Zealand, and to proceed by easy stages across Canada, making a detour through the Western States of America, then crossing the Pacific to New Zealand, returning by Australia, India and South Africa. At that time there were neither wars nor rumours of wars. The international situation was considered to be more satisfactory than it had been for years. The position at home was disturbed by the Home Rule crisis, but that seemed in a fair way of settlement. There was no likelihood of an Autumn Session of Parliament, nor the fear of an inconvenient General Election.

We left Liverpool on 10th July for Montreal. It was a beautiful summer day when we left the landing stage, and after waving good-byes to friends who had come

to see us away we turned round to settle ourselves for what promised to be a fine and enjoyable passage. But the only thing that one can be quite sure about on the Atlantic, is that one may have any sort of a voyage at any season of the year. It is quite as likely that the weather will be wild and cold in July as in December. The boat had not passed out of sight of the Irish coast before summer had been left behind, and all across the Atlantic we experienced cold and at times stormy weather. It was not till we entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence that the sun shone upon us, and we returned to the summer we had left behind in England.

The boat took two days to make the journey up the St. Lawrence to Montreal. In fine weather this is a splendid trip.

We did not remain in Montreal. We had received telegrams at Quebec from the Canadian Woman Suffrage Society and the Socialist organisation in Montreal inviting us to speak in the city. We were determined to resist all such appeals as these and to make our visit to Canada and the United States a real change of occupation. A number of Socialists met us at the docks, and we had an interesting talk about the Labour and Socialist movement in Canada before boarding the night train for Toronto, which we had decided should be our first stopping-place in Canada. Among these Socialists were a number of men from my constituency of Blackburn who had recently emigrated, and who were wanting to get back to Lancashire as soon as they could save the passage money.

We did not, as I have said, remain in Montreal. My wife had spoken in the city on a number of former visits, and on one occasion had an experience which is surely unique. Arriving in the city from the United States early one morning, she hailed a cabman to drive her to

her destination. On arriving there she enquired the amount of her fare. " Nothing at all from *you,* ma'am," said the cabman. " But you don't do this for the good of your health," she replied. " No, I don't," answered the cabman, " but I want nothing from you." Eventually, under pressure, he accepted a dollar, but the explanation of his strange action is still a mystery.

At the station at Montreal I got my first impression of the immensity of Canada. Here we said good-bye to some of our friends from the boat who were about to board the train for Vancouver. This train left Montreal at 9.45 p.m. on Saturday night, and would not arrive at Vancouver till 7.45 a.m. on Thursday, and all the time it was going due west through Canadian territory.

We reached Toronto on the Sunday morning and stayed at a quiet hotel which was so English that it might have been transplanted from an English country town. We spent the Sunday morning making a tour of the suburbs of the city, which were the most beautiful I had seen. The " spieler " who stood on the step of the coach, claimed that many of the buildings we were shown were unique for one reason or another. He showed a remarkable knowledge of the private affairs of the residents in the beautiful houses, and told us how much they were worth and how they made their money, ways which, according to his information, were not very reputable.

Toronto, as many of my readers will be aware, is a very convenient centre from which to visit the Falls of Niagara. I was one of the few individuals who had visited the United States and never seen the famous falls. When Englishmen, who have never been to America, had asked me about the Falls of Niagara I had rather enjoyed their amazement, when they discovered that it was possible for any tourist to visit the United

States and not go to Niagara. But when we were in Toronto, my wife, who has seen the falls under all circumstances and at all seasons of the year, insisted that I should wipe away the reproach. The excursion from Toronto to Niagara and back makes a comfortable and enjoyable day trip. I am getting too old for sensations, but I confess to a mild state of excitement as the car approached the point where a view of the falls can be had. Many people are disappointed with the first sight of Niagara. They had expected too much. I was not. I was more impressionable to this wonderful sight than a fellow-Yorkshireman who was being shown the falls by an American guide. " Ninety million tons of water pass over these falls every minute/' said the guide. " Well," said the phlegmatic Yorkshireman, " Aw see nowt to stop it." We saw the American falls first, and they presented the appearance of a great iceberg, the base of which was being melted in the warmer waters, causing a mist to gather round. The view of the American falls from above is not so fine; at least, the impression on me was less. This may be because from that point they are in competition with the Canadian falls, which, in my opinion, are far away grander than the falls on the American side of Goat Island.

The traveller who wants to see the real Canada will not linger long in the eastern cities. He will make his way by easy stages and the most interesting route to the west. Between Toronto and Winnipeg, a distance of a thousand miles, the railway passes through country which is most monotonous and uninteresting. The weather was oppressively hot, and we had ample time on our hands, so we decided to take the Great Lakes route to the West. A very fine fleet of passenger boats runs on the Great Lakes. It is a thirty-six hours' journey, and interesting the whole way. One sight we saw on this trip will never

be forgotten. It was the ^most gorgeous and wonderful sunset we had ever seen. The depth, the brightness, the variety of the colours, and the wonderful changing and blending, the mountain peaks of snow, the lakes of shining gold and the rivers of silver and crimson baffle all description. Darkness comes quickly in these parts; the water-birds which had followed us all day gracefully swooped down to the surface of the lake to sleep; and as the marvellous scene melted away we felt how beautiful and wondrous are the works of the Creator.

We had taken the boat at Port McNicol and we left it at Fort William. Scotsmen have left their mark everywhere in Canada in names of places. We took the train at Fort William for Winnipeg, a distance of four hundred miles. There surely cannot be a more monotonous journey in the whole world. At the time we were there, up to within seventy miles of Winnipeg the train passed through woods of dwarfed silver birch, broken only by an occasional small clearing in which had been built a small wooden cottage, evidently the home of a man who worked on the railway. The loneliness of life in such places must be awful, and as I suppose it is necessary that somebody should live there it is well that human tastes differ, and that some people enjoy what would be intolerable to others. Wireless has come since then as an inestimable boon to folks in these lonely places.

It was late in the evening when we arrived at Winnipeg. We went to the hotel at the station which was named the " Queen Alexandra ", but which we discovered was discourteously called by the natives " The Alick ". We had not been in our rooms a couple of minutes when the telephone rang, and I was informed that two pressmen were wanting an interview. Not a soul in the world beside ourselves, so far as we knew, was aware that we were coming to Winnipeg. We ourselves did

not know till our arrival where we should stay. But the prescient pressman had discovered it all, and he was there on the spot already. The American pressman and the American Press are unique institutions. I went downstairs to see them, for the experienced traveller in America never refuses the pressman's request for an interview. The interview will appear in any case, and it is likely to be less objectionable if he has treated the pressman with respect. The interviews duly appeared in the papers next morning embellished with a more or less faithful portrait of myself; but heaven only knows how it was obtained.

Before we had finished breakfast the morning after our arrival in Winnipeg, telephone calls came and people began to call to see us. The interviews in the morning papers had done it. Among the first to call upon us was a man possessing a face of homely familiarity, but a body I had never seen before in all that fulness. He was clearly from Yorkshire. Both his appearance and his speech betrayed that. With a little assistance his identity was established. I had seen him last in the capacity of secretary of the I.L.P. in Keighley. He had asked the hall porter (one of those gorgeously arrayed individuals who always inspire me with awe, and whom I always treat with deference) if I was in the hotel, and the reply he got was: " Aye, Aw've just seen him goa in. Aw knew him in a minute. AwVe heeard him tawk mony a time i' 'Owdam.'' We were beginning to feel very much at home. But the feeling of home-likeness grew upon us as our experiences accumulated. In a short walk along the street we were accosted frequently by people who had known us in the old country. Several men who had worked and voted for me in my constituency spoke to me. Some Blackburn ladies who had settled in Winnipeg called upon my wife. These

experiences prevented us from feeling that we were in a strange land.

We were much indebted to Alderman Rigg, secretary of the Winnipeg Trades Council and a Labour member of the City Council, for his attention during our stay in Winnipeg. Through him we saw much and learnt much about the city. He introduced us to many of the leading citizens, prominent politicians and newspaper men. We were shocked at the disclosures which were made to us of the corruption of political life in the State of Manitoba. A General Election for the State Legislature was going on at that time, and the newspapers of each party were full of charges of bribery, corruption, intimidation and terrorism alleged to be practised by the other party. I hope things are better now, but the stories we were told all over Canada of the corruption of political and public life surpassed anything I have heard of the United States. In a new country the political machine is apt to get into the hands of men who have some axe of their own to grind.

We broke the long journey from Winnipeg to the Rockies at Medicine Hat. We had a number of reasons for doing this. Some miles away from the city, away on a homestead settlement, lived an old friend of mine, who nearly twenty years before was a comrade in the I.L.P. in Keighley and a colleague on the town council there. He and his wife were both very actively connected with the Socialist movement, and I not only wanted to see my old friend again (his wife, I had heard, had died some years before), but to learn how he was taking to a life so different from the one he had led in the old country. We wanted to see Medicine Hat because of its fame as the city of natural gas, and we alighted there, too, because of a cordial invitation from the city authorities and the Trades and Labour Council to " stop over " there.

We arrived at Medicine Hat at about 7.30 on Sunday evening after a twenty-four hours' railway journey in a heat of 96 in the shade. We were met at the station by a large deputation, who made the intimation, rather nervously, that I was advertised to address a public meeting that evening at 8.30. At first I bluntly—and, I am afraid, rather rudely—refused to do anything of the sort; but the pitiable disappointment of our friends was too much for the " soft side " of my wife, and she told them she would take the meeting if I persisted in my refusal, so, under this indirect influence, I agreed. The meeting was held in a beautiful church which had recently been erected at a cost of a hundred thousand dollars. The minister announced from the pulpit that our meeting would begin immediately after the conclusion of the ordinary service. We had a very fine audience, and the chair was taken by the president of the Trades Council. In the absence of the mayor, who was away, we were welcomed by the deputy-mayor, and short speeches of welcome were also given by two members of the State Legislature—one a Conservative and the other a Liberal.

During our two days' stay in Medicine Hat we were the guests of the representative of the city in the State Legislature.

We had arranged to take a motor-car out to the homestead, twelves miles away on the prairie, in which my old friend from Keighley was settled, but just as we were about to start he *and his wife* turned up at our host's house. I have had a few genuine surprises in my life, but this was the first time I had met with a person whom I had for many years believed to be dead. We had a long talk of old times, and about the new and strange life my friends were now living. They were happy and contented, and had no longing to return to the old country. Meeting with these friends so far away from our former

associations brought back many recollections of the early days of the I.L.P. Movement in Yorkshire, when we together dreamed of a time and worked for the day when the poverty and wrong of our age would be swept away. I shall probably never see my friends again, but there will always be a mournful interest in my recollection of the circumstances under which I parted from them as they mounted their prairie wagon that warm and beautiful summer evening to set forth to their lonely Canadian home, so far away from the storm and stress of the life in which we once worked together.

From Medicine Hat we went on to Calgary—the Gateway of the Rockies. Even for Canada, where cities have grown up like mushrooms in a summer night, the rise of Calgary is remarkable. When we were there men talked to us, as if it were but an event of yesterday, of an Irishman riding out West with no capital but the horse he rode, and settling down on a claim by the banks of the blue Elbow River on the site of which the city of Calgary now stood. At the time of our visit to Calgary an oil boom was on. Oil was reported to have been found in the neighbourhood; " sharks " had hastened to take advantage of the opportunity by forming companies, and the public had rushed to subscribe the capital with an impetuosity hardly equalled since the South Sea Bubble. All kinds of business premises had been turned into share sales rooms, and practically whole streets were given up to these transactions. Men inside, in their shirt-sleeves, smoking long cigars and looking as villainous as the scoundrel in a Sadler's Wells melodrama, were doing as brisk a business in oil share transactions as the barmen were doing in liquor in the adjacent " saloons ". The whole affair showed the worst side of human nature—the anxiety of people to get rich without working, and the readiness of others to take advantage of the covetousness and ignorance of the public.

The end of this oil swindle soon came. The promoters were left with their gains, and the subscribers had their scrip certificates to remind them of their folly.

From Calgary we went into the heart of the Rockies. We stayed for a few days at a spot on the watershed, where, in what is surely one of the most beautiful and enchanting places in the world, a summer resort has been established. The traveller for Lake Louise leaves the train at Laggan, whence a mountain railway has been constructed for four miles to the chalet on the edge of the lake. This lake lies at an altitude of nearly 6000 feet. At the top of the lake directly facing the chalet is a great glacier, and above this are immense snowfields, from which an avalanche is constantly falling, the sound of it being echoed from mountain side to mountain side. There are other show places in the Rocky Mountains, but there is nothing to surpass—if there be anything to equal—the entrancing beauty of this emerald water in its setting of glacial and snow-capped peaks.

It was a change from this scene to our next experience. From this point we made our way across the border into the northern part of the State of Montana. It took us three days, by the best train service obtainable, to cover the 400 miles to the Glacier National Park. The journey, it is true, was not continuous. It necessitated a " stop over " at Calgary for a night, another at a prairie " city " named Lethbridge, in Southern Alberta, which is deserving of special note because it had a railway porter who refused a tip, and a wait of about six hours at a wayside station in Montana in a heat of 100 degrees in the shade. This part of Montana is given over to the rancher, and as a consequence the population is very sparse. On the evening of the third day we reached Glacier Park, where we were met by Dr. Aked of San Francisco, who had been fishing in these parts for a month, and whose skin was as brown

as that of the Blackfeet Indians who live in large numbers in the Government Reservation there.

Glacier National Park is one of a number of national beauty places which have been reserved by the Government of the United States, under strict regulation and control, for the enjoyment of the people. This particular park comprises some hundreds of square miles of the Rocky Mountains, and is specially attractive for its lake, river and mountain scenery. There are lakes almost unsurpassed for the beauty of their situation and unrivalled for the wonders of the strange fish which inhabit them; rivers for trout fishing which provide the veracious angler with stories of marvellous achievements; and mountain glaciers which afford all the risks and attraction of Alpine mountaineering. On the edge of this enchanted land a great log chalet had been erected which was the starting point for the exploration of this region, and the centre for those who are content to make day journeys into the mountains. From this point my wife made a five days' journey with guides into a trackless region of the upper reaches of the Columbia River, making trails through the forests and over the mountains, being the first woman, according to the guides, who had ever made the journey. She returned quite safe and sound in body, having suffered no greater misfortune than the loss of a good part of the scanty wardrobe with which she started, but possessed, as a compensation, of memories of a thrilling and exciting adventure.

vVe stayed in this charming spot for some time, and it was here that we first heard reports of the outbreak of the European War. The American and Canadian newspapers which came to us two or three days late had sensational headings in type an inch deep, usually printed in red, announcing that Germany had declared war against Russia, and it was expected at any moment

that France and England would become embroiled in an awful conflict. In the calm surroundings in which we were living it was impossible to believe all this. When we left England there was not a war cloud on the horizon. The possibility of the Great Powers of Europe being engaged in war within a month was a thought which could never have entered into the mind of any sane person. To one far away from all reliable sources of information, it was inconceivable that the conditions could have changed so suddenly and so seriously as to permit of no settlement of the differences without resorting to what must be the most disastrous and costly war the world has ever known.

The Canadian and American Press, to which alone we had as yet access, gave pages to reports of this European calamity. The tone of the special reports cabled to Canada from London was deplorable. These reports gave the cue to the leading articles in the newspapers, and Canadian opinion was formed accordingly. Readers of the Canadian Press who had no personal knowledge of British politics could only come to the conclusion that England was absolutely united in loudly clamouring for war, that all the political differences which separate British Parties had disappeared; that they all recognised that the country and the Empire was faced by a crisis of such tremendous seriousness that there was not one voice left to cry out against a course of action which would leave an indelible stain upon our professed civilisation, and be an unspeakable crime against God and humanity.

We did not know what was the cause which had let loose the war dogs on the Continent of Europe, and which seemed likely to involve Great Britain in the conflict. The Canadian Press had not thought it to be worth while to supply this (one would have thought)

very necessary information. In some mysterious way, it seemed the honour of England had become involved because Austria had picked a quarrel with Servia. Because these two nations had some differences, all the Great Powers of Europe were to go to war, and the whole Continent was to be deluged with blood. That such a thing as that could happen; that on such a paltry excuse as this nations should resort to war; that the statesmen and diplomatists of Christian Europe should fail to settle such a matter by peaceful negotiation seemed incredible.

When definite news came that England had actually entered the War, I cabled to Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Labour Party Whip, enquiring if I should return. He replied there was no need to cut short my tour. I could not at the time understand this, but I learnt after why he was not anxious for me to come back then. There was a split in the Party on the question of the War, and Mr. Henderson rightly assumed that I should be on the side of the minority who were opposed to Britain's participation in it.

So we continued our tour, which from that day was darkened by the knowledge of the appalling slaughter which was going on in Europe.

After leaving Glacier Park we made two journeys through the Western States of Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. I was greatly impressed by the vastness, the resources and possibilities of these States. No part of Canada and the United States which we had visited fascinated me more than Oregon. This State has an area of nearly 100,000 square miles, and it is remarkable for the variety and diversity of its soil, climate, crops, and general conditions. The great range of the Cascade Mountains divides Oregon into two great divisions—different in climate and agricultural possibilities. The

western part, stretching from the Pacific to the mountains, comprises the great fruit-growing area which has made Oregon famous and prosperous.

When we were travelling through these States I had a rather severe attack of ptomaine poisoning, contracted, I believe, by drinking enormous quantities of impure iced water. When we reached Portland, the capital of the State of Oregon, I had to go to bed for a few days, and I did not throw off the effects until we reached New Zealand. At Portland I had a very annoying experience. I fell a victim to the imagination of the American Press interviewer! The worst injustice the newspapers had done me, up to that time, was to illustrate a sketch of me with a portrait of Mr. John Redmond. But this was a matter about which I did not complain, as I looked upon the liberty they had taken with Mr. Redmond's portrait as a compliment to myself. We had not been long in Portland when the pressman found us out. He was anxious to get my views about the War, which had then just broken out. I had no information on the question beyond the very unreliable reports which appeared in the American Press; and, in any circumstances, my natural caution would have prevented me from expressing any definite views on such a matter to an American pressman. I may mention that the American pressman very seldom writes shorthand. If you find a Canadian or American reporter who writes shorthand you may conclude with certainty that he is an importation from Great Britain. These American interviewers will talk to you for half an hour—or, rather, will listen to you—without taking a single note and usually they produce an interview which is surprisingly accurate in the circumstances.

I was too ill to give this pressman an interview, but my wife saw him and explained why I could not do so. How-

ever, he seemed determined to get an interview, even if he had to fabricate it. A few hours after, my wife was in the street and bought a copy of the evening paper. Judge of the shock she experienced on opening the paper to see on the front page an alleged interview with me with this heading in large type!——

" BRITON M.P. ADVISES BRITISH SOLDIERS TO SHOOT THEIR OFFICERS "

And below this heading, in what purported to be a statement by me, were words to the effect that I would like to see the soldiers turn round and shoot their officers and bring the War to an end. I was simply astounded when I saw the report. There was not, of course, a shadow of foundation for the statement. The sentiments were utterly abhorrent to me. We at once got into communication with the editor of the paper, and after seeing the reporter he admitted that a serious blunder had been made. The heading and the statement were taken out of the report in the subsequent editions, and on an assurance from the editor that the false report would not be circulated further, nor telegraphed to any Press agency, I let the matter rest, as I was leaving Portland that evening, and I knew something of the difficulty of getting any legal redress in an American court.

About a fortnight later, when I had almost forgotten the incident, a friend gave me a copy of a New York paper dated the day after this fabricated interview had appeared in the Portland paper, and there the whole thing was reproduced with the same heading and the same statement. The report appeared as a special telegram from Portland. This was a very serious matter, and we at once decided to return to Portland, which was 1200 miles from where we were then, to see if any satisfaction could be obtained. On arriving at Portland, I first went to see the British

Consul, who was extremely obliging and anxious to help me, but the only consolation he could give me was, that if I tried to get the newspaper to put the matter right, they would probably publish another fabricated interview worse than the first; and as to the possibility of legal redress, he assured me I might as well cry for the moon. However, I went to see the editor, and when I produced the New York paper and told him I should go on to Washington to see the British Ambassador if I could not get satisfaction he did seem to realise something of the seriousness of the matter. He declared that no member of the staff had telegraphed the report, which must have been done by some man on the prowl who was not an accredited representative of any Press agency.

To make a long story short, after a great deal of trouble, I managed to get the reporter to go with me to the British Consul, and there he signed a sworn declaration that the statements attributed to me had never been made by me. When I appeared at the Consulate with the reporter in custody the Consul had a mild fit of surprise, and he afterwards assured me that I was the first man who had ever succeeded in getting any satisfaction from an American newspaper!

From Portland we went South to San Francisco and Los Angeles. So far we had seen little or no evidence of the existence of the European War. American opinion, so far as it was expressed, seemed in the main to be rather indifferently pro-British. But in San Francisco we encountered our first experience of the financial repercussion of the European situation. We were travelling with Canadian Pacific Railway Company's cheques, and in San Francisco we found considerable difficulty in getting them cashed. Even the office of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company was reluctant to cash its own cheques. At Los Angeles, however, which had a large

foreign population, we found opinion largely unsympathetic with Great Britain. Feeling had run so high, with rather serious consequences in some instances, that the Mayor had issued a manifesto appealing to the people not to discuss the War as the topic was too inflammable.

We spent a couple of days in Los Angeles motoring round its beautiful suburbs, and visiting Pasadena, the winter resort of Eastern millionaires. In one magnificent avenue here, the veracious guide told us, were the residences of one hundred and thirty-seven millionaires. He seemed to be on intimate terms with all of them. " This is the residence of Mr. So-and-So. He is worth thirty-seven million dollars. Last year he donated fifteen dollars to charity." " This is the residence of So-and-So. He is away at present. He has gone to Reno to get a divorce from his wife."

Our destination was an island lying twenty-five miles off the coast of Southern California called Santa Catalina. Here we spent an entrancing fortnight. It is difficult to convey a proper idea of the charm and beauty of this remarkable island. Its climate is perfect. The variation of temperature between summer and winter is very slight. It is always fine, genial, warm weather. I had to restrain myself from making the observation that it was a fine morning, such a remark being too commonplace when every morning is fine.

The proprietors have constructed a good road across the island, and a few weeks before our visit the first motor car had been imported. On this car we made a most delightful trip of fifty miles. We shall never forget the joy of this excursion. Santa Catalina is wholly hilly. The road out of Avalon rises by tortuous windings in a very short distance to a height of 1600 feet. At times the lower part of the road we had covered seemed to lie straight beneath us, hundreds of feet below. The interior

was entirely uninhabited except for one lonely ranch in the centre of the island which was occupied by a Spanish family. Here we rested for a little while sitting under a fig tree of great dimensions, the branches of which were weighted down with the burden of a nearly ripe harvest of fruit. There was no animal life on the island, but birds in great variety were there—the eagle, the hawk, the owl, the cormorant, the quail. The cactus covered the hillsides, and as it was in full flower the deep-red and yellow colouring gave a brilliant appearance to the scene. The sense of perfect beauty and calm, the wonderful charm of the scene where the glory of landscape and deep-blue sea joined together returns to me as I write these lines.

Santa Catalina is better known for the sea-fishing it affords than for the beauty of its interior. Very few persons, indeed, who visit the island ever get far away from the coast. The inhabitants of Avalon really live on the rod and reel. The ordinary visitor comes only in the months of July and August; the angler is there during many months of the year. Enthusiastic anglers come from all parts of the world to fish for the tuna, the yellowtail, the skipjack, the albecore, and the barracouda. The records of the Tuna Club at Avalon informed us that the largest yellowtail ever landed from the waters around this island was brought to gaff by a gentleman from Whalley, near Blackburn, England. In the hall of the hotel was a gold ring of exquisite Indian design, the gift of this gentleman, waiting to become the property of the person who could beat his record of a 63 lb. yellowtail caught on a 6 oz. rod. That the world is a very small place after all, or that the people who live in it have a way of spreading themselves well over its surface, was brought home to us when we discovered that the owner of the small motor launch we hired for our amateur efforts at fishing was a native of my constituency of Blackburn. The love

for the old land remains strongly imbedded in the hearts of these men who have permanently settled far away from it, and it was very touching to see the tears come to the eyes of this sea-bronzed Englishman when I spoke to him in the dialect of his native place.

There were a number of English people settled in the island. On the beach opposite the hotel was a newsagent's and general store with a name that was not unfamiliar to me. In conversation with the hotel manager I mentioned that the proprietor of that place must have come from within six miles of Colne in Lancashire. On enquiry we discovered that he hailed from Burnley, about five miles from Colne. He was an ex-student of Ruskin College, and instead of following the career of Labour leader in England, which had once been his ambition, he had settled down to the prosaic life of a shopkeeper on this island in the Pacific, where there is no social problem to vex one's soul.

We left this Paradise with reluctance, and made our way from the United States north to Vancouver, to be able to sail from there to New Zealand in the early days of September. For weeks the American and Canadian papers had been publishing sensational reports of the activity of the *Leipzic* and *Numberg* off the American coast. Vessels coming into San Francisco and Vancouver brought startling accounts of hairbreadth escapes from these German cruisers. Others reported that they had heard the continuous booming of guns, which they set down to an encounter between one of these vessels and a British cruiser. In view of these reports a voyage across the Pacific under the British flag promised a good deal of excitement—of a kind not agreeable to nervous people. The prospect had evidently frightened a good many persons, for a considerable number of those who had booked passages by the boat, which was to sail on 2nd September, cancelled the bookings, and when the

steamer did start it was with not more than one-third of the cabins occupied.

We were to have left Vancouver at noon, but an intimation was made that the time of sailing had been changed to four o'clock. When that hour arrived a further postponement was made till ten o'clock, and then we were informed that we should not sail until noon the next day. Various reasons or excuses were put forward for these postponements, such as the delay in the British mail from the East; but, as we were told later, the true reason was that the boat was held up by the Admiralty authorities, who were not satisfied that it was safe to leave. On the morning of the second day an intimation came that we might sail. On the seven days' journey from Vancouver to Honolulu no incident occurred which marked the voyage as in any way extraordinary, beyond the fact that at night the boat sailed with all its exterior lights extinguished, and no passenger was allowed to have a light in the cabin unless the window shutters were closed.

It was not intended that we should remain in Honolulu for more than a few hours, but the German cruisers again interfered with our plans. Three days before our arrival at Honolulu the German cruiser *Nurnberg* had put into the port to coal. It had left but two days before, so could not be very far away. By instructions from the British Admiralty authorities in the Pacific, we were held up at Honolulu for twenty-four hours, and when we resumed the voyage it was with the feeling that we were running considerable risk. When we were two or three days out from Honolulu the boat suddenly changed its course with a violence which gave the passengers a shock. It transpired later that we were in the near neighbourhood of the German cruisers.

Our next call was at Fiji. At this place we took on board a number of German prisoners from Samoa, who

were being taken to the military prison on Somes Island at Wellington. They were treated with all the consideration shown to cabin passengers, but they held themselves aloof from the other passengers. There was a good deal of trouble with some of them after dark, as they would persist in showing their lights, presumably in the hope of attracting a German cruiser. Four days after leaving Fiji we arrived safely in Auckland, where we were met by many friends, who had become rather anxious on account of the late arrival of the boat.

We landed in New Zealand on the 25th of September. This time of the year corresponds in the matter of seasons with the end of March in England. The weather was bright, though the wind was sharp and cutting. We spent the first week in Auckland. The Auckland people are very proud of the natural situation of their city. Every visitor is expected to endorse the local opinion on this matter. As I am now too far away to suffer any physical injury from offended local patriotism by telling the truth, I may say that I have seen many towns far more beautifully situated than Auckland.

I had not fully recovered from the effects of the ptomaine poisoning I had contracted in the United States, and was still very weak. So we went for a few days to Rotorua—the wonderland of New Zealand—a place renowned throughout the world for the recuperative properties of its air and springs. Three days in this place made me a new man. While there we were taken charge of by the local Maori clergyman, a well-educated man, who was devoted to his own people, anxious to preserve and encourage the Maori language, customs and traditions. He had a beautiful little church, built by himself with the help of his Maori congregation, which contained many wonderful specimens of native handicraft.

We had many instances of the tenacity with which the

Maoris cling to their language. We visited many native settlements, and the chief, who knew English quite well, would only talk with us through an interpreter. By this, I suppose, he was asserting the dignity and independence and superiority of his race. We were very much interested in the position of the Maori population. Nowhere did we find the slightest indication of racial superiority shown towards the Maoris by the white population.

We came across an amusing instance of the reversal of the usual practice where white settlers have invaded native territory. By some treaty Britain had made with the Maori chiefs, the ownership of a large area in the North Island had been perpetually reserved for them. British settlers had, with the assent of the Maori chiefs, come there and built a town on land leased to them by the Maoris, who lived in charming villas on the hillsides and ran Rolls-Royce cars out of the ground rents they received from the whites.

In one of the villages we visited there was a Maori brass band which had recently been formed. A young Maori woman had died. A Maori funeral is a great event. The brass band turned out to the burial to give her musical honours. As the procession moved away from the grave the band struck up the only tune they knew: " The Girl I left behind me". The minister afterwards explained to the band that that tune was not quite appropriate for a funeral, and he would give them a suitable piece for such occasions. He presented them with copies of the " Dead March in Saul ", which they set to work with gusto to learn. Their next engagement was at the opening of a Drill Hall, and all the afternoon they played the " Dead March in Saul ".

In the course of our tour through New Zealand we spoke in practically every town in the Dominion on behalf of the Temperance Party. We liked New Zealand and its

people very much. It is the only part of the British Empire we visited where the attachment to the Mother Country was universally strong. There seemed to have been a deliberate effort to reproduce in the new land the customs and conditions of the old country. Everything was English, where it was not Scotch, down to the uniforms of the postmen and policemen and the painting of the letter boxes. Everywhere Britain was spoken of as " home ", even by those who had never been there, but who lived in the hope that they would some day visit the land of their fathers. At the time we were there the War had been going on for some months. It had aroused remarkable patriotism among the people. They knew nothing of the causes of the War. It was enough for them that the Old Country had called for their help.

We had opportunities of meeting the leading politicians, and other public men, and of studying the Social and Labour legislation, in which New Zealand had been a pioneer. We were entertained at many civic functions, and by various political and social organisations. Both Mr. Massey, the Prime Minister, and Sir Joseph Ward, the Liberal Leader, presided at our public meetings. I was invited to address the members of the House of Representatives on the subject of Proportional Representation, a topic which then was exciting considerable interest in the country.

I was a " distinguished stranger " at the sittings of their Parliament, and I was much interested in their procedure. They had a time limit to speeches to which Ministers were subject. At the end of ten minutes even a Minister was stopped, and after an Opposition's speaker had replied for ten minutes, the Minister resumed his speech for another ten minutes, and so on until he had exhausted his material. It seemed to me to be an objectionable practice, as it largely destroyed the effectiveness of the speech.

The members struck me as being quite up to the level of the average British member of Parliament. At the time of our visit the Prime Minister was Mr. W. F. Massey—or " Bill " Massey as he was popularly called—a genial farmer, who hid a good deal of Scottish shrewdness behind a blunt and innocent appearance. He had a striking resemblance to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The Liberal Leader was Sir Joseph Ward, a very different type of man from Mr. Massey. I had many talks with him in his room at the House. He impressed me as a man of considerable ability, a cute politician, a keen Party man, but not inspired by much idealism.

I might mention another little thing which shows how New Zealand keeps up British historical associations which the Mother Country has lost. The members' dining-room in the Parliament House is known as " Bellamy's ", after the famous caterer to the British House of Commons, whose meat pies were so much appreciated by the Great Pitt. The Library of the New Zealand Parliament made me utterly ashamed of the Library in our House of Commons, which contains practically no modern works. Their Library was stocked with all the recent books on sociology, economics, monetary problems and politics.

New Zealand is, perhaps, too small to produce a big crop of statesmen of outstanding ability. Since " Dick " Seddon's death no politician has wielded so much personal influence. A prominent citizen of Wellington said to me: " Send us out from England a man who can speak and who has a knowledge of politics and social questions and we will make him Prime Minister in five years."

We were told many good stories of Seddon. On one occasion he was the guest at a smoking concert, and when it was over he went to the house where he was to be entertained for the night. There were several young

ladies in the family, and Seddon—who was in a hilarious condition after his evening's enjoyment—seized one of them, put her on the piano stool, and then threw his eighteen stone on the sofa saying to the young lady: " Play and sing to me ' There is sweet rest in Heaven ' ".

We came in touch with the New Zealand Labour Movement, which was fairly strong and had a number of members in the House of Representatives. We were entertained at a banquet by the Party, where we met a number of old acquaintances from " home ", most of whom expressed themselves as being very happy and prosperous. The Leader of the Labour Party in Parliament was Harry Holland. He had a reputation among his political opponents of being something of an extremist, but I found him to be quite moderate and practical, and a man of considerable ability. He died in 1933 under tragic circumstances, but a death which he probably would have chosen for himself. He was a great friend of the Maoris. He went into the Maori country to attend the funeral of a Maori chief. The funeral ceremony was held on the summit of a hill. Mr. Holland, who was lame and in ill health, insisted on walking up the hill, and when he reached the summit he collapsed and died. The Maoris gave him a wonderful funeral, with all the ceremony and honours they could bestow.

