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# MY LIFE

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MY LIFE  
*by*  
GEORGE LANSBURY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

*by*  
HAROLD LASKI

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**TO MY WIFE**



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# INTRODUCTION

[*Reprinted from the "Daily Herald" by courtesy of the Editor*]

THE Prime Minister never did a more popular thing than when he put Mr. Lansbury into his Cabinet. Everyone felt that it was the right measure of his service to the Labour Movement.

There are abler men in the Labour Movement; minds more subtle, and more distinguished. But George Lansbury is its soul.

In the whole of Great Britain no man is more loved, or more justly loved, than he. It is not only that he kept the *Herald* alive in dark and despairing times. It is not only that he built, at Shenfield, the great poor law school which is a model to every public authority in England.

It is not only because that Poplarism he embodied was the most effective protest of our time against the theory that the poor must be humble and contrite and respectful.

These were, all of them, great services. But they are the least part of what Mr. Lansbury has achieved.

He is the incarnation of the fellowship in the Labour Movement. He represents, as no other man

represents, its faith in the common man, its simple and kindly altruism, its genuine indignation at the existence of unnecessary pain.

Other men may see farther or more clearly ; no man sees more justly than George Lansbury.

I should not necessarily feel that I was wrong if I differed from him on intellectual grounds. I should certainly feel unhappy if I differed from him on an ethical principle.

For in that realm he has a definite genius for being in the right.

He has always been simple, genial, kindly, tolerant. I have never known him ungenerous or cruel.

Where he has been angry, it has always been for a wrong done to others. Where he has been mistaken, he has been the first to admit his error.

Profoundly religious, George Lansbury makes the freethinker respect the inspiration of an inner faith as not half a dozen Englishmen in the last fifty years.

He is a genuine egalitarian, because he genuinely respects his fellow-men for themselves.

Riches do not impress him, nor birth, nor authority. What he looks for in his neighbour is that spirit of service, that desire to do justice, which, in the end, is the real distinction between man and the brute.

Docker and dustman, Prime Minister and Prince of Wales—for George Lansbury they are genuinely of the same clay. He does not ask if they are able, or important, or wealthy. All he is concerned to know is whether they care about the happiness of the common people.

Wherever Mr. Lansbury is, you will find laughter and eagerness and the sense of a need to get something done.

Send him to a meeting, and you find the audience feeling that, with just one more effort, they may be on the high road to the promised land. Go with him to Shenfield, and the simple happiness of its children merely because he is there is as moving a sight as there is to be seen in England.

I have heard people sneer at Mr. Lansbury because he has not a taut intellectual doctrine to preach. I have heard others say how much better his heart is than his head.

Neither taunt moves me because both are irrelevant.

Mr. Lansbury's job has been to act as the evangelist of the movement. Day in, day out, he has preached its gospel. He has lit a flame in thousands of hearts; in others, it has burnt more brightly because he has been alive.

That is why I feel humble in his presence.

Until you have met him you do not know what is meant by passionate conviction for a great ideal. Until you have worked with him you do not know the meaning of self-sacrifice. \*

Nothing has ever been too small for him to do ; nothing has been too great for him to attempt.

I know no education in citizenship greater than association with him in some cause. Nothing you do seems unimportant ; you always find yourself able to do more than you expected to attempt.

And, somehow, his simple jerky word of thanks, when it comes, leaves you with the sense that he has honoured you far beyond your deserts.

I wish I knew how to measure his innumerable kindnesses to every sort and kind of person. George Lansbury has never sent a man or woman away without a hearing ; and he has never failed to try and do his best for every applicant.

No one whom he has helped has ever been humiliated by the way in which he has played the generous part.

I am only one of many who owe their first real chance to George Lansbury ; and when he enlisted me in his army, he made me feel that I had found, not an employer, but a friend.

Those who feel as I do about him are not a small company.

I have sat in a bare miner's cottage in Durham and heard him spoken of as one speaks of a beloved master. I have heard Lord Morley, to whom in doctrine and in method Lansbury was utterly antipathetic, say that he and Robert Smillie were two of the noblest figures in public life.

No man of our time has won respect and friendship from men and women in so many different walks of life.

What is Mr. Lansbury's secret?

He would not claim a distinguished mind. He is not a great organizer. Though he is a good committee-man he is not a specially good administrator.

His oratory is good, in the familiar, colloquial style, but he has never had Snowden's power of argument, nor MacDonald's occasional genius for moving on the heights.

The answer, I think, is that he has a peculiar quality which I can only call moral genius. To respect him is part of one's own self-respect.

He represents the urgency to do the right thing, the sense that to act by the light of one's conscience matters as nothing else matters, that no effort can possibly be wasted if the end is worth while.

He has something like that divine gift which, seven hundred years ago, made men feel that St. Francis was a part of the best spirit of mankind.

Put him in a room with a dozen friends and there seems more light and warmth in it because he is there.

Watch him in a great public meeting, and you see in the audience's faces that everyone has the sense that he is listening to a personal friend.

Sit with him in a committee, and you try not for victory but the solving of the problem.

There is not much wrong with the foundations of a movement to which men like George Lansbury give their lives. There is, too, something profoundly significant in the selfless acquiescence with which Mrs. Lansbury has shared him with all who toil.

Our movement has its fill of the eagerly ambitious, the cheaply sentimental, the unthinking doctrinaire. But while we can produce people of his quality, we can, as a movement, rise superior to all these limitations.

For not one of these things can, in the end, destroy the kind of spirit George Lansbury represents.

The qualities he has are typically English qualities—a love of justice, a sense of humour, energy and a certain splendid recklessness. Cobbett would have loved him, and Robert Burns and Dickens. The thing that makes us respond to them

makes us respond to him also. To know him is to know the inner essence of British democracy, and to know it in him is to find new faith in its hopes and dreams.

HAROLD LASKI.



## PREFACE

I HAVE written this book, first (of course!) because I hope to make a little money through the sales, but mainly because I wish to put on record the kind of work we founders of "Poplarism" have been engaged in during the last fifty years. Myself and my friends in East London and Poplar have been so denounced, so misrepresented, our every action distorted, that at times I have wondered whether we Guardians, Councillors, and Socialists of Poplar could possibly be right. We have had coined for our special benefit a new word—Poplarism—a word which some use as a term of opprobrium and others as a sign and symbol of admiration. The fact is that in most of our propaganda and in all our work we, like all rebels, have been just a few years before our time. We have never claimed an extra dose of wisdom, because we know we were just ordinary people trying to do our day's work in the world. On the other hand, we repudiate with humorous indifference the notion that we are cursed with a double dose either of original sin or ignorance.

I wish it were possible for me to pass in review all those men and women who in dark and bright days have made our Socialist movement in Poplar and throughout the world what it is. My personal share in this work has brought me more true contentment and happiness than could possibly be associated with any other sort of life and action. We East-enders have not vegetated, we have truly lived, and in the living have built up friendships, comradeships which nothing can break. It is said that to suffer together is the cement of human friendship. We can say that working together for great causes has brought us untold friendship and friends whose number is legion.

I like to remember the early pioneers who made their

appeal to the common people in language such people understood, and who never for a moment thought Socialism possible of achievement without the conscious co-operation of the working classes. Among these truly great ones I think of such men as Morris and Hyndman, Hardie and Quelch, Glasier and Burrows, Grinling of Woolwich and Will Pearson who, working for his daily bread as a docker, was one of the best leaders in East London, and but for his untimely end would have become foremost as a leader of the Socialist movement. Pearson was cut off from us by an accident while leaving his work at the docks, and in him we lost a man who may be truthfully described as one of Nature's gentlemen.

Among women who treated the workers as equals and worked to ensure not mere acquiescence in their Socialist teaching, but active, intelligent co-operation, I place, of those I knew best, Dr. Annie Besant, Eleanor Marx Aveling, Margaret MacDonald, Enid Stacey, Mrs. Bruce Glasier, Mary Hughes, Muriel Lester and her sister, Helen Mackay, Margaret McMillan who, in co-operation with Clara Grant, established the first children's clinic in the Borough of Poplar. It is only now, after a quarter of a century of unremitting toil, that people in Britain are understanding the splendid work carried on by Rachel and Margaret McMillan on behalf of children: it is very pleasant to remember their first work in London was done here in the East End.

These men and women had no intention of creating a huge party organization controlled from the top, but were true democrats who, because of their superior knowledge and the advantage which birth and education gave to some of them, believed their duty in life was to live lives of service, teaching the masses to think and act for themselves.

There are crowds of other men and women with whom it has been my joy and privilege to work. It is not possible to name them all, but here are just a few (those who are

unnamed will take my word that our work together has been part of the true inspiration and joy of living): Docker Waite, J. E. Williams, Jack Nash, Tom Glossop, Will Crooks, Annie Thompson (now Annie Johnson), A. A. Watts, Francis Davey, Fred Heffernon, James Macpherson, Sylvia Pankhurst, Mary MacArthur, Mrs. Despard, Joseph and Mary Fels, Walter Coates, Mrs. Coates Hansen, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, John and Julia Scurr, Mrs. Wilson, David Adams, J. Lindsay, C. W. Key, T. J. Blacketer, Tom Hoare, Teddy Cruse, Charlie Sumner, Gordon Crosse, Will Gaskin, E. Goult, and crowds of others, known and unknown, whose works do follow them and whose lives will live for evermore. My children will not expect to be written about, but they and readers will not mind me saying that though we have all had our shares of joy and sorrow, success and failure, sickness and health, all of us have discovered that working together in great movements like Socialism, while it will not bring piles of money, does bring satisfaction. My son Edgar was able, owing to the loyalty and comradeship of his brother Willie, to serve for many years as Guardian and Councillor and to share with me and my thirty colleagues, including his late wife, Minnie, the amenities of prison life on behalf of the people of our district. Owing to a series of circumstances which there is no profit in discussing here, he is for the moment out of public life. I am confident he will come back and again take up the task of bringing nearer the day of Socialism. Meantime, I want to include him and my whole family with those whose help and comradeship has made life and work tolerable. None of us will get rich: when I die I shall leave no property, no money, but we shall be able to say that together with thousands of other men and women we have striven to lift up the poor and oppressed and to bring help to those who are in need. This does not mean I am claiming any special goodness for me and mine, or for our

friends, but does mean we are ordinary people who have striven to improve life both for ourselves and those we live amongst, and in doing our day's work in this fashion have been blessed and cheered by the comradeship of innumerable friends without whose friendship life would at times have been almost unendurable.

Although the following chapters tell of most movements and people with which I have been connected, there are several movements which can be mentioned only. David Graham Pole is a friend recognized as an authority on India: with him I have worked very hard during the past fifteen years on behalf of that great country. Years ago Henry Fawcett, Charles Bradlaugh, and H. M. Hyndman roused in my mind a hearty detestation of British rule over civilized and uncivilized peoples. Annie Besant and Graham Pole brought me into active close touch with Indians, Burmans, and Singalese men and women struggling to bring the blessings of freedom and self-government to themselves and their fellow countrymen and women. I remember with pride Tilak and Wadia, Joshi and Baptista, Patel Sastri, Lajpat Rai, and Shiva Rao. There are many others, especially those gentle souls from Burma and Ceylon who spent weeks in London during the years 1918-20. The British Labour movement has at last taken up the question of India in dead earnest. Albert Purcell and J. Hallsworth have been to India as delegates from the Trades Union Congress to aid Indian workers in organizing trade unions. This is the direct outcome of visits paid to the Trades Union Congresses and Labour Party Conferences by Wadia, Baptista, Dr. Besant, and others, and propaganda carried on through the I.L.P. and Labour Party, most of which was organized by John Scurr, M.P., and myself. Although there has been some disagreement between Indian Nationalists and the British Labour movement about the composition of the Simon Commission,

nothing that has happened or can happen will in the slightest degree weaken my faith in the cause of Indian nationalism. Indeed, I firmly believe that only by a union of Eastern peoples with the Western world will civilization be saved. So I do all in my power to understand our comrades from India, China, and the Far East, and assist in all possible ways their struggle for freedom. I put this on record because some misunderstandings have arisen owing to my resignation from participation in the work of the League Against Imperialism. I do not intend to go into the reasons for this resignation, except to say I am convinced I can better help the cause of oppressed nationalities outside rather than as a member of the League.

I also helped form the Church Socialist League. We were a small and very mixed band of adventurers who, some years ago, gathered in Egerton Swann's room at Paddington. We were all rebels against the Capitalist system: this was the one and only thing we agreed about. Some of us, like G. K. Chesterton, were strong individualists. Others were fanatical Guild Socialists, others Syndicalists. The Countess of Warwick, Lewis Donaldson, Conrad Noel, T. C. Gobat, J. West, Percy Widdrington, and others were Parliamentarians, but very few had any faith in the Labour Party. At one time it looked as if we would become a formidable power in the Church. We stirred up the Church Congresses held at Swansea, Barrow-in-Furness, Leicester, and elsewhere. Although for some years our propaganda meetings were well attended, our numbers never grew. I travelled here, there, and everywhere, speaking in churches, mission rooms, and parish halls. Then came the War, and Church Socialists became as divided as materialist Socialists. Our God of the human race became in the minds and prayers of some of us God of the British, and so we dwindled and became one of the "has been" societies.

I have also done a considerable amount of lecturing and speaking for the Brotherhood, P.S.A., and similar movements, and many Nonconformist churches. I do less now because at times I feel a restraint which prevents me saying just exactly what I mean, and I find so many people who think they are Socialists certainly do not mean Socialism in the sense that I do. Of course, this is rather a narrow way of seeing things. All of us ought to be able to put our view in a clear manner and be satisfied to leave people to exercise their own judgment as to whether the message is true or not.

I joined the Theosophical Society in 1914, just after the outbreak of war. This was owing to Dr. Besant asking me to become a member of a committee of workmen to whom, under Sir Edwin Lutyens as architect, she had entrusted the erection of the Theosophical headquarters in Tavistock Square, without a contractor or supervising authority other than a committee representing the unions concerned. This was an excellent piece of constructive "Guild Socialism." The work was splendidly performed; a great deal of money was saved; but before our job was finished the War Office commandeered the whole place and thus prevented our being able to show a huge piece of work organized and carried through without contractors or masters of any kind.

I had known Herbert Burrows and Dr. Besant years before as Theosophists, and with my wife had received unbounded kindness from Mrs. Lloyd at Bow during the years 1889-1901, when she organized the Girls' Club in Bow Road, where our branch of the S.D.F. held its meetings; but I had never thought of joining the Society till I came into close contact with the men and women on whose behalf we were carrying out this piece of work at Tavistock Square. I was asked to lecture for the Society on Socialism and on Labour questions, and I also attended theosophical

lectures. As a result of some talks with David Graham Pole I found myself able to accept the only condition of membership imposed by the Society, which is that all who join shall work together to establish a universal society based on Brotherhood. The Society has no other tests, theological or otherwise: it consists of Parsees and Hindus, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Agnostics and Seventh Day Adventists, Spiritualists and Deists. I do not claim any more consistency for members of this Society than for others, but I have personally received from my association with them more help, more encouragement to live my own life and express my own opinions and develop my own thinking than from any set of people with whom I have come in contact. It is something to be grateful for that in a world of machine-made opinion and strict censorship of ideas, there should be a society of men and women not afraid of either new or old thought, always tolerant and willing to listen to all sincere expressions of views, whether these are popular or unpopular. It may be said I am prejudiced because of the great help I have received from some members of this Society in my political work, and especially in connection with the *Daily Herald*. It may be so, but when I remember all the kindly advice and day by day counsel and help I received from H. Baillie Weaver, and the ever-open door of his office to all others in need of help and advice, and the consistently genuine willingness to help good causes connected with all progressive and humanitarian movements, I am content to record my grateful thanks and appreciation of the friendship of this good man and the hosts of others who are members of the Theosophical Society and Order of the Star.

I had intended to write separate chapters in a general way dealing with religion, business, and politics, but space forbids, so in this preface I write down some thoughts on these subjects. I do not pretend that I have kept a diary,

in fact almost every word of this book, except a date or two and one or two names, has been written entirely from memory: so I ask for mercy from any who come across mistakes I may have made.

On all questions of religion and no-religion I have always been more than tolerant. The same is true of total abstinence. I am sure it has been best for me to abstain from alcoholic liquors and tobacco, and at all times I have advocated abstinence from strong drink. All the same, it is not my business to judge other people, so I am excellent friends with those who follow my advice and those who do not. In the matter of religion I cannot think of those who strive to worship God in some other way than I do as either inferior or superior to myself. Religion and all questions concerning the spirit are so very much a personal matter that nobody can truthfully settle these matters for other people. We all of us must make up our own minds what we think about God and the future life. As for those to whom spiritual and supernatural things make no appeal, if they live happy, useful lives without the inspiration which faith in God gives other people like me, then good luck to them. My chief trouble about religion is not what others say and do: it is myself with whom I am most dissatisfied.

All through my thinking life I have found myself perplexed by the inconsistencies and unrealities of life—especially my own. Socialism has for years meant for me the finest, fullest expression of everything learned from religion. I can see no other way out of present-day discontents or escape from the social, economic, and moral wrong of our time, except the complete abolition of the present-day competitive, commercial system, and the substitution for that system of co-operation of mankind in social service on behalf of one another. I have been asked many times why, if I admire Tolstoi, St. Francis, and

Father Damien, and worship at the shrine of Christ, I do not live differently, why do I accept a standard of life better than the poorest, and why, when from one source and another I am able to secure more material comfort than many of my neighbours, should I denounce riches and acquisitiveness in others? My reply is that if I have ever denounced individuals I have only intended to do so when rich people refused to aid in changing the social system. I do not blame anybody who takes advantage of the present system, but I do charge those with insincerity who declare that poverty, unemployment, and pauperism are the result of individual evil or because the victims deserve what they are called upon to endure. There are exceptional cases: these only prove the rule. I also think rich people ought to know the origin of their riches, and ought to understand that riches and poverty are twins—neither can exist under the present social and industrial system without the other.

I confess that when I first learned about St. Francis and his life, and read the teaching of Tolstoi I wished to live like them. I can be as happy in a tiny room as in a mansion. If I found myself doomed to sweep the roads and live what is described as a hard, penurious life, this also would be taken in the day's work, because bread, butter, and cheese are as sweet as the finest cooked food in the world when hunger is the sauce. But as I married quite young, and we raised a big family, life was more difficult and complex than for the Saint. I owed them a responsibility. St. Francis never married, so his responsibility ended with himself. Tolstoi was able to leave his wife and family all he possessed in the way of property, his sacrifice of wealth and refusal to make money out of his books and work only affected himself, so if an injury was done because of his determination not to live as a rich, acquisitive man, it was only himself who would suffer. Therefore, between me and

those whose lives appealed to me as noble there was and still is a great gulf. Our circumstances are not the same. I had to face life and live it as best I could, and so when circumstances none of my making landed me in a business, I took it on. This was in March 1896. Up till the War, in addition to all my public work, I worked hard as a capitalist. The business was successful except for a brief period when we rather thoughtlessly entered a combination which failed—though our own business was always quite successful. But I cannot either act or think of myself as an efficient capitalist. I am too much of a coward, too self-conscious ever to be able to carry on a business to the point of becoming a very rich man, though it is true that for the period between March 1896 up till 1904 I was able very largely to help the movement financially in East London and elsewhere. Then came Joseph Fels, and he just poured out his money for the movement and in an endeavour to make me free of worry and free financially. What would have happened had he lived and the War had not come I do not know. As matters turned out, July and August 1914 found myself and my partners faced with a number of debtors who one and all refused, for one reason or another, to meet their bills. This was just before the Moratorium, which saved thousands in a similar position, was proclaimed. As a result we wound up and sold our business, and I gave up all idea of ever again running an ordinary business and concentrated time and effort on the *Daily Herald* and the movement.

I wrote the story of the *Daily Herald* in a book called *The Miracle of Fleet Street*. The large sums of money put up by my friends were put up in my name and for use on behalf of the paper and the movement. My own election and ordinary propaganda expenses in Bow and Bromley have, since 1914, come from personal friends. I have done my best to spend money entrusted to me in the most

effective manner and for the good of the movement. Whether I have succeeded is not for me to say. It is, however, certain that the work that my friends and I have been engaged in in East London and elsewhere has been very largely made possible because of the overwhelming generosity of friends who, forsaking class interests, gave their money free of all restrictions and conditions to assist in establishing Socialism.

My political faith remains just what it has been during the past thirty-five years. I am a firm believer in Socialism. There will be, can be, no peace either in industry or in the world until money-making, greed, ambition all become things of the past. I have risen to some of the highest positions in the Labour movement. It is certain that wherever I find myself, whatever position I occupy, it is and will be impossible for me to think or act other than as a Socialist. I do not hold the commonly accepted view that when any of us attain positions of responsibility our outlook must change and principles and theories of life advocated when out of office must be dropped. If the Labour movement for the sake of office becomes wedded to the devil's doctrine of mere expediency, it will inevitably perish. The only danger to our movement that I can see is one which comes to us in many guises, but chiefly comes with the promise that "something must be done." Those, and they are many, in our movement who talk and write about securing a combined opposition made up of Labour members under the banner of MacDonald and Liberals under Lloyd George, and who in their hearts desire our electoral tactics arranged to that end, are, in my opinion, conscious or unconscious traitors to Socialism and our movement. Any coalition with the Liberals, implicit or explicit, before, during, or after an election, means the death of the Socialist movement for a generation.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Those who are

discussing arrangements, understandings, agreements, or coalition with Liberals are honest enough to say publicly what they mean. We who believe such a policy would be destructive of all that is virile in our movement must be up and doing. A Labour Government will be of use and service to the workers only in so far as it is willing and able to pass Socialist legislation. This is the only reason for the existence of such a government. It is not a change of men only that we work for, but a change which will give us men in power able and willing to give us Socialism. Reforms even of a far-reaching character may be obtained from Tories and Liberals. It is better to leave the task of passing such legislation to them and ourselves remain out of office until we have the power to carry through our own policy. Democracy is on its trial. We who have pinned our faith in political democracy must take up the challenge thrown down to us by Bolshevism on the one hand and Fascism on the other. We have to prove that the possibility of creating a Socialist state is a real one and that we are in earnest in our efforts to put this policy through. We know Lloyd George and his supporters are anti-Socialist, consequently we must keep clear of all alliances, implicit or explicit, and keep the Red Flag of Socialism flying.

I feel the same about all the discussions going on to secure peace in industry through co-partnership, profit-sharing, and what is called workers' control. All these proposals, by whomsoever they are fathered, presuppose that within the capitalist system peace and harmony throughout society is possible. This is not so: capitalism rests on competition between profit-takers and the workers. Every effort to unite the huge business monopolies on the one hand and the federation of huge combinations of workers on the other, is bound to fail in securing peace because the interests of each are opposed to the other.

There is no escape from this except through national and international Socialism.

Looking back on life, I should like to record my conviction which is that a man of my temperament and of my beliefs has no right to try at one and the same time to be a capitalist, Socialist propagandist, and a talking Christian. Some men can do this very successfully, but not I. I am certain I should have made a worse job of all three than perhaps I have done, had I not been held up by friends, and I cannot repeat too often that all through life I have been blessed with many more than my fair share of staunch and faithful friends. There is another side to this: people think lots more of a person whom they imagine can, as they say, make money. I do not share that view. Joseph Fels often stripped the money-makers bare. My own experience has also proved that to be successful you must go out and make war on your competitors and gradually secure a monopolist control. No man ever made a fortune who remained a manual worker employed by others. The motto of business is "business is business." The Christian teaching is the exact opposite: "Do to others as you would they should do to you." Anyhow, I am content to know that although I have taken very big risks and often been faced with what has looked like complete ruin, always at the critical moment someone has come along and showed a way out. And so in sending out this story of my life, I do so in the hope that some young men and women may learn from my weakness, mistakes, blunders, and inconsistencies what to avoid. If anything I have done or said, or any experience of mine, brings them into the Socialist movement, the work of writing this will have been well worth while.

I cannot conclude without saying again I am as conscious as my critics are that lots I have said and done would have been better unsaid and undone, and this is because I am just an ordinary person like the rest of men. My thanks

are very heavily due to my daughter Daisy for her invaluable assistance in getting this book together and to her husband, Raymond Postgate, for his help in discovering mistakes and arranging the chapters and the toil of publishing.

BOW, LONDON, E.  
1928.

*George Lansbury*

# MY LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### IN LONDON SIXTY YEARS AGO

UNFORTUNATELY, from the point of view of notoriety, I was not born in a workhouse, prison, or other public institution. My mother said I first saw the light of day in a toll-house somewhere on what was then the Turnpike Road between Halesworth and Lowestoft. This being the case, my county of origin is Suffolk, sometimes known as "Silly" Suffolk because ancient rumour affirms that in order to get a calf through a small gate the owner cut off its head.

Whatever the men be like, Suffolk is a county within which are bred fine, upstanding cart-horses and some of the finest breed of sheep to be found anywhere in the world. Further, the soil is among the most prolific for corn-growing in this island. So it is possible to speak of my native county with feelings of respect, due to the fact that it can produce and give to the use of man all that is necessary for the maintenance of life.

My natal day was 21st February 1859—so my length of days is rapidly approaching threescore years and ten. Looking backward, it seems to me a long time ago since my mind began to receive impressions. I cannot remember when I first began to sit up and take notice. Indeed, I can say that until midsummer 1922 I had never seen the place of my birth. This perhaps accounts for my lack of local patriotism, in fact, I think nobody can claim any personal virtue because of being born in any particular part of the world, or being of any particular nationality. Our parents

usually have as little choice over the matter as we have. My birthplace was decided by the fact that my father worked as a timekeeper for Thomas Brassey and his partners, the celebrated railway contractors. His job was to book up the time worked by navvies and others on the section of railway which runs through Halesworth from London and Ipswich to Lowestoft and Yarmouth.

My early recollections centre round long rows of wooden huts erected on the bungalow style with communal sanitary arrangements. Water was outside the huts. We enjoyed none of the amenities of, say, modern L.C.C. houses. There was plenty of strong drink about: the saying of Chesterton, "the rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road," applied equally to those who built the railways. Beefsteak, bread, cheese, and beer were the food and drink of those who built the iron roads of England. The navvies worked very hard indeed: often I saw men stripped to the waist, digging and shovelling as if the whole future of the world depended on their exertions.

We were living near Penge and Sydenham, in Kent, when memories became fixed in my mind. The feeling of awe and wonderment with which we boys watched men at work was increased a hundredfold when we heard, as occasionally we did, that a tunnel roof had fallen in and buried a number of men alive. One of my uncles was buried in a fall which took place during the construction of a tunnel near Chelsefield, on what is now the Southern Railway from London to Dover. The funeral of these men, when the bodies were recovered, and of others killed on the line, always left a deep impression on me. There was usually no show such as we now witness. Their own comrades carried the rough coffin on a bier, and sometimes (I cannot say why) we used to imagine that putting their bodies in a grave was only done to keep them fit and warm for the Resurrection

Day. From my first thinking moments I believed in life after death—that is, my faith is absolute in the words “there is no death.”

But the outstanding incidents connected with these rows and rows of wooden dwellings were the fires. I remember two, one of which burned down a whole row leaving nothing of houses or furniture but heaps of ashes. On the other occasion, my aunt's house and another were levelled to the dust. The cause of both these fires was overheating beds with warming-pans. There are few families in Britain to-day who possess such articles of domestic comfort: in my youthful days all houses could boast such a possession. Some were fine copper utensils, others a brassy kind of tin. These were made like big frying-pans with lids and a long wooden handle. Usually they were filled with red-hot cinders or wood that had become charcoal, then closed up and rubbed up and down the sheets so as to make the bed warm before going to rest. The fires were caused either because the cinders were so hot as to make the pan red-hot, or the owner stupidly left the pan in one place. These fires in after years always came back to my mind when looking at the picture of John Wesley being rescued from his father's rectory, because at Sydenham we actually saw children being handed out of a burning house surrounded by smoke and fire.

My father and mother had run away from home to be married. She was sixteen and he was just under eighteen. My father was son of a Warwickshire man who had also taken service under Thomas Brassey as a sub-contractor. He had had some education, which was why he could take a job as timekeeper. My mother belonged to Brecknock. How they met I never heard, except my mother used to talk of being out at service. I saw her old home at Clyro, in Radnorshire, where for a time her people lived after moving from Brecknock. It was a small cottage above a

little stream in this lovely country village—a village built all round a big parish church and churchyard with a huge squire's mansion and estate alongside. During this visit I saw a Meet of the Hunt: the number of dogs seemed uncountable, and I know my young mind was full of admiration for the ladies on horseback and the men in red coats; and I remember it took my mother a long time explaining before I began to understand what foxhunting meant. For years afterwards I imagined a fox was a terrible animal deserving only to be chased by dogs and kind, rich people who hunted for the benefit of cottagers who kept poultry! I was seven years old at the time of this visit. So impressed was the scenery on my mind, and so thoroughly had I enjoyed all I saw and heard, that forty years later, when for the first time I revisited the spot, I took my wife from the railway station at Hay and walked straight across the bridge over the lovely river Wye, pointing out as we went cottages of friends with whom my mother stayed, and found, not my grandmother's cottage, but the place where it had once stood, which is now occupied by a chapel.

This Welsh grandmother of mine was always a great favourite with us children at home. She talked about men and things in a different manner from most people. Although my mother had behaved badly according to the ordinary rules of life by running away to be married, and though they had never met for ten years till the time of this visit, and no notice had been given that we were coming, the darling old woman just hugged her daughter and then smothered my baby brother and myself with kisses. For some years after she used to come to London once a year. On these trips she talked politics and started in me my love of freedom and sympathy for individuals and nations struggling for self-expression. I do not mean she taught me religion or politics: she made me understand there was lots more in life than my own home and our own family.

If there is such a thing as heredity then it is certain this Welsh grandmother of mine who stood upright, straight as a dart at seventy years of age, was to some extent responsible for the strain in my blood which, on occasions, in spite of myself, forces me to sympathize with, and stand foursquare with, those who use force for attaining their ends—methods which in my heart I cannot approve. I first learnt to read *Reynolds's* newspaper from her, because no Sunday could pass without it being bought for her, although she was a good Nonconformist.

For years my parents had no settled home, because working on railway construction compelled them to go from place to place. All the same, their family increased and multiplied at a rapid rate. There was no talk of birth control clinics when I was born, so my mother's family of nine came into the world at quite regular intervals of eighteen or twenty months. At Sydenham we numbered three boys and a girl. One day we were all crawling or standing round our door waiting for mother to come home. We had been left more or less in charge of the friend next door. All at once a small crowd came along in the midst of which we saw something being carried: when it got to our house we saw our mother lying on a couch being carried along by four men. She had been knocked down and her leg was broken.

We were all too young to know what had happened. All we knew was that mother could not move and somebody else must do the work. It was then we learned how the poor help the poor—at least how they helped each other in those days. My sister, who was the eldest of the four, acted under instructions from our next door neighbour who, with her big daughter, did all the work of our house and nursed my mother back to health.

At this time, 1866-7, I saw my first policeman, dressed in a long blue uniform frock-coat, top-hat, and big staff at

his side. Myself and others were playing on the partly built railway, doing what we knew was wrong: when this "Bobby Peeler"—as policemen were called—came into view we scattered as hard as our little legs would carry us, as if the devil himself was after us. People to whom a policeman is a sort of everyday acquaintance cannot imagine the awe and respect in which police were held when first Sir Robert Peel instituted the force. Anyhow, after once seeing our "Peeler" none of us wanted to trespass on the line again.

Sydenham is the place where I first went to school. Readers who know the district from Herne Hill to Orpington must remember that the time of which I am writing is over sixty-two years ago. There was no Sydenham, Penge, Dulwich, or Bromley such as there is to-day. There was no compulsory education, no Council schools, in fact, no schools of any sort or kind for such children as those I lived amongst. My school was the front room of one of the cottages. An old lady with a big granny's cap was teacher. We learned letters, recited figures, sang nursery rhymes. We had no forms, no seats except the floor, where we all sat down in a ring. The governess took a fancy to me, allowing me to thread her needle for her—a feat of which I used to be very proud and boastful when we got home. Children of to-day, no matter where they live or to what class they belong, ought to bless the memory of W. E. Forster who introduced compulsory education. School is now a place, not for learning and discipline only, but for individual development. The teaching profession, taken as a whole, is one of which we are all proud. The enormous amount of voluntary work given by teachers in working-class districts teaching music, games, and sports of all kinds to both boys and girls, is beyond all praise.

In justice to the "old dames" who sixty and seventy

years ago taught boys of my class this must be recorded to their credit: we did learn the alphabet and figures. We discovered how to use words and our intelligences were set on the road which leads to mental development.

While we were at Sydenham the Crystal Palace had become a great meeting-place for the people. This great building, which still stands high up amid the Surrey hills, was first erected in Hyde Park to house the great International Exhibition organized by Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, a prince whose mind and intelligence was far in advance of his time: he was one of those men who believed the more the nations of the world could be mixed up together the more likelihood was there for the abolition of war and the establishment of world peace. The exhibition was a great success, although it was immediately followed by the Crimean War against Russia, the Indian Mutiny, Civil War in America, and the Italian-Austrian wars. Nations, like individuals, think in the present, and because so many nations sent goods and treasures, and thousands of foreigners visited the Exhibition, people imagined the day of universal peace had dawned. Just as to-day good-meaning people vainly imagine war can be abolished by the use of soft words, not realizing that economic rivalry and conflict are the root causes of modern wars.

The huge glass palace was taken down and rebuilt on Sydenham Hill as a permanent memorial of this effort to secure international peace.

In the early days of its existence there was no danger of financial loss or deficits, because as the fields for miles around became covered with houses a population grew up to whom the palace and its grounds offered delightful opportunities for enjoyment without, as now, any counter-attractions. At the time of which I am writing General Tom Thumb, a small, very tiny dwarf, who later on got

married and toured the country as General Tom Thumb and his wife, was one of the great attractions. I think the notorious Siamese twins were also on show there. However, my first and most lasting memory is "Blondin," the tight-rope walker. I can see him as I write, stepping out of the door of one of the towers, balancing-pole in his hand, bowing to the huge crowds below him, then walking along the rope as easily and as safely as if on dry land. My elder brother Jim could never see Blondin without turning sick, and I remember seeing a woman faint during one of the shows. My feeling was one of downright awe and amazement: it seemed to me only a god could do such things with safety, and we children used to talk as if there must be some black magic in the business. Blondin once walked across Niagara Falls on a rope—I think with a man tied on his back; and at the Crystal Palace he walked along the rope trundling a barrow with a man in it. There are some marvellous feats performed to-day: I doubt if any require more nerve and courage than this walking across space on a rope.

After Sydenham we moved to Greenwich. This time into a big house in Mount Nod Square which, if my memory does not play me false, was alongside a railway which was then being built. We went to school in a private house near Greenwich pier, taking bread, butter, and cheese for our dinner. Our dining-room was usually in the park or on the pier. An endless source of delight was the wild deer in the park. I remember nothing much about the school, so I imagine I learnt very little: but on the pier we used to sit and listen to men telling stories of the big sailing ships that every hour of the day passed up and down the river. At one time we listened to a long discussion as to which clipper would get home first with the new season's tea from China. I have since heard that these fast sailing ships raced each other to get to London with the "new season's

teas." The voyages then depended on wind and tides, not as now on coal and oil.

Fishermen also landed here with shrimps and winkles, mussels and whelks in great numbers. Between them all we got pictures of what men did to win bread from the seas and what dangers are faced by those who "go down to the sea in ships." Few among us remember that in days not so long ago it was the custom of His Majesty's ministers to go down to Greenwich once a year and enjoy a dinner of whitebait or sprats. I think the date was usually in November. Londoners, especially along the river-side, always indulged in meals off these little fishes when the season came round. I got my first sight of them on Greenwich pier.

At Greenwich also I first understood that some people were better off than others. Our mother had brought us up to go to church, and quite young we had learned all about our duty to our neighbour and ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to our betters: but until we got to Greenwich the "betters" had not come our way, except in the form of the parson. There was a sort of manager at Greenwich who controlled the job my father and his brothers were engaged on. He lived in a house near us, and one fine day we were all washed in an extra superfine way, our best clothes brushed and put on, our hair oiled and brushed, and off we went, soon to find ourselves inside a house furnished in a manner we had never before experienced. But the one outstanding feature of our visit, after a gorgeous tuck-in of fruit, pasties, and cake, was to hear and see the piano. None of us had either seen or heard one before and we stared with amazement as the lady of the house made music by running her fingers up and down the pieces of black and white ivory. The piano itself was an imposing piece of furniture: huge, high-backed, draped with a delightful kind of green drapery. I remember

squeezing close up to the lady and, stretching out my hand, touched a note. Of course, my mother reproved me. The player just let me strike the whole chord by running my fingers along the scale, which sent quite a thrill through me. Children nowadays take pianos and many other wonderful things for granted. In my day a piano was as much a mystery and wonder-box as wireless and gramophones are to-day.

The lady at the piano opened out a new world for me in quite another way. It was Christmas time, and she told us lots of wonderful fairy stories: *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Dick Whittington* stand out most clearly. Perhaps my mind was extra young: whatever the reason, I accepted these stories as quite true and for years after could never really be sure whether Red Riding Hood, her grandmother, and the wolf were existent or non-existent. Those who teach children fairy stories might remember that in some way a child should be made to understand he is being told a fairy tale with a practical meaning, just as a parable as told by Christ is said to be an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Dick Whittington and his wonderful cat and his adventures before reaching the mayoral dais at the Guild-hall I did understand, because, although the number of rats and mice destroyed by the cat seemed too great, yet it might be possible, and I understood the moral was that truth, honesty, and hard work led to riches and so forth. Actual experience since my youth has taught me the exact opposite: I have learned by experience that to get rich it is necessary to exploit the skill and labour of others, and also take advantage of the faults and failings and appetites of our fellow men and women. Honesty and riches have no actual relation with each other.

Another fairy tale which this new friend told us was *Cinderella*. I cannot describe my feelings as I sat open-mouthed listening to the story of the ugly, nasty sisters and

dear, little, beautiful Cinderella, the drudge who afterwards, with the aid of a fairy godmother, married a prince. *Jack the Giant Killer*, *The Forty Thieves*, all came to us in rotation, so we all had cause to remember with lots of gratitude our first wealthy friend who, in addition to telling us stories, gave us picture-books which enabled us to read the stories for ourselves.

At Greenwich we also heard something about politics. My political education began here. I can remember hearing the names of Palmerston, John Russell, Derby, Disraeli, Gladstone, Cobden, and Bright. I also remember hearing of Cavour, Mazzini, and many of the names connected with the American Civil War: indeed, I became quite interested in affairs even though not yet ten years old. My mother was to the end of her life a good Radical. She died in 1881, before the modern Labour or Socialist movement was heard of. I am certain if she had lived all her sympathies would have been with the Socialist movement.

Greenwich was a distinguished borough because on its hustings was fought out the great struggle on behalf of Jewish political emancipation. David Salamans was returned with Mr. Gladstone at the election which took place while we lived here, I think in 1868. The hustings were set up on Blackheath. The franchise was very restricted: all voters had to declare publicly on whose side they intended to vote. All parties openly practised bribery. On this occasion a huge crowd gathered round the polling places on the Heath. My mother and another enthusiastic woman took me and my brother to see the election. How we came back alive I cannot tell. We were pushed and squeezed, spat at, and hooted because we wore Salamans' colours, and cheered every time his jockey rode past with figures telling how the poll was going. I have been in many an election campaign since that day, but think I have never been nearer death. People talk of rowdiness and

uproar at public meetings nowadays: the worst scenes connected with the Irish and suffrage agitations were mere parlour games to what used to take place in the good old days when voting was free and open, and bribery was carried on as an honourable occupation.

It is obvious that I could have understood very little, if anything, about the Jewish oath and the iniquity of asking a Jew to swear on "the true faith of a Christian": it was, however, quite easy for me to know my mother was on the side of something big, and it would be a good thing if Salamans won—though here again I did not understand *what* it was he or anyone else would win as a result of our shouting.

I have often wondered what elections would be like to-day if no Ballot Act had been passed, and what Bow and Bromley would be like on a polling day if our 33,000 voters were expected to poll at an open booth in Bow Road. I fancy we should have a high old time, unless the "pubs" were closed and all traffic stopped till the job was done. Having seen both systems at work I am all for the secret ballot, though, of course, the machinery for taking votes could be tremendously improved.

From Greenwich we came to East London, first to Albert Road, Bethnal Green, and then to Whitechapel. Here we lived among what may be described as mixed populations—Irish, Jews, and foreigners of all nationalities. No sooner were we fixed at Bethnal Green than with my brother I found myself mixed up with Irish boys attending St. James-the-Less day school, provided by the Church of England. This was in 1868—a year when Irish questions connected with the land and the English Church in Ireland were very much in the public mind. Fenianism was not only rampant in Ireland but was very strong in Manchester, Glasgow, London, and other big towns. The Irish boys at our school were all "Fenians"; consequently, when the wall of

Clerkenwell Prison was blown down and three Irish martyrs executed in Manchester because a police officer was accidentally killed, very great excitement prevailed in our classes and playground. The teachers tried to make us understand how wicked the Irishmen had been on both occasions, but my Irish friends would have none of it, and when a few months later T. D. Sullivan's song *God Save Ireland* came out, we boys were shouting it at the tops of our voices every playtime. Another song also came to us, this time from America, *John Brown's Body lies a Mouldering in the Grave, but his Soul goes Marching on*. Our teacher did his best to make plain what John Brown had done and why he and his sons were executed. I think, though this is not certain, he also told us about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It is certain he made John a hero and a saint to us all. We were a lively little set, because we were not content with marching and singing round the playground, but marched round the houses singing our songs.

While at this school we were regularly inspected to see that our vaccination marks were plain, and again and again taken into church to pray God to stay the plague of small-pox, typhoid, and cholera. When I was a boy London was regularly visited by these epidemics, and no wonder: our drinking water was stored in tanks which were usually foul owing to the bottom and sides being lined with green, grimy slime. Many a blasphemous lesson was taught us children about God having been pleased to call his loved ones home, using these plagues as the means of transplanting them from earth to heaven. We know better now: no bishop, priest, or minister would dare to charge against God or Nature the preventible deaths which bad drains, foul water, and noisome slums or other evil conditions are responsible for. I say this because at Bethnal Green I first heard of atheists and others who poured scorn on our prayers for the removal of plague and disease. Looking

back, it seems strange that at any time there should be educated people who believe Providence sent these diseases to take us to heaven: yet such was the case. Consequently, the atheists and secularists had an easy job proving what knaves or fools these persons were.

It must have been just before the days of Charles Bradlaugh that a small group of freethinkers and others met to proclaim their gospel of unbelief to tiny audiences on Bonner Fields. These fields are now covered with houses, but are memorable because, in the days when Protestant killed Catholic and Catholic Protestant, Bishop Bonner and other martyrs to their respective faiths were burned on these fields. My mother was terrified lest my brother and I should ever go near these meetings; because she told us not to go we took care to find our way there. Not much harm was done us, because most of the talk centred round the questions "Who was Cain's wife?" "How old the world was," and abstruse questions connected with the Virgin birth and other equally irrelevant questions so far as boys of our age were concerned. The talk about preventible plague and disease came later.

When mother discovered we had been listening to these evil ones she would take us to a small Primitive Methodist chapel in Bonner Lane, where we received the message of Hell Fire and Brimstone and a general warning of what was in store for us if we listened to the wicked men on Bonner Fields. Our mother had an idea that for ordinary life the Church of England was enough, but when any of us were more troublesome than usual, or did things which were particularly bad—and although we were good Sunday School boys and churchgoers, we were always up to every kind of mischief; none of us could by any stretch of imagination be described as good or goody-goody, we were as bad as most healthy young barbarians know how to be—she pinned her faith for our reformation to the virile

teachings of those who believed in God as a terrible ogre, sitting up aloft waiting to punish with everlasting torment those whose conduct He disapproved of. I am afraid we all became much too hardened to be affected by such teaching; we used to listen, say our prayers, and then go and do the same thing all over again.

Victoria Park was a great place for children then, as it is now, but much more mysterious. The park-keepers wore top-hats, frock-coats, red waistcoats, and carried sticks, impressing us all by the official manner in which they carried themselves. We did not understand what was on the island in the duckpond, where there was and still is a Chinese pagoda. The L.C.C. has now destroyed all mystery by throwing open the island by means of a bridge, but sixty years ago, when Queen Victoria opened and named the park, we children thought Chinese lived in the pagoda and at night took care of the ducks, swans, and water-fowl. However much rich people may love their own private parks and grounds, I can truthfully say we Lansbury children and our cousins home from Canada fairly loved Victoria Park and enjoyed every minute we spent there. On holidays we used to ride donkeys along what is now Bishops Road and Approach Road, both of which were largely open spaces. Bethnal Green Museum, which came later, was also a most popular resort for all young people in East London, and much more frequented than now.

After Bethnal Green, Whitechapel. Here we lived for a dozen years in a fine old mansion formerly the home of a whiskey and gin distiller. This house was our first real settled home and a magnificent home it was with its huge ballroom and other huge rooms. It was well placed inside the Spitalfields Coal Depot in Bucks Row, now Durward Street. Here we were in the midst of an Irish colony, and here my life as a politician and social reformer first commenced. You who take no thought of church or chapel

must not mind my references to these, because in the days of which I write there was no social life outside religious organizations. Politicians were mainly divided into two parties, Liberals and Tories. In 1868-9-70 Radicals were coming to the fore: Howell, Cremer, Odger, and Maxse are men I remember—the last two as parliamentary candidates. Young as we were, my brother and I went to all Captain Maxse's meetings in the Tower Hamlets, and finally at the declaration of the poll saw him defeated.

The Franco-German War came and was over before we realized it had begun. At first all our sympathies were with the Germans, but as the "needle gun" beat down the chasseur and the Krupp cannon destroyed the mitrailleuse, and the old German Emperor claimed God as his ally, public opinion changed. My father read *Punch*, and I remember now as clearly as yesterday the cartoon showing an unctuous old gentleman inditing a telegram to his wife: "My dear Augusta: with the French we have had another awful buster. Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below. Praise God from whom all blessings flow." This first of German Kaisers honestly believed in the God of war, so when he wired to his wife telling her of carnage and victory, he invariably finished with the words "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

This sort of stuff alienated friends in Britain and, coupled with the terrible conditions imposed on France, turned the tide of opinion in favour of the defeated. I took great interest in the war, trying to understand what it was about. The following story is told to show that nearly sixty years ago a boy of eleven, by reading books and newspapers, getting into touch with men and women whose ideas of life were bigger than a parish, could get a grip of international affairs quite equal to that which a boy of the same age can acquire to-day. I always mixed with people older than myself: one day a discussion took place

about the war and the wicked action of the Tsar of Russia in tearing up what was known as the Black Sea Treaty. None of the men had the right hang of the question, so, kid as I was, I explained that the Treaty had been made at the end of the Crimean War, one of its main clauses being to prevent Russia building and sailing warships in the Black Sea, and that the Tsar, taking advantage of the Franco-German War, had declared his signature was no longer binding, explaining at the same time that if parties to agreements could without consultation or agreement denounce their signatures, then no agreements would bind anybody.

My adviser and friend was John Hales who, during the days of the Commune, was Secretary of the First International established by Marx and his friends in 1864. I did not attend the meeting in Hyde Park in support of the Commune and protest against the ruthless persecution and murder of the Communards, but I know all my boyish sympathies went out to the men and women who were struggling to establish what I thought of as "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Of course, I mixed these things up with Gambetta, Thiers, Jules Simon, and others, and did not understand the difference in theory and principle between Republicans and Communards. All I did understand was that Delescluze and his friends were leading working people, and that was always enough for me. Hales told me about the International and taught me the need of working-class solidarity. Many of my friends rebuke me because of my extreme toleration when speaking and writing about Labour leaders of bygone days: the fact is that although men like Hales and early working-class Radicals like Howell, Lucraft, Applegarth, and Odger failed to follow Marx and establish a Socialist organization, they did see farther than most of those with whom they came in contact. It is true most of these men lived the latter part

of their lives in the odour of sanctity of the Liberalism of Mr. Gladstone and died therein; nevertheless, they deserve honour because they helped establish the First International, and by so doing made the present International possible.

My school-days at Whitechapel were interesting: first the family was sent to the old Birkbeck School in Cambridge Road, now turned into a Chapel of Ease to one of the parish churches. This school taught no religion, opened without prayers. I learnt more general knowledge here than at any other school, learned to recite quite fluently, had my first and last school fight with an individual boy. I won because I got in too quickly and too brutally, and then cried because I had hurt him. We had no end of school fights with other schools. The Lansbury boys were popular because out of the yard where we lived we were able to supply our pals with short sticks cut from trees.

After a time mother thought we needed more religion, so for a year she sent us to a private school in Cambridge Road at a cost of 6*d.* per head per week, conducted by the Rev. W. Bradford, a Nonconformist minister who opened his school with long prayers and kept us in order by frequent doses of punishment inflicted with a strap. He used to hold our wrist on his desk and then give us half a dozen swipes. I remember nothing of any worth which I learnt at this school, except what was taught us by a nice little kind old man who made the most wicked and unruly of us love him. He came every Friday to give us history lessons. This teacher made historic scenes, such as Alfred's struggles with the Danes, the Conqueror's landing at Hastings, the rising of the Kett brothers and march of Wat Tyler, and much more, actually live before our eyes. I have never met his like since. The thing he did for me was to rouse in me the sense of development continuing, or as someone says, the fact that all life is a process of becoming. For

years after I could read nothing but historical books and novels, huge volumes telling of the fight to the death which took place between Rome and Carthage, the *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, and lots more, such as Green's *History of the English People*—not in a volume, but in what seems to me, looking back, to be pieces taken from that history. Whoever else I have to thank for creating in me a love for the past and a knowledge of what we owe to those who fought for freedom, no one can ever have a higher place in my memory than this old man who first opened my eyes to that vast field of knowledge and experience called history.

My last school was St. Mary's, Whitechapel. Michael Apted, our head master, was a gem, but what a school-building! No classrooms, one huge room with classes in each corner and one in the middle. Here again I learned very little, except history, arithmetic, grammar. At this school I did my first bit of agitation. We were not allowed any playtime. The big playground was used only by the Davenant Charity School next door. This school was attended by those we called "charity sprats"—girls and boys dressed in ridiculous uniforms. So I got up a demand that we have a playtime the same as the "charity sprats," pointing out that as we paid 4d. a week we were entitled to a better treatment than those who got clothes and education free. I must have heard or read of a "round robin" because, getting a big slate, I wrote out a petition and then we signed our names in a round ring. I explained that this was to ensure that Mr. Apted should not know who signed first. We put the slate on his desk and waited in fear and trembling: but we had no need to fear. He simply said he knew who had got it up, that he thought we ought to have playtime, and would consult the managers. He did this, and the next week we got half a day's playtime on Wednesday, and this continued till the London School Board came into being.

