'ENGLAND, ARISE!'

By the same Author

History

THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEA IN FRANCE

Fiction

THE TESTAMENT OF DOMINIC BURLEIGH

AGAINST THE SUN

THE STRANGER: AN ADVENTURE AMONG THE ENGLISH

Verse

SCHOOLBOYS AND EXILES

YEARS OF PEACE

'England, Arise!'

A Study of the Pioneering Days of the Labour Movement

BY

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To all those who, in this cause, have sacrificed themselves without thought of reward

FOREWORD

THIS book is primarily a study of the methods and the human elements of a great political movement; of its adventures, humours, and martyrdoms; a study, it is hoped, which, besides portraying a vivid and significant episode, may throw some light upon the nature of the complex Labour Movement of to-day. For the study of political forces is apt to be directed too exclusively to their objects. But for those who wish to understand a great movement such as this, its methods and its personnel are perhaps even more important. It is with these, at least, that I have been chiefly concerned.

I have been for a considerable number of years on the inside of the present Labour Movement, and I could not study the records without sympathy for the story they revealed, but as a historian I have done my best to take a sufficiently detached view of the facts. A number of those who played considerable parts in this adventure are still alive, and some of them would, no doubt, have been kind enough to allow me to draw upon their personal recollections. But as I pursued my task I found that there exists now such a wealth of original literary sources for this story that extensive recourse to personal reminiscence was no longer indispensable, while it might, I thought, contribute difficulties of its own. With the vividness of these written accounts, by eye-witnesses or even protagonists of this or that aspect of the Move-

ment, I naturally cannot hope to compete. But the time seems to have arrived when an attempt should be begun to present the whole astonishing episode more objectively and comprehensively as a complete and reasoned historical picture.

The title of the book is taken from Edward Carpenter's celebrated Socialist song, which begins:

England, arise! The long, long night is over,
Faint in the East behold the dawn appear.

The world-famous *Red Flag* was written to express the aspirations of revolutionary movements the whole world over. *England Arise*, which now rivals *The Red Flag* in popularity in the British Labour Movement, was composed to celebrate the first victories of the new and native British Socialism. As a large part of the theme of this book is the failure of imported methods of Socialist propaganda and the emergence and triumph of a characteristic native Movement, this title (the suggestion of which I owe to my friend, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, M.P.) seems singularly appropriate.

A bibliography will be found at the end of this book. It is far from including all the sources I have examined, but it contains a full list of all the books, pamphlets and periodicals to which references occur in the footnotes and on which, accordingly, the narrative is actually based. I have to thank particularly Mr. Francis Johnson of *The New Leader* for his kindness in allowing me to examine not only the files of the old *Labour Leader*, but a partially unpublished fragment of a diary of Keir Hardie's, and Mr. J. S. Middleton, Assistant-Secretary of the Labour Party, whose knowledge of the history of

the Labour Movement is immense and who not only lent me several little-known books and pamphlets, but generously read through the manuscript of this work, and made a number of valuable suggestions.

G. E.

'ENGLAND, ARISE!'

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

At the beginning of 1881 Victorian England seemed to bask in a mellow and still unshadowed prosperity. 'Britain as a whole never was more tranquil and happy' pronounced the *Spectator* in the following summer. It appeared indeed a pleasant and a tranquil scene and seemed to present every sign of permanence. The grandfathers of these merchants and lawyers, it is true, had seen the coming of the machine shake the foundations of their England. Their fathers had wondered for a while what might not come of railways. Their sons would see the Atlantic flown. But just now the old changes lay far behind and it needed more than a prophet to foresee those which were to come. Something of a prophet too perhaps to perceive that all the possible consequences of those now long familiar miracles were by no means yet exhausted.

Long ago, too, there had been machine-breaking and rick-burning, regrettable accompaniments of what nobody yet had been taught to speak of as the Industrial Revolution. Other almost equally regrettable accompaniments one read of, incredibly long hours and low wages and what forgotten agitators had called 'child-slavery'; undeniable evils which, it was generally assumed, had now disappeared or were disappearing as fast as any sensible person could expect. There had been violent

agitation, of course, for some time before the passing of the great Reform Act of 1832. History related that a bishop had seen his palace destroyed by a ruffianly mob and that more than one town hall had gone up in flames. (When Disraeli, however, had enfranchised the artisans fourteen years ago the only serious sacrifice to public excitement had been some railings in Hyde Park.) History had to tell also – not very effectively perhaps, for events later than the battle of Waterloo were not included in any educational curriculum – of the alarming Chartist agitation of the eighteen-thirties and eighteen-forties, and the revolutionary programme in which it actually demanded vote by ballot, payment of Members of Parliament and the suffrage for adult persons of either sex, which, as Lord Macaulay had pointed out at the time, was 'utterly incompatible with the very existence of civilisation.'