The ablest and best-informed man we met in New Zealand was Mr. W. Downie Stewart. We stayed with him and his sister for a fortnight at their home in Dunedin. Mr. Stewart was exceedingly well read on social and economic and financial questions. He was not then a member of Parliament, but at the time we were there he was contesting a division of Dunedin, for which he was returned. Shortly after he volunteered for the War, where he was badly crippled. He returned home, and took up his parliamentary work. His ability and knowledge

soon gained for him a position of influence in the House, and he became Minister of Finance. In this position he made a great reputation by his grasp of financial problems. His physical infirmity alone prevented him from becoming Prime Minister.

Dunedin, the town in which Mr. Stewart lived, is not only Scottish in name but Scottish in population. He told me a good story which a Scotsman with a sense of humour will appreciate. A rate collector with an unmistakable Scottish accent called one day at a house to enquire for the occupier who had the not uncommon name of John Smith. The wife said that if the rate collector would go into the garden he would find her husband there. The man came back and said he could not find her husband. There was nobody there but a Chinaman. " That's my husband ", said the woman. Seeing the look of surprise in the Scotsman's face, the woman added: " You seem to be surprised." "Well to tell you the truth, missis, I am surprised to find a good-looking woman like you married to a Chinaman." " Oh ", said the woman, " I have a sister who is far better looking than I am and she's married to a Scotsman."

We both liked New Zealand very much. We liked the people, we liked the scenery, we liked the climate. It has been called " God's Own Country ", and I will not dispute the claim. I cannot think that there is any country in the world which contains, within a comparatively small area, such natural beauty and such a variety of soil and climate as New Zealand. The pioneers must have been a brave, adventurous, hardworking and persevering type of men. Few things we saw in New Zealand surprised us more than the settled and fully developed appearance of many parts of the country. In the south of the North Island and in the north and east of the South Island the country was as fully developed as rural England. Yet

it is only about ninety years since white men began to settle there, and today the population is only a million and a half.

It seemed to us amazing that in this comparatively short time such a small population could have put in the work required to bring so much of the country into such a developed state. Vast portions of the country are still covered with the primeval bush, and in many parts, where isolated settlers have made a clearing in the forest far from any centre of population, there are no roads. Life in the " back blocks ", as the remote settlements are called, is said to be terribly trying, and many stories were told to us of the privations and sufferings of the people who have gone out there, especially of the women, to whom this means practically banishment from civilisation and society. Papers reported an incident which showed how far out of touch with things men living in the remote regions may be. A man came in from the " back blocks " to one of the towns to buy goods. It was November, and the news of the War which had been raging for months in Europe had not reached their settlement.

Farming, when we were there, was very prosperous. In recent years New Zealand, like the rest, has suffered severely from the slump in agricultural prices. But she will recover, and will again offer to the adventurous sons of the old land the opportunity for a natural, healthy and prosperous life. I came away from New Zealand with the strong feeling that if I had been a young man with a liking for an outdoor life I should without hesitation have made my home there.

Ever since the outbreak of the War we had been anxious to get back to England. At the end of December we arranged to leave New Zealand. We abandoned our original intention to return by India and South Africa. We took the boat from Wellington to Sydney. We spent

a fortnight in New South Wales. That was far too short a time to get any impressions of Australia worth retaining. At the time of our visit there was a Labour Government in that State. Mr. Holman was Prime Minister. We had met Mr. and Mrs. Holman in England. We were very warmly welcomed by them and the members of the Government. We were taken round Sydney Harbour in the Government launch, and we signed the usual declaration " that Sydney Harbour *is* the finest harbour in the world ".

We left Sydney by the direct steamer for San Francisco, which we safely reached after a three weeks' uneventful voyage. We had no fear this time of German cruisers. The *Leipsky* the *Numberg,* the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* had been sunk a month before by Admiral Sturdee's squadron in a battle off the Falklands. On arriving at San Francisco we were met by our friend the Rev. Dr. Aked, who calmly told me that he had advertised me to preach in his church next day, which was Sunday. I strongly protested against this, but it was too late to cancel the announcement. I spent a miserable Sunday morning trying to concoct a sermon, but without any success. So I fell back on my stock-in-trade and gave the large audience an address on Internationalism.

We remained in San Francisco only two days, and left for New York by the then little used Western Pacific Railway. This is by far the most interesting of the trans-continental routes. The train rises from the rich, warm plains of California to the summit of the Colorado Sierra Mountains to the mining town of Leadville, 7000 feet above sea-level, and then begins a rapid descent to the plain of Colorado. In this descent one of those curious things happened, the like of which have perplexed me throughout my life. The train was rushing along at breakneck speed down a steep mountain side. I saw on

this rugged, stony, inhospitable mountain side, seemingly scores of miles from any human habitation, placed among the heather and rocks, a rough stone shelter, and outside sitting on a boulder, was an aged man smoking a pipe. He had a remarkably striking appearance, and might have sat for a portrait of Walt Whitman. It passed in a moment; but the scene made an indelible impression on my mind. It has recurred to me hundreds of times since then. Why should this be ? Why should a momentary flash of a trivial incident be permanently impressed on one's mind, and why should it recur again and again through all the after-years without there being anything to call it to one's memory, when events of importance completely pass out of one's recollection? I wonder what explanation the psychological experts can give. In this particular instance there may be a partial explanation. The sight of the old man set me wondering. Why had he gone so far away from the haunts of men? How did he get a living? What was his life's history? I shall never know. I shall have to be satisfied with the memory of the flash on that bleak Colorado mountain.

We arrived in Liverpool in the first week of February 1915. During our seven months' absence from England we had not seen an English newspaper, and we had not had a letter from home. We had come back to a strange land. We had left a country and a people from whose minds the thought of war was far remote. We had come back to an England where all the resources of the country and the energies of its people were devoted to the prosecution of war. It was a sad homecoming.

Photo by Walter Scott, Bradford

PHILIP SNOWDEN IN 1914,
AGED 50

CHAPTER XXIV

My Attitude to the War

ON our arrival in Liverpool at the end of January 1915 we went straight to Blackburn. I was very anxious to meet the Labour Party there in order to get some understanding of the actual state of affairs. During my seven months' absence I had been completely out of contact with the British Labour Movement. What information I had been able to acquire had come to me from garbled and unreliable reports in the Dominion and American Press. As I think I have stated elsewhere, I had not seen an English newspaper since the outbreak of war, nor had I had any letter from England. I had gathered from what I had seen in the newspapers that there were divisions of opinion in the Labour Party upon the question of the War, and that the Independent Labour Party were not supporting it. I should have been surprised if the attitude of the I.L.P. had been otherwise. From the time I first learnt of the outbreak of the War I never had a moment's doubt as to what my position would have been if I had been at home. For fifteen years I had criticised the foreign policy of the British Government, and had declared that if it were pursued a European War would certainly break out sooner or later. When, after my return, I had the opportunity of studying the documents relating to the alleged causes of war, and when I had read the speeches of Sir Edward Grey and other British statesmen, my attitude was confirmed by everything which I read.

It is no part of my purpose in the following pages to

deal at length with the diplomatic history of the period preceding the War, or with the conflicting statements of politicians intimately concerned in it. I learnt from the contemporary newspaper records that the speech which Sir Edward Grey delivered on the 3rd August made a remarkable impression both in the House of Commons and in the country, and turned a hesitating public opinion in favour of Great Britain's participation in the War. Reading that speech now, when the war fever has subsided and when one can study it unmoved by the fears and passions which then made calm judgment difficult, I am amazed that such a speech could have produced the effect which it appears to have had. That speech was a complete justification of the charges which had been made against Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy. Although he claimed that there was no definite agreement between France and Great Britain that Great Britain should go to the help of France in the case of war, yet he made it perfectly clear that France had been encouraged to believe and to expect that in such an event she could rely upon British support. He admitted that conversations had taken place between British and French military and naval authorities in which plans had been considered for co-operation in the event of war. What other conclusions could France draw from Britain's willingness to enter into such consultations? Sir Edward Grey was quite right in making out the case that, without any understanding embodied in a treaty, the honour of Great Britain had been pledged to go to the help of France in circumstances such as had then arisen.

For years before, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had been repeatedly questioned in the House of Commons on the rumours of such an understanding between Great Britain and France. Both had repeatedly denied that there was any agreement between the two

countries. This was a deliberate evasion of the facts, and deceived the House of Commons as to the existence of an understanding. Both Lord Morley and Mr. Lloyd George have given us accounts of the way in which these understandings with France were kept from the knowledge of almost all the members of the Cabinet. Mr. Lloyd George has written: " The Cabinet were never informed of these vital arrangements until we were so deeply involved in the details of military and naval plans that it was too late to repudiate the inference ". He tells us that both Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Asquith expressed grave doubts as to the wisdom of proceeding with these discussions, and that when Sir Edward Grey, under pressure, communicated these negotiations and arrangements to the Cabinet, the majority of its members were aghast. " Hostility ", he says, " barely represents the strength of the sentiments which the revelation raised. It was more akin to consternation. Sir Edward Grey allayed the apprehensions of his colleagues to some extent by emphatic assurances that these military arrangements left us quite free in the event of war, whether or not we should participate in the conflict.'*

Such an assurance proved worthless, for Sir Edward Grey in his speech on the 3rd August made the fulfilment of the expectations he had given to France a matter of British honour. These disclosures confirmed the belief which certain members of the House of Commons who had closely followed the trend of foreign affairs over a period of years had long held, that this country was so far committted to support France that when the occasion arose we should be unable to withdraw. These understandings with France indirectly committed this country to the support of Russia in the event of France being engaged in war, because France and Russia were by treaty under an obligation to support each other in case of a

war with Germany. European policy for years had aimed at two antagonistic combinations—the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. Sir Edward Grey's sympathy with France and his antagonism to Germany cannot be denied. His general attitude to Germany was disclosed in a remark made by him in the Cabinet during the feverish days before the outbreak of war. Lord Morley in his " Memorandum " says: " Grey rather suddenly let fall his view in the pregnant words that German policy was that of a great European aggressor as bad as Napoleon ". Morley replied: " I have no German partialities, but you do not give us evidence ". Lord Morley also discloses the fact that, in the Cabinet discussions preceding the declaration of war, " the question of Belgium was in truth, up to the morning of August 3rd when Grey had set out his whole case in the House of Commons, secondary to the pre-eminent controversy of the Anglo-French Entente ".

Abundant evidence could be given, if it were necessary, from authorities with an intimate knowledge of what actually took place, but the student who is interested in this question need go no farther than Lord Grey's book *Twenty-five Years* (published in 1925) for complete confirmation of the fact that he had so far committed himself to the support of France that when the crisis came he could not in honour deny the understanding which he had given to her. It is clear from what he says in his own account of the extent to which he had committed this country, that if the Cabinet, Parliament and the country should decide at the critical moment not to support France he would have to resign. Lord Morley tells us that this was a view that he pressed strongly upon his colleagues in the Cabinet. Lord Grey writes: " One danger I saw . . . it was that France and Russia might face the ordeal of war with Germany relying upon our

support, and that this support might not be forthcoming, and that we might then, when it was too late, be held responsible by them for having let them in for a disastrous war ".

The position was put very well by Sir Eyre Crowe, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in a memorandum he sent to Sir Edward Grey dated July 31st 1914, in which he said: " The argument that there is no written bond binding us to France is strictly correct. There is no contractual obligation, but the Entente has been made, strengthened, and put to the test and celebrated in a manner justifying the belief that a mutual bond was being forged. The whole of the Entente can have no meaning if it does not signify that in a just quarrel England would stand by her friends. This honourable expectation has been raised. We cannot repudiate it without exposing our good name to a grave criticism."

This was the position on the 3rd August when Sir Edward Grey said in the House of Commons that Parliament was technically free to repudiate obligations about which it had never been consulted and of which it had up to that time no knowledge. But Parliament could only do so by repudiating its Foreign Minister, and destroying the expectations which had been given to France in the name of the British Government. Sir Austen Chamberlain put this point very well eight years later in a speech in the House of Commons on the 8th February 1922. He said: " We found ourselves on a certain Monday morning listening to a speech by Lord Grey at this box which brought us face to face with war and upon which followed our declaration. That was the first public indication to the country, or to anyone by the Government of the day, of the position of the British Government and of the obligations it had assumed. Was the House of Commons free to decide? Relying upon the arrangements made

between the two Governments, the French coast undefended—I am not speaking of Belgium, but of France—there had been the closest conversations and negotiations between our two Governments and our two Staffs. There was not a word on paper binding this country, but in honour it was bound as it never had been bound before. . . . Suppose it had been laid before this House and approved by this House might not the events of these August days have been different. . . . If we had had that, if our obligations had been known and definite, it is at least possible, and I think it is probable, that war would have been avoided in 1914."

These facts, relating to the foreign policy of Great Britain, were the reasons why the Executive of the British Labour Party at the outbreak of war passed the following resolution, which was subsequently endorsed at a joint meeting with the Parliamentary Labour Party:—

" That the conflict between the nations in Europe, in which this country is involved, is owing to Foreign Ministers pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power; that our own national policy of understandings with France and Russia only was bound to increase the power of Russia both in Europe and Asia, and to endanger good relations with Germany.

" That Sir Edward Grey, as proved by the facts which he gave in the House of Commons, committed, without the knowledge of our people, the honour of the country in supporting France in the event of any war in which she was seriously involved, and gave a definite assurance of support before the House of Commons had any chance of considering the matter.

" That the Labour movement reiterates the fact that it has opposed the policy which has produced the war, and that its duty is now to secure peace at the earliest possible moment on such conditions as will provide the best opportunities for the re-establishment of amicable feelings between the workers of Europe.

" That without in any way receding from the position that

the Labour movement has taken in opposition to our engaging in a European War, the Executive of the Labour Party advises that, whilst watching for the earliest opportunity of taking effective action in the interests of peace and the re-establishment of good feeling between the workers of the European nations, all Labour and Socialist organisations should concentrate their energies meantime upon the task of carrying out the resolutions passed at the Conference of Labour organisations held at the House of Commons on August 5th, detailing measures to be taken to mitigate the destitution which will inevitably overtake our working people whilst the state of war lasts."

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who at that time was Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, on the instructions of a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party spoke after Sir Edward Grey on the 3rd August. He made only a short speech, and reading what he said today many of his statements have proved prophetically true. He said:

"I think the Foreign Secretary is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. We shall see. The effect of the Rt. Hon. gentleman's speech in this House is not to be its final effect. . . . If the nation's honour were in danger we would be with him. There has been no crime committed by statesmen of this character without these statesmen appealing to their nations' honour. . . . Finally, so far as France is concerned, we say solemnly and definitely that no such friendship as the Rt. Hon. gentleman describes between one nation and another could ever justify one of these nations entering into war on behalf of the other. . . . So far as we are concerned whatever may happen, whatever may be said about us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will take the action that we will take of saying that this country ought to have remained neutral, because in the deepest parts of our hearts we believe that that was right and that that alone was consistent with the honour of our country and the traditions of the Party that are now in office."

From the time the War threatened in the last days of July, the International Socialist Movement was active

in trying to avert the catastrophe. The International Socialist Bureau met at Brussels on the 29th July. The British Section of the International met in London the following day to receive reports from the Brussels meeting. The British Section at once issued an appeal, signed by James Keir Hardie and Arthur Henderson, the Chairman and Secretary respectively of the British Socialist Bureau. This is an appeal which is worth producing in full in view of the change of attitude towards the War which took place a week subsequently.

" AN APPEAL TO THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

" *Issued July* 31s* 1914.

" The long-threatened European War is now upon us. For more than a hundred years no such danger has confronted civilisation. It is for you to take full account of the desperate situation and to act promptly and vigorously in the interest of peace.

" You have never been consulted about the war.

" Whatever may be the rights and wrongs of the sudden crushing attack made by the militarist empire of Austria upon Servia, it is certain that the workers of all countries likely to be drawn into the conflict must strain every nerve to prevent their Governments from committing them to war.

" Everywhere Socialists and the organised forces of Labour are taking this course. Everywhere vehement protests are made against the greed and intrigues of militarists and armament-mongers.

" We call upon you to do the same here in Great Britain upon an even more impressive scale. Hold vast demonstrations against war, in London and in every industrial centre. Compel those of the governing class and their Press, who are eager to commit you to co-operate with Russian despotism, to keep silence and respect the decision of the overwhelming majority of the people, who will have neither part nor lot in such infamy. The success of Russia at the present day would be a curse to the world.

" There is no time to lose; already, by secret agreements and understandings of which the democracies of the civilised world know only by rumour, steps are being taken which may fling us all into the fray. Workers, stand together, therefore, for peace. Combine and conquer the militarist enemy and the self-seeking Imperialists today once and for all.

" Men and women of Britain, you have now an unexampled opportunity of showing your power, rendering a magnificent service to humanity and to the world. Proclaim that, for you, the days of plunder and butchery have gone by. Send messages of peace and fraternity to your fellows who have less liberty than you.

" Down with class rule! Down with the rule of brute force! Down with war! Up with the peaceful rule of the people!

" Signed on behalf of the British Section of the International Bureau.

" J. KEIR HARDIE, *Chairman.*

" ARTHUR HENDERSON, *Secretary"*

At the outset of the War the International Socialist movement suffered an irreparable loss. The greatest French Socialist, and indeed the greatest figure in the International Socialist movement—M. Jean Jaures—was assassinated in a Paris cafe\ He had already declared his opposition to the War for the reasons set forth in the manifesto just quoted. He was shot down because it was known that he would have had a tremendous influence on behalf of peace, not only in France but throughout Europe. He was the one man who would have been able to reorganise and rally the whole International Socialist Movement on behalf of peace. This is not the place to give an appreciation of the life and work of this most eloquent and influential of Socialist leaders. It is enough to say now that, had he lived, the course of the War might have been different.

Being absent from the country, I cannot write from my

own knowledge of the state of public opinion in the days immediately following the outbreak of war. But from what I learnt there was little of the ignorant flag-waving jingoism. The appalling seriousness of the conflict seems to have staggered the nation. Indeed, throughout the whole four years of the War there was a remarkable absence of bragging enthusiasm. The nation realised that there were tremendous issues at stake. The public in that condition became easy subjects for official propaganda. Men and women who had spent their lives in preaching peace; ministers of religion, who by their profession were expected to oppose war; Liberal newspapers which had protested magnificently against intervention before war was declared—all now threw themselves whole-heartedly into supporting the Government, calling loudly for the vigorous prosecution of the War—as though a threatened crime becomes a virtue when it has been committed.

The majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party could not escape the influence of this great national surge, and as soon as war was declared they forgot their declarations, forgot the causes of the War, and decided to adopt a policy which conflicted with the resolution quoted above, which they had passed two days before.

In these changed circumstances Mr. MacDonald could no longer speak in the House of Commons as Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and he accordingly resigned the position. All but two of the Independent Labour members of Parliament remained true to their principles, but the rest of the Labour Party from that time to the end of the War gave an unswerving support to the Government, and were not one bit behind in using all the usual methods of war propaganda.

The invasion of Belgium came as a veritable God-send to the embarrassed British Government, who were con-

scious that it would have been difficult to get popular support for a war on behalf of France and Russia in which, as Mr. Balfour said, " no British interest was involved ".

Mr. Lloyd George has said that before the invasion of Belgium the majority of the people of this country were opposed to the participation of Britain in the War. But when the neutrality of Belgium was violated, when the ruthless German Army swept over her territory, British opinion swung round almost unanimously in support of the War. It was such an easy thing for our statesmen to appeal to the best emotions of the British people on behalf of a small and almost defenceless nation under the ruthless heel of the invader. The bald fact is that the invasion of Belgium was not in the least the cause of the War, but this colossal blunder of Germany enabled our statesmen to hide the real causes behind an emotional appeal.

There are only two reasons which will ever induce a people to support a war: one is fear, and the other is an appeal to their patriotism and the worthiness of the cause they are asked to support. The value of the invasion of Belgium, and the cry that international treaties were trampled under foot, was quickly realised for war propaganda purposes. Immediately on the outbreak of war the old stock-in-trade political propaganda was brought into use. There was not one thing that was new in the methods which were employed to gain popular support for the War. Every student of past wars is quite familiar with every one of the methods. They are not employed by one country alone, but are common to every country engaged in a war. The enemy is represented as an aggressor, who, by his military powers, is seeking to gain imperialist ends. Every war is represented as a war of defence, and the passions of the people on each side are excited by stories of appalling atrocities inflicted on

military prisoners and on the civilian population. Each side represents to its people that the war has been undertaken from high and lofty motives in defence of national security and honour. In the late war not a new slogan and not a new appeal was invented. They had all been employed in former wars. The phrase that " the War was a war to end war " in identical words had been the slogan used in the last European war in which Britain had taken part, when in the Crimea she was resisting the mighty military power of Russia.

It is quite true that Mr. Lloyd George elaborated these old catchwords and dressed them in more oratorical language. In view of the state of things in Europe nearly twenty years after the end of the War, and the promise that he held out that the sacrifices of British life and treasure would bring their reward to future generations in a world free from the scourge of war, it is rather cruel to quote some of the emotional and rhetorical appeals by which he encouraged the British people to make these sacrifices. " The British Empire ", he said, " is finding its purpose in the great design of Providence on earth, finding it in this great war for liberty and for right throughout the world/' He appealed to men " to rally to the flag, to be imbued with the idea that they were going forth in a Holy War, fighting not in a war of conquest, nor a war of appropriation. As the Lord liveth, we seek not a yard of German colonies, we are in this war with motives of purest chivalry to protect the weak."

Rhetoric like this, in the light of our present-day experiences, sounds like sheer blasphemy. To assert that the design of Providence brought the British Empire into the war to fulfil a divine purpose, to talk of the War as a " Holy War ", cannot be excused even in the circumstances which then existed. " As the Lord liveth, we seek not a yard of German colonies, . . ." and at the

end of the War we took every yard of them. In the state of popular feeling at the time, a time when people's nerves were frayed, to use appeals like this to induce the youth of the nation to offer to sacrifice their lives cannot be excused or defended. The British Empire was carrying out no design of Providence. It had been embroiled in this conflict by the policy of European diplomatists, for which Great Britain has as great a responsibility as any of the other belligerents. A terrible thing about war is that politicians make wars and innocent people have to fight them. There was a remarkable poem published in the early months of the War which put into the mouths of four plain soldiers of different nationalities, who had been taken away from their useful occupations to fight in this " holy war ", these words:

> " I died for freedom, this I know,
> For those who bade me fight have told me so."

Within a week or two of Mr. Henderson issuing the appeal which I have quoted to the British people to stand together for peace, and to proclaim that the days of plunder and butchery were gone by, he was doing his best within his limited gifts of eloquence to emulate Mr. Lloyd George in appealing to the youth of the nation to come forward to fight in this " holy war ". I need only give two short extracts from his innumerable speeches which show the line he took. " I declare, without hesitation," he said, " that the Government could not have adopted any other course than it did without violating some of the finest traditions associated with the history of this country." " The great impression ", he said in another speech, " made upon my mind is that Britain, France and Belgium (he did not say Russia) were now linked together in an unbreakable alliance not only for democracy but also for Christianity." I must in

common justice to Mr. Henderson say that his speeches were very moderate compared with the outbursts of many of his Labour colleagues.

So far I have written only of those reasons for the opposition of the I.L.P. members to the War which have dealt directly with its causes, but we had one other ground of opposition which far transcends all those other reasons in importance. That was our fundamental opposition to war as a national policy. We objected to war, not only because of its barbarity and of the universal suffering and ruin which it inflicts, but because of its futility. I have never taken up the attitude of the extreme pacifist who objects to war in all possible circumstances. I can imagine that in the present half-civilised state of humanity there may be occasions when war cannot be avoided if a nation is to preserve its existence, but it may be confidently asserted that war between modern nations never achieves its declared purpose. War invariably sows the seeds of future wars, and war itself never can destroy militarism and establish universal peace. Surely if the Great War has taught us any lessons at all it is that. In the war which so many people in Europe are now talking about as inevitable we shall find all the old reasons, all the old justifications, put forward, and the end will be the same as at the end of the last war—all the seeds of enmity will be left to ripen for yet another war.

When I went down to Blackburn immediately upon my return from abroad, I found that my Executive had taken up the position with regard to the War which I had expected they would take, and which was wholly in harmony with my own views. Although the great majority of my constituents had accepted what had been told to them by our politicians as to the origin and objects of the War, I found no evidence of the warlike spirit in the town. The members of the Party, I after-

wards learned, were almost unanimous in their opposition to the War; there were only two or three exceptions. But all but one of these exceptions, during the four years of the War and the General Election which came at the end of it, never expressed publicly any opposition to my views. They came on to my platform at the public meetings, and worked heartily for my candidature at the Election.

Like most places, I found there had been a great response to the appeal for recruits for the fighting services. I made arrangements to go back to the constituency in a fortnight to address a public meeting. It was an open meeting, and I had a packed audience of two thousand men and women. I had a very hearty welcome, and the meeting was quite unanimous. There was not a murmur of opposition, and at the end of my address when questions were invited none was put. I placed before the meeting a frank statement of my attitude to the War, very much on the lines I have already stated. I took advantage of the occasion to explain my attitude to the recruiting campaign. I had been invited by the Mayor to speak in the recruiting campaign, and had declined to do so. I could not ask men to fight in a war I did not approve. Moreover, I believed that no man had any right to use any influence he might possess to induce other people to take a serious risk which he was not prepared, or was not able to undertake himself. The consequences being so serious, enlistment was entirely a matter for the individual's own conscience. If men believed that liberty called them to fight for liberty, then they would go, and if they went under a noble impulse like that they were deserving of honour.

Mr. MacDonald was invited by the Mayor of Leicester to attend a recruiting meeting, and he sent a letter in reply which caused a good deal of comment. It is worth producing as a typical example of his style. It shows

that his facility in dancing round the mulberry bush is not a recently acquired accomplishment.

" MY DEAR MR. MAYOR,—

"I am very sorry indeed that I cannot be with you on Friday. My opinion regarding the causes of war are pretty well known, except in so far as they have been misrepresented; but we are in it. It will work itself out now. Might and spirit will win, and incalculable political and social consequences will follow upon victory.

" Victory, therefore, must be ours. England is not played out. Her mission is to be accomplished. She can, if she would, take the place of esteemed honour among the democracies of the world, and if peace is to come with healing on her wings, the democracies of Europe must be her guardians. There should be no doubt about this.

" Well, we cannot go back now, nor can we turn to the right or the left. We must go straight through. History will in due time apportion the praise and the blame, but the young men of the country must, for the moment, settle the immediate issue of victory. Let them show it in the spirit of the brave men who have crowned our country with honour in the times that are gone. Whoever may be in the wrong men so inspired will be in the right. The quarrel was not of the people, but the end of it will be the lives and liberties of the people.

" Should an opportunity arise to enable me to appeal to the pure love of country—which I know is the precious sentiment in all our hearts, keeping it clear of thoughts which I believe to be alien to real patriotism—I shall gladly take that opportunity. If need be, I shall make it myself. I want the serious men of the Trade Union, the Brotherhood, and similar movements to face their duty. To such men it is enough to say ' England has need of you ', to say it in the right way. They will gather to her aid. They will protect her, and when the war is over they will see to it that the policies and conditions that make it will go like the mists of a plague and the shadows of a pestilence.

" Yours very sincerely,

" J. RAMSAY MACDONALD."

Some time after, Mr. MacDonald was asked in a public meeting how he reconciled the views he had expressed that night about war with his letter to Leicester asking young men to fight for King and Country. He replied: " I did not do anything of the kind. I wrote a letter to the *Leicester Pioneer* declining to attend recruiting meetings. Anyone who reads that letter intelligently cannot possibly miss the meaning I intended."

On this question of the recruiting campaign I may mention that a month after the outbreak of war the Prime Minister wrote to Mr. Henderson, who had been appointed acting Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party upon the resignation of Mr. MacDonald, asking the Labour Party to co-operate with the other Party organisations for the purpose of enlisting recruits. " The help of the Labour Party ", wrote Mr. Asquith, " in this campaign would not only be of the greatest service, but it would also form a striking lesson of the solidarity of our people at this hour of trial/' Mr. Henderson submitted this letter to the Parliamentary Labour Party who approved of the co-operation of the Party Whips in the proposal. The Executive Committee of the Party by a majority endorsed that decision, and agreed to place the Head Office organisation at the disposal of the campaign, recommending local affiliated bodies to render all possible support.

There were many regrettable features in connection with this recruiting campaign. Strong men of military age had the effrontery to go on to the recruiting platforms and appeal to others to join up. I could not help despising such men, who were asking other men to undertake the risks and dangers of war whilst they remained in safety at home. Later, when military conscription had been imposed and tribunals were set up to consider schemes for exemption from service, this matter of " shirkers " of

military age and in robust health who had been exempted because of their " indispensability " in civil employment became a national scandal.

However, let me turn from this digression to other matters. During the early part of 1915 I and my pacifist friends felt that it was little use publicly agitating for Peace Negotiations. The temper of the people was such, that at that time an appeal would have had little effect upon the mass mind. It needed a longer experience of the horror and suffering inflicted by the War to bring them into a frame of mind where such appeals would receive consideration. So, in the meantime, I turned my activities into other channels.

CHAPTER XXV

War Time Finance

FROM the outbreak of war I had been deeply concerned about the financial consequences of it. I realised that, even if it were not very prolonged, war was certain to leave the country burdened with a huge debt and with oppressive taxation. I was very much dissatisfied with the methods adopted by the Government for the financing of the War. When Great Britain declared war in August 1914, there were few well-informed people who believed that the conflict would be of short duration. But the Government acted upon the assumption that it would be a short war, and adopted a financial policy based upon that opinion. But, even if the prospect of a short war had been promising, sound financial principles could not have justified the policy of the Government in resorting to borrowing for the purpose of meeting the special expenses of the War. The present National Debt of over £7,000,000,000, and the charges of something like £300,000,000 a year for the interest and sinking fund, constitute a burden which the country has to bear for the vicious policy of those who controlled financial affairs during the War.

In the early days of the War, the Government had neither the courage nor the moral principles of Gladstone and Pitt, who financed their wars mainly out of current taxation. " To begin the war by a loan ", said Mr. Gladstone at the time of the Crimean War, " would be a confession of financial cowardice and economic weakness

unworthy of the character of the country." In the first year of the Great War the Chancellor of the Exchequer relieved the immediate exigency by borrowing. It was necessary to gain public support for the War, and a large and immediate increase of taxation would have had the effect of damping the patriotism of those who were ready to applaud the military adventure, but who were unwilling to make a financial sacrifice for its support. The country at that time was in an exceptionally favourable condition for bearing an immediate and heavy increase of taxation to meet the costs of the War. Even so early in the War as the date of the Budget of 17th November 1914, it had become manifest that certain trades were making enormous profits out of the War. No steps up to that time had been taken by the Government to interfere with this profiteering. In this first War Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd George) estimated that the deficit in the national accounts at the end of March 1915, after eight months of war, would be £340,000,000. He devoted a considerable part of his speech to a review of the war finances of Pitt, and pointed out that at one period of the Napoleonic Wars one-third of the total income of the country was taken for public purposes. In the course of his speech he said: " If we rose to the heroic level of our ancestors we should be raising today a revenue of between £450,000,000 and £700,000,000, and no borrowings would be necessary." Why he should have made this reference I really do not understand, because he failed to apply the lesson to the problem with which he was faced. He contented himself with imposing a paltry increase in the Income-Tax, which was estimated to realise £12,500,000 during the financial year. In addition to this, he imposed duties on beer amounting to £2,500,000. He made a reduction of licensing duty amounting to £450,000. In addition to this

he obtained relief by the Suspension of the Sinking Fund to the amount of £2,750,000. These changes left him with a deficiency of £321,321,000, which, instead of rising to " the heroic level of our ancestors " he proposed to meet by means of a War Loan.

Inadequate as was Mr. Lloyd George's initial effort in War Finance, his second Budget (introduced *on* 4th May 1915) was far more disappointing. Up to the end of the previous financial year (31st March 1915) the net cost of the War had been £307,416,000. In his second War Budget speech the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the wonderful buoyancy of the Income-Tax and the Super-Tax which had yielded £8,000,000 over his estimate of the previous November. Up to the end of March 1915, a sum of £458,000,000 had been added to the National Debt. On the assumption that the War would continue during the whole financial year of 1915-1916, he estimated that the total expenditure would be £1,136,434,493. On the basis of existing taxation the deficit to be met would be £862,000,000. After making this appalling statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer launched into an eloquent dissertation upon the enormous accumulated wealth of the country, and finally concluded his statement without imposing one penny of increased taxation, leaving a deficiency of £862,000,000 to be met wholly by borrowing.

By this time profiteering had attained scandalous proportions. Every day the newspapers were reporting the profits of commercial firms far beyond anything which had been made in past times. The cost of living was rising daily. Labour, which at the outbreak of War patriotically announced its decision to abandon demands for wage advances, was beginning to be clamorous under the pinch of the rising cost of living. The Chancellor of the Exchequer left the profiteer to pursue his ex-

ploitation of the national situation without interference. In leaving the buoyant incomes of the profiteers to rise still further without increasing taxation upon them, he perpetrated an act of grave negligence. In the summer of 1915 Mr. Lloyd George found a new sphere of operations in the Ministry of Munitions, and he was succeeded at the Treasury by Mr. McKenna.