This first venture into the realm of agitation and propaganda made me a great hero at the school. I may as well admit here that I never won a prize at school and never remember any desire to get one. Later I entered a scripture examination and found myself bracketed with my best pal for a second prize. I won a good many prizes for reciting at the Band of Hope: these came to me without effort or desire, simply because I was blessed with a first-class memory.

## CHAPTER II

### EARNING MY LIVING

**B**ETWEEN eleven and twelve—nearer twelve than eleven—I left school to spend twelve months in an office. This year was spent partly in an office in Coram Street, Bloomsbury, and partly in Whitechapel. My employers were Dakin Wright and Co., Coal Merchants. Hours of work unlimited. At night I usually got a first-class dinner given me by Mr. Wright. He was very fond of jugged hare and I remember what a nice little pig I made of myself on the first occasion it came my way. This gentleman published a monthly newspaper to advertise his coal: part of my job was to go round the West End distributing it from door to door. I remember getting my fingers smashed in the doors of a train on what was at that time the sulphuric underground. Although I was very young I must say I enjoyed the work.

After this I went back to school till I was about fourteen and a half, when I went to work for good, first in offices, then in a charcoal factory. I was sent to this factory because I had got into disgrace working in an office and ran away from home for a week or ten days, and as a punishment was sent to manual work from six a.m. to six p.m. each day except Saturday, when we finished at twelve o'clock. After this I worked as a checker on the Great Eastern Railway, and for about a year for a wholesale grocer. Then I joined my brother unloading coals. This latter was a contract job we held from the Great Eastern Railway, and consisted of unloading trucks of coals on the arches at Whitechapel and into barges at Thames Wharf, Blackwall. My father held these contracts till he died in 1875, when my brother and I carried them on for my mother till she

re-married, then we did the job for ourselves. I often worked at night—that is, from one and two a.m. till seven and eight a.m., going home for a bath and breakfast, a little rest, and then to cricket matches or political or other gatherings, and occasionally at night to the House of Commons. Although I worked hard the pay was good, as in addition to what I earned myself there was my share of the profit we made employing others to work for us.

While I was at work unloading coal, and also before as a boy, I became great pals with the railwaymen, guards, platelayers, greasers, wheel-tappers, shunters, signalmen, firemen, and drivers employed at Spitalfields, Brick Lane, and Bishopsgate depots. At night as a boy I spent many hours in a signal-box, stirring porridge and helping to eat it. I also occasionally rode on engines, sometimes a passenger-train trip and sometimes on a goods engine. In those days the Great Eastern Railway terminus was in Bishopsgate Street, not as now in Liverpool Street. The old station has been transformed into a huge goods depot. I learnt all there was to learn about trains, engines, and shunting, and learned only too bitterly what a dangerous life shunters and others lived in days when companies refused to supply poles with which to uncouple wagons. I remember two shunters, a guard, and an inspector being crushed to death because they were not quick enough stepping out from the trucks, or in between them. I do not know how many years of agitation were needed before this small, cheap reform was introduced.

My second piece of propaganda and organizing was done here. Not one of the men was a trade unionist, though we often talked about unions: so I suggested we should form a George Stephenson's Guild and meet once a week in our lobby and talk things over at night. We kept it up for a few years, but our main meeting was held on Good Friday morning when we met for coffee and buns, had a little

discussion, and went to church. These were jolly gatherings. So were the weekly ones which led us to join in social work at the Bedford Institute, which was then under the direction of Mr. Alexander, a member of the Society of Friends. We used to help at Sunday morning gatherings of about 1,000 tramps and casuals who were reminded it was Sunday by the provision of a thoroughly substantial breakfast. Many years later I helped some of the same men by speaking for the National Union of Railwaymen at Bethnal Green.

At St. Mary's School I met my wife. We all called her Bessie Brine, although her full name was Elizabeth Jane. We just walked out together in September 1875, when she was not yet fifteen and I was sixteen. We were married on 29th May 1880, when I was twenty-one and she was nineteen, her twentieth birthday taking place the following October. I am sure our marriage was the most blessed and fortunate thing that ever happened to me. Together we joined a Band of Hope and for years, with our friend Wait C. Sewell and his wife Alice, were its mainstay. This Band of Hope was held in a Ragged School building in Chicksand Street. I think Mr. Healey, the superintendent, helped me more than anyone else to develop my memory, because he set me learning poetry, such as Bell's *Mary Queen of Scots*, Massey's *Fifth of November at Inkerman*, Aytoun's *Charles Edward on the Anniversary of Culloden*, Tom Hood's *Bridge of Sighs*, Shiels's *Speech on Waterloo*, and Mark Antony on the death of Caesar. Most of these remain in my memory.

When I was sixteen my father died and I became personally acquainted with the then Rector of Whitechapel, the Rev. J. Fenwick Kitto, who afterwards became Vicar of St. Martin's. Although he was a strictly orthodox churchman, nobody has ever had quite the same influence, in a way it is not possible to explain, on my wife and myself as he did. He entered into our lives, teaching us mainly by

example. Because he asked us we were confirmed, but before this took place many heart-searching discussions took place between our Rector, myself, and some of our friends.

The discussions which Mr. Kitto was faced with concerned this. My school chum worked in the City; he was expected to tell white lies about goods, about his employers—that is, to say that he was out when he was in—and generally to talk to people in language which did not tell all the truth. Our rector never answered us, he could not. Economic forces were too strong for him, as they were for us. All the same, we were confirmed in the faith that together we would work to change conditions so as to make religion not a theory, but the law of life. We had a fine time at Whitechapel Church because Mr. Kitto was so human. He started a choir at Christmas 1875 by asking a lot of us to supper at the Rectory. This was a great experience for me, I was sixteen and had never seen an evening dinner or a meal served by servants, so sat looking at my plate, wondering what next was coming on. A superior young person asked me if I would have some “blancmange”: she might as well have said poison, because the words had never come my way before. Seeing my discomfort Mr. Kitto called down the table, “Have some cornflour, George?” and of course I said yes. This supper party was the first and last at which I found myself uncomfortable, because I soon discovered that eating and drinking is carried on in the same way by everybody, whether prince, priest, or peasant.

I am often asked how I learned to speak: there is no answer except Topsy’s “‘Specs I growed,” because ever since I can remember it was my habit to question and argue about things. My friend Hales helped a bit, so did the Band of Hope; but my first go off as a speaker in dead earnest was at the Whitechapel Church Young Men’s

Association. Most of the members were old men, that is, people over forty, until I and one or two other boys between sixteen and twenty years of age joined. The Irish controversies were in full swing, there was lots of anti-Catholicism about. My view of life has always been for toleration. I challenged the most virulent anti-Catholic to debate. He was a first-class speaker about forty years old. I was about seventeen. The proposition we set out to discuss was "Should the Papacy be tolerated?" I took the affirmative, but insisted that he should start. I received very little support and was soundly whacked, though I could not understand how poor a show I made. Later on I was invited to open a debate at a neighbouring Young Men's Association held in All Saints School. When I arrived I found myself addressing forty old men on the subject of Peace against War. At the end I was rebuked for my precocity and bellicose manner towards my elders. I replied: "You asked me to come and address a Young Men's Association. Why did you not tell me you were all in your second childhood?"

In this matter of pacifism I have remained as inconsistently consistent all my life. I have actively opposed every war and spoken against all assassinations and violent upheavals. All the same, it has been my pleasure to assist in sheltering Russian and other foreign nihilists, anarchists, and Socialists, Irish nationalists and Sinn Feiners. I always defend those struggling for freedom. These opinions of mine are by now fairly well known. The word war is anathema to me. It is not possible for me ever to believe that killing or injuring people is productive of good. All the same I am blessed with a pugnacious disposition, am always up in arms against injustice. My general philosophy is that most, if not all, people who find themselves prisoners or liable to attack are innocent, and in all circumstances my sympathy goes to the "bottom

dog," whether he is a native of Africa or a dweller in a city slum.

When, during these days at Whitechapel, the Disraelian Imperialist policy was in full blast and Britain was demonstrating her might and power by turning a queen into an empress, and war was being waged against Afghanistan and some of the tribes in South Africa, I joined, boy though I was, in protest against this policy by attending public meetings and demonstrations. When Mr. Gladstone and Canon Liddon flung the story of the Bulgarian atrocities in the face of Europe and their own countrymen everything in me responded to the call for action. My age during this period was between sixteen and eighteen. With my brother I walked from Whitechapel to Blackheath to hear the G.O.M., and attended a great gathering in Newman Street Hall, off Oxford Street. At this meeting Gladstone read a letter he had received from H. M. Hyndman, whose name on this occasion came to my notice for the first time. Hyndman, who all through his life took the side of the Turks against the Russians, appeared to be an out and out supporter of Disraeli. In the House of Commons during this period I heard the great speeches of Bright and Gladstone. Against the Gladstonian policy I heard Gathorne Hardy, afterwards Lord Cranbrook, Joseph Cowen, a Mr. Holker, who afterwards became a judge, Lord Hartington, who always appeared as if he needed a sleep, and Sir Stafford Northcote. By this means I became fairly soaked in the subject and was able to understand both sides. I also bought the *Times*, *Daily News*, *Standard*, and the *Echo*, and *Reynolds's* on Sunday. As the tide of battle rolled on against the Turks our jingoes grew louder and louder in their demand for war against Russia. Indian troops were brought to Europe, the fleet steamed towards Constantinople, MacDermott, the popular comedian, invented what was described as a patriotic song, rather more nauseous

than the *Absent-minded Beggar* which Kipling inflicted on us during the Boer War. The chorus was :

We don't want to fight,  
But, by jingo, if we do,  
We've got the ships, we've got the men,  
We've got the money, too.  
We fought the Bear before and so we will again.  
The Russians shall not get Constantinople.

This song was sung everywhere.

It is worth recalling the fact that Britain and France fought the Crimean War and Mr. Disraeli threatened war with Russia to keep the Tsars out of Constantinople, and in 1914 Britain had a secret agreement with her Allies to hand Constantinople and control of the Black Sea to Russia. Only the Bolshevik revolution prevented the consummation of this policy.

In spite of music-halls and the Press campaign, the pro-peace and anti-Turk party held on its way, inspired by Mr. Gladstone who, with voice and pen, never seemed to rest. The London Radical Clubs, powerful institutions in those days, led by the Eleusis Club at Chelsea, backed Gladstone in every possible way, holding demonstrations in all parts of the Metropolis. In the height of the jingo fever it was decided to hold a monster peace meeting in Hyde Park. All of us who had been in the agitation got notice that the medical students intended to smash up the meeting, so we were urged to be in attendance early. In company with my brother and others I attended the meeting, which was held under the Reformer's Tree in the centre of the open space where demonstrations are still held. We arrived safely, only to discover ourselves surrounded by a crowd of well-fed young ruffians armed with short, handy sticks which they were using to some purpose on all who came within reach. As has happened to me very often on similar occasions, my pacifist principles would not work,

so I made one with others to clear a passage for Charles Bradlaugh and Auberon Herbert, the speakers. I am not sure, but I think neither of them got to the platform. We were all very soon in the midst of a howling mob of screaming, dancing dervishes, anxious to prove their patriotism by smashing over the head all who got in their way. How Auberon Herbert escaped is beyond my recollections: Charles Bradlaugh was a fine, big, healthy specimen of manhood, he usually wore a top-hat and frock-coat. On this occasion I remember his coat was almost torn off his back, as in the midst of a double ring of friends who linked arms we swayed our way across the park to the Marble Arch, which in those days was the actual entrance to the Park. Once outside the police lent a hand, but not before a good many black eyes and bloody noses had been indiscriminately dealt out on both sides. In addition, most of us who joined arms to form the rings had our knuckles and arms badly bruised by the young gentlemen in training for medical service.

After a great struggle Charles Bradlaugh, amid a tremendous hubbub, was shoved into a hansom-cab and driven away. Having lost him some bright, intelligent spark among the students, as an object of vengeance, raised the shout " Now for Harley Street ; death to the traitor ; down with Gladstone ! " So, as if impelled by some unseen force, some ten to twenty thousand of us, friends and foes, raced for Harley Street, where Mr. Gladstone at the time was living. The house was soon found and surrounded by a huge crowd, shouting and singing, cursing and praising. All at once stones began to fly and some windows were broken. How many I never heard, but the breaking of windows and threatened attack on the house seemed to rouse the police who, up to that time, had not been very active. Patrols and ordinary constables soon cleared us all off.

I do not think any arrests were made. There was a general feeling among most of us that the authorities sympathized with the crowd, and that Mr. Disraeli was very glad to report to the Queen that London was on the side of his policy, which happened to be favoured by the Crown. Our rulers sometimes imagine they can keep things secret from the public. It may be the general mass of people did not trouble much about Bulgaria, Turkey, or Russia, but the active minority who make and unmake governments, those who give time and thought to the work of government and administration, knew quite well, long before the Queen's letters were published, that the sympathies of the Court were all with Disraeli against Gladstone. However, as is always the case, when the testing time came and the nation was able to record its opinion, the verdict was overwhelmingly against Disraeli and his Imperial jingoism and for Gladstone and peace.

## CHAPTER III

### ACROSS THE WORLD AS AN EMIGRANT

I GOT rather tired of my partnership with my brother at Whitechapel, and in 1883 dissolved our partnership. For a short period I managed a coffee-bar, founded by the then Rector of Whitechapel, the late Canon Robinson. We established many organizations devoted to literature, politics, temperance, and religion. I thoroughly enjoyed the work; it brought me in contact with life of every description. But as usual in business and employment I hated competition with others and began to want a change, added to which the close confinement of a business such as that of selling refreshments and running meetings, although there was a small gymnasium attached, was not healthy for me. All my life I had been accustomed to life in the open air. So, after about eighteen months, we made up our minds to make another change.

Emigration was very much talked about and discussed during the years 1881-4. A large number of the young men with whom I was acquainted had emigrated, some to Canada, some to Australia, and, as usual with me, I suddenly made up my mind that Australia was the place for us. We were sick of business and competition; the thought of a new country and a new start in a new life, coupled with the literature issued by emigration agents, made us take up the idea of clearing off to live under the Southern Cross. It is all very well to call people sentimental, but the mere words "Southern Cross" attracted us. We could see the Big Bear nearly every night and our reading of books of travel and descriptions of the tropics and tropical countries created the desire to go and see those wonderful places. So we packed, sold our wedding

presents—fortunately some of our friends bought them and we thus got something like their value—and sailed in May 1884 for Brisbane.

Our journey started rather badly because our ship sailed from Plymouth, and being emigrants we were sent the longest way round from Waterloo. I think we took a whole day getting there. We had three children, one a baby in arms and the others two and three years of age respectively. Only one of them could walk, so it will be understood that we had a reasonable handful. In addition I was taking out my young brother, twelve years of age. He also was a rather difficult packet to handle at times.

One of the features of our married life is that within ten months of our marriage we had a ready-made family, because with the death of my mother we took charge of my two younger brothers. One of these had got a job before we emigrated, so the younger came with us.

As we had to sleep the night in Plymouth we landed into a kind of lodging-house where we were kept awake all night chasing vermin—so it will be imagined how fresh we felt the next day when we embarked. We travelled steerage on board the Duke of Devonshire, a very long, four-masted vessel—a very narrow ship for her length—she looked like a great greyhound. Having passed the medical officers and got on board we went to find what we thought would be our cabins. We discovered then that the Duke of Devonshire was really an old cargo boat made adaptable for human cargo by dividing the hold up into a set of boxes partitioned off. I have often wondered what would have happened to that wretched ship and its unhappy cargo had a fire taken place. There were no such things as cabins and no accommodation of any kind except to lie down. The bunks were put together with bits of yellow deal with one's mattress on top. Going into them it seemed just as if

one was being put into one's coffin, especially in the lower berths.

For all this, however, we refused to be downhearted and kept cheerful faces while we bade good-bye to my wife's mother, father, and sister, who had come to see us off.

The sensation of being at sea the first night was a strange one. Most of us were too tired to think of anything, but as the ship began to roll as soon as she started to move, a very great deal of sickness at once became evident. This long, narrow-beamed old tub rolled, pitched, tossed, and did everything possible to make us uncomfortable. From the first moment, all through the eight weeks we were travelling, except for the days when we lay at anchor, my wife had one continual bout of seasickness. I kept well and so did the children. In fact, I think they enjoyed the voyage more than any of us.

We reached the tropics and lived through days of perpetual sun. It was possible every day to bath the children on deck in the easiest possible way, by plunging them into a great tub of salt water fresh from the sea. There was no need to scrub them as the daily bathing kept their little bodies very clean and wholesome. Most mothers followed my example and gave up washing their children in basins of water. We took with us a good stock of food, and had we not done this we should have literally starved. As it was we did not get enough to eat. It is true that the Board of Trade gave us a list of what we were entitled to, but it is also true that even if the strict letter of the regulations were carried out, there were so many variations and prohibitions that we should still have found it very difficult to get enough to eat.

Although my wife was so ill she did not have such a bad time so far as food was concerned, because all the officers were kindness itself. The engineering staff especially behaved very kindly. Over and over again both the second

engineer and the boilermaker shared their meals with women who were sick. I think my wife was kept alive by this means. These two officers, twenty years later, supported me in my Woolwich fight for a seat on the London County Council.

We used to spend the evenings in the tropics on deck, and far into the night we would be singing away, sometimes songs, sometimes hymns, telling of our past experiences, and weaving fancy pictures of what we were going to do when we reached the promised land

Reaching Malta was a great experience and I was able to go ashore. It is a magnificent harbour and on the two sides the land runs from the sea. But Malta as it was forty years ago was a pretty terrible place, full of streets with steps. At almost every corner there was a crucifix. Both here and at Port Said and at Suez we were put on our guard against thieves. Apparently Mussulmen and Christians know how to thief. It was one of the sights of our lives to see the natives clamber over the side of the boat to sell their wares, and as they came over to see English officers take them by the scruff of the neck and chuck them into the sea. At first we began to protest against this action, but when we saw the ease with which these men regained their own boats, and understood that their only purpose in coming aboard was to see what they could annex of other people's property, we were rather glad when they were so expeditiously put over the side.

At Aden we saw most wonderful diving by boys. I did not go ashore here because a woman passenger had died a day or two before and I did not like leaving my wife in the rather mournful atmosphere. At Colombo, however, I went ashore again. This is a wonderful place. Quite alone I went into what are called the heathen temples, and even in those days, when my mind had been filled with the idea that religion was something which came into existence

with the Christian era, I was able to appreciate just a little the centuries of effort which had gone to produce some of the most magnificent buildings and carvings.

At Batavia I spent two days ashore. We had rather a bad experience here. This is a Dutch colony and the manner in which these people treated the inhabitants was disgusting. I had a fierce row with one big Dutchman who was bullying the women who were carrying the coal aboard our boat. It seemed to me that he regarded these women as so much cattle and treated them as such.

In the Indian Ocean we were caught in a monsoon and experienced for nearly a week the most terrific weather. As a boy I had read of the sea running mountains high, but one must see this kind of thing to appreciate it. Our big ship would sink right down as into a great valley of water and waves, and coming towards us were huge mountains of water which seemed as though they must overwhelm us. But somehow, like a cork, our vessel rose up. For three days and nights we were battened down. It seemed sometimes as though the boat must smash in two. Everyone was sick, even I was ill for about two hours. In addition, we starved nearly all these three days, in fact, very few people wanted anything except to lie still. I think that had we been told we were going to the bottom it would not have made much difference. I am certain it would have made very little difference to my wife and myself. We had our children with us, and had the feeling that we should all go together. But of course there is an end to everything, and there was an end to this monsoon. It came when the heavens opened and the rain commenced to fall. The great torrents of water from the sky beat down the sea. I had heard that rain could beat down an angry sea, but should never have realized it had I not seen the water from above literally beat the waves down and thus produce a great calm.

We went to Brisbane via Thursday Island and the Torres Straits. After leaving Java we passed endless small islands dotted about what is known as the Malay Archipelago— islands which we were told were continually being submerged and coming up again. This making of the earth, as it were, is a wonderful thing. We were told by the officers that very often as they went out they would see a number of small islands which, as they returned, would have entirely disappeared. A reconstruction of the earth appeared to go on all the time. These islands look very beautiful and make one want to go and live there, although most of them are uninhabitable.

Thursday Island and the Straits are beautiful, and I shall never forget, and I think very few of the thousand other emigrants on board will ever forget, the first glimpse we had of Queensland. Going into Townsville and Rockhampton we all of us became quite excited with the idea that we, too, soon would be landing. It was very curious to see the farmers, sugar-planters, and others coming on board for the workmen for whom they had sent to the Old Country, and also coming to look around at the rest of us to see if there were any they would care to take. It would have been very easy for me to get work with these men, for I was pretty big and married, and therefore handicapped in a way. Most farmers preferred to have married men, as they could not run away so easily; there is always the risk of a single man going off, but a married man, especially with children, cannot do that so easily.

We arrived at the Brisbane river at about midday one glorious summer day in June or July. It was not summer in the ordinary sense, but for us it was a summer day, and as we sailed up that magnificent river, everyone standing alongside looking at the scenery, we felt that this really was the promised land. It is, however, quite a mirage of the desert. Nothing so deceptive has ever come into my

life as that beautiful river and its beautiful shores. The lovely white houses dotted here and there looked so peaceful and pleasant as if nothing in the world could ever enter to trouble or worry. I remember an enthusiast saying we had reached the land where the wicked ceased from troubling. These lovely surroundings gave us an impression that we had reached a land of milk and honey.

As we went round the bend of the river, however, and came in sight of the town itself, the houses became more closely packed together, the streets, which we could see quite easily from the ship, looked ugly and squalid, and the first glimpse of a friend's face on shore sent our hearts into our boots. There was something so pathetic and far-away in the faces of the people, the kind of wretchedness which disappointment stamps on the faces of those whose hearts are sick and whose hopes are gone.

We landed in the afternoon and were marched to the Immigrants' Home. Why the place was ever called a home passes my comprehension. At that time I had never seen the inside of a British workhouse, and could not draw a comparison. I know now, however, that I would much rather have been put with my children and wife into an ordinary British workhouse than into this beastly Immigrants' Home. It was filthy dirty, with absolutely no accommodation of any kind. We made up our minds to have a walk round and try to find accommodation elsewhere. This was not to be found. No hotel would take us. I had about £100 with me, so there was no money trouble. No one would look at us because of our children, in fact, during our whole stay in Australia it appeared to us that children were not wanted.

After sitting by the roadside and almost tossing-up whether to walk about all night or go back to the "Home" we finally decided to take our chance in the latter place. It is often said that English immigrants are a disgruntled,

discontented lot. It is probable that conditions now are much better than forty years ago. I have, however, no hesitation in saying that had I been a person who took drink I would have gone out after seeing my wife in bed and got gloriously drunk. A good many men did this, and I don't wonder at it. There we sat with our children lying on the floor, while huge great rats ran about the place the whole night through. There was no pretence at making things decent. The man and women in charge were destitute of all decent feelings and looked upon us as cattle. If a child was ill it had to get better the best way possible.

We got through that night somehow, but next day, worn out as we were, we went around and found rooms where we could live. We took a place in what was called the Fortitude Valley. It was worthy of its name, and I think we also lived up to it. The place we took was a kind of "humpy" for which we were plundered to the tune of ten shillings a week. It literally swarmed with cockroaches and black-beetles. We had escaped from the rats, but I am not sure which were the worst—cockroaches, mosquitoes, flies, or rats. I started looking for work, which proved a wearisome, toilsome business. You will remember that we had come to Australia to get away from competition and to live a simple life. As a matter of fact we had come into a very hell of competition. We did not understand what we should have understood had we not been a pair of dreamers: that people emigrate to make money, and in Brisbane every single thing was subordinated to that. I had letters of recommendation to clergymen, to the bishop, and to one or two business men. The poor bishop was a very decent sort indeed. His name was Bishop Hale. He was the predecessor of Bishop Webber, who went out from London accompanied by Manly Power, whom I afterwards met as Rector of Bow. When I went to interest him he was kindness itself, but that was all. He could not help me,

and did not know what to say when I accused his Government of getting people out under false pretences. He could only recommend me to continue asking at the Government offices and to follow up advertisements.

I assisted the unemployed to hold one or two meetings, but these were not of much use because the most violent men were bought off by getting jobs. In my case it was more difficult because I had had no experience of trade and all that I could do was heavy manual work or office work. There were no openings for this latter. After eight weeks of this kind of thing, finding our money slipping away—for living was very expensive—I fell back on the last resort which survives both at home and abroad, namely stonebreaking. Since I have returned people have often asked me why I am so bitter in my denunciation of this work as a task for casuals and unemployed. It is pointed out that we need granite for macadamized roads. This is very true, but stonebreaking is an art that can only be acquired after long practice and to put ordinary unskilled men to do it is to punish them in the worst possible way. Unless one knows how to handle the hammer and understands the grain of the stone, not merely are one's hands torn to pieces, but one's whole nervous system is wracked. I could have stood the soreness of my hands, for I had put up with this kind of thing as a boy shovelling coals, but it was the fearful jarring to my head which nearly drove me mad, coupled with which I was put on to what is a particularly difficult kind of granite, one of the hardest and most difficult to deal with, and as I knew nothing at all of the grain, at the end of the day I had earned about one shilling. I had to give up this job because it brought on neuralgia and, in fact, left me a nervous wreck.

I was then lucky enough to discover a job at a slaughterhouse, where I worked driving a van carrying the carcasses

of animals from the slaughterhouse to town. I think this was the nastiest job I have ever had. Here again, however, I learnt something which I think has always made me rather more tolerant than I should otherwise have been. The men employed were really brutalized by their work. I think they would have been ready to cut each other's throats as easily as they cut up the carcasses of sheep and bullocks. In fact, there seemed no feeling in them, and I could not wonder at it, because they worked at piece rates. Pain and suffering made no appeal to them, economic necessity crushed their better feelings. In a way other kinds of work have the same effect. I do not think it is possible to treat men as machines without this kind of thing happening to them.

I gave up this job because I would not work on Sundays. I still believe, quite apart from any religious principle, that it is necessary for people to have a rest from their ordinary work on one day in seven. It may be that superstition is responsible for the custom, but I think that Moses was really inspired when he laid down this principle. I do not mean that people must simply play the fool on Sunday, or that they must necessarily stay at home and read good books, but I do maintain that no human brain can stand the strain of the same work month after month and year after year. I believed in this from the religious point of view in those days much more than now, because now I think one day's rest in seven is a necessity. In those days I insisted on keeping Sunday as a rest day. My boss was a Roman Catholic, a really decent man—in fact, he was one of the best of the employers I met in Australia. He took a great deal of trouble to argue with me about the use of the Sabbath and was really sorry when I drew my money on the Saturday and said good-bye to him.

I went home without the least idea of what we should do. On the Monday I went down to the Immigrants' Office

again to see if there was any chance of work. There I met a friend who had just been rejected by an employer because he was not married. He recommended me to see this farmer, which I did, and to my great surprise I was accepted as a farm servant at £40 a year and my food. The food consisted of flour, meat, and sugar—nothing else.

The old farmer pictured to me a cottage, very pretty, amid lovely surroundings, which was to be our home on his farm. He lived about eighty miles from Brisbane at a place called Harrisville, near a fairly large town called Ipswich. We started the next day on a long, monotonous journey on a slow railway and were met at the end by my employer with an old farm-cart on which our traps were packed and ourselves landed on top. It was a pretty desolate ride in the dark, but we still tried to keep up our spirits with thoughts of the pretty little cottage waiting for us and the thought of the £40 a year I was going to earn.

When we arrived we found that the farmhouse itself was quite a fine building. My employer had gone to Australia as one of those who left his country for his country's good and had been able to put land to land and make himself a very fine residence. His wife was quite a decent sort, and did her best to cheer up my wife and the children, giving us a good supper and putting us to bed, not in the cottage, which we had not seen, but in the loft.

I was called early in the morning, and my first job was to help milk about fifty cows. I had seen this kind of animal before, but as for engaging in milking one it was an occupation of which I knew nothing. Still, I managed after one or two mornings to persuade most of the cows to give milk.

Our "pretty little cottage" was a "humpie," that is a wooden building stuck up on four stumps. The ridgeway of ours had worn away so that we were able to watch the stars in their courses while lying in bed. We had been told

that the cottage was furnished. There were two magnificent plank bedsteads built up on the stumps of trees, with wooden boards cut from the trees and laid some one way and some another like an ordinary mattress. There were also one or two cupboards, a table, and a bench. To the amazement of my employer we had brought an American organ with us which, in its packing-case, made a sideboard and table. This, with a few other odds and ends, made the place habitable except when the rain came, on which occasions we were in danger of being flooded. There was also a danger from snakes, which apparently lived and thrived in the long, rank grass all around the cottage. There were some weird animals about us, especially tiny bears which seemed quite harmless and were very fat and woolly. We experienced the joys of living near the laughing jackass, a bird which made a most terrible noise during the night, and quite alarmed us for the first night or two.

Our water supply was practically nil. About a quarter of a mile from the house was a deep ravine, at the bottom of which was, during flood time, a spring. This disappeared in hot weather. In this pool the cattle stood, lay down, and bathed, and out of it we took our drinking water. We had been seriously warned to drink nothing except what had been first boiled, but not even boiling it ever reconciled me to being obliged to drink it.

At work on the farm with me was an Irishman who had been a Land Leaguer and various other things in his own country. I think he had been given the choice of emigrating or going to gaol. We were both very much impressed with the rigours of our employment for our master was a regular nigger-driver. We spent our evenings discussing the best means of bringing him to heel. We decided that going on strike was of no use because, at this time, Brisbane was full of men and, in addition, the law of the land was that

we could both be sent to prison if we broke our contracts, which we had signed, binding us for three years. We often discussed whether we should burn down the place or smash the machinery, or do various other odd things which apparently my Irish friend had learnt from agitations in Ireland. Nothing came of all these discussions except that after working for three or four months, buying milk, butter, and other necessities from my employer, I discovered that instead of having wages to draw he had a bill against me and that the longer I stayed with him the more into his debt I should be, until I should find that there was no possible chance of getting out of debt or leaving him. I was in danger of becoming a permanent slave attached to that particular piece of land. It was absolutely necessary to buy food, for the allowance, as I have already described, contained nothing that was of any real use for the children.

Almost every day I quarrelled with my employer, and things came to a head when he brought the member of Parliament for the district round and I put my case to him. The poor man was rather taken aback, for I showed him some letters I proposed to send home describing the "joys" of emigration. Nothing happened except, that I was threatened with prison if I did not keep my bargain, but one morning I went up and told my boss that I was going. The children had been falling ill, my wife and brother were sick, although personally I was in excellent health. The hard work on the land and the open air agreed with my constitution, but the hot weather gave the children dysentery and other troubles, and as we were getting on towards Christmas and the heat was increasing I made up my mind that we should go, and at last my boss gave in. I left him, considerably in his debt according to his reckoning, but according to my own he owed me a large sum—although legally the boot was on the other foot.

We went back to Brisbane, straight down to a place

called Eagle Farm, where we stayed with the elder brother of a friend of mine in London who, at that time, was working for my brother in East London. We stayed here six or seven weeks. There was a big family, every member of which worked in some way on the farm. I got work from the next-door farm. We just managed to earn our keep. I was set to mow oats. This was an entirely new job for me, for although I had done all kinds of other work connected with farming up at Harrisville, I had not actually done any mowing or reaping. I think this is one of the hardest tasks to which a man can be put, because first of all it is usually done under the rays of a hot sun, then the whole of one's body is in motion, and the physical exertion all the time is very great.

The first day I did very little, but afterwards I managed to get through better. I also learnt to make post-holes, which is another back-breaking job, especially in a country where a good deal of the soil is clay.

After this we went back to Brisbane city and I worked for ten days on the laying out of the Brisbane Cricket and Sports Ground. The English cricketers were coming over and it was being prepared for them. On this job I learnt what eight hours' work, eight hours' play, eight hours' sleep, and eight bob a day meant. This was a new experience for me.

I should have liked to see the English cricketers that time, but I was unable to as at the end of this job I managed to get work with a parcels delivery firm.

My getting this job was rather curious. We had some goods stored away and wanted them shifted because we had taken a couple of rooms. I went to hire a cart and at the same time asked the proprietor to give me a job. He asked first whether I was a new "chum," and as we had been there nearly six months I felt justified in saying that I was not. He then showed me a heap of parcels and asked

if I could deliver them and whether I knew Brisbane well. As a matter of fact I knew the city pretty well, for I had tramped it for eight weeks when we landed, looking for work, but I knew nothing of the suburbs. As luck would have it he gave me a start right away.

In this case a house was attached to the job. We were stationed just outside Brisbane, a few miles away, at a place called Toowong, so instead of moving our furniture to the place we had taken the proprietor lent me a cart to take our goods out to the cottage. The lack of convenience to which we had become accustomed was as marked here as in the Bush. We cooked our food in a camp oven practically all the time we were in Australia. This is a small iron pot which is placed on hot ashes and then hot ashes are put on top. It can be used either for baking or boiling. In spite of drawbacks we felt when we landed at Toowong that we really were at home and on the up grade. The house stood in its own grounds and contained two bedrooms and a living-room. We had no bedsteads and very little bed covering. The mosquitoes were pitiless in their ravages. We stayed up one or two nights trying to clear the room by killing them on the walls with our boots. We might as well have tried to sweep back the sea. As soon as we killed one another dozen arrived on the scene. At last we decided to swop our harmonium for a proper bedstead with mosquito curtains, and then we were able to get a little peace.

My work as parcel delivery man was the most enjoyable of any, and I stuck to it right on until we left Australia. It was the custom for parcel delivery men to take on moving jobs and to make their own charges. Of course, we were expected at night to pay in all we collected to the boss, but I soon discovered that as I did not know the ropes I was paying in considerably more than any of the other men. A small deputation therefore waited upon me one

night to inform me that I was making it "bloody rotten" for my neighbours, first by doing so much work, and then by paying so much money in at night. In those days I had no idea of my strength and did not realize that in addition to paying in actually what I took I was doing the work of one and a half men. The job seemed to get into my blood. I always had good horses to drive and had always been very fond of them, so the work was a real pleasure to me.

We were getting on very well here and had it not been for the illness of the children and my wife I think we should have commenced saving some money. Money, however, never worried us, but the health of the children was a continual worry. It is not realized how many children die when emigrated, whatever the country they go to. Dysentery and zymotic diseases generally are responsible for these deaths.

We stayed one Christmas here at Toowong, a fairly enjoyable one. We had the rare luxury of veal and bacon for our Christmas dinner and a reasonable amount of plum-pudding. Three young men who were more or less stranded spent the Christmas with us. Although the man for whom I worked offered to take me into partnership our minds were always looking homeward and, when in May the letter came bringing us £100 to pay our fares home, we were only too glad to avail ourselves of it.

I met no Labour men or politicians while in Australia, was never asked to join a union—in fact, never heard of trade unionism. The movement got going in earnest shortly after I left. Before leaving England I had been my own employer, so when we arrived in Australia and when we left I was only a political Radical.

We came home on the s.s. *Mercato*. This old boat was sold to the Japanese and sunk outside Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War. The voyage home was, if anything, a more painful one than going out, although we were

travelling as ordinary passengers and not as emigrants. Accommodation was vile. The ship was infested with rats, and to make matters worse my wife was not only very seasick, but dreadfully ill otherwise. Mercifully the children were all quite well. They bathed every day and had a really fine time all the way home. We passed through the Suez Canal on the day when it was expected that war would be declared between Great Britain and Russia over the Pendjeh dispute concerning the Afghan frontiers. There was great excitement on board, especially at Suez, where we heard all kinds of stories as to what was happening in the Sudan. Gordon had just been killed at Khartoum and on board our boat came some of the Sudanese. They were fine big men with long fair hair, certainly some of the finest specimens of mankind I have ever seen. Both going and coming home sandstorms in the Suez Canal and heat in the Red Sea were among our most disagreeable experiences.

On the homeward trip we stopped at most of the places we had visited going out, and eventually we arrived at Tilbury. We were met by a host of friends whom we were all very glad indeed to see.

I started work the day after we arrived home in my wife's father's sawmill and veneer works in Whitechapel. Not only do we owe grateful thanks to him for giving me the chance of earning our living, but it is to him and his wife, more than to anyone else, to whom I am indebted for the chance of doing Socialist and political propaganda. I had to work very hard for my wages at all times. I tried to give full service for what came to me as wages. My appreciation for this big-hearted son of Somersetshire and his good-hearted Hampshire wife is not the money they gave us, but the sympathy and understanding which they at all times showed towards us. Without this I could not have showed up the fraud attaching to emigration propa-

ganda, or have become a Socialist propagandist. Their kindness and help has not resulted in making me a rich man, but it did most effectively set my feet along the road which has in the end enabled me, through the unstinted loyalty of my wife and the very considerable monetary help of others, to carry on the public and social work I desired to do.

My father-in-law died at fifty-six. His wife lived to pass her eightieth year. Both of them tried their best to serve God by doing their utmost to help lame dogs over stiles, and on no occasion did they show this trait in their characters more nobly than when they took us home, a rather sad and disillusioned pair with many responsibilities, and made it possible for us to start life over again.

## CHAPTER IV

### CROSSING OVER TO SOCIALISM

**M**Y official connection with politics commenced in 1885, on my return from Australia, and happened, as most things in my life have, quite accidentally.

On my return I started an agitation against emigration, holding meetings every night on Mile End Waste and other parts of London. Those who remember the winter of 1885-6 will know we suffered many severe snowstorms, consequently my open-air meetings were often held on frozen snow. Although this was the case we always secured big audiences. I also engaged in newspaper controversy on the subject through the columns of the *Echo* and other newspapers. I also became associated with J. L. Mahan, Charles Mowbray, and other Communist Anarchists—at least, that is how they styled themselves in those days, though Mowbray died a Tariff Reform lecturer and J. L. Mahan is, I think, a member of the Labour Party. I also came in contact with the Social Democratic Federation through their Tottenham branch. As a result of this work we managed to get together a representative committee, under the chairmanship of the Rev. A. T. Fryer, at that time curate in charge of one of the Clerkenwell district churches. This committee summoned a conference which was held at King's College, Strand, early in February 1886. We asked the Bishop of Bedford (this was the title given to the Bishop of London's first suffragan; the Bishop of Stepney is now used), the Rev. Walsham Howe, to take the chair, and invited Samuel Montagu, M.P. for Whitechapel, all the Colonial Agents-General, and representatives of a number of emigration societies to attend. The conference was a very good one indeed.

It so happened that at the morning session of the conference I was the principal speaker. I told in as clear a manner as possible my experiences in Queensland. The Agent-General for that colony tried to trip me up and charged me with being work-shy. In spite of his opposition and the opposition of several others I carried the conference with me, making what appeared to be a great impression on everybody present. At the end Mr. Montagu came and congratulated me, saying, "You must let us get you into the House of Commons. You are just the sort of man we want there." Like any other young man would be, I was a bit flattered but did not give too much thought to what he said.

The result of this agitation and conference was a deputation to Mr. Osborne Morgan, the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, who, on our representations, set up the Emigration Information Department which, from 1886 onwards, has issued information as to where emigrants are wanted. This information is displayed in post offices, labour exchanges, and other public places.

We were at this time living at Tottenham, but moved to Bow almost immediately, where I joined the local Liberal Association and soon became honorary secretary of the ward we moved into. Our house was a tiny four-roomed cottage, two up and two down, with a small wash-house. Our family in this house ran up to six, so we were a bit crowded, though not so crowded as many thousands of our neighbours. My wages were thirty shillings a week and house rent free. In addition, we had plenty of hard wood for our fires. How my wife managed to feed and clothe us all I do not know, except that she worked early and late at the job.

During the summer of 1886 Parliament was dissolved. Immediately this was announced I again heard from Mr. Montagu, who asked me to act as chief of his election

arrangements. This was a great surprise to me, because I had heard nothing of him since the anti-emigration conference in February. I asked my father-in-law, Mr. Brine, if he would let me off for three weeks and, as was usual with him, he very kindly said yes, and I became a full-blown election official. Because of my inexperience I was not described as agent. All the same I carried out the duties and received three pounds a week for the job. Mr. Montagu was one of the few Liberals who increased his majority, and he never tired of saying the election was the cheapest and best conducted in the country. He wanted me to stay with him, but even in those days of poverty I had a perfect horror of becoming a professional speaker or organizer, so I went back to the mill in St. Stephen's Road, Bow.

I resumed my work with the local Liberals and became honorary general secretary. We pinned our faith to voluntary work. When we selected Mr. J. A. Murray MacDonald as our candidate we pledged ourselves to carry on the work of the party without subsidy from anybody. We adopted a fairly advanced programme, taking for our motto "A happier, a more moral, and more equal life for all." Somehow none of our minds would stop working. The great Dock Strike of 1889 came along. Annie Besant was wrestling with employers on behalf of the victims of phossy jaw; the Irish question with all its horrors of coercion grew worse and worse. In the midst of this, I think in 1887, I suggested that East London working-men Radicals should organize a delegation consisting of twelve workmen to go to Ireland and see for themselves what crimes were being committed in their name. This was soon taken up by the Radical Clubs and twelve of us, led by the Rev. Fleming Williams, who afterwards became an alderman of the London County Council, found ourselves crossing St. George's Channel to Dublin Town. We were

received right royally by the Nationalist leaders. Edward Dwyer Gray, John Dillon, and others entertained us for a couple of nights, then we divided into three parties going North, South, and West. Dublin in those days looked like a city of the past, there was very little, or apparently very little, life in the place, except such life and excitement as was connected with political agitation. What struck me was how little attention was being paid to the foul housing conditions, and very soon I began asking questions as to what the Nationalists proposed to do about the poverty problem in the towns. It was easy to understand that the backbone of the Nationalist agitation was a middle-class one—small farmers and tenants of tiny landholdings. So far as industrial problems were concerned these, for Nationalists, apparently did not exist.

My group went North. We visited Dundalk, Newry, Belfast, Carrickfergus, Draperstown, and Londonderry. Wherever we went we were shepherded by police in uniform and police in plain clothes. Spies and informers sat with us at meals, in the smoking-rooms and lounges of hotels. Wherever we spoke in public note-takers surrounded the platform with armed police alongside to protect them. The people in the towns and villages always gave us a great reception and, best of all, allowed us to go over their holdings and cabins and see for ourselves the conditions under which they lived. I was interested in Draperstown because the whole district is owned by the Drapers' Company in the City of London. This Company gave many thousands of pounds towards the cost of building the People's Palace in Mile End, London, and has continued to spend large sums on its upkeep and development.

I told the peasants at a meeting we held at Draperstown that I thanked them on behalf of East London for making it possible for the Drapers' Company to be so generous to us. At this place we went over smallholdings created amid

rocks and stones on the hillside. We were assured that the soil on which pasture and potatoes were and still are grown was all carried up by the tenants, and that continually it had to be replaced because of rain and storms beating it down.

During the visit to Belfast we tried to get into touch with Protestants as well as Catholics. We found this almost impossible. We were able to hold one monster meeting in St. Mary's Hall—a meeting which for red-hot enthusiasm, fine speaking, and good singing would be hard to beat.

I have visited Ireland on many other occasions since the Land League days, once during the Dublin Strike and Lock-out in 1913. Through the *Daily Herald* I assisted in making the cause known in this country, and had done something to help organize assistance both in money and kind. The Irish Union, led by Jim Larkin, sent me a very pressing invitation to go across and help in the task of heartening the people who were on strike. The time chosen for my visit was a week-end, during which the *Daily Herald* had organized a big concert meeting in the Horticultural Hall on the Saturday evening. Will Dyson, Charles Lapworth, Jim Larkin, Bill Haywood of America, and myself were speakers. Consequently, there was only the barest time left to catch the night train. The meeting was a very exciting, enthusiastic one, leaving me like a piece of wet rag. My mind was full of the idea of meeting face to face the thousands of suffering men, women, and children. After leaving Euston a wracking headache came on, I could neither eat, sleep, nor rest. My good friend Frank Smith travelled with me, trying every kind of remedy and persuasion to quieten me down, but without avail. The crossing was a very rough one and, quite unusual for me, I was terribly ill—so ill that I imagined my last hour had come. Frank Smith was wonderfully kind and attentive; no trained or other sort of nurse could possibly have

mothered me better than he did. But my mind and body were both tired out and fell an easy prey to that most evil of ills man suffers from—seasickness. When we arrived at North Wall, Dublin, every vestige of headache and sickness, however, disappeared. The short sail up the river, the keen morning air, beautiful scenery of Dublin Bay bathed in the sunlight of a glorious morning sun, coupled with a good wash and fresh tea made me a new person. George Russell (A. E.), Professor McNeil, Sheehy Skeffington, and some of the Union leaders met us with jaunting-cars and, although it was very early in the morning, took us home to a fine old-fashioned Irish and English breakfast of ham and eggs, toast and butter, jam and marmalade, to all of which Frank and I did more than ample justice.

Our plans for the day consisted of a continual round of meetings, starting about 10 o'clock and lasting till I was carried shoulder high through huge masses of people to Westland Row Station on my way to the steamer. The Irish are a wonderful, generous, genuine race of people; they mean what they say, whether fighting for Socialism, a Republic, or killing landlords. My reception was a tribute through me to all the tens of thousands of British workers who had responded to the call of their Irish brothers for help. During this Sunday, in company with George Russell, the Skeffingtons, and others, I marched with at least 10,000 people to Kilmainham prison. I believe a word from me would have hurled the whole mass against the police and forced open the prison gates. I had not the pluck to give the word; as usual, the mere thought of violence and bloodshed made me a coward. In addition there was my firm belief that force was not a true remedy. As it was, however, the chiefs of the police were very nervous and anxious and took care to shepherd George Russell and myself till we were safely away.

At night, outside and inside Liberty Hall, there was an

enormous crush; how any of us got through to the platform is a mystery. How any of us had either breath or strength to speak is also a mystery. Frank and I left before the meetings ended. The crowd closed round us. We sang the *Red Flag*, *God Save Ireland*, the *Marseillaise*, and other songs, and found ourselves being borne on the shoulders of docker friends through great crowds to the station. I was not ill crossing back to Holyhead, but very little sleep came my way because of excitement. We arrived back at Euston just about thirty-six hours later than when we started, having gone through experiences which would try any ordinary person if passed through in a week.

'Another visit to Dublin and Belfast was in connection with Women's Suffrage. I went over to speak for the Irish Women's Franchise League. During this visit I was the guest of the Sheehy Skeffingtons, both of whom were kindness itself. I like to remember Sheehy Skeffington as he was then—a fine, brave, courageous man, ready to die or live for a cause, but never willing to hurt or destroy a living soul no matter how bad or how good people might be. His murder during the 1916 Easter rising by a British officer will remain forever as one of the foul blots connected with British rule.

The meeting in Dublin was held in the Rotunda, which was packed out, a big crowd not being able to get in. As had become usual, the audience gave me a great reception, mainly because they had been impressed by my leaving Parliament, and because I had been to prison on behalf of the cause. During this meeting Mrs. Skeffington, on behalf of the League, presented me with some Irish linen handkerchiefs and bread-board for my wife, and a beautiful Irish travelling rug, which I still use and value very highly. I went to Belfast in some trepidation, not knowing what the Ulster men might do for me, because at that time I was doing my full share in support of Home Rule and denuncia-

tion of Carson and Co. However, the meeting was a huge and enthusiastic one, and I found the people of Belfast as generous and freehearted as those in Dublin.

The first visit to Ireland made a big impression on me. I began thinking out for myself what are called economic problems and was unable to discover what difference in principle there was in asking for State aid for Irish peasants and fixing rents for the same people, and fixing wages and hours for the workers in Britain. In consequence of this and other changes in my outlook I began to worry our Liberal candidate and my fellow members of the Liberal Association. In this work James MacPherson, Francis Davey, Charlie Sumner, A. A. Watts, E. Metivier, Francis Johnson, his wife, Jessie Thompson, and Tom Glossop could always be relied on to back me up. When the Dockers' Strike took place I joined the local committee and assisted to raise money in support of the strikers. We collected from door to door every Saturday while the dispute lasted.

Either at the close or during the strike I met Will Thorne, then engaged in forming the Gas Workers' Union. He immediately attracted me and some others, and in May 1889 I joined the Bromley E Branch of the Union and have remained a member ever since, although for the most part of the time I have been an employer and not a working man in the ordinary sense. I have been a trustee of the Union for many years, and for the past seven years have been elected at the top of the poll as delegate representing the London District of the Union at the Labour Party Conference. Joining this Union opened up new fields of work. I attended branch meetings fairly regularly, persuaded members to join in local and political work, though the initiative in this was usually taken by my friend Charlie Sumner. I should like here to say that of all the men it has been my good fortune to work with during my forty

years in Bow and Bromley, there is no one who on all occasions proved himself more true and loyal than Charlie Sumner. In dark days and bright he was always the same. The work he did will never be fully known, but we who worked with him were always inspired by his splendid enthusiasm and his downright loyalty to the Union and his class. He knew nothing of economics according to the books, but he had a clearer conception of right and wrong than most experts I have met. Together we roped in the Union to help the "bass-dressers" a band of men and women who were being sweated and exploited in a shameful manner. We got our branch to join up with the "Legal Eight-hour Day Demonstration Committee," a committee which organized May Day demonstrations in accordance with the decisions of the Paris International Conference in 1889. I was sent as a delegate and was elected by the delegate meeting to serve on the executive. Eleanor Marx Aveling and Dr. Aveling were members of this committee—in fact, without Eleanor Aveling the committee would have soon ceased to exist. In addition to working on the Legal Eight-hour Day Committee, she found time to assist in the gigantic task of creating and consolidating the Gas Workers' Union, especially on the International side. This Union, although one of the youngest, was foremost in its advocacy of political action and in support of the International. At its annual demonstration in Beckton Road I have seen Bebel, Singer, Liebknecht senior, and other European Socialists.

For some years the May Day celebrations were held on Sundays, although there were always a few enthusiasts who met on the 1st of May no matter what day the 1st fell on. I remember on one occasion myself and Charlie Sumner and two banner-carriers were the only persons who left Bow for Hyde Park, though on the Embankment we mustered several hundred behind our flag. It is a long way

from Bow to Hyde Park, only enthusiasts can stick such a walk on a Sunday morning. I spoke at all these demonstrations. On the first occasion I considered it a great honour to be speaking on the same platform with Michael Davitt, Cunninghame-Graham, and John Burns, with J. E. Williams as chairman. I fancy I got chucked in as makeweight. We were all allowed an equal number of minutes to speak. One speaker was very eager to get us all finished so that he could fill up the rest of the time. Before I had been going five minutes my coat was being pulled and I heard a deep voice muttering "Time." Although I am not considered an unpopular speaker, I have always considered it a mean sort of thing to take up other people's time—though I have often sat on a platform for two hours on end waiting for my turn to come to finish a meeting. It has become almost a custom at demonstrations to fix me as last speaker. The promoters always declare it is done to keep the audience, but my first time in Hyde Park taught me how pushful and eager some people may be when they want to hear their own voice.