But all this too had long been virtually forgotten by everyone, except perhaps by a few elderly and unrepentant ex-Chartists who still cherished in secret senile dreams of 'the coming triumph of the people' and other strange-sounding phrases with which the perorations of Oastler or Stevens or Feargus O'Connor, now scarcely even names to the English public, had once familiarised them. But more than thirty years had passed since the latest echo of Chartism, the last formidable agitation, had died away; and, for the prosperous, they had been comfortable and tranquil years. Thanks to the machines and thanks to 1832, the merchant and manufacturing middle classes had come into their own. In painting, in literature, in architecture and household decoration they imposed the fashions. In the determining of state policy theirs was the last word. Even in the House of

Commons itself, which had still some claims to be considered the best club in the world, they had almost lost their diffidence and class-consciousness among the landed gentry, and the complicated business of setting up Disraeli as a country gentleman, which was courageously undertaken by some members of his party as soon as it was realised that he must inevitably become its leader, would hardly have been thought indispensable had he been commencing, instead of, in every sense, ending, his career in 1881. For everywhere, except in Society, the landowners had had their day. And even in Society they were steadily coming to terms. For ever since the Repeal of the Corn Laws had brought down the rent-rolls the noblest landowner if he owned nothing but the countryside, and wished his family to continue to own it, had begun to find himself compelled either to go, or to marry, into Business.

While as for the working-classes, for more than thirty years they had taken scarcely any interest in politics, to the barely concealed satisfaction of the overwhelming majority of politicians. The prosperous were almost completely ignorant of the real condition of the poor. Not for eight years yet would Charles Booth publish the first results of his labours and disclose the fact that thirty per cent. of the population of London lived below the level of bare subsistence.* Meanwhile, Trade Unionism, which, for a few months after 1832, in the Owenite Grand National Consolidated Trades Union had seemed to be heading, with its wild talk of co-operative millenniums and general strikes, directly for revolution, had long since confined itself to the aristocracy of Labour and settled reassuringly down into

* See pp. 145–146.

what could often hardly be distinguished from a network of respectable Benefit or Friendly Societies. There had been, it is true, a transient alarm in the year 1866 when a disquieting series of strikes and lock-outs had culminated in the explosion of a can of gunpowder in a workman's house in Sheffield, an outrage which, since no one proved able to discover its authors, was everywhere ascribed to Trade Unionists. Violence however had not re-appeared and the alarm which it had caused had been almost forgotten. Yet the incident had not been without significant consequences. A Royal Commission had inquired into Trade Unionism and after prolonged labours had issued what to many seemed a disappointingly inconclusive report. That this report neither condemned Trade Unionism nor even recommended that its powers should be diminished was recognised to be largely due to the efforts of Frederic Harrison, the Positivist, Professor E. S. Beesly and Thomas Hughes, M.P., a muscular Christian, educated under Dr. Arnold and author of a school story, about Dr. Arnold and muscular Christianity, which became a best-seller. That members of the upper middle class should be found among the working-men's leaders appeared to some to be a surprising precedent, but there seemed no likelihood that it would be followed.

In 1867, too, had come Disraeli's adventurous extension of the franchise to the working-classes of the towns. There had been considerable misgivings, no doubt, and Thomas Carlyle had denounced all and sundry in his richest Old Testament vein for what he chose to call the 'shooting of Niagara' but the general public had been speedily reassured on finding that the familiar alternation of Conservative and Liberal governments had proceeded

apparently entirely unaffected, and had continued, after debates in which even alarmists had been able to detect no novel note, to give birth to precisely the same sort of legislation. The place of the ancient Whig Party, with its august family traditions, had, it is true, since this 1867 pretty obviously been taken by the new Liberal Party with the emotional Gladstone at its head and a tail of even more Radical and equivocal disciples of Cobden and Bright. But the Radicals had scarcely any closer affiliations with the newly enfranchised classes than had the Conservatives. Cobden and Bright, though they were sometimes suspected of being Republican, were too palpably racy of the commercial middle classes, on whose ideals indeed their whole political outlook had always been based, to be mistaken for heralds of the entry of novel forces into public life. Indeed they too had no suspicion of what was brewing. Speaking at Glasgow in 1883, Bright expressed the opinion that there were no issues left upon which great conflicts were likely to arise. 'Perhaps,' he added, 'we shall soon be a happy company in which we have hardly anything to disagree about.' (It is true that he had just received the freedom of the city and may have felt accordingly disposed to prophecy smooth things, but the opinion is characteristic.)* And when in 1874 the second General Election after Disraeli's leap in the dark had given his party the first genuine majority it had obtained for thirty years, it seemed apparent that not only were the working-classes not revolutionary, they were Conservative.

And yet, altogether unobserved by contemporaries, there had already passed across the political horizon a cloud no bigger, indeed far, far smaller, than a man's

* *Times*, March 25, 1883.

hand. The Trade Unions had violently resented a Criminal Law Amendment Act passed in restraint of Trade Societies by Gladstone's government in 1871. At three by-elections before 1874 under the auspices of a Labour Representation League they had even put forward their own candidates against those of the two Parties. They made no claim to possess a policy distinct from that of the Parties. They desired merely, as the name of the League implied, to see Liberal (or Conservative) working-men represented by Liberal (or Conservative) working-men.