In September 1915 Mr. McKenna introduced an Interim Budget. In the meantime expenditure had grown to an estimated total of £1,590,000,000 a year. Mr. McKenna made a serious, but by no means adequate effort to redress the fatal negligence of his predecessor. He raised the Income-Tax, increased the Super-Tax, brought a new class of income-tax payers into the net by reducing the limit of exemption of Income-Tax to £130 a year. He added to indirect taxation, increased the postal and telegraph charges, and made an attempt to appropriate war profits by the Excess Profits Duty. In this Budget Mr. McKenna imposed taxation which was expected to yield up to March 1916 the sum of £32,000,000, and in a full year £106,000,000. He expected to derive £30,000,000 in a full year from his new Excess Profits taxes.

In April 1916 Mr. McKenna introduced his second Budget. The deficit of the previous year had mounted to £1,200,000,000, which had been met by borrowing. In this Budget he imposed new taxes, or additions to existing taxes, which were expected to realise an extra £162,500,000, raising the total estimated revenue of the year to just under £500,000,000, which was double the sum Mr. Lloyd George had raised during the War. Unfortunately, political intrigues dismissed Mr. McKenna from the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in December of that year, and he was succeeded by Mr. Bonar Law, whose Budget records were even more deplorable than

those of Mr. Lloyd George. In Mr. Bonar Law's first Budget, introduced on the 2nd May 1917, he proposed no new taxation, but made small additions to three existing taxes, namely the Excess Profits Duty, the Tobacco Duty and the Entertainment Tax, which were expected to yield the sum of £27,500,000. Mr. Bonar Law's Budget Estimates showed a deficit of £1,650,000,000 and to meet this he proposed a paltry addition to taxation °f £27,500,000.

In Mr. Bonar Law's second Budget introduced in April 1918, when the total national expenditure had risen to £2,972,000,000, he made an addition of is. to the Income-Tax, and raised the rate of Super-Tax from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. in the £. He also made additions to indirect taxation on spirits, beer, matches and sugar. Mr. McKenna's scheme of appropriating some part of war profits by the Excess Profits Duty had, by this time, become very remunerative, and was producing about £300,000,000 a year.

The proportion of war expenditure met out of revenue in the four years of the War was £23.3 per cent. The balance of expenditure had been borrowed. The National Debt in the last year of the War had risen to £7,43 5,000,000. This included the sum of £1,739,000,000 which had been lent by us to the Allies and the Dominions. If the amount of taxation levied in the last year of the War had been raised in the first three years, the yield would have been £1,100,000,000 more than it actually was. This unappropriated sum available for taxation was left in the pockets of the people who, instead of paying this surplus in taxation, had loaned it to the Government at a high rate of interest, and thereby imposed a heavy annual tribute on the community.

The financial policy of successive Governments of refusing to employ the weapon of taxation more ener-

getically is not the only financial crime of which they were guilty. Borrowing is bad, but borrowing at an unnecessarily high rate of interest aggravates the offence. At the outbreak of war the Government and public bodies could borrow at 3 per cent. The first War Loan was issued in November 1914. The issue price was £95, and the rate of interest 3½ per cent. In June 1915 a second War Loan was issued, and upon this the Government raised the rate of interest to 4½ per cent. In January 1917 another War Loan was issued, the price being £95, and the rate of interest 5 per cent. These successive increases in the rate of interest was not merely an additional impost upon the taxpayers, but had the serious effect of raising the price of money all round and depreciating the capital value of all existing fixed interest-bearing stock.

The circumstances surrounding the raising of these loans was one of the grave scandals of war time. Millions of men had voluntarily or by conscription joined the fighting forces, and were risking their lives at the front. The people at home, who enjoyed immunity from such dangers, and many of whom were becoming enormously rich by the exploitation of war requirements, had been tempted to supply the financial necessities of the Government by frantic appeals to subscribe to the War Loan at a high rate of interest—by such appeals as "Join Patriotism with Profit." "Subscribe to the safest and most remunerative investment in the world." Life had been conscripted, but capital had to be offered double the rate of interest it had received before the War.

Speaking in the House of Commons in November 1915 on military conscription, Mr. Bonar Law said: "We are asking these men who go to the trenches to give up everything, not merely their capital but their lives. I

agree absolutely that we have no right whatever to make a demand like that unless we are prepared to spread it over the whole nation, and to take from every man and every class everything that is necessary to bring the War to a successful issue." How different the financial position of the country would have been if that principle had been acted upon.

At the time these loans were being raised by such tempting offers, the enormous profits which were being made out of the supply of war material and war services had become a grave public scandal. Mr. Bonar Law gave a personal experience of this sort. He told the House of Commons that he had made certain small investments in ships before the War. " The total amount of the investments was only a few hundred pounds in each ship. I was a shareholder in fourteen ships. Taking the average of these ships the rate of interest I received last year was 47 per cent, after paying Excess Profits Tax." Some idea of the general rate of profit during this period may be gauged from the fact that the Excess Profits Tax yielded £300,000,000 a year. I could fill pages with instances of particular profits which were larger than the case quoted by Mr. Bonar Law. In the wool-spinning industry the profits on cross-bred yarns rose from id. per lb. in 1914 to a maximum of 53d. per lb. in 1918, an increase of 5000 per cent.

A Memorandum was issued by the Board of Inland Revenue shortly after the War dealing with this subject of war-time profits. It gives the endorsement of the authority of a Government Department to the popular knowledge that great fortunes were made during and out of the War. This Memorandum showed that, after paying an additional amount of Income-tax and Excess Profits Duty during the four years of the War amounting to £1,731,000,000, the wealth remaining in the posses-

sion of individuals on the 30th June 1919, was over £5,000,000,000 in excess of that in their possession at the outbreak of war. Against this the Board offset a figure of £1,075,000,000 of losses suffered by other individuals. This estimate of the Board of Inland Revenue was regarded as very conservative, and eminent authorities like Sir Josiah Stamp put it much higher. It is not, of course, maintained that the whole of these war-time increases of wealth was due to special opportunities created by the War. In the years preceding the outbreak of war the annual capital savings of the country were estimated to be about £350,000,000 a year. But, after deducting these normal savings, the fact remains that the additions to capital wealth during the War, entirely due to profiteering, amounted to a colossal sum.

During the War I took every opportunity in the House of Commons of raising this question of the seriousness of the rapidly increasing debt. I also spoke upon the subject throughout the length and breadth of the land. I could foresee the serious economic and financial difficulties of such an enormous debt, with the corollary of intolerable taxation. It was certain that the War would alter the equilibrium of world trade, and that competition in international trade would be carried on under greatly intensified conditions. Prices rose at the peak point to nearly z\ times the pre-war figure. Wages had also risen in many industries by an equal amount. It was quite evident to me in these early days of the War that the question of harmonising the costs of production with falling prices would become a very serious problem, causing widespread unemployment. But while the War was on everything was subordinated to the urgent matter of prosecuting it with the utmost vigour. The expenditure of money was of no consequence. Prices out of all reason were paid for munitions of war and for services

that the Government required. The future was left to take care of itself. This reckless expenditure on borrowed money created most of the financial troubles we have experienced since the War. Fourteen years after the end of the War taxation is still nearly at the highest point reached during hostilities.

On the 12th May 1915, speaking on Mr. Lloyd George's Budget which had just been introduced, I stressed the importance of dealing with Excess Profits, and strongly urged the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take my suggestions into consideration. This matter, as I have already pointed out, was dealt with by Mr. McKenna in the Supplementary Budget he brought forward in September of that year. When speaking in the debate upon this Budget I brought forward in detail a scheme for a capital levy. At that time the debt had not assumed one-quarter of the dimensions it attained later, and my proposal for a capital levy in these circumstances was of a much more moderate character than this proposal assumed later when it became a part of the Labour Party schemes for the reduction of the National Debt. My proposal at this early stage was a graded scheme for the taxation of capital, under which capital value below £1000 would be exempt altogether, and then begin with a tax of 1 per cent, to a graded scale up to 10 per cent, on capital values of £1,000,000 and over. This suggested scheme was almost identical with the capital levy proposed by the Board of Inland Revenue to a Select Committee on War Wealth in 1919. The recommendation of this Committee was rejected by the House of Commons, which was only to be expected from " hard-faced men who had done well out of the war ". If the proposal for a capital levy had been carried out at the end of the War, before war profits had been largely dissipated in riotous living and in unsound commercial flotations, the

country would have been saved from much of the economic and financial suffering it has since had to endure. The statesmen who were responsible for the conduct of financial policy during the period of the War have a tremendous indictment to answer for their lack of courage and foresight.

CHAPTER XXVI

Drink in the War

THE need for regulating the sale of intoxicating liquor became obvious in the early days of the War. Reports were in circulation that the output of munitions was being seriously curtailed owing to the loss of time by drinking. In the November following the outbreak of war Lord Roberts made an appeal through the Press to the civil population not to put temptation in the way of our soldiers by injudiciously treating them to drink. " Thousands of young recruits ", he said, " are now collected together in various places and are having their work interfered with and their constitutions undermined by being tempted to drink by a friendly but thoughtless public, and also by the fact that public-houses are being kept open at a late hour."

By February of the following year (1915) the evil of excessive drinking became so grave that Mr. Lloyd George called attention to it in a public speech. " While acknowledging that most of the workmen were putting every ounce of strength into their work, loyally and patriotically, there were others who shirked their duty in this great emergency. The main reason for this ", he said, " was the lure of drink. Drink is doing more damage to us in the War than all the German submarines put together/' Shortly after this speech Lord Kitchener called attention to this danger in very similar language. The state of affairs in the munition areas had become so serious that at the end of March a deputation from the Shipbuilding

the naval and military forces were assembled in the area. The Control Board had the power to issue regulations applicable to those areas; to acquire compulsorily or by agreement any licensed or other premises or business in the area so far as it appeared necessary for the purpose of giving proper effect to the control of the liquor supply in the area. The Board was also empowered to establish and maintain refreshment rooms where food and non-alcoholic drink would be supplied. It was authorised to regulate the conditions on which liquor should be sold in such areas, to fix the hours during which public-houses should be open, and to close public-houses if the conditions in the district justified it. The powers conferred upon the Board were very drastic. The members were not hampered in their operations by the existing Licensing Acts, which they were entitled to set aside where they considered this to be necessary.

Mr. Lloyd George invited me to join this Board, and I accepted this invitation. Lord D'Abernon was appointed Chairman of the Board, and during its existence he gave time and labour without stint to this work. Other men who were on this Board included Lord Astor, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Lord Leverhulme and Mr. E. Richard Cross. Mr. Cross deserves special mention. He was an ex-President of the Justices Clerks' Society, and his extensive knowledge of the Licensing Laws and of their administration was invaluable to the Board. He was drowned a year after the formation of the Board when bathing at Buttermere. His untimely death was a great loss to the Board.

The Board first of all turned its attention to Newhaven on account of an appalling report received from the Transport Officers there, which showed how ships were delayed sailing owing to the drunken condition of the sailors. Newhaven was a port of embarkation for the

seat of war. When the Board got down to its work we found that it was very difficult to strictly define the are? to which our powers were limited. As a matter of fact almost every part of the country was concerned with the production of munitions, or was engaged on other services necessary for the carrying on of the War. We turned our attention, as being a matter of great urgency, to those munition areas from which complaints had been received. We divided up the Board, and members paid personal visits to practically every part of the country. We held conferences with representatives of the employers and workmen, the local justices, and the military authorities. At all these conferences we met with the fullest co-operation, and particularly found the workmen's representatives anxious to assist and to help in removing any ground of complaint that work was being hindered through drink.

In the first two years of the Board's existence we made Orders which practically covered the whole of the country, and applied to thirty-eight millions of the population out of a total of forty-one millions. By our Orders the normal hours for the opening of public-houses were cut down by more than half in Scotland and by two-thirds in England and Wales. Before the War the hours during which public-houses were permitted to be open was nineteen and a half. Under the Board's Orders the maximum number of hours the public-houses could be open for the sale of intoxicating liquors was five and a half—two and a half at midday and three in the evening. These changes did not apply to the sale of food and non-intoxicants. The restrictions which were imposed applied not only to public-houses, but to clubs, restaurants, grocers' shops, refreshment rooms, hotels and theatres.

The Board did not by any means confine its activities to restricting the sale of liquor. We gave great encourage-

ment to the establishment of canteens in factories and workshops, and in these two years the Board secured the provision of more than seven hundred industrial canteens. We made great efforts to stimulate the sale of food on licensed premises, and encouraged the sale of beers of a light gravity. Indeed, the weakness of the beer became a subject for wit and sarcasm. There was a story told of a man who went into a public-house and the barman refused to serve him on the ground that he was drunk. The man protested, and said: "I am not drunk, but I may be water-logged."

The most difficult problem the Board had to deal with was the Gretna area. This was a rural district where one of the largest munition factories had been erected. Only a proportion of the workpeople employed in the Gretna factories could be accommodated near the works, and they had to find lodgings in Carlisle and in the smaller towns within a radius of twenty-five miles of the factory. A town had to be rapidly built, and vast constructional work—the making of roads and railways, factories, etc.—brought numbers of navvies and other labourers into the district. As one can well imagine, there was great disorganisation of social life. The people drawn from all parts of the country to the Gretna munition works, attracted by the rumours of very high wages, were a very mixed lot. Drunkenness soon became a very serious problem, especially at the week-ends. Carlisle and Longtown and Annan were given up to drunkenness. There was a complete breakdown of public order. The police were quite unable to deal effectively with the appalling situation. It was little use arresting men for drunkenness. There were too many of them. The arrests in Annan in the first half of 1916 were twenty-four times higher than in the corresponding six months of the previous year, and in Carlisle the figures rose from

seventy-two to five hundred and sixty-foui. The Board held a Conference in Carlisle owing to the seriousness of the reports which came to us from the area. We met civic authorities, licensing justices, brewers, licensed victuallers' associations and the representatives of the local clubs. They all agreed that the situation could not be dealt with by any powers then possessed by the local authorities.

Immediately after this Conference the Board issued one of their restrictive Orders. It was realised that it would be very little use applying the Order to the Carlisle and Gretna areas if practically non-regulated facilities for drinking existed outside this area; so the Order was made to apply to a very large area in the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland and Lancashire on the English side of the Border, and to two of the southern counties of Scotland. The usual regulations of the Board—that is, the reduction of the hours for the sale of drink to five and a half a day; the special restriction of the off-sale of spirits; the prohibition of treating; and the abolition of the *bona fide* traveller's privilege to get liquor during closing hours, were included in the Order. We limited the off-sale of spirits to two and a half a day from Monday to Friday, and no off-sales at all were allowed during the week-end. Railway refreshment rooms were prohibited altogether from selling spirits for consumption off the premises.

A brief experience showed that the usual Order of the Board was inadequate to deal with the exceptional circumstances of this area. The Board had powers to take over the complete control of the traffic, so we came to the conclusion that this was a suitable area in which to exercise that power. The Board appointed a small Committee of its members, of which I was one, to go into the question of buying up the public-houses. The scheme

of State purchase and direct control of the liquor traffic which the Board carried out was not undertaken as an experiment, but because the circumstances in this area were so exceptional that nothing short of this was likely to deal effectively with the situation. The Board started this scheme by taking over a number of public-houses on the Scottish side of the Border in Longtown and Annan and in some of the neighbouring villages. Later we tackled the much more difficult problem in the Carlisle area, and after consultations with the local authorities, licensing justices and brewers, we decided upon a comprehensive scheme for the purchase of the breweries and licensed premises in Carlisle and the adjoining country district as far away as Maryport. The total area included in this scheme when it was completed was five hundred square miles in extent. The Board's General Managers worked in association with local advisory committees, which consisted of representatives of the county, municipal and licensing authorities. The Board soon worked a great change in the conditions of the licensed premises in the area. A large number of public-houses were closed, and the grocers' licences were suppressed. All advertisements were removed from the outside of licensed premises. Complete Sunday closing was enforced throughout the whole area under the control of the Board.

The Board paid special attention to the provision of counter-attractions to the public-houses. At Longtown and at Annan we built bowling greens, billiard rooms, and institutes, and at Annan we ran a cinema hall. The breweries and licensed premises which were taken over by the Board were, of course, paid for; and the value of the properties acquired was fixed by valuers acting on the Board's behalf, which was usually accepted as fair and reasonable by the owners of the properties acquired. From the financial point of view the scheme was very

successful. The profits in the first year showed a return on the total capital, after meeting all trade charges, of about 15 per cent. There could be no question that this experiment in the State control of the liquor traffic was very successful in dealing with the exceptional conditions for which it was established. But I would not go so far as to say that a case for the nationalisation of the liquor traffic was established by the experience of this scheme. The circumstances were quite exceptional.

The Board did some really useful constructive work. I was very glad to have been given the opportunity to take part in this work. The experience which was gained from the operation of the Board's Regulations has been useful in post-War public-house control. Many of the Regulations have been incorporated in a modified form in statutory legislation. The very considerable shortening of the legal hours during which public-houses may be opened; the earlier evening closing hour; the two-hour break in the afternoon; and the subjection of clubs to the same, or nearly the same regulations as those imposed on the licensed premises, are the most important changes which have been made permanent in continuation of the Liquor Control Board's Regulations. In addition, the encouragement which the Control Board gave to the establishment of comfortable and well-equipped workers' canteens, and the high standard set from the outset and maintained till the present time by the public-houses in the State-ownership areas, have played a large part in stimulating and leading a much-needed improvement in the amenities of public-houses and other places to which the public resort for their refreshment.

It is true that many and various causes have contributed to the great decrease in drunkenness, and to the reduction in the consumption of beer and spirits which distinguishes the present from pre-war conditions. But

it is nevertheless true that much of the Liquor Control Board's Regulations remain embodied in our present laws, and undoubtedly these reforms have had a very large share in the improvement effected; and for this credit must be given to the work which the Board itself did, and to the legislation which has preserved many of the changes which the Board initiated.

CHAPTER XXVII

Coalition and Conscription

IN the early part of May 1915 it was widely rumoured that there were serious differences in the Cabinet. Some members, led by Mr. Lloyd George, were said to be gravely concerned about the ineffective prosecution of the War. Talk became general about the need for a reconstruction of the Government, and the idea of a Coalition Government began to be mooted. The circumstances which led up to the formation of the first Coalition Government have been described by those who were intimately associated with the events. I am able to write with knowledge only of the association of the Labour Party with this change.

One afternoon during this crisis I was leaving the House after the close of a sitting when I encountered Mrs. Asquith at the exit in the Speaker's Court. She said that she wanted to have a chat with me. Her car was at the door, and as I was making for Charing Cross Station she insisted that she should drive me there. When we got into the car she slapped my knee and said: " We're in an awful mess! " She went on to explain that the Tories had got information about the shortage of munitions and were insisting that they should be admitted into the Government. She said that Lloyd George was at the bottom of the whole trouble. Mr. Asquith was strongly opposed to the idea, which he regarded as an undeserved slight upon his administration.

A day or two after this conversation, on the 12th May,

Mr. Asquith was questioned on the subject, and said: " The Government were greatly indebted to the leading members of all parties for suggestions and assistance on certain specific subjects. The subject suggested by my Rt. Hon. friend is not under contemplation, and I am not aware that it would meet with general assent." From that day events began to move quickly. It was reported that Lord Fisher was insisting on resigning his post at the Admiralty on account of differences with Mr. Churchill. Exactly a week after Mr. Asquith's statement in the House of Commons that a Coalition Government " was not in contemplation " he announced that " steps are in contemplation which involve the reconstruction of the Government on a broader personal and political basis ". A week later the Coalition Government had been formed. It consisted of twelve Liberals, eight Unionists, Lord Kitchener, and one Labour member—Mr. Arthur Henderson. Mr. John Redmond had been offered a seat in the Cabinet, but was unable to accept it. His action was supported by a meeting of his party.

On the day Mr. Asquith announced that a Coalition Government was in contemplation, Mr. Arthur Henderson intimated to the Executive of the Labour Party and to the Parliamentary Labour Party that he had received an invitation to join a Coalition Government with a seat in the Cabinet. The Executive of the Labour Party agreed that the Prime Minister's invitation should be accepted. But when the matter came before the Parliamentary Labour Party on the same day the invitation was rejected by nine votes to eight. A joint meeting of the Executive of the Labour Party with the Parliamentary Party was then held, and the proposal was very freely discussed. This joint meeting decided to accept the Prime Minister's proposal by seventeen votes to eleven. The majority of the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party again

opposed the acceptance of the offer. Since the outbreak of war there had been no Conference of the National Party. The Annual Conference was due to be held in January 1915, but the Executive of the party, after taking a postal vote of the affiliated organisations, decided that it should be postponed, especially as the social and industrial activities occasioned by the recruiting campaign made it inadvisable to hold it. Such a step as joining in a Coalition Government was so opposed to the constitution of the Labour Party that it was felt a decision ought not to be taken without the sanction of a Party Conference. It was not within the powers of the Executive of the Parliamentary Party to take such a step, and even the exceptional circumstances at the time did not warrant it. Notwithstanding the strong opposition of the Parliamentary Labour Party, as shown by the vote upon the question, Mr. Arthur Henderson acted upon the majority decision and joined the Coalition Government as President of the Board of Education with a seat in the Cabinet. Two other members of the Labour Party were appointed to subordinate offices—Mr. W. Brace as Under-Secretary for Home Affairs and Mr. George Roberts as a Junior Whip.

Shortly after the formation of the Coalition Government the question of Conscription became prominent. It was alleged that the voluntary system and Lord Derby's scheme of attestation were not bringing in a sufficient number of recruits. The Trades Union Congress in September had passed a resolution strongly opposing Conscription, but at the same time it realised that if Conscription were to be avoided increased efforts would have to be made to secure the necessary number of recruits under the voluntary system. On the 27th September a meeting of the Executives of the various Labour bodies, and including members of the Parlia-

mentary Labour Party, met in London and conferred with Lord Kitchener and the Prime Minister on the situation. It was decided that the Labour organisations should undertake a special recruiting effort on Labour platforms through the organisations of the Labour movement only.

The Government, however, did not wait for the outcome of this campaign, but proceeded to take steps for the introduction of a Conscription bill. Mr. Lloyd George has given an account in his *Memoirs* of the strong differences of opinion which existed in the Cabinet on this question of Conscription. The failure of Lord Derby's scheme to enroll less than half of the single men of military age appears to have decided the Cabinet to resort to compulsion. When it became definitely known at the end of 1915 that the Government were about to introduce a Conscription measure, the three National Labour Committees and the Parliamentary Labour Party met to consider the situation. Before this Conference had time to meet a Conscription Bill was introduced into Parliament by Mr. Asquith on the 5th January 1916.

The following day a special Congress representative of the whole Labour Movement, industrial and political, was held at the Central Hall, Westminster. It was attended by nearly eight hundred delegates. The three Committees had met on the previous evening, and had prepared a report summarising the position of affairs. They drafted a resolution for the Conference, which protested against the action of the conscriptionists in threatening national unity. The resolution declared that the result of the voluntary recruiting campaign had not been ascertained with sufficient accuracy to warrant the passage of the proposed Bill, but it suggested that the Labour members should be left free to vote upon the Bill as they individually thought fit. When the Confer-

ence assembled this resolution of the Labour Committees was not put forward. In its place the following resolution was submitted by a number of organisations:

" This Conference reaffirms the decision of the Bristol Trades Congress when it unanimously protested in the name of over 3,000,000 organised workers, against compulsory military service; it regrets that the unity and solidarity of the nations have been gravely imperilled, and industrial and political liberty menaced by the proposal to introduce such a system, against which it makes a most emphatic protest, and decides to use every means in its power to oppose.

" The Conference rejoices at the magnificent success of the appeal to the voluntary system, which in so short a period has supplied this country with an army of 4,000,000 of free men, and is emphatically of opinion that no case has been made out for any measure of limited or temporary compulsion, which we regard as the first step to a general application of a vicious principle. We declare that all the men required for military and industrial purposes can be obtained by a continuance of the voluntary method.

" This Conference further considers that the proposals of the Government would be economically disastrous to the life of the nation, and declares its opposition to the Bill, and recommends the Labour Party in Parliament to oppose the measure in all its stages."

This resolution was adopted by 1,998,000 votes to 783,000, a majority of 1,215,000. Mr. Arthur Henderson, who was a member of the Cabinet responsible for the introduction of the Conscription Bill, strongly opposed this resolution. He dealt at length with his position in the Cabinet, and said he did not go there of his own accord, but was sent there! He regarded his position in the Cabinet as indispensable in the interests of national unity. Sir John Simon could leave the Government without breaking the Coalition, but if he and his two colleagues were to leave the Government they stood a great risk of breaking it because it would mean the

withdrawal of one section of the Coalition. "If", declared Mr. Henderson emphatically, "this Conference considers I must oppose this Bill I shall refuse to accept their decision, and immediately I refuse to accept their decision I shall apply for the Chiltern Hundreds, and I shall go to my constituency at Barnard Castle and ask them if they endorse my attitude, or not. I do not mind extending an invitation to those who talked so glibly about a by-election or a General Election to accompany me to their constituency." I rose at once from the body of the hall and said: "I would like Mr. Henderson to come to mine. I accept his challenge right away." The newspaper report of the Conference said that this declaration of mine raised a tremendous demonstration. Mr. Henderson at once began to hedge. "I have nothing to do with Blackburn", he said. "It is time for me to go to Blackburn when I am invited by the Blackburn Constituency. I am going to Barnard Castle."

A few comments may be made upon Mr. Henderson's statement and upon his support of the Conscription Bill. Shortly before Mr. Henderson joined the Coalition Government he had repeatedly in public speeches expressed strong opposition to anything of the nature of conscription. He had said: "I want to give a word of warning. I believe there is nothing that would divide this nation today in a way that would do irreparable injury more than an attempt to introduce into this great war anything in the nature of conscription." It will be noted that in Mr. Henderson's statement to the Conference he declared that if the Conference called upon him to oppose the Conscription Bill he would refuse to accept the decision, and would at once apply for the Chiltern Hundreds and submit himself again to the electors at Barnard Castle. The resolution passed by the Conference, it will be noted, *recommended* the Labour Party in Parlia-

ment to oppose the Measure in all its stages. During all the years that Mr. Henderson has been Secretary of the Labour Party there has been no one who has so strongly insisted upon the obedience of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the resolutions of the Party Conferences. In this case Mr. Henderson, apparently to his own satisfaction, was able to draw a distinction between a Conference *recommendation* to oppose the Measure in all its stages, and an instruction to oppose it.

After this decisive expression of the views of the Labour Party upon this Measure, Mr. Henderson went back to the House of Commons, and through all the stages of the Bill voted in support of it. He allowed himself to be used by the Cabinet as the spokesman for the Bill on its Second Reading. He did not go down to Barnard Castle to seek the opinion of his constituency, but contented himself by writing a letter to his agent. When the General Election came, Mr. Henderson found a convenient excuse for deserting the constituency he had represented for fifteen years. He sought election for a London constituency, where he was badly beaten.

At the end of this Conference a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Party was held, when it was agreed that the Party should withdraw from the Coalition Government and oppose the Bill. Upon this decision being conveyed to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, Mr. Asquith sought a consultation with the Party and the Executive. This took place in the House of Commons on 12th January. I put a number of questions to Mr. Asquith, to which he gave very embarrassed replies. He did give us a definite assurance that there would be no extension of compulsion to married men; that the Bill was to operate during the War only; that amendments would be introduced obviating any possibility of industrial compulsion; that

the tribunals would be civil and not military courts; and that opportunity would be afforded to Parliament to strengthen the clause exempting conscientious objectors. Another joint meeting of the Party and the Executive followed, when it was agreed by a majority that the resignations of the three Labour members should be withdrawn pending discussion at the forthcoming Annual Conference of the Party. No authority was given to Mr. Henderson and his two colleagues in the Government to persist in their support of the Bill.

The Annual Conference of the Labour Party was held in Bristol in January, 1916, at the time the Conscription Bill was before Parliament, and it naturally came up for consideration. A resolution was moved that " this Conference declares its opposition to the Military Service Bill, and in the event of it becoming law decides to agitate for its repeal." This led to a very animated debate, in which Mr. Henderson tried without much success to defend his action in supporting the Bill. The resolution which I have quoted was divided into two parts. The first part—" that this Conference declares its opposition to the Military Service Bill "—was carried by 1,716,000 votes against 360,000. For the second part—" that this Conference decides to agitate for the repeal of the Military Service Bill "—there voted for 614,000, against 649,000.

At this Conference the action of the Executive and Labour Members of Parliament in allowing Labour Party representatives to enter the Goverment was confirmed by a very large majority.

It must be remembered that this Conference of the Labour Party was the first that had been held since the outbreak of war. The differences in the Party were very acute, and feelings were rather bitter. A long debate took place on the action of the Executive of the Labour Party in co-operating with other political Parties in the

national recruiting campaign. I spoke in this discussion, and put forward the reasons why the I.L.P. had not seen its way officially to join in the recruiting campaign. I had rather an unusual experience in this debate, and indeed a remarkable one considering that I was speaking against the majority feeling of the Conference. A motion had previously been carried that no speaker should be allowed more than five minutes. When my time limit had been reached I had not finished my speech, and it was moved, seconded and agreed that this rule should be suspended. After which I continued until I had finished what I had to say. The voting upon this resolution approving the action of the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party in accepting the Government's invitation to take part in the recruiting campaign was endorsed by the Conference by a very large majority, the voting being 1,847,000 against **206,000.**

The strength of the anti-war feeling in the Conference was more clearly shown in the voting upon a resolution which raised the clear issue. The resolution is worth quoting as showing how public opinion in favour of the War had been manufactured by the usual methods of war propaganda. The resolution reads:

> [11] That this Conference, whilst expressing its opposition (in accordance with previously expressed opinions) to all systems of permanent militarism as a danger to human progress, considers the present action of Great Britain and its Government fully justified in the present war, expresses its horror at the atrocities committed by Germany and her ally by the callous and brutal murder of non-combatants, including women and children, and hereby pledges the Conference to assist the Government as far as possible in the successful prosecution of the War."

This resolution was passed by the Conference by 1,500,000 votes to 602,000 against. This voting did not clearly

indicate the extent of the opposition in the Conference to the War, as the Block Vote of four Trade Unions accounted for about 1,000,000 votes, and these four Unions by their Block Vote could overwhelm the voting strength of the other 69 Trade Unions, 39 Trades Councils, 41 Local Labour Parties and the Socialist Associations.

The House of Commons, of course, by overwhelming majorities supported the Conscription Bill. But the votes of the House of Commons in favour of the Bill did not reflect a united opinion in the country. Married men generally supported the Measure as it applied only to unmarried men. They hoped that the number of men recruited from this class would supply sufficient men to render it unnecessary for the married man to be called to the colours. The votes of the Labour Conference provided further evidence of the lack of national support for the Measure. There was a great deal of opposition to the Measure among Nonconformists, but it never took an organised form of expression.

Sir John Simon, who had been Home Secretary in the Coalition Government, resigned his office as he was unable to give his approval to the Measure. His accession to the ranks of the anti-conscriptionists in the House of Commons was a great acquisition to their debating strength. He delivered some powerful speeches in opposition to the Bill. On the First Reading the Irish members voted against the Bill because it would apply to Ireland. The Government withdrew these provisions, and the Bill as passed did not extend to Ireland. It was believed that it would have been impossible to enforce a conscription Measure in Ireland, and if attempts had been made to do so, very serious trouble would undoubtedly have arisen. After the Irish Nationalists had secured this concession they did not vote in the further stages of the Bill. The anti-Conscriptionist Party in the House

numbered thirty-nine. Three or four of the Labour members who were not in opposition to the War joined us in voting against this Bill.

Mr. John Burns gave a silent vote in opposition to the Measure through all its stages. He had never spoken in the House since his resignation from the Government at the outbreak of war. I asked him once some time before the Conscription Bill was introduced when he was going to break his silence. He replied: " My dear Philip, just you wait. Let the Government dare to introduce conscription, and then the voice of John Burns will be heard/' When the Coalition dared to introduce conscription, and after the First Reading of the Bill, I reminded John of what he had said. He replied in the same terms: " My dear Philip, don't you know that after the First Reading comes a Second Reading, and after the Second Reading comes the Committee stage. Just you wait a little longer." But John still remained silent. Though the strength of the opposition to conscription *in* the House of Commons was small, the Bill was far from being popular in the country. Mr. Asquith had said a short time before the Measure was introduced that there could be no Measure of conscription except by general consent. General assent to this Bill certainly did not exist. This declaration by Mr. Asquith was like many others which he made during the War which he was at a later date compelled to repudiate through the pressure brought to bear upon him.

At the request of the little group of thirty-nine, I spoke on the Second Reading of the Bill. *The Times,* in its account of the debate said that my speech was quite the ablest onslaught that had been made upon the Bill. This was a compliment which I did not deserve, for there had been in the four days' debate upon the Second Reading a considerable number of speeches in opposition of very high merit. The Bill, as I have mentioned, applied only

to single men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, and contained a number of provisions for exemption in certain circumstances such as business obligations, men in key positions in munition factories, physical incapacity, and the conscientious objectors to military service. We directed our attention during the Committee stage mainly to safeguarding and strengthening these provisions.

The first Conscription Bill, passed in January, soon proved to be inadequate to provide the number of men which in the opinion of the Army Council was necessary to replace the men who were killed and wounded, and to provide an additional number. The married men who had attested under the Derby Scheme and who had been given a pledge that they would not be called up until all the single men had been recruited, were dissatisfied because there still remained a considerable number of single young men, who were not engaged on munition work or other work necessary for the country, who had not been called up. The Government had begun to call up groups of attested married men, and the National Union for Attested Married Men put to the Government a number of demands, the chief being that until the pledge given by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George was fulfilled in the letter as well as in the spirit, the married men who had attested should be released from their obligations.