All this time I was still a member of the Liberal Party, finding it more and more difficult to square Liberalism and the demands of Labour. Everybody connected with the Liberal Party was very kind to me: Mr. Montagu always helped any Labour cause on whose behalf I appealed to him. The Carpenters' and Joiners' dispute ran away with all the funds of the Union; some of their members came to me and asked would I appeal to him for a loan. I did so, and he gave them some considerable assistance in the way of a loan. He also helped the Free Speech fight at the World's End, Chelsea. I cannot say how it has happened, but all through my political life I have been able to raise considerable funds for assisting the movement in various ways. But though men like Montagu, Murray MacDonald, and Corrie Grant were very kind, my mind continually took me

towards the Socialists. I read their literature, went to hear Morris and Hyndman, listened to the debates between Henry George and Hyndman, and between Hyndman and Bradlaugh, and on each occasion found myself theoretically on the side of Hyndman. I was very interested in unemployment and soon became a convert to the theory of a shorter working day and increase in the spending power of the workers through higher wages. I wrote letters to the Press and waged a campaign for an eight-hour day by Act of Parliament for all Government and Municipal employees.

At a Liberal and Radical delegate meeting held in the National Liberal Club I moved a resolution demanding legislation along these lines. All the good, old-fashioned Liberals and individualist Radicals opposed this, but I carried the day by a big majority by sheer vehemence and persistence. The carrying of this resolution created a great stir, Liberal capitalists were up in arms, John Morley denounced the proposition for all he was worth. I challenged him to tell the nation the difference between fixing hours and wages in Britain and fixing rents in Ireland. He replied he had not the time to enter into such a controversy. But we in Bow and Bromley had time. We sent forward a resolution in identical terms demanding an eight-hour day for all Government employees to the National Liberal Federation for its next conference, which was to be held in Manchester. I was elected to go as a delegate and to move the resolution. Sir James Kitson presided over a huge gathering in the Free Trade Hall. Pressure of all kinds was brought to bear on me to persuade me not to move the resolution; Sidney Webb and H. W. Massingham both wrote agreeing the resolution was a good one, but the time was not ripe, that we must wait till the iron- and coal-masters of the North had been won over. J. A. Murray MacDonald, our candidate, took me to Mr. Shaw Lefevre,

who talked to me like a statesman and politician, but I was pigheaded and obstinate. I said it was a conference, and a rank and filer like myself was entitled to be heard. But the caucus said otherwise; when I mounted the platform Sir James rang a bell. I took no notice. One half of the audience supported me, the other half tried to howl me down. After a few minutes I was gently but firmly pushed down the steps and thus ended my connection with Liberalism.

We cannot tell what would have happened in British politics if the War had not come. It is certain, however, that stifling me at Manchester, refusing even to consider a proposal sent up by an ordinary delegate, created disgust in the minds of all lovers of free speech and true Liberalism and drove many young people into the S.D.F. and I.L.P. I at once let it be known that whenever the next general election was over and done with I should join the Socialists. My mind had been with them for some time. The action of Sir James Kitson only precipitated a break that was bound to come. But before this happened many efforts were made to keep me with the orthodox. I was a very poor man, struggling with poverty, and the temptation to stay where I was with the Liberals was very strong indeed.

The School Board Election, which returned Mrs. Besant to the School Board in 1887, was a testing time. I did not like her atheism or birth-control views. All the same, her great big appeal for education and the care of children's bodies and minds appealed to us all, and when she was returned and commenced to do things she became one of the foremost of our leaders. It was a great disappointment when she left us, but no one said a word of reproach. We gathered thousands strong to bid her good-bye. Her example showing steadfast adherence to what she believed in, and her courage in facing friends and foes when she changed her religious outlook helped lots of us also to keep

straight and "march breast forward." Consequently, when Bolton King and J. A. Murray MacDonald arranged for me to visit Warwickshire with a view to my becoming successor to Mr. P. H. Cobb, the retiring Liberal member, I was able on my return to say, "No, thank you. I can only stand as a Socialist."

The same happened in regard to the London County Council. At the first L.C.C. election in January 1889 Bow and Bromley returned Jane Cobden as one of its members. She is now Mrs. Fisher Unwin. We were all very proud that we had returned one of the first women to the L.C.C. After her election it was decided by the Courts that women were not eligible to sit as County Councillors, so we had to choose another candidate. I had done a lot of agitation on behalf of women's right to act in this capacity, speaking at drawing-room meetings and at big demonstrations. A group of West End people agreed that if I was adopted by Bow and Bromley as candidate they would subscribe a maintenance fund. I was selected, but was obliged to give the same reply: "I can only stand as a Socialist." Later on my good friend Samuel Montagu, who a little later on became Lord Swathling, tried his hand with me. He had always been a friend to any cause needing help on whose behalf I appealed to him, so he imagined he could persuade me not to sacrifice a career for the sake of what he described as an unpractical theory and dream. I met him in the House of Commons and accidentally met John Burns at the same time. John, always on the look-out for a bit of scandal, asked me what I was doing having a private talk with a millionaire banker. I replied: "I am trying to make a Socialist of him." Sir Samuel asked me what I was going to do with my life, pointing out that if I really desired to help the masses he would help me, that his influence would get me a safe seat, and once in the House of Commons with his backing my future and my work for the people

was secured. I told him I had become a Socialist and wanted to preach Socialism. He replied: "Don't be silly, I am a Socialist, a better Socialist than you. I give a tenth of my riches each year to the poor." I said: "Yes, I know how good you are and respect you more than it is possible to say, but, my dear friend, we Socialists want to prevent you getting the nine-tenths. We do not believe in rich and poor and charity. We want to create wealth and all the means of life and share them equally among the people." He said: "But think of your wife and children; how much nicer it would be for them. I will give you a start now in Whitechapel at five pounds a week as my agent, and we will get you a seat in this place at the first opportunity. You can preach all the Socialism you like: all I ask is support for the Liberal Party, which is the best instrument even for your Socialism." I did not like to hurt his feelings by blankly saying no, so after a two and a half hours' talk with him I promised to talk it over with my wife and write him my decision. I did this and wrote him next day that both of us had decided my place was with the Socialists, that we were very grateful to him for his goodwill and kindness, but could do no other.

Murray MacDonald, who had more to lose by my leaving the Liberals than any other person—because it was certain that even if we returned him as M.P., which we did, our defection from the Liberal Party meant he would lose the seat, as he did at the 1895 election—never tried to persuade me not to follow my own mind; indeed, he encouraged me to do so, and I can never be grateful enough to him for the kindness with which he has always treated me, although my action must have been a bitter disappointment to him. His election for Bow and Bromley in 1892 was a great event. I was his agent, we fought the election on a minimum of money, nobody believed we would win, but win we did. Keir Hardie, who had won West Ham, came

and helped us the night before our poll. The following night we who had become Socialists packed up, left the Liberals, and formed the Bow and Bromley branch of the Social Democratic Federation.

I have been an unpaid propagandist for Socialism all through the past thirty-five years, except for twelve months, 1896-7, when I worked for the S.D.F., and before that did no end of voluntary work for Liberalism. I have always liked public speaking, though now I am a bit older in years the strain becomes rather severe. Ever since my early days as a member of the S.D.F. it has been my custom to give nearly all my week-ends to the movement. As a result I have travelled this country from John o' Groats to Land's End, speaking in villages, townships, and cities. No matter where I find myself there is always someone to give me a word of good cheer. The only person who has paid for this work is my wife, so if any thanks are due to me for this sacrifice of time and energy, the thanks are due to her and no one else, because she has borne the loneliness of life without any regret, feeling sure the work we were trying to do was for the good of mankind.

There is one aspect of life connected with propaganda which needs emphasizing. The movement should take care of the men and women who do this work, and should be prepared when necessary to pay for extra long holidays so that man and wife may have time to recognize each other and enjoy each other's company. When at work in the mill at home it was my custom, directly my work was finished on Saturday, to leave London for the provinces, do a meeting on Saturday night, three on Sunday, and catch the night train back, ready to start work at seven o'clock on Monday morning. My trains would land me at the London termini at all hours—3, 3.30, 4, 5 o'clock in the morning. There was no money for cabs, no buses, or trains, so often it was my lot to walk to Bow from King's

Cross and Euston. Always when arriving home at these early hours my wife would be waiting up with a first-class breakfast and a nice big fire. How she managed things is a mystery; our family kept growing, but my wages were for a long time only thirty shillings a week. We were very happy in those days. Somehow our hearts kept young and the world seemed young. We worked and looked for a future which would be bright for us and for others. Whenever we had to make a decision as to our future we both thought only of what was good for the movement. We never stopped to argue about personal advancement. Whatever political position has come my way, has come without any seeking by either of us, and so these early years of propaganda and hard manual labour may be counted among the very happiest of our married life, which is rapidly approaching fifty years.

We never trained our children to be Socialists: all of them went to church and Sunday school, and when old enough decided for themselves their future. Only for a year or two did they as children come under the influence of heterodoxy, and that was for a period when I left the Church and they attended the Ethical Sunday School in Bow, organized and conducted by the prince of teachers, F. J. Gould. All of them went about with me to propaganda meetings, selling literature and generally taking part in the work of helping to gather money for the cause. One time, in Victoria Park, the families of my comrades in the branch and my children sold thousands of copies of *Merrie England* when that fine book was sold at a penny. Books I read they read. Churches, cathedrals I visited, they came with me. They learned Socialism as I did, in the school of experience. During the controversies raised by Annie Besant when she joined the Theosophical Society, and by Stanton Coit when he formed the Ethical Society. They came and heard the discussions and also met face to

face Dr. Cosmo Gordon Lang, when he was Bishop of Stepney, and later on argued religion and atheism with the curates and rector of Bow, although nearly all were confirmed members of the Church of England.

The one big meeting which brought new ideas before my family was the first public meeting addressed by Annie Besant after her conversion to Theosophy. This came about because she asked me to preside over the meeting which was held in the Bow and Bromley Institute. The meeting was a crowded one, at least 2,500 people were present. There was a little excitement which, under the magic of her voice and personality, soon gave way to complete silence. I have always looked back with pleasure to the fact that I took the chair at this meeting, where this famous woman made her first public confession of faith in positive religion and away from negative agnosticism.

After the general election of 1892, when I had joined the Social Democratic Federation, Bow and Bromley became the cockpit of Socialism in East London. Our branch was about forty strong. We were all in good jobs, all very enthusiastic, and convinced our mission was to revolutionize the world. Our meetings were usually well attended and orderly. Our branch meetings were like revivalist gatherings. We opened with a song and closed with one, and often read together some extracts from economic and historical writings. These weekly branch meetings were held in the premises of a fine club established by Annie Besant for match-girls after she joined the Theosophical Society. The association of the branch with this club brought Dr. Besant into close personal relationships with our little crowd of rebels and established a friendship and respect for her which, so far as I am concerned, grows stronger as the years go by. Mrs. Lloyd, the club superintendent, was a good friend, giving us all the facilities of the club for a nominal rent. Every Saturday we ran

dances, humorously telling our critics we were going to dance into Socialism. Like the Young Communists and junior members of the present-day I.L.P., we were all very dogmatic and prided ourselves on our knowledge of economics. We ran an economic study class under Comrade Hazell and wearily struggled with *Das Kapital* and Engels' *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*. My wife, though heavily burdened with a large family and small income, attended the branch meetings and the economics class. We were firm adherents and supporters of the principles connected with the equality of the sexes and equal pay for equal work. In company with my branch of what was then the Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union we fought elections, making things hot for all our Lib-Lab trade union comrades and friends. James Macpherson was one of our stalwarts. He started his Shop Assistants' Union in Bow after a meeting addressed by T. P. O'Connor and myself, and promptly got the sack from Rylands and Son. Together we used to hold two or three open-air meetings a week. Sometimes we would talk for a solid hour to each other, then a dog or a drunk would come along and help us get a crowd.

We were among the branches of the S.D.F. who censured Harry Quelch because he met the Prince of Wales—who later became King Edward. It was very childish. Harry Quelch was one of the leading members of the London Trades Council and a member of its Executive Committee. This body was invited to attend a function which the Prince of Wales was also to attend, and as sensible people they attended because the whole affair was nothing to do with politics directly or indirectly. Quelch appeared in what is known as morning dress, a high hat, white waistcoat, etc. One would have imagined from the indignation all this evoked that he had deserted and gone over to the enemy.

He was upset that I joined in the censure, and in later life so was I. What did it matter if he met a prince? Perhaps they could each teach the other something, and as to clothes, while I myself attach no importance to what I wear, this is no reason why others should not appear in what clothes please them. Lenin, when asked by the first Soviet ambassador in Germany if he should wear Court dress to meet the Kaiser, replied that he might dress in a petticoat if by so doing he helped Communism; and that is really all there is to it.

We were, as I say, tremendous workers and confident in our mission. We never feared our enemies and did not feel we needed armed guards such as Harry Quelch and our Bermondsey comrades thought were necessary. It is said there is nothing new under the sun. Our modern Fascists may discover their pioneers in the "Skeleton Army," which I will speak of later. Those who to-day are trying to establish Labour guards to defend Labour rights against police and Fascists may like to know that thirty years ago leading men in the S.D.F., like Harry Quelch, Hunter Watts, and J. E. Williams, all believed it was necessary to arm and drill guards for the same purpose.

The old headquarters of the S.D.F. in Bermondsey Square no longer exist, but in the days when the club was in full swing Quelch and others could be found almost any night drilling raw recruits for Labour's army. I think the pages of *Justice* will bear me out when I say the original policy we were all expected to stand for was the "Bullet, bomb, or ballot-box," though none of us really believed in the efficacy of the first two, because the S.D.F. leaders and rank and file always opposed, as do the Communists to-day, all forms of violence against individuals.

All the same, Hyndman and some of his close friends always talked of revolution. I am sure H. M. Hyndman, up to 1914, always imagined the day would dawn when he

and a few others would seize the Government offices and drive out those he looked upon as whited sepulchres and devourers of widows' houses. When, with others, I was elected a Guardian of the poor he continually pressed upon me the importance of mastering the job, and when he and others seized the centre to be prepared and competent to take charge of East London.

My activities as a Guardian brought me into conflict with the local bigwigs and brought on more disturbances. Once, at St. Martin's Hall, Westminster, a Poor Law Conference was held; a crowd of supporters of the Charity Organization Society first refused to allow me to speak, and then talked of chucking me out. A Mr. Chance, afterwards Sir William Chance, was among this little mob, but I was a hefty, rough-looking handful, and although they danced round me and talked together, I finally talked them down and made my speech. But in Bow and Bromley our friends the enemy tried to break up our meetings, and my pacifism was as usual sorely discomfited. On one occasion a noted local personage talked Herbert Burrows down, would not let him get out a word. This brother was supported by a noisy band of about twenty. After mild and violent expostulation Tom Glossop and I took him by each shoulder and just luffed him downstairs. He said we bumped him on the steps; all I know is when we got to the bottom we were set about by his friends and for a time there was a very rough house. He summoned me for assault, alleging I had brutally ill-used him by bumping him on the stairs. This was my first appearance in a police court, and had it not been for the presence of Corrie Grant, who was a Queen's Counsel, and one of the best friends I ever had, things might have gone badly for me. As it was, the magistrate gave my prosecutor a good lecture on how to behave at a public meeting and dismissed the case, and we Socialists were hailed as defenders of law and order.

On another occasion the local ratepayers gathered in force to protest against our Guardians paying so much outdoor relief. We also attended and asked to be allowed to put questions and move amendments. On this being refused we moved the chairman leave the chair. He refused, so we elected another chairman and for the rest of the night the meeting was carried on with two chairmen. This was a really comic gathering, the two chairmen solemnly pretending to carry out the duty of calling on speakers and putting resolutions.

Talking thus of rowdy meetings reminds me of the Albert Hall in 1913 and early 1914, when the *Daily Herald* organized two meetings in support of the Dublin Strike. At one of these our young friends connected with various London hospitals, medical students, determined to break us up. We got news of this and made provision to meet them by organizing the London taxi-drivers, who came in great numbers armed with spanners and other persuasive instruments. No student got into the meeting. A few attempted to rush the doors of the main circle, instantly the stewards from all quarters of the hall were on the spot. My son Willie and his friend dropped down the hall from box to box to be in the scrum, and our friends of the medical profession went away bruised and, I hope, wiser men. The same kind of thing happened at the end of the War, when we were restarting the *Daily Herald*. On this occasion stink bombs of a particularly foul kind were used. Our meetings just carried on, as indeed was the case whenever we were attacked.

I ought to make it clear that on no single occasion did we of set purpose interfere with or break up a meeting. If, as a result of insults or refusal to conduct the business fairly, meetings were broken up, the responsibility rested with those who were too stupid to carry the business through in an orderly manner. A case of this kind happened

in connection with a local church meeting. Some years ago it was the custom for trustees of certain local charities to be elected by parish meetings summoned by the vicar or rector of the parish. The clergy generally managed to put their own nominee in office. We Socialists thought there should be a change and attended the meeting held in the church in full force. The vicar put himself in the chair, allowed no minute to be read, himself read a notice convening the meeting, proceeded to nominate and declare elected a certain ratepayer as trustee—the whole proceeding taking about three minutes or less. We could not sit down, or stand, for this, so we made a fuss. Our vicar hastily left the church and ordered the lights out. I urged the several hundred people to sit tight, saying I would get lamps and candles, which I proceeded to do. A few minutes after we recommenced the meeting by candlelight, about three dozen people holding candles above their heads. I was elected chairman and we elected our own trustee. Our action was approved by the Charity Commissioners, who accepted our trustee and refused the vicar's disorderly nomination. Some people severely censured us because of this disturbance in a church: even the most dense person can see the discredit for the whole business rested, not with us, but with the obscurantist old gentleman who was unable to realize the "schoolmaster had been abroad" and working people could no longer be treated as dummies.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME TOO LIVELY MEETINGS

**A**LL who take part in Socialist, Labour, or even religious and ordinary political agitation can tell stories of exciting incidents in which they have taken part. So I will interrupt my narrative to tell a few connected with my own experiences.

As quite a young boy I heard William and Catharine Booth speak in Whitechapel Road. I joined their temperance organization—that is, signed the pledge at the Christian Mission. Mrs. Booth was one of those speakers who always attract young people. She was truly named “Mother of the Army.” I never cared much for her husband who, I think, was much too dictatorial to be a true leader of men. There is no doubt, however, that for a time this Christian Mission movement, afterwards called the Salvation Army, with its message of Blood and Fire, Heaven and Hell, did turn vicious people into virtuous, drunkards into sober men and women, and as a consequence publicans and others organized a counter-attraction and called it the “Skeleton Army.” I forget the name of the leader, he was what would be described in these days as a neurasthenic. He jumped about like a howling dervish, made all manner of absurd and libellous charges against the Booth family, and gathered to himself all the flotsam and jetsam from Flower and Dean Streets and the courts and alleys around Brick Lane and Commercial Street. Whenever the Salvationists went for a march or held a meeting there was also the Skeleton Army, making night hideous with their blasphemous shouting, singing, and cursing. Often there was a pitched battle between those who supported the army and those who hated it. I remem-

ber on one occasion outside Whitechapel Church finding myself in the midst of the most unholy, scrapping, kicking, butting, and hitting it has ever been my lot to be in. The Salvationists never fought, they took their gruelling as all in the day's work, though new converts occasionally broke loose and gave the "Skeletons" a dose of their own medicine.

This spurious movement soon died, but not till its leaders had tried a fall with the Radical workers of East London. This took place for the last time at a meeting which I helped to organize. The Skeleton Army chiefs issued a handbill saying their army intended taking part in the meeting. We knew what they meant so we took precautions and organized as fine a band of "chuckers-out" as could be found anywhere on earth. They were recruited from the ranks of coal- and market-porters. The late Edward North Buxton was in the chair, and our supporters punctuated every word with cheers. The "Skeletons" retaliated by interjecting rude remarks. The poor chairman was in despair and asked from whence had come these men claiming to give him support. This sort of thing only lasted for a short time, at a given signal the Skeleton Army rose from their seats and made for the platform, and then the fun waxed fast and furious. The army was no match for the porters and as the hall was at the top of a stairway chucking-out was a relatively easy matter. One comic incident occurred: a boy friend of mine who had come to help see fair play found himself attacked by our friends, and before he could be rescued was half over the balustrade. Myself and another saved him by grasping his trousers, and in doing so tore the seat out so that they were in two parts. The sight of the boy's plight restored some good humour, so after an hour's lively interlude the meeting proceeded to its end. This was the finish of the Skeleton Army, which very soon dissolved.

My next adventures were with the Irish. Although for years I worshipped at the political shrine of Mr. Gladstone, I hated the coercion policy of his 1880 Government, a policy initiated and carried through by Mr. "Buckshot" Forster. The London Radical Clubs agitated strongly against this policy. The Tower Hamlets is that part of East London stretching from Aldgate to Bow Bridge on one side, and Hackney and Bethnal Green to the river on the other, and forty years ago could boast of a very large Irish population. From 1880 to 1885 a Liberal, Professor Bryce, and a Tory, C. T. Ritchie, sat as its M.P.'s. The Irish and the Radicals left Ritchie alone, even though he supported coercion. All our opposition centred on Professor Bryce. As a result he found it almost impossible to address a meeting. In order to get himself and others a hearing the Bow and Bromley Institute, a fine public hall in Bow Road, capable of holding two or three thousand people, was hired and a meeting called. Edward North Buxton was chairman, Professor Bryce, Edward Rider Cook, and a whole crowd of notabilities were present. Not a word did anyone of them get out. Five minutes after eight o'clock a small crowd on one side of the hall rose and, to the music and words of *God Save Ireland*, marched as one man to the platform, picking up on their way Fanny Parnell and holding her aloft, just brushed Buxton, Bryce, and their friends off the platform. No one was hit, no one was hurt; all that happened was that a group of earnest men and women had refused to hear a defence of coercion and persecution in Ireland. Another friend and myself were the only Englishmen allowed to remain on the platform. The result of this disturbance was that the railway company refused ever again to let the only big hall in the district to be used for political purposes.

On another occasion, when in Whitehall, I came in conflict for the first, but not the last, time with the police. I am not in favour in general of wilfully disregarding law

and order. There are times though when, in my opinion, it is imperative that self-respecting men and women should revolt. Between 1876 and 1880 there was a lot of agitation against land enclosures and on behalf of land reform. This was before the days of Henry George in England. The leader of the movement was a John de Morgan who, in some mysterious manner, mixed up Magna Carta, Dr. Kenealey, and Arthur Orton (the Tichborne claimant) with land reform. Like the people of Athens I went after this new thing, to see what it was, and one fine night found myself part of a huge crowd in Trafalgar Square which, in defiance of the law, proposed to carry our new charter to the House of Commons. After fiery speeches we started off. When we reached the statue of Charles I our leaders were collared and marched off—at least they disappeared. We were left a mob, shouting, singing, and running till we reached old Scotland Yard, which was then a cul-de-sac. Into this we were shoved and pushed by the police until all at once, out of the barracks came trotting what seemed to be an army of police on horseback. I think this was the hottest corner with the police I ever was in. My toes got frightfully bruised and I received a severe kick or punch in the back; but although we were packed very closely and could only get out through the entrance by which other people were crowding in, nobody got seriously hurt. What happened to de Morgan I never heard, he seemed to drop right out of things as other and more stable organizations were established.

Later on, after the 1885 election, during the terrible winter of 1886, there were many demonstrations of the unemployed, especially the famous one which ended in the arrest, among others, of John Burns, who is said to have shouted the slogan, "Bread or Lead." I was in the Square, but did not follow into Pall Mall or Piccadilly. The ostensible object of the demonstration was the rather

stupid one of advocating protection as a remedy for unemployment. It was paid for by sugar refiners who wanted a safeguarding duty on imported sugar. Hyndman, Burns, and others objected to the advocacy of this policy as making dupes of the unemployed and so summoned a counter-demonstration. When the meeting broke up the demonstrators smashed the windows of the clubs in Pall Mall, whose wealthy inhabitants jeered at them. This tiny riot so alarmed the rich that within a few hours £100,000 was raised at the Mansion House to relieve the unemployed.

On another occasion the Social Democratic Federation, Socialist League, and Radical Clubs came into conflict with the police with serious consequences. A demonstration of protest against the Government's Irish policy was called in Trafalgar Square. The police prohibited the meeting. They did this under a new rule which the Commission promulgated after the previous disturbances. In spite of this the demonstration was held. Cunninghame Graham, John Burns, and others were arrested. The Guards were called out, and one man, named John Linnell, was killed. I am not sure that this demonstration did much good to the cause of Ireland, but it did secure the reopening of the Square on the conditions under which meetings are now permitted to be held there. During this struggle Annie Besant was in the thick of the crowd, bearing a charmed life, as she did in Palace Yard on another memorable night when, by her sheer personality, she prevented a riot during the time Charles Bradlaugh was being flung out of the House of Commons.

While these things were happening in West London we, in East London, were passing through our own difficulties. The Tory member for Bow and Bromley, a Captain Colomb, had in the 1886 election turned out the Liberal, W. A. Robson, on the slogan "Vote for Colomb and No Coercion." The Liberal Party, of which I was honorary secretary,

managed to preserve some of these posters, which we took with us to Conservative meetings and held up to remind our member, who regularly voted for Arthur Balfour's Coercion Bills, of his electoral pledges. We never made any disturbance, but simply held up the posters. Our Tory friends, as was to be expected, grew very angry and attempted to chuck us out. On two occasions they closed the meetings and turned off the light, leaving the halls crowded. Nothing daunted, we went out for lamps and candles and carried on, passing resolutions, calling for the resignation of our M.P. There was an occasion when the Tories came back, and then there was a fierce struggle for the huge armchair, which eventually turned upside down with the Tory chairman safely trapped underneath. There was retaliation by Tories at our Liberal meetings, but they made a poor show. We usually managed to hold our own.

One of my early experiences was connected with the Social Democratic Federation at Burnley, and happened over thirty years ago. I had gone up on the Saturday afternoon and addressed a big gathering. As soon as I appeared on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock we were told to hold a meeting in one of the wards outside a big mill. We started with a good crowd of people, that is to say, the chairman got well away with his speech and finished. Then my turn came; the watchman in charge set a hooter going, which continued the whole time I was speaking—which was about an hour and a quarter. My voice at the end was like a frog croaking, and my throat felt as if it had been rasped. All the same I spoke at another open-air meeting in the afternoon and at night gave an hour's talk in St. James's Hall, and then adjourned to the Market Square, which was packed with some thousands of people, most of whom were on our side. But there was a strong body of Liberals present, led by a well-known Lib-Lab speaker. This little lot kept me at it till close on midnight and forced me to lose

my train home; but, worst of all, lost me my voice for at least three weeks. In those days I would never give in no matter what noise was made or how leather-lunged my opponents might be.

A similar thing happened in Birmingham about the same time. Those who know the Labour movement in the Midlands as it is now can have no idea of what things were like in the days when Arnold Pinchard, as a High Church curate, joined hands with Arthur Tooth, who was by the way of being a bit of an agnostic, in preaching Socialism. Tooth was a good, class-conscious Marxian of the rigid type. He worshipped at the shrine of Marx, and H. M. Hyndman was his living guide, philosopher, and friend. I used to stay at his home and so know what his views were. I also know that his mother and family were always exceedingly kind to me. The occasion of which I am writing was one on which it had been agreed we should do some pioneer work at Smethwick. Smethwick, now a big town, was quite a small place then. We arrived at some cross-roads near Cape Hill schoolroom to find ourselves stopped by the police. On my suggestion we went over to another corner and held our meeting. All that happened was that my name and address were taken, but the audience was so large, the noise and din so great, that my poor throat was ruined. All the same, our motto in those days was "Where duty calls or danger be, never wanting be." So in the afternoon I spoke out at Nechells or Aston way, again in the open air, then an indoor meeting in a schoolroom, and at eight o'clock at the Bull Ring. This place was a kind of miniature Marble Arch corner of Hyde Park as Hyde Park is on Sunday evenings now. Secularists and Anarchists, Socialists and Liberals, Salvation Army and other religious bodies, and, worst of all, a temperance speaker with a voice like two foghorns hammered into one. This genial barbarian came and landed his platform within a yard of mine,

and for over two hours we addressed, or at least thought we addressed, the huge audience our performance attracted. At the end of this time, at about 10.30 p.m., his throat either burst or his spirits failed him. Anyhow, he gave up and left the field clear for me to finish the meeting, which I did after talking quite sanely for about thirty minutes more. I was made a great fuss of because our friend, the advocate of temperance, had been giving our men a most unholy time by his most intemperate and rude behaviour.

Oxford has many pleasant memories for me so far as "rags" go. My first experience was in the summer of 1894 or thereabouts. I had been down with Hyndman to a meeting in the Guildhall, presided over by Professor York Powell. All the speakers had been put through it very badly, myself included. The next Sunday I was advertised to speak at the Martyrs' Memorial in the centre of the town. I arrived with two or three comrades only to find our way to the platform barred by a solid mass of young gentlemen who simply refused to budge. In those days there was a fine old comrade who used to sweep the college chimneys. He had a large family, mostly girls. Some were with us, and with a chivalry which none of us imagined we possessed we invited those girls to lead the way—which they did, using hands and arms to such good effect that in a few minutes I found myself addressing the howling mob. We kept this meeting going for nearly three hours, more than half the time in dumb show, but we had the last word.

On another occasion H. D. Harben, Harold Laski, G. D. H. Cole, and William Mellor organized a meeting on behalf of women's suffrage in the Corn Exchange. This was a very merry-go-round affair because, in addition to the noise, the darling boys out for a little innocent amusement let loose mice among the female part of the audience. In spite of this we all managed to say our piece, as we intended to do.

Later on, during the War, when the agitation for peace negotiation was in full swing, I was asked to speak in the same hall with the Rev. F. B. Meyer and Austin Harrison, with the Rev. Mr. Talbot, son of the then Bishop of Winchester, as chairman. The Rev. F. B. Meyer refused to go on the platform with me; he objected to my pacifism and to my attitude towards the War. So we started one short. This did not matter, as a large part of the audience not only desired to talk, but insisted on doing so altogether, with result that the chairman and Austin Harrison took quite a long time to finish their speeches. Then came my turn, which for a time was cut off by a slight shower of tomatoes which had apparently been grown for my special benefit. This little pleasantry, though not a single shot got home on any of us on the platform, settled the hash of the interrupters. Although we were advocating peace and pacifism the chairman and speakers agreed we had carried out the scriptural injunction and been smitten on both cheeks, and therefore urged the stewards to do their duty—which I am glad to record they did in fine style, being ably organized and assisted by Professor Haldane and a great big lump of an athletic man who just leaned over chairs and lifted offenders off their seats and gently passed them out. Earl De la Warr and a group of his friends also did fine work on this occasion.

A year or so later I was to speak in the Town Hall for the Labour Party. Someone in authority put the bar up and so gave me and the meeting a great advertisement. Consequently the meeting was held by permission of the head, Mr. Sanderson-Furness, in Ruskin College. The hall was packed to suffocation, but it was an orderly audience because of the presence of a lot of stewards organized by De La Warr and his friends. My young friends in Oxford are nothing if not ingenious. Realizing that rowdiness would not have a chance in the hall, they filled the side

street with cars, motor-bikes, and other instruments of productive noise, and gave my speech an accompaniment of clamour such as is usually associated with Bedlam.

I record these doings, not at all because I have any feelings other than of goodwill towards these young gentlemen of England, but solely to show what a nice, joyous, pleasant time Young Oxford could on occasion give such persons as me.

A year or two ago I spoke at the Union, supporting a motion downing or damning the Liberal Party. C. F. Masterman took the opposing side. I am glad to say my side won.

During the unemployment agitation of 1903-5 I was asked to speak at a meeting at Balliol College, at which I met for the first time Sir W. Beveridge, R. H. Tawney, and other young men intent on social reform. I was advocating Labour colonies, land development, and public works. These young men smothered me with their logic and economic reasoning, proving that unemployment was entirely a question of maladministration, that there was plenty of work for all if only the worker was better educated and his mobility increased. Their theoretical logic-chopping has been proved all wrong: Labour exchanges, with all their schemes of mobility, do not create work, and Steel-Maitland has been obliged to take up my proposal in a very truncated manner and start Labour land centres in order to get men back to the basic industry of working on the land. I like to think how right I was and how wrong facts, not theories, have proved these intellectuals to be.

I have also spoken a great many times at Cambridge, and am bound to say that the young men of England who attend that University treated me with more decorum and consideration than their friends at Oxford. The occasions on which I spoke at the Union were always fairly successful, both as to reception and in voting. I think it is a very good thing indeed that men like myself should attend

meetings of the Union both at Oxford and Cambridge, and at the other Universities throughout the country. Only last year 1927 I spoke at the Centenary debate connected with the University of London, and am glad to record that I persuaded the very large gathering of students to vote in support of the Labour movement. There is, however, always a feeling when speaking at such places that we are treated as rather extraordinary specimens. I rather resent this. I am sure there is nothing of this kind meant, but there is that kind of atmosphere. I found this also when being trotted round by bishops and others at a Church Congress or religious meeting of some kind or the other. When I was a member of the London Diocesan Conference and the House of Laymen I always had the feeling that I was regarded as rather an extraordinary being who had in a way strayed from my rightful quarters into those which should be reserved for another sort of person. Some of the leading men in the Church, the Bishop of London especially, use cockney "lingo" when speaking in the East End of London. I am certain that this does not make him appear to the workers as a workman, and it is this fact which at times makes me rather hesitant when speaking either at the Universities or to meetings made up largely of middle and upper class people. I am a bit self-conscious and extremely anxious to talk just as I would talk anywhere else, and find that thinking about how I shall talk makes the task of speaking much harder than it otherwise would be. This, however, by the way.

I had an exciting adventure at Glasgow during the War, I think in the summer of 1918. Sylvia Pankhurst and myself were invited by John MacLean and his band of rebels to take part in a meeting connected with peace and Russia. This gathering was to be held in the City Hall. At the last moment, I think the day before the meeting was to take place, we were informed that the City Hall

would not be available. John MacLean proclaimed far and wide that he would bring the lads from the Clydeside shipyards and docks armed with crowbars, hammers, and spanners to break down any opposition which the authorities might organize to prevent us holding the meeting. My wife was with me, and I was rather more nervous and anxious than usual, so I spent a good part of Sunday in an endeavour to persuade John MacLean and Sylvia Pankhurst to abandon any idea of the meeting. But they were both made of sterner stuff and refused to consider the question. I spent the night lying awake and wondering what I was going to do, because it was evident that if we attempted to rush the hall the result would be considerable bloodshed, because I had heard that the police were determined, and I was informed also that not only were they determined that there should be no meeting indoors, but that no meeting of any kind should take place.

So when the day came I went out to find first of all the Lord Provost and then the Chief of Police, and having got them both together I suggested that if they would allow us to hold the meeting outside the City Hall it was just possible I might, even at the eleventh hour, persuade Sylvia Pankhurst and John MacLean to give up the idea of forcing an entrance into the City Hall itself. After a great deal of discussion, and on the distinct understanding that I could pledge my word there would be no disturbance if the crowd were allowed to assemble close up to the City Hall, permission was given.

I then had to rush on and make my peace with my two colleagues. This took a very considerable time, during which I was reminded again and again that such attacks on free speech could only be overcome by physical resistance. In the end, though, I gained my way. An enormous crowd of some thousands gathered together an hour before the meeting was advertised to start. When we did start,

I think very fortunately for my word of honour, the heavens opened and rain descended. We were simply drenched through to the skin—all of us, including my wife and friends who had come with us merely as onlookers. A large proportion of the crowd remained to hear the speeches which we all delivered at great length, but I am quite certain it was the rain which really damped the revolutionary ardour of all present and compelled acquiescence in what many of the crowd considered as my cowardice in having done my best to prevent a riot.

After the meeting I was quite satisfied, however, that Nature and the Lord Provost had, as it were, saved my bacon; and I went to the station and occupied a "sleeper" to London quite satisfied that I had done my duty, although my point had been gained at the cost of whatever reputation I had for courage, and also at the cost of a good drenching.

In connection with the City Hall, Glasgow, there is a small incident which took place a few years previously during the Suffrage agitation of a more pleasant character. As has been recorded, on one occasion I lost my temper rather badly with Mr. Asquith and others and was suspended from service in the House of Commons for disorderly conduct. At the Christmas following someone sent me an anonymous present of a very valuable gold watch and chain, inscribed recording the incident. I tried hard to think who could possibly have sent me this present, but failed, until one night when I was speaking in the Glasgow City Hall. I put the watch on the table so that I stopped speaking at the right time. Miss Janie Allen was in the chair; she was a very ardent supporter of the movement and had been to prison on more than one occasion. As I picked up the watch after my speech something made me say to her: "Have you ever seen this before?" She replied: "Yes, once," and of course I then discovered who was the donor of my very handsome present.

The town of Wigan is not exactly a health resort or the kind of place any of us would go to for a holiday, or would choose to live in. (I hope no native of that salubrious city will be offended at me saying this, but I can only put down what the effect of the place was on me.) On one occasion, walking through Wigan to Ince, I found myself amid the collieries of the district, and for the first time in my life saw women working on the top of the pits. I am, of course, and always have been, an advocate of equality for women and equal pay for equal work, but when I saw these women dressed as they were and doing that kind of work, and looked around me at the surroundings, the only words that would come to my mind were "the abomination of desolation." I could not find the place where the trade-union official lived who was organizing my meeting, so I sat by the roadside and looked round and just howled, not loudly but, as they say of the children, deeply.

Later on I went to Wigan to hold a meeting in the centre of the town. When I arrived overnight the comrades informed me the meeting could not be held because the police had prohibited it. I told them we could not allow the police to prevent us holding our meeting if the place of meeting was a usual one, used by other people. They assured me this was the case, and that it was simply prejudice on the part of the Chief Constable. So after a talk we agreed that we would risk prosecution or imprisonment and hold the meeting.

When we arrived on the spot on Sunday morning, together with half a dozen others, we found a huge crowd assembled. Suddenly out of the crowd walked a very well-dressed man, who came up and greeted me, saying: "I am pleased to see you here, Mr. Lansbury, I used to hear you very often down in Bow." I could see the look of consternation on the faces of my colleagues, and also noticed that the crowd watched us with great curiosity as

we shook hands. Within a few seconds the gentleman who had given me this welcome introduced himself as the Chief Constable of the town, going on to explain that he had formerly served in the Metropolitan Police in the East End of London; that he was quite sure there would be no disturbance that morning because he knew me too well; that there was no need for all the hullabaloo that had taken place; all that he desired was that there should be a proper gangway for vehicles and pedestrians; that if the meeting was held at another spot which was adjacent to the one under dispute there would be no trouble at all.

I, of course, moved the stand and we held the meeting, and a very successful meeting it was. I am quite sure, however, that a good number of truly class-conscious comrades were quite upset because they had discovered I was on good terms with a chief constable. They did not understand the sort of attitude of mind which enables the policeman to have decent relationships with one of our number, and to remember this when later in life he occupies so important a position as that of chief constable of a big Lancashire town.

## CHAPTER VI

### A FRIEND

**A**MONG the many rich men and women whose goodwill and friendship I have enjoyed none brings more memories which I care to cherish than does the comradeship of the late Joseph Fels. I first met him during the summer of 1904. Unemployment was very bad in East London, and as usual I was taking a leading part in the agitation. The main plank in all my talk was work, not charity—unite idle men with idle land. Joseph Fels, a rich American soap manufacturer, was an ardent disciple of Henry George. Single Tax was to him the one and only key which would open the road for all other reforms. He did not object to Socialism or any other "ism," but did insist that free access to the land and all that therein is was a condition precedent to all measures, either of reform or even revolution. The fact that I was a clear-cut Socialist putting Socialism forward as the final and complete system of life which would abolish poverty made no difference to our friendship. In youth and early manhood he had known, through hard, bitter experience, what capitalism means to those who, without money or influence, dare to enter the competitive race for life and fortune. Unlike many rich people, he was never able to accept the pleasant doctrine so beloved by Samuel Smiles, which describes rich men as self made. He knew the accidental happenings which open the road to wealth—the meeting together of men with varied brain power, the pooling of experiences, such as those of the inventor and the business man. Consequently he was well aware that everybody could not be a capitalist

or monopolist, and that it was not true, as stated by Napoleon, that every private soldier carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack.

This made him one of the most unselfish, understandable men I ever met. It would take many pages to write down fully all the many big and little acts of kindness he did for me and mine, or to record the great help in counsel and material assistance which he gave me in my work as a Socialist agitator. He spent his money like water on unemployed agitation, founded the Vacant Land Cultivation Society—a society which, during the War, enabled thousands of tons of food to be produced from waste, derelict land. The Hollesley Bay, Laindon, and a score of other agricultural labour colonies owe their existence to him and his generous gifts of money. This, however, was but a tiny piece of his work. He was a man who literally went about doing good. There are thousands of people like me into whose lives he came, giving himself, his time, and money in an endeavour to assist them along the road of life. Struggling unknown artists of all nationalities could always rely on him for aid in their early days of struggle; people in slums, down-and-outs, with every avenue of help closed, have found in him a providence. Not a word I have written can express in any full measure his worth or the value of his example. He was small of stature but mighty big in heart. Often I have gone to him when all the world of men seemed against me and everything I cared for lost, and received inspiration, courage, and hope to go on, confident and sure the future was with us.

I shall not see his like again, because such men as he are very rare in the story of mankind. I have been blessed with many, many friends, but the ten years' close daily contact and work with him stands out unique among all other friendships with men. There are some other friendships about which I would like to write, especially one,

but as we are both still living this is impossible. I shall leave behind me a full story of all a present-day friendship has been to me, and without which I would long ago have been obliged to give up much of the public work I am doing.

I have said this much about Joseph Fels here because I wished to explain who he was and how I came to know him. Keir Hardie had met him in America and a friendship ensued which lasted till death. When the unemployment agitation in London was at its height, during 1904, he asked Hardie to introduce him to the man at Poplar who was making speeches about idle land and idle men. I was the guilty one; he rang me up and asked if he might come and see me. Rather petulantly I said *yes*. I had not much interest in the visit, because other rich men had often disgusted me with their long, wordy talk about the unemployed and unemployables. However, we met and a close friendship was formed which, though he is dead, has never ended. He had learned my history, all about the business and business troubles of a Socialist propagandist who was also a capitalist. Elsewhere I have told of our work in forming Labour colonies and the money he spent on organizing the unemployed. One thing he always insisted on about money with me: not once, but many times, he said, "Money is of no use except to help other people help themselves. I hate charity, and what I am doing is not charity but an effort to bring justice into the world."

With my wife I spent some happy week-ends at their lovely home at Bickley, and later at Cornwall Terrace, Regent's Park. On these occasions it was usual to meet men and women of all classes, professions, parties, religions, and nationalities. There never was a meeting place so cosmopolitan and free as the home of Joseph and Mary Fels. This man, unlike many other people I have met, was in

dead earnest. He believed private monopoly was a curse and so fought might and main against the evil.

When in 1913 he asked my wife and me to go with him to America we jumped at the chance. He booked our passage on the huge liner Kaiser Wilhelm II. This was the finest and fastest of the Hamburg-Amerika line—a floating palace. I have travelled on P. & O. and other British ships, but none excelled this German boat in accommodation and obliging service. I am a good sailor, and so was Joseph Fels. My wife and Mary Fels are not so fond of life on the ocean wave and were both rather ill a good part of the trip. A voyage even of five days can become very monotonous, but with Joseph Fels there never could be any such thing as monotony or doing nothing. Together we roamed all over the ship, found out all about wages, hours, and conditions; gave everybody Single Tax leaflets and some Socialist pamphlets, and wound up by spending afternoons and evenings in a big sitting-room arguing and discussing Socialism. Our travelling companions were all very rich people, so we had a lively time. Joe was asked again and again: "Well, why the hell don't you share out?" He had one answer: "I will make as much money as I can so as to help destroy the system which enables you and me to get what we don't earn."

One night we had a set debate, opened by myself. This went on till the early morning. Even then the audience was in no hurry to disperse. I must say that taken as a whole this audience of rich American men and women received all we both had to say in a very broadminded manner. Although they could not understand Joseph Fels they could understand me, because they knew I was not a rich man or likely to be one.

This propaganda on board ship was typical of the life of this wonderful little man. The truth of Single Tax was so true to him that he was obliged to proclaim it no matter

whose company he found himself in. I have heard him trying to convince the late Lord Long and Gerald Balfour, both of whom, hardened Tories though they were, listened with respectful attention because they knew how earnest he was.

You can imagine how quickly our five days' voyage passed amid all this excitement and propaganda. We arrived outside New York Harbour on a cold winter's morning amid brilliant sunshine. The Statue of Liberty, with its fine figure of freedom, seemed to welcome us with open arms. We were all examined mentally and bodily. There was just a doubt whether or not I would be stopped owing to my part in the Suffrage agitation and my imprisonment in connection with that movement. However, I convinced the authorities I was not dangerous, and then had to run the gauntlet of a score of newspaper men and women. It was all very strange and exciting: the main topics of discussion were the coming Carson rebellion, the suffrage, and unemployment agitations. After a wrestle with the Customs we went off to a hotel at Greenwich. The next day we started more interviews and meetings. I am not quite sure who are the most persistent interviewers, Bolshevik Russian or New York Pressmen. I think in some ways the Russians are most persistent.

As editor of the *Daily Herald* I was entertained at a Press dinner. As a member of the Labour Party, Socialists, Anarchists, and others gave us dinners—in fact, had we not soon left New York I should have needed new clothes. Never before in our lives had we experienced such overwhelming generosity and hospitality. Of course, suffrage women gave us receptions and entertainments. I addressed meetings nearly every night. I earned some money lecturing, but spoiled my chances through being too eager to deliver my soul about Socialism and the Suffrage. In Brooklyn and New York I spoke in churches on religion

and Socialism, and succeeded Professor Bryce as a speaker at the famous New York Luncheon Club. I quarrelled furiously with the Marxian Socialist, Morris Hilquit, because I supported industrial action as an aid to politics. Max Eastman, his wife, and colleagues of the *Masses* did all in their power to help us understand American politics and the futility of American Labour bosses. Ernest Thurtle, my son-in-law, got permission for us to go over big lumber mills to see how modern sawmills should be organized. I was convinced by observation that in Britain, man for man, we work much harder than in America. This is true of all classes except the idle rich. We went over municipal buildings and elementary day schools, met the Mayor of New York, went to Tammany Hall for a meal, and discovered Tammany was not as black as he is painted. The wonderful Brooklyn Bridge carrying foot passengers, trams, and other vehicles, and a railway was a source of admiration. We wondered why some of our rivers could not be crossed in the same manner.

After some weeks of this we left New York, with its underground, overground railways, and noisy, rattling, bustling trams, for Philadelphia. Here we stayed in the home of Professor Earl Barns and his family. Christmas came, and although away from home we spent a very, very happy time in this American home, where it was spent in the good, old-fashioned manner, with Santa Claus bringing everybody a nice, useful present. I cannot record a tithe of the happenings here. At this Christmas gathering we met Scott Nearing and his wife for the first time; he was then quite a respectable professor of economics and I pictured him ending his days as a prosy old man, teaching young men how to be respectable by not being too enthusiastic or too revolutionary. He has grown in every way, and although outside the ordinary rut, has become one of the very foremost of American Socialists.

We went over the huge Fels-naptha soap works and saw at work all the welfare schemes likely to make capitalism tolerable. With Maurice Fels I went over one of the very finest mental institutions in the world, a place which treats mental deficiency in a scientific, Christian, and human manner. Then I went off to Cleveland, Chicago, and Cincinnati. At all these places I spoke to big public meetings and at the City Luncheon Clubs. At Cincinnati my host was Dan Keifer and his family, ardent devotees of the Single Tax. On Sunday night I spoke in the People's Church with Pastor Bigelow. He is a good, courageous Socialist and pacifist who was tarred and feathered during the War by some "hundred per cent." Americans. It was a joy to meet such people in the flesh.

At Chicago I inspected the stockyards, watched the automatic slaughter of pigs, and the evolution of a pig into bacon and ham—a horrible business. Later I went over the settlement organized by Jane Addams, and at night was entertained at dinner by women suffragists, with Jane Addams presiding. I also spoke to a meeting of Chicago Socialists and spent a good deal of time learning about their methods of running newspapers and organization generally. In New York I did the same, going over the offices of the *Call* and *Vorwärts*—the German Socialist daily paper. This paper was paying its way, but the *Call*, like the *Daily Herald*, was having a big struggle to keep going.

I returned to New York to rejoin my wife and then together we travelled to Montreal to meet her sister and my brother. We liked Montreal very much, but had to hurry on to Ottawa as I had a lecture engagement to fulfil there. In Ottawa we drove about in sleighs. We found it very cold indeed—as cold, in fact, as I found it in Russia a dozen years later. Dr. Clarke, M.P., took us in hand, introducing us to all the well-known M.P.'s. We went to the House of Commons, heard Sir Wilfred Laurier speak, dined in the

members' dining-room, and were introduced to all the notabilities who were present. At night I addressed one of the biggest meetings of the tour. I may as well say here that everywhere we went we met people from Britain, and everywhere the audiences were very large and all gave me a splendid hearing and an excellent reception.

After this we went back to New York and travelled out to Yale and Harvard. Yale is a modern university, very large and up-to-date. I gave a lecture to the students, got a little heckling, but in the main the reception was extremely friendly. We dined in the Common Hall. I found this very like Oxford or Cambridge, except the buildings and equipment are more modern. The friend who was our host was a young man about twenty years of age, full of social enthusiasm. I met him later in London in 1918. He was here as a flying man in the American Air Force. As I have not heard from him since I fear he has joined that unnumbered host of young men sacrificed for the lie that they were fighting to end war. That was all the interest my friend had in the ghastly business.

Harvard is a much older and more scholarly looking place. We dined here, as at Yale, in the common room, and I lectured to a big audience of young people. I think this was the youngest audience I spoke to during the trip. Everyone at both these universities was kindness itself.

Back again in New York we attended the annual gathering of Socialist students, gathered from all American colleges and universities. There was a huge attendance, a grand dinner, singing, dancing, and one or two speeches. Mrs. Gilman Stetson spoke and so did I. My wife and I were given a great reception and made to feel quite at home.

We paid other visits to bankers and merchant princes, all of whom showed themselves eager to understand the British Labour movement, but all rather scornful about

Socialism. It was Mary and Joseph Fels who arranged these meetings and dinners for us.

Later we went on to Washington to attend the annual conference of the Single Taxers. At this conference I met many other rich men and women who, unlike Joseph Fels, could see all the evils of land monopoly but could not see evil in money and capitalist monopoly. Sam Gompers was also here, looking for all the world like a very prosperous Wall Street stockbroker.