Naturally they were not successful, except indeed in irritating the Liberals, and the three 'Labour' representatives who had been elected in 1880 were 'Labour' in no significant sense. None the less these three candidates were generally, if inaccurately, spoken of as a 'Third Party,' and in *The Beehive*, a Trade Union organ, in 1873 Professor Beesly wrote these words: 'I trust that such a third party will appear in every large town in England at the next General Election even though the result should be a Parliament of six hundred and fifty Boords.* Everything must have a beginning, and workmen have waited so long for justice that seven years of Tory Government will seem a trifling addition to the sum total of their endurance if it is a necessary preliminary to the enforcement of their claims.' The Professor's wish was not to be gratified in 1874 (although two 'Labour' candidates were returned in that year). But his words are not unmemorable. 'Everything must have a beginning,' he had written and, in view of the events upon which he was commenting, it does seem that a cloud,

* The successful Conservative candidate at the Greenwich by-election in 1873.

however transient and inconspicuous, was passing across the horizon.

II

If, then, as far as eye could judge, all visible political currents continued unquestionably tranquil – save indeed in Ireland, and in Ireland one had learnt not to expect tranquillity, if there seemed in retrospect to have not been very much Niagara even about the events of 1867, was there after all even in the more subterranean tendencies of literature or speculation, anything which, had some accident directed its attention to literature or speculation, need have alarmed polite society in the England of 1881? It scarcely seemed so. In the United States, it was true, two years before, a certain Henry George had published his *Progress and Poverty*, a work which bitterly denounced the exclusion of the people from the land and, surprisingly enough, would soon achieve a wide popularity in this country. But though Henry George assailed landlordism he assailed nothing else, advocating simultaneously the socialisation of land values and the suppression of those who proposed the socialisation of anything else. Moreover Henry George was a foreigner. It was in fact not until 1882, a year after our present date, that his influence reached the United Kingdom. In that year he toured the country, lecturing, and *Progress and Poverty* began to be widely read. His doctrines, temporarily at any rate, would convert many and stir yet more to thought.

'One evening in the early 'eighties' a certain George Bernard Shaw, of whom more is to be heard

in this history, would write, 'I found myself . . . in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, listening to an American finishing a speech on the land question. I knew he was an American because he pronounced "necessarily"– a favourite word of his – with the accent on the third syllable instead of the first . . . and because he spoke of Liberty, Justice, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth century superstitions; and because he explained with great simplicity and sincerity the views of the Creator who had gone completely out of fashion in London in the previous decade and had not been heard of there since. . . . I noticed, also, that he was a born orator, and that he had small, plump, pretty hands. . . .' And he would add 'When I was swept into the great Socialist revival of 1883, I found that five-sixths of those who were swept in with me had been converted by Henry George. This fact would have been far more widely acknowledged had it not been that it was not possible for us to stop where Henry George stopped. . . . Thus George actually felt bound to attack the Socialism he had created and the moment the antagonism was declared and to be a Georgite meant to be an anti-Socialist, some of the Socialists whom he had converted became ashamed of their origin and concealed it; whilst others, including myself, had to fight hard against the Single Tax propaganda.'

On the Continent, likewise, there were men who proclaimed themselves Socialists and publicly advocated, it seemed, 'red ruin and the breaking up of laws.' Socialists, one gathered, were concerned not so much with speculation as with bombs. 'Socialism! Then blow

us up, blow us up! There's nothing left for it but that' was the despairing cry of Dr. Warre, then headmaster of Eton, when Henry Salt, one of his assistant-masters, broke to him the news of his conversion. Also it was thirty years and more since men had publicly called themselves Socialists in England; and by those who now remembered anything of that distant episode it was felt that by adopting the strange and apparently contradictory title of 'Christian Socialist' that small brotherhood had been dressing up a trifle unnecessarily in wolf's clothing. For though they had denounced the economic organisation of Society they had made no constructive proposals, save for workmen's co-operation. Of their best known members had not Charles Kingsley, as well as writing several unexceptionable tales for children, afterwards became a Professor of History, a Canon of Westminster and chaplain to Queen Victoria? While Frederick Denison Maurice, another parson, although one could not feel so sure about him – he had been asked to resign for heterodoxy by the Council of King's College, London – had become Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge. Among immediate followers, moreover, had been a peer and two men who had become successively Deans of Westminster. Unpractical idealists, it went without saying, these men must have been, unguarded of speech and pen too, no doubt, in their younger days – the *Quarterly Review* had in fact reviewed Kingsley's *Alton Locke* in conjunction with some French Communist pamphlets as 'Revolutionary Literature' – yet they could hardly have been bomb-throwers. It seemed then that 'Socialist' had not meant in England what it seemed to mean in Europe. And in any case there were no Socialists in England now.

Professor Ruskin, whose writing upon aesthetic subjects was so much admired, had strayed occasionally, as notably in his *Unto This Last* and his *Munera Pulveris*, into economics, and in this field, it was true, some of his conclusions were said to have been gravely unorthodox and had been publicly denounced – which only made it all the clearer that even if one respected an art critic's opinion upon art one need pay no serious attention to his opinions upon anything else. After all, such brief outbursts of social denunciation, couched usually in a somewhat biblical vein – and they were to be found in the writings of Charles Dickens and of Cardinal Newman, they were to be found almost to excess in the writings of Carlyle – were to be expected, almost perhaps in a sense to be welcomed. For at least they served as healthy reminders of what was universally agreed – that, economically as in other ways, society was not perfect; nor was there any risk of their entailing dangerous practical consequences, it being equally generally agreed that any radical attempt to efface the inevitable inequalities of Society must involve in ruin the much that was good in it without even disposing of the little that was bad. 'Not perfect, but in a workaday world the best possible,' such was the received opinion as to the economic constitution of Society in 1881, a verdict which befitted a nation of realists and was precisely similar to that pronounced by the Iron Duke upon its much more ancient political constitution a few months before this latter disappeared for ever amidst almost universal rejoicing. Moreover, of the essential inoffensiveness of such literary criticism of Society what more reassuring example was to be found than that of Disraeli himself, whose early novels had appeared to advance a comprehensive and almost