At the same time a further agitation was afoot which aimed at the extension of compulsion to all men of military age. The Cabinet were acutely divided upon the question. In April Mr. Asquith promised to make a statement in the House of Commons on recruiting and the proposals of the Government in connection therewith. Twice he had to postpone this statement because, as he said, " there are still points of disagreement in the Cabinet, and if these points are not settled by agreement the result must be a break-up of the Coalition. The Cabinet were united

in believing that such an event would be a national disaster of the most formidable kind, and it is in the hope that it may be avoided by a few days more deliberation that I propose to adjourn the House for a week." This course is probably without precedent in our political history. I doubt if there has ever been a similar instance of the adjournment of the House of Commons for the admitted purpose of giving the Cabinet time to reconcile its differences.

When the House of Commons reassembled at the end of a week it was announced that Parliament would sit in secret session in order that it might be put in possession of the main facts and figures, the publication of which would obviously be undesirable. This secret sitting was continued into a second day. During this session the House of Commons presented a strange appearance. The public galleries and the reporters' gallery were closed, and all the messengers and minor officials were banished from the House. The opposition in the Cabinet to compulsory universal conscription must have been very strong, for when next day Mr. Walter Long introduced a Military Service Bill, which represented the measure of agreement the Cabinet had reached, it proposed nothing more than the extension of the service of time-expired soldiers, and bringing youths on reaching the age of eighteen under the Military Service Act. This Measure was so severely criticised for its inadequacy that Mr. Asquith was obliged to withdraw it, and a week later the Government brought forward a scheme of general and immediate compulsion. The previous Measure had recruited boys who were then over eighteen years of age, but it had made no provision for capturing boys as they reached the age of eighteen. This new Bill enacted that every boy on reaching the age of eighteen was automatically deemed to be a soldier. There

was a good deal of dissatisfaction with this proposal to take boys into the army at such an immature age amongst people who were in favour of conscription. An amendment, however, to fix the minimum age at nineteen was rejected. In addition to calling forward new men, this Bill also provided for the extension of the time of regular soldiers then with the colours; for the recalling of time-expired men; for the review of all exemptions on medical grounds (to be undertaken by the Army Council) which had been granted since the beginning of the War.

The rejection of the Second Reading of the Bill was moved by Mr. R. D. Holt, a Liberal Member of Parliament of the Manchester school, and it was seconded by Mr. Lees-Smith, who had come straight from the Front to perform this duty. He was a University professor, and had volunteered as a private soldier. He spoke on this occasion in the uniform of a corporal.

The anti-conscription group *in* the House felt that it was little use putting up a prolonged opposition to this Bill. My own feeling in the matter was that, when once the principle and practice of conscription had been accepted by Parliament, there was no logical ground for opposition to its extension to all classes of men within the age limit. The extension of conscription to all classes was likely to advance the movement for peace by negotiations, which by this time had assumed considerable force in the country. An Act was passed at a later period extending the maximum age of recruitment to fifty-one. We offered practically no opposition to this Measure on the ground that conscription having been accepted, if the men were really needed for the effective prosecution of the War, no reasonable argument could be advanced against recruiting able-bodied men up to fifty-one, most of whom up to that time had confined their practical support of the War to " killing the Germans with their tongues ". I even went so far as

to suggest rather ironically to the House of Commons that recruiting had begun at the wrong end. As the old men had rjnade the War they ought to have been the first to be called upon to fight it, and I suggested that recruiting might have begun by taking the old men of eighty and gradually working* down the age scale as men were required.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Conscription and Conscience

THE administration of the Military Service Act soon began to create considerable disaffection. Pledges had been given that the tribunals set up to deal with claimants for exemption should not be military, but civil bodies. As a matter of fact a very large number of these tribunals had military men sitting upon them, and the military authorities had their representative at all the hearings. The Act, as I have pointed out, gave the right to a person called up for military service to appeal to the tribunal for exemption on a number of specified grounds, such as physical unfitness, family responsibilities, business engagements, and a conscientious objection to military service. The responsibility for the administration of these provisions of the Military Service Act was divided between the Local Government Board and the War Office. The instructions issued to the local tribunals by the President of the Local Government Board—Mr. Walter Long—were framed in the most fair and generous spirit, and if the local tribunals had carried them out in the same spirit, the grave scandals which arose would have been averted.

I cannot speak too highly of the efforts that Mr. Walter Long made to secure a fair hearing and a just treatment by the tribunals set up for the purpose of hearing claimants for exemption. Indeed, not only Mr. Long as President of the Local Government Board, but Mr. Asquith and Mr. Herbert Samuel, who had succeeded Sir John Simon as Home Secretary all did their best

to secure the rights conferred by the Conscription Act upon the genuine conscientious objector. Mr. Asquith, in introducing the first Conscription Bill, warmly justified the conscience exemption against the mockery of many members of the House of Commons. In the debate upon the first Conscription Bill, Mr. Herbert Samuel, in advocating the inclusion of a conscience clause, said:

> "Are you, in the case of these conscientious objectors, to arrest them and bring them before the Court and impose fines, and if the fines are not paid, proceed to imprison them? Is it really contemplated that now, when for the first time you are making military service compulsory in this country, it should be accompanied by the arrest and imprisonment of a certain number of men who, unquestionably by common consent, are men of the highest character, and, in other matters, good citizens? I am sure Hon. Members would not wish to contemplate that there should be anything in the nature of religious persecution, or that you should have this body of men locked up in the gaols of this country."

The first Military Service Act contained a clause to the effect that "exemption on conscientious grounds may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only; or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged on some work which, in the opinion of the tribunal, is of national importance/' This alternative ground for exemption was generally given by the tribunals where a conscientious objection to military service was admitted. But the cases where a tribunal admitted a genuine conscientious objection were very rare, and, as I will show in a moment, applicants for exemption on that ground were treated by most of the tribunals in an outrageous manner. These tribunals were partly chosen from lists sent up by the political associations in the constituency, and the members consisted to a large extent of aged men who had made themselves notorious in the recruiting campaign. In a few cases the Stipendiary

Magistrate, or a County Court Judge was made chairman of the tribunal, and their judicial experience was a real check upon their prejudiced colleagues.

To understand the difficulties of the position of the conscientious objector we must transport ourselves into the atmosphere of the early days of the War. The idealism which had led millions of young men to respond to the call for volunteers was still widespread. The young man who, for moral or religious reasons declined to take part in this slaughter had a very unpleasant time. He was looked upon as a coward who was shirking the dangerous duty of defending his country. The pressure of public opinion and of his neighbours and work-mates, and sometimes even of his own family, and of the clergy who had turned their pulpits into recruiting platforms, required great courage to resist. It required a greater courage to stand out against this scorn and obloquy than it did to go with the tide of public opinion. The grounds taken by the conscientious objectors varied. We had the young members of the Society of Friends whose fundamental creed was a rejection of war. There were a number of smaller religious bodies whose views made it impossible for them to take part in combatant service, including Christadelphians, Plymouth Brethren, and an organisation of which I had never heard until I came in contact with it through my activities on behalf of the conscientious objectors. This was the International Bible Students' Association, which I learnt had millions of members throughout the world.

The most active resistance came from the Socialists, whose objections to military service took different forms. Some of them refused military service because of their deep-rooted opposition to war on humanitarian grounds. The objection of others was, I am inclined to think, more political than religious or moral. They regarded

the War as a capitalist war, and for that reason declined to give any support to it. There were a few, I dare say, who sought exemption on conscientious grounds, not because of any deep convictions of any sort, but because of fear. My efforts in seeking to secure for the genuine conscientious objectors the treatment to which they were entitled under the Military Service Act brought me into personal contact with a very large number of these resisters, and I can testify to the genuineness of their convictions. I have no hesitation in saying that many of them would have unflinchingly faced the death penalty rather than violate their consciences by engaging in military service in any form.

The most prominent of the conscientious objectors was Clifford Allen—now Lord Allen of Hurtwood. Shortly after the outbreak of war, in anticipation of conscription, he had formed an organisation known as the " No-Conscription Fellowship ". He was called up for military service very soon after the Act had been passed. One would have thought that his was a case of genuine conscientious objection to military service. The tribunal before which he appeared refused to grant him complete exemption from combatant or non-combatant service. He was arrested, brought before the magistrate, and handed over to the military authorities. He refused to obey military orders, and was court-martialled. I went to the hearing of his court-martial trial, and if it had not been for the tragedy of it all it would have been amusing as a comic travesty of justice. Where the tribunal did grant some form of exemption on conscientious grounds it usually took the form of exemption from combatant service only, or on condition that the applicant would engage in some work of national importance, usually something ancillary to the conduct of the War. Some of the decisions of the tribunals were

strange. One tribunal gave exemption to the full-time secretary of a local I.L.P. branch on condition that he continued in his job, which the tribunal regarded as " work of national importance ".

Immediately after the first Military Service Act came into force, Mr. Walter Long issued the circular to the tribunals to which I have referred, in which he called special attention to the duties of the tribunals in the case of applications for exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection. He reminded them that they should so act in trying these applications that the applicants would be able to feel that they had been judged by a tribunal which would deal fairly with their cases. He further pointed out that the Act of Parliament empowered them, where they were convinced of the genuineness of the conscientious objection, to grant absolute exemption from both combatant and non-combatant service.

The way in which the tribunals flouted Mr. Long's instructions, and indeed the Act of Parliament itself, soon became a grave scandal. The prominent part I had taken in opposing the Conscription Act led to my being regarded as the champion of the objectors in the House of Commons. From that time to the end of the War I was flooded with letters of complaint about the harsh administration of the Act. During 1917 I kept a record of the number of letters I received from aggrieved persons, and they numbered over 30,000. Complaints came not only from the conscientious objectors but from others who had been illegally conscripted. Parents who were dissatisfied with the amount of their separation allowances, disabled soldiers who experienced difficulty in getting their pensions, men who had been taken into the army in an unfit physical condition, wrote to me to take up their cases with the authorities. The

revelations which came to me (which I always insisted upon being properly authenticated) showed a state of things which was simply appalling. The local military representatives who were in charge of recruiting acted in many instances with an utter disregard of the law or of ordinary common sense. Every day I had questions to Ministers on the House of Commons Order Paper, raising cases of this description.

It was impossible to do more than select one in a hundred of the cases submitted to me. On two occasions I found an opportunity to raise, in speeches in Parliament, the whole subject of the inhuman administration of the Act by the local tribunals and local recruiting officers. In March and April of 1916, before the second Military Service Act had been passed, I made two speeches which startled the House of Commons and made an impression in the country, and which brought forth a leading article in the *Daily Chronicle*, which said: " No one could read the tremendous array of recruiting injustices which Mr. Snowden recounted to the House of Commons on Wednesday, and of which not one was refuted, without realising that we are here in face of a very grave scandal indeed, one for which those responsible in ordinary times could not survive many hours ".

I cannot do more than quote a few instances which are typical of thousands which came to my knowledge. One was the case of a young fellow so feeble-minded that he was quite incapable of replying to the questions addressed to him. He received notice to report, and was taken by a friend to the recruiting office. The recruiting officer refused to accept him. He was handed over to the medical officer, who promised to certify that he was a born idiot. Later, this man was taken and attested. Another was the case of a young fellow of twenty-two years of age who had never worked. He was a sufferer

from epilepsy. He had been known to have as many as fifteen fits in a day. He was called up, taken by a friend to the recruiting office, and passed by the doctor. Two men came before the Southwark Tribunal. One had only one hand, and the other had a paralysed leg. But the doctor passed them both. The reason given for this was that these men might be of some service in the army. A lad who lived at Glossop had been medically rejected twice, and had a certificate to prove it. On being summoned to attend a recruiting office he was kidnapped. The next his mother heard of him was that he was training as a soldier at Chester.

These cases are typical of what went on all over the country. The applicants to the tribunals for exemption on conscientious grounds were in many cases subjected to gross insults. One conscientious objector was told by a member of the tribunal: "It seems to me there are two things you possess, cowardice and insolence". At one hearing the military representative told an applicant: "I do not think we ought to waste any time on conscientious objectors". The chairman on another Tribunal told an applicant: "You are the most awful pack that ever walked the earth". In one case the applicant was asked if he had ever been in a lunatic asylum. And in another case the applicant was called a traitor, and told that he was only fit to be on the point of a German bayonet. The Market Bosworth Tribunal made a special name for itself. This tribunal had a conscientious objector before it, to whom the chairman said: "This man puts his own skin first. It was the first of the breed he had met, and he hoped there would not be any more." He then went on to exempt in the national interests all the men of the local hunt! The case of Mr. Leo Strachey, the author, was unique. He was called up. Those who

knew Mr. Strachey personally looked upon the idea of making him into a soldier as something of a joke. He applied for exemption to the Hampstead Tribunal. When his case was called he stepped forward. He was tall and straight, had a fine beard and long hair hanging down to his shoulders. He came forward with a deflated air-cushion in his hand, and before he sat down he very deliberately inflated the cushion, then placed it on the chair and sat down. He had a thin voice, scarcely louder than a whisper. Mr. Strachey had claimed exemption as a conscientious objector, not on religious or moral grounds, but for political reasons. The tribunal evidently had enough sense to realise that it would be useless to try to make this man into a soldier, so he was granted exemption as a political conscientious objector. This, I believe, was the only case where exemption was given on political grounds.

Mr. Walter Long was so impressed by the indictment of the tribunals I made in this speech that the very next day he issued a further circular-letter to the tribunals stating that allegations had been made that some tribunals had subjected applicants to a somewhat harsh treatment on the grounds of their objections. It was, he said, desirable that the enquiries should be made with tolerance and impartiality. He reminded the tribunals that they should so act in trying these applications that the applicants would be able to feel that they had been judged by a tribunal which would deal fairly with their cases; and he further pointed out that the Act of Parliament empowered the tribunals, where they were convinced of the genuineness of the conscientious objection, to give absolute exemption from both combatant and non-combatant service. This second circular made little impression on many of the tribunals, who continued to subject applicants to harsh and illegal treatment.

Few of the applicants for exemption on conscientious grounds were given complete exemption. Where the conscientious objection was recognised the exemption usually took the form of exemption from combatant service only. There were a number of these objectors who took up the position that they would do no work which might directly or indirectly help in the prosecution of the War. Some thousands who had been given exemption from combatant service accepted work in the Friends' Ambulance Unit and the War Victims' Relief Company, the Royal Army Medical Corps and other non-combatant corps. A great many refused to accept work in any way connected with the army. They were put into prison. When the prisons became full of these objectors, the Home Office instituted a scheme of civil employment in a number of centres where the men were released from prison regulations and given a considerable amount of liberty. The estimated number of conscientious objectors was a little over 16,000. Of these 1543 took up the absolutist position, and were sentenced to two years imprisonment under ordinary prison conditions. I remember Sir George Cave once saying that two years hard labour was the severest term of imprisonment which could be inflicted. Of the men who received this sentence no less than seventy-one died in prison, or shortly after they had been released on medical grounds. I never agreed with the attitude taken up by these absolutists, although I had the greatest respect for their adherence to what they regarded as the right course.

Among the absolutists who served these long terms of imprisonment five later became Members of Parliament, one a member of the Government, and one was elevated to the House of Lords. More than 1000 of these absolutists were kept in prison from six to nine months after the termination of the War. One of the

most discreditable things the House of Commons ever did was the disfranchisement, under the Franchise Act of 1917, for five years after the War of all persons who had been exempted from military service on the grounds of conscientious objection, and had not performed work in connection with the War. These men had exercised a right which Parliament had conferred upon them, and because they had exercised that right Parliament now imposed upon them the penalty of electoral disfranchisement. This proposal was vigorously opposed by a section of the House of Commons. Lord Hugh Cecil made two noble speeches in opposition to it in which he rose to great heights of eloquence. The Government left the decision upon this proposal to a free vote of the House of Commons, and it was carried by the votes of the Conservative members, the Liberal and Labour members voting against it.

There was an incident in connection with the treatment of the conscientious objectors in prison which I must relate, because it answers the charge so often made against Mr. Asquith that he was always slow in making up his mind to take definite action. A large number of these resisters had been concentrated in one of the London prisons and placed in charge of a military officer as commandant. This man was, I think, mentally unbalanced. He treated the men in a shameful way, and wrote long letters to them of a most abusive nature. Some of these letters came into my hands, and I at once set out to place them before Mr. Asquith, who at that time was acting temporarily as Secretary for War in place of Lord Kitchener, who had just been lost in the *Hampshire*. When I reached Downing Street, Mrs. Asquith was just coming out. Her car was at the door. She asked me if I was coming in to see Henry. She thought he was engaged at the moment, but she would like

to have a talk with me until he was ready to see me. So we went into the secretary's room, and for half an hour she gave me a most entertaining time. The intrigues of Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Northcliffe which had led to the overthrow of Mr. Asquith's first Government were still going on, she said. She saw them walking and conspiring at six o'clock in the morning in the garden of No. i l . Her great desire at that time was to see both of them dangling from lamp-posts in Whitehall!

When I was called into the Cabinet room to see Mr. Asquith he apologised for keeping me waiting. I told him I had been talking to Mrs. Asquith, and he said " Oh! " in a tone which implied " I wonder what she has been saying now! " She had said nothing indiscreet, unless it were an indiscretion to tell me such family secrets as " Henry " coming home from the House every night to hear " Puffin " (Anthony) say his prayers before he went to sleep. Without any preliminaries I put these letters before him. I had carefully arranged them so that he read the milder ones first. The last letter I put before him had this sentence: " You say you are going to make a complaint to the War Office. You can do what the hell you like. I do not care a damn for Asquith or anybody else." When Mr. Asquith read those words he collected all the letters, put them into his pocket, and said: "I am going across to the War Office now, and you will hear later what I have done ". In half an hour that official was dismissed from his post.

Before leaving the conscientious objectors I may mention a strange incident that happened during a debate about them in the House of Commons. A young Conservative member, Mr. Harold Smith, a brother of " F. E.", was denouncing these resisters with great vigour as cowards and shirkers. I quietly interrupted him by asking: " Seeing that the Hon, Member is

himself of military age, will he kindly tell us why he is not serving in the Army? " For a moment he was completely confounded, and then made this amazing answer: "That is a matter for my own conscience ". The House was aghast at the inanity of this remark. The member stumbled through two or three more sentences and then sat down. I do not think he ever spoke again in that Parliament.

CHAPTER XXIX

Free Speech in War-time

IT will always be to me a matter for surprise and gratitude that we were permitted to carry on an active propaganda for peace, by public meetings and in our own Press, and by the distribution of leaflets and pamphlets during the four years of the War. One would have expected that when the vast majority of the people believed that the country was in a life-and-death struggle, when hardly a family in the land had not fathers and sons and near relatives exposed to death, when soldiers were daily returning home broken, sightless, maimed and limbless, that the public would have violently resented any talk or activities which went counter to the popular view and which were regarded as unpatriotic and as likely to hinder the successful prosecution of the War. I understood all that, and, looking back on the events of these years I feel that, on the whole, the best traits in the British character were displayed. The love of freedom, the right to express opinions in the Press and in public speeches which are opposed to the popular view are ingrained in our British people, and this, I think, explains the general toleration which was shown to peace propaganda during the War.

That view was expressed by Mr. Herbert Samuel, then Home Secretary, in a speech in the House of Commons in June 1916, in words which deserve to be quoted as a classic statement of the case for free speech even in time of war. He said:

" I myself hold the view that it would not be proper for the Executive, even when engaged in a vital struggle such as this, to prevent the expression of opinions on the part of members of the public that were hostile to the policy of the Government in power. There may be occasions upon which the most patriotic service that any individual citizen could render his country would be to agitate against a war in which his Government had wrongly engaged. I do not think the Executive of the day ought to arrogate to itself the right and duty of determining whether it is a moment in which opposition to its policy should be suppressed or not. I can imagine in the future the nation engaged in some war in which, as I say, the Government was wrong, did not represent the feelings of the country, and did not represent the real desires of the nation, and when it would be a crime to suppress the expressions of public opinion, and they ought not in these circumstances to be able to point to any principle laid down by Ministers in the year 1916 to the effect that whenever the Government was engaged in war it should throw into prison or otherwise penalise any persons who objected to its policy."

The vast majority of the British people believed, in the first years of the War at least, that it was a patriotic duty to support the military effort until a decisive victory was achieved. We, on the other hand, believed that the most patriotic duty we could render to our country was to seek peace; that the longer the War continued the more those ideals for which the nation stood were in danger of being destroyed; and that when the end came " a just and lasting peace " would not be made because of accumulated commitments and a desire for impossible indemnities. President Wilson was right when he said that a " peace without victory " was the only peace which could secure the permanent attainment of international conditions which would make an end of war for all time. The greatest tragedy of the Peace Conference was that President Wilson gave his help to framing a Peace Treaty which violated his previous declarations,

There was, of course, a great deal of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of our peace attitude. We were not a " Stop-the-War " Party, if by that was meant laying down our arms unconditionally. Our position from the beginning of the War was that stated at a later period by Lord Lansdowne, Lord Loreburn, Lord Buckmaster, Mr. Runciman and other prominent statesmen, and what I stated in my speech in February 1916, from which I have quoted in a previous chapter. With the exception of two or three Socialist weekly papers, the whole Press of the country was against us. The more irresponsible section denounced us as " traitors " and " pro-Germans ", and incited soldiers and civilians to break up our meetings, and went as far as they dared in suggesting personal violence towards us. Nearly every pulpit in the land and nearly every religious journal was preaching hate, glorifying war and denouncing peace talk. I was turning over, a few days ago, a mass of Press cuttings of extracts from sermons, speeches by ministers of religion, and articles from the religious journals. I thought I might give a selection, but I cannot—they are too terrible. All the speakers and writers are probably now ashamed of " what they did in the Great War ". When I recall War-time experiences like these, when I remember how men who had been lifelong pacifists, how ministers of the Prince of Peace, and how newspaper editors who opposed Britain's entry into the War turned their journals into jingo organs when war broke out, I feel somewhat sceptical as to whether their present pacifist sentiments would stand the strain of opposition to another war. I do not in the least doubt the sincerity of their desire for peace, nor of their hatred of war. But if the next war about which everybody is now talking does come, all the old justifications of it will be urged afresh. It will be represented as another " war to end war " and as " a war to dethrone

militarism ", and patriotism will be invoked to win support for it. It is true that very few people want war; it is equally true that a war is always popular in its early stages. The Boer War was one of the most unjustifiable wars ever waged by Britain. It was a mean war; the power of a mighty Empire used to crush the independence of a small farmer State; and yet it was popular. Thackeray was right when he wrote that when the soldier gets into the vision of the people he obscures all else. The only way to prevent the people from becoming war mad is to prevent war from breaking out. It is necessary to work in time of peace to establish conditions which will leave no possible justification for war.

From what I have said about the state of public opinion in the early years of the War it will be understood that the position of those who did not take the popular line was not an enviable one. It needs a good deal of courage to stand almost alone and face calumny, scorn and misrepresentation. Cowardice can never be imputed to men who dare to do that. They may be wrong, but their motives deserve respect. I think that many of those who profoundly disagreed with the attitude of the pacifist to the War felt like that towards them. This probably goes far to explain the general toleration which was shown towards peace propaganda during the War.

In my own personal experience I was more fortunate than some of my friends. I was never prosecuted for any of my speeches or writings. I was never sent to prison, though I am sure I deserved that distinction as much as some of my friends who were incarcerated. I addressed public meetings practically every week-end when Parliament was sitting, and on week-days during the Recess. With a very few exceptions these meetings were perfectly orderly. I can only call to mind four meetings where there was some disturbance. One was at Huddersfield, where a number of very young men in training tried to force

their way on to the platform from the stair behind. The attack was beaten off with one minor casualty. One of the intruders, in making a hasty retreat down the stairs, fell and broke his cane. The pieces were given to my wife as a memento of the occasion. Only at two meetings in my constituency was there the least opposition manifested. At one crowded Town Hall meeting a local town councillor, a well-known Tory character, made himself objectionable at question time. A tumult was created, during which he was escorted from the hall in the custody of the stewards. At the other meeting a disturbance was caused by a few men and women at the back of the hall who were persistent in their interruptions. Peace, by negotiation with the stewards, was eventually secured, and the meeting proceeded quietly. The outside Press made a great story of this incident—" Mr. Snowden refused a hearing ", etc. The local papers referred to it as " some slight interruption from a few persons at the back of the hall ". I paid frequent visits to Blackburn during the War. The meetings were invariably crowded, and at every meeting questions were invited. The local Press, though opposed to my attitude, treated me with the utmost fairness. Though critical of my position, they were never abusive. They reported me almost *verbatim*, and generally gave me a full page after a week-end visit. It seems incredible, but it is nevertheless true, that during the four years of the War I did not receive from the constituency one resolution condemning my attitude. The only resolution connected with the War came from a Tory club, who protested against the liquor restrictions! I do not wish it to be inferred from these facts that my constituents were mainly supporters of my war attitude. Not at all. Most of them disapproved of it. But I think the explanation of the generous toleration they showed to me was this: I had been member for the borough for

ten years, and it is true to say I had won the devotion of my supporters and the respect of my political opponents. Though the majority of the electors dissented from the line I had taken on the War, they differed from me more in sorrow than in anger.

The rowdiest meeting I had was one Sunday afternoon at Hull in 1917. The disturbance was prearranged. There was no violence, but constant interruptions which made it difficult to give a coherent speech. About a dozen lads from the Navy had come to the meeting, and they led the opposition which was taken up by a section of the audience. Anyone with experience of lively public meetings knows that the main part of the commotion is caused by the supporters of the speaker. The sailors who had caused the disorder were in the charge of a Methodist minister whom I had known as a speaker on the Socialist platform. I exonerate him from all responsibility for the row. He appealed for a fair hearing on condition that I would answer questions at the end of my speech. His appeal was in vain, so I declined to answer questions, and this led to renewed uproar. After the meeting the minister held a protest meeting outside, and as the local Press report put it," after his protest the crowd dispersed ". This was the most turbulent meeting I had during the War. There was a sequel to this meeting. Some years after I had a letter from a young man in the Navy. He wrote reminding me of this meeting, and said: " I was one of the party of sailors who deliberately came to that meeting with the sole object of preventing the meeting taking place. At that time I was young and suffering from the malady which had its grip on the masses. Since then my views have altered. I have been hoping that I might meet you personally, but I cannot wait any longer because I feel it is my bounden duty to offer you an apology for what I did at that meeting."

I was much more fortunate than some of my friends in my experiences of public meetings. On three occasions when my wife was one of the speakers at peace meetings the meetings were violently broken up by organised gangs, and she was lucky to escape without suffering physical injury. But these were exceptional experiences. She addressed a very large number of peace meetings, and with three exceptions her experience was the same as mine. Hundreds, nay thousands, of peace meetings large and small must have been held during the War, and it is a great tribute to the fair-mindedness of the British people, and to the tolerance of the authorities that they passed off on the whole so quietly. Some of the meetings I addressed stand out in my memory. I remember one I had in Glasgow on a Sunday evening in December, 1916. The large theatre was packed two hours before the advertised time. At most of my meetings in the last two years of the War a resolution was submitted appealing for peace by negotiation, and this was invariably carried.

I made the journeys to these meetings alone and unprotected, except when my wife was to be a joint speaker. I was never molested or subjected to abuse, though I was well known all over the country. The only occasion on which I was attacked was a year after the end of the War. When I was entering the Hall where the meeting was to be held an ex-soldier gave me a violent blow in the face which felled me to the ground. This incident also had its sequel. Some years after, the man wrote to me to express his deep regret and to ask for my forgiveness. My wife was attacked during the War in the street in which we lived at Golders Green by a well-dressed man who slashed her face with a cane and made a deep cut. On one occasion a brick was thrown through our window. Looking back to the days of the War I am surprised at two things; first, that I escaped personal injury, and

second, that I never had the least fear of it. I came home to Golders Green from the House of Commons nightly by the tube railway, and walked in my laborious way through the unlighted and quiet street from the station to my home without ever thinking of the possibility of attack. I never anticipated trouble at any meeting I was to address, even when the Press beforehand had incited the public to turn up and destroy the meeting. I was advertised to address meetings one Sunday at Rochdale in the afternoon and at Oldham in the evening. That morning a Sunday newspaper circulating widely in the area came out with a violent attack on me, and with an incitement to prevent me from speaking at these meetings. Both the meetings passed off without any opposition.

I received, as was to be expected, the attention of the anonymous correspondent, who sent abusive and often indecent postcards and letters. On the other hand, soldiers wrote to me expressing their approval of the stand I was making for peace, and their disgust with the politicians who, far away from the cannon's mouth, were making others fight and die.

A great many prosecutions took place under the Defence of the Realm Act of persons charged with making statements or issuing printed matter calculated to prejudice recruiting and discipline in His Majesty's Forces, or in other ways to hinder the prosecution of the War. These prosecutions were often undertaken as the result of complaints made by the local military authorities, but in many cases they were initiated by the local police. They often showed a lack of intelligence and discrimination on the part of those responsible for the charges. The *Labour Leader*, the official organ of the I.L.P., was filled every week with articles opposing the War; yet, apart from one initial attempt to suppress it, it was permitted without interference to continue its propaganda throughout the

War. In August, 1915, a raid was made by the police on the office of the paper, and two of its issues were made the subject of a police prosecution in Manchester. The case came before the stipendiary, who heard it *in camera.* He dismissed the case, and ordered that the seized copies should be returned to the publishers. At the same time the Head Office of the I.L.P. was raided, and all leaflets and pamphlets dealing in any way with war were taken away. Simultaneously the National Labour Press at Manchester, which was the property of the I.L.P., was raided, and a prosecution was instituted against the proprietors. The bulk of the literature which had been seized was returned, the magistrate deciding that there was no case for its confiscation. At a later hearing, however, a number of pamphlets were ordered to be destroyed and among them was a pamphlet I had written five years before on Mr. Lloyd George's 1909 Budget!

In January, 1916, the Glasgow Socialist paper *Forward* was prosecuted for articles alleged to cause disaffection with the Munitions of War Act and with the policy of Dilution of Labour, and the publication was not permitted until the Editor had signed a statement agreeing not to publish in future anything calculated to cause disaffection.

It came out in the course of debates in the House of Commons that the local police often acted without the authority of the Home Office, and in some cases when a prosecution had taken place the action of the police was not supported by the Home Secretary. A very large number of prosecutions was instituted against persons who were charged with the distribution of leaflets exposing the illegality of the treatment of conscientious objectors, and a considerable number of them was sent to prison. The Hon. Betrand Russell, now Earl Russell, wrote to *The Times* to say that he was the author of a leaflet of this kind

which had been seized by the police. He was prosecuted at the Guildhall and fined £100 and costs. He refused to pay the fine, and his goods were distrained. Subsequently Mr. Russell was prosecuted again for an article he had written in a weekly sheet issued by the " No-Conscription Fellowship ". In this article he wrote: " The American garrison, which will by that time be occupying England and France, whether or no they will prove efficient against the Germans, will no doubt be capable of intimidating strikers—an occupation to which the American army is accustomed when at home ". The case for the prosecution was that these words would have a detrimental effect upon the British and Allied soldiers. The Bow Street magistrate sentenced Mr. Russell to six months imprisonment in the Second Division. Nothing but vindictiveness could have prompted such a sentence as this over a statement which no persons with a grain of intelligence could believe would have any detrimental influence on the prosecution of the War.

Another infamous prosecution by the authorities was that of Mr. E. D. Morel, who was charged with attempting to send some of his pamphlets on the War to the eminent French writer M. Romain Rolland, who was living in Switzerland. Mr. Morel's pamphlets were freely circulated in England, and the authorities apparently took no exception to them. But under a clause in the Defence of the Realm Act it was an offence to transmit printed matter to a neutral or enemy country, but not to France or any other Allied country. Mr. Morel was sentenced to six months in the Second Division. Mr. Morel's imprisonment aroused widespread indignation. It was felt by a great many people that he had received this sentence, not on account of the trivial charge against him, but on account of his general anti-war activities. Colonel Wedgwood came back to the House of Commons from active

service to make a passionate protest against this outrage on British liberty. Before the War Mr. Morel had been prominently associated with the agitation against the Congo Rubber atrocities, and for this service he received a testimonial from the heads of the churches and members of all political Parties. Mr. Morel felt the indignity and injustice of his imprisonment (" herding ", as he put it, " with common felons ") so much that it had a serious and permanent effect upon his health, and was, no doubt, responsible for his death a few years later.

I never could understand the principles upon which the authorities acted in selecting cases for prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act. Most of the cases they took into the Courts were for alleged offences of a very trivial nature, while other instances of anti-war propaganda which, in my opinion, were far more calculated to influence popular opinion against the War were allowed to pass without interference. The *Labour Leader* and other Socialist publications, as I have said, after the first unsuccessful attempt to suppress them, were allowed with impunity to continue their weekly attacks upon foreign policy and the conduct of the War. When the Press Bureau was established it was necessary to submit all leaflets intended for publication for the approval of this body, and I must admit that they acted on the whole on the lines which had been laid down by the Home Secretary, that there should be no unnecessary interference with the expression of opinions, and with appeals to bring the War to an end by negotiation. Every leaflet had to bear the name of the author and the printer and the publisher, and, in order to give it official patronage, we generally inserted on the leaflet " Passed by the Press Bureau ".