While I was in Washington Lord Eustace Percy, then attached to the Embassy, very kindly called on me and was kindness itself—much more genial towards me than he has been since. I suppose I have grown evil in his eyes. We called at the White House, but the President was away. While here I addressed a huge meeting of women workers, mainly in the clothing trade. At this meeting a well-to-do woman made a fine speech, during which she explained why she joined the Socialist Party. She said that some years before, during a railway strike, she was convinced the men were right and gave big sums to the fighting fund. A few months after the dispute was settled she had to discuss her investments with her lawyer, and to her horror found most of her unearned income came from this railway company, which she knew underpaid and overworked its workers. Her first thought was to burn all her shares, but this she realized would only benefit the remainder of the stockholders. After nights of anxious thought she determined to hold on and use her money, time, and energy to destroy the system which gave her the right to live without work. All her wealth came to her because she was her father's daughter. This speech made a great impression on the vast audience.

We saw the House of Representatives at work, and a curious sight it was! Everybody talking at once, men standing in groups round the seats, holding what seemed

to be committee meetings, while one man addressed the chair in a voice like an undertaker's, nobody taking the least bit of notice of what he was saying. I think all speeches are distributed free to a member's constituents.

After Washington we went through Pittsburgh, seeing "hell with the lid off," as John Burns once said. Then to Chambersburg, where we were welcomed by the mother of our friend Mrs. Coates, the wife of Walter Coates, who was private secretary to Joseph Fels and his splendid helper and adviser, and one of the truest friends any man could wish to have. We saw here the memorial set up to commemorate Lee's march to Gettysburg, where the last great fight of the Civil War took place. We were in Maryland, and all the time the famous words and tune of the song, *Maryland, my Maryland*, which is also the tune we use for the *Red Flag*, would ring in my ears. It was so strange to be walking the same road, seeing the same places as those who sang that song and those also who went to battle chanting *John Brown's Body lies a Mouldering in the Grave, but his Soul goes Marching on*. I talked with people who had seen Lee's army and who watched and prayed in agony till the tidings of victory for the North came to hand.

After this we again went back to New York to arrange for our return. Joe Fels came in to say good-bye, he could not come to the ship. After a talk we went to see him off somewhere and said "good-bye" on the side-walk. He seemed depressed and ill in mind and body. We were both—that is, my wife and I—a little disconsolate. We had spent such a fine two months receiving his kindness and hospitality on a scale we never experienced before or thought of as likely to come our way. We shook hands and kissed each other several times, got on a tram, and left him standing there alone. I see him now, a small figure of a man, waving his hand in loving farewell. He looked lonely and lonesome, yet that could never be, because around him in

life and in death there must always have been the thanks and gratitude of the many hundreds of good and bad, deserving and undeserving lame dogs in the battle of life whom he had helped over stiles of difficulty. We never saw him again. In a few short weeks he was stricken low and passed away almost before any of us knew he was ill.

I owe much, very much, to my wife's parents for the help they gave me in my early efforts to take part in affairs. There are many others who deserve grateful memory, but none was more unselfish, impersonal with their assistance than Joseph Fels. While life lasts his memory will be a blessed one for me.

Before we finally left New York we visited Alma Gluck, the famous singer, in a lovely house in one of the suburbs. She is now married to Zimbalist, the violinist, whom we knew through visiting at the house of Mary Fels. Alma Gluck is a great artist. She is also a good, natural sort of woman, loving her home, her mother, and family as only a good woman can. Later on, while I was in Brixton Prison, she braved all conventions and came to say a word of love and good cheer to me and my fellow councillors. We left New York at the end of January, accompanied by our daughter Dorothy and her husband, Ernest Thurtle, on the Atlantic liner *Minnewaska*. We had a good voyage home, landing at Tilbury to be received by the younger members of our family with the shout: "We are all grown up. We are no longer children."

On the following Sunday my friends at Bow and Bromley, old and young, mothers with babies, filled the Bow Baths Hall and gave us a magnificent welcome. We soon dropped into the routine of day by day work for our daily bread and the Cause, but felt much stronger mentally and physically to face the eternal task of keeping going the *Daily Herald* (of which I was now in charge) and managing an ordinary business.

## CHAPTER VII

### PARLIAMENT AND WOMAN SUFFRAGE

**M**Y first experience as a parliamentary candidate was in 1895, when I was put forward by the local branch of the Social Democratic Federation as candidate for the Walworth Division. William Sanders, who was a noted advocate of the Single Tax, had resigned his seat because of the failure of the Liberal Government to carry out its pledges in regard to the taxation of land values. Why I was selected I never knew, because up to that time I had not specially attempted to deal with the land question, except through land settlements, and though I was in favour of the taxation of land values, I could never accept this theory as a substitute for Socialism.

The election was quite a hectic one. It was the first the S.D.F. imagined they had a chance of winning: but alas, I polled under 350 votes—I think 347 to be exact—and this in spite of the fact that I was supported by every leading man and woman in the movement. Morris and Hyndman, Hardie and Quelch, Frank Smith and Mrs. Pankhurst, in fact everybody who was anybody. Our meetings were most enthusiastic, but were filled up with people from all parts of London and young people and women who had no votes. Had we voted as now with almost universal suffrage I should have won easily, but my meetings were thronged with voteless people.

A short time after this the general election took place and I stood again, on this occasion polling even less votes. The cry at all these three-cornered elections was that the Socialist candidate had no chance, and that by voting for him the electors let the Tory in. We let the Tory in all right on both occasions, even though so few people voted

for me. But this sort of slogan does partially explain the small poll on the second occasion. There was the usual talk that I was not a good candidate because I was so extreme; it may be that some more moderate-speaking person might have done better, but I thought it my duty to preach Socialism and Socialism alone. During this election Harry Quelch was nearly lynched. While speaking in Walworth Road he called upon the people to come out of their bug-hutches and slums and fight for Socialism. A man in the crowd, who looked as if he had come straight from a slum, rushed to knock him off the stool, shouting, " You lying —, call my — home a slum and bug-hutch! "

It is curious to look back and remember that the S.D.F. in those days was a very strictly disciplined body, its discipline being almost as strict as that of the Communist Party of to-day. All parliamentary candidates, and in fact all candidates for public bodies, were expected to sign a form of resignation which was deposited with the executive committee and enabled them to secure the resignation of any member who broke any of the rules laid down for their guidance. The election address of parliamentary candidates was also drafted by the executive committee—in fact, you were just a part of the machine. I rather kicked against these rules and drafted my own election address, submitting it to the executive committee. Hyndman was extremely wrathful and scornful at my effort, asking me whether I thought the electors were a lot of fools or soppy sentimentalists, because I had included some lines from a poem of Russell Lowell's in my draft. I remember quite well Ernest Williams, who afterwards became a Tariff Reformer, but who was then a middle-class member of the S.D.F., whispering to me and saying: " You stick to it, don't let him bully you out of it. It is your election address, not his," and so the lines remained in.

The scenes at these elections were very exciting, more

especially at the declaration of the poll, and although on both occasions I was thoroughly well whacked, nobody was downhearted. We were all very poor in those days and used to tramp from Bow to Walworth night after night to do the canvassing and propaganda, and always there were several comrades accompanying me. On polling day, of course, a larger number than ever would come, and we would march along singing the *Red Flag* and the *Marseillaise* just as if we had won the election. On the last occasion when, with my wife and Hyndman and Mrs. Hyndman, we walked out of the Vestry Hall an old Irish woman, thinking I was downhearted threw her arms round me and kissed me, telling me we should win some day or the other. Of course, I have never won Walworth—that was left to T. E. Naylor to accomplish more than twenty years later. Harry Day says he remembers seeing and hearing me speak in East Street, Walworth.

My next parliamentary venture was in Bow and Bromley during the Boer War, when I again got soundly beaten. It was a pure and simple jingo election. Our children used to be chased off the streets as pro-Boers, but I do not think any harm befell them as they were possessed of good, healthy bodies and fairly strong lungs!

At the election of 1906 I stood for Middlesbrough against Havelock Wilson, polling a little over 1,200 votes and again being nicely at the bottom of the poll. This election was one of the most spirited events of my life. I was put forward by the local Independent Labour Party, and most of my expenses were paid by Joseph Fels. The coal, iron, and steel workers were extremely friendly, but were quite certain that if they voted for me they would "let the Tory in." It was extraordinary that my meetings were always the biggest, but I think on no occasion did I get a majority vote in favour of my candidature, though my reception both before and after my speeches was always

very enthusiastic. I was not able to go out on polling day as I was taken ill the night before and was laid up for a month afterwards. I was most kindly taken care of by Mrs. Coates Hansen and her mother—in fact, had I been of their own kith and kin I could not have received kinder treatment. My wife left our last baby to come and help nurse me, and as usual took my breakdown as all in the day's work—as also did she take my defeat. Keir Hardie was the only prominent Labour man to give me support.

At the next general election I stood again for Bow and Bromley in a three-cornered fight against the sitting member, Stopford Brooke, and Alfred du Cros. I should have won the seat fairly easily but for the intervention of Dr. Clifford. I had always maintained that on the question of religious teaching parents had a right to say whether they wanted it or not, and I put forward a proposal that in those cases where the parents desired their children to have Anglican instruction it should be given by the vicar or rector of the parish in the church before school hours. This settled my hash with the local Nonconformists, and Dr. Clifford issued a manifesto against my candidature, in spite of the fact that he had previously written me a personal letter supporting me, and the further fact that I distinctly said no public money should be spent on sectarian religious education. I put Stopford Brooke thoroughly at the bottom of the poll and as a result he left the district, leaving me a clear field at the election in December 1910.

On this occasion I had as my opponent L. S. Amery, the present Colonial Secretary. This election took place because of the action of the House of Lords in throwing out the Budget. During one of its debates Lord Milner had invited his colleagues in the House of Lords to "throw out the budget and damn the consequences." He came to Bow to support his friend Amery: my friends attended the

meeting and gave the noble lord a very lively reception, punctuating every important sentence by shouting in chorus "and damn the consequences." I am told Lord Milner and all concerned treated these interruptions in a friendly, humorous manner.

I won the election, not because we had converted the people to Socialism, though of course there was a very large percentage of Socialist electors in the division, but because Lloyd George rallied the Liberals to my support in the famous speech he delivered at Limehouse. There was much discussion as to why Lloyd George should have gone out of his way to invite people to vote for "his friend George Lansbury," because most people were unaware that a personal friendship existed between us. No one was more ignorant of this than I was. But Lloyd George is nothing unless he is an astute politician, and in East London he knew quite well that in those places where the fight between Liberal and Tory was keenest, my name might help in winning over Socialists to vote for the Liberal.

That this was so was proved the next morning, when I was telephoned by three leading Liberal journals and asked, "What response are you going to make to Mr. Lloyd George's generous appeal on your behalf." I simply said, "No response at all." I did not want his support, and I had no idea that he was going to make such an appeal. Each of these men put the same question, which shows that there had been concerted action by somebody. The question was this: "Won't you say a word to recommend your friends in other divisions where there is not a Labour candidate to cast their votes on behalf of the Liberals?" My reply was quite emphatic: "Certainly not. If the Liberals in Bow and Bromley care to vote Tory or abstain in order to keep me out they are welcome to do so." As matters turned out, most of the Liberals must have voted for me, because I won the seat by a very good majority.

Nowadays the local Liberals appear to have become merged in either the Tory or Labour Parties.

My life in the House of Commons during the two years I remained a member was a very active one. I was always in hot water with the Party. My speeches in the country were continually coming under review, because I could not settle down as an ordinary rank and filer—that is, I continually took my own line on questions of policy. During this period the Suffrage agitation was in full swing; women were being imprisoned, going on hunger strike, and being treated in what I considered was a very brutal manner. Because of my indignation and my belief in woman suffrage I became one of their champions in the House of Commons, continually worrying the Home Secretary. There were also a number of labour disputes: the big mining dispute in the Rhondda Valley, during which some disturbances took place at Tonypany (I remember late one night defending Keir Hardie against a rather vicious attack made upon him by Winston Churchill over this); a big dock strike in the East End, in which I took part by speaking almost daily on Tower Hill. During this strike we also held a series of demonstrations in Hyde Park, at one of which I got severely knocked about for no reason at all except that the police had stupidly shut one of the gates and then commenced to ride down the crowd, which could not get out of their way quickly enough. I got very little change out of the Home Secretary who, as is usual with Home Secretaries, blindly accepted the police version of the affair, which had resulted in rather badly hurting my ribs.

I opposed the National Health and Unemployment Insurance Bills. I objected to the contributory principle embodied in the bills as being anti-Socialist. The Party supported Lloyd George. I thought then, as I think now, that the Party ought to have taken its stand and fought for

non-contributory schemes, but was always beaten at Party meetings. It is worthy of notice that Philip Snowden and James O'Grady were amongst the dozen of us who voted against the third reading of these bills. Discipline was neither so strict nor so effective in the Party as it has become to-day.

During this Parliament the veto of the House of Lords was taken away and the Parliament Act passed and a Home Rule Bill was forced through the House of Commons. We sat almost continuously through both the years 1911-2. There were many all-night sittings and many disturbances, during which men like the Cecil brothers, Lord Winterton, Viscount Castlereagh, Viscount Helmsley, Ormsby Gore, and other scions of our old nobility did their best to prove that vulgarity and rowdiness are not by any means a monopoly of the lower orders. On several occasions free fights seemed inevitable between our men and these sons of the "Peerage and Beerage." Together with Will Thorne I endeavoured to bring Carson and his "Carsonites" to book by a motion which we had won the right to move by winning a ballot for a private member's night. Sir Frederick Banbury, that champion obstructionist, and several others were able on a perfectly idiotic bill to take up all the night, and so prevented us getting our opportunity.

I became perilously near becoming a legislator, *i.e.*, getting a bill through the House of Commons. It was a very small measure designed to give the right to Church of England clergymen to sit in the House of Commons on the same terms as Nonconformist ministers. The bill went through all its stages till we came to the third reading, and once more Sir Frederick Banbury used the art and guile of the obstructionist and prevented the bill going through. I also introduced a bill with the object of securing the payment for holidays and the compulsory granting of

annual holidays to all workpeople. Of course, I got no farther than the first reading with this.

The coronation of King George took place in 1911. I put some questions in the House about workmen losing their wages and suggested that the coronation should not be an occasion for imposing losses on masses of people who could ill afford to lose a day's wages. Lord Carrington sent for me and asked me what I wanted done. I told him I wanted the King, or somebody on his behalf, to make an appeal to all employers to see that the workmen did not lose their wages, and this was done. So I can reckon these questions in the House resulted in preventing a considerable number of people losing money they could ill afford to lose.

Another episode during this period of my service in Parliament was in connection with the "Don't Shoot" campaign. Tom Mann, the brothers Buck, and Guy Bowman were charged with printing and publishing a document addressed to men in the army, appealing to them during labour disputes not to fire on their fellow workers. Some copies of this leaflet had been distributed round Aldershot by a comrade named Crowsley, who was not a Socialist, but a Christian Anarchist. Directly the arrest took place I raised the question in the House of Commons and endeavoured to move the adjournment, but as I had not given notice to anybody, as I should have done, the necessary forty members did not rise in their places to support me. But I called for a division—a thing that had never been done in the House of Commons before—and succeeded in getting the motion for adjournment put down for 8.15 p.m. John Ward, Josiah Wedgwood, Philip Morrell, Keir Hardie, and others supported the demand we were making that the prosecution should be quashed; but we were unable to secure this, and so formed a committee outside the House to raise funds for a "Free Speech" campaign. We actually raised more funds than we needed.

The balance left over was given to the Dockers' Strike Fund. Finally, after much private and public negotiations, we got the prisoners released before their sentences were quite finished. I often think how true it is that there is nothing new under the sun; fifteen years later half a dozen Communists suffered twelve months' imprisonment for what was virtually the same offence.

During the discussions on suffragette and other prisoners there were often scenes between myself and the ministers. The most violent took place in connection with an answer I received from Mr. Asquith. I had got an admission that the women were suffering badly, and then Mr. Asquith, as Prime Minister, said: "All these ladies can leave prison to-morrow if they will only give a promise not to break the law." This so infuriated me that I rushed down the House in a white heat of passion, shouting to him that what he was saying was exactly what every tyrant said who had put reformers in prison; that he knew perfectly well none of these women, because of their creed and faith, could submit to the conditions which he laid down.

I was, of course, reprimanded by the Speaker and ordered to leave the House, which I did. This meant suspension for the sitting. The next day, as I entered the House, one of the oldest members on the Liberal side met me. He was very sympathetic and offered me very good advice—at least, good advice from his point of view—saying: "Of course, you were in a bad scrape yesterday, it is the sort of thing that might happen to any of us, but you must do the big thing to-day, you must just stand up and apologize to the Speaker and apologize to Mr. Asquith and to the House: you will make yourself a name in this place forever." Of course, I thanked him for his kindly interest on my behalf and went into the House, and when my question was called, just asked it. There was no apology or explanation forthcoming from me. I think I

would have preferred to have my tongue cut out rather than do any such thing. I had said what I thought, and that was all there was to it.

I got into trouble during the debate on the Marconi transactions. I had received a considerable amount of anonymous information with reference to these transactions. My difficulty was that they were anonymous, but as matters turned out they were correct, and if I had had the courage, which I haven't even now, to use anonymous letters, I should have hit on the explanation of the business and saved the House of Commons the trouble of appointing a long-winded committee to discover whether or not the Government party funds had benefited by dealing in Marconi shares, or whether Lloyd George had gambled in them. But I did get so far as to say that in my opinion there was a big case for enquiry, and that something more was needed than mild protestations of innocence from ministers. I pointed out that during the afternoon debate most of the ministers concerned had shown a great deal of uneasiness. Sir Rufus Isaacs, now Lord Reading, made a very eloquent defence of Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues, a defence which made very strange reading after the revelations which came to light during the sittings of the Committee of Inquiry.

The next morning the sketch writer for the *Daily News* was very sarcastic about me, and wrote that I was probably the only man in the House of Commons with a mind bad enough to think such evil of honourable men as to suggest that any of them had made money out of dealings in Marconi shares. I am not quoting the exact words, but this was the effect of the censure. I did not mind this because I was perfectly certain that sooner or later we should know whether it was Italian Marconis, or whether, as my anonymous writer assured me, American or British, that the deals had taken place in.

This Marconi incident left a very bad impression on the public mind. I think we can trace a definite lowering in the standard demanded from Members of Parliament since these transactions. During the War M.P.'s were allowed individually and collectively to be interested in Government contracts and business. Although this is not now allowed to individuals, it is permitted that M.P.'s may be shareholders and directors in companies in contractual relationship with the Government. The present (1928) House of Commons has also refused to take action against the Chamberlain brothers, who were actually directors of companies having contractual relations with the Government of which they were also members. Nobody, certainly not myself, would dream of charging either of these men with corruption, but it surely is not right for ministers to place themselves in such positions. The same kind of thing happened during the coal dispute. Men heavily interested in a financial sense were the foremost in passing the Eight Hours Bill and in imposing starvation terms on the miners. I do not quite know what is to be done, though I am quite certain none of us is good enough to be allowed to pass laws which may put money into our own pockets. Because I said this in the House of Commons I incurred the censure of some friends and foes. I do not pose as a purist on any of these matters, but do think that if poor men carrying on local government work must be above suspicion, so also should rich men sitting in a Cabinet or in the House of Commons.

I left the House of Commons in October 1912 because of disagreement with the Party on the subject of the franchise. The Government had declared its intention of bringing in what would to all intents and purposes have been a Manhood Suffrage Bill. I proposed that the Party should move an amendment to that bill and vote against it unless women were included. It was a question on which I felt

it impossible to compromise. I consulted my friends at Bow and they supported me in my point of view, and also took the view that I was responsible to them and not to the Party in the House of Commons. The Party was obliged to take notice of my attitude, and at one of the meetings I was told that as my election expenses had been partly paid by the Party, and as I was run as one of their candidates, and gained my seat because of their support, I owed a loyalty to them not to work and vote against decisions on policy which had been arrived at by the majority. I thought then, and think now, that that was quite a fair statement of their case, and one to which there could be no answer but resignation. I therefore decided to resign, and went across to Boulogne to meet Christabel Pankhurst and her mother in order to arrange the election campaign, which was what might be described as a really cheery one. Every interest in London flocked down to Bow and Bromley, with the result that we were snowed under, although our meetings were the biggest and most enthusiastic ever held in the division. I think I was beaten mainly because my supporters were shocked that I resigned. They felt that it was a childish thing, while I retained their support, to come out. There are still people in the division who never vote at an election because they will not vote against me, but will not vote for me because of the action I took in 1912.

This defeat kept me out of the House of Commons for ten years—but they were not wasted years. I was getting my living in the ordinary way while in Parliament, and of course continued to do so after I left, but I plunged a little deeper into agitation and propaganda, going into every corner of the country on behalf of woman suffrage. I dropped everything else for the time being but this. I often very nearly overstepped the line between legal and illegal speeches, and finally did so at a great demonstration in the

Albert Hall held on the 10th April 1913. Mrs. Pankhurst and certain other leaders were in prison, and I appealed to the women to close up the ranks, and for every one in prison another should take her place; that if they burned and destroyed they were only doing what others had done before; no life had yet been taken on behalf of the suffrage, no life would be taken; but human life and human happiness were much more valuable than all the property in the world. The result of this speech was that a few days later at Canning Town, as I was leaving a public meeting, I was served with a summons. This summons was taken out under the very old act of Edward III—Statute 1 Edw. III, c. 16. The clause of this act under which I was dealt with did in effect deal with me as "a wanderer, a beggar, and a piller from across the seas." I was given the chance of being bound over or serving six months' imprisonment. Of course, I refused to be bound over and after an appeal went to prison.

I was sent to Pentonville Prison, but I had taken the precaution of going on hunger strike, but not thirst strike, for three or four days before going in, so that by the time I entered the prison I was fairly weak. At the end of a few days, on the advice of the doctors, I was released under the Cat and Mouse Act and was not interfered with again. I am not sure how long the Cat and Mouse Act operates against a prisoner who has not served the term of imprisonment; perhaps I may be arrested again now I have made this confession!

My very brief experience in Pentonville convinced me that prisons are a relic of barbarism; they are like work-houses, they cannot be improved. The whole spirit and system is wrong. It is all penal. A prisoner is made to feel that he is less worthy than other people, and this is kept up in the prison cell, in the chapel, and in every relation-

ship of life—clothes, food, sleeping arrangements. Human feelings are given no chance.

A young chaplain came to me one day and rebuked me because I was hunger striking, saying I was defiling the temple of the Holy Ghost—my body. I asked this bright young spark whether he was a Protestant. He said "Yes," so I replied: "You are able to come here and insult me because two men named Latimer and Ridley allowed the temple of the Holy Ghost to be destroyed by fire because they would not submit to the laws of the land, just as I will not submit to the laws of the land as to what I shall say in regard to a political agitation." The young man cleared out without saying another word.

While I was there the doctor and the deputy governor, in fact all the officials, were extremely kind, but their kindness was too overwhelming when it consisted of putting a pot of freshly made tea and toast and nicely poached eggs, custards, and other dainties in front of me when I was suffering from hunger and thirst—because while I was in prison I took neither food nor drink. All the same, after a couple of days, during which I was very exhausted, the doctor ordered me to be carried out and laid on a small lawn in the prison yard, so that I could get the sun, but it was a rather gruesome place because on the walls were the names of the murderers that had been hanged in the prison and whose remains had been buried alongside the wall. I was, in fact, lying among the tombs of many noted murderers.

On two occasions while lying out in the sun men who were working on the building opposite the prison recognized me. Just to see someone from the outside gave me a few minutes of good cheer. Once or twice a band came outside the prison and I could hear the cheers as well as the band.

On the Sunday after my release about 10,000 of my constituents, who had proposed to march to the prison,

marched to the house of my friend Joseph Fels in Cornwall Terrace, Regent's Park, to which I was taken straight from prison. The police at first said they would stop the demonstration coming to the house, but they finally allowed it to come, and I just showed myself from the top bedroom window. There was no doubt at all that the police would have had a lively time if I had been kept in prison many days longer. There was real indignation, though I think I deserved these expressions of protest and sympathy less, much less, than the scores, nay hundreds, of women who were being sent to prison week by week.

Although Bow and Bromley rejected me as their M.P. it must be remembered that it was only men who had the vote. Our campaign here and throughout East London resulted in the formation of a very solid block of enthusiastic, determined supporters of the movement for women's enfranchisement. Men and women went from my division to all the demonstrations outside the Houses of Parliament, and many of the women who would have been otherwise ill treated either by hooligans or the police owed their safety to men who earned their bread by casual labour. Sylvia Pankhurst made the district her headquarters and lived for a time opposite our house, spending her time going backwards and forwards to prison. She always came home a complete wreck, but even so was at all times able to speak from her window to the crowds who used to assemble round her house.

On one occasion I returned home from some meetings in the country and found St. Stephen's Road in a great uproar and my home besieged by a crowd of police. I had been advertised to speak with Sylvia at Bow Baths Hall. The authorities were determined she should not appear at the meeting; we were determined that she should, so there was a fine battle of wits. The C.I.D. men, thinking she was in my house, surrounded the premises waiting to capture

her on the way to the meeting. But they reckoned without the rebels of the *Herald* League. No sooner was I indoors than a small group surrounded me, explaining their plans. Briefly they were as follows: my daughter Daisy, who is about the same height as the lady who was wanted, was to dress up in her clothes and leave the house as if going to the meeting, while Sylvia was to climb over the garden wall into the next house and walk out with me as my daughter to attend the meeting. The success of our plan exceeded our most sanguine expectations. No sooner was the door of our house opened and Daisy's head appeared than the clever, zealous C.I.D. men made a rush and, without asking a question or showing a warrant, bundled her into a car they had in readiness. While this little comedy was being played Sylvia and myself left the house next door, exchanged greetings with the uniformed policeman, reaching the Bow Baths Hall in time to start the meeting at the precise hour advertised. Meantime Daisy was being carried along, a silent prisoner. Surprised by the fact that she did not speak or utter a word of protest the suspicions of the officers were aroused, one of them remarking "She's very quiet, lift up her veil." This being done they, of course, discovered only the laughing face of a young person they did not want. In spite of their chagrin at being deceived they behaved quite decently, taking my daughter to Bethnal Green Police Station and then, after a few questionings, allowing her to go free.

As a result of this discovery the telephones were set in motion and an army of plain clothes and uniformed police, horse and foot, surrounded the hall. Some of them entered the hall, only to find their progress to the platform blocked by a dense mass of people, mainly women, who refused to budge, lustily singing the *Woman's Song* and the *Red Flag*. Once again the question arose: "How can we get her out?" and once again it would have been easy for a traitor

to betray her. But among those thousands there was not one with a craven or traitor spirit. A small group of poor women were thus able to outwit some of the cleverest men from Scotland Yard. These women, many of them poorly clad and hungry, did the work they set their minds on in a most courageous manner. Their plan was to split up into small groups, defended from attack by hundreds of others who just stood together, refusing to move when ordered to do so by the police. These groups took one of their number whose height and build was similar to Sylvia's and, by dint of changing hats and coats, at least half a dozen Sylvias were sent out into the streets to be chased and captured by the police. While this chasing was going on one or two men escorted the real personage to Bow Road, where a taxi was found to take her home to safety.

On another occasion when the police were hot on her trail members of the League hid her in some premises in Bow Road. In the dead of night a timber merchant's van was taken along the road and, under the very noses of uniformed police, took her to my home in St. Stephen's Road. From there the next morning she was loaded up in the midst of a vanload of wood, and carted away as firewood to Essex, where she spent a few weeks recuperating before entering the fight again. On this occasion the police actually spoke to those who managed her escape.

On another occasion Sylvia Pankhurst laid herself down outside the House of Commons, refusing to move night or day till Mr. Asquith agreed to meet a deputation of East End women. As was usual, her friends called on me to aid and abet her in this rather mad scheme. After much talk and negotiation with Mr. Illingworth, the Chief Whip of the Liberal Party, an interview with Mr. Asquith was arranged. I was to take the deputation of purely working-class women to 10 Downing Street and myself be responsible for their good behaviour and the safety of Mr. Asquith. I was

asked to be at No. 10 a quarter of an hour before the deputation, which was timed to arrive about 9.30 a.m. Well, the morning came, and I found myself talking in a most friendly manner with Mr. Asquith, whose only anxiety was to know and understand who the women were who were coming, what they worked at, and what they expected him to say. I did my best to make him understand. Later events proved how unnecessary this was. The women, all of whom were pure East End working-class women, put their own case splendidly and fairly cornered the Prime Minister who, as he always does, rose to the occasion and made what for him, an anti-suffragist, was quite a good speech—in fact, he almost avowed himself a supporter. We went away not satisfied, but certain the women had made some impression on their most stubborn opponent.

On another occasion, in company with Sylvia Pankhurst, I tried some private negotiations with Lloyd George and Mr. McKenna with a view to ending the bitter struggle in which the women were engaged. We got on very well with Lloyd George, who informed us that Sir Edward Grey, Sir John Simon, and himself were willing to give a public pledge that all three would decline to enter any government after the next general election which did not make woman's suffrage the first plank in its legislative programme. These negotiations were smashed up by Christabel Pankhurst, who was in Paris making a public declaration that she and the Women's Social and Political Union would not cease from strife on any such pledge, but would continue their militant tactics until a bill giving women votes on the same terms as men was on the Statute Book. I always found fanatical women as difficult to deal with as fanatical men; they always seem to me to want the best, not merely of two, but of all, worlds.

This, one of the greatest movements to which, when

young, I attached myself, has now triumphed. Sitting in the House of Commons I often think of the wearisome debates, quarrels, and wranglings and disorderly disputations which used to take place in relation to women and their persecution and imprisonment, and then look around and see seated on the Government bench the Duchess of Atholl as a Minister of the Crown, and some half a dozen other women in various parts of the House, proving that courage and persistence in a good cause always wins, and proving something else—that no amount of persecution and opposition can stop the onward march of men and women towards the goal of equality.

It is also worth recording that Margaret Bondfield, when connected with the Shop Assistants' Union, stood as a candidate for one of our Bromley wards for the Board of Guardians. We lost the election, but later on she became one of the first women Members of Parliament and the first woman to enter a government and sit on the Treasury Bench. I very often take parties of school children over Westminster Palace, and never fail to tell the girls the story of how women fought for freedom and remind them that perhaps some day one of their number will be found seated on the green benches.

## CHAPTER VIII

### POPLARISM AND PRISON

A GREAT part of my life has been given to the work of a Guardian of the Poor and local Town and Borough Councillor. I was first elected in 1892, when I was thirty-three years of age. My personal experience of Poor Law was *nil*. I had read *Oliver Twist*, and in Whitechapel had seen at first hand the doings of the brutal Charity Organization Society, whose local headquarters were at Toynbee Hall.

Canon Barnett, in the days when he first came to St. Jude's, was a young, ardent, well-meaning social reformer. He brought with him Thory Gardiner as his curate, and gathered round him men like Bolton King, a young Warwickshire squire, Hancock Nunn, good-hearted but perfectly brutal in his application of Charity Organization principles, Lord Milner, and a host of others who followed in the wake of Arnold Toynbee, whose short life in East London was made memorable by the creation of the Toynbee Settlement. All these young men came to East London answering the call of the Barnetts: they were to mix with the poor, learn about conditions and the health of the poor. What a good and blessed thing it would be that rich and poor should live together! But "living" only extended to meetings, first in St. Jude's school-rooms and later in Toynbee Hall and its fine parlours, dining and other rooms.

I yield to nobody in my respect for Canon Barnett and his wife, but I am more convinced than ever that their whole philosophy of life was all wrong. They never took sides about anything, not even about religion. Nobody except themselves could possibly understand what they believed about God and the Christian religion, and as to

politics, Socialism, Toryism, and Liberalism all were a sort of jumble—nobody was quite right, everybody was a little wrong. The Canon's sermons and addresses on religion were on the same lines and as understandable from the orthodox point of view as those of the present Bishop of Birmingham.

For a time Toynbee Hall was acclaimed as the centre of a great social reform movement, a movement which was to bridge the gulf between rich and poor by the use of smooth words and ambiguous phrases, to bridge the chasm which even yet divides the teaching of Huxley and that of Cardinal Manning or Mr. Gladstone.

Years after I first entered St. Jude's I discovered that what Toynbee Hall actually accomplished was just this: men who went in training under the Barnetts, just as men and women who later came under the spell of the Webbs, could always be sure of government and municipal appointments. The number is legion of those who, after a few months, or at most a year or two, at Toynbee have discovered themselves as experts on social affairs and, on the reputation created by the atmosphere and surroundings of the Settlement, claimed and received very fine appointments. The one solid achievement of Toynbee Hall, and the most important result of the mixing policy of the Barnetts, has been the filling up of the bureaucracy of government and administration with men and women who went to East London full of enthusiasm and zeal for the welfare of the masses, and discovered the advancement of their own interests and the interests of the poor were best served by leaving East London to stew in its own juice while they became members of parliament, cabinet ministers, civil servants; people who, after leaving East London, discovered the problems of life and poverty were too complex to solve and that palliatives must not cost money; that, after all, all the poor in a lump were bad and reform and progress must be very

gradual; that the rich were as necessary as the poor—indeed, that nothing must ever be done to hurt the good-hearted rich who keep such places as Toynbee Hall going out of their ill-gotten gains.

In any case, my sixty years' experience in East London leaves me quite unable to discover what permanent social influence Toynbee Hall or any other similar settlement has had on the life and labour of the people.

There is one small place in Whitechapel, the Dew Drop Inn, whose founder, manager, and administrator, Mary Hughes, daughter of that first of Christian Socialists Tom Hughes, does indeed practise what she preaches. Nobody is too wicked or too poor to receive from her the right hand of fellowship and such help as they need. Our frail humanity only produces a Mary Hughes once in a century. East London may be thankful that the one woman of our time who literally believes the teachings of Jesus and is fine enough in character to strive to live her ideals is here in our midst. The number who go to her is, relatively speaking, not large. She may often be deceived and taken in. The wise and learned may think her mistaken and at times unwise, but the knowledge of her life and work does develop and spread the faith that happiness comes to us not through the greatness of possessions, but through service. Mary Hughes and her little Dew Drop Inn will never become famous as Toynbee Hall is famous: she trains no clever persons to become governors, cabinet ministers, or members of parliament, but in days to come her life and work will prove more lasting than any of the others I have mentioned, because she lives with the people, sharing their sorrows and joys. For her there is no separate house with parlours; her idea of a mixing of the classes is to live together as men and women. While she holds firmly, simply, and courageously to her faith in the Christian religion she, like the Founder of her religion, finds her peace

and happiness among the people. She teaches the deceitfulness of riches, is definite in her social creed, is a member of the Socialist Party, sits as a Guardian of the Poor and a Borough Councillor in order to help the people. She has no thought that money is more than life or that the poor are sent by God in order that the rich may care for them.

Why do I thus write of Toynbee Hall in the midst of my story about my own work as a Guardian? It is like this: when at Bow I was asked by my branch of the Social Democratic Federation to stand as a Guardian; my mind instantly went back to my early life in Whitechapel, and I remembered how heartless and brutal in its effect on the lives of the poor was the Charity Organization policy of men like Canon Barnett and Mr. Vallance, the expert clerk to the Whitechapel Board. I remembered, because my mother was always doing little things for the poor who lived all around us; every Sunday a couple of dinners for an old couple living in a slum went from our dinner-table. My wife's mother also visited the sick and needy, and as we did this sort of work we came up against the malignant work of Mr. Vallance and his Board of Guardians. On at least two occasions these wretched experts in rate saving actually had the impudence to write and request us not to help certain people, as our assistance prevented the Guardians—the Guardians, mind you—from sending them to the workhouse, which in the judgment of these Christians was the best place for them.

I wrote Canon Barnett about these cases, and was told by him that "the workhouse was the best place for such people." This message and my later inquiries made me a most bitter enemy of the Charity Organization Society and all its works. Consequently I jumped at the chance offered me to gain a seat on the Poplar Board of Guardians.

My father-in-law, Mr. I. Brine, for whom I was working, proved himself, as he did all through the years of our

friendship, a generous, good friend. He knew nothing of Socialism, but like his wife was a helper of those who needed a friend. He gave me time off to fight the election, and when elected allowed me to arrange my work so as to be able to attend meetings in the daytime. My work was never neglected however late at night I finished my day's work. All Guardians and Council meetings were in those days held during the day, a fact which made it almost impossible for working people to accept office.

From the first moment I determined to fight for one policy only, and that was decent treatment for the poor outside the workhouse, and hang the rates! This sort of saying brings censure on me and on the movement: it cannot be helped. My view of life places money, property, and privilege on a much lower scale than human life. I am quite aware some people are bad and deceitful. I know this because I know myself. I know people drink, gamble, and are often lazy. I also know that taken in the mass the poor are as decent as any other class, and so when I stood as a Guardian I took as my policy that no widow or orphan, no sick, infirm, or aged person should lack proper provision of the needs of life, and able-bodied people should get work or maintenance. To-day everybody agrees with this policy. I also determined to humanize Poor Law administration: I never could see any difference between outdoor relief and a state pension, or between the pension of a widowed queen and outdoor relief for the wife or mother of a worker. The nonsense about the disgrace of the Poor Law I fought against till at least in London we killed it for good and all.

My daily work was in a sawmill and veneer works: often I had no time to change my clothes or even to wash, because I made it a point to be punctual at all meetings. My knowledge of law was absolutely *nil*, so from the start I followed the line laid down by Parnell and learnt law and rules of procedure by simply breaking them. At the first

meeting I arrived collarless and sprinkled with sawdust. Will Crooks and Harry W. Kaye, of the Transport Workers, at that time cashier for the Dockers' Union, and two others were there, making five Labour and Socialist members out of twenty-four. We elected a chairman and then it was proposed to take the minutes as read. Of course, my curiosity was aroused, and I insisted that the clerk should read the whole of the minutes, and after a long struggle this was done. Then came questions and appointment to committees. We five managed to dominate the proceedings and very soon discovered that two or three people who know what they want and are persistent enough can usually get it.

At the close of this first meeting we were all invited to tea. Quite innocently I asked who was going to pay for it. The answer came: "Oh, the chairman always gives a tea on the occasion of his election." I replied, "Well, when you make me chairman you won't get any tea, as it is not in my power to pay for it, so you must excuse me from accepting a free tea at your hands."

This first Board was made up of chemists, doctors, clergy, undertakers, house agents (mostly slum-owners' agents), a representative of the London and India Dock Company, whose business on the Board was to look after the assessment committee and see to it that big properties like the docks and railways were not over-assessed. When the assessment business was taken away from the Guardians and given to the Borough Council, the dock company lost all interest in the Guardians and transferred their official to the Council, where he at once secured election to the assessment committee. Most Guardians were freemasons, and so were many of the officials and all the contractors. I do not think there was any real corruption except that people did look after their friends. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours was the kind of policy where jobs and contracts were concerned. I have often said the Board

was made up of those who reckoned to make a bit out of the poor, and who could play into each others' hands. You see, the slum owner and agent could be depended upon to create conditions which produce disease: the doctor would then get the job of attending the sick, the chemist would be needed to supply drugs, the parson to pray, and when, between them all, the victims died, the undertaker was on hand to bury them. It was a nice kind of family or company arrangement by which it was clearly possible for most of my colleagues to serve God and the devil, at least to their own mutual advantage.

The clerk, Mr. Lough, and his assistant, Mr. F. Butler, were friends from the start. How far they agreed with our policy is not for me to say, but once we got our resolutions or proposals adopted we could always rely on their loyal co-operation in carrying them out. I, the only one of the five remaining on the Board, remember with the deepest gratitude their kindness and help in days when such assistance was very much needed.

My first visit to the workhouse was a memorable one. Going down the narrow lane, ringing the bell, waiting while an official with a not too pleasant face looked through a grating to see who was there, and hearing his unpleasant voice—of course, he did not know me—made it easy for me to understand why the poor dreaded and hated these places, and made me in a flash realize how all these prison or bastille sort of surroundings were organized for the purpose of making self-respecting, decent people endure any suffering rather than enter. It was not necessary to write up the words "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." Officials, receiving ward, hard forms, whitewashed walls, keys dangling at the waist of those who spoke to you, huge books for name, history, etc., searching, and then being stripped and bathed in a communal tub, and the final crowning indignity of being dressed in clothes which had been worn

by lots of other people, hideous to look at, ill-fitting and coarse—everything possible was done to inflict mental and moral degradation.

The place was clean: brass knobs and floors were polished, but of goodwill, kindness, there was none. There is a little improvement in the ordinary workhouses of to-day, but not much. Most of them are still quite inhuman, though infirmaries, hospitals, and schools are all vastly improved. But thirty years ago the mixed workhouse at Poplar was for me Dante's *Inferno*. Sick and aged, mentally deficient, lunatics, babies and children, able-bodied and tramps all herded together in one huge range of buildings. Officers, both men and women, looked upon these people as a nuisance and treated them accordingly. Food was mainly skilly, bread, margarine, cheese, and hard, tough meat and vegetables, and occasionally doses of salted, dried fish. Clothing was of the usual workhouse type, plenty of corduroy and blue cloth. No undergarments for either men or women, no sanitary clothes of any sort or kind for women of any age, boots were worn till they fell off. The paupers, as they were officially styled, were allowed out once a month and could be visited once a month. Able-bodied men were put to stone-breaking or oakum-picking. No effort was made to find work for men or women. Girls came in to be delivered of their babies, went out, and in course of time came back again. On one visit I inspected the supper of oatmeal porridge. On this occasion the food was served up with pieces of black stuff floating around. On examination we discovered it to be rat and mice manure. I called for the chief officer, who immediately argued against me, saying the porridge was good and wholesome. "Very good, madam," said I, taking up a basinful and a spoon, "here you are, eat one mouthful and I will acknowledge I am wrong." "Oh dear, no," said the fine lady, "the food is not for me, and is

good and wholesome enough for those who want it." I stamped and shouted around till both doctor and master arrived, both of whom pleaded it was all a mistake, and promptly served cocoa and bread and margarine.

This little incident set my colleagues and me store-hunting. We visited the workhouse early morning and late at night, discovering many gross irregularities such as calico in stock in place of linen the Board had paid for. Then we tried to discover where all the stores went to, and finally found our stores were short by thousands of yards. After weeks of toil we impeached the officers and proved gross negligence, if not worse, and applied to the President of the Local Government Board for an Inquiry. I do not know how many months passed before the Inquiry was held; when it did take place we received not the slightest help from the Local Government Board or its officials. Our own officials, whose conduct was under investigation, employed a Queen's Counsel, Mr. McMorran, and the task of prosecutor fell on me. We won our case, and the officials responsible were sacked. The manner in which Whitehall did its utmost to burk an inquiry into these irregularities, and the alacrity with which they rush inspectors down to investigate cases where they consider too much relief is given is worthy of the attention of those who are willing at all times to think the central Ministry must be right and local Guardians wrong.

The Board, in spite of their neglect of duty, determined to pension the officials. Our little group of five managed to prevent this for some months by methods of obstruction. On one occasion I spoke for six or seven hours straight on end against this, but finally we were beaten, though in fact we had won, because we had cleared out most of the old gang and were able to set about administering our own policy.

This episode has always made me very sceptical of the

work performed by public auditors. What we discovered in reference to calico should have been brought to light by this official. We found him one of the most difficult of persons to convince that anything was wrong. He did all in his power to help the officers. The same man was ready at all times to surcharge us if we gave a poor person an extra sixpence or shilling a week. As to finding out anything corrupt, auditors appear to think that is none of their business, and so find out only what they are told.

Our new master and matron proved themselves excellent administrators. With their assistance and with good advice from Mrs. Crooks and Mrs. Lena Wilson, a new Labour Guardian, we revolutionized the place from top to bottom.

Although we reformed our administration and though to-day the result of thirty years' labour in the way of reform may be seen by all who visit the institution, I can with simple truth say I would not voluntarily be found dead in the Poplar or any other workhouse. Years ago, somewhere about 1906, I went over a splendidly administered workhouse with the late Lord George Hamilton. His lordship was loud in his praise of the place, and with a look of enthusiastic pride on his face turned to me and said: "Well, Lansbury, this is all right. No complaints here. You can say nothing against this. It is really delightfully clean and comfortable." I replied, "Oh, yes, my lord, it is too damned clean, too well regulated. Get up with a bell, breakfast with a bell, dinner and supper likewise, then bed with a bell, and at the end, heaven or hell by bell. You, Lord George, would not live here an hour. You would not be found dead here by choice, neither would I. What is not good enough for you and me is neither clean nor comfortable enough for others." This remains my opinion about all such places.

When I was first a Guardian at Poplar outdoor relief was a farce. Old people received 1s. 6d., 2s., 2s. 6d. a week.

Widows the same. For their children they received sometimes 1s. per head, sometimes 1s. 6d. There was always a reduction on a quantity. All this was soon changed. We doubled the scales and soon quadrupled them. We were helped in all proposals brought forward by myself and my colleagues by the fact that a couple of years after our election the late Right Hon. Charles Booth, the ship-owner, who spent time and fortune investigating conditions in East London, persuaded the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor to allow me to give evidence before it. Lord Aberdare was chairman, Henry Broadhurst, Lord Playfair, the Prince of Wales, Charles Booth, and a dozen others formed the Commission.

The night before attending the Commission Mr. Booth kindly invited me to his house near the Marble Arch to dinner. I had never been out to a dinner before, and of course possessed no dinner uniform, and never have done. Mr. and Mrs. Booth and their family were kindness itself. The only awkward people were the footman and foreman footman, who appeared to wonder what kind of a monstrosity had floated in. I took Mrs. Booth down to the dining-room. This sort of thing had never happened to me before but, as I say, all the family were very kind. The dinner was the usual one, made rather irksome by the fact that behind my chair and the chairs of the rest of the party stood a footman watching our every action and anticipating our thoughts as to what we wanted.

Charles Booth was not a Socialist, in fact he made his investigations primarily to prove the falsity of Socialism—at least, that is how I understood it. He was, however, the most fair-minded of all the social experts I ever came across. I think he did his work much fairer and more thoroughly than any of those who came after him, and his East London and South-East London investigations are standard works of their kind.

The next morning, when I appeared before the Royal Commission, I found myself once more in quite exceptional surroundings. The Commission met in a room at the House of Lords and was constituted as I have already stated. I sat at one end of a long table and was interrogated first by the chairman and then by each of the commissioners in turn. I had made strong points in my evidence that there should be more freedom in workhouses, that people should be allowed to go in and out, that they should be entirely different institutions, not workhouses at all, because, I said, aged people, infirm people ought not to be expected to work, and that better clothes, better food should be supplied, and the whole surroundings entirely changed.

The Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII, was the first to start cross-examination after the chairman. I did not know what I was expected to do, but I know that I tried to treat him just as respectfully as I had done the chairman, so I called him *Sir*. He was evidently interested because he picked out from the points I had made the questions which were at least the most interesting to me. He referred to the need for underclothes and no uniform, and in reply I said: "Certainly they need those, just like you and I do." Then we got on to the question of the sort of institution, and I remembered I had just before visited the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, and so I said that that seemed to me to be the kind of place which aged people who had no homes of their own deserved. Then came the question of food, which finished us, because he asked what I meant by variety, and himself said: "Well, a biscuit occasionally," and I could not help but just finish it all by saying: "Well, if you give them biscuits you will also have to supply them with teeth."

At the conclusion of my examination there was a lunch, to which I was invited. In the middle of the table was a

woodcock pie, with the bird's head at one end and its tail at the other. That it was such a pie was explained to me by Lord Lingen, with whom I carried on a very animated discussion about Socialism during the whole meal. But I was able to observe that lords, princes, and commoners all ate and drank very much in the same manner; all seemed to enjoy the same kind of drink and food, which proves that eating and drinking is just an ordinary business for all human beings.

After the lunch we all stood round talking, and I found myself looking over the head of the Prince, who was offering round cigars. I just ignored them because I am a non-smoker, but I have always felt a bit ashamed of myself for not being courteous enough to notice the case coming round. I had rather steeled myself not to be impressed by royalty. Of course, I can see this was all very nonsensical, because there is no doubt in my mind that everybody from the Prince to Henry Broadhurst was willing to hear anything I had to say about the Poor Law and to give it as much consideration as other people. That this was the case was proved by the fact that a day or two later I received a letter from the Secretary of the Commission to tell me that he was instructed by the Prince of Wales to tell me that he considered my evidence was the best that had been given from my side.

The one unsatisfactory member of the Commission from my point of view was Henry Broadhurst, an old-fashioned trade unionist M.P. He seemed full up with the old ideas about the injury which giving people old-age pensions or decent outdoor relief would create amongst the poorer classes. Be this as it may, my evidence before this Commission had a great effect at Poplar. I remember quite well attending the house committee the day following my evidence at the Commission, and together with Harry Kaye raising the question of clothing, pointing out that his

Royal Highness had agreed with me that uniforms ought to be abolished, that old people ought to have warm underclothing, that they should be allowed to get out more often, that more food should be varied and of better quality and more in quantity. Almost before the words were out of my mouth the committee had agreed to recommend to the Board that we should employ tailors and dressmakers, that the dietary should be reconsidered, and that the master should report about the granting of more leave to our patients.

Right from the start the five of us set our faces definitely against task-work and the workhouse for the able-bodied unemployed. But we also recognized that paying people for nothing, either as outdoor relief or in a workhouse, was a very bad thing. So we looked up the law and found it was possible for Boards of Guardians to hire land and to put able-bodied men and women to work. H. M. Hyndman and other leaders of the S.D.F. always urged their members who were Guardians of the Poor to advocate this policy. We summoned a conference of London Guardians and put forward a scheme for uniting the whole of London as one single union. The President of the Local Government Board had power to do this without legislation, as has the present Minister of Health—which is now the title for the President of the Local Government Board, and I think it will be easier if I use that title for the rest of what I have to say about the Guardians and the Ministry. I cannot emphasize too strongly the fact that over thirty years ago we so-called ignorant workmen in Poplar fought hard to secure work, and not doles, for the able-bodied. It has always been a lie to say we wanted to pay such people money for nothing.

We agitated neighbouring Guardians, called meetings of the unemployed outside the workhouses, and marched them to the local Board of Works, which body afterwards became

the Borough Council. On one occasion we packed the board-room of the Board of Works, not merely the galleries, but all round the seats of the members. I suppose we were standing six or seven deep behind the members. Our demand was that work should be put in hand. The chairman said: "How can we discuss this matter with men standing six and seven deep behind us, the room ought to be cleared." This, of course, was easier said than done. The Councillors had to wait while five or six of us made speeches. As a result about a thousand men were set to work at one sort of task or another the next day.