Utopian social programme, which, when he obtained power, he had shown no inclination whatever to carry out? And if the criticism of the amateur economists had shown itself to be harmless, the professional economists had not criticised. For Mill, although he had experienced misgivings at the close of his career, was remembered for his earlier orthodoxy rather than for his later misgivings, while as for Professor Cairns and Professor Marshall they had shewn that they could be relied upon to experience no misgivings whatever.

Profound tranquillity! The old civilisation of the fields was no more and the rule of the feudal classes had passed with it. The new civilisation of the machine was firmly established and every symptom in politics and literature seemed to forecast a long and prosperous reign for the new rulers, the lords of counting house, factory and Exchange. Charles Booth with that formidable thirty per cent. of his was still undreamed of. The new system seemed to have outlived its growing pains – Reform-agitations, King Ludds, Owenism, Chartism, the 'hungry forties' – and the whole English landscape, social, economic and political, now wore an impressive air of permanence. In the heart of an era which to future ages will appear as one continuous transformation, unique both in extent and in rapidity, an unbroken dislimning of the national landscape, these men lived secure. And why, after all, should they not? Were not all the auguries fair, or at least all the auguries which any competent observer could reasonably be expected to admit into his calculations? There was on the whole so little he need overlook and that little so inconspicuous.

It is true that, as we have seen, there had been 'Labour' candidates, but there was no evidence that Labour representation, if it ever came about, would mean Labour politics. Few indeed of the English members even of the defunct International Working Men's Association knew anything of 'Socialism.'

It is true, too, that there was a force at work in politics, inconspicuous as yet, but of incalculable importance. The best known of the Factory Acts was already more than thirty years old. But no one had as yet clearly affixed to it, or to the legislation which had followed in the same collectivist vein, the label 'State Socialism,' and in the absence of such a label its incalculable implications might well be overlooked by our competent observer of 1881. Yet even in the eighteen-forties Lord Melbourne (of all people) seems to have had his suspicions. At any rate he had said of Lord Shaftesbury, the blameless and evangelical Conservative chiefly responsible for the great Act of 1847, 'He is the greatest Jacobin in your Majesty's dominions.' 'We are all Socialists nowadays,' a Liberal statesman would exclaim towards the end of the century, meaning that Socialism, as collective interference or ownership, was in the air and that both historic parties were already publicly committed to its principles. The Combination Act of 1875, the Trade Union Acts of 1871-6, the Arbitration Acts beginning in 1867, the Education Act of 1870, the Sanitary code of 1875, the growth of municipal trading since 1850, to take but a few examples, were the work of both Conservative and Liberal Governments, and all, as Professor Dicey has pointed out in a memorable chapter, were openly

Socialistic in tendency. As early as 1881, John Morley would write in his *Life of Cobden* '. . . we find the rather amazing result that in the country where Socialism has been less talked about than (*sic*) any other country in Europe, its principles have been most extensively applied.' Socialism, like Benthamism in the first half of the century, was plainly imposing itself even upon its professed opponents. It is thus a fact of fundamental importance that before the Socialist campaign opened it had in a sense been won. The question at issue could never now be, as in the first half of the century it must have been, Shall there be Socialism? It could only be now, How much Socialism shall there be? But Englishmen are apt to be more alarmed by a label than by that to which the label is affixed, and would accordingly for a long while yet tolerate Socialist legislation only if it was not called Socialism and was imposed upon them by anti-Socialists. Thus the task before the agitators who would openly proclaim themselves and their creed would be scarcely any the less formidable. None the less it is this ubiquitous, if unavowed, permeation by Socialism of the political air, the fact that Socialism was now, as Benthamite Individualism had once been, the one living political principle, which explains a phenomenon by which the early Socialist pioneers were greatly perplexed – the alarmed seriousness with which they were taken by their contemporaries. When they could scarcely number their adherents in hundreds, the Press would estimate their strength in tens of thousands, and it proclaimed the Socialist menace a cause for public alarm when the only Socialist society in existence had not nearly five hundred members and depended upon a dozen of them for all sustained and serious propaganda.

It is true also that already for more than thirty years an exiled Prussian Jew, fierce-eyed and shaggy, had been haunting the reading-room of the British Museum. But how was our observer, even if he had heard of those interminable labours, to suspect that they were yet to make the Museum-reader's name, though not his work, a familiar household word spoken with reverence or dread by almost as many millions as is Buddha's or Mahommed's? The first volume of *Das Kapital* had been published, but in German. In Russia and in Germany the influence of Marx was already pivotal: in England he was virtually unknown. A prolonged search among the most revolutionary circles in London would have unearthed a few ill-printed translations of the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847, but beyond this no writings by Marx, nor, for that matter, any other Socialist works in English were to be procured. Once or twice within the last few years – for in the political, as in the scientific, world discoveries never come unheralded – obscure idealists had published ill-printed pamphlets or even shortlived provincial journals* to proclaim their own confused notions of what they called Socialism, but no one had troubled to buy them, much less to read them.