My wife, as organiser of the Women's Peace Crusade, published quite a number of leaflets under these regula-

tions which were very widely circulated. I remember one day, when we had just received a consignment of leaflets from the printers and were engaged in putting them into parcels for distribution, a maid came into the room to say that two policemen were at the door and wanted to see me. Everybody connected with peace propaganda in those days was always expecting a police raid, and when we were told of this visit of the police we thought that at last our turn had come. The police officers were shown into the room, and they began by saying that they were very sorry to trouble me, but as I was a subscriber to the police charities they had called to ask for a renewal of my subscription!

I had another experience in South Wales which at first looked serious but ended in an anti-climax. I was addressing a wonderfully enthusiastic meeting in the rink at Merthyr, and in my speech I vigorously denounced the prosecutions which were taking place under the Defence of the Realm Act. A young Welsh miner had just been prosecuted for a statement which the prosecuting counsel described as " the most outrageous and monstrous and untrue statement that had ever been made since this planet began to revolve ". The miner had had the audacity to state that the Military Service Act contained the possibility of industrial conscription. I read out the words for which he had been prosecuted, and I said: " I take these words as my own. I repeat the statement. Let them prosecute me! " At the end of the meeting, when I was in the anteroom, a person came in to tell me that the Chief Constable was outside and was anxious to see me. We all came to the conclusion that my challenge had been immediately taken up. We invited the Chief Constable to come forward. He entered the room, shook hands with me very cordially, said he was very glad to meet me, and congratulated us on a very

successful meeting. I heard no more about my defiance of the Defence of the Realm Act.

Mr. Richard C. Wallhead, who has been M.P. for Merthyr for the last ten years, was not so fortunate with the Glamorgan County Police. He was prosecuted in January 1918 for a speech he had made at Briton Ferry and sentenced to four months imprisonment. His offence was a statement that he had been informed that it was the intention of the Government to keep the young conscripts after the War to form the nucleus of the future army. Mr. Wallhead was not in good health, and representations were made to the Home Secretary which secured his release after he had served about a month of his sentence.

Mr. Wallhead was a full-time propagandist for the I.L.P., and one of the most successful the Party has ever had. He was immensely popular with the branches, and was Chairman of the National Party for three years. He was a very attractive and powerful speaker—witty, eloquent and well informed. He ruined his voice by much open-air speaking, and his health has suffered permanently from the hardships of the life of a Socialist propagandist. During the years he has been in the House of Commons he has been greatly handicapped by ill-health, and this has prevented him from making the position there which otherwise he would certainly have attained. He is far superior in debating ability, in knowledge of economic and political questions, to some of the Labour members who have achieved popular notoriety.[1]

Mr. James Maxton, too, came in conflict with the authorities and served a term of imprisonment in Calton Jail. I do not remember the precise nature of his offence, but it fell under the wide definition of " sedition ".

A particularly shameful, and at the same time ridiculous

[1] Since this was written Mr. Wallhead has died.

prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act, was that of the Friends Service Committee for publishing a leaflet without having first submitted it to the Press Censor. When this regulation was made, the Friends wrote to the Home Office to say that they could not conscientiously conform to it. They published a quite unobjectionable leaflet on conscientious objectors in prison without submitting it to the Press Censor. For this offence three members of the Committee were prosecuted—Mr. Harrison Barrow, Mr. Arthur Watts and Miss Edith Ellis. The two men were sentenced at the Guildhall in May 1918 to six months imprisonment, and Miss Ellis was fined £100. On appeal, this sentence was confirmed. Mr. Barrow was not only a leading member of the Society of Friends, but a very prominent citizen of Birmingham. At the outbreak of war he was the prospective Lord Mayor of the city, but declined to go forward as he felt the office during war-time would involve duties he could not discharge.

Mr. Barrow and the others were not charged with publishing matter of an illegal, disloyal or seditious nature, but simply with non-compliance with the regulations described. The safety of the realm required that a man of his standing and high character should be kept in prison for six months! Just before this prosecution Mr. Barrow had received the thanks of the Home Office for services to the city of Birmingham, and the offer of the O.B.E., which he declined.

The Chairman of the Quarter Session (Sir Alfred J. Newton) which confirmed the sentence of the Police Court indulged in one of those ignorant tirades which at that time some magistrates considered it to be their patriotic duty to utter. He said:

> "One can scarcely contain oneself, and restrain one's indignation. The law has been deliberately and wilfully and

ruthlessly broken. For the protection of the Empire and of the civilised world it has been decided that a check should be put on the publication of certain literature. Here is a body which deliberately flaunts everybody and everything. This Bench will not sanction any such proceedings.*'

The protection of the Empire and of the civilised world had been imperilled by the publication of a harmless Quaker leaflet!

After this regulation requiring the sanction of the Press Bureau for the publication of leaflets came into effect, we always put on the leaflet " Passed by the Press Censor ". This gave an importance and authority to the leaflet which it would not otherwise have had, and most people read that inscription to mean that the matter had been approved by the Government.

CHAPTER XXX

Peace by Negotiation

WHEN hostilities broke out the International Socialist Movement was hopelessly divided on the question. For years before it had been passing resolutions at its International Congresses declaring its opposition to war and discussing the question of an international strike when war was threatened. But in all the continental Socialist Parties minorities remained staunch to the ideal of peace, and refused to give any support to the prosecution of war. The French and German minority Socialists carried their protest to the length of voting against war credits. The peace party in the British Parliament often seriously discussed this question, but the majority decided that no useful purpose would be served by carrying our opposition to the War to that length. Such a protest in any case would have been ineffective, and we felt that so long as the War continued it would have been both foolish and inhuman to deprive our armies of the necessary equipment to carry it on with adequate supplies. But at the same time we urged strongly and constantly that every opportunity should be sought and used for bringing the War to an end by negotiation.

In the early part of 1915 abortive efforts were made to call a meeting of the Internationalist Socialist Bureau, with a view to organising the Socialist Parties in the belligerent countries to bring pressure to bear upon the respective Governments to open up peace negotiations;

or to accept the good offices of neutral nations for the purpose of offering continuous mediation.

Nothing, however, came of these efforts, as the state of feeling in the majority sections of the continental Socialist Parties at that time was not favourable to such a course of action. Near the end of that year (1915), however, not only in Germany, but in all the belligerent countries, a marked change came over public opinion. There was a good deal of feeling in every country that the War had gone on quite long enough. There seemed at that time to be little prospect of any decisive military result. The daily slaughter was having its effect. On the surface the uncompromising " fight to a finish " spirit remained, but beneath it there was a growing yearning for peace.

This growing desire was reflected in December (1915) in the decision of the official Socialist Democratic Party in Germany to put a question to the Imperial Chancellor asking whether he would be prepared to make a statement as to the conditions under which he would enter into peace negotiations. In response to this question, the Imperial Chancellor stated that he would be prepared to consider in conjuction with Germany's Allies any peace proposals put forward by Great Britain. During the same week I put a question to Mr. Asquith in somewhat similar terms, and the reply showed that the change in public feeling was realised by the British Government. Mr. Asquith replied that " if proposals of a serious character for a general peace were put forward either directly or through a neutral Power by any Governments, they would first be discussed by the Allied Governments, and until this contingency arose I could not give any other pledge. Should proposals for peace be put forward, it will be the desire of His Majesty's Government to take Parliament into its confidence at the earliest possible moment."

There were at that time three sections in the German Social Democratic Party. Dr. Liebnecht and a few of his colleagues were militantly opposed to the War. Edward Bernstein, Karl Kausky, Herr Haase, and a strong neutral group were in favour of immediate steps being taken towards peace, but were more moderate in their denunciation of the Government. Herr Schiedemann and the majority which had supported the prosecution of the War were now in favour of the immediate proposal of peace terms by Germany, but were prepared to continue their support of the prosecution of the War in national defence. In a debate which took place in the Reichstag early in December, Herr Schiedemann put forward a very definite plea for peace, which showed how rapidly working-class opinion in Germany was changing. Herr Schiedemann said that all the peoples were tired of the War and wanted peace. He strongly denounced all proposals of annexation, and declared that the German people would not continue the War one day longer than was necessary to secure Germany's independence. At the same time demonstrations in favour of peace were reported from all parts of Germany.

Mr. Lloyd George in his *Memoirs,* writing of this period, tells us " that the evidence of the accumulated horrors of the War made an impression upon a section of the Liberal Party. War weariness and the passing of the gust of patriotic fervour had left that section of the Liberal Party, who had been brought up on the peace-loving precepts of Cobden, Bright and Gladstone, disliking the continuance of the War more and more."

The peace group in the House of Commons felt that the time was now favourable to put forward a plea for peace by negotiation, and to elicit from the Government a definite statement of the conditions upon which they **would** be prepared to bring the War to an end; and also

to extract a reply from Mr. Asquith to the speech of the German Chancellor recently delivered in the Reichstag answering an interpolation from the United German Socialists for an early conclusion of the War. The speech of the German Chancellor on this occasion, when one remembers in what guarded language he had to speak, gave considerable encouragement for an approach to be made from other quarters.

I was selected to bring this question before the House of Commons, and on the Second Reading of the Consolidated Fund Bill on the 23rd February, 1916, I raised the subject. As this was the first occasion since the outbreak of war that a peace debate had taken place in the House of Commons we wondered what reception our speeches would be given. As it turned out, the House of Commons that afternoon was in its very best mood. Members gave a most attentive and respectful hearing to what we had to say, although all but a very small minority were wholly opposed to the views we put forward. The members were keenly interested, and they did not once interrupt the expression of sentiment with which they totally disagreed and which they regarded as untimely and perhaps even dangerous. Mr. Asquith, after the speeches of myself and Mr. Trevelyan, spoke very briefly. " The speech of the Hon. member who opened the debate," he said, " not only contained many passages of eloquence and feeling, but deserves, and I hope it will receive from me, respectful consideration and attention."

The main points of my speech may be summarised as follows:

I assumed that there was no member of the Government who would not jump at the chance of bringing the War to an end, provided it could be brought to an end on such terms as would realise our object, and on conditions consistent with our national honour and security.

I said that whatever differences there might be between us as to the causes and origins of the War, I did not think that this was the time for debating and emphasising these differences. The time would come when these questions could be looked at without passion and in an atmosphere unclouded by the smoke of battle, and then blame and responsibility would be justly apportioned.

We, who took the minority view of the origins of this War, frankly recognised that the nation had given practical and overwhelming testimony to its belief in the righteousness and justice of the national cause. The only difference between ourselves who were putting forward these proposals for negotiations and those who were opposed to them was that, while we were all equally anxious to see the speedy and successful termination of the War, we believed that such a result was more possible then than by a continuation of the War in the hope that a decisive victory would enable us to dictate terms to a vanquished foe. We were constantly being warned of the danger of a premature and indecisive peace. Such a warning as a criticism of our suggestion was not deserved, for it could never be premature to end an awful tragedy like this, provided the end would give us what we could hope to gain by a prolongation of the War.

If by an inconclusive peace was meant such a condition of things as would leave all the material for a repetition of this War, create new injustices and new enmities, leave national aspirations unsatisfied, leave militarism unsubdued, leave small nations a prey to the menace of greater powers, leave a condition of things in Europe which will make the maintenance of large armies still necessary, if that is what was meant by an indecisive peace I expressed a doubt if there were a man in the country who would not say that the prolongation of the War with all its horrors and ruin would not be preferable

to such a conclusion as that, provided that there were reasonable grounds for believing that the prolongation of the War would mean a just and lasting peace.

We were making our proposals that afternoon because we believed that there was abundant evidence that the longer the War continued the greater would be the difficulties in the end of arranging the conditions of a just settlement, and because we earnestly felt that no opportunity ought to be lost and no effort wasted to prevent the unnecessary sacrifice of one human life. I then went on to analyse the present military situation, and to say that there was no reasonable ground for the hope that a decisive and crushing military victory could come to either of the contending parties. The War might end after two or three years of further fighting by the economic exhaustion of one of the contending forces. If at the end of three or four years more of fighting, economic exhaustion brought the War to a collapse, a permanent settlement would depend upon the frame of mind and spirit in which the cessation of hostilities finds the various nations. No victory in the field could establish the conditions of a permanent peace unless there were the willingness and the decision to recognise that the real interest of all nations lay in respecting and safeguarding the interests of all. The ruthless subjugation of Germany would be the very worst preparation for a just and lasting peace in Europe. (With the experiences of fifteen years since the end of the War to judge from, it would seem that these were prophetic words.)

The latter part of my speech was devoted to the production of evidence from the German newspapers and the spokesmen of the German Socialist Party of their willingness to enter upon conversations for the purpose of bringing the War to an end. I submitted the facts I had put forward, proved that there was reasonable

ground for believing that the present was a favourable opportunity for holding out the hand of negotiation. I further expressed the hope that any evidence of a desire for peace on the part of our enemies would not be regarded as a sign of weakness and an encouragement to us to press on with the War. The personal reputations of statesmen were of no account when compared with the fact that thousands of lives were being lost every day, thousands of homes made desolate, and millions of treasure wasted.

Mr. Asquith, as I have said, spoke very briefly in reply. It was not a conciliatory speech. He declared that the will of the British people to continue the War to a decisive military victory " had not weakened, and that the voices of the small minority who advocated peace were like the twittering of sparrows in a thunderstorm ". He poured scorn upon the expressed willingness of the German Chancellor to welcome approaches to peace. He described his speech as one colossal and shameless audacity, and his language and arguments as transparently hypocritical and futile. In response to our appeal that Mr. Asquith would state our terms of peace, he declared that he had stated in clear, direct and emphatic language what were the terms on which we in this country were prepared to make peace. He quoted again the familiar rhetorical passage in the speech which he delivered in Dublin in the early months of the War. " We shall never sheathe the sword which we have not lightly drawn until Belgium recovers in full measure all, and more than all which she has sacrificed; until France is adequately secured against the menace of aggression; and until the rights of the smaller nationalities of Europe are placed upon an unassailable foundation; and until the military dominance of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed." Mr. Asquith appears to have been intoxi-

cated by this oratorical sonorosity for he quoted it a great many times in his War speeches. He declared that there was nothing wanting in clearness and directness in his language. He could not make it more intelligible. Mr. Asquith's speech had a very bad effect in Germany. Its offensive reference to the German Chancellor's speech, and the absence of any encouragement to the peace proposals of the German Democracy were most unfortunate in their consequences.

On the 27th May 1916, two months after this debate had taken place, the movement for peace by negotiation received a great impetus from a speech delivered by President Wilson. In this speech he expressed the willingness of the United States to suggest or negotiate a movement for peace among the nations now at war, and he set forth in bald outline the conditions on which he thought peace ought to be made. The Central Powers welcomed President Wilson's message, and they replied that they were willing to take part in an immediate meeting of delegates of the belligerent states in some neutral place. The Allies also welcomed President Wilson's message, but regarded it as impossible to bring about a peace which should assure to them the reparation and reconstruction and guarantees to which they were entitled. In reply to President Wilson's request that the belligerent Powers should define in the full light of day their aims in prosecuting the War, the Allies replied that their war aims were well known. They could only be set forth in detail at the moment of negotiation.

On the 29th September 1916, Mr. Lloyd George gave an interview to the United Press of America which put an end for the time being to any prospects of peace negotiations. " Britain was not prepared to stop the War because of the squealing done by Germans or done for Germans. They must fight to a finish, to a knock-

out blow. There could be no outside interference at this stage. Britain could tolerate no intervention. The enemy was whimpering and whining. With regard to the duration of the War, there is neither clock nor calendar in the British Army today."

I am not writing a history of the War, and can only partly summarise the efforts which were made from this time onward in various quarters to bring about peace by negotiation. Between December 1916 and March 1918 there were no less than nine opportunities which, if followed up, might have led to an earlier and more satisfactory end of the War. By this time Mr. Lloyd George had become Prime Minister, and all these efforts were rejected. One of the first of these efforts was made by the German Chancellor *on* the 12th December 1916. He announced in the Reichstag that the Central Powers had despatched to the ambassadors of the Neutral Powers and to the Pope, a Note intimating " a desire to enter now into peace negotiations ". On the 30th December the Allies issued a general reply to the Central Powers. The offer was described as a sham proposal, a war manoeuvre, and an attempt to create dissension in allied countries, and to deceive and intimidate public opinion in neutral countries. Ten days before this reply of the Allies had been made to the German offer of negotiations, President Wilson had issued a Note to all the belligerents urging them to begin conversations to compare views as a preliminary to ultimate arrangements for peace. The Governments of Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark associated themselves with the United States.

On the 10th January 1917 the Allied Governments sent a considered reply to President Wilson's Note. It was a decisive rejection of the President's suggestion that

the belligerents should begin conversations with a view to arranging for peace. The Note concluded by declaring that the Allied Governments should each and all determine to put forward all their strength and to endure every sacrifice in order that they might press the conflict to a victorious close. This reply to President Wilson's Note was important because it stated in greater detail than had been done before the aims for which the Allies were fighting. Among other aims the Note declared that the civilised world knew that primarily and of necessity they included the following:—

> " The restoration of provinces or territories formerly torn from the Allies by force and contrary to the wishes of their inhabitants. The liberation of Italians, Slavs, Rumanians, Czechs, and Slovaks from foreign domination. The liberation of the peoples who now lie beneath the murderous attacks of the Turks, and the expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire."

This more detailed statement of the aims for which the Allies were now fighting caused much adverse criticism from people who were closely following events. By this time a great deal of dissatisfaction was being felt and expressed by those soldiers who had volunteered in the early days of the War. They had rushed to the colours because of the appeals which were made to them to go to the rescue of Belgium. This, as Mr. Lloyd George had said, and as everybody knew, was the one reason why there had been such a magnificent response for volunteers. The British people had given their support to the War, and the men who had volunteered before Conscription was established, had not offered their lives for the liberation of Italians, Slavs, Rumanians, Czechs, or Slovaks from foreign domination. Not one in a hundred thousand had ever heard of Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks, and not one of them would have volunteered in a war to liberate these peoples from foreign domination.

There could be no question that the British Government had not entered the War for any such purpose, or with any such object. The War had now been going on for two and a half years, and this wide extension of the aims for which it had originally entered upon was nothing short of a gross betrayal of those who had volunteered for a much more limited object. This extension of the objects of the Allies was the bribe which had been offered to Italy and Rumania to enter the War.

Because of this extension of the War aims of the Allies, and because of war weariness and the daily toll of casualties during 1917, the desire and the demand for peace negotiations gathered force throughout Great Britain. Movements at the same time were being made by neutrals. On the 1st August 1917 the Pope issued an appeal to the belligerent Governments. It urged that deliberations should be begun for the purpose of bringing the War to an end. This " moving appeal " was welcomed by President Wilson. The Allied Governments returned no reply to the Pope's appeal.

A desire for peace was expressed in Lord Lansdowne's famous letter appealing for peace negotiation which was published in the *Daily Telegraph* on the 29th November 1917. This letter made a great impression on public opinion, coming as it did from a former Foreign Secretary and from one who could not be regarded as having any pro-German sympathies. Lord Lansdowne was violently attacked in certain quarters. A special private conference of the National Unionist Association was held the day after its appearance, and an emergency resolution was passed deploring its publication. Mr. Bonar Law, who addressed this conference, dealt with the letter. While admitting Lord Lansdowne's patriotism and disinterestedness, he expressed his absolute disagreement, not only with the arguments, but with the whole tone of

the letter. He regarded its publication as nothing less than a national misfortune. The next day the Government issued a full statement to the Press, in which Lord Lansdowne's letter was emphatically repudiated. " The views expressed in the letter did not in any way represent the views of His Majesty's Government, nor did they indicate in the slightest degree that there is any change or modification in the war policy of this country/' It went on to quote the recent utterances of M. Clemenceau: " The war aims for which we are fighting are victory/' This attitude of the Government and the politicians to Lord Lansdowne's appeal showed either how ignorant they were of the state of popular feeling in this country, or that they were determined not to recognise it or permit it to move them from their policy of the " knock-out blow ".

A considerable number of peace societies were now in existence. During the whole of 1917 and 1918 I addressed peace demonstrations practically every week-end, and I had special opportunities of estimating the strength of the peace sentiment in the country. There is no doubt whatever that if the Government had at any time during this period shown a disposition to enter on peace conversations there would have been an overwhelming response from the nation. After the publication of Lord Lansdowne's letter my wife organised a National Women's Peace Crusade, whose special work was to gain support for Lord Lansdowne's manifesto. Hundreds of thousands of signatures were obtained to a petition in favour of peace negotiations.

In the early part of the following year (1918) a by-election occurred in Keighley, and the Independent Labour Party put forward a candidate, who fought the election solely on " peace by negotiation ". This election occurred just at the time when the Germans had launched their great spring offensive, and when the conditions

were not favourable to the success of such a candidature. There was, of course, the usual combination of the two parties against our candidate, and yet he polled one-third of the votes cast. This was the more remarkable when it is remembered that the Liberal candidate was a Quaker, and did not support the " last man and the last shilling " policy. Mr. Asquith sent a letter to the Liberal candidate asking the electors to return him " to work for the attainment of peace ".

On 4th February 1918 the Allied Governments issued a declaration from the Supreme War Council at Versailles which closed the door against any further appeals for peace negotiations. " The only immediate task before the Allies ", it was declared, " was the prosecution with the utmost vigour and in the closest and most effective co-operation of the military effort of the Allies." This declaration, made after the War had been going on for three and a half years, was strongly disapproved by a large number of people who had been whole-hearted supporters of the War in its earlier stages. We had a debate upon it in the House of Commons a week later. A motion condemning the terms of the Allied Declaration was moved by Mr. Holt, a Liberal member, and seconded by Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, a liberal-minded Conservative member. Mr. Balfour, who at that time was Foreign Secretary, made a lamentable speech, in which he showed quite clearly that he had not followed at all what had been taking place during the previous months.

Perhaps the most remarkable speech of this debate was given by Mr. Runciman. He criticised the varying tones adopted by the same Ministers when dealing with the War aims of the Allies and the attitude we were to adopt towards our enemies. This criticism arose out of a speech which Mr. Lloyd George had made to a Labour Congress in Edinburgh just previous to this

Allied Declaration. In this speech he had adopted a moderate and conciliatory attitude, which was more than counterbalanced by the uncompromising Declaration of the Supreme Council, to which Mr. Lloyd George must have been a party. This debate was in some respects the most important discussion on peace which took place in the House of Commons during the War, as a number of members of all Parties took part in it who had not hitherto spoken in this sense.

Shortly after the peace debate in the House of Commons on 13th February 1918, to which I have referred, Mr. Asquith came up to me in the Division Lobby and said that he would like to have a talk with me about the War situation, and would I come next morning to his house in Cavendish Square. We had a long and interesting conversation, in which he expressed his views with great frankness. He was particularly anxious to hear from me about the War views of the rank and file of the Trade Union movement. He did not think that the Trade Union leaders represented the mass opinion of their members. He wanted particularly my opinion about Robert Smillie and J. H. Thomas. Smillie, who at that time was President of the Miners' Federation, was one of the few Trade Union leaders who had been outspoken in his opposition to the War. Mr. Asquith had a high personal regard for Smillie, with whom he had been brought in touch at Trade Union deputations, and he thought Smillie was one of the very few able men whom the miners had produced. He spoke contemptuously of Mr. Lloyd George's efforts to get the support of the Labour officials. He had bribed them with the gift of offices, thinking that if he got the support of the leaders he had captured the rank and file.

Mr. Asquith knew that I was constantly addressing public meetings in the country, and he asked me to relate

to him my experiences. I told him that I was convinced that there was a great change coming over public opinion, and that the desire to bring the War to an end was very widespread. He said that he was receiving a great many letters, many of them from people of considerable influence, to the same effect; but that there was a natural reluctance to come forward and risk the treatment which Lord Lansdowne had received. He was not in favour of the Labour members leaving the Government. He thought it would be best for them to remain and, as he put it, " stew in their own juice ".

Mr. Asquith was frankly pessimistic of the then War situation, and declared that it seemed to him that a military victory was hopeless. He condemned the idea of expecting that the country would be willing for the War to go on until we were utterly ruined. Economic and financial ruin would certainly result if the War were continued much longer. He had been trying to get information about the economic condition of Germany, and, from what he could learn, her position seemed to be very near disaster. He expected that there would be a revolution in Germany, but he expressed the view that if the revolution were confined to Germany it would be a bad thing. He thought some other countries in Europe were in need of a revolution.

The Allies, Mr. Asquith said, were now probably counting much less upon the hope of military victory than upon the economic collapse of the enemy countries. It had been a misfortune that America came into the War, but, he added, one cannot say that publicly at present. America could never give effective military help, and she was not doing much to assist in the matter of money. But at the end of the War we may be sure she would claim to have won it for the Allies. He had tried to find out what was the state of American opinion, but

found it very difficult. The opinion of Washington and New York was not the opinion of the middle west and the western states, where, so far as he could gather, there was not much enthusiasm for the War. He had no high opinion of President Wilson as a statesman. He was something of an enigma—a University don who had found an opportunity for the exercise of his rhetoric—and, he added, it is quite good rhetoric.

The recent Declaration of the Versailles Council was simply eyewash. He believed in his heart Lloyd George did not agree with that Declaration, but he had been overborne by Clemenceau. He considered Lansdowne's arguments exemplary. I asked him why he had not followed Lansdowne's lead. He said that he did not like to take up a line until he felt that the time was favourable and that there was likely to be a general response. He was seriously considering whether he could with advantage come forward and support a demand for peace negotiations. " I am being strongly pressed ", he said, " by friends for whose opinion I have a high regard to take this course." I reminded him that he had a great responsibility for the War, and he replied: " I fully realise that, and I am seriously considering how I can in the present crisis discharge that responsibility." I parted from Mr. Asquith with the impression that he might come forward with an outspoken statement of his views. As matters turned out, what Mr. Lloyd George described as his " paralysing inactivity " in a crisis prevented him from doing so. In the following six months he made several speeches which showed his vacillating state of mind.

After my return to Parliament as member for Blackburn, my wife and I had become friendly with Lord Morley, who was a native of the town. We often visited him at his house in Wimbledon, and our conversations with him

remain among the happiest of our recollections. He was a charming conversationalist, and his penetrating comments on his political contemporaries were illuminating and fascinating. When my wife was conducting her Women *s Peace Crusade in support of Lord Lansdowne's efforts at peace by negotiation, she wrote to Lord Morley to ask him what he thought about coming out in the House of Lords with a speech in support of Lord Lansdowne. In reply he sent her the following letter, which is interesting as showing his state of mind at the time:—

" FLOWERMEAD,
" WIMBLEDON PARK, S.W.,
"6th June 1918.

" DEAR MRS. SNOWDEN,

" Your letter quickens my pulse, but I cannot persuade myself that such an action as you suggest for the members of the House of Lords will be effective just now. A demonstration in force there would have to be definite in object, and I question whether that is within reach until the battle has come to its end, and until we are sure how France and U.S.A. will keep in step with us.

" Nothing could be expected from the Government beyond the position taken by Balfour in the debate on Runciman's Motion some three weeks ago. They may be insincere—some of them—but as things are they cannot well bring themselves to go beyond Balfour. President Wilson is no oracle of mine. The time will come, perhaps soon, for a genuine and widespread rally and a complete exposure of the irresistible and wholly uncompensated mischiefs of our policy. Such an exposure as Mr. Snowden, beyond other people, could drive into the common head—a keen, plain and biting list of the broad facts of wrong and ruin.

" You know at first hand whether the sense of the public is yet ready for this great collective move.

" When will you two favour us by a visit?

" Yours most sincerely,

" MORLEY."

CHAPTER XXXI

The Russian Revolution

IN March 1917 the news burst upon the world that the long-awaited Russian revolution had come at last—quite suddenly and without warning. The revolution had been precipitated by the action of the Czar in issuing a Ukase dissolving the Duma and the Council of the Empire. But this action on the part of the Czar was the outcome of the internal state of Russia, where starvation was almost universal, and the army was virtually in a state of mutiny. Widespread corruption in the Government, and the malappropriation of money voted for the equipment of the army, had led to the soldiers being driven into battle with scarcely any arms at all, where they were mown down like rye. It was calculated that by this time over eight million Russians had been killed, and other casualties amounted to over twenty millions.

The storm burst on 9th March, when a general strike was proclaimed, and workmen marched through the streets of Petrograd shouting, " We want bread! " Within two days most of the troops had joined the revolution. Three days after the outbreak the Czar's Government resigned. The Duma resolved not to disperse. The Socialists and Labour men declared that more determined action was necessary, and it was demanded by the events outside. They constituted themselves into a Council of Labour Deputies to which they summoned the soldiers and people. Next day they joined in a common session of the Duma, when it was decided to form a Provisional

Revolutionary Government. By now all the military and naval forces in Petrograd had declared themselves on the side of the revolution. In Moscow, Kazan and other large towns they declared for the Duma.

A week after the outbreak of the revolution the new Government issued a manifesto stating its policy. It declared in favour of an immediate amnesty for all political and religious prisoners, freedom of speech and of the Press and of associations and Labour organisations. Immediate proposals were put forward for the summoning of a constitutional assembly. There was nothing in this declaration about waging the War to a triumphant conclusion.

The British Government, who had been kept acquainted with the disorganised state of the Russian army, realised that the revolution was the end of Russian active participation in the War. This became quite clear from later developments, but the British Government at once took steps to exploit the revolution for the purpose of encouraging Russia to prosecute the War more vigorously. A resolution was submitted to the House of Commons, moved by Mr. Bonar Law, which deserves to be quoted in full:—

> " That this House sends to the Duma its fraternal greetings, and tenders to the Russian people its heartiest congratulations upon the establishment among them of free institutions in full confidence that they will lead not only to the rapid and happy progress of the Russian nation but to the prosecution with renewed steadfastness and vigour of the war against the stronghold of an autocratic militarism which threatens the liberty of Europe."

The efforts of the British Government to get the new Russian Government to continue the War were supplemented by a number of British Trade Union leaders, including the Labour members of Mr. Lloyd George's

Government. They sent, in the name of British Labour, to the leaders of the Russian working class a message urging them to " impress on their followers that any remission of effort means disaster to the comrades in the trenches and to our common hopes of social regeneration."

This was the message which these Labour leaders sent to the Russian working classes when they were engaged in a life and death struggle to liberate Russia from the military despotism of the Czar and the Russian bureaucracy! Pursuing the same policy of pressing the new Revolutionary Government, not to a consolidation of a new Russia, but to a determined continuation of the War, the Government dressed up Mr. Will Thorne and Mr. James O'Grady in khaki, gave them titles of Colonel and Captain respectively, and sent them on a mission to Petrograd, in the words of Mr. Bonar Law " with the one object of encouraging as far as they could the present Russian Government in the prosecution of the War. The British Government are satisfied that they will serve the purpose."

During the first few weeks of the first Russian revolution there was an embarrassing division of power between the Provisional Government and the Soldiers' and Workers' Committee, which was a very powerful organisation of Socialists. M. Kerensky, who had taken office in the Provisional Government as Minister of Justice, was the only Socialist member of that Government. Eventually a compromise was reached about the middle of May under which the Socialists got six seats in the newly constituted Government. M. Miliukoff, who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Government, was dropped because he was considered to be too imperialistic. This new Coalition Government at once issued a declaration of its policy. It repudiated any intention of making a separate peace, made a promise to develop the

principles of democracy in the army and to strengthen military power, but at the same time it laid down in very explicit terms that the peace at which Russia aimed must be a peace without annexations or indemnities, and must be based upon the rights of nations to decide their own affairs.

On the 16th May, immediately after this declaration by the Russian Government, I opened a debate in the House of Commons on behalf of the peace group on the following resolution:—

> " This House welcomes the declaration of the new democratic Government of Russia, repudiating all proposals for militarist conquest and aggrandisement, and calls upon His Majesty's Government to issue a similar declaration on behalf of the British democracy, and to join with the Allies in restating the Allied terms in conformity with the Russian declaration.'*

This motion led to a most interesting debate which occupied the whole sitting. Our amendment was, of course, lost, 32 members voting for it and 238 against.

As a response from the British democracy to the declaration of the Russian Government, we formed a Committee, of which I was the chairman, to arrange for the holding of a great Convention at Leeds, " to follow Russia in her demand for the repudiation of all materialistic War aims, and the establishment of a peace without annexations or indemnities ". As the purpose of this Convention was misrepresented at the time, and is still being misrepresented, I would like to state the facts relating to this great gathering. I was, as I have said, chairman of the organising committee, and have a clear knowledge of all that happened in connection with it. The organising committee of the Convention consisted of representatives of the Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party with the addition of Mr. Robert Smillie and Mr. Robert Williams. Circulars

were sent out to Trades Councils, Trade Unionists, local Labour Parties, Socialist Parties, Women's Organisations, and other democratic bodies. The following is a copy of the much-criticised circular calling the Conference:—

"FOLLOW RUSSIA!

"From the United Socialist Council of the Independent Labour Party and British Socialist Party

"*May* 11, 1917.

"SIR,

"The events which have recently taken place in Russia call for a reply on the part of the British Socialist and Labour Movement. It is considered desirable and necessary by the undersigned that a Conference shall be convened of representative organisations to congratulate and encourage our Russian comrades upon the success they have achieved in overthrowing the reactionary forces of that country and establishing real political freedom.