We had not only a lot of men on our hands, but we also had a large number of women, as indeed this part of London always has; so after talking with my friend Joseph Fels, he decided to pay the cost of taking a thousand women from this district to Westminster. With Mrs. John Scurr, Mrs. Charles Sumner, and other local women we got the women together, keeping our proposal as quiet as possible. We hired the Caxton Hall as a rallying ground, and arranged with the caretaker there to provide food and drink for our women. Our plan was to arrive at Westminster a little before the time when Parliament would open, march in procession to Caxton Hall, and then send deputations of five to interview various London members. Later on, as is well known, the suffrage movement adopted this plan of propaganda by making oneself a nuisance to M.P.'s, but we were the first people who organized deputations of women to Members of Parliament.

Mrs. Pankhurst in some way had heard of the gathering, and so had Mrs. Cobden Sanderson, and they took the opportunity to make propaganda on behalf of votes for women; but we stuck to our arrangement that the deputation should be purely working class. I undertook the job of piloting them over. We asked for Keir Hardie as Leader of the Labour Party. We had already told him we were

coming. We also asked for John Redmond and Campbell-Bannerman. We saw these three together. They were all very sympathetic: the only one that was in any way definite was Keir Hardie, in fact, as was to be expected, he was the only one who gave any sort of idea that he understood the question and appreciated the evil conditions which had brought us there. Arthur Balfour, who was then Prime Minister, would not come upstairs to the committee room to see us, but allowed half a dozen of the women to go down to his room behind the Speaker's chair. Will Crooks and Hardie took them down, and the interview with him was as unsatisfactory as with the others. But the women had the chance of telling these politicians exactly what East London was suffering.

The deputation, about thirty in all, was given tea on the terrace, after which we returned to Caxton Hall and reported. Although everybody realized we had been sent empty away there was no disappointment, everybody felt that we had, in all probability, started an agitation which would bear some fruit; and this proved to be the case. Soon afterwards we sent another and a bigger deputation, which assembled on the Thames Embankment, and was organized by women from all parts of London: Mrs. Herbert Stead in South-East London, Mrs. Cobden Sanderson in West London, Mrs. Scurr, Mrs. Sumner, and others in East London. The London Trades Council and the Social Democratic Federation also put in an oar, but they really did very little in the work of organizing.

Our plan was to march from the Embankment down Whitehall and allow the deputation of women to go into the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, who, with Mr. Walter Long, was to receive them. The London Trades Council put itself at the head of the deputation, but on reaching Mr. Balfour's room in the Foreign Office was brushed aside.

Mr. Balfour listened to the women very attentively, and

to Crooks and myself, but rather gave us the impression that he could do nothing by suddenly exclaiming to the women at the end of his speech, "What can I do?" We had made arrangements to meet the demonstrators after the deputation, and in order to do this had persuaded the Archbishop of Canterbury to give us the use of Church House and several other big church schools in the neighbourhood, and to supply refreshments. The authorities of Westminster Chapel did the same. We ourselves took Caxton Hall and one or two other places, and when we had done our reporting the women went home with the Balfour slogan, "What can I do?" and this rang through the country, showing the ineptitude and uselessness of the Government.

Even so, the result of this agitation was the passing of the Unemployed Workmen's Act, under which Parliament granted a sum of money which was distributed to the various unemployed committees which had been set up throughout the country, in order to enable them to find work for the unemployed. In London this body was called the Central Unemployed Body, and had power, and still has power, to raise a small rate to pay for administration.

Another result was that workrooms were started for women, and the big labour colony at Hollesley Bay was set going. Joseph Fels, who came in on this latter very handsomely (without him the colony never would have been bought), lent London nearly £40,000 for three or four years free of interest, and went from one cabinet minister to another imploring them to get Boards of Guardians and these unemployment committees to take over waste land. He started the Vacant Land Cultivation Society, which has assisted tens of thousands of men to grow food.

At Hollesley Bay there is no doubt at all that with a sympathetic Minister of Health men could have been trained to restart rural England. But, of course, it costs

money, and from the time of John Burns to the present day Hollesley Bay has always been "damned with faint praise" when it has not been openly cursed.

I have always reckoned that the establishment of Hollesley Bay and the setting up of the colony at Laindon by the Poplar Board of Guardians are amongst the best pieces of constructive work that stand to the credit of my initiative. But there is nothing personal in this claim, because the idea of such places was adopted long before I was a Guardian, but it was my good fortune, with the tremendous assistance of Joseph Fels, to get them brought to fruition. It is no exaggeration to say that the despised Poplar Guardians and Councillors can justly claim to be pioneers in constructive work for dealing with the unemployed. Our colonies at Laindon and Hollesley Bay led to others being established in many parts of England and Scotland. Our workrooms for women as well as men are all on the same line.

The War came and stopped all this sort of thing. It is, however, worthy of notice that the present Ministry of Labour, in its efforts to deal with unemployment in a practical way, has had to fall back on the Hollesley Bay and similar training schemes. The work that is being carried out now at the two agricultural colonies under the Ministry of Labour, and the work in the day training establishments, is exactly the kind of thing that we were prevented by John Burns from doing at Hollesley Bay and elsewhere.

If training for land settlement at home or abroad is to be successful the authorities at Whitehall, and all who take any part in the administration of such places, must be prepared to give unlimited time to the business and to exercise unbounded patience with the men with whom they have to deal. They must treat them as self-respecting citizens, not as wastrels or as unemployables: there should be no mixing, as is the case to-day, of mentally deficient and

physically weak men with those who are able-bodied and men capable of earning their own living. During the early years at Hollesley Bay—in the winter of 1905—I and other members of the committee, especially C. H. Grinling of Woolwich, spent all our week-ends in an endeavour to start classes, lectures, and educational recreation for the 500 men who were living there. We found them most responsive and, what is more, men who were able to bring out their families and live together in cottages proved, by the manner in which they carried on the work of agriculture in the day, and cultivation of their own gardens in the evening, that tilling the soil is an occupation which appeals to all sorts and conditions of men and that unemployed townsmen can train themselves to become expert gardeners and agricultural workers.

The Poplar Board of Guardians also established a colony through the assistance given them by Mr. Joseph Fels. As a matter of fact, this American Single-Taxer spent an enormous amount of money, time, and energy endeavouring to persuade Boards of Guardians and the Government that it was wiser to put men to work on unused land than to leave both idle. Both the Poplar Board and Joseph Fels were rather done in the eye over the price paid for the farm at Laindon: somehow it got out that we were after it, and I think there is no doubt somebody made several hundreds of pounds out of the deal.

This farm consisted of about 100 acres, and when we took it was the most barren and desolate place imaginable. We were able to accommodate at least 200 men, and by their labour have turned what was derelict land into orchards and gardens. It is within twenty miles of London and therefore easily available for inspection.

During the early years—1904-6—the men received sixpence per week pocket money, which Joseph Fels supplied. The families of those who were married were maintained in

Poplar on a similar scale to that which was paid to the wives and families of the men at Hollesley Bay. In some ways, although the men at Laindon were classed as paupers, they fared a little better than those at Hollesley, because the Guardians were able to supply clothes. One sad feature—at least, I think it was a sad feature—is that most of the men we had to deal with had served in the Boer War. I remember quite well how pained Mr. Gerald Balfour was when he visited the colony and Hollesley Bay with his Local Government inspectors, to find that man after man to whom he spoke had done good service during that war. Of course, no man, whether he is a soldier in the army of industry or a soldier in the ordinary army, ought to be out of work, but Mr. Balfour, I am sure, felt that it was an extra special sort of crime that men who had fought for their country should come back and find their country had no work for them. I do not know what he would think now when, for one case then, there are a thousand to-day.

The Laindon colony has now become very largely a place to which only aged men without families are sent, and only very occasionally is it used for young men.

During these early years it was visited, as also was Hollesley Bay, by Guardians of the Poor, Town Councillors from Scotland, and all parts of England, as well as by Sir Horace Plunkett, George Russell, and others from Ireland. Canon Barnett, with a deputation of his expert friends, came to see and as usual to criticize. The two friends who, while not agreeing with all that we were doing, were quite sympathetic were Charles Booth and Mr. Lockwood, Chief Inspector of the Ministry of Health. I was very much amused to find that Canon Barnett, because we were a Socialist Board, expected we would give visitors a swagger lunch—in those days we gave them bread and cheese and tea or coffee. The worthy Canon could not conceal his

surprise or refrain from expressing it, saying how pleased he was to find we did not guzzle at the public expense.

Another piece of work for which I was largely responsible as a Guardian of the Poor was in connection with children. Soon after my election to the Board I was elected as one of the managers of what was called the Forest Gate District School: this was a school owned by the Whitechapel and Poplar Boards of Guardians and administered by a joint committee representative of both Boards, with one or two nominated members. This school, when I first went to it, gave me another example of how good-intentioned people were able to treat themselves quite differently from those they considered pauper children. My first view of the school was a most disheartening one. The buildings are in Forest Lane, Stratford, and are built on the barrack system—that is, long dormitories for scores of children to sleep in, very little accommodation for recreation, and at the time I first saw it the children were dressed in the old, hideous, Poor Law garb, corduroy and hard blue serge, and the girls with their hair almost shaved off, with nothing at all to make them look attractive in any sort of way. The food was quite coarse and I should think at times insufficient. It was apparent that the place was organized and controlled as a barracks. I daresay the superintendent, who had been a military man, was, according to his light, quite a decent person, but then his light was deficient! He and those who administered with him, just like officers at the workhouse, looked on the poor as a nuisance—although they got their living out of the poor, or because of the poor.

After our first committee meeting we were taken downstairs, where a seven course dinner was to be served. It was this which made me very disgusted with the middle-class men and women who controlled this institution; they could let little girls who they knew must be half starved, and who were shockingly dressed, stand and wait on them

while they ate chicken, nice soups, sweets, etc., all at the expense of the rates. I am glad to say that when, later on, we bought out Whitechapel and took over the school all this sort of thing was abolished. We were very badly let down by the Ministry of Health in our dealings with Whitechapel over the purchase of these buildings, but it was no use our attempting to work in double harness with Whitechapel. That Board was a board which believed in making the Poor Law penal, and of course we at Poplar had persuaded even our opponents that it was our duty as far as we could, and especially in regard to children, to humanize the business.

I was elected chairman and remained chairman for over twenty years, until my other work made it impossible for me to continue, although I remained a very irregular member of the committee. No sooner did we get control of the school than we appointed a new superintendent and matron, and although neither of them were Socialists they both have proved themselves most splendid officials. The Poplar Training School is known throughout the world: our boys and girls are to be found wherever there are any British people, and this is largely due to the splendid work of Mr. W. B. Dean and Miss Hilda Lidgett. No Poplar Guardian will ever be able to speak too highly of the work these two people did in the early days when we were obliged to revolutionize the place from top to bottom. Corporal punishment had been in vogue for both boys and girls; an atmosphere of bullying and fear was prevalent when we took over. Officers all conspired to tell us it was impossible to let the girls' hair grow, but Miss Lidgett took this job in hand and in a very short time the girls had long hair and their mothers and relatives took to supplying them with pretty pieces of ribbon; and now whoever goes to the school remarks on the appearance of the children's heads.

We abolished all uniform so far as this was practicable, and by engaging tailors have proved that we can clothe both boys and girls cheaper in ordinary clothes than in the formerly costly uniforms. There were no training classes of any kind; this also was changed, so that both boys and girls are now taught trades, although most of the girls go to domestic service. There is always a very much greater demand for these girls than can be filled from the school. We went in very largely for sport, a thing almost unknown before Mr. Dean's time. I used to spend most of my Saturdays (until I began to go to Hollesley Bay) going with the boys to football and cricket matches. We also ran a hockey team and later netball teams. There is no finer or more enjoyable holiday for the people of Poplar than the day when they go to the school sports in July, when at least two or three thousand people gather to see these sports. (I ought to have mentioned earlier that we moved the school from Forest Gate to Shenfield in February 1907.)

There had always been a Forest Gate School Band: we turned it into a Poplar Training School Band. We have abolished uniforms either for bandmaster or band boys, and have now established an excellent orchestral band in addition to the brass band. The name of our school was proposed by Will Crooks who, from the first, was one of the most active members of the committee, and supported in every way possible the work we were doing. We developed the band to such an extent that it has become one of the most famous boys' bands in the country. At one time our band won the first prize at the Crystal Palace in a competition. It has also been used for demonstrations of various kinds. It led the procession of women from the Embankment which went on a deputation to Mr. Balfour; it has played at May Day demonstrations, and on one occasion, when May Day was celebrated at the Crystal Palace, the band attended with several hundred of the children. Its most famous

piece of work was when one night a week it played selections outside Brixton Prison during the six weeks the Guardians and Councillors were incarcerated there. The auditor kindly surcharged us the fares for these jaunts, which we paid.

At this school we have always made a great feature of prize day. I suppose there is no school of its kind in the country that has had more celebrated people to distribute the prizes than has the Poplar School. The late Lord Long, Lord Chaplin, Dr. Macnamara, Gerald Balfour, J. R. MacDonald, J. H. Thomas, and many others have been with us. It has also been visited by innumerable people, as I have already mentioned, by the Queen and her daughter.

During my period as a Poor Law Guardian I was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. This was in December 1905. I received this appointment without any influence being used on my behalf, either by myself or anyone else. It came as a bolt from the blue when I received the letter from Mr. Walter Long asking if I would serve. The trade unions objected to my being taken as representing the Labour movement in general, and as a result in the following February Mr. Francis Chandler was added to the Commission.

This Commission published its report in 1909; there was a majority and a minority report. The minority report was the work of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and was signed by myself, Mrs. Webb, Mr. Chandler, and Bishop Wakefield. I have never pretended to agree with every detail contained in the minority report, but broadly speaking all of us who signed agreed with its main principles. We were unanimous that the present system had outgrown whatever usefulness it had ever possessed, and that the overlapping between the Poor Law and Public Health services should be got rid of,

and so we plumped straight for the abolition of Boards of Guardians, workhouses, and all such institutions. We desired that the work of Boards of Guardians should be undertaken by town, county, and urban authorities doing similar work—that is, children of school age should be under the control of education authorities, all sick persons suffering from any sickness should be cared for by the public health authority, able-bodied unemployed men and women by a national authority. There were, of course, many other details, but these were the broad principles, laying stress, of course, on the word “prevention” rather than “curative.”

The years spent on this Commission were amongst the best I have spent so far as local government is concerned, because almost every moment was one spent in gathering information and knowledge concerning administration. Our journey throughout the country, and especially the journey through Holland, Belgium, France, and Germany, gave me a bird's-eye view of social and industrial conditions such as I could not otherwise have obtained. But at the end, although I still remained a Guardian and local government worker, and in a way retained my faith in parliamentary action, I came from the Commission a more convinced Socialist than when I started. My conviction grows stronger as the years pass that everything we do on palliative lines leaves some evil behind it, and that there is no remedy for poverty and destitution except the total and complete abolition of the causes which produce these evils, and that in the main, though there are many individual exceptions, these evils are social and not personal; that drunkenness and other crimes of that sort are incidental, and not of themselves the primary causes which bring about destitution most people deplore.

At the present day, this year 1928, it is a very sad and terrible thing that it should be possible for me to write

down as a truth that casual wards, which were empty during the War, are now overfull; that all the old problems connected with the adolescent for whom there is no continuation of employment after a certain age still remain; that hundreds of thousands of men and women are out of work, and that money spent on Poor Law relief is an enormous sum compared with what it was in 1914, and that what are called social services continue to increase—I mean such social services as clinics for mothers and children and expectant mothers, which are more needed than ever. I do not want to be misunderstood; money must be spent on these things where the need exists, but there ought to be no such need. After all the years of agitation and all the money that has been spent it ought now to be possible for children to be born under normal, healthy conditions without the intervention of either public or private charity. If every mother went to a maternity clinic, if it were the custom for every child to be born in a maternity institution, then there is nothing to be said against it, but it is this need which comes from poverty and destitution which I think is so bad and which, one of these days, we shall get rid of.

Apart from my work as a Poor Law Guardian I have also served a period of three years on the London County Council. My short experience on that body has convinced me that its method of conducting its business—I am not now talking of policy—by dividing members up into committees and sub-committees, is a most excellent method by which members of the Council are able to control administration and able also to understand the task that has been entrusted to them. The bureaucracy at the County Hall is a very strong one indeed, but it is controlled as I think no government bureaucracy in this country has ever been controlled.

But my longest period of local government service has been as a Poor Law Guardian and a Borough Councillor.

I retain my membership of these. I became a Borough Councillor in November 1903, and have retained the same seat that I fought for the Guardians over thirty-five years. All the work in Poplar is hindered because of high rates: high rates are caused by low rateable value and a poverty-stricken population. Charles Booth put it on record that in his day twenty-five per cent. of the wage-earners never knew one day to another when they would get work, which means, of course, that no one was sure of an income. There is nothing so devastating as this for anybody. Consequently poverty demands big public expenditure and low rateable value makes such expenditure the cause of high rates. The local Labour Party always had on its programme the equalization of rates—that is, we contend that the poor rate, instead of being levied on each borough, should be levied over the whole twenty-eight boroughs, so that those who were financially strong should help bear the burdens of those who were financially weak.

When the local Labour Party came to power in 1919 we were faced with the problem of how to carry out this policy. We found our rates going up by leaps and bounds; we had gone up to something over thirty shillings, and it looked as if we might possibly soon reach two pounds for every one pound of rateable value. We met as a Labour Party to try and discover what to do. It is not quite certain who proposed the scheme whereby we hoped to bring matters to a head: I believe the suggestion came from me in a quite tentative sort of way that we should refuse to pay the London County Council or the Metropolitan Asylums Board, or the Police precepts. This meant several hundreds of thousands of pounds per year.

The late Charlie Sumner enthusiastically supported the idea and so we decided that we would not pay. There were some months of negotiation with the central authorities who, in the end, threatened to take proceedings and did so,

and we were summoned to the High Court. We went up escorted by our ratepayers with banners flying, headed by a band, with the Mayor, Sam March, marching at the head with his chain of office and the mace bearer. The scene in Court was a very lively one: we all made speeches, which the lawyers told us were our undoing, but we never believed that because we were all quite certain that the three old gentlemen before whom we appeared would have no mercy on a recalcitrant council such as that which rules at Poplar. The case against us was well put by one of the judges, who said: "Suppose every other council did as you do, what would be the result?" We immediately answered: "Why, of course, we should get our way." The judges all agreed that we had a hard case but, as they said, the law was against us and until the law was altered we must obey it.

We stood firm and after an appeal to the High Court were sent to prison. Our stay lasted six weeks. The Trades Union Congress and the Parliamentary Labour Party all did their best to get us out, but to no purpose. We tried to get ourselves made first-class misdemeanants, but were informed that people who were put in prison for contempt of court could not be so treated. It was very amusing for us to be told that we were in prison *sine die*, which meant that we might be there for ever. Lawyers came in and told us that until we purged our offence we would never be let out. There were about twenty-four of us at Brixton and half a dozen women at Holloway. We all played up the prison authorities very badly. I and one or two others were taken in on a Saturday, and I remember the first words one of our number said to the chief warden was "Where's your union card?" Both the officers who stood there looked flabbergasted and when he repeated it and we all joined in they really did not know what to do with us.

The doctor passed us all in without going through the

form of a bath, for which I was devoutly thankful, having rather lively recollections of the kind of bath I went into at Pentonville a few years before.

We made up our minds to do no work, and did none. We demanded footballs and the right to have our cell doors open and to have newspapers. After a struggle lasting a day or two the authorities gave way, so we spent most of our time out in the open air. It was a beautiful September, and the October days were the beginning of an Indian summer. Do not let anyone imagine that although we broke every rule it was possible to break, that we were very comfortable, or that there was anything enjoyable about it. I have no doubt in my own mind that the lives of Mrs. Scurr and Minnie Lansbury were shortened by the imprisonment; neither have I any doubt that Sumner, Rugless, and O'Callaghan also shortened their lives by going to prison at this time. Although we fought for and obtained much better food than was given to the other prisoners—in fact, both in quantity, quality, and cooking there was really nothing to complain of in regard to the food supplied after the first two or three days—and although we were able to meet each night in the room set apart for the Prison Commissioners, and were allowed more freedom than people in a workhouse are allowed, it is only mere truth to say that not an hour passed but we chafed at such restraint, and what is of more importance, our mode of life was all changed and at the time of life most of the men and women had reached this was a very bad thing.

All the same, the Governor and officers of the prison were only too delighted to get rid of us: but we were not allowed to go until we had made them understand what we thought of prison. This book, if I chose, could be filled with experiences gained in the short space of six weeks. There are some which stand right out. Here is one: my second night I was taken rather ill and rang the bell.

A face came to the grating and asked me what the hell I was ringing about. I told him and he just went away and nothing happened. I rang again, the door opened and a man leaned across me and said he would smash my b——y head in if I did not stop it. Well, I then began to talk rather loudly and my friends each side of me heard something was wrong and they passed the word out of the window to the rest of the cells, and then, of course, pandemonium broke loose in rather less time than it takes me to write. The result was the chief warder, doctor, and deputy governor appeared, only to find me in a more or less state of collapse. Of course, they were all very sorry and in the end the warder who was guilty was punished.

I am confident that if I had been in that prison alone without any friends, I should have been quite thoroughly set about that night and should, in the morning, have been charged with assaulting the warder. I never met so brutal a kind of man in my life as he was.

After this everybody with whom we came in contact were more or less civil, though I had a real tussle with the doctor about the food. In a prison, as in a workhouse, it is not so much that the ingredients and material out of which meals are provided are bad, but it is the preparation and the cooking that is so dreadful. The tea was, for the first two days, served up to us in a most putrid manner. It was impossible for us to drink it; neither could we eat the margarine, and as for the porridge it was not at all good—that is, it was not properly cooked. Vegetables were, I think, the one form of food which were not only badly prepared, but the potatoes themselves were bad. The doctor certified that the tea I complained of was good. I challenged him to drink a little of it, but he told me it was not meant for him. I then said it was not for me. As a result we always had tea freshly made for us and our meals specially prepared. I was on a special diet and could

have been removed to the hospital, but I wanted to remain with the rest of the crowd.

The worst thing about Brixton was the young boys we found there dressed in the hideous prison garb which, by the way, we never more—we never even wore our yellow badges with our numbers on. But these boys in their teens were enough to make the most hard-hearted of us just weep bitter tears to see them.

The church was another tragedy, and after one visit we just boycotted it. Because we spoke to one another we were told to shut up. We were asked by one warder, "Don't you know where you are?" We told him "Yes, we are in hell." That, of course, brought more of his wrath down upon us, but like the rest of the officials he had become too much cowed to interfere with us as he would have done with any other prisoners who made such an answer.

The granting of so many privileges to us brought similar demands from the rest of the prisoners, and a very humorous incident took place when the Governor came round and asked us if two of our number would join him in interviewing the prisoners who had sent a round robin asking to be treated as we were. The old gentleman thought we would assist him in proving that we were entitled to what we got and they were not. Well, we allowed him to think so till we got in front of the deputation, and then I said to him: "Well, Governor, if you allow me to sit in your chair and give me your authority I will settle this business for you, because we think these people should have exactly what we are having. We have committed a breach of the law and that is all they have done, and we have no right to have better treatment than them." Of course, that broke up the meeting.

All through our imprisonment the unemployed and others came and sang outside the wall of the prison. We could

hear the singing quite well and joined in the chorus of the Socialist songs. After the first evening the whole prison used to ring with the strains of the *Red Flag*. Occasionally I made a speech from the window of my cell. It was impossible to stop us because what could the authorities do? They could not fasten the windows because we must have air, and they could not have a warder at each cell, so they just let it go. There was an amusing incident when someone suggested to the Governor that we should be moved into the interior of the prison. He came to us and suggested that we might like to go into the interior because, if we did, and were away from the other prisoners, he could allow small privileges, such as smoking and more newspapers. It was all very nice bribery, but if we had gone inside it meant we should never be able to see or hear our friends outside, so we told him we would send two or three of our number to look at the new cells. We sent three non-smokers, who came back and reported that we had better stop where we were, and so we remained there till our discharge.

The discharge came all of a sudden. After a week or two of negotiations, carried on through Harry Gosling, the County Council sent their lawyer to the courts to ask for our release. All we had promised to do was that we would attend a conference and help to find a way out of the difficulty which had landed us where we were. We sent a petition to the judges, telling them that we were sorry we had broken the law, but that it really was not our fault, that we were sorry we had given them the trouble of sending us to prison, and that we would attend the conference if we were released. I do not pretend for a minute that anyone of us was anxious about anything else but to get out of prison; however, we wanted to get out without giving way on the question of making the rate, and this we accomplished.

The judges asked whether we were going to obey their

order? The counsel for the County Council was wise enough to say that he did not know what was going to happen, which enabled the judges to wink the other eye and to do what the law journalists said afterwards had never been done before, and that was release thirty prisoners sent to prison for contempt before they had purged their contempt.

The result of our six weeks' imprisonment was that after a conference at Whitehall, over which Sir Alfred Mond presided, it was decided that the cost of outdoor relief and the major part of indoor relief of the poor should be levied over the whole of London. It works out that Poplar gets  $9\frac{1}{2}d.$  per day for each person relieved outside an institution, man, woman, or child, and for every person relieved inside an institution  $1s. 3d.$  Formerly only  $5d.$  per day was allowed and nothing at all for outdoor relief. This immediately relieved the rates of Poplar to the extent of  $6s. 6d.$  in the  $\pounds$  and put  $1s.$  in the  $\pounds$  on the rates of Westminster and the City of London. It will thus be seen that although our going to prison was a very inconvenient and not at all pleasant business for us, it resulted in a very great advantage to the people of Poplar. Among those who benefited the most from this are the people who own house property and the shopkeepers, because out of the nearly  $\pounds 600,000$  which each year comes to Poplar from the richer boroughs of London a good part of this goes to pay rates and buy food from the shopkeepers in the district. The rates in Poplar still amount to  $25s.$  in the  $\pounds$ , which is an outrageous figure and is caused very largely by casual labour and unemployment. The Ministry of Health does its best to get us back to the palmy days of no outdoor relief, aided and abetted by the public auditor. Great efforts are being made to cut down not only relief but wages paid to employees. Whenever a Labour Government comes to power its first task should be to deal with unemployment on a national scale,

provide for all expectant and nursing mothers, and provide a state allowance for each child born until such children are able to earn their own living. Aged and infirm people should be a charge on national resources. Old parish boundaries have long ago been swept away. It is time the territorial unions were abolished and the entire problem of destitution, poverty, sickness, education, and all social services were paid for from national funds and administered by municipal and other local authorities on broad, uniform lines, leaving the local authorities the right to experiment and develop special local services at their own expense.

The work of our Socialist group on the Board of Guardians brought us the usual gross misrepresentation and abuse. One half of the Labour movement joined in the howl against the Poplar "wastrels," as we were dubbed by the *Daily Mail*. To this day many men and women in our Party privately disagree with our policy but dare not avow their opposition in public. As was always the case in any movement with which I was associated, I managed to secure most notoriety, though I can honestly say I never asked for it. My first dose came in 1893 when my colleagues with the help of some Liberals elected me chairman of the Board. The idea behind my election to this position was that responsibility would temper my enthusiasm and give my common sense a chance. My mental and moral make-up is not susceptible to such arrangements, consequently, as chairman I became more extreme than ever, always insisting on recording my vote on controversial questions and when my vote made voting equal I then gave a casting vote. For this sort of action I received censure from most of my Labour colleagues, except the S.D.F. members and Charlie Sumner, who never in any circumstances deserted either me or any other pal; and as a consequence my Labour friends joined the Tories and elected a more

respectable Labour man, who could be trusted not to say or do unpleasant things, in my place.

Henry Chaplin and his successors at the Ministry of Health, Walter Long and Gerald Balfour, were all very sympathetic with us in our endeavours to humanize the Poor Law. Our chief opposition came from John Burns, when he honoured the Liberal Party by accepting office under Campbell-Bannerman. Burns and Crooks had been fast friends on the London County Council; both of them accepted, as did many other Labour men, Fabians, and parlour Socialists, the position laid down by Lord Rosebery of a Progressive-Labour alliance which, in practice, worked out as a Liberal-Labour alliance. The Battersea and Poplar Labour leagues drew a good deal of financial support from wealthy Liberals who also subscribed heavily to the wages funds established to maintain Burns and Crooks. There was no secret about this alliance; the Labour bench on the L.C.C., which contained men like George Dew, Harry Gosling, John Burns, Will Crooks, Will Steadman, Ben Tillett, and, for a time, J. R. MacDonald, openly avowed its alliance with the Progressives.

In East London and in Battersea there was strong opposition to this policy; we modelled ourselves on Will Thorne and his West Ham colleagues and went in for a Socialist policy, always standing as Socialist and Labour candidates. In Poplar we were divided—one half of the borough following Crooks and the composite Progressive and Labour Party, and the Bow and Bromley half, led by the Bromley E Branch of the General Workers' Union and the local S.D.F., taking the Socialist line, refusing to have anything to do with the unclean thing called Liberalism.

Sidney Webb was the chief protagonist of the composite policy, ably supported by H. W. Massingham in the days when he edited the *Star* and wrote for the *Daily Chronicle*. This policy held back independent Labour representation

on the L.C.C. for many years and, in fact, retarded the progress of the Labour movement in London till after the War. I think it was in 1918 that the Webbs found their way into the Labour Party and were soon followed by trade unionists and a swarm of young Fabians. I like to remember that with my brave, courageous comrade Frank Smith and R. C. K. Ensor we formed the first Labour group on the L.C.C. entirely independent of Liberals and Progressives. We were three cheerful, bonnie fighters and got to know and care for each other as men always do when fighting a lone and courageous fight together.

The time I was a member of the L.C.C. was the most hectic so far as work goes that I ever experienced. It was during the years 1909-12. During this period I was for the first time elected Member of Parliament for Bow and Bromley, was earning my living at an exacting business, was Borough Councillor and Guardian of the Poor, and chairman of working colonies under the Central Unemployed Body. Anybody who looks up my record on these bodies will find I was not a passenger, but a very active member, though I nearly killed myself at the job.

All this brings me back to John Burns at the Ministry of Health: his policy with regard to the Poor Law was largely dictated by Sir James Davey, the Chief Inspector. This gentleman filled the Labour leader with the idea that he should prove himself a strong man and stand up against his personal friends as if they were his political enemies. In a hundred ways John Burns did his best to hinder and thwart our work, whether this work was carried on at Laindon Farm Colony, Hollesley Bay, or in the giving of outdoor relief, improving our hospitals and schools. The Poor Law seemed anathema to him, though I never remember him supporting the Webb scheme for abolishing Boards of Guardians.

The *Daily Mail* flattered him, and as a result he appointed

the most bitter of our opponents, Sir James Davey, to inquire into our administration. The whole business was engineered as a stunt against Socialists and against Crooks and myself. The scenes in the hall where the Inquiry was held had the appearance of a farce. Sir James Davey could not be dignified or fair if he tried, his mind was soaked in prejudice and steeped in what he described as the eternal principles laid down by the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834. Any Tom, Dick, or Harry was allowed to come forward and make any statement he pleased about us and our work. Every statement, no matter how ludicrous, was printed with great headlines in the Press, as if it were gospel truth. One Ananias, more unscrupulous than others, came forward and said we gave all our inmates starched shirts and collars, and dressed our women patients in fine clothes, giving everybody two or three changes. Mr. Elvy Robb, who appeared as prosecutor against us, was allowed to open the proceedings from his side by making a whole series of vague, undefined charges which were taken at their face value. Corrie Grant, as usual our friend and helper, did his best to stay the tide of innuendo and hard swearing by witnesses, all to no purpose. Sir James intended we should be damned and that his chief, John Burns, should be justified, and for days the case went on. We brought the boxes containing the boys' clothes, including shirts and collars given to boys when leaving, and the girls' boxes, showing the changes of clothes given to girls when leaving, in order to disprove the yarn mentioned above. Sir James took no notice but, like the Crown Counsel at the Parnell Commission, simply asked for more and more of the same stuff. Charges of drunkenness against Guardians were established because a couple of Guardians who had been sailors always walked with a slight roll. Not a single charge of corruption, direct or indirect, was proved against anybody. It was proved that we helped the poor, the sick

and needy, the widow and orphan, and this we admitted. It was proved we had built a fine new school at Shenfield and that our big school- and dining-hall at the schools was worthy of Eton or Harrow, Oxford or Cambridge, and we refused to explain or apologize. It was proved we sent able-bodied men to Laindon and maintained their wives and families in decency and comfort at home. Yes, and lots more of the same kind; but after weeks of the most relentless searching and investigating dear old Sir James Davey could only report we had violated the sacred principles of 1834, had cared for the poor and needy not wisely but too well; that in his view some of our number had not always been discreet and one official had committed adultery.

His report fell very flat indeed. The Inquiry which took place in June 1906 made the work we were doing known throughout the land and many a hundred Labour men and women followed in our train. We were subjected to a second Inquiry in March 1922. This time a gentleman from Bolton, a Mr. Cooper, was appointed to investigate us. We had been to prison, had beaten the Courts and the Government; our expenditure was and is being paid very largely by all London. This was too much for our enemies to swallow, so suddenly Mr. Cooper appeared in our midst, armed with authority to examine privately our books and our administration. This gentleman is an ardent supporter of the same eternal principles so beloved by Sir James Davey and the Charity Organization Society. Consequently, our administration was in his mind damned before he started. After a few weeks' searching and scratching among books and documents without seeing any of our work on committees or at the Board he produced a report in which he stated he could save £100,000 a year on our administration. He found us guilty and we pleaded "Guilty and proud of it." Neither of these efforts to smash us did us

any harm. At the elections which followed the publication of both reports we received more support than ever. The fact was that our people know quite well that the Labour Party in its work spent money on the poor and were most economical in expenditure on non-essentials.

There is this also to be said about us: condemned and criticized as we have been in so wholesale a manner, our example has been one which the Labour movement has followed in all parts of the land. In addition, it was our agitation and work which brought about the appointment of the Royal Commission, and this made possible the public consideration of the Webbs' proposal for the abolition of Guardians and workhouses. When these reforms are affected, as they will be, whatever credit may be due to other people, the Poplar Guardians, men and women like Charlie Sumner, Julia Scurr, Lena Wilson, and good old Charles Goult of the S.D.F., and many others, known and unknown, will deserve thanks from the masses.

There is another thing worth recording: the Poplar Borough Council and Board of Guardians can boast among the members who have served on these bodies three bishops, one prebendary, seven County Councillors, and six Members of Parliament—which goes to prove that the more the *Daily Mail* attacks a man because of policy, the more respect and support he receives from the public.

I ought to put on record here the fact that John Wheatley, when he became Minister of Health, by a stroke of the pen wiped out surcharges amounting to thousands of pounds and repealed a ridiculous order issued against us by Sir Alfred Mond. In many ways he lightened our task so far as it was possible to do so by administrative act. The Borough Council also received assistance in its housing schemes from him and his assistant, Arthur Greenwood. Short of land as we are, we have been able through the assistance thus given, and the beneficent support of Dr.

Addison, to create very nice garden cities in Poplar and lots of houses and tenements in Bow and Bromley. Our housing schemes are among the very finest in the county of London and have been erected at a minimum cost. In this alone "Poplarism" has more than justified itself. Our electricity undertakings, our fine libraries, large and small baths and wash-houses, parks and open spaces, lighting, cleansing, and upkeep of our streets and roads, tree-planting, public health clinics, maternity and child welfare centres, the cutting down of the death rate by more than one half, and the improved physique of our school children—all these are proofs that "Poplarism" means efficient, cheap public administration.

During all these years I have met all sorts and conditions of men. For over twenty-five years I toiled with a handful of others as a minority on all local bodies, discovering that a small minority could by perseverance and industry carry its way with even the most bitter opponents. We fought against "graft" of every kind. Our most indignant enemies bear witness we never plundered the public for mean or sordid ends. Alone among the Boards of Guardians of London we urged the Minister of Health to use his power to centralize the supply of stores and so eliminate the evils connected with contractors. Men who offended against the law, members of a subsidiary committee, went to prison, but they were not Labour members and the offences charged against them were of the most trivial description. Huge combinations of rich men organized as a Municipal Alliance, headed by Gilbert Bartholomew, then managing-director of Bryant and May's, spent many thousands of pounds in an endeavour to destroy us. Richard Green, shipowner, shipbuilder, best of good fellows, but weak as water when it came to standing to his guns on behalf of the things he knew to be right, came on to the Guardians to lead our enemies, only to discover his need

to appeal to us to save him from his friends. Gordon Crosse, attracted to East London by a genuine desire to help lift up the poor, became more Socialist than the Socialists in his anxiety to help those who needed the help of a friend. Bishop Chandler, of Bloemfontein, Bishop Trollope of Korea, Bishop Mosely of Stepney, Prebendary Mason of St. Paul's, dear, kind-hearted Manly Power, Rector of Bow, Comrade Langdon, now Vicar of St. Matthew's, City Road, all these and many others came to hold us in check and finished by helping us do our work more thoroughly. Miss Wintour and James Peckham from the Isle of Dogs and Miss MacKay from Scotland came and stood in with us, at least up to the point of defying John Burns and all his works. The Municipal Alliance paid others to serve as Guardians, only to discover they had wasted their money. And so I could go on. This record of thirty-five years is a record of a period when a few poor men and women stood out and demanded and secured for the people of their district decent, wholesome conditions of life such as even Tories like Neville Chamberlain are compelled to-day to admit are right and proper. We never always satisfied everybody among the unemployed and the poor; on two occasions we were, as a Board, locked in all night by the unemployed, who thought we were too weak in giving way to the Minister of Health. These were only passing fits of temper, quite understandable, but not very reasonable. I am proud, very proud, to have been one among the band who, without money or friends, threw down the challenge to Bumbledom in 1895. We soon gathered friends; men and women of all classes rallied to our aid. The finish of our task is not yet; that will come on the day when poverty, pauperism, penury, and want are forever banished from our land.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE "DAILY HERALD"

MY connection with the *Daily Herald* from its start in April 1912 until February 1925 was one of the most worrying and happy episodes in my life. I joined the committee knowing little or nothing about newspapers, otherwise it is very probable I should have refused to join. It is true that as a boy with other young aspiring geniuses I assisted in publishing and circulating a news-sheet in connection with the Whitechapel Church Young Men's Society. But this journal was written by our own fair hands and circulated from one person to another. Though this was the case we were as proud of our work as were the *Daily Herald* directors when, after hours and hours of labour, organization, and waiting, the first clean copy came off the machine on 15th April 1912. I had also helped to sell the *Link*, a little paper published by W. T. Stead and Annie Besant in 1888, and as secretary of the Bow and Bromley Liberal Association helped to edit and publish a local monthly called *Coming Times*, to which I contributed notes over the name of "John Blunt." James Macpherson and W. Hoffman helped with this venture. We were, in fact, inseparable friends during those strenuous years from 1885 to 1895. *Coming Times* was, for a while, quite successful. Our respectable connections enabled us to secure advertisements from undertakers, pawnbrokers, and others. I don't know other people's experiences, but I have always found undertakers very willing to advertise in local papers published by persons with advanced views. This must be due to our papers being so dull that we bore our readers to death and so help the funeral trade. My present-day

experience leads me to think that birth-control advertisements also form a large part of Labour's stock of trade advertisements, so that these columns of my papers seem to have carried the message " Don't be born—or if you do, die quickly."

After *Coming Times* had joined the " has-beens " the Social Democrats brought out a *Bow and Bromley Worker*. This ran until all of us were doubly bankrupt and had exhausted every avenue for begging or borrowing for money. I say bankrupt advisedly, because this was literally the case. None of us was getting much money. Finnis, Annie and Jessie Johnson were our millionaires, and they were blackcoated workers. It is easy to understand how hard our struggles were, especially as nobody with much more than two halfpennies for a penny had as yet joined our ranks. Looking back I am bound to say, however unpractical and sentimental it may sound, that for my wife and I the pioneer days, when we were very poor in a material sense but extremely rich in our own love and the evergrowing love and comradeship of equally poor men and women, are among the very happiest of our lives. I remember quite well the arguments about this piece of work and the other, and how the final word always was " Well, it's got to be done. We must have faith and go forward."

E. E. Metivier, another blackcoated proletarian, John Nash, A. A. Watts, Tom Glossop, and many others were fine helpers. Metivier's job was to keep our records, plan our meetings, correspond with newspapers. On one occasion, when some vandals wished to pull down our five centuries' old Bow Church, which stands in the centre of the main road, it was Metivier who rallied William Morris, Walter Crane, and others to its defence and the church was saved. We Bow Socialists were publicly thanked by the present Bishop of London for our

ance in saving this fine old building. However, this has nothing to do with newspapers.

When I was asked to join the *Daily Herald* venture this was all the experience standing to my credit—or discredit. I funk'd accepting responsibility for the madness involved in publishing a daily paper with a capital of £300, and for twenty-four hours persisted in my refusal to continue a member of the committee. Maurice and Tillett came to the House of Commons and did not go away till I had promised to rejoin. Consequently, when the paper was published I was as responsible as anyone else for the huge debt we immediately accumulated. No paper was ever brought out under such difficulties. There was practically no furniture, one table, and several chairs, no ink, pencils, or paper. W. P. Ryan, Langdon Everard, and Jimmy Butler remain on the staff, sole survivors of the most hectic first night. W. H. Seed was editor for a few days, then came a friend to whom I took exception, then Rowland Kenney, later on Charles Lapworth, and finally myself. We changed editors so often because nobody was satisfied with the paper. The man is yet to be born who can satisfy a committee as editor, especially a committee of Socialists and Labour men. Men like W. F. Rean, H. W. Hobart, and others deserve all the credit attaching to the launching of the paper; it was their eternal optimism which overcame every obstacle.

Our best days were during the War, when the daily became the *Herald* and appeared weekly until 1919. During this period we were responsible only to one another. We had no committee, no bosses, and discovered that a one-man committee is best for editing a paper. Committees for such a purpose were invented by the devil to destroy us.

The manner in which some much more moral and respectable people have written and talked about the

*Daily Herald* and its struggles has always amused me. Whatever we did with other people's money, it is mere truth to say that right up till the War broke out we also spent our own as freely as we spent other people's. Since August 1914 also we did what we could in assisting the finances of the paper. Nobody at any time ever gave or lent a penny to the *Daily Herald* without the full knowledge that the money would probably be lost in the sense that no interest or dividend would ever be paid. At a meeting of the executive of one of the biggest unions which lent up to £50,000 I was asked what guarantee could we give that the money would not be lost. I told them we could give no such guarantee; the only sure thing was that the money would be expended on the development of the paper. The five per cent. interest guaranteed by the assets of Victoria House to certain debenture holders did not mature because it was agreed to waive these claims when the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party took over the paper, as these bodies also took over as a free gift the assets, machinery, and plant of Victoria House Printing and Publishing Company, worth at least £30,000.

So far as I am concerned in all these matters my gratitude goes to those brave men and women, all or nearly all of whom, were weekly wage-earners, who in great faith in the ultimate success of the venture put up the first £300, and the innumerable host who later on gave one penny, sixpence, or one shilling weekly to help keep us going.

We were from the start what is described as a rebel organ—although our directors were nearly all of the ultra-respectable type, men like Charles Bowerman, T. E. Naylor, Ben Tillett being among them. In fact, it could with truth be said of us as of Ishmael: " Our hand was against every man's and every man's against us." Because G. K. Chesterton, who at that time was a member of the Anglican Church, and Hilaire Belloc wrote for us, British and French Social-

ists charged us with being in the pay of the Papacy, and this was actually accepted as true by people who should have known better. Then we were said to be subsidized by a crowd of American monopolists who were bent on capturing the British Press. Why anybody should have wanted to capture so rebellious and, on paper, so revolutionary a crowd as we were passes my comprehension, and what sort of mentality was possessed by those who could believe and spread such yarns is past finding out. The fact is, our first twelve months were months of stress and difficulty which no set of men and women, except those possessing a fanatical zeal and unbounded faith in their enterprise, could have lived through.

Alone in the British Press we denounced the scandals connected with the sinking of the Titanic, and forced the Government to institute an inquiry which in turn we proved was, from first to last, a more or less whitewashing affair. Our presence among the daily Press forced journals with much bigger circulations to mention at least the fact that, to the eternal discredit of those concerned, the cry which sounded loudest, at least in deeds, on that tragic occasion was "First-class passengers first," and hundreds of people lost their lives because risks were taken to establish a record. It would not be fair in saying this not to record that some rich men behaved like men, not to say chivalrous gentlemen, and that the fine old leader of British journalism, W. T. Stead, found a premature grave by refusing to crowd into a boat, simply standing by, taking his chance, content to meet whatever fate had to give him. But we were brutal and frank in our denunciation of conduct which disgraced the magnificent record of British shipping, and which we felt was something new and typical of some of the vulgar new rich.

Although at all times we never knew one day from another how to pay our bills, we started funds to assist

unemployed marchers from the provinces. It could with truth be said of us that wherever a strike took place there we were in the midst. We found the money which enabled the ironworkers in the Midlands to march to London during their strike in 1912. We raised the necessary money to feed, clothe, and house them for some weeks in an L.C.C. lodging-house at Deptford. Only those who acted with me and with Webber, their leader, can ever know the difficulties we encountered carrying out that task. Without the *Daily Herald*, and the influence which a daily paper published in London gives, we should have hopelessly failed. Those who think a newspaper is judged only by its circulation, or that influence is confined to those who boast of millions of readers, are not aware that the most influential among Tory papers are those with small circulations. In this matter quality counts as well as money.

Our industrial propaganda, as indeed all our propaganda, was greatly assisted by Will Dyson, the Australian cartoonist, whose famous " fat man " drawings attracted attention wherever they appeared. Dyson was a brutal realist, and although it is true all capitalists do not in actual life look fat and sleek and well-to-do, the pictures he drew did represent, as no words could, the tremendous gulf which in modern life separates Dives from Lazarus, and that was his object. With Dyson came Cecil Chesterton, G. K. Chesterton, G. D. H. Cole, and William Mellor, now editor of the *Daily Herald*. The Cole and Mellor combination was an effective one, lasting till the end of the War. Their chief propaganda was for Guild Socialism. The shop-steward movement, Whitley Councils, and other efforts at securing workers' control are the results of the work they did in the *Daily Herald* and the propaganda carried on by S. G. Hobson and Orage in the *New Age*. The men and women who wrote for the paper are too numerous for me to remember: among them are Francis Meynell, best and

most helpful of good friends, Gerald Gould, without whose untiring help and loyalty I could not have edited the paper, Evelyn Sharp, John Scurr, W. P. Ryan, Rowland Kenney, C. Langdon Everard, G. E. Slocombe, James Butler, Norman Ewer, Harold Laski, and Charles Lapworth.

The paper apparently had no settled policy. One day we advocated direct action and poured scorn on Parliament, and the next urged people to vote at municipal and other elections. All the same, running through each edition there was at all times a clear-cut Socialist appeal. Our apparent inconsistency was due to the fact that I, as editor and director, insisted on giving the very fullest freedom of expression to all our paid and unpaid contributors, and allowed all sides of our movement to state their case. Although I have lived long enough to know that official Socialist, Communist, and Labour papers will not allow this freedom, I nevertheless still firmly hold the view that it is always better to allow people to say what they think than pay them to say what you think. I know that during the short time *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* was running several of our best contributors wrote much more brilliantly and usefully for that paper than they had previously done for papers where their right to free expression was limited. I think an editor should only edit methods of expression and never attempt to suppress views however unpopular and hateful these views may be. I do not count scurrilous, malicious attacks on individuals as matters of principle. Such writing should always be severely censored.

When I became editor of the *Daily Herald* I abolished betting tips, but I was obliged to restore them in 1919. Our best piece of work before the War was on behalf of women's suffrage. This was a subject about which there was a wide division of opinion among those who controlled the paper, but in the end we were able to keep an even keel

and to fight manfully day by day on behalf of the cause. And what a cause it was, and how splendidly its advocates stood together, worked together, and sacrificed life itself, has been told many times over. Here it is only necessary to say the *Daily Herald* supported all who wanted rights for women. We did not attack militants or non-militants. The only people we went for were those laodiceans who were neither hot nor cold, who always found excuses for doing nothing, and who denounced those who, by their sacrifices and labour, compelled public attention to the need for women's enfranchisement.

Mr. Drew, manager of Victoria House Printing Company, was a courageous comrade in this struggle: when Mr. McKenna suppressed the *Suffragette* he, without a moment's thought of consequences, printed the paper which was sold under the nose of Scotland Yard an hour after its suppression had been announced. Charles Lapworth assisted in this fine piece of work, though his part in that job did not get him into prison. Mr. Drew was prosecuted and served a term in prison for his action in this matter.

Whenever we met to discuss programmes we quarrelled like enemies: whenever we discussed work and how to smite the enemy all our differences vanished. The work of the *Daily Herald* League for the unemployed, for men and women fighting against unjust conditions, was of the very best; but the work we did on behalf of women's suffrage was beyond all praise. Wherever the struggle was fiercest, in the Albert Hall, where we rescued Sylvia Pankhurst from under the eyes of the police, or in Trafalgar Square or Hyde Park, there were members of the Herald League defending women and smiting their enemies hip and thigh. At respectable Surbiton one night, when I was down to speak in the Public Hall, a crowd of young hooligans looked like giving me and Frank Smith a good trouncing. Members of the League surrounded us and we got

away without any trouble—in fact, I invited one bright young spark who said my face should be bashed to start on the job, which invitation he was much too frightened to accept. He was one of Kipling's men who believed in killing his enemies with his tongue.

Our help to the women was repaid us in terms of money and help, full measure, pressed down, and running over. Whenever we made an appeal for funds, and we did so at least twice a week, women would send money, jewels, books, and articles of value for us to sell, and in the end it was a group of women who gave me, through H. D. Harben, without any conditions or stipulations, the money needed to buy Victoria House and carry on the paper.

I have spoken of the charge that our money came from Rome. In 1913-4 the story was we were in the pay of the Germans. A certain Baron Von Horst and a Miss Lilian Troy were the mediums through which the money was said to be coming to us. It is true the lady did assist the London dockers during their disputes, true also that the Baron loaned £150 to the paper, and in a short time sued me for repayment and received his money in full—though I was no more responsible than anyone else.

H. D. Harben and Muriel, Countess De La Warr, were our principal helpers, in fact, H. D. Harben came on to the Board and rendered us great assistance in addition to raising lots of money. We also unofficially fought by-elections. We kept C. F. Masterman out of the House of Commons because of our support of John Scurr at Bethnal Green and Ipswich. We also fought a by-election at Chesterfield with John Scurr as our candidate against the present Lib-Lab member, Barnet Kenyon. This election was an eye-opener to me in respect to the feelings of loyalty entertained by the workers for those who serve them. Barnet Kenyon is one of the most honest and dearly loved men in Derbyshire. He served the union as an official for

many years. In politics he is a Radical, and has been one all his life, and cannot change. In religion he is a Nonconformist, taking his part in the preaching work of his church. He cannot accept Socialism, so when we arrived on the scene we found ourselves up against a personality, not a talker, but one who had years of work to his credit. We did our best to explain we were not fighting on personal, but public, grounds. We held meetings in the public squares from noon to midnight and talked ourselves hoarse for Socialism. But the declaration of the poll found our candidate well beaten. All the same, Chesterfield has not forgotten our fight, and one of these days will be won for Labour, and our little effort will be remembered as the pioneer work which made victory for Socialism possible.