On the whole then in 1881 there were altogether sufficient reasons for expecting the present tranquillity of the English scene to be indefinitely prolonged. Yet

* E.g. *The Socialist* of which six monthly numbers appeared, July—December, 1877, published in Sheffield by William Harrison Riley, who had previously published *The International Herald*, for a time the voice of the English section of the International Working Men's Association, and who had been one of its few members who embraced some sort of Socialism.

one individual at least, a certain Henry Mayers Hyndman, held other views.*

IV

This Hyndman was now thirty-eight and had prosperous business interests. He had been born in Hyde Park Square, was a Cambridge man, an Etonian and the son of an Etonian and had played cricket for Sussex; yet he did not seem to have made full use of his opportunities. Somehow or other he seemed to have spent his life consistently looking for trouble. He had helped to improvise field-dressings for the wounded with Garibaldi's Thousand (and had been violently sick thereafter, for he had an inconvenient 'horror of blood and broken bones'); he had investigated politics and journalism in Australia, escaped death by a hair's breadth in a hurricane in Polynesia, and assisted involuntarily at a Mormon shooting-on-sight in Salt Lake City. In 1880 we find him on board a Cunarder poring over the French edition of Marx's *Capital* during a business expedition to the United States. The gigantic, erudite and essentially foreign manifesto came to him with the force of a revelation. Was it not, for one thing, an elaborate and pitiless exposure of that bourgeoisie against whose code and habits Hyndman's whole career had so far been an unconscious revolt. Perhaps indeed all his previous adventures had been an instinctive search for trouble on the grand, impersonal scale. At any rate, arrived in the States, with Marx in his portmanteau and in his head a vivid impression of class antagonism and Irish conspira-

* Henderson, 152-4. Salt, 65. Raven, 170. Dicey vii. Morley i, 302–3. Hyndman, *Record*, 224. Bryher, 14–15.

cies a-brewing in the New World, he scented trouble ahead of him – 'economic, social, and political trouble in the coming time.' The adventurous Mr. Hyndman was, moreover, a political journalist with a considerable reputation. He had been a friend of Mazzini and Meredith and, attracted to the subject by the unsuccessful campaign to secure the return of the Berar provinces to the Nizam of Hyderabad, in which he had played an important part, he had set himself to study minutely the facts of British rule in India. After wading indefatigably through an ocean of bluebooks he had expressed his views in a series of articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Nineteenth Century* which created a considerable sensation and earned him an invitation from its chairman to appear before the House of Commons' Committee on India then sitting, on the ground that he evidently knew much more about Indian finance than any of the witnesses who had so far appeared before it. There had even seemed every prospect – or so he thought – of his policy being officially adopted by the Conservative Party. Accordingly once again on his return from the States he determined to see if public opinion could be aroused. And on January the first, 1881, his article 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch,' appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*. It was a memorable title to have chosen for New Year's Day, 1881. 'At a period such as ours anything may happen' he wrote. He had always been quick to sympathise with the oppressed in every quarter of the globe, and now, having read Marx, he had a creed – ready made. No wonder that, true to his adventurous record, he had already resolved to play what part he could in himself stirring up the 'trouble, economic, social and political,' which he foresaw and indeed believed to be desirable.

A resolute person, this Hyndman, determined to have his way, but perhaps not very easy to work with.*

V

One day in the early weeks of 1881 Mr. Hyndman might have been seen making his way down Curzon Street, attired in the impeccable frock-coat in which a certain George Bernard Shaw, shortly to be a fellow-agitator, was soon to assert that he must have been born. The garment on this occasion may have concealed inward misgivings unusual with its wearer. For he was about to be received, for the first time, by Lord Beaconsfield. More than this, it was his firm resolve to lay before that aged statesman, recently more or less retired but still prodigiously influential, the whole of his plans for the regeneration of Britain and the British Empire. It was in some ways an intimidating enterprise, this highly symbolic interview – or would have been for one more susceptible than Hyndman to this sort of intimidation; for at the end of his unique career, whatever he may have been at its outset, Lord Beaconsfield could certainly not be described as an idealist. The old warrior, looking back from the verge of the grave upon the long struggle of 'that damned Jew' to reach the inner circles of the powerful, and upon all that he had sardonically observed since he reached them, could hardly be expected to be capable of much sympathy either for Marxian Utopias or for street-corner agitation. His capacity for satiric epigram moreover was notorious.