"The newly enfranchised Russian democracy are becoming increasingly despondent of the Great Britain which they once considered the home of liberty and progress. Dissatisfaction has, moreover, been manifested against the reactionary forces in this country nominating and selecting individuals ostensibly to represent the Labour and Socialist Movement of Great Britain. In Russia, where the people have assumed control over their own political circumstances, they are repudiating the policy of imperial conquest and annexation, and declare repeatedly in favour of peace without annexations and indemnities. They have, moreover, called upon the common people in all the belligerent countries to throw over their reactionary Governments which are at all times in favour of conquest and imperial aggrandisement.

" Not only is it the duty of the German and Austro-Hungarian working class to repudiate the dreams of conquest of their rulers, but it is clearly the duty of the working class of Great Britain to repudiate aims and aspirations—dynastic, territorial and capitalist—that were supported by the Russian Czardom, and which have materially influenced the collective aims of the Allies.

"We, therefore, feel it our urgent duty to convene a representative conference of Trades Councils, local Labour Parties, Socialist organisations, and women's industrial and political organisations, in order to ascertain and pronounce upon the opinions of the working class of this country regarding the developments which have taken place, and are taking place in Russia. We are, moreover, especially anxious that Trade Union branches and District Councils or Federations of Trade Unions shall be represented at this Conference, and they will receive credentials at their own request.

"It is becomingly increasingly evident that the forces which brought about the war are unable to make peace. Just as the Russian democracy have taken the most significant steps in favour of an international peace, so must the democratic forces in every country strive to emulate their magnificent example. If the Russian people receive no sympathetic response to their call for an international peace from the people of the Allied countries, they may be driven into a separate peace with the Kaiser's reactionary Government. It is our duty to work for a complete and real international peace based upon working-class solidarity, and, therefore, calculated to be honourable and enduring.

"The Conference will take place at Leeds on Sunday, June 3, and the basis of representation will be one delegate for every 5000 members or part thereof. The delegation fee will be 2s. 6d. per delegate. It is hoped that the great Trades Councils and local Labour Parties and all branches of the Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party will provide for strong representation, in order to make the Conference as respresentative and powerful as possible. Those Trade Union branches and District Councils which feel that they are entitled to separate representation may do so on the basis indicated above. Will all secretaries and sympathisers place this matter before their respective organisations at the earliest possible moment? The Conference will take place exactly a week before the Stockholm meeting of the International, at which the international situation will be considered by working-class representatives from all countries. The Leeds Conference will be destined to have a great and far-reaching effect upon the international situation. The plans of the imperialists, mili-

tarists, and aggressionists throughout Europe can only be thwarted by concerted action on the part of the working class, now rapidly returning to their adherence to the principles of the International Solidarity of Labour.

" Yours fraternally, on behalf of the United Socialist Council,

" H. ALEXANDER, E. C. FAIRCHILD, J. RAMSAY MACDONALD,
" CHAS. G. AMMON, J. FINEBERG, TOM QUELCH,
" W. C. ANDERSON, F. W. JOWETT, ROBERT SMILLIE,
" C. DESPARD. GEO. LANSBURY, PHILIP SNOWDEN,
" ROBT. WILLIAMS.

" ALBERT INKPEN \ *Joint*
" FRANCIS JOHNSON J *Secretaries?'*

It was the most democratically constituted Labour Convention ever held in this country. It was held in the huge Coliseum at Leeds on the 3rd June 1917. At that time railway travelling was very difficult, but no less than 1150 delegates came to the Convention, hailing from every part of Great Britain.

If there had been any strong popular feeling against the holding of such a Convention it would certainly have organised itself. For weeks before the date of the Convention the Press had been denouncing the Convention and inciting the rowdy elements to opposition. There was not the slightest evidence of any opposition either inside the theatre or among the crowds outside. The delegates went about the streets wearing their red ribbons without the slightest molestation. The delegates had been sent from Trades Councils and local Labour Parties, Trade Unionists, Socialist Bodies, Women's Organisations, Co-operative Societies, Adult Schools, and the Peace Societies. Unlike the Trade Unions and Labour Party Conferences, there was no " block vote ". Every delegate had equal voting power. The Convention was

a strange contrast to the Labour Conference held at Manchester in the previous January. Then the war spirit dominated the majority of the delegates. They would not listen to any talk about peace. The demand was for the ruthless prosecution of the War until a victory had been achieved. In the intervening five months the leaven of peace had worked a wonderful change in the minds and attitude of many of the leaders of the Trade Unions and Labour movement. The Russian Revolution and the magnificent appeal of its leaders to the democracies of the world to work for an early peace with no annexations and no indemnities had done much to bring about this change.

The great gallery of the theatre was crowded to suffocation with freely admitted visitors. The chair was taken by Mr. Robert Smillie, the miners* leader, who received a welcome which showed how warm a place he had in the hearts of those to whose service he had devoted a long life. The slogan of the Convention had been " Follow Russia ", and as this has since been misrepresented as a demand for a revolution in Britain which would overthrow the monarchy and the constitution and establish a Communist State, it would be well to make clear what was the purpose of the Convention, and in what respect this country was called upon to " follow Russia ". The Bolshevik Revolution which overthrew the Democratic Government did not occur until the November following, *five months after the date of this Convention.*

The objects of this Convention could perhaps be made clear by giving the text of the four resolutions which were submitted and passed by the Convention:—

" *Hail! The Russian Revolution.*

" This Conference of Labour, Socialist, and Democratic organisations of Great Britain hails the Russian Revolution! With gratitude and admiration it congratulates the Russian

people upon a Revolution which has overthrown a tyranny that resisted the intellectual and social development of Russia, which has removed the standing menace of an aggressive Imperialism in Eastern Europe, and which has liberated the people of Russia for the great work of establishing their own political and economic freedom on a firm foundation, and of taking a foremost part in the international movement for working-class emancipation from all forms of political, economic, and imperialistic oppression and exploitation."

" *Foreign Policy and War Aims.*

" This Conference of Labour, Socialist and Democratic organisations of Great Britain hails with the greatest satisfaction the declaration of the foreign policy and the war aims of the Russian Provisional Government, and it shares with them the firm conviction that the fall of Tsardom and the consolidation of democratic principles in Russia's internal and external policy will create in the democracies of other nations new aspirations towards a stable peace and the brotherhood of nations. In that belief we pledge ourselves to work for an agreement with the international democracies for die re-establishment of a general peace which shall not tend towards either domination by or over any nation, or the seizure of their national possessions, or the violent usurpation of their territories —a peace without annexations or indemnities and based on the rights of nations to decide their own affairs; and as a first step towards this aim we call upon the British Government immediately to announce its agreement with the declared foreign policy and war aims of the democratic Government of Russia."

" *Civil Liberty.*

" This Conference calls upon the Government of Great Britain to place itself in accord with the democracy of Russia by proclaiming its adherence to and determination to carry into immediate effect a charter of liberties establishing complete political rights for all men and women, unrestricted freedom of the press, freedom of speech, a general amnesty for all political and religious prisoners, full rights of industrial and political associations, and the release of labour from all forms of compulsion and restraint."

" *Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils.*

" This Conference calls upon the constituent bodies at once to establish in every town, urban and rural district Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates for initiating and co-ordinating working-class activity in support of the policy set out in the foregoing resolutions, and to work strenuously for a peace made by the peoples of the various countries, and for the complete political and economic emancipation of international labour. Such Council shall also watch diligently for and resist every encroachment upon industrial and civil liberty; shall give special attention to the position of women employed in industry, and generally support the work of the trade unions; shall take active steps to stop the exploitation of food and all other necessaries of life, and shall concern themselves with questions affecting the pensions of wounded and disabled soldiers and the maintenance grants payable to the dependants of men serving with the Army and Navy, and the making of adequate provision for the training of disabled soldiers, and for suitable and remunerative work for the men on their return to civil life. And, further, that the conveners of this Conference be appointed a provisional committee, whose duty shall be to assist the formation of local Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils, and generally to give effect to the policy determined by this Conference."

The first resolution was moved by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in a speech of passionate power, which roused the delegates to a high state of enthusiasm. The resolution was carried with complete unanimity. The second resolution on Foreign Policy and War Aims was entrusted to me. I had repeatedly to appeal to the delegates against applause as tending to waste of time. After a magnificent debate the resolution was carried with only two dissentients. The resolution on Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils needs a little further explanation. This proposal for the establishment of Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils was the idea of Mr. W. C. Anderson. For some days before the Convention the Press had seized upon this resolution and had grossly misrepresented its purpose.

It was described as an incitement to the subversion of army discipline and military authority. It was in effect a very harmless resolution as a careful reading of its terms will show. It was largely unnecessary, for the work of looking after the interests of the workers in industry and of the disabled soldiers was undertaken by an organisation conducted by the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. Nothing came of this resolution, as, when the committee which had organised the Conference met afterwards, we considered it was unnecessary to carry out the proposal.

A number of local conferences had already been called to take up the question of forming local branches of Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils. Most of these were carried out quite peacefully, but at two or three of them there was organised rowdyism which broke up the conferences. At a conference which was going to be held at the Brotherhood Church, Southgate, the worst riot seen in London for years occurred. The Press had been for some days inciting soldiers and others to turn up at the meeting-place and prevent the conference from being held. A great crowd collected before the time of the meeting, which soon showed that it was bent on mischief. Conspicuous among the rioters were a considerable number of Canadian soldiers. The crowd rushed the church and, once inside the building, the work of destruction began with vigour. Every piece of furniture in the church was smashed to atoms, the chairs were used for the systematic battering of the leaded windows to pieces, water pipes were hacked away from the walls, and water drenched the attackers and for a time quenched their ardour. The promoters of the meeting, including a number of women, kept their seats, and passively defied the attack of the rioters. This seemed to have some effect upon the violence of the intruders, who made no

attack upon them. Nobody was seriously hurt, but in the general scuffle three people received minor injuries and had to be taken away to hospital. At the time this incident was taking place I was addressing a Conference in Leicester, which passed off without the least interruption.

Some time after the outbreak of the Russian Revolution a deputation of four came to England from the Workmen's and Soldiers' and Socialist Councils to try to get the British Labour Party to take part in an International Socialist Conference of all the belligerent countries to attain peace on the conditions laid down in the manifesto of the new democratic Government of Russia. I had a number of acquaintances among the Russian political refugees in London, and through them I became well acquainted with the four delegates from Russia. With the help of Mr. H. W. Massingham, then editor of the *Nation,* who was giving strong support in his journal to the Russian Revolutionary Government, we were able to get the case of these Russian delegates put forward in a number of sympathetic British newspapers. Our house at Golders Green became the centre from which this propaganda was conducted. These delegates belonged to the Menshevik, or moderate section of the Russian Socialists. I believe that when the Bolshevik Revolution occurred some of these delegates, like Kerensky, were exiled from Russia.

In the days before the Great War there often came to see me a small, thin man, with the stooping shoulders of the scholar. He was always neatly dressed in well-worn black clothes, and his brown beard was always neatly trimmed. He spoke quickly in excellent English, jerking out his words, his hands always moving nervously. He was one of the band of Russian refugees who had found an asylum in England from the tyranny of the Czarist

regime. Like many of his class ,he seemed to have no occupation, and no visible means of subsistence. He lived in a tenement in the Euston district, and though I was never able to discover what his circumstances really were, I saw no evidence that he was in want. That he had ample leisure I had proof in the frequent and voluminous written epistles he sent me on the dogma of the " class struggle " and the theory of " mass action ". This man was George Tchitcherine (so he always spelt his name). I little dreamt in those days that he was destined to become an historic figure, one of three men holding the fate of Russia in their hands. His main interest in those days was the fate of the revolutionary exiles in Siberia. He first came to me to enlist my help on their behalf. We formed an English committee, of which I was chairman and he secretary, to raise funds to get some comforts for these exiles.

When the first Revolution came Tchitcherine was not a Bolshevik. He did not, however, approve of the action of Kerensky and the Mensheviks in forming a Coalition with the Cadets, though he remained on friendly terms with them, and when a delegation of Mensheviks came to England he acted as guide and interpreter. When legislation was passed to send Russians of military age resident in this country into the Russian army, he organised resistance to it. He became the leader of a No Conscription Movement. Up to that time, as a citizen of an allied nation, he had been immune from the inconvenient attention which the British Government had bestowed upon so many foreigners of doubtful patriotism. What his views were about the War I never knew from any confession he ever made to me. But when he became prominent in opposition to British policy in the matter of recruiting, he was not long left to pursue his activities. He was arrested and interned in Brixton Jail. I had not

seen him for a considerable time previous to this, and was surprised to get a request from the Committee, before which appeals against internment were heard, to appear before them and tell them what I knew of him. It was very little I could tell the Committee. My association with him had been solely confined to the object I have mentioned, and he had always been singularly reticent about his other activities. But I discovered from the Committee that he had not been interned ostensibly because of his alleged pro-German activities, or, in the official charge, for " hostile associations ". It appeared that he had been a member and a frequenter of a foreign Communist Club in Clerkenwell, which was a notorious centre of revolutionary activity and of hostility to all existing Governments. The Committee confirmed the internment order, and he was kept in Brixton Jail for, I think, five months, and then deported under every circumstance of humiliation.

Immediately on his return to Russia, the Russian Bolshevik Revolution having in the meantime taken place, he was appointed to the high office of Commissar for Foreign Affairs. It came as a great surprise to me, and I think to all who had known this mild-mannered and apparently inoffensive individual, to discover that he was so important a person in the Russian revolutionary movement. As Foreign Minister, Tchitcherine soon began to show mettle we had little suspected he had in his nature. His offensive dispatches to the British Government, which would not recognise him, but could not ignore him, shocked the taste of our Foreign Office. I remember an interview I had with Mr. Balfour, who was then acting as Foreign Secretary, about some Russian matter, just after Lord Robert Cecil, then Under-Secretary, had sent a particularly dictatorial Note to Tchitcherine, and Mr. Balfour had complained that Tchitcherine had

ignored it. "Would you have sent a reply to such a Note addressed to you?" I asked Mr. Balfour. "Well", he replied, "I would not ask the man who sent it to me to dinner."

Tchitcherine, as I have said, was singularly reticent about himself. But a little I gathered from him of his past. His father was in the Russian diplomatic service. The son was trained for this career. He spent many years in the Foreign Office at Petrograd, and it was there that he not only learnt the ways of conventional diplomacy, but imbibed the revolutionary spirit. In 1904, anxious to learn more of the revolutionary movement, he decided to go abroad. His purpose was unsuspected by his official associates, and when news reached Petrograd that he was consorting abroad with revolutionaries, he was warned never to return.

He was a remarkable, well-educated man. His letters to me were written in perfect English—the too perfect Latinised English of the foreigner with a classical education. He was equally at home in French and German. He was passionately devoted to music, and I was told that when he became Foreign Minister he wholly abandoned it, fearing that its attractions might wean him from his political work.

When Mr. Lloyd George invited the Russians to come and see him at Genoa in 1922, Tchitcherine turned up dressed like a Piccadilly dude—faultlessly cut morning-coat, creased trousers, white spats, patent leather boots, yellow kid gloves, and the glossiest of silk hats. Some years later he retired or was deposed from his post as Foreign Minister. I made inquiries about him recently, and was told that he is living a quiet life in Moscow, probably indulging his passion for music. I was assured that there was no truth in the report we had heard that he had been picked up in a street in Moscow dying from starvation.

Another of the Russian refugees in London before and for a few years after the outbreak of war was LitvinofF, the present Russian Foreign Minister. He used to come occasionally with Tchitcherine to see me. He was at that time working in a warehouse in the City. When the Bolshevik Revolution occurred he was appointed by Lenin the Russian representative in London. He was not recognised by the British Government, and after many unpleasant experiences he was deported. I was not in sympathy with the Bolshevik regime, but I saw[T] a good deal of LitvinofT in those days, as he came to live near us in Golders Green. He had married an English lady—a niece of the late Sir Sidney Low.

One evening in September 1918 he called to see me, and said that he had heard that his house and office were likely to be raided by the police within the next few days. There was little or nothing among his papers of any importance, but he had a small packet he was very anxious should not fall into the hands of the police. He asked me if I would oblige him by taking charge of it for a day or two. I did not altogether like it, but I could not refuse to oblige him. I was not to give up the packet to anybody but himself or to a person holding his written instructions. He came for it himself two days later. A remark he made when I handed it back to him led me to believe that it contained money. I was at the time Chairman of the I.L.P., and he said he would like to make a donation to the funds of the Party. I thanked him, but added that on no account could the I.L.P. accept money from Communist sources.

Litvinoff was a very different character from Tchitcherine. He seemed hard and unsympathetic, the sort of man who would pursue a purpose with relentless determination. I have not seen him since he was deported, but from his public actions as Russian Foreign Minister

I assume that he has changed somewhat and become less extreme and more practical. If he ever did entertain the ideas held and preached by Russian Communists in the early years of the Bolshevik regime of Russia's isolation from the outside capitalist world and the pursuit of the aim of world revolution, he has abandoned these ideas and aims. It is, perhaps, the common experience of responsibility and the knowledge of practical affairs changing a person's outlook, for in recent years Litvinoff has shown himself to be the most international of statesmen and the most skilful and successful of diplomats.

Among the members of the colony of Russian refugees in London at that time was M. Maisky, the present Soviet Ambassador in London. In those days M. Maisky struck me as a moderate man. Indeed, I think that, like Tchitcherine, he belonged to the Menshevik section of the Russian revolutionary movement. As he said to me recently when speaking of our old association, he never expected when he was deported from England to return as the accredited Russian Ambassador to the Court of St. James.

CHAPTER XXXII

Coalitions and Conferences

EARLY in December 1916, a political crisis reached its climax with the resignation of Mr. Asquith of his office of Prime Minister. This was the culmination of a conspiracy which had been going on for some time, the principal conspirators being Lord NorthclifTe and Mr. Lloyd George. For some time the NorthclifTe newspapers had been violently attacking Mr. Asquith every day, and demanding his resignation. Matters were brought to a head by a demand presented by Mr. Lloyd George to Mr. Asquith that the War Committee of the Cabinet should be reconstituted and should consist of three members, one of the three being the Chairman. The Prime Minister was not to be a member of the Committee. This, of course, was an insulting suggestion that no self-respecting Prime Minister could possibly entertain, and it was no doubt put forward with the intention that Mr. Asquith would be driven to resign. Speaking at a general meeting of the Liberal members of Parliament two days after he had been driven from office, Mr. Asquith said that it was impossible to isolate the events of last week from what had been going on before. There had been a well-organised, carefully engineered conspiracy directed against members of the Cabinet, and in particular against himself and Lord Grey. He had received the decision of a meeting of the Unionist members of the Cabinet to the effect that, owing to the publicity given to the intentions of Mr. Lloyd George, no mere reconstruction of

the Cabinet was possible, he should at once tender his resignation, and if he refused to do so they would be obliged to tender theirs. Consequently Mr. Asquith offered his resignation to the King. Mr. Bonar Law was in the first instance invited by the King to form a Government, and upon his intimating that he could not do so, Mr. Lloyd George was offered and accepted the Premiership, and the duty devolved upon him of forming a new Government.

All the important Liberal members who had been in the first Coalition under Mr. Asquith declined to serve under Mr. Lloyd George, including Lord Buckmaster, Lord Crewe, Lord Grey, Mr. McKenna, Mr. Runciman and Mr. Herbert Samuel. The Liberals whom Mr. Lloyd George retained or brought into his Government were a motley crew. There was not a single one who had the least political standing in the country. An additional number of Conservative members, mostly nonentities, were brought into the Government. The circumstances under which Mr. Asquith's Government had been overthrown and in which Mr. Lloyd George's Government was formed were such as to preclude a self-respecting Liberal or Labour man from participating in it.

Mr. Arthur Henderson had been a Cabinet Minister in Mr. Asquith's Coalition Government, and two other Labour members had held minor offices. When Mr. Lloyd George was forming his new Government he sought the help of Mr. Henderson to get the Labour Party's participation. On the Friday before Mr. Asquith resigned, Mr. Arthur Henderson spoke at a public meeting in Northampton. It was then publicly known what was going on in the Cabinet, and Mr. Henderson must have been well aware of the efforts which were being made by Mr. Lloyd George and the Conservative members to force Mr. Asquith's resignation. Mr. Henderson took

the opportunity in his speech at Northampton to pass an eloquent eulogy on Mr. Asquith. He asked the meeting to send back with him to London a message of encouragement to one man more than another—the leader of His Majesty's Government, Mr. Asquith. " No statesman in the country ", he said, " possesses the same power to reconcile and unite divergent interests as Mr. Asquith, and in my opinion he is the man to lead us to the end of the War, and to lead us successfully. It is possible to put other men into the saddle, and then when they go fast where they will go had not the same certainty as when you follow a leader tried and courageous as the present Prime Minister has proved himself to be." That was Mr. Arthur Henderson's opinion of Mr. Asquith on Friday the ist December. Mr. Asquith was then, in his opinion, the indispensable leader to carry the country successfully through the War. During the week-end Mr. Henderson had been thinking the matter over, and he came to the conclusion that it was not Mr. Asquith who was absolutely indispensable, but Mr. Arthur Henderson. On the Tuesday following, when Mr. Asquith resigned, Mr. Henderson was perfectly ready to follow a new leader who " might go faster, but where he will go there is not the same certainty as following a tried leader like Mr. Asquith."

On the Thursday Mr. Henderson conveyed to the Labour Party an invitation from Mr. Lloyd George to associate itself with the new Ministry. The National Executive of the Labour Party were in London at the time, and it was agreed that Mr. Henderson's message from Mr. Lloyd George should be considered at a general meeting of the Executive and the Parliamentary Party. I was present at this meeting. Mr. Henderson told us that Mr. Lloyd George was prepared to offer a larger number of offices in the Government to Labour, and also

to carry out a number of reforms which were upon the Labour programme. The meeting was not satisfied with Mr. Henderson's explanation, and decided to request Mr. Lloyd George to receive the whole of the members present in order to go further into the invitation and its conditions. The request was made to Mr. Lloyd George by telephone, and he responded to it with alacrity. We all trooped off to the War Office, and there we found the new Prime Minister in the most exuberant spirits. He told us that the new Government had been formed for the ruthless prosecution of the War, that every consideration should be subservient to that aim, and that he was very desirous of securing the co-operation of the Labour Party. He indicated the offices and departments to which the proposed Labour members should be appointed. He announced his intention to institute State control of mines and shipping, important developments in the production of home supplies of food, and the establishment of a Ministry of Labour. As we were leaving the room, Mr. Lloyd George said to me: "I see you have managed to keep out of prison so far." I replied, " I do not suppose I shall keep out much longer now that you have the power to put me there." " I shall not do it ", he said. " You'd be much more dangerous in than out."

After this Conference with Mr. Lloyd George we all went back to the House of Commons and resumed our meeting. The announcement by Mr. Lloyd George that six or eight more Labour members were to be given posts in the Government had considerably reduced the opposition to accepting the invitation. To bring the matter to an issue the Chairman asked for a Resolution, and it was at once moved that the invitation be not accepted. A number of speeches followed, every one of which was opposed to accepting the invitation. Then

Mr. Henderson rose, and began by complaining that no speeches in support of the invitation had been made. He said that this was a case where feeling pulled one way and national interests another. He made a point that at the last Annual Conference of the Party a Resolution had been passed to the effect that the best interests of the nation would be served by the Labour Party representatives remaining in the Coalition Government, and he asked how had the circumstances changed since that time? As a matter of fact the circumstances had changed materially through the methods by which the break-up of the Asquith Coalition Government had been secured. To support Mr. Lloyd George's Government would be condoning the circumstances under which it had been formed. But that argument made no impression on Mr. Henderson. He had made up his mind to serve under Mr. Lloyd George, and justified this from the point of view of the national interest. " If Labour were to take no part in the new Government it would give to the Allies the impression that the country was divided and was not behind the new Government." He said nothing about the impression which the Allies would get from the fact that Mr. Asquith and every prominent member of the Liberals had withdrawn from the Coalition. After a long discussion, in which the weight of the argument was on the side of those who were against accepting the invitation, the resolution was put and defeated by 17 votes to 12. By this narrow majority Mr. Henderson and half a dozen of his colleagues were authorised to join the Government.

Six weeks later (in January 1917) the Annual Conference of the Labour Party was held in Manchester, and this action on the part of the Parliamentary Party and the Executive came up for decision. This Conference was the liveliest Labour Party Conference I have ever attended.

Mr. Henderson had the warmest time of his life. There had been a good deal of disaffection among the engineers on the Clyde through schemes for the dilution of labour. Mr. David Kirkwood, who was the chief shop steward at one of the works, had come into notoriety through the prominent part he took in heckling Mr. Lloyd George, then Minister of Munitions, when he paid a visit to Glasgow about Christmas 1915. Three or four months after this visit a strike took place in several of the works, and this interfered with the output of munitions. Mr. Kirkwood, who disclaimed all responsibility for the strike, was deported without trial under the Defence of the Realm Act with eight of his fellows, and up to the time of this Conference he had been in Edinburgh. Mr. Kirkwood attributed his deportation to his attacks on Mr. Lloyd George when he had visited Glasgow, but there did not appear to be any ground for this assumption. As Mr. Henderson was a member of the Government it was assumed that he had a measure of responsibility for the deportation of Mr. Kirkwood.

Mr. Kirkwood was appointed a delegate to the Manchester Labour Party Conference by the Engineers' Society. Only a few of the delegates were aware that Mr. Kirkwood was in the Conference. It had apparently been arranged with the Chairman that Mr. Kirkwood should speak on a resolution demanding the restoration of Trade Union rights after the War. When the Chairman called Mr. Kirkwood the great body of delegates turned their heads in surprise, and the speaker was greeted by a loud cheer from those who knew the facts. As soon as it spread through the hall that Mr. Kirkwood was the representative of the Clyde deportees the cheering became general, and as Mr. Kirkwood proceeded with the narrative of his treatment the Conference was roused to a great state of indignation, which led to

one of the wildest scenes that have been witnessed in a Labour Conference. He related in graphic style how he and his eight comrades were arrested one morning early, placed in prison cells, and deported in the evening from their native district. No charge was made against them. They were given no chance of proving their innocence of any offence which had led to this treatment. After keeping them in banishment for nine months, the Government now offered to set them free if they signed documents undertaking to work regularly and loyally and behave obediently to their Trade Union. They declined to sign what they considered to be a humiliating pledge. They demanded that the Government should state the reasons why they had been deported, and that they should have a fair trial. When he left that Conference he said he would not return to deportation, but would go straight home to Glasgow, or to prison.

When Mr. Kirkwood sat down the Conference was in a state of pandemonium. Delegates jumped on chairs and yelled frantically for Henderson. Mr. Henderson rose, but for a time could not get a hearing. He faced the storm with coolness, and when he was allowed to state his case he repudiated any responsibility for an administrative act on which he was not consulted. He asked that the Conference should appoint a committee of investigation. " If I am to be condemned, then let me be condemned after a full investigation, which is the birthright of every Englishman." The Conference at once seized on this statement, and yelled out: " This is what you have refused to Kirkwood." However, the Conference finally gave Mr. Henderson his committee, but passed a resolution condemning deportation without trial as a thing that savoured of that Prussianism which we were fighting to destroy. The delegates followed this up by a telegram to Mr. Lloyd George, demanding

the immediate withdrawal of the deportation orders against Mr. Kirkwood and his friends, and it fell to Mr. Henderson as Secretary to the Conference to send this telegram to his fellow-member in the War Cabinet!

The next exciting incident in the Conference arose on the action of the Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party in accepting by a majority the invitation of Mr. Lloyd George to join his Government. Mr. Henderson made a long statement, setting out the reasons which had induced these two bodies to recommend acceptance of Mr. Lloyd George's invitation. I followed Mr. Henderson in opposition to the course which bad been pursued. I had one of the most entertaining experiences in my career. At this time the majority of the delegates were still ardent supporters of the " knock-out blow " policy. I knew that it was hopeless to get a vote in the Conference repudiating this action, so I just let myself go! For forty-five minutes, as the *Manchester Guardian* put it," I exercised my dangerous gift of irony ". Another newspaper described the incident as follows: " Mr. Snowden stood on the floor for forty-five minutes pointing a long menacing forefinger at the Labour Members of Parliament who had lined up in coalition with the Tories and Lloyd George. He skinned and flayed them, and rubbed salt in the sore places. When they howled, Mr. Snowden only dangled his spectacles and waited. He was in no hurry, he told them, but they had to take the medicine that he, as a good physician, had prepared for them." The resolution approving the action of the Party in joining the Coalition was, of course, carried by a large majority—1,849,000 for the Coalition, and 307,000 against it. This majority was obtained by means of the block vote, and it was likely that had an individual vote of the delegates been taken the majority would not have been nearly so large.

This Conference was held thirty months after the outbreak of war, and the desire for peace negotiations which was spreading in the country had not yet touched the Conference delegates, who were largely men who had been exempted from military service on the ground of their indispensability in civil life. The attitude of the big majority of the delegates to peace was shown later in the Conference in a resolution submitted by the I.L.P. calling for a meeting of the International Socialist Bureau. This was met by an amendment " That the fight should continue until victory is achieved, and the Socialist and Trade Union organisations and the Allied Powers should meet simultaneously at the Peace Conference ". I am thankful to say that this was the last occasion on which the Labour Party Conference identified itself with the knock-out blow policy and rejected all efforts for peace. When the Conference met the following January (1918), at Nottingham, a great change had taken place. Mr. Henderson had been driven out of the Coalition Government by his Cabinet colleagues because of his support of the proposal for a Conference of the Socialist Parties of the neutral and belligerent countries. Special Conferences had been held to formulate Labour's peace proposals. By this time the British Labour Party had become widely infected with the rapidly growing desire for peace.

The story of the failure of the International Socialist Movement to stop the outbreak of war, and to exert any influence at all on its continuance or upon the peace settlement when the War ended, is a very painful one. For nearly three years after the outbreak of war the British Labout Party declined to consider any suggestion for supplementing military effort by diplomatic conversations. No meeting of the International Socialist Bureau had been held. In March 1916 arrangements were made for

M M . Vandevelde and Huysmans, Chairman and Secretary of the Bureau, to come to London to learn the prevailing state of opinion regarding the War. They came to London, and met separately the Executive of the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party, the L L.P. and other British Socialist organisations. The British Labour Party made it clear to M M . Vandevelde and Huysmans that any consideration of possible terms of peace by the British Labour Party was absolutely impossible at the time, and that even if it had been possible such action would create misunderstandings in neutral and allied countries, and also in the minds of the enemy as to the attitude of the British working classes towards the War; and that the only thing with which the Labour Party could concern itself was the prosecution of the War to a victorious termination. Twelve months later the Labour Party had so far changed its attitude to peace as to enter into correspondence with the Socialist Parties in the allied nations with a view to the ultimate presentation of a peace policy to an International Conference. The narrative of the steps that were taken to carry out that purpose during 1917 is a long and complicated one, and only a bare outline can be given.

In the early part of 1917 the Swedish and Danish Socialist Parties formed a Committee presided over by Mr. Branting, the Socialist Prime Minister of Sweden, and a warm supporter of the Allies in the War. This Committee tried to arrange for a Conference at Stockholm of Socialist delegates from all the belligerent countries. The British Labour Party in the first instance turned down this invitation, and decided to convene a meeting of the Socialist Parties of the allied nations in London at about the end of June. The Russian Revolution had now happened, and the Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies had decided to issue

invitations to the Socialist Parties of all countries to a Conference with a view to securing a united working-class peace. The Executive of the British Labour Party suspended the arrangements for the proposed inter-Allied Conference until it had had more information about the Conference suggested by the Russian Socialists. It was decided that a deputation representing all sections of the British Labour and Socialist Movement should go to Petrograd to obtain this information. Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Jowett were appointed to represent the I.L.P., and when the deputation reached Aberdeen, where they were to embark for Russia, through the action of an official of the Seamen's Union Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Jowett were prevented from sailing, and in the circumstances the other delegates decided not to proceed on the journey. It was decided to take no further action pending the return of Mr. Henderson, who had gone to Petrograd on a Government mission.

Simultaneously with the return of Mr. Henderson to London there arrived four representatives of the Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, who were visiting the Socialist Parties of the allied countries to arrange for the International Conference at Stockholm. From that time onwards Mr. Henderson's dual position as a member of the War Cabinet and Secretary of the Labour Party was constantly getting him into difficulties. On his arrival in Petrograd he met the Executive of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council, and discussed with them the proposed Stockholm Conference of the Socialist Parties of all the belligerent countries. After this interview he came to the conclusion that if the conditions of this Conference could be changed, turning it from an obligatory Conference to a consultative Conference for the purpose of exchanging views, he would go back and recommend the British Labour Party

to take part in the Conference. On his return a special Party Conference was called, which was held on the ioth August, at which it was decided by a large majority that Mr. Henderson's recommendation should be accepted. About a fortnight previous to this Conference Mr. Henderson, in his capacity as Secretary of the Labour Party, had gone with Mr. MacDonald and the Russian delegates to Paris to consult with the French Socialists on the subject of the Stockholm Conference.

When the news of this visit to Paris became publicly known there were great protests in Parliament and in the Press. The adjournment of the House was moved, and an exciting debate arose. It was urged that it was an outrageous proceeding on the part of a member of the Cabinet to take part, in the company of a notorious pacifist like Mr. MacDonald, in a consultation for the purpose of arranging an International Socialist Conference at which delegates from the enemy countries would be present. It became known later that the Cabinet were strongly opposed to Mr. Henderson's action, though in this debate Mr. Lloyd George did not disclose this fact, but confined his remarks to eulogising Mr. Henderson's great War services and to explaining the difficulty of his dual position as a member of the Cabinet and the Secretary of the Labour Party.