We also fought Leicester. A vacancy occurred owing to the death of one of the sitting members. Gordon Hewart, the present Lord Chief Justice, was the Liberal candidate. Leicester was then a double-barrelled constituency with J. R. MacDonald as one of its members. Labour headquarters determined not to fight the seat. The *Daily Herald* offered to support an unofficial candidate, and eventually E. R. Hartley, an original member of the I.L.P., was put forward and supported by the Social Democratic Federation. This was not a nice fight; most of us lost our tempers, though the fault for this was not all on one side. No clear statement as to why the seat should not be fought was ever officially put forward; Liberal whips asserted publicly that an arrangement existed between the Labour and Liberal headquarters that Leicester should remain as a Lib-Lab constituency.

I spent a lot of time in the division, and so did many others who are now in the House as respectable Labour members and officials of the Party. We were badly beaten, though I think this election prevented any further talk

about coalitions and accommodations in double-barrelled constituencies.

While these events were happening, and while we were raising money for all sorts of good causes, our own financial position became daily worse. It was a simple fact that during the periods we were charged with accepting money from the Pope of Rome, from the Hearst Trust, and from Germany we were hard put to it to carry on. At times only part wages were paid—in fact, in the early days there would have been no paper at all if the workers had not at times sacrificed all or part of their wages. Once the directors met in the House of Commons, and after a long discussion formally closed down the paper. When the time arrived to give effect to this all concerned in producing the paper refused to obey and the *Daily Herald* appeared, printed on reels of all sizes. I had gone to Hanley and Crewe for by-elections and had announced overnight that the paper was dead. After breakfast I bought a copy on my way to the station.

Our narrowest escape came when our creditors, much against their will, issued a writ and put us into bankruptcy. This brought in the brokers' men. Robert Williams, Ben Tillett, and myself passively filled up the doorways with our bodies so that no one could pass without assaulting us. The brokers' men retreated. Sime Seruya came to our aid with £1,000. We went to the court. I bought the goodwill and title for £100 and off we went again.

In the late autumn of 1913 I paid a visit to America. Before going it was necessary to decide who should be left in charge. For some time I had found myself unable to agree with the *expression* of our policy as it appeared in the paper. Our attacks became much more personal and bitter, so it was decided to change editors. The change was carried out in what appeared to be a high-handed manner: all such changes must of necessity be so, because if there is

disagreement between an editor and those for whom he is acting as to policy or anything else which is vital to the paper, it is not possible to give notice to quit, but money must be paid in lieu of notice. It is true my vote was the deciding vote for making the change; there were only three of us who could make the change, and so it came about that my vote replaced Charles Lapworth by myself. We paid him a full year's salary, and though for a time there was some wild talk about treachery, tyranny, and prejudice, I think it is only truth to say Lapworth and myself have forgotten all about the incidents and are now, as we have been, very good friends. Had it been possible to keep him connected with the paper as a contributor I would have been only too glad to do so. The storm and fuss made over his leaving the *Daily Herald* was created not by him, but by friends who saw in this event a good chance of paying me back a few kicks and debts they imagined were my due. However, we survived. Francis Meynell was left in charge with W. P. Ryan, and when I arrived home during February 1914 I found everybody in good heart because, with our advertisement manager, W. H. Harford, booking up advertisements our future looked a bit easier.

Three months preceding 4th August 1914 we worked out a complete scheme of improvement for the paper and booked a lot of space for advertisers. This was largely the work of H. D. Harben and W. H. Harford; but man proposes, and super-lunatics called statesmen, diplomats, and militarists dispose. From March till August rumours of civil war in Ireland were very persistent. The Carsonite army of 100,000 men, well armed and drilled, openly defied the King's writ; army officers, from subalterns to generals, not only threatened mutiny, but actually did mutiny at the Curragh Camp. Officers of the Fleet refused to interfere with ships carrying arms and ammunition sent from Germany to Belfast for the use of these patriots. The King

abandoned his position of neutrality and in vain endeavoured by a round-table conference in Buckingham Palace to bring these seditious, revolutionary Privy Councillors to reason. We did our best to show up the doings of these highly placed fomentors of disturbance and rebellion. But nothing daunted them. Aided by Mr. Balfour and Mr. Bonar Law and all respectable Tory leaders, these loud-mouthed patriots held on their wicked way. The German Ambassador and his attachés reported what everybody believed was true—that Britain was on the verge of civil war. Meantime, the nations of Europe, throwing wisdom to the winds, led by the universal spirit of evil which appeared to dominate all the Chancelleries, drifted into the barbarism of the most wicked, useless, uncalled-for war of all history.

There is no excuse for British statesmen, none for the Tsar or Kaiser: bloodguiltiness rests on them all. So when the War came that was the attitude we took up. We could not support our own people in such a war, and of course could give no support to her enemies, so we stood by waiting for a chance to make propaganda for peace. Elsewhere I tell the story of the demonstration we initiated, held on Sunday, 3rd August. It is said our brave, fine-living comrade Keir Hardie died broken-hearted because of the War. We know that Jean Jaurés was foully murdered in order to make easy the path of those who, forsaking every principle of internationalism, became violent, fanatical nationalists and jingoes.

We soon discovered that if we were to live as a daily paper we must give full-blooded propagandist reports of battles and any amount of lying propaganda about atrocities. This was not possible for any of us. In addition, with the whole nation likely to be organized for war we knew, money or no money, there would be no place for us in the daily Press, so very sadly and reluctantly we closed

down as a daily on 19th September and reappeared as a weekly the following week. Whatever may be said about us as a failure compared with other dailies, as a weekly we more than redeemed our character.

At Christmas 1914, in company with Gerald Gould, I visited France, went close up to the fighting line just beyond Soissons, and saw what ruin could be wrought by modern warfare. We watched from a car thousands of French soldiers marching to battle, not in any gay, defiant spirit, but walking like men going to their death as a disagreeable duty.

On our way to Soissons we passed through Senlis and other villages which had been occupied and bombarded by the Germans during their famous march on Paris. Some houses were totally destroyed, others badly damaged. At one village we were shown the spot where the mayor and others had been shot. At Senlis we went over the fine old parish church and heard the story of how, when the German shells came bursting over the town, the priest caused the church bells to be rung, filled the churchyard and church with parishioners, then celebrated Mass and, as they all believed, God did not allow anyone to be injured or the fabric of the church to be harmed in any way. Superstition, you will say; perhaps it was, but it was a kind of superstition which in very dark days brought courage and hope to the living and consolation to the dying.

In company with H. D. Harben and a Roumanian princess I visited the headquarters' staff, but was not allowed to proceed right up to the lines because our papers were not in order. We visited many hospitals and saw what terrible injuries man, during the madness and inhumanity of war, inflicts on brother man. At Nerves, somewhere in the middle of France, we met a group of middle-class Theosophists of all nationalities managing a hospital on voluntary lines, paid for, equipped, and main-

tained by money from all nations. Here we saw German and French, Senegalese and Algerian, British and Belgian all mixed up together. All suffered together: hatred, even nationalism, was swept away in the face of sickness and death, which afflicted all alike. Here we visited a tiny, seventh-century church with rounded granite pillars as in Durham. The pavement up the aisle was worn right through with the tread of lovers going to be wed, and the faithful going to the altar to celebrate the Mass. I knelt and bowed my head and prayed that in spite of all my dread surroundings "Love is not dead nor doth it sleep: the wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, goodwill to men."

Back in Paris in company with H. D. Harben we visited more British hospitals, at the Hotel Majestic and elsewhere. Haden Guest and his wife, H. D. Harben and his wife, all did magnificent work tending the sick and dying. On our way home we called at Wimereux, near Boulogne, and went over the hospital organized by Dr. Garrett Anderson, and found everybody loud in their praise of women doctors.

One amusing incident in all this: while in Paris I sat with Gerald Gould drinking coffee. A small bottle was brought, which looked like a small vinegar bottle. Gerald put some in his coffee and asked if I would have some. I said "Yes." A minute later he asked did I like it. Again I replied "Yes." He then informed me it was cognac—a very strong liqueur brandy. "The innocence of these total abstainers is past finding out," is what he now says of me, because I frankly told him I liked what I had always previously refused to drink. In spite of this lapse from grace I have not fallen a victim to the custom of many Labour leaders who, total abstainers in England, drink wine and liqueurs on the Continent because they are afraid to drink the bad continental water.

Before leaving Paris we met Longuet and members of the Confederation of Labour (C.G.T.)—Jouhaux and another. We got little pacifist change from them. They seemed bent on seeing the War through. They would not hear a word against France's part in the business, only Germans and the German Government were to blame. On board the boat home we met Lord Robert Cecil: he seemed pretty disconsolate and miserable and not at all hopeful about the War and our chances of immediate victory. I was surprised to find how very prejudiced his outlook against the Germans seemed to be. It proved to me how clever, intelligent, good men do, on occasion, allow what they consider national and personal interests to overcome their true instincts and better judgment. I do not for one moment believe, and never shall believe, that Lord Cecil really thinks the Kaiser and German people are alone responsible for the folly of the Great War.

On our return we published a small pamphlet telling the story of our visit, which sold very well indeed. As the days passed bitterness and hatred increased to such an extent that we felt there was nothing left for us to do but try and keep the fire of love and internationalism ablaze in the hearts of all who would read or listen to our message. We also set ourselves the task of fighting profiteering and exploitation, and when conscription came we did everything possible to aid the conscientious objectors.

As I was editor we found it very easy to make our stand against all war a very definite one on Christian lines. My correspondence during the War years and since convinces me that much more than many churches or clergy, the *Herald* helped people to preserve their faith in religion. We supported every effort to bring about peace conferences or efforts on behalf of peace, and found ourselves in company with strange bedfellows—men like Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Hirst, Sir Hugh Bell, and others, none of whom had

a shred of real sympathy either for our pacifism or Socialism. Each of them would have supported the War if it had been a paying proposition, and would have been well pleased if out of the War British capitalism had become, or could have become, more successful. I was always very amused when speaking at meetings with these gentlemen. It was always obvious they were in terror as to what people like me would say, and as for me, I always wanted to make it clear that I was against the War because I was an international Socialist and a Christian.

At one meeting when Sir Hugh Bell was in the chair someone had spoken of certain past wars and the need of nations to defend legitimate rights. I retaliated by telling Sir Hugh publicly that if I believed, as some of his friends and he himself believed, in the right, in certain circumstances, to kill our enemies I should start with him and most of those on the platform.

When the Russian Revolution came we hailed its coming as the dawn of a new day. We cared not whose revolution it was, whether Menshevik or Bolshevik: for us it was enough that the Tsardom had fallen. Our first step was to take the Albert Hall for a congratulatory demonstration. This was held on 31st March 1917. In order to get the hall on proper terms we formed the Anglo-Russian Democratic Alliance. This was formed round a table in a Lyons' restaurant under the railway arches near Ludgate Circus. Harry Hease, W. H. Harford, Francis Meynell, Robert Williams, and myself were present. I was elected chairman, Robert Smillie, without his permission, was to be president, and someone else, I forget who, treasurer. This meeting, quite unique in the annals of public meetings in London or England, was one of the biggest and most enthusiastic ever held. It seemed as if all the long pent-up feelings of horror and shame of war and intense longing for peace were at last let loose. When the organ pealed out

the *International* the audience rose and sang as at a revival meeting. When Madame Clara Butt sang the verses of *God the All Terrible* Atheists and Christians, Deists and Jews, Moslems and Hindus all joined in the prayer " Give to us peace in our time, O Lord." The verse :

God the all pitiful  
Is it not crying  
Blood of thy people  
Like water outpoured.

brought tears coursing down the cheeks of strong men and full-hearted, brave women.

The meeting, over which I presided, was started by the whole vast audience standing silent while we remembered with reverence and gratitude the long, long roll of our martyred dead who, through the ages, wrought great things for us ; and remembered specially the uncounted immortal hosts whose bones lie bleaching under the turf, or even yet along the roads that lead from Moscow to the mines of Siberia. Yes, we had in mind those slain and tortured ones, our own kith and kin, and those of other nationalities who, at the moment of the meeting, were facing or had endured all the tortures of the man-made hell called war.

I reckon this meeting as one of the chief of the many services rendered to the cause of peace and Socialism by the *Herald*. Spontaneous, with very little organization, yet everything went as if we had been organized by a machine.

After the Albert Hall meeting came a demand for a national conference, and so we set about organizing a national gathering at Leeds. It is most interesting to read over the names of some of those who were present : Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Albert Inkpin, Captain Tupper, Tom Mann, Ernest Bevin, and Ben Tillet ; and to read the resolutions in favour of Soviets that people

like Snowden and others supported. This was a purely unofficial conference and denounced as such by those leaders who were hot in support of the War. It was, however, the most representative gathering of Socialists, Progressives, Labour men and women, and pacifists ever held in this or any other country. Its effect was soon felt. In the trade unions people who had remained silent now lifted up their voices on behalf of peace and the way was opened whereby people could now publicly demand a cessation of strife. The organization of soldiers' and workers' councils failed because of the insane rivalry which existed between the British Socialist Party and the Independent Labour Party. Nothing either side proposed suited the other. MacManus and Inkpin could not agree with MacDonald, Snowden, and myself, so the organized movement died down.

In the *Herald* we week by week kept up our fight. We formed a committee on which Langdon Davies, Brailsford, Mellor, Cole, and others served, to draw up a new Magna Carta for the Socialist and Labour movement. Most of the proposals then made have stood the test of time and are applicable to the conditions of to-day.

One of our biggest scoops at this time was the publication in full of all the treacherous, sordid, thieving Secret Treaties. We owed this fine piece of work mainly to Seymour Cocks, who is still pursuing the subject in the *New Leader* and I.L.P. pamphlets. These Treaties are worth everybody's while to read. They show what liars and scoundrels otherwise honourable, decent men who become diplomats and statesmen can be; they show that truth, fair dealing, and honesty are strangers on the lips and in the hearts of those we acclaim as statesmen. So far as I know, no other newspaper but the *Herald* and *Labour Leader*, with the exception of the *Manchester Guardian*, either cared or dared to print these damning documents. We put them into a pamphlet which sold like hot cakes.

The Government dared not prosecute us, though they knew we were injuring the cause of war, and they dared not do so because we only published the truth. Lloyd George and his colleagues would dearly have liked to try a fall with us, but they knew they could not gaol us all. So we kept on with our work for peace, making new converts every day.

We held another meeting in the Albert Hall before the close of the War. This time we roped in J. H. Thomas and the National Union of Railwaymen. Thomas had been laid up with an illness affecting his eyes and at the time was staying at Bournemouth. So, in company with W. T. A. Foot, the then Secretary of the London District of the N.U.R., I journeyed to Bournemouth to do my best to persuade him to undertake the meeting. When the day came we filled the hall with lots of railwaymen accompanied by a great crowd of " respectables," including Lady Astor, J. L. Garvin, and others. Thomas made a good speech: it was definite enough for our purpose, and once more we felt we had quite definitely helped forward the cause of peace.

At last came the Armistice, and then peace. Ex-service-men's organizations sprang up everywhere. In London we found ourselves surrounded with *agents provocateurs* and spies. I attended three secret meetings of ex-soldiers and officers; at each of these proposals for secret arming and secret organizing for revolution were proposed. I was much too old and experienced to be let in for any such madcap schemes, and was nicely denounced for my cowardice.

My long visit to France for the Peace Conference is dealt with elsewhere. Here I need only say that week by week I wrote a long account of the happenings at the Peace Conference, which appeared in the *Herald*. My visit lasted about five or six weeks. I received from all the professional journalists the best of friendship and goodwill.

Lord Riddell was specially kind and did all in his power to get me permits to go wherever I wanted and also to attend the public meetings of the Conference. It was difficult, however, not to be impressed with the futility and sordidness of the whole business.

I wandered up and down the streets of Paris, into one hotel after another, seeking for truth and reality. Honestly speaking, I never found either. I do not say everybody was consciously dishonest or lying, of course they were not. If they had been I should have felt happier. But as I saw the business it was one of make believe, just like children playing "Let's pretend."

I returned home in March ready once more for launching the *Daily Herald*. Our first issue contained the only story of the proposal to hold a conference with the Russians on an island in the Black Sea.

After my return work became heavier and heavier on my shoulders. I found myself called upon to do the work of a dozen different men. My local work as mayor was very strenuous and this, with the responsibility for financing the paper, almost became more than I could bear. It is true no man had around him more loyal colleagues and comrades than I did, but our views were not always in line with each other. Gerald Gould was always a great tower of strength. Francis Meynell, youngest of us all, was most energetic and enterprising, but left us after a time to carry on the much more congenial task of producing first-class books, beautifully printed and put together.

During the summer George Slocombe, as news editor, asked me to take the Queen round Poplar. I suggested she should visit our Poplar School at Shenfield. This she did in company with Princess Mary. I had stipulated for a private visit, but found on arrival a crowd of Press and other photographers. The time spent with Her Majesty was for me rather a self-conscious and at the same time

pleasant one. People may or may not like royalty, but like the rest of people, queens and kings, princes and princesses are all very human, and in going round the school the things which interested both the Queen and her daughter were not the buildings, but the children. I think they were both surprised and delighted to see so many bonny, healthy, happy children in what is a Poor Law school. The children, when asked to sing, were fine, and gave a good account of themselves. One boy, son of one of the poorest of poor families in Poplar, sang *Jerusalem* in fine style without a shadow of self-consciousness or shyness. As was to be expected, I got some criticism for having anything to do with royalty. I had no object except to try and convince those who are at the head of society that environment, fresh air, good homes, good food, and clothing are all that is needed to build up good healthy bodies with good clean minds in the children of Britain. Some critics called attention to the fact that I walked round the grounds as guide to the Queen with my hat on, and thus acted in a grossly disloyal manner. I had no thought of anything of the kind. I walked with my hat on because I should catch cold if I left it off. But of such comments is the kingdom of small minds.

I had a similar sort of experience at Lady Astor's on another occasion when I visited her house to lunch. I need not explain how it came about I was invited. When there I discovered myself in company with a celebrated American High Court judge, Prince and Princess Henry of Connaught, Lord Balfour, and lots of other such-like people. I shook hands with everybody I was introduced to, which I was told showed my lack of good breeding. But my greatest blunder was after lunch. I wanted to get away to my work and so went up to Lord Astor and the Prince and said I must be going. Both of them just said good-bye in the usual manner. Afterwards I heard myself described as

ignorant because I was unaware of the fact, if it is a fact, that when royalty is about nobody must move until given permission to do so. Of course, people like me are ignorant of all this kind of nonsense, and I should think most royal personages are also. In any case, on neither occasion could my conduct be called in question, because my education on such matters was, I am glad to say, entirely neglected.

One thing pleased me very much about this royal visit to Shenfield. This school has been severely criticized because of the cost, and the auditor years ago surcharged the *Guardians* because we tar-paved our paths and parts of the playing-ground, and also put glazed tiles on the walls in all lavatories and corridors. Going round, both the Queen and her daughter complimented the *Guardians* on being so sensible as to have supplied the children with such delightful playgrounds, which kept their feet dry and clean, and also for their foresight in making walls which could be kept light and clean with little or no human labour.

The main event of 1919 was the strike of railwaymen. This was a terrible blow to us, as it ran away with a pile of our reserve of money. We spent nearly £14,000 in an endeavour to get the paper all over the country. I think we got further afield than most other papers, and am certain railwaymen in outlying districts will ever remain grateful to us for the service we rendered during their eight days' stoppage.

Later came the mines dispute. I think I can claim that in a small way we paid back the miners for their great kindness and sacrifice on behalf of the paper. Of course, neither the friends of the *Daily Herald* nor anyone else can really repay kindness and personal service. People have reproached me because we supported in so out-and-out a manner the demands of the miners, and did not give enough prominence and thought to the proposals put forward by Frank Hodges and others. My answer is that all through

labour disputes, no matter whether these concerned the transport workers, railwaymen, or miners, we endeavoured to be realists and thus gave our support to the men who were fighting. I came in contact with A. J. Cook for the first time during this struggle, and liked him from the first moment. He is now one of the foremost leaders in the ranks of labour. He has a rather scornful kind of patronizing attitude of mind towards older men like myself, and is in danger of falling between two stools. In life it is not possible to act as a revolutionary and practical person at one and the same time. Struggling within a capitalist system to obtain even a tolerable condition of life and labour is a job which in normal times is almost foredoomed to failure, and this is the task of trade unionists on the industrial field, and the task of men like myself in Parliament. This inevitably means compromise. The pure and simple revolutionist, to be entirely consistent, must have nothing to do with palliatives or measures such as old-age pensions, raising of the school age, or improvement of wage conditions. A.J. is struggling for the best of both worlds and, of course, like the rest of us, will get the best of neither. As to age, he will grow out of his youth and one of these days will discover he also has joined the ranks of veterans. He is a bonnie fighter and fought like a trojan during those tragic days of 1920. "Black Friday," the day on which the railwaymen and transport workers failed to join the miners, will never be forgotten, and I shall never cease to be grateful to Gerald Gould for the splendid rallying call he gave the whole movement in the leading article which appeared in the paper on 16th April 1921. This article helped all who read it to keep the faith. As for ourselves, we sent round the fiery cross. I gave myself no rest night or day, and by using a car was able to address two or three meetings a night. The London collections were wonderful, even at a meeting in Bow Baths we collected over £100. At the

Albert Hall and elsewhere I learned how to act as an auctioneer: funds and gifts of all kinds poured in, and at the end of the dispute our total was well over £85,000. The amount of money and goods our influence helped to get cannot be reckoned.

I do not propose to write at length about our controversies regarding Russia. We backed both revolutions and because of my visit in January 1920 very close and intimate relationships were entered into. I should have been glad if the Third International could have supplied us with paper or helped us in a business sense in the matter of paper, because of our enormous difficulties with British merchants. The story of the jewels has been told many times. The *Daily Herald* could have had a free gift of over £70,000, but the directors refused to touch the money. My own position is simple: I have collected money and used my own money to help Socialist newspapers and societies in other countries. During the years preceding the War the German Social Democrats financed the Socialist movement in many lands. The Third International, in helping revolution in all lands, is simply following the usual line adopted by Churches, temperance, political, and revolutionary organizations. My only objection is to secrecy and dictation. I do not think it is good to receive money and orders from outside our own nation in secret; but money received and spent openly is quite legitimate. Societies connected with Free Trade and Single Tax carry on international propaganda, and so, of course, do the Churches. British morals, however, refused the money, so the *Daily Herald* is clear of the taint which has fallen upon those who dared to carry jewels embedded in chocolates, and those who turned the funds into money, and the money into British war-loan stock.

Now the *Daily Herald* is the property of the movement. I ceased my connection as editor when the Trades Union Con-

gress took over the paper. At that time the circulation was very low, because the price was twopence. This was at once changed and Hamilton Fyfe started without the handicap of a small paper at double the price of the larger London dailies. I remained for a short while as general manager, but was never very happy. The board of directors acted as if any proposal coming from me was sure to be wrong. All sorts of experts were called in ostensibly to inquire what was wrong with the management, conduct, and editing of the paper. The result of all this expert inquiry and management after five years is that all the heads of departments who served so loyally under me are still in the same positions. The only change is a new general manager and a new editor. It is not my job to say what is the present position of the paper as to circulation or advertisements. We can see with our own eyes the improvement in advertisement revenue. I am glad to think that Mr. Poyser and his staff have proved themselves so successful. My own temperament is such that even if the directors had taken a different line, it is doubtful if I could have stayed, because though I am a Socialist I am in actual life a very determined individualist, and like having my own way; in addition, if I am a general manager I like to be left alone to do my job. This is impossible in modern journalism, and especially Labour journalism. However, one thing is certain: the Labour movement has one daily paper—a paper that has cost nearly a million of money and no end of unselfish, unpaid labour. We should all consider it a sacred duty not only to keep it going, but to assist in making it the biggest and most powerful weapon for Socialism in the world.

When, in February 1925, I left the *Daily Herald* it was my intention and desire to have a rest. Circumstances and the determination of friends arranged my immediate future otherwise. A group of friends who thought they had a

Left Wing point of view, neither I.L.P. nor Communist, called conferences at Easton Lodge and Jordans to discuss the possibility of starting a weekly paper. I was dead against any such venture, because it seemed to me impossible to raise the money. After a time some friends offered to put up the amount of cash needed to start, on condition that I should be editor. I agreed on condition that there should be no control over the editor, and so *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* was started. This personal title was taken as a last resort after a vain effort to reach agreement from a score of other titles. We wished most of all to call our new paper the *Weekly Herald*, but the *Daily Herald* friends objected. So *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* was launched. We started excellently, but a week or two after our start the *Sunday Worker* was launched, and this immediately halved our circulation and brought us up against finance. All our estimates were knocked into a cocked hat. In addition, advertisers fought shy of us to such an extent that at the end of twenty months we came out with less than ten pounds' worth of advertisement. We were losing money at an alarming rate, with the result that in July 1927 we decided to amalgamate with the *New Leader*.

I shall not attempt to explain or excuse my own failure to make the *Daily Herald* or *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* pay their way, because in this respect I am no better and no worse than the most expert, intellectual Fabian, trade unionist, or Communist editor. Nobody has yet discovered how to compete with the huge octopus Press, and the money lords who now control it. Insurance schemes, stunts, huge advertising all cost no end of money; money which has never been available either for me or any other Labour press manager or editor. I think we must continue to do our best with what means we possess until the growing intelligence of the masses turns their minds

away from the poisonous trash poured out against them in the insidious form of news propaganda by those who use the Press to-day to keep things as they are.

In concluding this chapter I would like to say thanks a thousand times to all those good friends whose names and numbers are legion who, through good report have stood with me in these efforts to help our movement onward by means of newspapers. Our work has not failed: on the foundations we have built with so much effort and sacrifice will one day arise a great Press devoted, not to the spread of half-truths and lies, but to the single propaganda of truth.

## CHAPTER X

### TWO WARS

TWO wars stand out more vividly than others in my memory: these are the South African War and the World War, which lasted from August 1914 to November 1918. There have been many others lasting for shorter periods and waged against weaker foes, such as the wars against the Abyssinians, the Indian frontier tribes, the Zulus, Kaffirs, Egyptians, Sudanese, and Afghans. All these wars were opposed by a handful of Radicals and Socialists, but this opposition attracted very little attention because very few troops were engaged and our alleged enemies were people whose skins were of another colour. The South African War, waged against the Boers, was in another category altogether: it was a war between whites, and stubborn whites at that. Britain had already suffered a severe defeat on Majuba Hill, and at the outset, with Buller acting like a bull at a gate, the war seemed likely to end in the complete overthrow of British power in the colony. As usual, the Press took up the question of our lack of "preparedness," and the money lords of the city of London were persuaded to take the lead in raising volunteer troops to go out and fight. This was quite a natural thing for them to do seeing that this war was more distinctly a war for plunder—*i.e.*, for diamond and gold mines—than many others. There was the usual atrocity propaganda, as despicable as any which took place during the Great War. The apostles of "gradualness" residing in the temples of Fabianism came out on the side of the war, declaring the direct opposite policy to that which they took up during the Great War, claiming that small republics, small nationalities, such as those in South Africa, were a

nuisance and should be abolished. Intellectuals as well as Christians, whether Socialists or Tories, may usually be relied upon to support Imperialism, Jingoism, and Nationalism once war is declared. Socialist principles are, on these occasions, as loosely held as are the principles of Christianity.

During the years of this war, from 1899 to 1901, Jingoism was more rampant than I have ever known it before or since. Those of us who refused to accept the Fabian "commonsense view" went about our daily work in danger of assault from hooligans set against us by newspaper lies. We were charged with being in the pay of Kruger through his agent, Dr. Leyds. Lloyd George, at the Queen's Hall, London, and the Town Hall, Birmingham, barely escaped with his life. At a great demonstration in Trafalgar Square speakers were received with volleys of stones, knives, and other missiles. John Burns, who, in later days, did many things as a Liberal minister with which many of us disagreed, was a great stalwart against this war. At Battersea the warmongers did their best to prevent him being heard, but always he managed more than to hold his own. I remember one meeting in the Latchmere Baths, at which Miss Hobhouse, C. A. Conybeare, and myself were present: we all got a severe handling except John Burns, who just towered over his opponents and by sheer force of will and lung power compelled them to hear him. Lord Balfour, then Arthur J. Balfour, distinguished himself by frankly defending this hooliganism, in his lordly way telling the victims that there were limits to human endurance—meaning that we who opposed the war only got our deserts when assaulted and maltreated by paid hooligans. Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Haldane, later to be christened Viscount Haldane, Mr. Asquith, afterwards made Lord Oxford and Asquith, joined wholeheartedly with the warmongers, leaving that fine old Scotsman, Campbell-Bannerman, in

company with Lloyd George, to join with Socialists and others in opposing the methods of barbarism with which the war was carried on.

It was during this war that Lloyd George came to Bow and, when attending one of our evening lectures on Socialism, endeavoured to persuade us that he was a better Socialist than any of us. This was the only time I met him before he proclaimed me to the public as his "friend Lansbury." Harold Spender was then Liberal candidate for Bow and Bromley and fought a by-election during the war. The Social Democratic Federation wanted me to stand, but I refused as the contest would have been more hopeless even than the Walworth fights had been.

Although we in East London were in the forefront of the struggle against the war and proclaimed ourselves as pacifists, our propaganda was not so definitely against all wars as it was during the Great War and after. It was this particular war, waged on behalf of diamond speculators, mineowners, and other monopolists, to which we were opposed. Our bitterness was more than equalled by those who supported the war. I remember one night in Fleet Street, when the rumour had run round that Mafeking had fallen. H. M. Hyndman, Belfort Bax, and myself, coming from an executive meeting of the S.D.F. held in Bolt Court, found ourselves in the midst of a surging, howling mass who recognized us and at once set about hustling us from one side of the road to the other. Hyndman could hardly speak for rage, Bax wanted to run, and being youngest I felt it my duty to hang on tightly to an arm of each. It has always been a marvel to me how we got out of that mob without personal injury. We had a similar experience at Shoreditch Town Hall. At this gathering I was chairman and W. M. Thompson, editor of *Reynolds's*, Hyndman, and Quelch were speakers. For some time not one of us seemed likely to get out a word. Suddenly I saw a friend of mine

in the midst of a set of what looked like fighting men. I made to leave the chair to go to his assistance and found myself held down by Harry Quelch and Thompson, who were abusing me for being such a fool as not to understand that once a chairman left the chair the meeting would be all over. At the close H. M. Hyndman, Quelch, and myself walked out together and found ourselves the objects of very serious attention from the well soaked patriots who had been waiting for us.

The most exciting local meeting, however, held during this war was at the Mile End Vestry Hall. Again I was in the chair, and J. E. Williams, one of the best propagandists the S.D.F. ever produced, and some local men were speakers. The audience was about equally divided—one set singing the *Red Flag* and the other *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the Queen*. How we got started I don't know, but start we did and were well on the way to what appeared likely to be a successful meeting when suddenly two stewards appeared, shouting, "Look out, they are coming." This, we learnt later, was to inform us that a huge crowd had been gathered together and was marching into the hall. I handed my wife to the care of some comrades, asked Jack Williams to take the chair, and with Tom Glossop called for volunteers to defend the stairway. A goodly crowd rallied with me at the top of the stairs where, for an instant, we paused. Then, as our enemies came cheering up, we went with a rush at them, causing them to sway from side to side, with the result that the railings on each side gave way and we were all tumbled pell-mell to the bottom. Those who found themselves underneath got a severe bruising: one man suffered a broken arm, others went home with damaged legs and limbs. It seemed incredible nobody was killed or so few seriously injured. This escapade saved our meeting, but did not save us from very severe, and in some cases brutal, attacks on our way home.

As a sequel to the breaking down of the stair-rails we were summoned to pay damages, but as the local secretary of the S.D.F., who signed the application form, was under twenty-one and his parents had no means, we got off without paying—except those who were ratepayers, who paid their quota in rates.

This war ended in what appeared to be the extermination of the Boers, but in fact the contrary was the case. A few months after the war ended the Dutch slowly but surely regained control and assisted in creating the South African Dominion. It is certain that for a time the dominant power in South Africa will be Dutch: all the same, the future of that huge country lies with the original races who slowly but surely are training themselves through education to rule in their own land. The spread of education amongst Zulus and Kaffirs will prove as revolutionary there as elsewhere. The relatively tiny handful of white settlers will not be able to retain power by means of coercion and legislation such as is now in operation against coloured workers.

The General Election which followed the ending of this war took place in January 1906, and was one of the most disgraceful ever held in my lifetime. The Liberal Party swept the country and for once outdid their opponents in sheer lying mendacity. The stories of Chinese slavery and indentured labour were worked up to convey the impression that such conditions were unknown till introduced into the mines of South Africa. I have often felt ashamed of my own part in this campaign of gross distortion and misrepresentation. Grossly vulgar scenes took place in the House of Commons: Alfred Lyttelton and Arthur Balfour were both shouted down. A couple of years later it was Winston Churchill, the champion political contortionist of our time, who, in his most cynical and impudent manner, admitted the foulness of this electoral campaign of lies,

describing them as "terminological inexactitudes." Of such is the honesty and sincerity of successful politicians

Campbell-Bannerman was a man made of better stuff. He was no Socialist, but was as honest as any political leader could be. All through the war he had steered an even keel, had denounced the concentration camps and other methods of barbarism, had declared again and again for full self-government, at least for the whites—Dutch and British in South Africa—and when he came to power was brave and big enough to face all the interests and compel the British Parliament, in spite of Tory jeremiads and the threats of moneyed men, to create in South Africa the Dominion which now controls that vast country. I recall these incidents because this old Scotsman, limited in his outlook on social affairs at home, did prove himself a fine and courageous statesman when dealing with a problem concerning the future weal or woe of millions of human beings. Campbell-Bannerman, in another direction, did a very courageous thing: an international Parliamentary gathering, representative of all nations, was held in London during the early days of his premiership. A banquet was given to the delegates in Westminster Hall. Just before this took place the Tsar abolished the Russian Duma: consequently that country was unrepresented. Campbell-Bannerman, not caring for the feelings of autocracy, gave the toast, "The Duma's dead: long live the Duma." If he had lived till 1914 the Jingo Liberal Imperialists, Grey, Asquith, and Haldane, would not have been permitted to plunge Britain into the Great War, and all their secret plotting and planning between 1906 and 1914 would have been impossible.

This war, which cost the Western world untold treasure in the destruction, maiming, and bruising of many, many millions of human lives and material prosperity, came upon us as a bolt from the blue. Since its ending statesmen of all

lands, together with princes, kings, and kaisers, have vied with each other in shouting from the housetops, "Please sir, it wasn't me." Nobody who has even partially read the long stream of blue, red, and green books issued from the chancelleries, or has read the nefarious secret treaties and bargains arranged in the European thieves' kitchen can possibly arrive at any other conclusion than this, that diplomacy, statecraft as practised in Christian Europe was, and for all we know still is, the most despicable and lying business men can put their brains to. Kaisers met kings, statesmen met statesmen—always with lies on their lips and deceit in their hearts. They talked peace and friendship and all the time made ready for war. The present Lord Grey, as Sir Edward Grey, posed as an honest man and lover of peace, yet he, in company with Lord Haldane, deceived the House of Commons again and again; declared there was no alliance binding Britain to France and Russia if either came into conflict with Germany. Fred Jowett was a persistent questioner on this subject, and always got the same answer. Lord Grey's speech in the House of Commons on 4th August 1914, in spite of its lengthy equivocations, was proof positive how pledged we were. In addition, memoirs of ambassadors and military men like Sir Henry Wilson and Lord French, employed to make arrangements for Britain's participation in such a war, make abundantly clear what a dirty thieves' game secret diplomacy is.

As to war itself: the histories which have been published, the long stories told by Asquith, Repington, Churchill, and last, but by no means least, Henry Wilson, all show what a mean and sordid business the conduct of the war could sink to. Men striving to get a show, men taking a gambling chance, risking hundreds of thousands of lives in the process, the foulness of propaganda: all these things, revealed since the war, were quite well known to many of us during

the period of the war. Some of my friends cannot understand my point of view concerning Russian propaganda. I do not denounce their propaganda, first because they have the same right as any government to make propaganda on behalf either of their own interests or on behalf of International Communism, but chief of all I take my stand on the fact that Great Britain spends millions of money on secret service, secret propaganda, helps with arms and money all reactionary movements in the world, and allows our country to be used as an asylum for royalties and reactionaries, and also as a place from which royalist and other plots are organized against nations who have got rid of such expensive luxuries. When Britain herself ceases to be propagandist, when the right of asylum is taken away altogether, I will reconsider my position—except that I shall always stand up for the right of asylum for all political offenders, no matter to what parties they belong.

Although I helped agitate for peace and supported the conscientious objectors, I always felt that had I been young I should have felt obliged to volunteer for some dangerous non-combatant work in a similar manner to that undertaken in his teens by the present Lord De La Warr. He served on a mine-sweeper on the understanding that he should not take any part in actual fighting. My view is that at all times we wish to live, and in some way ought to contribute to the job of obtaining the means of life. We do not escape this by going to prison. Be this as it may, I backed the C.O.s, no matter what position they took up, because conscience in such matters is the only true guide for any of us to follow.

When war seemed inevitable I called up the *Daily Herald* League and set about organizing an anti-war demonstration in Trafalgar Square, which we held on Sunday, 3rd August. For a day or two it looked as if the League would act alone. In the end Keir Hardie, who could always be relied on in a

crisis, won over the Labour Party and the organization of the meeting was undertaken by them. The platform was a most representative one, and all of us, Fabians, Social Democrats, members of the Independent Labour Party, and trade unionists pledged ourselves to take no hand in war, but to oppose it with all our strength. Alas for the utility or futility of resolutions. By Tuesday 5th August the Labour movement almost unanimously went over to the Government. The invasion of Belgium was the excuse: personal hatred of German Social Democrats in the case of some of our own Socialists was the true cause. J. R. MacDonald stood out against his colleagues and gave up the chairmanship of the Party, and did not get back to that position till the Clyde brigade elected him in 1922.

There is no need for me to try and write the story of the war. It is not in my power to do so. Enough briefly to state my part in the agitation that started at Christmas 1915 till the armistice 1918. When the shop-steward movement, organized by Arthur MacManus, prince of industrial organizers, Willie Gallacher, David Kirkwood, John Clarke, and others got going on the Clyde in 1916 I went up to Glasgow to see what was happening and found the strike committee meeting in the rooms of the *Herald* League. I was allowed to attend meetings, and as a consequence began to understand the inner meaning of the movement and how it could be used to force the Government to a reasonable frame of mind whenever the time came to end the war. The real cause of the dispute, however, was profiteering. Men knew the directors, shareholders, owners of munition works, shipyards, and great iron and steel works were making money hand over fist. They also knew that all who had anything to buy or sell from boots to bread or milk to beer were making pots of money. The strikers could get no publicity. After a couple of days listening to discussion I asked to be allowed

to bring the capitalist pressmen along. This was agreed to, and within a few hours the men's case was more or less correctly reported in the Press.

I came down to London to see the Minister of Munitions, Dr. Addison. I met him at the War Office, and on my way up the staircase met Herbert Samuel, who expressed great surprise at seeing me there, and asked, "Have you at last come to join us?" I promptly reassured him that there was no danger of my doing so. Dr. Addison and his assistant both told me I was treading on dangerous ground, that if I was not careful I should find myself in prison. It was easy to see that the whole munitions staff was very apprehensive as to what might happen on the Clyde. As far as I could judge from after events, the policy of the Government in all matters of prices, wages, and commission was to let everybody get what they asked for so long as the work went on. Winston Churchill was quite a skilled artist at this sort of performance.

I met a big East End shipbuilder during the early days of 1915. He begged me to join in and help my country, explaining that he and his fellow shipowners, builders, and repairers were no longer going to bother about contracts with the Government: all were *giving* their services at commission rates—that is, they would receive as profit or payment for supervising services five or six per cent. on all wages paid and cost of material. This policy resulted for a time in nobody caring two straws what was spent on wages, materials, or machinery. As the war went on some big changes were made, but the records of enormous profits still stand for all to see recorded in the Treasury documents, which tell the story of excess profits taxes.

On another occasion I visited Edinburgh in connection with the deportation of David Kirkwood, Arthur MacManus, and others. I found them in a hall near the Castle, and after a long talk resolved to go and see Colonel Levita,

who had been appointed a kind of Emperor of Scotland. I had met this genial gentleman when we were both members of the L.C.C. He has a great opinion of Colonel Levita, and was full of a sense of his own importance, speaking to me, as J. H. Thomas would say, with a full sense of his own responsibility. At first I had a vague idea he might detain me, as he most cordially informed me he had his eye on the *Herald*, which often almost overstepped the mark. *Forward* had already come under the ban of this uncrowned monarch. However, we managed to smooth each other down and the result of my interview was to make the way clear for some of the deportees to find their way to other towns. I think David Kirkwood was the last to get away.

In London most of my time was given to any movement aiming at ending the war. At the start though, and long before anyone else either cared or thought of soldiers' wives, children, and dependents, Sylvia Pankhurst, Mrs. Despard, my wife, Minnie Lansbury, and others formed the League of Rights for Soldiers' and Sailors' Wives and Relatives. This organization agitated for pensions for widows and dependents and for proper allowances for wives left at home. We held hundreds of meetings in all parts of the country, waging war against profiteers and the niggardliness of the Government. Our agitation was met and overcome by the Government conceding most of our demands and establishing a new organization largely controlled by politicians on the make. Sylvia Pankhurst worked day and night, rushing from town to town and from one Government office to another. Sir Wyndham Childs and the War Office must have been considerably worried by her attentions. It is, however, certain that many thousands of women and children owe her and the rest of her committee thanks for securing something approaching decent treatment from the Government. The British Legion and other organizations

only came along years after this small but vigorous organization had been doing the job and receiving no help from the Press or officialdom.

During the war Horatio Bottomley paid some attention to me, bringing out one of his huge posters with the caption, "To the Tower with Lansbury." The Press, however, did me very little harm. Except for one or two quite exceptional instances I never received any treatment comparable with what I met with during the Boer War. The exceptions were an anti-conscription meeting in the Memorial Hall, at which I did, in spite of interruption, manage to get out my speech. I think I deserved some of the opposition I received at this gathering because, in writing about conscription, I had said that in my opinion if people supported war then there should be conscription—or words to that effect. I do most certainly think that if any nation prepares for war as ours did, or any nation intentionally or by consent enters upon war, then the able-bodied of that nation, both men and women, should be conscripted for service, and by this I mean conscription of wealth, conscription for fighting, and industrially on terms of equality. Nobody should be allowed to make a penny out of the ruin and bloodshed a war inevitably creates. There must always be a conscience clause for those who will have no hand in the work of legalized murder. The thing to insist on, and that is what I intended to convey when I wrote, is that no man should be conscripted by hunger or by pressure, but all who want the war carried on should take their share in the risks and sacrifices involved in war.

Another occasion when, in common with others, I came in for a little danger was at a conference held in the South Place Chapel. We got through the conference all right, but as we left the building most delegates, old as well as young, received a perfect tornado of missiles and personal assaults. The police stood by enjoying the discomfiture of

those they described as "b——y conchies." My luck or good fortune was well in. Together with Dr. Hodgkin I walked out of the hall and away to Liverpool Street. Whether it was our size—the doctor is over six feet—or what it was, neither of us was molested or spoken to personally as we walked slowly down the street, but of course there was lots of shouting and swearing and throwing of missiles of one kind and another.

Another war experience was in connection with a *Daily Herald* dance at Holborn, which took place the evening of the same day. A great crowd had assembled, lots of whom were "on the run" as war resisters. Suddenly the word went round that we were to be raided. I was rushed to the platform. I stopped the dance, and while explaining matters on marched an officer with his serjeant-major and several soldiers. I introduced myself as chairman and said we were just about to sing. The officer, in the King's name, demanded my assistance in obtaining order while he made an announcement. His serjeant-major came blustering up, asking did I know what I was doing, obstructing His Majesty's officers, and much more. Seeing that I took no notice and was engaged in leading the singing of the *International*, the serjeant-major, bursting with his own importance, tried his hand, bawling: "Order. Silence. In the King's name order." The more he shouted the louder we raised our voices. After about an hour of this pantomime they retreated amid cheers and jeers from the dancers. We had got rid of them. The job for us now was how to get out those who carried no identity cards, that is, those who were on the run. We managed by a change of cards to get all but one or two safely home. A number of arrests were made, but these proved all wrong, as later on the cards which had been used to get the C.O.s safely away were returned to secure the release of their rightful owners.

It was my custom to attend the tribunals before whom

persons requiring exemption from military service had to appear. With Philip Snowden and others I attended the trial of Clifford Allen and others at Warley Barracks, Brentwood, and visited Francis Meynell in the military prison at Hounslow, where he was brought to death's door by a hunger and thirst strike and later released as "not likely to make an efficient soldier."

As the years passed and the war dragged on new movements came into being. One which started at Christmas 1914 has continued till now, I mean the Fellowship of Reconciliation. This organization owes its existence very largely to a conference held in a Cambridge college. Maude Royden, William Temple, now Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Hodgkin, Rev. W. C. Roberts, and others, including myself, attended. We were rather nebulous in our conclusions and did not, as an organized body, do very much against the war. William Temple, when I met him later, seemed to have given up any idea of being able to put an end to the slaughter till it reached its appropriate high-water mark. I mention this conference because of its indefiniteness. We talked a lot about Christian witness, but few among us were willing to say war was murder. On one occasion I met Bernard Shaw, who solemnly suggested the only thing for old men like us to do was either to drown or shoot ourselves.

I did my best through the weekly *Herald* to keep people's faith alive in the principles of Socialism and religion, and was splendidly backed up by Gerald Gould, Francis Meynell, and many others without whose assistance, despite our money security, we could not have carried on. With their aid we organized the famous Leeds Conference, the story of which you will read elsewhere in these pages. These activities brought me a good deal of undeserved notoriety. I called on Lloyd George at Whitehall on two occasions, each time enjoying one of his famous breakfasts. Although I think him

the last word in political jugglery and make-believe, I do not dislike him. Somewhere in him there used to be the makings of a fine servant of the people, but like so many others he fell among thieves. I mean this in a political sense. Speaking with him as man to man I found him saying lots of things it was impossible to disapprove of. He hated the slaughter in France and though he talked of war to the end, was in his heart longing for peace. If he could have been sure of keeping his position, if it had been possible to convince him that we who desired peace would, with him as leader, beat Northcliffe and the *Daily Mail*, I am certain he would have ended the war at the time of the Russian Revolution; but strong and courageous as he is, when he is on top, he had not the courage to face and fight those whose minds were sodden in lust for blood and conquest. I met him once in Paris, whither I had gone to see the Peace Conference and the many side shows attaching thereto. Once more I was at his breakfast table, this time pleading for the release of C.O.s still remaining in prison. This was in January 1919. He declared the question was out of his hands, but promised to inquire, and within a short time most of them were set free. At this party I met Albert Thomas, George Barnes, and some military people. We discussed the visit of Steffins and Bullitt to Russia and also the Peace Treaty. My respect for great men received many shocks during the period of the war and at other times. As I listened to the talk at this breakfast table I wondered what the masses would think could they also hear their rulers and masters discussing their affairs. Nobody agreed with the demands of the French and Belgians for reparation and occupation of German territory, but the sharing out of plunder elsewhere had to be safeguarded, so other interests had to suffer. I was shown maps of Belgium and France which marked off the devastated areas, showing how relatively small was

the damaged portion, yet the statesmen of both countries were demanding as reparation the total capital value of their respective countries.

It is certain that men like Lloyd George and George Barnes, brought up with some ideas of democracy, must have been shocked when they found themselves compelled to agree to policies of annexations and reparations they knew to be foul and unjust, simply because their own nation required annexations and mandates to satisfy the greed of home and colonial imperialists. It is quite certain that if secret diplomacy, secret discussions, and treaties were abolished, war would be impossible. There is no nation, no people in the world, who would sanction for a single moment the lying, make-believe dishonesty and treachery which goes on under the name of diplomacy. Good, clean-living, honest-dealing men in private life, become double-faced, downright liars when dealing with international affairs. E. D. Morel knew this, and because he knew it so well he fought to the end for open diplomacy and against all secrecy.

In London and Paris I met Colonel House, and in Paris President Wilson. Colonel House I met on several occasions at the home of my friends Joseph and Mary Fels. He was then a fairly well informed man on social and industrial conditions in his own country and in Europe. Although we have met several times since, I am not convinced that he has acquired as much intimate knowledge of European diplomacy and affairs as many newspaper men have to their credit. When I met him in London after America entered the war, he was very certain the diplomats of Britain and Europe had put Mr. Wilson and himself in possession of all the secret treaties. He was also quite sure that a good sound peace would be obtained because America had come into the war not for national gain, but to secure international justice. I could not at the time contradict this,

but later on, when I met him in Paris, and again some years later in London, it was obvious that Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and others, advised and directed by those who controlled European foreign affairs, had left him a disillusioned man. Neither Colonel House nor any of his staff ever tried to defend the Versailles Treaty. They know this Treaty is a base betrayal of all America was said to stand for when she entered the war. Some people—that is, clever, intellectual persons whose *nay* is always *yea*—may think of Colonel House as an idealist and dreamer. He is perhaps both, but in addition he is something more: he is an honest, clear-thinking man, and came to Europe never dreaming he was to enter an “International Thieves’ Kitchen,” but expecting to treat with honest men—and so he did if we think only of private life—but he discovered what all who dabble in foreign affairs discover in time, that men who would rather die than lie and cheat for money, will do both when they imagine their nation’s interest demands it.

European diplomacy, with its secret arrangements, treaties, and covenants, is proof that modern statesmen act up to a creed that what is morally evil must be politically right if it is to the interest of the nation it should be so. The result of this policy is seen in the world chaos amid which we live to-day.

President Wilson, after two weeks’ waiting, kindly gave me an interview. I cannot describe him except that he was very courteous, very kindly. He wanted to know all about Labour conditions in Britain and what we thought of the Conference. I had heard his speech at the opening of the Peace Conference and said we Socialists were expecting him to live up to his fourteen points and to satisfy, as he said the Conference must, the common people. I soon discovered that he had given up any faith in America’s power to carry forward her own policy. The greed and ambition

of small and large nations, the obstinacy, to say nothing of the obstruction of men like Clemenceau, whose custom it was to preside silent for days on end over discussions on important questions, and at the end of each day refuse to come to decisions. I urged Mr. Wilson to appeal over the heads of these wicked old men who had made the war, to the nations of the world, and ask them to prevent the ghastly travesty of peace being consummated. He, like Lloyd George, could not make up his mind whether or not he would win. Had it been possible to assure him that the workers of Britain would strike against such a peace, or in some other way compel their Government to see reason, he might have been moved to action; but he was not a big enough man to take a great risk, and in the end compromised his own soul.