All this, together with the main headings of his

* Hyndman, *Record*, chaps. i-iii, vii, x, xii, xiii. *Nineteenth Century* Jan. 1881.

proposals and some of the actual phraseology in which they were soon to be incorporated in his *England for All*, was doubtless passing through Mr. Hyndman's mind as he rang the front door bell in Curzon Street. A formidable interview maybe, and yet – he had his reasons. There were the novels which Lord Beaconsfield had written thirty years ago, for one thing, with their almost revolutionary idealism. Hyndman had been in close contact with some of the leaders of the Conservative Party, then still in power, and had they not almost officially accepted from him a new policy for the extension of self-government in India? Again, what alternative was there, if one desired some influential impetus for one's schemes, some more speedy alternative to mere unassisted street-corner demagogy? Obviously, Gladstone. But although he would still have called himself no more than an advanced Radical, Hyndman had long been conscious of a profound mistrust both of Gladstone and of his Liberal followers. A mistrust, it must be added, which was fully reciprocated by the Liberals, who regarded him as an 'eccentric political free-lance who was working in the Tory interests.' Perhaps indeed with Hyndman it was an aversion more deep-seated than mere mistrust, an aversion cherished ever since Charles Kingsley's day by a goodly proportion of such of the gentlemen of England as have devoted themselves to working-class and Socialist agitation. 'The Church, the gentleman and the workman against the shopkeepers and the Manchester School,' was Kingsley's summary of the political struggle. It had been scarcely distinguishable from the battlecries of the Young Englanders, Disraeli's Tory Democrats. In the forties indeed the dividing line between Christian Socialist and Tory

Democrat had been sometimes almost imperceptible, and Lord Goderich had not been alone in attaching himself simultaneously to both groups. There seemed ample reason, then, historical and political as well as personal, for the appeal to Lord Beaconsfield. Conservatives and Socialists had been at one in the past in their denunciation of *laissez-faire*, and although there were apparently no Socialists left to-day, had not the Socialist principle of collective interference made remarkable headway? Was there not state education, a state post office, a state factory code? Why then should not a resolute state policy of social improvement be backed by a new Conservatism – with *Sybil* as its Bible? Unfortunately there were obstacles to any project of this kind more formidable even than Lord Beaconsfield's age, infirmity and cynical detachment. For when the Young England Conservatives had denounced the commercialism of the newly powerful middle classes in the eighteen-forties theirs had been a 'Country Party,' all squire and parson, and almost uncontaminated by the new social elements; whereas since 1867 the merchant class which the old Conservative Party had assailed had been pouring with ever-increasing rapidity into the new Conservative Party, which, now that Palmerston and the Whigs were no more, was ranging itself against the new Liberalism of Gladstone, Cobden, and the Nonconformist chapels. Disraeli had denounced the middle classes, Beaconsfield ennobled them. None the less it was with undaunted bearing that Hyndman deposited his silk hat in the hall at number nineteen Curzon Street and was ushered upstairs to endeavour to convert Lord Beaconsfield to the ideals of Lord Beaconsfield's youth.

He found himself in two apartments of moderate size

with folding-doors thrown open between them. The furniture was upholstered in red damask, the curtains and wallpaper were of red and gold. Somewhere invisible beyond these discreetly curtained windows weltered the tragic thirty per cent. Against the glowing oriental background of the Conservative leader's apartment the Socialist Etonian in his intensely British frock-coat planted himself solidly. After a brief pause a door opened and there advanced painfully a strange figure in a long red gabardine. The deeply-lined yellow face with the curl plastered down over the forehead and the protruding lower lip was almost deathly in its masklike impassiveness. One eye was closed and the other only partially open. Lord Beaconsfield lowered himself slowly on to a couch near the fireplace and silently motioned his visitor to an armchair near-by. The visitor paused expectantly but Lord Beaconsfield remained silent, and with a bizarre sensation of addressing himself to some eastern idol – so remote, so profoundly impassive was that deeply-graven countenance – Hyndman plunged to the assault.

But not immediately to the point. He opened diplomatically with Russia, intimating that it was to be regretted that Lord Beaconsfield's Russian policy had received a set-back. The figure on the settee gravely inclined its head but did not speak. The fall of Lord Beaconsfield's Government, pursued Hyndman, was to be regretted likewise for the sake of India. Another silent inclination from the settee. The monologue now struck boldly at its objective. He had looked forward, explained Hyndman, to seeing some such social policy embarked upon as was adumbrated in Lord Beaconsfield's early novels. It could come only from the Conservatives, for the

Liberals could not oppose social reform from such a source. For this reason too then, above all, the fall of the Conservative Government was to be regretted. At this Lord Beaconsfield spoke for the first time. In thick, almost sepulchral, tones and with an execrable French accent he observed '*Tu l'as voulu Georges Dandin.*' And as he uttered these words the eye that was only partially closed began slowly to open. Considerably encouraged, Hyndman gave it as his opinion that the issue had not been adequately put to the electorate. '"Peace with honour" was a dead formula: "Peace with comfort" was what the people wanted to hear about.' The veteran strategist was now genuinely interested. '"Peace with comfort" is not a bad phrase' he remarked thoughtfully, in slow, deep tones. 'Who used it?' And the other eyelid was lifting.

'Why, I did, of course,' replied Hyndman, recovering his natural brusqueness now that he felt himself on solid ground. Lord Beaconsfield opened both eyes completely and actually smiled. 'You have, I presume, some ideas on the subject, Mr. Hyndman?' Mr. Hyndman had, and indicated that he was prepared to expound them.

'What do you mean by comfort then?'