All the facts came out in a debate a fortnight later, after Mr. Henderson had left the Government. Mr. Bonar Law then stated that Mr. Henderson's colleagues in the Cabinet learnt indirectly of Mr. Henderson's decision to go to Paris, and had received the information through a telegram Mr. Henderson had addressed to the Prime Minister who was in Paris. On this matter coming to the knowledge of Mr. Bonar Law he called the Cabinet together to consider it. " We clearly expressed to Mr. Henderson ", he said, " our disapproval of the

course he had decided to take." Mr. Henderson replied that he accepted every word that Mr. Bonar Law had said.

Mr. MacDonald, who was Mr. Henderson's comrade on this trip to Paris, gave his version of the adventure in a newspaper interview. Mr. Henderson had said in a speech in the House of Commons that he kept a strict watch on Mr. MacDonald in Paris. Speaking of this, Mr. MacDonald said:

> " In regard to that very terrible eye he is supposed to have kept on me, I must say that, as a matter of fact, it was I who had to look after him. On several occasions I had to put him straight when he was going wrong, and stand by the Empire when he quite unintentionally seemed to be leaving it in the lurch."

Mr. MacDonald was evidently very pleased with his Paris visit. He said:

> " I return from France more firmly convinced than ever that *my* policy is the right one, and what is even of more importance I come back reassured that I have the cultured mind of Paris behind me. I find that I am supported almost unanimously by the intellect of Paris. I have conversed with literary men, politicians, the boulevardier, Frenchmen indeed of every type, and almost invariably I have found acquiescence with *my* policy."

On his return Mr. Henderson resumed the character of a member of the War Cabinet. He reported the result of his Paris Conference, and told Mr. Lloyd George that he had come to the conclusion that it would be in the interests of the Allied Governments that British representatives should be sent to the Stockholm Conference. Mr. Lloyd George considered this matter to be so serious that he called a special meeting of the Cabinet. Mr. Henderson was, of course, summoned to this Cabinet meeting, but when he turned up he was told to wait in the

Secretary's room while the Cabinet discussed the business for which it had been called together. Mr. Henderson was left waiting for an hour, and those who know Mr. Henderson's fiery temper have never been able to understand why he did not explode from internal combustion. At the end of an hour the Cabinet sent out Mr. Barnes, who had been acting in Mr. Henderson's place as a member of the War Cabinet, to tell Mr. Henderson what was taking place. Mr. Henderson told Mr. Barnes that he did not do business in that way. " I am either a member of the Cabinet," he said," or I am not. If I am a member of the Cabinet and have anything to say to my colleagues I will say it to them when they are all present." Mr. Barnes went back to the Cabinet meeting, and returned to tell Mr. Henderson that he would now be admitted. The Prime Minister explained to him that he had been kept waiting out of regard to his personal feelings! I have it on the authority of a member of the Cabinet who was present at this meeting that the whole conversation in the Cabinet while Mr. Henderson was on the mat outside was concerned with trying to find some means of getting Mr. Henderson out of his difficult position. It was known that the matter was going to be raised in the House of Commons that evening, and the Cabinet were anxious not to throw over Mr. Henderson and expose the fact that he had been acting in this matter in opposition to the wishes of the Cabinet. That was the reason why Mr. Lloyd George made the kind of speech in the debate which I have described.

This was on the ist August, and Mr. Henderson, in spite of his knowledge that the Cabinet were not favourable to the Stockholm Conference, and had been opposed to his visit to Paris, remained a member of the Cabinet, went to the Labour Conference on the ioth, and made a long speech in favour of accepting the invitation to go to

Stockholm. This speech brought matters to a head, and on the evening of that day the Prime Minister summoned Mr. Henderson to Downing Street to ask for an explanation of his speech at the Conference. What took place at this interview can be gathered from a letter which Mr. Lloyd George sent to Mr. Henderson next day accepting his resignation as a member of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister charged Mr. Henderson with going to the Conference directly in opposition to what he knew to be the views of his colleagues. It was not until after Mr. Henderson had spoken at the Conference that Mr. Lloyd George received from him an intimation that he had come to the conclusion that he should stand by the advice he had given to the Cabinet after his return from Russia.

Mr. Lloyd George further charged Mr. Henderson with having withheld from the Conference material information which, had it been divulged, might have influenced the decision of the Conference. Two days later Mr. Henderson made a long statement in the House of Commons, giving a chronological outline of the events of the previous fortnight which had led up to his leaving the Government. There was a conflict of testimony between Mr. Henderson and Mr. Lloyd George as to the actual facts, and the House of Commons was left to form its own conclusions upon the respective statements.

Two things, however, were quite clear. First, that when Mr. Henderson spoke at the Labour Conference he was well aware that the Government were opposed to the Stockholm Conference, and, while still a member of the Cabinet, he was recommending to the Labour Conference a course of action which was opposed to the views of his Cabinet colleagues. The Executive of the Labour Party stated in their official report of this Conference that it was made apparent that the Government had decided, prior to the holding of the Conference, that passports to

attend a Conference at Stockholm would not be issued, but the announcement of this fact was withheld from the Conference in order not to prejudice its decisions.

The second point which stood out clearly from these disclosures was that the retention of the office of Secretary of the Labour Party was incompatible with Mr. Henderson's position as a member of the War Cabinet. It was impossible for him to serve two masters. In the letter that Mr. Lloyd George wrote to Mr. Henderson the day after the Labour Party Conference, accepting Mr. Henderson's resignation, Mr. Lloyd George strongly complained of Mr. Henderson's speech to the Labour Party Conference. He said:

> " Your colleagues were completely taken by surprise by the attitude which you adopted at the Labour Conference yesterday afternoon. You know that we are in the present circumstances unanimously opposed to the Stockholm Conference, and you had yourself been prepared to agree to an announcement to that effect some days before. I was under the impression after several talks with you that you meant to use your influence against meeting enemy representatives at Stockholm. It was, therefore, with no small surprise that I received a letter from you yesterday afternoon saying that you ought to inform me that, after the most careful consideration, you had come to the conclusion that you could take no other course but to stand by the advice you had given after your return from Russia. Surely this was a conclusion of which you ought to have informed the Cabinet before you entered the Conference? When you spoke at that Conference you were not merely a member of the Labour Party but a member of the Cabinet, responsible for the conduct of the country. Nevertheless, you did not deem it necessary to inform the Conference of the views of your colleagues, and the Conference accordingly were justified in assuming that the advice you gave was not consistent with your opinions."

Mr. Lloyd George also complained that Mr. Henderson had not informed the Conference of a communication

received from the Russian Government, a copy of which he had sent to Mr. Henderson with a request that he should communicate it to the Conference. This communication, which was afterwards published, did not alter the situation, for it was well known that, while the Russian Government did not deem it possible to prevent Russian delegates from taking part in the Stockholm Conference, they regarded it as a Party concern, and its decision was in no wise binding on the liberty of action of the Government.

Mr. Henderson's resignation from the Government relieved both himself and the Cabinet from a very embarrassing and impossible situation. It was a complete justification of the attitude of those of us who had opposed the entry of Labour into the Government. We urged, when this matter was under discussion, that circumstances were bound to arise where the views of the Labour Party and those of the Cabinet would be in conflict. The other Labour members of the Government did not resign with Mr. Henderson. Mr. George Barnes took Mr. Henderson's place as a member of the War Cabinet. It was a good thing for Mr. Henderson that he did resign, for it left him free, unhampered by Government responsibility, to carry forward the work of preparing a peace policy for the Inter-Allied Socialist Parties.

When it became clear that the Stockholm Conference could not be held, arrangements were made for the holding of an Inter-Allied Socialist Conference, which met in London on the 28th and 29th of August, The official report of this Conference stated that " it could not be disguised that the outcome of the Conference was wholly disappointing ". After this abortive Conference steps were taken in co-operation with the Trade Union Congress Committee to arrange a further Inter-Allied Conference. The Committee took in hand the

work of drafting a Memorandum on War Aims with a view to securing an agreed policy on behalf of the British movement for subsequent presentation to a further Inter-Allied Conference. This Conference was held in London on the 20th February 1918 and three following days. In addition to the representation of the British Labour and Socialist Movement there were representatives of the Socialist Parties of France, Belgium, Italy, Serbia, and Rumania. The draft Memorandum on War Aims which had been prepared by the British Labour Party was exhaustively discussed, and finally adopted in an amended form. This Memorandum on War Aims is a lengthy document, too long to be produced in full, but it may be summarised by saying that it followed very closely the statement of war aims set forth in the Allied Reply to President Wilson's Note on the 10th January 1917. It was no wonder that when the document was submitted to the German Socialist Party it was criticised as being in general harmony with the imperialistic claims of the Allied Governments. It had been intended that this document should be presented to the Allied Governments as a statement of the peace proposals of the Socialist Parties in the allied countries.

The Annual Conference of the Labour Party met at Nottingham in January 1918. The change of temper and tone from the Manchester Conference a year before was remarkable. The acute differences between the pro-War and the pacifist section which had showed itself so markedly at the previous Conference had almost disappeared. Men who still supported the continuance of the War were in such a hopeless minority that, at the Nottingham Conference, with the exception of the Chairman, who occupied a privileged position, they remained silent. The change showed itself very significantly in the attitude of the Conference to the Labour

members of the Government, who were treated with contemptuous indifference. The year before the overwhelming majority of the Conference would not listen to any talk of peace, rejected a resolution in favour of an International Socialist Conference, and declared that the fight should continue until victory was achieved.

At this Nottingham Conference the Executive submitted a long resolution, which was moved by Mr. Henderson, pressing the Allied Governments to formulate and publish at the earliest possible moment a joint statement of their war aims; and, assuming that a joint agreement could be arrived at by the Labour and Socialist Parties of the allied countries, to ask the several Governments to allow facilities for attendance at an International Congress in some neutral State. Mr. Henderson, as I have said, moved this resolution. During the previous twelve months Mr. Henderson had made innumerable speeches warning the people against peace talk, and begging them " to recognise that the victory upon which we have set our hearts is not going to come by negotiation *i%*. In moving this resolution at the Nottingham Conference, he said he " held the opinion very strongly that this War had been unnecessarily prolonged on account of the refusal during the past six or eight months to state the war aims of the allied countries, and especially to state these aims when the conditions for negotiation were much more favourable than they were now ". This resolution was carried unanimously. It had taken the Labour Party three and a half years to come to this conclusion. Meantime they had opposed every proposal which had been made to use the machinery of negotiation to find out whether peace could be secured by other than military means.

The conversion of the Labour Party to the policy of peace negotiations brought them into line with the

attitude which the I.L.P. had assumed from the beginning of the War. We recognised that when once the War had been entered upon, when passions had been aroused, and when the question of national honour and prestige became involved, it was impossible to stop it until time and the tragic sufferings had cooled these passions and brought about a change of mind favourable for the employment of reason. We believed that at any time after the first year of the War diplomacy should have been employed for the purpose of trying to bring it to an end. This was the policy which the I.L.P. advocated vigorously from the end of the first year of the War to its conclusion.

During the years of the War the I.L.P. as an organisation passed through very difficult times. It was no pleasant experience to be in opposition to so many of our friends in the Labour Party. When we take into consideration the fact that the War position of the I.L.P. was supported only by a small minority of the nation, it is remarkable that the organisation was kept so well together. In the first year of the War the I.L.P. was undoubtedly very unpopular. It was the object of persistent and violent attacks and malevolent misrepresentation in the Press. In the face of all this it maintained its organisation and continued to hold public meetings. In the first year of the War the income of the Headquarters was maintained, and the number of the branches of the Party increased. The official organ of the Party, *The Labour Leader*, considerably increased its circulation, although its pages were filled week by week with anti-War and peace propaganda. In the second year of the War the I.L.P. intensified its propaganda, and a larger number of meetings was held on the subject of peace by negotiation and the conscription of wealth. This propaganda was carried on under considerable difficulties arising from

the restrictions on the Press and upon public speaking, and also from the fact that the imposition of conscription had taken away many of the active workers in the local branches. The year ended with an increase of members, an increase of branches, and a financial position improved as compared with twelve months before.

At the first I.L.P. Conference after the outbreak of War, which was held at Norwich, we experienced some difficulty in obtaining a hall for the Conference. The owners of the hall, which had been engaged for the purpose for some time, cancelled the hiring just before the date of the Conference. When this became known two religious bodies in Norwich offered the use of their buildings for the Conference. The trustees of the building which had been placed at our disposal made it known that they had taken this action, not because as a body, or even as individuals, they had any particular interest in the I.L.P. organisation, and their action was not to be taken as meaning that they were entirely with the I.L.P. in general principles or in the attitude of the Party on the War. They had offered their building to the Party because they were concerned for the honour of the city of Norwich, and they felt it would have been a disgrace to Norwich and to the free-Churchmen of Norwich if there had been no building available for a Conference like that. They believed in the great principle of free speech, a principle which was very dear to them.

At this Norwich Conference Mr. Keir Hardie made his last appearance on the platform of an I.L.P. Conference. His health had been for some time failing, and the shock of the War aggravated his illness, causing his death six months later. I shall never forget his last speech near the end of the Conference. Although he was weak, and the hand of death was obviously upon him, he spoke with great passion on a resolution protesting against the

action of the Russian authorities in passing severe sentences upon the members of the Duma. His concluding sentence was: " We register our protest against the infamies of the bloody cruelties of Russia ". These were the last words he addressed to a Party he had been largely instrumental in making, and of which for more than twenty years he had been the honoured leader.

During the last two years of the War there was a remarkable increase in the membership of the I.L.P., which reflected the change of public opinion in favour of bringing the War to an end by negotiation. At the Annual Conference of the Party at Leeds in 1917 I was elected Chairman of the Party. On taking office I ventured to express the hope and the confident belief that the year upon which we were entering would see the Party grow in strength and interest. This hope was realised far beyond all expectations. When I presided at the Annual Conference held next year at Leicester I was in the proud position of being able to present a report of progress during the year which had surpassed all previous records in the history of the Party. Our income at the Headquarters Office had increased by 50 per cent., and one hundred and fifty-eight new branches had been formed. The reported membership of the Party was 90 per cent, higher than the year before. The following year's Conference assembled at Huddersfield. I was in the position to report that the progress of the Party had been maintained. One hundred and thirty-nine new branches had been formed during the year. This increase in the membership of the Party had not been recruited wholly from the working classes, but also from men and women of influence and reputation whose faith in the old political Parties had been destroyed by the War, and who recognised in the L.L.P. a movement which expressed the economic, political and international ideals

and needs of the age. This Huddersfield Conference was the largest the Party had ever held, consisting of three hundred and seventy delegates. The Conference was held a few months after the General Election of 1918, when the five I.L.P. Members of Parliament who had taken an anti-War attitude were defeated. These defeats had not in the least depressed the Party. We realised that it was the result of a temporary state of public opinion which was already rapidly passing away, and that when the next Election came the electors would reverse this decision, as indeed proved to be the case.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Armistice

AT the beginning of October 1918, definite steps were taken by the Central Powers to bring about the end of the War. On the 4th October the German Chancellor sent a Note to the President of the United States asking him to inform all belligerents of their desire for peace, and to invite them to appoint plenipotentiaries for the purpose of taking up negotiations. The German Government accepted as a basis for peace negotiations the programme laid down by President Wilson in his message to Congress on 8th January 1918. This message contained the notorious " Fourteen Points ". President Wilson replied, asking for further information as to the exact meaning of the German Note. He observed that the German Government accepted the terms laid down by him in January, and that Germany's object in entering upon discussions would be only to agree upon the practical details of this application. The German Chancellor replied that the step taken by Germany had been taken with the support of the great majority of the Reichstag and in the name of the German Government and the German people. Further correspondence took place between Germany and President Wilson, and on the 6th November the Versailles Conference sent a message to Germany announcing their willingness to make peace with the Government of Germany on the terms -laid down by President Wilson in January. The Allies, however, made reservations in regard to two of

President Wilson's Fourteen Points; one relating to the freedom of the seas, and the second declaring that the Allies would insist that compensation must be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and to their property by the aggression by Germany by land, by sea, and by air. This second condition ought to be carefully noted in view of all the difficulties which have since arisen through attempts to enforce such a comprehensive claim. Subject to these two conditions, the Allies were willing to receive properly accredited representatives of the German Government, and to arrange the conditions of an armistice. Bulgaria, Austria and Turkey were already out of the War.

During the month before the Armistice was arranged the attitude of the British Press was, on the whole, deplorable. With very few exceptions, practically the whole national Press took the line of hostility to the peace suggestions of the Germans, but I doubt if in this they represented the sober sense of the country. The hilarious joy with which the news that the Armistice had actually been signed, the way in which every class abandoned themselves to wild rejoicings, showed that they were ready for peace; and so great was their relief when the news came that the fighting had ceased that they never enquired at the time upon what conditions it had been arranged. The Press, on the whole, during the month preceding the Armistice made every effort to keep alive and to foment the basest war passions. The *Times*, which was then under the control of Lord Northcliff e, specially distinguished itself in this respect. For days its columns were filled with the rakings of the old and discredited stories of German atrocities, with the object of preventing the acceptance of the request for an armistice. A number of people, who had learnt nothing from the four years' experience of the War, and who were

still controlled by an insatiable desire for vengeance, wrote to the Press to denounce the proposal for an armistice as a trick on the part of Germany to avert a complete and unconditional surrender. At no time since the outbreak of war had the British Press, on the whole, shown itself so utterly lacking in a reasonable appreciation of the facts of a situation. It was largely obsessed by an uncontrolled passion of war lust. Nothing would satisfy it but that the soldiers should go on fighting for the mere sake of fighting. With the control of the Press in such hands, there was no means by which the sober sense of the nation could be expressed. This attitude on the part of the British Press had its influence on the Government, and the public speeches of Mr. Balfour (who was then acting as Foreign Secretary), and of Mr. Lloyd George during the period expressed, though in less bloodthirsty language, the sentiments which were being daily published in the Press.

During this time Mr. Lloyd George appeared to be influenced by alternating emotions, as, indeed, he was throughout the whole war. At one time he was all for a " knock-out blow ", and for imposing stern and harsh conditions on the enemy; and then in the next speech he would take quite the opposite line. On the 9th November 1918, two days before the Armistice was signed, he spoke at the Lord Mayor's Banquet and prepared the country for the coming announcement of stern terms to be imposed on the enemy. Then a day after the Armistice was signed he addressed a private meeting of his supporters at 10 Downing Street, when he struck a very different note. He said: " We must not allow any sense of revenge, any spirit of greed, any grasping desire to over-rule the fundamental principles of righteousness. Vigorous demands will be made to hector and bully the Government in the endeavour to make them depart from

the strict principles of right and to satisfy some base, sordid, squalid ideas of vengeance and of avarice. We must relentlessly set our faces against that." He warmly approved the proposal of the League of Nations as an absolute essential for a permanent peace. He spoke of the great work of social reconstruction which the new Parliament would undertake—a great housing programme, a shorter working day, a minimum wage, land reform, transport reform, and the necessity of speeding up the Parliamentary machine.

Events were moving rapidly in Germany. On the 9th November the Kaiser abdicated; her armies on the Western Front were in a condition of disorder, and the sailors of the High Fleet were in a state of mutiny. At 5 a.m. on the nth November the German plenipotentiaries signed an armistice at General Foch's Headquarters to take effect at n a.m. the same day. Thus ended the greatest war the world has ever seen. In the afternoon of November nth Mr. Lloyd George read the terms of the Armistice to the House of Commons, and at the end of his speech he said: " Thus at n o'clock this morning came to an end the cruellest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind. I hope we may say that thus this fateful morning came to an end all wars." Mr. Asquith gave a brief expression of similar sentiments, expressing the aspiration that we have now entered upon a new chapter in international history in which war would be recognised as an anachronism never to be revived!

The announcement of the Armistice was received with rapturous delight throughout Great Britain; the sentiments which had been expressed by Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Asquith were echoed in every heart. The sense of relief which the Armistice had brought produced a temporary feeling that for the moment nothing else mattered. The dominating thought was thanksgiving

that the bloodshed had ceased, and that the husbands and sons and relatives of practically every family in the country were now safe.

Writing at this time I said:

" The War is over, but victory is yet to be won. No military success ever brought a permanent victory by itself. It is not today that we know, it is not in a year that we shall know who have been the victors in this war. It may be that a year hence—ten years hence—we shall have learnt that the war has been * a game from which both sides have risen the losers \ Whatever will happen this terrible war will be a defeat for everybody unless there is born a new reign of freedom and a new world civilisation. That is the task which must now be undertaken. Success or failure in this great work depends upon the spirit in which this task is undertaken. If the bitter passions and the intense hatred which the war has aroused are not exorcised there will be no victory; but if the nations which have suffered so largely and have sacrificed so much will now subordinate selfish aims, national pride and the spirit of vengeance to the work of reconstructing the world on a basis of international good-will, then the only victory which could ever have been worth fighting for, the only victory which could compensate for the incalculable loss of life and suffering would be achieved. The circumstances which had brought about the end of the war, the accepted conditions of peace, are the justification of the policy which we, who have been demanding peace for so long, have pursued. The end of the war has not come by a military decision in the field. The economic exhaustion of the Central Powers, the coming to a head of the long smouldering discontent of the German people with their domination by their rulers, finally breaking out into a revolution which swept away thrones, governments and institutions, that is what has brought the war to an end. The prolongation of the war made any other end than this impossible. It came to Russia two years ago. It has come to the Central Powers today. It would have come to the Allied nations had it not through superior economic reserves been able to longer avert famine and exhaustion."

So great was the general relief at the signing of the Armistice that few people at the time took the trouble to

examine its terms. The full text of the terms which was drawn up by the Allied Powers and imposed upon Germany was a very lengthy document, and set forth conditions which were wholly at variance with the terms of the understanding between President Wilson and Germany. The German Government addressed a protest to President Wilson pointing out how the stern terms of the Armistice failed to correspond with the principles which President Wilson had always maintained. The internal state of Germany, her economic condition and the exhaustion of her food supplies left her no alternative but to accept the terms. The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and Associated Powers were to remain unchanged, and all German ships found at sea were to be liable to capture. The German Government pointed out to President Wilson that a continuation of the blockade after it had been in force for fifty months would make it impossible to provide Germany with food. This statement turned out to be tragically true, and the maintenance of the blockade until after the close of the Peace Conference resulted in the starvation of countless German women and children. The Germans were cut off from freedom of communication with the occupied Rhine towns. This added to the difficulty of feeding the German people.

Repeated efforts were made to secure a relaxation of the blockade, but these met with a stern refusal from Marshal Foch. In reply to one of these requests Marshal Foch told the German delegates that " the passage of food supplies from the occupied zone to the neutral zone and traffic on the lines of communication both by road and rail between these zones are not permitted in view of the necessity for maintaining the blockade of Germany as provided for in the Armistice Treaties ". The maintenance of the blockade after the Armistice will for ever remain an indelible blot upon the humanity of the Allied

and Associated Governments. Lord Robert Cecil, who had been Minister of Blockade, in a speech in the House of Commons six months after the Armistice had been signed, made a strong appeal that the blockade should be raised at the earliest possible moment. He gave instances of the devastation and misery which the blockade was causing in Europe. " Women and children," he said, " were undoubtedly approaching starvation, and all children were tuberculous as a consequence."

CHAPTER XXXIV

The General Election 1918

IMMEDIATELY after the announcement of the Armistice, rumours spread that Mr. Lloyd George was contemplating a General Election. He wanted to get a popular verdict before disillusionment and the inevitable reaction which follows every period of strain came to the electors. In view of the likelihood of a General Election, the Labour Party held a Special Conference on 14th November to decide what its election policy should be. The Labour Party still had its representatives in the Coalition Government, and the point at issue was whether Labour's part in the Coalition should be continued, or it should go back to its former position of political independence. The delegates were almost wholly the same persons who had attended the various Labour Conferences during the War, and who had opposed all proposals for peace negotiations and who had given enthusiastic support to the Coalition Government. I could not help contrasting in my mind the tone and temper of this Conference with the experiences of the minority in former Conferences when we were howled down for advocating the attitude which this Conference was prepared to approve.

It was quite evident from the opening of the Conference that the majority of the delegates had made up their minds to have nothing more to do with Mr. Lloyd George's Government. The Executive of the Party submitted a resolution declaring that the General Election would terminate the conditions under which the Party entered

the Coalition, and the Party should resume its independence and withdraw from the Coalition at the close of the present Parliament. Mr. Clynes, who was a member of the Coalition Government holding the office of Food Controller, moved an amendment that Labour should remain in the Coalition Government up to the end of the War, and when the Peace Treaty had been signed the Party should resume its freedom of action. He put forward the plea in support of his amendment that if Labour remained in the Coalition Government up to the end of the Peace Conference it might be able more effectively to influence the terms of the settlement.

Mr. Bernard Shaw turned up at this Conference and made a speech opposing Mr. dynes' amendment and violently attacking Mr. Lloyd George. His speech was rapturously applauded. Mr. dynes' Amendment was defeated by a huge majority, and the resolution of the Executive was adopted.

In the evening of the day on which this Conference was held, Mr. Lloyd George announced the dissolution of Parliament; and the Labour members of his Government, with the exception of Mr. Barnes and two minor Ministers, resigned their offices. It is clear from a letter he sent to Mr. Bonar Law on the 2nd November, nearly a fortnight before the Armistice, that he had been for some time contemplating a General Election, as he believed it to be essential that there should be a fresh Parliament based on the authority which only a General Election could give it to deal with the difficult transition period which would follow the cessation of hostilities. The Armistice was not the reason for the General Election, but only a precipitation of the course upon which he had already determined. Mr. Lloyd George went on to explain in this letter that his idea was that the Election should be fought by the existing Coalition, and that the country should be definitely

invited to return candidates who gave a definite pledge to support his Government. The policy which Mr. Lloyd George pressed upon Mr. Bonar Law was actually adopted. He got his General Election, and he got the conditions upon which he had insisted.

In speeches in which Mr. Lloyd George defended the Coalition he made use of arguments, and in almost identical language, similar to those which are being now employed in defence of the present (1934) " National " Government. The problems of reconstruction before the next Parliament were so grave that only by sinking former political differences could they be satisfactorily solved. The condition he had laid down, that only those candidates should be approved who gave a definite pledge to support him and his Government in the new Parliament, put Mr. Asquith and those Liberals who had remained outside the Coalition under Mr. Lloyd George's ban. This ostracism dealt a blow at the Liberal Party from which it has never recovered.

A meeting had been arranged to open the Coalition Election campaign before the Labour Party's decision to withdraw had been made. It was expected that at that meeting the Labour Party would be represented in an official capacity, but the Conference decision of the Labour Party had upset this plan. Mr. George Barnes had decided to remain in the Government, not as a representative of the Labour Party, but in his own personal capacity. It was evident from Mr. Lloyd George's remarks, at this meeting, that the action of the Labour Party had deeply annoyed him. He described the decision to withdraw Labour members from the Government as the height of folly, and he could not imagine whatever inspired men to come to such a decision.

A few days after this meeting a joint manifesto was published, signed by Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar

Law. Some comment was made upon the fact that Mr. Barnes no longer represented a Party. This manifesto appealed to every section of the electorate without distinction of Party to support the Coalition Government for the furtherance of the general good. The manifesto contained no allusion to matters which became the popular topics of the election. The only reference to peace was contained in two or three lines in these few words: " Our first task must be to conclude a just and lasting peace, and so to establish the foundation of a new Empire that occasion for further wars may be for ever averted."

As the election proceeded, candidates began to feel that they needed something with more blood and thunder in it than these platitudinous statements. In Mr. Lloyd George's early election speeches he said no word about hanging the Kaiser, or making Germany pay. However, the Press became so insistent upon a statement on these two matters that the Prime Minister was compelled within a week to make some pronouncement upon them. On the 5th December he issued a statement of policy and aims in which he dealt with these two questions. He began by declaring " The Kaiser must be prosecuted! The War was a crime. [L]Who doubts that? It was a frightful and terrible crime. . . . Is no one responsible? Is no one to be called to account? Is there to be no punishment? Surely that is neither God's justice, nor man's. The men responsible for this outrage on the human race must not be let off because their heads were crowned when they perpetrated the deed." With regard to making Germany pay, he said: " All the European Allies have accepted the principle that the Central Powers must pay the cost of the War up to the limit of their capacity. The Allies propose to set up a Commission of Experts to examine and report upon the best method of exacting this indemnity from the Central Powers."

A week later there was issued an official statement from the Coalition Whips Office giving a summary of Mr. Lloyd George's Election Programme. The first two items were " Punish the ex-Kaiser " and " Make Germany Pay ". As the Election proceeded Mr. Lloyd George was being pressed to be more definite in regard to making Germany pay. He was speaking at Newcastle on the 29th November, and this speech showed that he was making considerable progress in the direction of satisfying the demands of those who were clamouring for a pledge to make Germany pay the costs of the War. Mr. Lloyd George was in a great difficulty. He had to give his candidates something with a bite in it by which they could satisfy the appetites of their audiences, and at the same time he was restrained by his own knowledge of the impracticability of obtaining a large indemnity from Germany. It is quite true that Mr. Lloyd George never committed himself to any definite sum which Germany would be compelled to pay. But in his public speeches he dealt with the subject in such a way as to encourage his more irresponsible supporters to make the electors believe that they were going to be relieved from bearing the cost of the War, and that Germany would have to shoulder the burden of the British National Debt.

Speaking at Bristol near the end of the Election campaign he went into figures in regard to the capacity of Germany to pay. He said: " I have always said that we would exact the last penny we could get out of Germany up to the limit of her capacity, but I am not going to mislead the public on the question of capacity until I know more about it, and I am not going to do so in order to win votes. It is not right. It is not fair. It is not straightforward, and it is not honest." In an earlier part of the speech he had said that the bill against Germany was £24,000,000,000 (twenty-four thousand

million pounds). It is true that he threw some doubt upon the capacity of Germany to pay such a sum as that, but the Press and the public took little notice of his reservations, and jumped to the conclusion that twenty-four thousand million pounds was the sum the Allies would demand from Germany. This speech was given in the afternoon, and the evening paper in the constituency where I was seeking re-election came out with cross-page headings in huge type:

GERMANY TO PAY FOR THE WAR
INDEMNITY OF £24,000,000,000
PREMIER REVEALS THE FIGURE

I made this the subject of my election speeches that evening, and exposed the absurdity of expecting such indemnities. Indemnities I denounced as " twice cursed —cursing those who pay them and those who take them ".

The day following Mr. Lloyd George's speech, Mr. Asquith was asked if he were in favour of making Germany pay, and he replied: " Yes, I am in agreement with what the Prime Minister said yesterday upon this matter.''

Although Mr. Lloyd George himself might not have been responsible for the summary of the points in his Election Manifesto, which was circulated as an official statement from 12 Downing Street, I submit that the two points—

1. Punish the Kaiser.
2. Make Germany pay.

could bear no construction other than that which the Coalition candidates and the electors placed upon them. Mr. Lloyd George has often denied that he was responsible for the pledge to " Hang the Kaiser ". No doubt he never used that phrase, but he could not deny his responsibility for the popular paraphrase of the official

statements that it was part of his policy to bring the ex-Kaiser to trial, and to exact the fullest indemnities from Germany. It was Mr. George Barnes, a member of the War Cabinet, I believe, who was responsible for this paraphrase of the fate the Allies had in store for the ex-Kaiser. On the 30th November he stated in a public speech " I am for hanging the Kaiser! " This remark was seized upon and shouted from a thousand election platforms.

Mr. Lloyd George in his campaign speeches was specially bitter against the Labour Party for this desertion of the Coalition. On the eve of the poll he made a speech at Camberwell in which he said that the Labour Party was being run by the extreme pacifist Bolshevist group. " It was they who pulled Labour out of the Government. They pulled it out—why? What they really believed in was Bolshevism. Who are these men? They are the outstanding figures of that Party, I name one or two of them—Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Snowden and Mr. Smillie and others. . . . Supposing the Labour Party won. The moment they got in these are the men who would run the Government. That is exactly what happened in Russia." This was rather hard on men like Mr. Henderson and Mr. Clynes, who had been associated with him for two or three years during the War; and his denunciation of the Labour Party as aiming at Bolshevism found little justification in the programme upon which the Labour Party fought this General Election. Its programme demanded a peace of international co-operation, freedom for Ireland and India and democratic rights, the repeal of the Defence of the Realm Act, the complete abolition of conscription, and it urged land nationalisation as a vital necessity. It demanded that a million new houses must be built at once at the State's expense and let at fair rents. It stood firm against Tariffs and for Free

Trade, and it declared that in paying for the War, Labour would place the burdens on the broadest back by a special tax on capital. It also advocated the immediate nationalisation and democratic control of the vital public services, such as mines, railways, shipping, armaments, and electric power. This was the " Bolshevik Programme" on which Labour appealed to the country for support!

I sought re-election in Blackburn, a constituency I represented for thirteen years. The Liberals and Conservative Parties solidly united in opposition. They used a common platform, and issued joint literature. The Tories adopted as their candidate a local man who had won the V.C. for distinguished naval service in the Zeebrugge affair. He had no knowledge of politics, but it was expected that his War service would make a special appeal to the electors. Both my opponents had Mr. Lloyd George's coupon.