I am certain both Colonel House and President Wilson knew quite well the treaties they signed were unjust, untruthful, and could never stand the test of time. I am equally certain it was this knowledge which in the end destroyed the nervous system of the President and sent him to a premature grave. Apart from his disagreement with the Treaty Wilson never agreed with the policy of isolating Russia. On the initiative of Lincoln Steffins, the American journalist, he approached Lloyd George and persuaded him to agree to the proposal to send William Bullitt and Steffins to Russia. Lloyd George has never really denied that he agreed to this mission. The man who killed the projected Anglo-Russian Peace Conference was M. Clemenceau, ably assisted by Lord Northcliffe. I think this noble lord was a nightmare to Lloyd George. During the last years of the war and making of peace he was always looking round to discover what the leading boss of the British Press was saying and doing.

The Bullitt mission was doomed the day the Paris *Daily Mail* came out against it and all its works. Those

British people whose money is lost in Russia may like to know that Lenin and his colleagues sent Bullitt back with the knowledge that the Soviet Government was anxious to come to terms with Europe on all outstanding questions ; but the Jingoës, egged on by Tsarist relatives, officials, and renegade Social Democrats representing Tsardom, refused all accommodation : Bolshevism must be fought as a plague, a *cordon sanitaire* from the Black Sea to the Baltic must be set up and great Russia, by starvation, brought back to the fold of capitalism. We know the result of this insane policy. It is writ large over the ruins of British trade and industry. This might have been otherwise if Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson could have forgotten for a brief space personal risks and thought only of what was the right thing to do, and to have done it.

During the Peace Conference I attended the first gathering of the Second International since the war. I was only a visitor. The British delegation kindly allowed me all the privileges which in the circumstances were possible. The Conference was held at Berne : it took me two weeks to get a Swiss visa. All sorts of excuses were given me for refusing it. I appealed to Lord Balfour and Lloyd George, and finally discovered Basil Thomson was the person to see, and after a discussion managed to get the magic signature.

In Berne I interviewed the German Ambassador, a Social Democrat, who appeared to know more about me than I did about him. He was very communicative, urged me to tell my friends in Britain that Germany would always remain unarmed if only all other nations would unarm, but that occupying all the rich portions of industrial Germany, cutting corridors through East Prussia, annexing huge slices of territory, robbing Germany of her colonies and all further hope of colonial development, could only mean future wars and many of them. I was surprised how quietly and patiently this man talked of the blockade of his country

and the terrible effects the blockade was having on child life.

When I returned to Paris I sent a memorandum to Lord Robert Cecil, Lloyd George, President Wilson, and Monsieur Clemenceau, which I expect was never read. I was stupid enough at that time to imagine these men only wanted truth and justice to prevail. The only really honest man at the Peace Conference was Clemenceau: he wanted vengeance, and said so. His policy was announced and lived up to. Britain could have what she wanted in the Middle East and in Africa; Italy could hold all she could take; Russia, before the Revolution, could take Constantinople and the Black Sea; but for France, Alsace and Lorraine, all the mineral wealth of Germany, and both Austria and Germany so divided, so broken that no unity would ever again be possible, and Poland created and held up as a great power. Clemenceau never wavered: he forced the others to do his will, and in addition forced Wilson to eat his words and professions, and imposed an impossible indemnity. He is a marvellous man, this French Imperialist—marvellous because he can boast that alone among the gamblers who assembled in Paris he knew what stakes he played for and won.

While at Berne I saw the crowds of Austrian children whom the kindly Swiss people were saving from the ravages of our infamous blockade. Nobody who saw as I did the condition of children arriving from Austria and the condition of those returning home, would ever forget the feeling of indignation and horror which sweeps over one when brought face to face with the crimes of government. I was proud to be able to meet the splendid men and women who were organizing this work, and personally to thank them for their noble action.

During the Conference I did a little towards bringing together Germans, Frenchmen, and Britons, but was more

surprised than I can say to find how bitter was the hatred felt and expressed towards the Bolsheviks. This was a new view of Socialist life for me, because all my life I have felt it does not matter who accomplishes the social revolution so long as the work is well and truly done. I would have liked to see the Russian Revolution brought about without bloodshed, but who am I to say those who carried through that gigantic task are not worthy to be considered comrades within the international Socialist movement?

After leaving Berne I went to Cologne, shepherded by an officer of His Majesty's army. This gentleman had acted as a kind of showman for pressmen and visitors to the trenches during the war. He had also served as private secretary to one of His Majesty's aunts, the Duchess of Albany, whose son, through no fault of his own but solely for family convenience, had become Duke of Saxe Coburg and was then obliged to take up arms on behalf of Germany and against his own native land. His father was the youngest son of Queen Victoria and known as Prince Leopold. This Duchess of Albany was treated very scurvily by the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers afflicted with Germanophobia. I rather enjoyed hearing this nice young man pouring scorn on the sort of propaganda which Northcliffe indulged in in order to win the war.

At Cologne I was allowed to see everything and everybody I asked to see. General Hobbs, who was in control of the city, was kindness itself. He asked me to meals and with his staff discussed for hours on end Socialism, India, and Imperialism. I discovered while talking with one of the officers that my inoffensive little book, *Your Part in Poverty*, had been stopped by the Censor, but allowed to circulate after a protest from several officers.

I interviewed Cardinal Hartman, whom I also heard preach in the beautiful cathedral. He was a thoroughly good Catholic, a Tory of the Tories, and quite unrepentant

about his attitude towards Britain during the war. He was certain that the German nation would rise again and become once more the leading nation of the world. The Burgomaster took the same line. He was also, because of food shortage, very bitter indeed, and took me round the children's hospitals to see the ravages our foul blockade was making. I saw babies whose bodies were transparent, others whose small limbs were twisted and distorted because of malnutrition suffered by their mothers. In the streets I met people whose faces bore the imprint of starvation. The clothing of the people in the streets was very bad. The British troops, who were well fed, often shared their food with children. General Hobbs, with whom I talked about this condition of affairs, declared it would not be possible to keep British troops in Cologne unless more food was brought in, and told me he had informed the Government that none of them would stay in Cologne unless lots more food was sent up. Though starvation and disease were rampant because of our blockade I never heard an angry word against us as a nation. Everybody wanted to declare friendship. In State theatres and opera houses, at the Cathedral and other church services, Britain and German sat together as if there had been no war. The ordinary army officer and soldier knew nothing and cared less for the hate business than did our politicians. Had the British soldiers been given the task of making peace we should have a very different Europe to-day. Though this is true it is also true that everybody I met in authority in the army dreaded Bolshevism. Lord Hampden, with whom I travelled home, was very worried over what his men who came from English villages would think of their own cottages and mean, desolate streets and villages after seeing the well-equipped life of the German villages, with electricity as a housemaid, and meeting-houses for leisure, pleasure, and education. Other officers wondered

what the effect on the men would be now they were daily mixing with those they had been taught were Huns. One American officer declared that if his troops stayed more than a year not a man would go home without a German wife, so wholesome and clean were the homes of the women. It was good to hear this, but also very saddening to think that because of the crimes of governments such people had been slaying each other by the million.

I came away from Germany and France more than ever convinced that the great men of our day were very puny, small-minded persons, that the few who possessed slightly more brain-power and idealism than others lacked the moral courage to speak their minds and stand foursquare for what they believe. We do not need more of such great men, we need more wisdom and understanding among the masses. It is the few who bring about wars: it is the many who must put an end to the conditions which make wars inevitable.

At the close of the war the Cavendish Club in West London organized a committee composed of all sorts and conditions of men; the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, I think, was one of the leading spirits, and the Marquess of Salisbury was chairman. Lord Selborne and many others belonging to the classes were members, and so was I. We were anxious to discover how to make Christianity the rule of life. We all agreed in words but violently disagreed in the application of our principles. One day I had advocated a mild, very mild, form of Socialism. Lord Salisbury replied, saying, "If we do what Mr. Lansbury suggests, people will say we want to turn the world upside-down." I replied, "Yes, my lord, that is exactly what the early Christians did, and if we had courage to do it we might find prison, but we should find our souls." The same sort of thing happened when I was on the Archbishops' Committee appointed to declare the Church's policy towards the

Labour movement. There were no end of bishops, deans, and canons present, together with W. C. Bridgeman, M.P., and R. H. Tawney. We struggled for months about formulas. Nobody denied capitalism and landlordism were of the devil, but all, except Tawney, jibbed at Socialism. So we compromised by declaring the first charge on industry was the decent, adequate maintenance of the workers and their dependents. Events have proved that this is unattainable within the capitalist system.

It is this fact which has destroyed all the fine promises concerning brotherhood and peace in industry which was to come when the war was over. The clergy and many others who supported the war as a war to end war, vainly imagined when the fighting was over that the comradeship of the trenches, the friendship between classes shown during the war, would continue, but they forgot that when normal conditions returned, rich young women would cease to be nurses, scrubbers, washers-up for the poor men acting as soldiers; that country houses would no longer be open for convalescent soldiers of industry, as they were opened for wounded workers during the war. No, we just floated back to the old class divisions. The unemployed in 1920 were, without protest from the clergy or from anyone else in authority, batoned in Whitehall whither they marched to protest against unemployment. No single promise made by Church or State had been kept. The late Vicar of St. Martin's is a fine, good-living man: he is in despair about the Church because his life in East London made him understand why people care very little, if anything, about the teachings of the Church. Yet he, good as he is, will not take the only course that is logical and come out boldly on behalf of an entirely new social order. Some time ago he asked me should he give up the Church and stand for Parliament as a Christian candidate? I could not advise him, but did tell him then that there are only two lobbies

in the House of Commons, that reform, revolution, or change, means action and not merely words, that if he came to the House of Commons as a Christian he must translate his creed into deeds.

I put this statement about the Church and men like Dick Sheppard here because it is a good finish to what I have to say about war. St. Martin's became known during the war as a "Place of Refuge" from worry, want, and temptation. No doubt it helped many people, but what a grander, nobler piece of work would have been done had the Vicar boldly and without reservation declared against the war and taken his stand with those who demanded peace. I am convinced there is only one road leading to life for the Church: neither as individuals nor as organizations can any of us serve God and the devil. During a war the Churches try to serve the God of War and the God of Peace. It cannot be done. The Church also blesses property, blesses riches, and at the same time preaches the gospel which tells "He has put down the mighty from their seat and exalted the humble and weak." Had I the power I would shout from the porch of every church and chapel every day of the week, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve: ye cannot serve God and Mammon." I tried to get this view expressed by the committee mentioned above and also by the Archbishops' Committee, but my colleagues were all too clever, too intellectual, and more theological than I was, so I was just a voice in the wilderness with the almost solitary exception of Tawney and, on occasions, Bishop Gore.

## CHAPTER XI

### RUSSIA

ON my return to London we set about the work of re-starting the *Daily Herald*. I also plunged into local work. We captured our local Board of Guardians, wiping out all opposition. In November 1919 we captured the Borough Council, winning thirty-nine out of the forty-two seats which, when we elected the aldermen, gave us forty-six out of forty-nine. I was elected Mayor, thus being the first Mayor of Poplar elected to that office by Labour votes. This election gave me great pleasure and was the only office to which I was elected after expressing my desire for election—that is, I really wished to be the first Labour Mayor of Poplar presiding over a purely Labour council.

When installed in office I asked permission to be allowed to discard the chain of office and other regalia, and then we settled down to years of hard work, work which resulted in halving our infantile mortality and general death rate. Nobody but we who took part in the huge task of administering our borough have the least idea of the amount of work which fell upon us all. Within two months of taking office I cut the first piece of turf in connection with the housing scheme on the Isle of Dogs—a real garden suburb—which was opened for occupation about a year later.

In December 1919 I made up my mind to go to Russia. Many years before 1914 I had been interested in Russia and was a keen supporter of the work of the very respectable "Society of Friends of Russian Freedom." I helped in the work of transporting revolutionary literature from London to St. Petersburg, assisted Stepniak, Kropotkin, and others in their propaganda work. I represented the

Social Democratic Federation at the funeral of Stepniak, who was accidentally killed at a level railway crossing in Surrey. At this gathering John Burns made one of his best speeches, greeting Stepniak with the words: "Farewell, comrade; greater than king, greater than kaiser is Stepniak now dead." In Trafalgar Square during the winter of 1905, after the Winter Palace shootings by the Tsar's soldiers, we held a demonstration against the Tsar's visit to Britain. The Square was packed: speeches were made from six platforms—two on the north side, near the National Gallery. G. Bernard Shaw and H. M. Hyndman were the leading speakers. Hyndman suggested that the crowd should march to the Foreign Office and then to the Russian Embassy. We reached the Foreign Office and J. E. Williams mounted a window-sill and attempted to speak. He was just chucked off by the police, which resulted in a riot of a more or less serious character. One woman comrade, still alive, wound the red flag she was carrying round her body to prevent its capture by the police, and as a result was very severely assaulted by the defenders of law and order. I found myself underneath several hefty policemen, who appeared to be playing at the game boys play—"more sacks on the mill"—which gave me a very bad fit of vomiting. I lost a hat and got smothered in dirt and became breathless. One unfortunate Russian was arrested. I think he got off or was only lightly punished, mainly because Mr. Fisher Unwin, who was an eye-witness of the events, got together a committee and raised a defence fund. This action, however, was successful in preventing His Imperial Majesty Tsar Nicholas coming to London. It was during this agitation that we were told by the Foreign Secretary that no government had the right to interfere in the internal government of other nations, and it was not the business of British statesmen to protest against anything done by the Tsar in Russia. British statesmen these

days are not so reticent when speaking of Lenin and his colleagues.

My colleagues on the Borough Council, knowing how interested I was in Russia and her revolution, unanimously agreed to give me leave of absence as mayor, and selected Sam March to act as deputy mayor. I did not apply for passports to Russia because our Foreign Office had no power to issue them. I started with a passport visaed to Denmark, intending to get other visas as I went along. I travelled to Esbjerg, thence to Copenhagen, where I again met Maxim Litvinoff and his wife and children. There is a story to tell about Mrs. Litvinoff which may as well come in here. When the British Government deported Maxim Litvinoff, his wife and children stayed here. As soon as it was arranged that James O'Grady and Litvinoff should meet in Copenhagen to negotiate about the blockade and exchange of prisoners, Mrs. Litvinoff applied for a passport to join her husband. This was refused her by the British Foreign Office on the ground that the Danish Government objected to her going. This refusal was persisted in after Litvinoff had wired that the Danish Government had no objection to his wife and family joining him. She came to me asking what should be done. After a little talk we took a taxi to the Danish Legation, saw the Minister and got his assurance that if a passport were issued by the British authorities he would give the visa. Armed with this we raced off to the Foreign Office, asked to see the Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon, were turned on to an under-secretary who blandly assured us it was all the fault of the Danish Government who would not give a visa. I demolished this young gentleman and his fairy tales, after which he asked us to retire and wait a few minutes. In about an hour he returned saying everything was all right except the police, and I must see Sir Basil Thomson. I asked for a telephone, rang up Sir Basil, asked him to see me, and

crossed over to New Scotland Yard. This gentleman was as evasive as usual. It took quite a time to get him down to actualities. At last he said, "I can't let her come back again once she goes, yet if I refuse to readmit her, you and her influential friends may persuade the Government to override me, and then consider what mischief she might do, bringing money and literature into this country." After a lot more of a similar kind of stuff he agreed to allow her to leave Harwich the next night. I asked for a pass to get her through his police, but he absolutely refused her either a passport or document of any kind. So she had to travel to Harwich and take her chance. When she attempted to go on the steamer she was stopped, and not until she wired to me and I had taken up the matter again with Sir Basil was she allowed to proceed. The ways of police and diplomats are past finding out. Mrs. Litvinoff is an English woman of letters who simply wanted to join her husband, yet she was treated to this kind of scurvy intrigue and downright lying in an endeavour to prevent her doing so.

On arrival at Copenhagen I received a warm welcome from them both, and was also very cordially received by James O'Grady. I took part in a public controversy about the manner in which the Soviet representative was being treated by hotel proprietors and others. I interviewed the Foreign Minister and chief of police and succeeded in impressing upon them the fact that the British Labour movement would not consider the Danes as good friends if they were rude to the representative of the first Workers' Republic. After this my friends received much more courteous and friendly treatment. I never posed as an official representative of the British Labour movement, but as a member of a big trade union and editor and proprietor of the *Daily Herald*. This latter fact made a lot of difference in the treatment I received from statesmen and public officials.

I had some difficulty in getting my visa for Finland—in fact, I was obliged to fall back on James O’Grady, who very soon smoothed matters out for me. I arrived at Abo after a rather tedious train and sea journey. My trip across the Baltic was through ice, which now and then stopped the ship. We only succeeded in re-starting by backing out and making as heavy a dash against the ice as only powerful engines were capable of doing. I can speak no language but London English. How, now it is all over, I got through passes my comprehension. I had to pass three lots of customs and arrived at Abo in the dead of night. Snow was thick on the streets. There were plenty of sleighs for hire, but for at least twenty minutes I failed to make anyone understand I wanted an hotel. A journey which lasted much less than ten minutes cost me a pound. A bedroom and no food cost another, so when I left the hotel for the railway terminus I thought I was well away. I learned the value of English sovereigns while travelling in Scandinavia—a golden sovereign was a talisman which overcame all difficulties of language, and even time and space.

At Helsingfors I was met by Griffin Barry, a young American journalist who was acting as correspondent for the *Daily Herald*. This eased my path very much because he could speak French and a little German. There were a lot of obstacles to be overcome before I could enter Russia. My passport was all right to go *via* Reval, but I could not get there, as the sea between Reval and Helsingfors was frozen too hard. My good friend Madam Wuolijoki pulled all kinds of strings with the Government to get me across on an ice-breaker, but without avail. Lord Acton, the British Minister, interceded for me with the Finnish Foreign Minister who, after a couple of interviews, agreed to let me cross the frontier at Raiyoki; but he had reckoned without his secret police, who detained me at Viborg for further instructions. I got to the frontier after sixteen days of

waiting and finally found myself with Barry cheering the Red Flag in the midst of soldiers, not one of whom understood a word we were saying. However, it was a great joy for me to feel myself in a Socialist country, even though the masses were starving. The food I took in was shared with officers and men who took us to headquarters. We all knew the language of knives, forks, and appetites. I have never ceased to respect and admire the simple, good-hearted men and women of the Finnish Red Army who escorted me over the frontier and first introduced me to Soviet Russia.

After a few hours' delay we went on to Leningrad. What a sight it was! As we left the station and entered a motor-car the streets and buildings were covered with very thick snow and frost, all bathed in the soft luminous light of a brilliant full moon. We went down the main streets, past the Winter Palace, the Hermitage, catching sight of the ugly, straight-up, golden spire of Peter and Paul, which brought a flood of memories associated with Kropotkin, Stepniak, and others. We lodged at the headquarters of the Red Finnish revolutionary army guarding the frontier. At about two in the morning I got a call through to Chicherin in Moscow, who at once arranged for us to set off the next day. We slept very little that night and were out early to look at the town before starting on our twenty-four hours' journey. We went to the Smolny Institute, heard stories of the revolution, and suddenly found ourselves in the company of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, the well-known American anarchists.

These comrades, whom I had previously met in New York in 1914, were very kind indeed. Without their help we should have fared very badly on our journey from Leningrad to Moscow. They were both well-known anarchists and had suffered for their principles while doing propaganda work in America. In New York in January 1914, at a

meeting I addressed, Berkman asked me the question which I was told it was his custom to put to all speakers who professed any belief in religion or morals. It was this: would a man who himself was starving and whose wife and children were starving be morally justified in stealing bread? My answer was *yes*. This reply without any reservation pleased Berkman very much and set up in his mind some small feelings of respect for me as a Socialist.

I very soon discovered that he and Emma Goldman were entirely out of touch with the Soviet Government. The rigid discipline, suppression of opinion, abolition of freedom of public debate and meeting, chafed them very much. Although both past middle age, they seemed to me to have come to Russia expecting to find a free Socialist society. They did not realize the gigantic task confronting Lenin and his colleagues, took no account of the horrible effects of the blockade, appeared not to know that war was raging almost up to the gates of Moscow and outside Leningrad. In fact, these two good-hearted comrades, willing to share their last piece of bread with anybody in need, were utterly unable to understand they were living in the midst of an unfinished revolution, surrounded by crafty, mean-spirited, false friends and very powerful foes; that all the outside world was against the Soviets; that Lenin, by his tremendous energy and transparent honesty, had roused a nation of uneducated serfs and industrial workers to fight and die for freedom. Because of this lack of appreciation of facts, this inability to think and live according to the facts of life, both these friends wasted their time and talents trying to agitate and make propaganda against Lenin and his government. There never was any objection raised to propaganda in the ordinary sense, because debates, even in those far-off days of 1920, were daily taking place between Christians and Atheists, Anarchists and Bolsheviks. But everybody was expected to accept, and is still expected

to accept, the dictatorship of the Communist Party in the government of the country till the revolution is consummated.

Although this was the case they were, while I was in Russia, treated with the utmost kindness and courtesy by the authorities. Kropotkin was in similar case to these two. I went out to see him in the nice country house placed at his disposal by the Government. Berkman and Emma Goldman went with me. After the first cordial greetings we spent seven or eight hours arguing about the sins of Lenin and other members of the Government. It was not at all a nice night's talk: all these men and women held fast to their anarchist creed and refused to see or hear anything but evil spoken about the Bolshevik regime. I experienced something of the same sort when I met the Tolstoian Chertkoff. He is a Christian Anarchist, and was, if anything more opposed to the Bolsheviks than the others. It says something for the toleration and goodwill of Lenin and his friends that these men and women, active and philosophic anarchists, were allowed as much freedom as they undoubtedly did enjoy. I have always thought that people like these would have served the cause of the workers much better by staying away from Russia until the revolutionary government was more settled and sure of itself.

On both my visits, in 1920 and 1926, I found it difficult to criticize much that I did not like, simply because it is certain that no set of men holding the principles on which the revolution was established could do other than is being done, especially when we remember how hemmed in they have been by foes without and foes within. There is the further fact, which all who know anything of governments understand: policy at home and abroad is largely governed by fear, and fear makes cowards and bullies of us all. Russian Bolsheviks in the past have had everything to fear from capitalist governments: even to-day Britain supports

all the Baltic States and other small nationalities in any disputes which arise with Russia, and as a consequence Russian governments live in fear of war.

In modern days we have heard of Amritsar, where many hundreds of Indians were slain and wounded because a British General lost his head. The British people, during and after the 1916 rising in Ireland, almost without a protest, allowed hundreds of Irishmen, men who were among the best and most honest of their race, to be shot in cold blood and flung into prison thousands of others. The operations of the secret police, the Cheka in Russia, the appalling slaughters, imprisonments, and suppressions are all accounted for by fear—a fear which all governments share and which impels all governments to do exactly the same kind of killing, persecution, and slaughter they each denounce when practised by others. Even though this is true, it is also true that in Russia there is and was in 1920 complete freedom of worship and freedom of opinion and expression of opinion, so long as in the practice of these there was no organized attack on the Soviet Government. Those who get prosecuted and flung into prison are those who, like our own Communists, break the law and attack in a serious manner the foundations of government, and in defending itself by the old, orthodox measures of repression, coercion, and suppression the Soviet Government is but following in the steps of other governments. Needless to say, I do not think a Labour Government in Britain should act in this manner. I am, however, certain that such a government would, in similar circumstances and conditions, take all the necessary measures for safeguarding its own and what was considered the nation's interests.

However, I must get on with my story. Our journey took place on a Sunday. We travelled by an ordinary train, which was crowded inside and out, people standing

on steps and in between the carriages, riding on buffers and couplings, and some even on the roofs. It was a long, wearisome journey. We had no utensils for food, but all drank out of a tin can in which we made the tea. At each station we stopped at in daylight I got out and walked about among the people. As it was Sunday we were able to see with our own eyes people freely moving about just as is seen along a railway in this or any other land. We were also able to some extent to gauge the feelings of ordinary people towards the Government. Berkman told us most were very friendly, but all were starving—as indeed was all too apparent on their faces. All the same, good fellowship and a willingness to help each other pervaded all who were on the train.

Before leaving Finland I had been warned not to mix up with the people because, if I did so, I would become lousy, or else catch smallpox and other fevers. I was in Russia for over six weeks, mixed up with all sorts and conditions of people, was never properly fed, went in and out of overcrowded, tsarist tenements, slums, factories, and railways, and never saw a bug, flea, or louse, or caught any fever. I was not always in good health, but was just as healthy as at home. I believe the bright sunshine, pure cold air, frost and snow, coupled with a reasonably healthy mind and body, kept me in good health while all around me people were dying daily from plague, pestilence, and famine.

On our train there were no signs of dirt, except among some passengers, and no sickness at all. At some stations boiling water was supplied to all who needed it. While stopping at many of the larger stations one thing struck me, and this was the sound of church-bells and the sight of villagers going to church. We had heard in England that all churches in Russia were closed and nobody was allowed to worship God. Facts as we saw them gave the lie to all

such statements. Religion will never die out of the world and is certainly by no means dead in Russia. There is persistent propaganda against religion, but the Church still thrives and prospers. A new national church has been created, which prays at all services for the success of the Soviet Government. During this visit I met one of its founders, Bishop Pensa, and many chiefs of other sects while in the country in 1926.

I was also much impressed to see not in pictures, but in real life, Russians rubbing their hands in the snow and warming each others' faces in a like manner. The more I see of other nations the more convinced I am that if once we can remove the curse of vested interests and the greed of money-making war, all quarrels will for ever cease.

We arrived at Moscow at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon. No one had come to meet us, so for an hour or more we had nothing to do but look about us. Poverty and want were in evidence everywhere. Roads and streets were piled up with frozen snow into which carts, motors, sleighs, all raced along at all kinds of speeds. Some London newspapers said a special tram-service was put on to welcome me and that my Bolshevik friends ennobled me with the title "Lord" Lansbury. This was just pressmen's exaggeration. Trams were running in Leningrad, but none were even on view in Moscow. This wonderful city of fine churches, cathedrals, and public buildings is the meeting-place between the far and near east. In 1920 plague, pestilence, and famine were rampant throughout the city, all sanitation was frozen up because of shortage of wood and fuel, the city was overfull of men and women of all nationalities. Our first acquaintance with life in the place was to find ourselves surrounded by a great host of beggars of all ages and both sexes, all eager to earn a *kopeck* or get a bit of bread. I have seen similar scenes in Birmingham, outside New Street Station, and at Liverpool, outside

Lime Street Station, but never in such numbers. It was quite clear that thousands were suffering from hunger and starvation.

Our next scene was at the railway station which brings people to Moscow from Siberia. Here we met face to face Red Army troops waiting to entrain for various war fronts, and also saw a train-load of wounded who had been dumped on to the station. We were told that lint for bandages was unobtainable, that there were no anaesthetics, no instruments for operations—all because of the *cordon sanitaire* which Christian Britain, France, and America had placed round the country. I confirmed these statements later on both in Russia and in Scandinavia—in fact, the first parcels of medical necessities since the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 went into Russia as I came out in February 1920. I met the British Red Cross people who were going in while I was resting in Helsingfors. British soldiers, prisoners of war, also suffered severely because of the blockade, until James O'Grady successfully negotiated the agreement by which food could be sent into them. When food parcels came into Russia British prisoners were better off for food than their captors. Looking at this train-load of broken wounded Russian soldiers I realized in a small way what horrible suffering is inflicted on innocent people by those who make war, and understood, too, that these sufferings will never be ended until all who make wars and support wars are themselves obliged to accept all the risks and sufferings war brings.

While waiting we also visited one or two churches, which to our great surprise we found packed with congregations taking part in the Greek ritual and service. When our guide arrived we parted with Berkman and went off in a fast motor to our dwelling-house, which proved to be a mansion owned by a former sugar-king, situated opposite

the Kremlin on the southern embankment of the Moskva river. This drive was a very perilous one owing to the condition of the road: every moment we were on the verge of turning completely over and escaped collisions by a hair's breadth. These Russian chauffeurs beat any I have met with for sheer dare-devil courage. The taxi gentlemen in Paris take some beating, but I think I give the men I have met in Leningrad and Moscow the palm.

As soon as we set foot inside this house I arranged to send a wireless message home, which was printed in the *Daily Herald* as follows:

Arrived here to-day. The churches are all open and people going in and out. The magnificent shrine in the Kremlin was being visited as of old. All classes are in the streets. All suffer hunger, cold, and sickness, due entirely to civil war, aided by foreign gold and arms.

The whole nation needs peace. Organized Labour in Britain and America must secure for the workers here a chance to reorganize their society. There is great hope, great faith, and idealism, but all here want to know if the Allies will now leave Russia free to work out her own salvation. Everybody I have spoken to would welcome honest co-operation. The feeling is that we all need each other. I never met people so determined to win their fight for economic freedom. I interviewed Ch cherin, who said the Russian co-operative societies were willing and anxious for trade, and had appointed Litvinoff their agent. They would send delegates from Russia to act with him. Russia, he said, must be allowed to determine what she will buy and sell. The co-operative societies are part of the Constitution; in fact, are distributive agencies for the Soviet Government. That means that every Russian citizen is *de facto* a member of the Co-operative Society.

Asked what was the task for the immediate future, he

said the people of Russia under Trotsky cheerfully allowed themselves to be organized, trained, and disciplined to repel foreign and internal enemies. Now they will all be organized, trained, and disciplined for the purpose of production. The most serious work of to-day was to recreate Russia from the wreck caused by the ceaseless war of five years. This means great exertion, great sacrifice, much central organization, and much discipline. The other day the call was for every man to the front. Now the call is for everybody to come and labour—all to the bloodless front.

Food, clothes, everything depended on work. Without food men could not work, but even food cannot be obtained without transport, and this can only be supplied by labour. So a great industrial army, including all the able-bodied, was being formed. This, however, was a passing phase, leading on to the day when men and women, learning from the mistakes and sacrifices of the past, will freely give the best service to the common weal.

As to peace with our neighbours, there is no obstacle on this side. All Russia demands from her neighbours is friendship. Poles, Ukrainians—in fact, all peoples—can have peace if they will treat Russia as a free nation.

I am struck with the calm confidence with which all officials face the future. It is their faith which keeps the masses with them. There is suffering, plenty of it, but the scenes outside the station where I arrived were similar to those seen at any terminus in London and the provinces before the war. Lots of people, boys and men, were waiting to transport luggage on sledges and droshkys, and to carry you home. People are badly dressed, but are looking remarkably well considering their privations; but the outstanding fact is that the blockade and civil war have let loose disease and want of

every description. Yet these millions of human beings desire only to be allowed to live.

I earnestly beseech the Government, especially Mr. Lloyd George, to go forward in the big English manner and give the hand of comradeship to this great people struggling to its feet after years of pain and loss. Also I urge Henderson, Smillie, Thomas, Williams, MacDonald, and Snowden all to unite and, with the authorities, bring about the reconciliation of both nations.

Atrocity-mongering is played out here and in Petrograd. I am as free and safe alone in the streets as in London; indeed, more so. True religion is untouched; true marriage is as sacred as ever. The churches are being restored at the public expense. There is nothing here worse than in other capitals; there is much, very much, that is better.

This was the first direct message sent from Russia to Britain by any newspaper man since the Revolution. G. K. Chesterton, writing about my journey and these telegrams, said the *Daily Herald* did not make as much of these messages as any other daily paper would have done. Our failure to get as much publicity as others was, of course, due entirely to our lack of money.

I sent a special message to Lloyd George as follows, but received no reply:

I beg you to come here and join in conference with Lenin. I am certain that your eyes and ears would be opened as soon as you cross the frontier. There is no danger to fear from peace, but great danger to Britain and Europe if present conditions continue.

I am convinced that if Lenin, Krassin, Lloyd George, and Wilson could have met at any time between 1917 and 1921 every question as to debts, loans, and confiscation would have been entirely settled.

Our accommodation in this sugar-king's mansion was

most luxurious so far as furniture and other appointments go. The things we were short of were food, water for baths, and, at times, firing. In these we fared, as did all with whom we came in contact, very badly. I think the reason my health kept good was due to my constitution and to my ability to live on bread, butter, and tea: of this latter we got all we needed, but butter became non-existent after we had eaten and given away what we took in with us.

Another newspaper man, representing the *Daily Chronicle*, who came after us, was courageous enough to buy some eggs: these, when cooked, went off like a gun. I do not think Dan Leno could have placed these in any category, either as "new laid," "fresh," just "eggs," or "eggs for election purposes."

I interviewed everybody of any importance from Lenin to people in the street. I met spies of various nationalities, most of whom were very quickly put behind bars. Prisons, factories, institutions of all sorts and kinds were thrown open for my inspection. In those days eggs, poultry, milk, butter, and meat were reserved for children, nursing and expectant mothers, sick and aged. Often when I hear ignorant Members of Parliament and ministers of religion denouncing the horrors of Bolshevism I see a vision of my friend and comrade Krassin, pale and wan, sitting at a desk in a room that was like an ice-well. The day was one of the coldest I experienced, and Krassin, though a leading minister of the Soviet, was suffering all the ills which poverty and want of food brings, bearing on his face all the marks of privation and starvation. The same day I visited two children's homes and saw 200 children at each home sit down to a dinner of good, wholesome soup, boiled chicken, and vegetables. I wonder how many of us, labour leaders and others, myself included, ever suffered any shortage of food and firing during a strike or lock-out, when our comrades have been starving? I wonder more how many

cabinet ministers during the war went short while poor children got food? During this visit, meeting Kalinin, Kameneff, Chicherin, Lenin, Krassin, Kolanti, Balabanoff, Tomsky, Melinshanski, and lots of others, I discovered for the first time in my life the truth of the saying "To suffer together is the salt of human friendship." The strong and healthy in Russia during the famine years suffered on terms of equality. The Red Army, the toilers, and children and others mentioned above were at all times kept as far removed from want as was possible.

Krassin always impressed me as a great man. It is a mistake to think that because of his fine abilities as a business expert and engineer he was any the less a revolutionary Bolshevik. I found him, whenever we discussed things, just as downright and emphatic as the others in his denunciation of Western capitalism with its parliaments and municipalities. The one thing which separated him from his colleagues was the fact that he knew there was another side, and his mind was broad and big enough to enable him to understand that some of those who disagreed with him were as honest as himself. My interview with him was a joint one, Griffin Barry, Michael Farbman, and another pressman being present. From the start it was evident the Soviet Government eagerly desired a settlement with Britain, that they were willing to compromise and compromise heavily about debts and trading. The question of credits did not loom so large then as now, because in the north there were large quantities of timber, skins, and hides waiting to be shipped. According to Krassin there was also a possibility of the Soviet granting long leases to capitalist concerns to work mines and minerals. This would have been carried out under agreements compelling capitalist companies to observe labour conditions as laid down by the Soviet Union.

Later on I spent several nights with Chicherin dis-

cussing international questions. Chicherin sleeps by day and works at night. This comrade knows our country very well indeed, and although a sound Bolshevik has a rather stand-off manner, quite in the style of our own aristocrats and diplomats. He is in the same category as our intellectuals Webb, Shaw, Wells, or Haldane. Nobody can ever know as much as they do, be as wise as they look, or at least try to make us believe they are. All the same, comrade Chicherin was a good friend and helped me in all my inquiries, making it possible for me to see people and institutions, and, what is more important, did his best to make me understand the foreign policy he was pursuing.

While I was in Finland the Foreign Minister, Mr. Holsti, asked me to inquire when in Moscow about Finnish soldiers who were prisoners in Russia, and also to find out what view the Soviet Government held on the question of disarmament. I took in with me a long list of prisoners and as a result new agreements regarding prisoners and exchanges were later on arranged. About disarmament Chicherin was as emphatic then as Stalin was in August 1927: the Soviet Government would disarm on all its frontiers, dismantle all fortifications, and go in for general disarmament if the nations surrounding the Union would do the same. And as to the Border States, such as Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, and others, all the Russians wanted from these were security, peace, and a full assurance expressed in deeds as well as words that trade should be free between big Russia and these smaller powers who had attained their freedom solely through the Revolution. Chicherin also said it needed to be widely known that Great Britain and France were continually using these small nations as jumping-off ground for economic and other attacks on the Union. He was quite certain that unless British Labour intervened both France and Britain would assist Poland against Russia, which even then, in February 1920, he was

sure was inevitable. War did break out a few months later.

In this connection I may as well point out that on leaving Russia, and while staying in Helsingfors, I took the opportunity of seeing the Polish minister accredited to Finland and asked him what was the Polish cause of complaint against Russia. All I could gather was a demand for annexation by Poland of huge portions of the Ukraine and the district round and including Vilna. I found this gentleman a thoroughly good Polish Imperialist who would not listen to any talk of disarmament. Mr. Holsti, the Finnish Foreign Minister, treated the question differently: he had some rather big ambitions connected with the northerly territories that lie between Russia and Finland, but assured me Finland wanted peace and he would work for peace. When I told him Chicherin was willing to negotiate a treaty which would make the Baltic an international sea on which no ships of war of any nation should be permitted to sail, he expressed the view that such a proposal was utopian.

Now, after seven years have passed, it is easy to understand both the Polish and Finnish attitude. It is Great Britain which dominates in these matters. It is our Air Minister who sails in seaplanes round the Baltic, looking in at Reval, Helsingfors, and elsewhere, negotiating for aircraft centres and jumping-off places for possible attacks on Russia. Everything that has happened in regard to Russia since my interviews in Moscow and Helsingfors confirm the foresight of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Bolshevik Russia stands alone in its willingness to disarm and in its desire to live at peace with other nations. It is true Chicherin defended propaganda by the Third International on behalf of world revolution: it is equally true that the messages I brought out of Russia in 1920 were all of one sort so far as disarmament is concerned.

Russia would throw down her arms simultaneously with all other nations.

This view was also expressed again and again by Lenin during a very long talk I had with him on my birthday, 21st February. I have met all the men and women of my time considered great in the world of religion, literature, and politics: none compares with Lenin. He was a great man in every sense of the word. I know nothing of his personal relations with others and speak of him as he appeared to me, looking, as all these leaders looked, half starved, hunted, and worried, yet cheerful in spirit and words, full of confidence and hope for the future. He had been nearly killed by a would-be assassin, yet when I met him in his bare plain room in the Kremlin he was without guards and dressed like an ordinary British artisan. He did most of the talking, because I wanted to hear all he had to say. He knew a good deal about British politics and our Labour movement, was very scornful of parliamentary action, but very much more tolerant towards every other form of municipal and co-operative activity. He said no revolution could succeed without the ultimate support of the masses, that Russia could not hope to preserve the fruits of the Revolution unless education and knowledge became universal. As for religion, he was not an agnostic, but an atheist. He could not understand my outlook: the Churches had been one of the curses of mankind and had made capitalism possible and was primarily responsible for that system retaining its power in the world. "Religion is the opium of the people" was not first said by him, but by an English Christian. He had no objection to my professing faith in God and religion, though he did not understand it.

Zinoviev, whom I met later in Leningrad, also held the same view, and both of them said my ideas on religion and pacifism need not prevent me joining the Communist Party.

Lenin said: " You think you can win Socialism without bloodshed and through Parliament. I hope you may do so, though my opinion is dead against you. I wish you good luck, only get on with the job. It is up to you and those who agree with you in Britain to prove you are able to do it."

We discussed banking, currency, and national credit. As far as I can remember he said that neither himself nor his colleagues ever intended to smash up the banking system, but it was smashed for them by the sabotage of the bankers, and they were obliged to create out of nothing some system whereby exchange and distribution of foods could be carried on.

He was very bitter when speaking about the blockade and, like all other Russians I met, extremely scornful about President Wilson and his professions of pacifism. Lenin was certain the treaties imposed on the defeated nations would in the near future surely lead to war, and in agreement with Chicherin he was certain the Poles, egged on by France and Germany, would speedily bring about war with Russia. He would have liked to have met Lloyd George, of whom he appeared to entertain the opinion that he was a realist and one with whom it would be possible to make a tolerable agreement. But all through his long talk about foreign affairs there ran the conviction that the rest of Europe and America did not intend to allow the Russian Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to become successful. In spite of this he was hopeful of the future. When I suggested he should ask Sidney and Beatrice Webb to go out and teach his friends how to organize administration, he smiled and said he did not mind me suggesting that the Bolshevik scheme of things was a glorified kind of Fabianism; he and his colleagues were well aware that they had not established Communism, but they had laid the foundation. When I suggested that for a long period, in fact, until

the world revolution was accomplished, their system of State ownership and national organization of labour and industry was in fact State Socialism in a much more advanced stage than in Australia, he did not dissent, but was insistent that the advance of Russia towards full and complete Communism was only dependent on how soon the workers of other lands would accept Socialism.

That was his justification for the intensive propaganda which even in those days was carried on in all parts of the world. When I suggested propaganda would be an insuperable hindrance to diplomatic and commercial relationships, he took his stand on the fact that although the Government and Communist Party of Russia were largely one and the same thing, the Third International was, in fact, an international organization, separate and apart, though included in its ranks were representatives of Russia. He agreed, though, that so far it was Russian State money which kept the organization going. He also said he would be personally glad if the headquarters of the Third International were outside Russia, but no country would have them. Stalin said much the same thing to me in 1926.

We talked of the organization and discipline of labour. He said that no one who cared for the future of the working class should ever teach "ca' canny," as during a revolution or during the days of a Labour Government in Britain, more work, and not less, would be needed from all those in the service of governments and municipalities. He had little or no sympathy with those who would claim more from a public authority simply because it was a public authority. In Russia they had experienced much difficulty during and since the Revolution from people who imagined that because a revolution had taken place no one need work hard. His motto for the workers was "To have more we must get more, to get more we must know more." He believed the only true safeguard of the Revolution was

education and discipline. He did not excuse or attempt to explain away the fact that freedom of speech and press and public meeting were not allowed, and that workers were subject to strict discipline. He said that with the nation surrounded by outside foes, honeycombed within by secret spies and avowed enemies, no one could expect them to do other than they were doing. Again and again he asked what right have you British trade unionists and Socialists to expect us to give freedom to our enemies in order that they may destroy us, when most of you supported the Great War and only a small minority protested against the atrocities in Ireland and the massacre at Amritsar. Of course, I could give no satisfactory answer.

Although like the rest of his colleagues Lenin lived a life of hard work with scarcely any food or rest, and although when I met him the blockade was still in full blast, he was full of confidence and hope for the future. No statesman in our time in Europe or America can compare with him for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. He was loved as no other statesman was ever loved, not merely because he was leader and chief inspirer of the Revolution, but because his daily life, his attitude towards his fellow men, never changed. His virtues, consistency, courage, and ability also made him the most hated man of his time. When power came his way, when he was called upon to take over the leadership and control, he continued to wear the same kind of clothes as before, his apartment in the Tsar's palace was most plainly furnished. When giving an interview he did so alone without the attendance of secretaries and officials. He mastered and did his job—the best loved and most hated man in the world. I shall always esteem it the greatest event in my life that I was privileged to see this fine, simple, wise man and speak with him, learning from him how a man can occupy the leading position in a nation and yet remain simple, unaffected, and

without personal pride. He knew all about my views concerning religion and pacifism, knew also my relationship with the Labour movement and the *Daily Herald*. We did not quarrel: he held to his views, doing most of the talking—as I most certainly desired he should—but he was big enough and broadminded enough to recognize that others equally as honest as himself might hold a different view.

I believe one reason for his delightful friendliness towards me was that he remembered the small assistance which, with H. N. Brailsford, I was able to render to the Russian Social Democratic Conference, held in London, at the Rev. F. R. Swan's Brotherhood Church in Southgate Road in May 1907. The delegates to this conference had been driven out of Europe to Britain and arrived here almost penniless. Brailsford, always a friend of those in need, no matter what their race and opinions, at once set about trying to raise enough money to maintain the delegation till the conference closed. He went to our mutual friend Joseph Fels, who rang me up and asked if I would go with him to the conference and help him make up his mind whether to lend the money or not. Of course, I went, and as a result he put up the money. An agreement to pay the money back whenever it was possible to do so was signed by Lenin, Trotsky, and every member of the delegation. Years after, in a small office off the Strand, in 1921, I had the pleasure of seeing this loan repaid and the document with all the names handed over to a representative of the Russian Soviet Government.

It was at this conference in London that the Russian Social Democratic Party split into two parts—Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. I have no doubt Joseph Fels would have put up the money in any case, whether I had gone with him or not. I am, however, glad to have had the chance of at least thinking I was, in ever so small a way, assisting that

great little man, Joseph Fels, do one of the most brave and beneficent acts of his lifetime.

I have often looked back to the time spent with Lenin and wondered what would have happened had he lived. It is hard to believe the present discontents, disagreements, punishments, and exclusions would have taken place and another division been forced on the ranks of the workers in Russia: neither can I believe the present break between British and Russian trade unionists could have happened. It is, of course, true that none of our Russian comrades from Lenin onwards really understands the mentality of British trade unionists, but I believe Lenin knew enough to know that in Britain we can be persuaded, but cannot be forced into any course of action of which we disapprove. In our talk he quite clearly understood that we had determined to try out the Parliamentary method. His one request was be quick, there is no time to lose. However, he is gone, and the future of the Russian Revolution depends entirely on whether those men in power and those who succeed will be able to preserve unsullied, unspoilt the magnificent spirit of selflessness which animated him. He is one who would be a doorkeeper, a scavenger, if by so doing he could serve his fellow men. Russia, Britain, and the world need thousands more like him if Socialism is ever to come into its own. People like me in the House of Commons must learn from him that our position, our climb to the top, advantages nothing to the workers unless accompanied by fundamental social and industrial changes.

During my stay in Russia I visited many factories, aerodromes, rest-houses, children's homes, convalescent homes, and hospitals. All these were only in process of starting. All were in urgent need of new and more efficient machinery and equipment. Railway rolling-stock, bridges, permanent ways were in a terrible condition owing, not to the Revolution, but to the ravages of war. When people

talk as if the Revolution destroyed everything they talk nonsense. It was the collapse of transport, the breakdown of the railways, shortage of food, shortage of arms and ammunition brought about by the inefficiency and gross corruption of the Tsardom and its bureaucracy, which first of all starved the army and nation and thus precipitated the Revolution. Lenin and his colleagues had to restore order out of a chaos produced by famine and pestilence caused by war. For nearly four years they were hindered in their work because of internal and external war, fomented and waged by Britain, France, Japan, and America. In spite of this and every obstacle in their path Lenin and his comrades held on and so far have won through, not yet to Communism, but to social ownership of the means of life.

The men and women in factories all showed traces of privation and want, but nobody, either in towns or outside, whom I met wanted the Tsar back. All pinned their faith to Lenin and to his policy. The one thing everybody cried out for was education. I attended a meeting of the Moscow Town Council or Soviet, presided over by Kameneff. This gathering was a remarkable one, made up of women and men amongst whom were factory and other workers, soldiers and professionals. As the proceedings were interpreted to me I was reminded of the London County Council and its reports from committees, the only difference being that the medical officer, education officer, transport officer—called commissars in Russia—reported direct to the Council instead of through committees. When asked to speak I congratulated the Soviet and myself that in the two capital cities of the world the work of local organization, of essential services, was being carried on in much the same manner so far as organization and method were concerned—although in Moscow the Soviet dealt with every aspect of life, while in London we left most essentials to private enterprise.

I also met the British resident chaplain, the Rev. Mr. North. He was living in the residence attached to his church and looked well fed and happy, and so did all with whom I came in contact at his house. They had just begun to receive parcels from England, and although loud and very demonstrative in their hatred of the Bolshevik regime, were equally loud in their praise of Lenin both as a man and statesman. Mr. North talked very harshly of the Russian clergy and the corruption of the Church in that country. At the same time he longed for the restoration of the Tsars. On my way to his house I met some British soldiers trundling a barrow. They told me they were prisoners. When I met them and later met others I discovered that they were all on parole except officers and men whom it was known had volunteered to fight against the Revolution, and those who refused to give their word not to try and escape. They lived for the most part in big houses and could go in and out when they pleased. Some earned a little extra food by working for the Government. Nearly all, if not all, received extra food from England. All wanted to get home and were rather scornful because the Labour movement had not secured their release. I heard from these men how much suffering had been inflicted on our own people owing to the blockade, which prevented drugs, medicines, and anaesthetics being sent to Russia. One of our soldiers had his eye taken out without an anaesthetic because there was none to be had.

I had some arguments with these soldiers about the Revolution, and found them all very much under the influence of the chaplain. Although this was the case they all accepted with gratitude every privilege the Soviet Government gave them. I think they understood that Russian prisoners in Britain and France received much worse treatment than was given them. One or two showed their cosmopolitanism by marrying Russian girls. All of

them were international enough to play football. Two of them were very ill: I arranged with Chicherin that these should return to England with me, although no agreement as to prisoners had at that time been arranged between O'Grady and Litvinoff. All the thanks either the Soviet Government or myself got for what is usually considered a kindly action was on my return a few bucketloads of spilled ink in the Press, full of lies, half-lies, and suppressions of the truth concerning my relationships with Mr. North and these prisoners.

The same thing happened when I did a kindly action on behalf of a self-confessed British spy who had been caught red-handed and lodged in prison. This prison was in every respect a much better place of detention than any British workhouse; the discipline and rules were more humane, prisoners who gave their word not to abuse the privilege were never locked in cells, but could go from one workroom or reading-room to another. The Britisher whom I went to see informed me himself, without any questioning from me, that if he would give his word not to leave Moscow without permission he could have his freedom. He was much better dressed and looked in very much better health than most of the Russian workers I had seen. I knew his wife was anxious about him, so gave him a piece of paper on which to write her a private note, which he did, and I brought it home. Nobody saw it but the writer, myself, and his wife. There was no word of harsh or unjust treatment; it simply said that he was all right—as indeed he was. Yet, when I returned to London, every kind of lying story was being told about this man's treatment and condition. Even when I left the prison and met Mr. North it was not until I threatened to get him taken to the prison to see the prisoner as I had seen him that he gave up his assertion that the man was being badly treated.

When I was in Copenhagen James O'Grady tried hard to

persuade me not to continue my journey to Russia; he showed me telegrams saying our men were sick and small-pox of a particularly virulent kind was raging. I found none of our soldiers sick of any disease—on the contrary, I was very agreeably surprised to find how good a bill of health both the vicarage and the prison-houses could show. I am quite aware that the Soviet Government differentiated its treatment of British soldiers and prisoners. Ordinary soldiers got more privileges than those who volunteered, and to a large extent officers were kept in closer confinement and only allowed occasionally to meet the rank and file. For all this it would be very interesting to know how much sickness there was during the time these remnants of the armies sent to help the counter-revolutionists were in prison. One thing is certain: the men I saw were better housed, better fed, and had infinitely greater liberty than was at any time accorded to German or Russian prisoners in this country.