'Plenty to eat, enough to drink, good clothes, pleasant homes, thorough education and sufficient leisure for all.'

'Utopia made to order? . . . And how would you begin?' Hyndman set himself to explain. Chartism revived (had not Disraeli sympathised with the Chartists?) complete education, universal suffrage. ('I have done all that I could in the latter direction' put in Lord Beaconsfield). Hyndman explained that an educated democracy was essential. After which, with no change of tone to indicate the significance of the words, he proceeded 'There is no other way out than through collective organ-

isation by the democracy under its chosen agents for the benefit of all. You admit that.' There was surely something almost sublime about those last three words. 'I admit nothing, Mr. Hyndman,' replied Lord Beaconsfield gravely; and added, perhaps unnecessarily, 'I am listening to you.' More eagerly than ever the other continued his monologue.

'We must recognise this truth at once,' he summarised, a little later, 'and re-organise our entire Empire at home and abroad, replacing go-as-you-please by a resolute policy of general social improvement throughout Britain, adopting Home Rule and general Colonial Federation instead of domination, and granting self-government to India. This would bring us abreast of a great and harmonious policy that would, possessing a powerful navy, give us, with our extraordinary geographical position, the lead of the democratic movement throughout the world.'

Here Lord Beaconsfield interrupted him significantly. 'Why not say Socialist movement? That is what you mean.' The aged Jewish statesman in the red gabardine gazed reflectively at the robust Etonian. He was interested. Socialism! A gospel for the workers! And here was its solitary evangelist in a frock-coat and apparently without a single supporter among the artisan, or any other, class. Had it a chance? A crusade which offered no material reward whatever to the crusader! Well, long ago in another life, he had been Disraeli and . . . yes, there was a possibility. A fleeting vision came to him of the great families he had come to know so well. One thing was certain, if this thing proved to have a chance there were strange times coming in England. For a moment, who knows with what degree of foresight, he

contemplated the future in which he would play no part. Then he began to ply his visitor with questions, even to offer comments. Exhaustively the strange couple canvassed the Socialist scheme, as it existed then in the brain of Henry Mayers Hyndman inspired by Marx. In the middle of it all a butler presented Lord Rowton's compliments and Lord Rowton was at Lord Beaconsfield's disposal. But even his most intimate political henchman, (who was shortly to leave him for Africa), was asked to wait. The discussion continued for another hour. At last Lord Beaconsfield inquired, Did Mr. Hyndman really think he had any chance of success? Mr. Hyndman intimated that he would have a good try.

'It is only possible through such a democracy as you speak of,' said Lord Beaconsfield, thus not ruling out success altogether. But a warning he had to add, and who knew the rulers of England if not he? 'You can never carry it out with the Conservative party. That is quite certain. Your life would become a burden to you . . . The moment you tried to realise it on our side you would find yourself surrounded by a phalanx of the great Families who would thwart you at every turn.' And, who knows with what memories, part bitter part diverting, of thirty years of Belgravia, he added 'They and their women!' 'And you would be no better off on the other side.' And finally, with a smile, 'I do not say it to discourage you, but you have taken upon yourself a heavy work indeed.' In the deep, rich tones the last words fell measured and portentous. 'It is a very difficult country to move, Mr. Hyndman, a very difficult country indeed, and one in which there is more disappointment to be looked for than success. But you intend to go on?'

Undoubtedly Mr. Hyndman intended to go on.

'Then I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again.' But it is doubtful whether Lord Beaconsfield himself intended to go on. He had had enough. The long, strange journey was almost over. It had been indeed a difficult country to move and he was weary. In a few weeks he was dead.

As for Hyndman, he sallied forth from number nineteen Curzon Street, clearly realising what he had never seriously doubted, that no help was to be expected from above. He had a creed but no plans. For all he knew, there was not another Socialist in the country. But as he had told Lord Beaconsfield, he intended to go on.*

* Hyndman, *Record*, 227-245, 334. Bax, 94. Kingsley, 214–215.

CHAPTER II

ECCE CONVERTIMUR AD GENTES
1881-1882

IT was to be a question of rousing the working-classes, then. The rulers of England were not to be roused. Even Lord Beaconsfield had confessed to finding England a very difficult country to move. So indeed had Matthew Arnold, and after a lifetime spent in vainly attempting to convince the middle classes of their own many deficiences he too had despaired of them and was considering at the close of his career the potentialities of new rulers. *Ecce convertimur ad gentes* he called his address to the Ipswich Working Men's College—'Behold, we are converted, are turning, to the peoples.' 'For modern civilisation some approach to equality is necessary' he had said there. 'For twenty years I have been vainly urging this upon the middle classes themselves. Now I urge it upon you. Carry it forward yourselves, and insist on taking the middle class with you.'