It was the most strenuous contest that I ever waged. The local Labour Party were solid in my support. The Trades Council issued a manifesto on my behalf, and the local Trade Union leaders gave me their whole-hearted assistance. Blackburn was a two-membered constituency, each elector having two votes. I had at previous elections obtained the bulk of the Liberal vote, the Liberals giving one vote to their own candidate and their second vote to me. At former elections the Conservatives had put forward two candidates, but at this Election there was one Liberal and one Conservative candidate combined for the purpose of defeating me. Against such a combination as this my prospects from the outset seemed hopeless, or at the best very doubtful. That, however, was not the impression given to newspaper correspondents who visited the constituency. Public meetings are never a reliable guide to forecasting the result of an election. My meetings were by far the largest and the most enthusiastic

in the campaign. My wife threw herself into the campaign with great energy, and addressed three or four meetings every day. All my meetings during the contest were packed to the doors, crowds being turned away; and at all of them—including the overflow meetings which were frequently necessary—the enthusiasm was extraordinary. On several occasions resolutions of confidence were moved without invitation from the body of the hall, seconded in the same way, and carried unanimously. At all the meetings questions were invited. We rilled the large theatre half a dozen times during the contest.

At the beginning of the campaign I made my position perfectly clear. I said in my opening speech: " If there be those in the constituency who expect that I shall recede by one inch from the position I have maintained during the whole War they will be grievously disillusioned. I shall fight this Election on the record of my past work. Not to get ten thousand votes will I apologise for anything I have done, nor modify my attitude, nor sacrifice my principles in the slightest degree." My opponents' canvassers carried out a thorough house to house visitation, and made *in* this way all sorts of untrue statements, and, as is usually the case, circulated statements which they had not the courage to make publicly. In some cases, however, these statements came to my knowledge through questions asked at public meetings. This gave me an opportunity to answer them. There was one statement which was circulated by the Coalition of a specially ignorant and scurrilous character. It was to the effect that I had charged £1 for every case of separation allowances or discharged soldiers' pensions which I had undertaken. This is the sort of slander that one always gets at Election times, and it is a humiliation to have to refute it. But I suppose there are electors who can be influenced by such patently absurd statements. This particular

slander, however, was answered by a Tory speaker who said he was bound to admit that Mr. Snowden had done much so far as pensions and allowances of soldiers' dependants were concerned.

At this Election I had a larger measure of outside support than at any previous contest in which I was engaged. Mr. Bernard Shaw came down to address a meeting for me, but I doubt if he did me very much good for he made the blunder of recommending that the electors should give their second vote to the Liberal Coalition candidate, who happened to be an acquaintance of his! Mr. A. G. Gardiner, then Editor of the *Daily News,* who had strongly criticised my War attitude, wrote a letter appealing to the Liberal electors of Blackburn to vote for me because " I know you to be a man who can be neither bribed nor bought, and who seeks only the general good, the reign of justice, and the establishment of a clean world.*' Mr. Gardiner had formerly been the editor of the local Liberal newspaper. One other interesting platform supporter I had in this Election was Mr. Siegfried Sassoon, the poet. Defying all army regulations, Mr. Sassoon spoke on my platform dressed in his army uniform. He was no orator, but he became immensely popular during the contest through his transparent honesty and sincerity.

I have already referred to our friendship with Lord Morley. He was a native of Blackburn, and always enquired how I was getting on with my constituency. Just before the Armistice, when it seemed likely that a General Election would not be long delayed, we were talking over my position there, and I suggested to him that perhaps when the Election did come he might feel inclined to break his long silence on the War and send me a message of support. Just before the dissolution of Parliament was announced, he sent me the following

letter in reply to the suggestion I had ventured to make to **him:**

" PRINCES ROAD,
" WIMBLEDON PARK,
" *5th November* 1918.

" MY DEAR SNOWDEN,

" More than one bird of the air had already whispered the matter of your good fortunes in Blackburn. As a native I cannot but rejoice and I do rejoice that it shows that it is able to set a right value on courage, independence and clear, unflinching vision, along with marked power of devining an unmistakeable voice. I will think over what you have said of my coming out with something. We will see. Thank you for being kind enough to stir me up.

" Yours sincerely,

" MORLEY."

I made no further request to him to send me a message for use in the Election, but in the middle of the contest I received the following letter from him:

" PRINCES ROAD,
" WIMBLEDON PARK,
" *2jth November* 1918.

" MY DEAR SNOWDEN,

" I have tried as hard as I could to persuade myself that a word from me would be of any real use to you in Blackburn. Anything I said would be discounted by the fact that I had quitted the Cabinet rather than have anything to do with the responsibility for the War. If I thought the policy of the War a mistake my sympathy with your line might be inferred from and was contained in this fact, and you would be tarred with my brush. That would not bring any section of what are called decent and moderate people into your army. The sensible peace radicals are all yours already, and need no word either of exposition or of edification from me. I honestly think that my appearance might rather lose votes than win them.

" Further, I might feel bound to express my warm admiration for the tone and power of your anti-war line with some

qualifications and reserves on other articles in your political package. Support with qualifications and reserves in the random hours of the election is much more likely to do harm than good. I am heartily sorry to excuse myself from doing anything, but in spite of it I venture to subscribe myself

" Your sincere friend,

"J. MORLEY."

The result of the Election, which was declared a fortnight after the polling (the counting having been delayed to give time for the soldiers' votes to arrive), showed that the two-party combination in the Election had been even more solid than we had expected. The figures as announced by the Returning Officer were as follows: Norman (Coalition Liberal), 32,076; Dean (Coalition Tory, 30,158; Snowden (Labour), 15,274. Each elector had, as I have said, two votes, and 12,994 electors who voted for me did not use their second vote. I had 2000 splits with the Coalition-Liberal. An examination of the votes shows, on the assumption that under normal conditions the three parties were fairly equal, that I polled a vote equal to the vote of the Liberal and the Tory Parties separately. At this Election women voted for the first time, and I have no material for forming a reliable opinion of how the newly enfranchised electors voted in this constituency. I should say with their husbands. My election expenses were nearly three times heavier than at any previous contest I had in Blackburn, though we kept them well within the statutory limits. The grand total amounted to £962, and the fact that this sum was raised mainly by contributions from the constituency is evidence of the enthusiasm of my supporters.

Although I may not be believed, it is true to say that my defeat caused me neither disappointment nor misery. I did not lose a wink of sleep through it. I was out of

Parliament for four years, and during that time I never visited the House, nor felt any desire to do so. The House of Commons had never gripped me. I had no personal ambition to be a member of Parliament, nor did I ever feel to be a superior person because I was one. Why then, it will be asked, did I take the trouble to fight my way into Parliament? The answer is simple. I was a leading member of a political organisation and an advocate of great causes, and when I was asked to stand for Parliament and carry my advocacy of these causes to the floor of the House of Commons I felt it to be my duty to respond to the request. I remember once discussing this question with John Morley. I was arguing that the functions of the propagandist and the legislator were different and could not well be combined in one person. He took the opposite view, and strongly maintained that it was the duty of the propagandist, if the opportunity occurred, to take the responsibility of trying to carry out the ideas he publicly advocated. Perhaps Morley was right. At least I had conceded his argument by acting upon it.

The result of the General Election in the country gave Mr. Lloyd George an overwhelming Parliamentary majority. But an analysis of the votes cast shows that his huge Parliamentary majority did not represent a corresponding support in the country. As a matter of fact, taking the circumstances of the Election into consideration, remembering that he had forced the Election at the height of his popularity as the man who had won the War, the small amount of support he actually received from the electorate was very remarkable. The result was described by every section of the Press as a cataclysm, a land-slide, a catastrophe, and an overwhelming victory for Mr. Lloyd George. It was none of these things. With every favourable advantage Mr. Lloyd George had

not carried the country. The total electorate, greatly increased as I have said, by the admission of women to the franchise, amounted to 21,371,612. Contests took place in 600 constituencies, and the total vote recorded was 10,761,195, and of this number in Great Britain Mr. Lloyd George's Coalition polled 5,096,233, and the anti-Lloyd George vote amounted to 4,593,876. The first fact to note from these figures is that Mr. Lloyd George's candidates polled only 25 per cent, of the registered electors, and that the votes cast in Great Britain for his candidates amounted to only a little over 50 per cent, of the total. Through the anomalies of our electoral system, Mr. Lloyd George obtained four out of every five seats in Great Britain, though out of every nineteen votes recorded nine were given against him and his Coalition.

At this Election the Labour Party put forward 361 candidates, which was greatly in excess of the number run at any former General Election. Out of this large number only 61 were successful. All the pacifist members who had sat in the previous Parliament were defeated at the Election, and the same fate was shared by 66 Liberals who had refused to accept Mr. Lloyd George's coupon. Mr. Asquith and all his former Cabinet colleagues, including Mr. McKenna, Mr. Runciman, Mr. Herbert Samuel, Sir John Simon, were defeated. The total number of independent Liberals was only 33, while Mr. Lloyd George's mixed party contained 131 ex-Liberals who had been returned as Coalition candidates. The Labour Party lost 15 seats, including that of Mr. Henderson, who was badly beaten at East Ham, and Mr. MacDonald at Leicester, who polled 6347 to his opponents' 20,570. Some of the defeated Labour candidates polled remarkably well. Mr. Jowett came within 760 votes of winning in Bradford.

The I.L.P. had put forward 50 candidates, who stood unflinchingly in opposition to the War and to Mr. Lloyd George and his Coalition. With the tide running so strongly against them and their policy, it would have caused no surprise if the I.L.P. had not succeeded in winning a single seat, or if their votes had been so small as not even to justify the humorous practice of claiming a moral victory!

The I.L.P. won in three new constituencies, including the return of the late Mr. William Graham for Edinburgh, who entered Parliament for the first time. The 51 candidates of the I.L.P. polled an average vote of between five and six thousand, and the polls were largest where for four and a half years the I.L.P. had carried on an active propaganda of opposition to the War. Although the newspapers hailed the defeat of all the pacifist candidates with glee, they could not hide their disappointment at the remarkable votes which they polled. The Labour Party won about 20 seats, and as a result of the much larger number of candidates it put forward at this Election its aggregate vote was very largely increased. At the previous Election in December 1910, the Labour Party put forward 56 candidates, who polled a total vote of 370,802. At this Election the total poll of 361 candidates was 2,375,202. This large aggregate vote was the promise of what actually did happen at the following General Election in 1922.

Deprived of the services of many of its most experienced debaters, the Labour Party in the new Parliament was rather poorly equipped to stand against the serried ranks of the Coalition, which, as somebody said, was largely composed of " hard-faced men who had done well out of the War ". The Opposition was further seriously weakened and rendered largely ineffective by the defeat of Mr. Asquith and all the former Liberal Ministers who had refused to follow Mr. Lloyd George.

CHAPTER XXXV

The " Peace " Treaties

THE representatives of the Allied and Associated Powers assembled in Paris on the 18th January 1919, to prepare the terms of a treaty to be imposed upon Germany. The terms of the Armistice had prepared the world for a final treaty of a stern and remorseless character. President Wilson had come to Europe as the head of the American Delegation. His numerous declarations during the War in support of a peace of reconciliation had raised high hopes among the European democracies that he would be a moderating influence at the Paris Conference. This expectation was expressed by the British Trades Union Congress and Labour Party in messages sent by them to President Wilson at the opening of the Conference. In view of the later tragic disillusionment with President Wilson, the terms of these messages are worth reproducing. The telegram sent by the British Trades Union Congress and Labour Party read as follows:

" The British Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, representing nearly five million workers, desire enthusiastically to associate themselves with their French comrades in extending a warm welcome to you, the illustrious leader of World Democracy, on your arrival in France. Your outstanding democratic statesmanship during the stressful period of war has commanded the unbounded admiration and approval of the British Labour and Trade Union forces. Your conception of a just and enduring peace, including the immediate establishment of a League of Free Nations, drastic reduction of

armaments, open diplomacy, and no secret treaties, appeals strongly to them as being in strict harmony with the decisions of the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference. We wish to assure you of the earnest and united support of British Labour in your coming efforts to realise the lofty ideals for which the associated peoples have made such great and unstinted sacrifices.

C. W. BOWERMAN,
Secretary, British Trades Union Congress.

ARTHUR HENDERSON,
Secretary, British Labour Party."

When President Wilson visited London just before the opening of the Paris Conference, the British Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party presented him with a beautifully illuminated address in the following terms:

" To His EXCELLENCY, DR. WOODROW WILSON,
" PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

" SIR,

" In the name of the British Trades Union Congress and the British Labour Party, representing nearly five million organised workers, we wish to join in the general welcome offered to you on your arrival in Europe. As the elected leader of the American people, bred in the same democratic traditions as ourselves, and sharing the same ideals of freedom and peace, you have spoken in the greatest of wars in the name of the silent masses of humanity, and have guided the mighty energies of your Republic in the effort to win for these masses a safer and a happier future. By your courageous and far-sighted statesmanship you have drawn to your side the forces of organised Democracy in the countries which, in the War against militarist imperialism, have been associated with your own. Your utterances have given to the World Conflict the character of a War of Liberation, not only for Belgium, but also for the oppressed and driven peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. In speeches and messages elucidating your policy during the War you have formulated principles to which we have given our whole-hearted assent, and to which we sought to give

effect in the decisions of the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conferences, as embodied in our own Memorandum on War Aims. You have clarified the vision and fortified the will of the organised Democracy of Europe by interpreting and applying with consummate mastery the principles of democratic diplomacy in which we believe. Secret diplomacy has brought the European nations near to ruin. By the adoptions of methods of candour and open dealing in your relations with both the Allied and the Enemy Governments, you have shown to Governments and peoples a more excellent way.

" Your own resolute advocacy has brought the great project of the League of Nations to the point of realisation. Organised Democracy now turns with renewed hope and energy to building upon the ruins of European Imperialism a real fellowship of peoples. We share with you the belief that only within the League of Nations can the sundered peoples be reconciled.

" We desire to assure you that your efforts at the Peace Congress to give effect to the principles you have formulated will receive the support of the organised men and women for whom we speak.

" In the deliberations of the Peace Congress we are assured that all the Nations which seek freedom, and which desire to tread the path of peace, will find in you a firm and wise friend and counsellor; and that the final settlement of the War in which they have all poured out their blood and treasure will be determined by an even-handed justice."

I reproduce these documents in order to show the high hopes which were entertained that President Wilson would seek to have embodied in the Peace Treaties, principles that he so eloquently advocated in his public utterances. The fulsome eulogies and great expectations were hardly justified in the light of his later declarations. Those who had followed President Wilson's actions since America entered the War had noted a growing tendency to depart from his earlier speeches and messages, and to more and more identify himself with the attitude of the European Allies towards Germany. As events turned out, the British Labour Party were rather premature in.

hailing President Wilson " as the leader of World Democracy, and the hope of a peace which would make the world safe for democracy ".

Six months later the Labour Party issued a manifesto charging President Wilson with a repudiation and a violation of the spirit and letter of his declarations. Some of us were not in the least surprised that he turned out to be so disappointing at the Peace Conference. He had no knowledge of European conditions, and was as wax in the hands of experienced European statesmen like M. Clemenceau, who had a clear conception of what he wanted and was determined to secure it.

I have no personal knowledge of what took place inside the Conference Chamber, and can only judge by what finally emerged in the terms of the Peace Treaty. Others with a personal knowledge of what transpired have given us their account of the interminable wranglings and quarrels, and we must leave it at that. The world is concerned only with the final results as embodied in the Peace Treaties. Mr. Lloyd George went to the Conference hampered by commitments from which it was difficult to extricate himself. If he had been free to make the kind of peace which in his heart he could approve, and which he knew to be the only peace which would remove the certainty of future wars, we should have got a very different Peace Treaty from that to which he finally committed himself, and which he has often since unconvincingly tried to defend.

A Memorandum which he circulated to his colleagues at the Peace Conference on the 25th March, 1919, has been published, and it shows quite clearly that he realised many of the inherent dangers of the conditions it was at that time proposed to incorporate in the treaty. This Memorandum was a document which did credit both to Mr. Lloyd George's heart and to his prescience. The

Memorandum is very long, and any brief summary cannot do justice to the whole. It was not until three years later that this document was published in the form of a White Paper. It was a powerful plea for a settlement which would not leave a justifiable feeling of unfair treatment among the vanquished. " You may strip Germany of her colonies/' he said, " reduce her armaments to a mere police force and her navy to that of a Fifth-rate Power—all the same in the end, if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the Peace of 1919, she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors. . . . The injustice and arrogance displayed in the hour of triumph will never be forgotten or forgiven/' He went on to express the view that some of the proposals which were then being considered for transferring German populations from German rule to the sovereignty of small States who have never proved their capacity for stable self-government would, in his judgment, lead sooner or later to a new war in East Europe. " From every point of view," he said, " it seems to me that we ought to endeavour to draw up a peace settlement as if we were impartial arbitrators forgetful of the passions of war."

This statesman-like document appears to have had little influence upon Mr. Lloyd George's colleagues in the Conference, for a treaty was eventually drawn up and imposed upon Germany which was utterly at variance with the principles which Mr. Lloyd George had laid down in this Memorandum. The years of experience since this Treaty was made, and the state of Europe today, the resentment of the whole German nation towards the terms of the Treaty—" unjust, arrogant and humiliating " —fulfil the anticipation of Mr. Lloyd George that such a treaty " will never be forgotten or forgiven by those upon whom it has been ruthlessly inflicted."

When the draft of the Treaty was made public in the

early part of May, a feeling akin to horror swept over the democratic nations throughout the world. This feeling was not in the least confined to people who had not supported the War, but was shared by millions who had given it their whole-hearted support in the belief that the end would bring a lasting peace and would establish conditions favourable for realising the high aims and hopes they had expected from a victorious conclusion. It was not merely the outrageous penal terms of the Treaty which exasperated the German people, but the humiliating way in which it was thrown at the heads of the German delegates who came to Versailles to receive it. Nothing was omitted in the way of arrogance and offensiveness to add to the humiliation of the German delegates and the German people. When the German plenipotentiaries were received at the Conference, M. Clemenceau spoke a few sentences. He said:

> " Gentleman, this is neither the time nor the place for superfluous words. You have before you the accredited deliberations of all the Small and Great Powers united to fight together in the War that was so cruelly imposed upon them. The time has come when we must settle our accounts. You have asked for peace—we are ready to give you peace. We shall present to you now a book which contains our conditions. . . . I will give you notice of the procedure that has been adopted by the Conference for discussions, and if anyone has any observation to offer he will have the right to do so. No oral discussion is to take place, and the observations of the German delegation will have to be submitted in writing. German plenipotentiaries will know that they have the maximum period of fifteen days within which to present in English and French their written observations on the whole of the Treaty."

The head of the German delegation, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, replied. He said:

> " We are far from declining any responsibility for this great world war having come to pass, and for its having been made

in the way in which it was made. But we energetically deny that Germany and its people, who were convinced that they were making a war of defence, were wholly guilty. It is demanded of us that we should confess ourselves to be the only guilty ones in the war. Such a confession in my mouth would be a lie."

Referring to the manner of making war, he said:

" Germany is not the only guilty one. Every nation knows of the deeds of people which the best nationals only remember with regret. I do not want to answer reproaches by reproaches, but I ask you to remember when reparation is demanded not to forget the Armistice. It took over six weeks until we got it at last, and six months until we came to know your conditions of peace. Crimes in war may be inexcusable, but they are committed in the struggle for victory, in the defence of national existence, and passions are roused which make the conscience of people blunted. The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since nth November by reason of the blockade were killed in cold deliberation, after our adversaries had concurred and victory had been assured to them. The measure of guilt of all who have taken part can only be stated by an impartial inquest before a neutral commission before which all the principal persons of the tragedy are allowed to speak, and to which all the archives are open. We demanded such an inquest, and we repeat this demand again at this Conference, where we stand facing our adversaries alone and without any allies."

At the close of this speech M. Clemenceau said: " Has nobody any more observations to offer? Does no one wish to speak? If not, the meeting is closed."

The German Government formulated their views upon the Treaty within the specified time. The reduction of the German army to 100,000 men was accepted, and Germany offered to disarm all her battle-ships on condition that part of her merchant fleet was left to her. The cession of Upper Silesia was emphatically rejected, and also the

territorial dismemberment of Germany in East Prussia, West Prussia and Memel. They requested that Germany should be allowed to administer her former colonies as Mandatory of the League of Nations. She offered to pay an indemnity not exceeding five thousand million pounds (£5,000,000,000). A fortnight later the Allied Powers presented a detailed reply to the German counter proposals, and stipulated that the Treaty with the modifications mentioned in the reply must be accepted or rejected within seven days. Practically the only concession offered by the Allies was in regard to Upper Silesia, in which case they agreed to submit the matter to a plebiscite of the inhabitants. This plebiscite was taken, and showed an overwhelming majority in favour of the German claim. The Allies declined to act on the result of this vote, and decided to divide the territory, part of it coming to Poland and the rest remaining with Germany.

The German's reply to the Allied Note took the form of the resignation of the German Cabinet, of which Herr Scheidemann, the Socialist leader, was Chancellor. The Cabinet had decided against signing the Peace Treaty. A new German Ministry was formed, which announced its intention to sign the Treaty with certain reservations, and subject to the condition that its decision was ratified by the National Assembly. The National Assembly was called together, and voted for signing the Treaty by a large majority. M. Clemenceau on behalf of the Allies demanded that there should be no further delay relative to the signature of the Treaty, and that it must be either rejected or signed without reservations immediately.

While the German people were divided on the matter of signing the Treaty, Mr. Lloyd George helped them to make up their minds by a speech he delivered to a Welsh Regiment then stationed near Amiens. He made this reference to the Peace Treaty:

" Its terms are written in the blood of fallen heroes. The Germans have been reckoning on this job for years, even working on the number of spikes per yard of barbed wire. In order to make it impossible to occur again we have had to make these terms severe. We must carry out the edict of Providence and see that the people who inflicted this shall never be in a position to do so again. The Germans say they will not sign. Their newspapers say they will not sign. The politicians say the same, and we know that all politicians speak the truth. We say, * Gentlemen, you must sign. If you don't do so in Versailles you shall do so in Berlin \"

A statesman who believes that he has been appointed to carry out the edicts of Providence is a dangerous person.

Count BrockdorfT-Rantzau having resigned from the German delegation, a new chief delegate was appointed, and he replied to M. Clemenceau under instructions from the German Foreign Minister in a letter which expresses the circumstances under which Germany signed the Treaty He said:

" The Government of the German Republic has seen with consternation from the last communication of the Allied and Associated Governments that the latter have resolved to wrest from Germany by sheer force even the acceptance of those conditions of peace which, though devoid of material significance, pursue the object of taking away its honour from the German people. The honour of the German people will remain untouched by any act of violence. The German people, after the frightful sufferings of the last few years, lacks all means of defending its honour by external action. Yielding to overwhelming force, but without on that account abandoning this view in regard to the unheard-of injustice of the conditions of peace, the Government of the German Republic declares that it is ready to accept and sign the conditions of peace imposed by the Allied and Associated Governments."

The publications of the terms of the Treaty, as I have said, shocked reasonable opinion throughout the world. Among those who publicly expressed their disappointment

with the Treaty was General Smuts, who explained that " he had signed the Treaty not because he considered it a satisfactory document but because it was imperatively necessary to close the War, and nothing could be more futile than the state of suspense between war and peace." He felt that

> " the real work of making peace would only begin after the Treaty had been signed, and a definite halt had been called to the destructive passions which had been desolating Europe for nearly five years. There are in the Treaty territorial settlements which will need revision. There are guarantees laid dow[T]n which we all hope will soon be found out of harmony with the new peaceful temper and the armed state of our former enemies. There are punishments foreshadowed on which most of us in a calmer mood may yet prefer *to* pass the sponge of oblivion. There are indemnities stipulated which cannot be exacted without grave injury to the industrial revival of Europe."

Mr. Garvin, with whose opinions I do not often agree, vigorously denounced the Treaty as a Peace of Folly:

> " Instead of a settlement with security it is a patchwork stitching peril in every seam. Its terms give no fundamental solution to any European problem. They raise more dangers than they lay. They repeat the fatal precedents which have led back to war, and make the end of one trouble the direct cause of another. All the Treaty, apart from the incorporated and saving Covenant of the League, scatters dragon's teeth across the soil of Europe. It will spring up as armed men unless the mischief is eradicated by other and better labours."

The British Labour Party, whose leaders had expected and promised so much from a victorious conclusion of the War, immediately the terms of the Treaty were made known issued a Manifesto declaring that

> " the Treaty was based upon the very political principles which were the ultimate causes of the War, and involves a violation

of the principles embodied in Labour and Socialist -Conference decisions. It also violates the understanding upon which the Armistice was signed, and is, therefore, a repudiation of the spirit and letter of the declarations of President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George and other Allied statesmen."

The French Socialist Party, the majority of which had been enthusiastic supporters of the War, were greatly disappointed with the Treaty, and called a National Conference to consider what action they should take. They decided by an enormous majority to refuse to assent to the ratification.

The disappointment with President Wilson was expressed on every hand. No more scathing indictment of his failure could be formulated than that which was made in a letter addressed to him by the head of the staff of the American Peace Delegation. So disappointed were his staff and technical advisers with his actions that they resigned and went home. The full story is told in the following letter written to the President by Mr. W. C. Bullitt, who was chief of President Wilson's staff at the Conference:

" PARIS.
" *Friday.*

" MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

" I have submitted today to the Secretary of State my resignation as assistant of the Department of State attached to the American Commission to negotiate peace. I was one of the millions who trusted confidently and implicitly your leadership, and believed you would take nothing less than a permanent peace based upon * unselfish and unbiassed justice \

" But our Government has consented now to deliver the suffering peoples of the world to new oppressions, subjections and dismemberments—a new century of war.

" And I can convince myself no longer that effective labour for ' a new world order' is possible as a servant of this Government.

" Russia—the acid test of goodwill for me as for you—has not even been understood. The unjust decisions of the Conference in regard to Shantung, the Tyrol, Thrace, Hungary, East Prussia, Danzig, and Saar Valley, and the abandonment of the principle of the freedom of the seas, make new international conflicts certain.

" I t is my conviction that the present League of Nations will be powerless to prevent these wars, and that the United States will be involved in them by obligations undertaken in the Covenant of the League and the special understanding with France.

" Therefore, the duty of the Government of the United States to its own people and to mankind is to refuse to sign or ratify this unjust Treaty, to refuse to guarantee its settlements by entering the League of Nations, to refuse to entangle the United States further by an understanding with France.

" That you are personally opposed *to* most of the unjust settlements, and that you accepted them only under great pressure is well known. Nevertheless, it is my conviction that if you had made your fight in the open instead of behind closed doors, you would have carried with you the public opinion of the world, which was yours. You would have been able to resist the pressure, and might have established that ' new international order based on the universal principles of Right and Justice ' of which you used to speak.

" l a m sorry you did not fight our fight to a finish, and that you had so little faith in the millions of men like myself in every nation who had faith in you.

" Very sincerely yours,

" WILLIAM C. BULLITT."

The Peace Treaty came up for ratification in the House of Commons on 3rd July, and, as the British statesman mainly responsible for it, Mr. Lloyd George had to defend its provisions. In the light of the Memorandum he addressed to the Peace Conference in March, in which he so powerfully stated the objections to such a Treaty as had actually been imposed on Germany, it would be very

interesting to know what were his real feelings in delivering the speech which his position had compelled him to make. The terms, he declared, were in many respects " terrible terms " to impose upon a country. He gave a graphic summary of what the Treaty meant to Germany. Her great army reduced to a force adequate to maintain the peace of Germany, but not equal to destroy the peace of her feeblest neighbours. Her navy gone; her colonies covering a million and a half square miles stripped away; her mercantile marine scattered; her ruler soon to be placed upon trial; her war debt doubled to pay reparations. " They are terrible terms," Mr. Lloyd George repeated, " but the test was, are they just ? " He went on to examine the Treaty in detail; and on each penalty he concluded that the conditions were not unjust. His speech was a masterpiece of perverted history, unproved assumptions, misrepresentations of facts and repudiation of statements and speeches he had made in the course of the War.

There is often an element of comedy in a tragedy. The comedy was introduced into his speech by Mr. Lloyd George in his reference to the decision of the Allies, incorporated in the Treaty, that the Kaiser should be brought to trial before an Inter-Allied Tribunal sitting in London. The practice of bringing a criminal to be tried by his accusers introduces a new precedent into jurisprudence. I should imagine that this comic clause in the Treaty had been introduced at the instance of Mr. Lloyd George, who, no doubt, felt that his Election pledge to " Punish the Kaiser " laid upon him this obligation. Of course, nothing came of this. It was mere eyewash. The framers of the Treaty knew quite well that the ridiculous clause could not be carried out. Afterwards, a formal request was made to the Dutch Government to hand over the ex-Kaiser to the Allies. The Dutch Government entered

into the humour of the suggestion, and sent a dignified reply regretting their inability to meet the request of the Allied Governments.

When I look back upon the period of the War and contemplate the events arising from it, I feel the attitude of the minority who opposed it has been tragically justified. No student of the causes of the War would today accept the reasons which were given at the time for its occurrence. Mr. Lloyd George has recently written: " After reading most of the literature explaining why the nations went to war, and who was responsible, the impression left on my mind is one of utter chaos, confusion, feebleness and futility. Amongst the rulers and statesmen one can see now clearly that no one wanted war." This feebleness and futility cost the nations of Europe ten million lives and thousands of millions' worth of wealth. The prolongation of the War for over four years was due to the same feebleness and futility and blind confusion which led the nations into it. The terms on which the War was ended displayed the same lack of statesmanship. The three Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon which imposed the conditions of a " settlement " were all conceived in the old spirit of national antagonisms, of regarding military force as the instrument for enforcing national ambitions and for resisting the encroachments of other nations. The whole idea embodied in the Treaties was that nations were in constant competition with each other, and that their interests were eternally opposed. It is true that the Treaties made provision for the organisation of a League of Nations, but all the other provisions contradicted this idea and were based upon the most extreme form of nationalism. It is that spirit which has rendered the League of Nations ineffective, and which threatens to disrupt the organisation. The League of Nations has never been dominated by the idea of inter-

national solidarity, but solely by the consideration by all its constituent members of their own selfish national interests. The nations have pledged themselves in formal covenants and pacts to renounce war; and they have shown how little they trust these declarations by enormously increasing their defensive forces.

The changes made in the Treaties have greatly increased the dangers of war and made the maintenance of armed forces more necessary for two reasons: first, to hold the spoils nations obtained, and second, to keep in subjection populations which have been placed under the domination of an alien State. Millions of people in Central and Southern Europe have been separated from their fellows of the same race and language; and, without their consent, handed over like cattle as spoils for the victors. Territorial changes were made without any regard to geographical, ethnological, and economic considerations. These wrongs have left an intense feeling of injustice, which will burst into a flame when a favourable opportunity comes. Meanwhile these populations are only kept in subjection by the military power of their oppressors. New States were created, which are swollen with pride at their acquired status and are emulating the Great Powers in the maintenance of armed forces. Alliances of these small Powers have been formed for the purpose of helping each other to resist any revision of their territorial boundaries. The probabilities of war have been aggravated tenfold by the changes made in the " Peace " Treaties. All this is abundantly proved by the tension in Europe today and by the reluctance of every nation to reduce its armaments on the plea of insecurity. The war which was to make the world safe for democracy has destroyed democratic institutions over half of Europe, and threatens to convulse the whole continent in revolutionary chaos.

The situation in Germany today (1934) is the direct result of the Treaty of Versailles. For fifteen years Germany has endured the humiliation of what Mr. Lloyd George called " the terrible terms " of the Treaty. For the greater part of that period she has suffered the^ndignity and the arrogance of tjje occupation of her territory by foreign troops. She has submitted to the falsehood that she alone was responsible for the War, a charge which is now admitted to be untrue by those who compelled her to subscribe to it. For fifteen years she has waited for the Allies to redeem their pledge to reduce their own armaments. But at last her national pride and spirit have revolted, and she demands that she shall take her place among the nations on a footing of equality. The demand for equality in armaments is not a demand for the removal of her only grievance. There will be no assurance of peace in Europe until the many injustices of the three " Peace " Treaties have been removed or modified.

Some at least of the statesmen who framed these Treaties were not blind to the probable consequences of what they were doing. Mr. Lloyd George knew, President Wilson knew. They both foretold in the plainest language what the outcome would be of such a " peace " as they were imposing on the vanquished. But the results have been more tragic and ruinous than they could have expected. The war to end war has led to greater insecurity, to the piling up of vaster and more deadly armaments, to a greater waste of national resources in preparation for the next war, and to heavier financial burdens on all countries. How tragic the remark of Mr. Lloyd George, made in the House of Commons when announcing the end of the War, sounds today—" I hope we may say that thus this fateful morning came to an end all wars ". How poor a prophet was H. G. Wells when he said: " I think that this is a war which will

end war. I believe that this war is paving the way to a world confederation for the maintenance of peace/'

Why did the statesmen make such a " peace "? They failed because the environment in which they met, and the spirit which dominated the Conference made a peace of justice impossible. The old conception of nations as armed competitors, the base passions of vengeance and acquisitiveness, submerged the human ideals of a new and nobler international order which had at times during the War been hoped for as the recompense for the blood and treasure which had been sacrificed. The world was not ready for the great deed.

" God's fruit of justice ripens slow,
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow."

The new order of peace and brotherhood will be born in the hearts of men, and until that birth Treaties, Covenants and Pacts will not save the world from war.