The churches, as I have said, were open every day. On holy days and Sundays great crowds attended the services. I usually attended the Sunday morning services at the big church dedicated to Our Saviour just outside the southern walls of the Kremlin. This church is one at which the bishop and priests of the reformed or Living Church of Russia now officiate. Christian Communism is preached here and prayers are said on behalf of the Soviet Government. I got to know one of the priests and through his good offices tried to secure an interview with the Archbishop Tikhon. I must not speak evil of the dead: since my visit he has passed away. It is necessary, however, to point out that, contrary to all the statements published throughout the world, this prelate, in the months of December 1919, January, February, and March 1920 was not in prison. He was living in a house unguarded by police or soldiers, and preached and officiated at churches in his diocese every Sunday. He

refused to see me, although I informed him I wanted a message from him to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Bourne, and other religious teachers. I tried again and again to bring him to reason, pointing out that I felt in honour bound not to return to England without a personal, private message from him. It was no use. If he had conceded to my request the whole stream of falsehoods and lies connected with his name would have been blown sky-high. His house was guarded by his own guards. I saw one or two and they looked the kind of ferocious Christian bandits who would be capable of slitting the throat or choking any person who offended against their conception of religion.

The Archbishop's secretary and my friendly priest could both speak English, so we needed no interpreter. They freely admitted that their chief had freedom of action and could preach in any church when and where he pleased. They also admitted the old gentleman was an unrepentant Tsarist and was even then hoping to assist the armies of Kolchak, Denikin, and Yudenitch to succeed in their efforts to capture Moscow and overthrow the Soviet; that the Archbishop was continually being warned is true, but it is not true to say, as was said, that he was imprisoned and not allowed to preach—at least, during my visit to Moscow.

I went out to some of the rest-houses, formerly residences of princes and rich men, and saw, even in those days of famine, the great efforts being put forward on behalf of children, women, and sick people. Theatres, music-halls, and other places of entertainment were open each night; workers sat everywhere. There was no upper or lower class: we were all on an equality. The Tsar's box at the opera, reserved for me and a party of friends, was occupied because we arrived late. Entertainments, whether musical or dramatic, were all of first-class quality, the artists all did

their best to give thoroughly good entertainments. Lunacharsky, the education minister, reckoned it his duty not only to provide ordinary education, but to educate and develop people's minds, children as well as grown-ups, by music, drama, and art. Lenin also had a wonderful outlook on life. He always seemed to see things as a whole, and he talked with the greatest pride of how he hoped one result of the Revolution would be a broader, nobler conception of art and pleasure than the world had yet known. He wanted people to enjoy good music and artistic things as normally they enjoyed food and rougher things of life.

I returned to England early in March, coming back through Finland. I was held up at the frontier and taken to a quarantine camp, which was nothing less than a breeding ground for disease. All sorts of people were there, clean and unclean, diseased and free of disease. The sanitary arrangements were most foul. The two soldiers I was escorting home were in despair. The conditions were more horrible and foul than any I saw under government control in Russia or elsewhere. I refused to bath in a kind of sweat-hole used by everybody and never cleaned after anyone. I sent telegrams home to Lloyd George and the *Daily Herald*, to Lord Acton, and the Finnish Foreign Minister at Helsingfors. For once on this adventurous journey I was really frightened. The room in which I slept was surrounded by White Russians, all of whom viewed me and my soldier friends with suspicion. After three days some British Red Cross representatives arrived and we were shifted to more decent quarters. I endured a bath in one of the vapour baths, being watched by an old lady who was sadly distressed because I insisted on doing my own bathing in my own way. We were only detained here a day or two longer. My soldier friends were taken in charge by the Red Cross and I went to Madame Wuolijoki at Helsingfors, where I received the same warm welcome and

hospitality that this good friend has bestowed on so many of us who have travelled through Helsingfors to Russia.

I spent only a short time here on this occasion, but time enough to address two or three big meetings, and was also able to meet and speak to the Socialist members of the Finnish Parliament. These comrades were all living in a state of high nervous tension because they were daily expecting a Royalist German rising, which they knew was being organized by a body of men of similar status to the Carsonites in this country.

I stayed at Stockholm on my way home to see our paper merchants and endeavour to arrange supplies. The *Daily Herald*, after its new start in March 1919, was always in difficulty about paper. We were boycotted right and left. During the War most of the paper we used was not bought direct by us, but in other names. One minor, but important, object in going to Scandinavia, Finland, and Russia was to endeavour to surmount these difficulties. In Finland I discovered all newsprint was under one control. Madame Wuolijoki endeavoured to secure us some supplies from this quarter and so did I, but without result. In Russia I discussed with Chicherin and others the possibility, once they got their factories started, of opening up supplies from there. I also discussed printing and other work for our printing works in London. Whatever news Mr. Churchill and others got over the wireless, the memorandum I left in Moscow made my position clear. I could not if I would, and I would not if I could, print seditious literature likely to land me and those I acted with in prison, not while there is as much freedom of speech as there is at present in Britain. I wanted a business arrangement about paper and printing: nothing more and nothing less.

I was told to inquire at Stockholm and spent some days doing so. The representatives of the firm Stora Kopparberg, from whom we had purchased large quantities, were

willing to make contracts at very high prices—prices I could not see may way to pay. Comrade Strom, leader of the Swedish Communists, met me and did everything possible to facilitate buying. The Swedish merchants would only do business direct with me, as they had for some time been doing.

One night I was entertained to dinner by a group of friends, many of whom were ordinary business men, some Communists. Among the guests was Branting, who was Socialist Prime Minister for a time. Next me was a voluble English-speaking Russian, who I know now was a British spy. This gentleman told me of sixty tons of paper which I was to get for nothing and which could be shipped immediately. I knew about this paper, Comrade Strom had already spoken about it. The size was not suitable for their Swedish papers, but would suit us or the French Socialist papers. He could not then decide whether we could have it at a price or not, as it was under offer to Paris. This was the origin of the story which appeared in some sections of the London Press the Sunday after my return to London. I should have been very glad indeed to have got some credit facilities for buying cheap paper, and would have as gladly accepted these from the company which controlled the supplies of paper to the Socialist and Communist papers or Scandinavia as from the firm of Stora Kopparberg. As it turned out we never bought or received a pennyworth of paper from anyone outside Britain except from ordinary capitalist firms. This was proved when Lloyd George issued his famous attack on the *Daily Herald*.

I had a nasty journey home. First there was the quarantine business, then, in Stockholm, and even on the boat from Abo to Stockholm, I felt myself surrounded by spies. In Copenhagen these gentry were more daring: if I went out I was followed; if I stayed in, unless I remained in my

room, two of them would sit close enough to hear and see all I was doing. When I went to see O'Grady or Litvinoff I could always be sure of company. When I asked O'Grady, Litvinoff, and some Red Cross friends to supper, one of these gentry wriggled himself in.

All sorts of merchants, manufacturers, and others, good, old-fashioned Tories and Liberals, who hated my politics and had no regard for me, gave me no rest in their anxiety to get introductions to Litvinoff. One night, after I had spent the evening with some Single Tax friends who gave a dinner party in my honour, I found my room in possession of two Englishmen, obviously secret police, who, after begging an introduction to Litvinoff, went on to discuss the horrors of Bolshevism and the imminence of revolution in Britain. I could have easily made a fortune by imposing a tariff on my introductions.

There is an end to everything, and the end came when, after a cruel voyage of wind, storm, snow, and sleet, our ship from Esbjerg arrived at Harwich. My heart gave a great leap of joy when we entered the river, and when we were alongside I could have sung a hymn of thanksgiving. The workmen on the quay were expecting me and gave me the usual cordial welcome. The customs and police were courtesy itself, and within a few hours I was at Liverpool Street surrounded by thousands of friends who had crowded the station just after midday to welcome me home. A march through the city to the *Daily Herald* offices had been arranged. I preferred, however, to go straight home as I was dead tired and wanted to see my wife, from whom I had been parted too long. On the following Sunday a huge gathering at the Albert Hall gave me a rousing, rollicking welcome home. For an hour I told the story of my trip. Later on I wrote a book, *What I saw in Russia*, and also toured the country agitating for trading relationships to be set going. I wrote to Lloyd George, saw E. F.

Wise, and others connected with Government departments, and in every way open to me endeavoured to turn public opinion in favour of the Soviet.

Then came the Russo-Polish War and the Councils of Action. I was elected a member of the Central Committee and took my share both in organization and counsel. I am sure the action taken by the Labour movement and the *Daily Herald* stopped the proposed British intervention. We were all united, all knew what we wanted, and were thus able to succeed. I wish we were as conscious of our needs and as united to-day as we were then.

It was a great joy to be able to take my wife to Russia in the summer of 1926. We were the guests of the Russian Trade Unions and received the most warm and whole-hearted welcome ever bestowed on any man or woman. We went mainly for rest. This, however, was almost impossible. I also wanted to see how Russia looked in 1926 as compared with the winter of 1920 and, of course, our Russian friends wanted to show us everything. My wife, who cannot stand the House of Commons, and, like me, feels out of place at any sort of function, was at once at home with everyone in Russia. She went with me everywhere. Everybody we met, official and non-official, knew we were not Communists, and knew our views about the miners' dispute, propaganda, and policy generally. They accepted us as what we shall ever remain, friends of the Russian people. We visited factories, now in full working order, which in 1920 were derelict; where formerly there had been slums we saw fine housing schemes; railways, tramways, and other transport services which were not working were now going full speed ahead. We discovered that prisons were simply workshops and factories, those residing in them being paid wages and given freedom to buy food and other necessities, and to move freely about the prisons. We spent days with the Air Force and Red

Fleet, made pacifist speeches, and were assured these were not necessary: everyone knew my views and agreed with them, but Russia could not, would not, disarm unless all Europe disarmed. Life for the common people was infinitely brighter, gayer than ever before. We went to Peterhof Park on a Sunday and saw huge palaces being used as restaurants, crowded with men and women as are Hampton Court, the Crystal Palace, and Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday. We went over the palaces of the Tsars and realized how uneasy and unsafe lie the heads of monarchs such as those who ruled Russia. At Tsarskoe Selo we went over a palace built by that lovely Catherine who outdid even our Henry VIII in the number of her lovers. We visited police and other law courts and saw men and women actually being tried by their peers, that is, by peasants, artisans, and women. We saw the schools and the children, and were happy to think that in six and a half years so very much had been done to lift up, as we say in the Church, the whole body of the people.

In the streets of Peterhof we met men and boys of the Red Army and Fleet, some of whom talked in English and told us all there was to know about myself, my policy, and our British leaders and their policy. In prison, in workshop, and factory, in barracks, on board the warships, wherever two or three gather together, there is a Lenin's corner, where young and old, men and women, meet to learn how to live. This is the true safeguard of the future of Russia. I believe the British Labour policy is the only one for Britain, but for Russia the Communist policy as it is working out is the right one—that is, if we are to judge a policy by its results, and if that policy, as every Bolshevik I met in Russia assured me it will, leads on to true democracy—that is, to a society organized, controlled, and managed by the people for the well being of the people.

I can only speak of what I have seen on two occasions with my own eyes. If, after seven years, a Labour Government can show a transformation as great and as marvellous, we shall have a lot to be thankful for. However, we saw much more; rest-houses had been multiplied a hundred-fold. Clubs formerly used as haunts of social vice and crime are now used by the workers for education and pleasure. We travelled for two days and two nights from Moscow to Essentuki in the Caucasus and, as we raced across those marvellous expanses of land called steppes, understood what potential wealth lay stretched before us, and what fools British capitalists and governments are not to be friends with this great nation, who only need the help of our science and machinery to make their country blossom like a rose. Here in the Caucasus we enjoyed the hospitality of a nice comfortable home, good food, good friendship, and glorious trips from one show place to another. Here amid masses of foliage and cultivated land you will find Cossack villages, large and small, and many thousands of people whose lives have been freed from the tyranny of sexual and other oppressions formerly exercised by land-owners and their relatives.

There was still poverty and unemployment and still many thousands of destitute, homeless children. Slowly and with never resting efforts these evils are being overcome. The effort to remove them is being speeded up and will grow in bigger volume as the days go by. Meanwhile, fine sanatoria, huge palaces, grand hotels house the workers, peasants, soldiers on holiday or those who need special treatment. It is good to know that fine palatial buildings equipped with every device for saving and developing life, built originally by the workers for the use of the rich, are all now used by the workers themselves. There is no other nation in the world that has made or is making such an effort to create healthy minds in healthy bodies as is Russia to-day.

During this trip I interviewed Comrades Stalin, Trotsky, Tomsky, Chicherin, Litvinoff, and others. All our discussions turned on politics. No one now thinks it would be possible for a man holding my views to join the Communist Party. Religion, although allowed to be practised quite freely, seems to be more hated than ever. I do not think there is any chance at present of full agreement as to propaganda between our own Party and the Russian Communist Party and Red Trade Union International. They think we are all wrong, will not tolerate criticism from us, wholly reserving to themselves the right to criticize us. This is all very sad. I tried hard to show that the more our leaders are attacked the stronger they become. The difficulty is a theoretical one. The Russians hold fast the theory of international working-class organization with an International Executive representative of all affiliated bodies, this Executive to have power to determine policy for each nation. This position has never been accepted in Britain and until it is there is bound to be objection when our Russian friends attempt to enforce it on us.

I hope even now a new start will be made and our Russian comrades will agree that each nation must work out its own salvation in its own way. At the same time I want to see propaganda continued for an all-inclusive International to control national and international activities, as I believe that is the end at which we should aim. It is the only road by which we can attain my life's ambition—the Federation of the World, the Parliament of Man. Because it cannot be forced we must educate ourselves and our own people. In the meantime we ought to sink all these theoretical disputes and unite as far as we are able in fighting the common enemy.

With Stalin and Trotsky I discussed the question of compensation and confiscation. I pointed out that even if we do pay compensation in money when taking over land

and private property generally we are only doing what they have done and are still doing—as the destruction and loss occasioned in 1917 has had to be paid for. The paying will be a long time before it is finished. Our friends make no allowance for the 150 years of capitalist development in this country and its accompaniment of trade union, co-operative friendly societies, and municipal local government experience we have passed through, and are still developing. They stick to their propaganda and their policy. I feel exactly as I did in 1920. This Russian Revolution is the greatest human event in my lifetime. It has jerked us all forward and will eventually create a nation of free men and women out of a people who, a few years ago, were serfs and slaves of the Tsar and his nobility.

We in Britain must, in spite of all difficulties, in spite of our quarrels and disputations, stand foursquare in defence of Russia and her Revolution. We must say to our Government “ Hands off Russia ” and our Russian comrades must try and learn that however ignorant, stupid, or corrupt they may imagine any of us are, we can only do what appears right and proper to ourselves. We do not dare to say how the work of government and administration shall be carried on in Russia, or how the trade-union movement shall function. We want Russia to be free to work out her own social, economic, and political salvation in her own way, and claim the same right for ourselves. Even now I hope soon to see the day when the workers of both lands will find unity of purpose without insisting on uniformity of action.

Our journey home was a very pleasant one. We came from Leningrad to London through the Kiel Canal to Hamburg. This was also our outward route, except that we went into Copenhagen instead of Hamburg. Our experience both going and coming home in the Kiel Canal was very pleasant indeed. The men on the ships we travelled in almost all belonged to East London. I found only

a few of them much interested in the Labour movement. All I spoke to agreed that things were much better for everyone in Russia than before the Revolution. As for the Germans, everybody on both ships had no words but those of friendship for the one-time hated "Huns." This was easy to understand; sailors see the people of other lands face to face, understand their lives, and very soon discover we are all blessed with virtues and vices. In the case of Germany, no nation is more like ourselves than are those who live along the shores of the Elbe and occupy the land surrounding Kiel Harbour and the banks of the Kiel Canal. I shall always remember the lovely Sunday in July when we went through this wonderful piece of man's handiwork. Not only was the canal itself seen at its best, but the people dressed in Sunday clothes, men, women, and children, all looked so wholesome, clean, and happy, while the cottages, farms, cattle, and poultry gave a vision of decent prosperity it was a treat to see. The Kiel Harbour had only a remnant of the horrid "Grand Fleet" but was full of pleasure craft of every sort and kind: here and there a crew of young girls, dressed in the scantiest attire, driving their boat through the water in fierce competition with young men; others in small boats, and at the mouth of the canal, in canoes; there were also huge pleasure steamers crowded with passengers sailing to the accompaniment of excellent bands and, in the distance on both sides of the wide expanse of water, we could see the seashore packed with crowds of holiday-makers.

In Hamburg itself life seemed very much as it was in 1907 when I was there with the Poor Law Commission. Prices were higher and in the poorer parts people looked very poor. There was no naval show and not very much work at the docks. Coal was the biggest export being carried on. The stokers on our ship were very scornful indeed about the calorific value of German coal. When all

is said and done Hamburg is a fine port, splendidly equipped, the city itself well laid out, its parks and lakes unique. I, at least, have never seen anything like them anywhere else in the world. The people are kind and obliging. There is no trace of war spirit or jingoism in that part of Germany. Most people appeared bent on getting their living.

On my return I was immediately plunged into a very disagreeable controversy with Communists and the Minority Movement. Some months previously I had promised to speak in Birmingham with Dr. Dunstan, a Communist, who had been adopted as an independent Labour candidate for one of the divisions. I stupidly did not, when agreeing to go, realize all that was involved. The Labour Party Executive, of which I was a member, had approved of Mr. Willey as official Labour candidate: in these circumstances I had to choose whether to be loyal to the Labour Party or break away. I decided to cancel my engagement and, as a result, found myself attacked as a weak-kneed traitor who, because I wanted place and power, had run away from a promise. I do not propose to defend myself here or elsewhere, except to state quite briefly what my position in regard to the Communist Party is. I voted against the Liverpool resolution and would vote against a similar resolution to-day, but the Party Conference decided otherwise, and much as I hate heresy-hunting I am bound to acknowledge that the Executive Committee has no option but to carry out the resolutions of the Conference. There is an end to organization and loyalty unless this is done. The Communist Party compels its members to observe the strictest discipline; the Labour Party's methods are much looser, but even so, there is a point beyond which toleration is weakness. Therefore, those who cannot accept the policy, rules, and methods must be content to remain outside until the majority is converted to their views.

The British Communist Party gains nothing by its system of abusing all those who cannot see eye to eye with it. The leaders they abuse only become more fixed in position, as the rank and file of the movement never takes heed of mere, coarse abuse. The Labour Party road may seem a longer way round than was adopted by our Russian comrades. All the same, it is our only way and is more safe, more enduring, than any the world has yet known. Every other class has used political and municipal power for its own benefit. I am confident the workers of Britain, whenever they so desire, can use these powers to establish Socialism. The Communists believe otherwise. I do not want to quarrel with them and, in fact, decline to do so. My policy is to work as hard as possible along lines I believe in, and leave others to do the same. I see no reason why I should think those who disagree with me are either knaves or fools, or that I am one or the other of these. Time, which is not on the side of either party in this dispute, will, without doubt, very soon prove to us which is right.

## CHAPTER XII

### TOWARDS THE END

**I**N 1922 I again fought Bow and Bromley and captured the seat with a majority of over 8,000 votes. This election and those which followed in 1923-4 demonstrated the hold our Socialist propaganda has obtained in London and East London in particular. It is a remarkable fact that the greatest successes gained by Labour in London are in those boroughs where the policy of Poplar has been most strenuously adopted. During my campaigns I was supported by all sorts of people, especially the poor. I told them in the words of Eugene Debs that I would, in the House of Commons, be their mouthpiece and at all times make their claims heard. The children of my division are always my most vocal and loyal supporters. During the intervals between elections, as I walk about the side streets, they greet me with the refrain, "Vote, vote, vote for Mr. Lansbury," as if reminding me of promises made on their behalf. Women electors and non-electors have also been my staunch supporters. Those who took part in the fight for the franchise, some who went to prison during the stirring days of 1906-14, never weary in the work of rousing both women and men of the district to fight for Labour's cause. Whatever future there may be for me, my most cherished memories will be of the long, long years of work and pleasure, agitation and propaganda, carried on in company with these countless numbers of people, most of whom possess no money, no property, but who do possess the greatest of God's gifts to man, the spirit of comradeship and loyalty to each other, the spirit which impels them to work for great impersonal causes and also teaches them how to "labour and to wait."

I have had many opponents and possibly some enemies, but it may with truth be said that very little real bitterness enters into our struggles. Of course, no public man can make hosts of friends and not at the same time arouse hostility. When this is said the truth remains that in Bow and Bromley we have done our best to keep our political and social struggles above personalities and to fight our fights as protagonists on behalf of great impersonal causes. Those great thinkers who write and speak of the "people who count" and belittle the influence and work of the multitudes of unknown men and women who, without recognition or money reward, carry on the Labour movement, are totally ignorant of the actual facts of life. The people who count in human affairs are those to whom neighbours and friends turn in times of trouble and difficulty, and who, because of their friendship and help, become leaders. It is my good fortune to have known thousands of such men and women, and it is their loyalty which has enabled me to do or attempt anything worth while in my public life.

Writing this story of my own life, finding myself elected Chairman of the Labour Party for the year 1927-8, a member of the Executive Committee of the Party in the House of Commons since my return to that assembly in 1922, at the bidding of the Party sitting on the Front Bench as one of the elected leaders, I often ask myself whither are we tending? Sometimes it seems as if with a sort of relentless inevitability we shall go the same way as all other parties and organizations, religious, social, and political, and as the days pass find ourselves defending our organization with more fervour than the principles it is created to defend. The Party conforms to old traditions, takes part in ceremonial functions such as royal and official levees, garden parties, and entertainments. In 1910, when I first entered the House of Commons, we Labour members never

attended Speaker's levees or at homes; we possessed no uniform, dress suits, etc., and Mr. Lowther, the then Speaker, would not have us at his levees and other functions unless we went in "glad rags." He compromised by giving us a kind of annual lunch, attendance at which did not involve special clothes. Nowadays, Mr. Speaker Whitley has abolished all question of dress and those who attend may go dressed as they please. Our men who wear uniforms go in that attire equipped with tin swords, hats, and feathers. There is an unwritten kind of tradition that attendance at a Speaker's levee is compulsory in the same manner as it is said a command to attend His Majesty must be obeyed. Of course, some of our people break this tradition: in doing so they are expected to explain to the authorities the reason for non-attendance. It is all very stupid and reminiscent of days when Parliament had much less work to do than is the case to-day. For myself I find it impossible to take any interest in these functions. I am not sure whether it is principle or instinct which keeps me away, but instinctively and by intuition I keep away. This feeling is not confined to functions connected with the conservative traditions of our own land: I never felt quite at home when attending Chesham House where, under the auspices of Krassin and Rakovsky, similar functions were held. There always seems something queer and out of place in these rather vain exhibitions of semi-naked, over-jewelled women, and men in ridiculous uniforms, wearing decorations, all dressed up in garbs supposed to be beautiful but which, in my view, are ugly, vain pomp and show, reminding us of days when wealth was best expressed by showing off as Solomon and the Queen of Sheba did centuries ago. I am no kill-joy and like a good rousing gathering of pals to eat a meal, sing songs, tell stories, funny and otherwise, but these horrible, official functions—even the thought of them bores me stiff. In addition, I look on such gatherings just as I look on

court dress—as the badge of class servitude. I may be quite wrong about this: I can only put down how it strikes me.

I cannot think the Labour Party fulfils its mission by proving how adaptable we are and how nicely we can dress and behave when we enter official, royal, or upper circles. It seems to me we would do better to try and order our lives on the same lines as before we became members of Parliament. I cannot feel I am better or worse because some people have elected me as their M.P., and it is certain neither evening dress, court dress, nor indeed any particular set of clothes adds either to my ability or integrity. I do not claim any special virtue for myself or others who take the same point of view. We are each responsible for our actions. I think my attitude may be largely influenced because of the republican propaganda I heard and read when I was young, and good strong doses of individualistic teaching imbibed from writers like Emerson and Carlyle, and the fact that in his day the Press always singled out John Bright as attending court functions dressed in ordinary clothes, and shaking hands with Queen Victoria standing upright instead of kneeling and kissing her hands. There were also pictures of the American Ambassador, Russell Lowell, in ordinary dress standing out like a human being among the crowds of dressed-up people looking like popinjays.

My work in the House of Commons is pretty well known. In addition to serving on the Parliamentary Executive I take my full share in the work of the Party, both as a working member inside the House and by continuous weekend propaganda outside, and also serve on many committees and sub-committees. Men and women from all parts of the world come to see me, and, of course, my constituents think it only right they should be able to see me and consult about grievances. I find a great change in

the House from the days when, as a boy, in 1876, I first looked down on that assembly from the Strangers' Gallery. Then Disraeli and Gladstone were leaders in every fight. Parnell and Churchill had scarcely emerged. Arthur Balfour was learning his way about. Everybody wore top-hats and changed to evening dress for dinner; set speeches were the order of the day, and behaviour was more precise. To-day everything is more free and easy. There are few speeches which could be described as orations, except when somebody dies. Labour men are able to argue and plead their cause on equal terms with any others in the House. Yet we suffer from a kind of self-conscious "inferiority complex." We do not like to be laughed or jeered at: our opponents continually assert we cannot be like them—as if the first and last ideal of a Labour member is to act in such a manner as will secure him the approval of Tories and Liberals! The Speaker has, by dint of his own will, imposed a time limit on back benchers who desire to speak. This innovation would not have been tolerated in the days of Randolph Churchill, Parnell, and other famous fighters. Our men are also continually lectured about behaviour. I have intimately watched the House of Commons for fifty years, and can say with truth that if Labour men offend at all, it is that they are much too inclined to imagine those who claim all the knowledge and intellect, courtesy and good behaviour, really possess what they claim. In addition, the House of Commons has now become not a deliberative assembly, but a machine to register decisions desired by the Government. Nobody is allowed to act independently on any big, vital political issue.

I shall return to this subject a little later on. Meantime I record the fact that together with Dr. Haden Guest, Tom Johnston, Harry Snell, and several others, I helped to form the Commonwealth Labour Group, and have been its chairman since the lamented death of its first chairman, the

late W. S. Royce. This is one of the most important groups in our Party and is destined to exercise great influence on Colonial and Dominion policy. Every Monday during the Session we meet to discuss with representatives from India, the Dominions and Colonies, topics of mutual interest. We are all strongly anti-Imperialist, all agree that the British Labour movement must lead the way in establishing a Commonwealth of Nations—that is, a Federation of Nations coming together as free and equal partners in a Commonwealth representative of all the peoples at present living under the British flag. We maintain that it is possible to create a unity between East and West, and that without bloodshed and violence India may secure as full and complete political and economic freedom as is at present enjoyed by Canada and Australia.

This Commonwealth group is responsible for the initiation of the policy now accepted by the Labour Party of bulk purchase by the State of food and other commodities from the Colonies and Dominions and also from other nations. E. F. Wise, the expert adviser to the Russian Co-operatives, has worked out the necessary practical details and plan for this. Tom Johnston and myself first introduced the scheme to our movement. Our war-time experience taught us what was possible. My experience as a Poor Law Guardian during the war, buying foodstuffs direct from the Government at less than half the price paid by other local authorities and the general public, convinced me that by getting rid of all unnecessary middlemen's profits and eliminating overcharges on freight and marketing, fixing total imports and controlling prices, and especially controlling shipping freights, the cost of food and other necessities could be considerably reduced and producers obtain stabilized prices.

We also tackled the question of Free Trade and Tariff Reform, taking our stand that neither of these shibboleths

could ever be a solution of the poverty problem. We pointed out that in this land, under free trade and free competition, women, children, even babies were exploited; that slums and workhouses, mental asylums, and all social disorders of our day were the accompaniments both of Protection and Free Trade. We also proved that State and Municipal Socialist action was absolutely necessary to curb the terrible social evils which, during the days of Free Trade and Protection, had grown up in the great industrial centres owing to the reckless manner in which trade and industry were carried on. We argued that neither tariffs nor free trade do secure decent standards of life for our people.

Labour conditions in all nations must be hammered out at International Labour conferences by Labour delegates representative of the workers of the world. Such conferences should decide standards of hours and wages, and nations refusing to accept these standards should not be traded with. As an immediate policy for our own nation we demand that goods produced in this land for use within our own borders should not be driven out of the home market by the importation of sweated goods from abroad, and to secure this we would not impose tariffs, but would absolutely prohibit the importation of all goods produced under conditions which compete unfairly with our own standards.

On the question of agriculture and foodstuffs generally we demand a scientific system controlling all imports. We consider it is possible to find out what amount of foodstuffs it is necessary to import each year in order to make up the deficiency from our home-grown crops. The balance needed from abroad should be purchased in bulk and prices fixed and thus secure standard prices for home producers. We believe this policy can best be applied by a joint, co-ordinating effort with co-operative pools of producers

abroad, and in partnership with our own great co-operative movement and municipalities.

This is very roughly the proposal which we have set against the advocates of Free Trade or Protection, and we believe it is a proposal which any Labour or Socialist government will be forced to adopt. There are great difficulties and vested interests to be overcome, but we who believe in International Socialism must overcome these if ever we are to establish equitable arrangements for trade and exchange of goods between the nations of the world.

This work on the Commonwealth Labour Group and work in co-operation with David Graham Pole in connection with the committee we have established for discussing questions connected with India, is the most important I have undertaken apart from the main work connected with the House of Commons. I find myself, however, daily becoming more convinced that the present Parliamentary system is quite out of date. The House of Commons pretends to legislate on behalf of a mighty empire: it also claims to control those ministers at the head of departments which administer empire affairs. It does no such thing. Ministers and departments control everybody. There is and can be no independent thought and action; everything works and moves with the regularity of a machine. Most of us are mere ciphers, voting machines. The only remedy is more devolution, more home rule. Scotland, Wales, and England should each have their own Parliament with a joint committee for matters concerning them all. But we need most of all a Commonwealth Assembly of not more than one hundred members to take the place of the present Imperial Parliament meeting at Westminster. Such a Commonwealth Assembly should take control of all matters common to each part of the Dominion and Colonies—foreign affairs, defence, trade,

commerce, and migration. I do not believe the British Dominions can be held together in any other way. It is ridiculous and absurd to imagine that a mighty federation of free peoples will for ever tolerate their affairs being settled by an assembly of men and women most of whom are much too busy to understand the problems connected with what is described as our far-flung empire. Already South Africa and Ireland are claiming the right to determine for themselves whether or no they will assist, or, in fact, become partners in any sort of way with us in our next war for freedom. Imperial conferences and visits are not enough: we need a similar annual assembly to that which every year meets in Moscow, where directly elected delegates, representing over forty nationalities, meet and discuss matters of interest to all, leaving to each nationality autonomy within its own borders.

I call attention to these matters because the future of our race is involved in them. The East is now well awake: it is a sign of new life that a king of Afghanistan has visited Europe with a queen unveiled. Turkey, instead of accepting decadence and death from the West, is more virile than ever. China, India, Japan, Egypt, all demand freedom and a place in the sun. Unless we can establish co-operation instead of murderous, soul-destroying competition, it is possible the clash of rival interests may once again destroy civilization. In addition, it is little short of a crime that the social and industrial conditions of our own land should be as neglected as they are to-day. No one party is to blame for this. It is the cumbersome, lumbering, picturesque system, excellent for bygone days, which is responsible. This system, with its formalities, black rods, ceremonies, is all very well to mark our descent from other days, but like the London Lord Mayor's show it is of no use or service for practical work. So far as these islands are concerned the present cabinet system must also

be abolished : in its place committees controlling permanent officials must be set up. When we have our Commonwealth Parliament representative of all British possessions, a tiny cabinet representative of all Dominions will carry out the work of controlling external policy. If this policy were adopted, members of three national Parliaments representing England, Wales, and Scotland, would be able to earn their salaries by being enabled to give full and adequate service in return for their money.

All my life I have pinned my faith to political and municipal action plus industrial action for securing Socialism. As the years pass, my faith in these organizations is not quite so strong. I recognize now the need for something bigger than the machinery of democracy. The Labour Party has forged a huge machine which is rapidly becoming a caucus which, because of its size and the work it must do, ruthlessly crushes individual initiative and expression. This is not democracy. Somehow we must find a way whereby individual thought will be allied with organization. The one sure way by which this can be accomplished is by the establishment of the Initiative, Referendum, and Recall. With an educated nation, every man and woman entitled to vote on equal terms, it is possible to reduce the status of elected persons and use them as servants carrying out the will of the people, instead of as now, imposing their will upon the nation. The details of such a scheme cannot be worked out here, but in some towns in America and in Switzerland the voice of the people is heard in a direct manner when laws are made. This method would be easily adaptable if we reformed Parliament as proposed above.

Our Party does not like organized sections : up to the present a certain amount of freedom has been permitted. There has been no discipline such as is imposed by some Communist and Socialist societies. There has, however,

during recent days grown up a demand for tighter and tighter discipline, and pure and simple left-wing movements, even within the Party, are frowned upon. As a consequence the Party, while growing in numbers, does not appear to develop very much personal initiative and enthusiasm and is not encouraged to do so. I know all the difficulties which arise in any movement when small groups or even one individual breaks loose and acts alone, as on occasion myself and others have done. Although this is the case, a House of Commons or a party within which everybody is well drilled and made to act like a machine is destructive of all real progress. Some means must be discovered whereby views of minorities within an organized party may not only be ventilated, but fought for, without those who take such action being charged with disloyalty. The greatest danger I see ahead of the Labour movement is that we may become like churches and imagine our organization is more important than the cause.

Nearing the allotted span of three score years and ten, I find it possible to look back and in some small way reckon up what gains and losses the working classes have passed through during the years of my active social and political life. In many respects life has changed: there is an ever-widening circle of knowledge which finds expression in a thousand ways. Life, however, is not easier for anybody except for the inordinately rich. Ordinary business people, those who with small capital struggle to hold their own in competition with massed capital, find themselves harder and harder pressed in the battle of life. Those who continually assert there is plenty of room at the top for able, brilliant men and women, leave out of account altogether the outstanding fact of modern life, which is that in every class there is much more educated, developed ability than is possible of absorption by modern business and industry. It is this which accounts for the everlasting

gambling in stocks and shares, horse and dog racing, prize fights, and other forms of sport with which gambling is associated, and the increasing number of brilliant, able men who, because of their inability to use their talents in a legitimate manner, find themselves, because of their reckless gambling, prisoners at the criminal courts of the land. In every class there is a demand for a higher standard of life expressed in better homes, better clothes, better food, and more leisure and pleasure. Some people seem willing to sell their souls for these things.

The opening of doors of knowledge to all classes, which people like me support, has also had the demoralizing effect of belittling manual labour. No parents desire their children to become hewers of wood and drawers of water. We all talk, write, and preach about the dignity and glory attaching to a ploughman or a domestic servant, but few of us desire these occupations either for ourselves or those we love. We Labour Members of Parliament, drawn, as most of us are, from the ranks of the workers, find ourselves thrown into the midst of a society which is artificial and quite out of harmony with the conditions which formerly dominated our lives. In the sheltered libraries, reading, and dining rooms of the House of Commons it is a little difficult to realize the class war and all these two words mean in moral, mental, and material degradation to those who remain in the mental and material abyss from which we have, at least for a time, escaped. Parnell forbade his followers to fraternize with or hold friendly relationships with members of other parties. Until the day Mr. Gladstone introduced the first Home Rule Bill, Irish Nationalists behaved in the House of Commons as foreigners and strangers in an alien land, refusing to take part in any of the social amenities of the place. I believe for them this was a right policy and one which it would have been wise for the Labour Party to have adopted. This has not

been the case, and, as a consequence, much of our fighting strength has been frittered away in quite useless efforts to prove that because there is unquestionably good in all of us, men holding widely divergent views can co-operate to produce sane and useful legislation. Exactly the opposite is the truth, and for quite simple reasons: the House of Commons is organized now, as it has been organized for centuries, on a party basis, each side accepting the present social system and disagreeing only as to how this system could be reformed. Keir Hardie, Hyndman, Quelch, and all the early Socialists urged that the Parliamentary machine should be captured, not to perpetuate it as an institution, but solely for the purpose of transforming it into a machine for social reconstruction and revolution. The fact that as we have grown in numbers and strength we have retreated more and more from this conception, and frame our policy and conduct on lines which will fit in with and fit us in with the old traditional party system, is mainly responsible for the competition and some of the meanness which occasionally expresses itself in our movement. My own view is that in the House of Commons Socialists should always remember that we are engaged in war against all the man-made evils of to-day, and that whosoever is not with us is against us, no matter how kind and good of heart some of our opponents may be.

The party system has also become unworkable as a democratic machine; in fact, this machine acts as a steam-roller for the express purpose of compelling members of all parties to vote and act as if there were no such thing as individual ability and judgment. Fifty years ago men belonging to both great parties were accustomed to take an independent line. Joseph Cowen, Randolph Churchill, John Gorst, Edward Jenkins, John Bright, Sir Wilfred Lawson, Henry Labouchere, Mr. Roebuck of Sheffield, to mention only a few, were real thorns in the sides of the

governments they generally supported. Nowadays it is not possible to find such outspoken men in any party, because party discipline has become more machine-like and strict. The young enthusiastic Socialist elected to serve in the House of Commons comes there very soon to discover that he is not expected to act for himself but only to act with others. He is taught on the hard rack of experience what discipline and patience mean in practice. I do not think there is to-day as much opportunity for an individual of my education and upbringing to win either notoriety or fame as there was when I started forty or fifty years ago. In addition to the party machine there is a much larger number of really able people than ever before. The rubbish which some of our aged leading men write concerning what they are pleased to describe as the lack of great men in modern society, is quite ridiculous. There are so many brilliant people in all ranks that we do not notice them as our fathers did. As for achievement, we may all be proud that our day has witnessed the triumph of wireless and television, the conquest of sea and air; that in domestic affairs medicine and surgery have accomplished marvels, and in the House of Commons a miner straight from the pit, an engineer from the workshop, a working-class woman bred and born in Somerset, all hold their own in ministerial offices. One has acted as deputy Speaker of the House of Commons—proving our people are capable and fit to occupy positions needing intelligence, tact, and some knowledge.

There is nothing unusual in this: the upper classes have always recruited blood and ability from those considered beneath them; in our time men sprung from the working classes have served in Liberal and Tory governments and climbed to big positions, carrying on the administration of affairs in order to keep things as they are. Our Socialist movement exists to put into power men and women of all

classes who will assist in the task of transforming capitalism into Socialism.

The trouble in Parliament and within the ordinary walks of life is to use all the available ability to its fullest extent in service on behalf of the Commonwealth. We Labour men and women in Parliament may or may not have our ambitions some day to sit on the Treasury Bench: we may because of the change in our environment find ourselves becoming self-conscious and superior in our attitude towards those who elect us; but we can never be quite sure that out of the abundant raw material from which such as ourselves are drawn, some other man or woman will not emerge and by indomitable perseverance supplant us. So, although occasionally I wonder where the present system is driving us, I feel there is really no ground for apprehension. We must, however, accept the truth that there is not room for all capable people at the top. We should soon topple over as a human society if everybody refused to accept a position at the base. My proposals for reforming the House of Commons would go a long way towards removing the spirit of caste and class which pervades the place. The complete abolition of the cabinet system, the transformation of Parliament from an assembly controlled by a caucus to a working parliament within which all members were of equal status—no premier, no ministers, no honours to be bought, sold, or given away, would in a short time get rid of the meanness and trickery associated with the ambition to become one of the selected persons to hold a seat in governments.

Even so, I confess that so far as I am able to judge, and the experience of my own life and my own failings in both public and private life, convince me that unless our wider knowledge is accompanied by a spiritual, moral development which calls out from each of us the spirit of service, everything we appear to accomplish will be the merest

dead sea fruit. I can say with truth that on any occasion when even indirectly my own personal position or advantage has come up and success has appeared to attend my efforts, the result has been dust and ashes. I know some men in all walks of life seem to thrive and prosper by judging everything by a sort of money standard expressed in terms, sometimes of gold, at other times of power. This cannot be the last word in human development. People say we live in a material age within which "Love is bought and honour sold." It may be so, but we are also living in an age which is demanding with an ever-increasing insistence a fuller life for everybody. It is not possible to live without some work being done which is unskilled and which becomes the merest drudgery. We rightly educate all our children, feed them from the tree of knowledge and wisdom. As the generation now leaving the schools go out into life and discover avenue after avenue closed to them, their education of no account, they will ask the reason why these things should be, and why society should be organized on so senseless a plan as that which gives knowledge and education to the young and adolescent and then, when manhood comes, offers them conditions of life which mean for most of them drudgery, insecurity, and worry for the rest of their lives. I am confident that out of these conditions a new spirit will be born, a spirit which will demand a complete revolution in thought and action—such action as will find its fullest satisfaction in communal service on terms of equality. The educated girl will not mind being a domestic servant if her status is raised and she is treated as the equal in life of the school teacher; a girl from a high school will not mind being a cook if she is considered and treated as the equal of a shorthand typist; educated young men will not mind working in a sewer or on road-making if such work is recognized as of value to the nation equal with that given by those who write invoices or keep ledgers. It must

become possible to give absolute equality of remuneration to all, so as to ensure an equal standard of life as a right to all who serve the nation, no matter in what position they serve. We do not like our children to become manual workers, not because the work is unhealthy—most of it is very healthy—but pay and status determines our attitude of mind. Change these, and boys and girls will flock to outdoor, manual, and other work. When this happens we shall be approaching the time when he who is most intelligent, who has most to give of service to mankind, will be the servant of all; that day when men will as readily serve the nation and its best interests in days of peace as in days of war; when the reward we shall ask will be the reward which fine service and devotion to the common good alone can give—the satisfaction of serving our day and generation to the utmost of our ability.

This will be possible because with the development of education there has also come a tremendous revolution in our means of production. Electricity, gas, petrol, all now used in association with labour-saving machinery, are rapidly reducing the skill of manual workers to zero. The one problem facing mankind is how best to use for the service of the human race the ever-increasing brain power of the masses and the teeming multiplicity of goods and foodstuffs of every description which they are producing. Man must turn his mind to find a solution of this problem or perish. The search and competition for raw materials, and especially for markets, are the root causes of wars and create poverty and unrest at home. When a boy I heard men sing in the streets, "We've got no work to do": there was always the thought that Nature, God, or man had not produced enough. Sixty years of magnificent, scientific development proves this is not true. We suffer because of the superabundance of our possessions. Education does not save us: go among the unemployed, stand in a police-

court and hear the charges levelled against educated young men and women ; sit on a Poor Law relief committee, or at a labour exchange committee, listening to the life stories of old and young who come before such bodies, and we shall soon discover that in our midst there is a mass of unwanted, unrecognized ability running to waste, and that the cry we read of in the New Testament, " No man has need of us," is as true and as widespread as in the days of Jesus.

It is well to remember in a country like ours that revolutions come because reforms are too long postponed. It is inconceivable that an educated working class will for ever tolerate a continual fall in the standard of living or a permanent army of millions of unemployed and others classed as paupers, or that they will submit to the foul housing conditions which at present millions are forced to subsist in. The preventable evils attaching to disease are being slowly overtaken, but the more devastating diseases which afflict civilized nations because of malnutrition, bad housing, and all the accompanying evils attaching to such conditions remain to be dealt with. How many people even knew, till a group of women belonging to all classes told the nation, of the pitiable, preventable suffering and death which thousands of mothers endure at times of childbirth, and the story told of the murder by bad social conditions of hundreds of thousands of children under one year of age. Few of us can realize as we should what a crime against God and Nature these social evils really are. It is not true to say that those who suffer from destitution in all its varying forms are a diminishing part of a diminishing whole. Since the war workhouses, mental asylums, casual wards, and other institutions are becoming increasingly filled up. The old cry for penal measures against the poor and the down-and-outs is again heard in the land. At the same time writers strive to prove that because more money is spent, and certain amenities of life are now avail-

able for the poor, all must be well. It is true the masses appear to be better dressed and the girls of the working class dress prettily and daintily: this, however, is but a superficial view. It is not certain that the shoddy cloth and materials which come to us from Batley and Morley, Huddersfield and Dewsbury, is more endurable and serviceable than the rough cloth fustian and corduroy worn when I was young; but what is a great gain is the increased and ever-increasing value of personality. The spirit of subserviency is dying out: "Jack is as good as his master" is not merely a saying, but is finding expression in an added dignity to human life.

It is this which makes poverty, pauperism, and penury so unendurable. Nowadays many a young girl or boy will starve rather than appear badly dressed or of slovenly appearance. There is lots to cheer us, especially in the growing pride in one's body and the care and attention given to appearance. There is hope for the future again in the realm of sport in which the masses take an ever-increasing interest. It is true many, many thousands watch matches of various kinds at the week-ends. It is also true a much larger number crowd the all too few open spaces and playing fields and themselves take part in the healthy sports which tend to keep mind and body virile and healthy. We must, however, never forget that the more people value life and what life can give, the more they will acutely feel the pressure of unemployment and uncertainty of the future than did their fathers who could neither read nor write and for whom life was admittedly merely one of work and sleep. The working classes also travel more now than formerly. This is all to the good: the motor omnibuses which now go from village to village and town to town will very soon brighten up life for land and other workers who live far from the madding crowds. Saturday half-holidays, bank holidays, and summer holidays are part of our

ordinary life and taken as a necessity by millions who, had they lived fifty years ago, would never have dreamed that such pleasures would ever be theirs. All holidays are better spent than when first introduced. We are a more sober people and take our pleasures in more rational, sensible ways than by getting drunk and just shouting and screaming smutty songs. I honestly believe the masses of our people are, taken as a whole, at an infinitely higher standard of general culture and intelligence than most upper-class people enjoyed a century ago. We are also cleaner, tidier, and more truly moral. Elementary day schools have done more than anything else to refine and make splendid our young people. I am not blind to all that is evil in our midst, but it would be wrong not to record the fact that the teachers who organize and control our schools are among the very finest public servants our nation possesses. The amount of extra voluntary unpaid work, organizing school sports, concerts, visits, long country holidays of one or two weeks, all helps to develop the minds of those committed to their care and gives a higher and higher standard of personal value. Some day the national education authority will organize long visits to foreign lands, bringing American, French, German, and other foreign children here for long periods while ours take their places abroad. We shall destroy the spirit of war when the children of the world mix with each other and learn how much alike we all are. I like to believe the British race will so educate and organize its youth that in days to come we shall be much too cosmopolitan, much too Christian ever to fight.

But we must keep our minds on the economic situation and all the time strive to secure economic security. We must somehow, when educating children in book-learning, get into their minds the fact that all useful labour is equally honourable; that men and women who plough the fields,

milk the cows, cleanse our streets, dig our coal, cook our food, or scrub a house are of equal importance and value with those who sit in offices writing in books or adding figures; we must educate them to know and understand that clean clothes, healthy homes, decent food are as much necessities of life for manual or hand workers as for others.

The great days for mankind are not behind but ahead of us. We are journeying to the promised land, not away from it. Ignorance is the enemy of progress: in every direction this enemy is being fought. The days of pure and simple individualism are past and gone. No man liveth to himself or dieth to himself. We are interdependent upon each other. This is as true of nations as of individuals. How many more years will pass before mankind will reach the goal of human emancipation from preventable evils, no man can say, but thought and action are moving on and will move all the faster when those who speak and write on behalf of morals and religion cease quarrelling about a future life and concentrate on the age-long task of bringing Christ's Kingdom of Joy and Peace into the lives of men and women here and now. It may be mankind will never altogether escape from trouble, but we can and shall escape from troubling. We must learn truth I first heard from Joseph Fels: "What I gain I lose, what I give I gain." This only means that we must turn our thoughts to the teachings of those we think of as saints and martyrs, those who are called the unpractical ones, but whose lives and works do follow them because they taught that the fulfilment of life was service of God through service of man. We shall learn this the more we take part in public affairs and understand that social activities connected with wages, housing, unemployment, status, and conditions of life of the workers very intimately concern the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

My wife, with me, has almost reached the allotted span

of threescore years and ten. If we live a few years longer we shall see our fiftieth wedding anniversary. It is a long way back to 1880 and much has happened which brings memories sweet and bitter. Our family has been a big one. For a time we brought up my two young brothers and later had the charge of three grandchildren, so our total ran up to seventeen in all. It is not possible for anybody looking back over life to say what they would have left undone. I am sure I have made many, many mistakes: even so, why mourn over what is past. We live each hour and day at a time; there is never any sense in looking over one's shoulder at the ghosts of what might have been. My faith is with my people, and these are the poor who have no friends but themselves. Finishing this story of my own part in the life of my day and generation, so far as it has gone, my heart is full of joy and gratitude that it has been permitted that I should stand in with those who work for a new day. Years ago, in company with other boys and girls and my wife, walking the silent streets of the city of London by night, we together talked and dreamed of a future when the world of man would be a world of beauty, of love, and of joy. Foolish, rather stupid dreamers you will say. I think otherwise. During our lives many of our dreams have come true. We both have faith that our nation, the British people, blessed with all the forms of democracy, men and women equal as citizens, will peacefully win the new freedom, and we believe this will happen because we two frail people whose lives have been made up of joy and sorrow, mistakes and blunders, together with millions of other people, worked and toiled to give our children and their children the blessings of education, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; and in doing this we are confident that we have gained more of true satisfaction, more of the real joy of life through participation in the struggles on behalf of impersonal causes than would

have been possible under any other conditions. I do not claim we have ever attained to financial independence: we have not; but we have always maintained independence of thought and action, and though at times the winds of adversity with tempestuous force have blown across our path as if determined to overwhelm us, we can with truth say it is good to have lived, good to have been privileged to be soldiers in the army of the workers, engaged in the task of overcoming ignorance and establishing the Kingdom of Love.

We shall never forget the splendid comradeship of the poor among whom our lives have been spent, because these so-called poor are richest in the abundance of their love and goodwill. We like to think that in days to come, when the sordid poverty of our day is over and past, those who come after us will read the story of Poplarism and recognize that in days when to be destitute and poor was almost a crime, some poor men and women refused to accept that doctrine and together proclaimed the truth that all men were not only born equal, but were also possessed of the inalienable right to share in the products of their labour; and, greatest of all, I hope some who follow us will understand that we, poor and unlettered as we are in Poplar, also possess the vision that society is made up of women and men, that all peoples of all races, climes, and tongues are of equal value in the sight of God; that there is no God of the British, but one Father or Creator of the human race, and because this is so, all wars are civil wars—wars between brothers—and consequently we have always struggled for peace, peace not imposed but accepted because it must and will be based on truth and justice, love and brotherhood. The insane strife between Communists and Socialists, between right and left wings of the Labour movement, will pass, and out of the discords of our day the movement which many as yet have only dreamed of will become a

reality, because we shall have discovered that the only test for any of us is not what we say but what we are, not our life's creed but our life's work. This is the only thing worth while. I repeat, my faith is in the common people, those unknown millions on whose toil and labour we all depend for everything worth while which comes to us in our daily life. These millions are waking: when at last they really arise they will make short work of all who strive to divide and distract them by mere words and by their own work and organization will lead themselves into the promised land of Socialism.

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