'Carry it forward yourselves.' This was precisely what Hyndman was now designing to bring about, a not unformidable task. But, we observe, the approach to equality which was to be carried forward was an equality between the wage-earner and the middle classes: and by 'middle classes', if he meant anything precise at all, Matthew Arnold intended no doubt, in the current fashion, the classes with intermediate incomes, however derived. It did not occur to him that the frontier between

wage and salary might be far more artificial than that which divides work of whatever kind from money-making. That a schoolmaster or a doctor might have more interests in common with a railwayman or a miner than either with a petty profiteer. Hyndman, too, like a good Marxian, thought of Socialism as an exclusive message for the proletariat. Yet he found at once that his first allies must be men of the same professional type which theoretically he was abandoning. And he turned first to Haverstock Hill on which dwelt Karl Marx, as yet unknown to the English public. Accordingly, towards the end of 1880 and at the beginning of 1881 the Doctor, for so Hyndman constantly spoke of him, might often have been seen marching eagerly up and down his study (such being his habit when interested in discussion), while upon the other side of the table strode Hyndman almost pace for pace, a practice he had, for his part, acquired during his long sea voyages. The talk ran chiefly upon economic theory, but Hyndman managed to say something of his plans for reviving the Chartist movement and the Doctor showed himself sympathetic, though far from optimistic. But though at Haverstock Hill Hyndman could drain fresh draughts of the new economic theory and survey the battleground-to-be from the heights of the Doctor's immense knowledge and prophetic ardour, it was even more important to assemble such potential practical allies as could be expected to have any heart for the projected revival of Chartism – for a revived Chartism rather than the stark, new Socialism seems to have been what he hinted in his earliest invitations. The tentative muster, which drew largely upon the Radical Clubs and Irish Committees of London, began for the most part

outside the working-classes. It was perhaps the beginning of the long and painful lesson which Marx had never learned and which Hyndman was to learn at last from experience, although he might have learned it from history; the lesson that there had never yet been in any country a revolutionary working-class.

Professor Beesly, the Positivist, who had taken the chair at the first public meeting of the now defunct 'International' in 1864, was an obvious choice. He was no longer young and he had never been a Socialist, but he was widely associated with progressive ideas and nevertheless had managed not to sacrifice his respectability. Helen Taylor, the prim step-daughter of John Stuart Mill, came too, and Joseph Cowen the member for Newcastle, Butler Johnstone the Tory member for Canterbury, Justin Huntly McCarthy, M.P., Irish Nationalist and popular historian, and Dr. G. B. Clark an energetic Radical and free thinker. Besides this there were at least five old Chartists and several artisans, including James Macdonald and John Williams, a diminutive but capable and undaunted leader of the unemployed, who had already graduated through many varieties of insurgence.* Of the miscellaneous gathering Hyndman, the convener, knew scarcely any save the three Members of Parliament. He had not yet begun to 'familiarise himself with the working-classes.' The discussions were fairly nebulous and scarcely anyone present suspected that they were to be asked to do more than skirmish, clamorously no doubt, upon the left flank of Mr. Gladstone and his orthodox Liberals. But Hyndman had come to the conclusion that it was time to take the plunge. He had been very busy while these

* See p. 228.

informal conferences went on upon a short book which he called *England for All*, expanding in it the views, tentatively Marxian at home and Radical abroad, in which he had endeavoured to interest Lord Beaconsfield. By early May of 1881 it was resolved to summon a more formal Conference, a Conference in fact which should re-launch the Socialist movement in Great Britain. This Conference met at the Westminster Palace Hotel on June 8th, 1881. After a discussion which Hyndman as chairman did his best to retain within the limits of the practical it agreed upon founding the Democratic Federation. The Socialist movement had been launched – towards unguessed destinies. The Press ignored the incident. The most important item in the day's news had been the opening by Princess Christian of a Fancy Fair at the Albert Hall.

But the question remains how far the first members of the Federation were as yet aware of what they had done. Not until three years later was the Federation to add to its title the word 'Social' and to become the Social Democratic Federation. The programme agreed upon for the moment appeared more Radical than Socialist. Of its nine points* the first, third and fourth came direct from the People's Charter itself, and indeed, for that matter, beyond that, from the demands advanced before the French Revolution by a Committee of Westminster electors under the chairmanship of Charles James Fox. Five more, though of more recent origin, were Radicalism and not such extreme Radicalism at that. Only the last,

* (1) Universal Suffrage; (2) Triennial Parliaments; (3) Equal electoral divisions; (4) Payment of Members; (5) Corruption and bribery to be punishable as criminal offences; (6) Abolition of the House of Lords; (7) Home Rule for Ireland; (8) Self-government for the Colonies and Dependencies; (9) Nationalisation of the Land.

Nationalisation of the Land, savoured of Socialism. And even this, thanks to Henry George, scarcely lay at that time beyond the boundaries of Radicalism. Many Radicals indeed had been attracted to the doctrines of Henry George. For orthodox Radicalism, holding still to its traditional belief in *laissez-faire*, need have no objections to hearing Land denounced as the great Monopoly, provided that Capital, in which Free Competition was believed still to hold undiminished sway, remained sacrosanct. Had not Land moreover been traditionally the basis of the Tory party while Whig Liberalism was manifestly the party of the new Capital? None the less, scarcely distinguishable though its official programme may have been at first from a familiar brand of Radicalism, the majority of those present at the Westminster Palace Hotel in that June of 1881, though none so clearly as Hyndman himself, were yet more or less dimly aware of reaching out after something novel. 'At the innumerable lectures' which members of the Federation were so soon to be delivering 'Socialist principles' would from the first be 'fearlessly championed.' So the Conference of August 4th, 1884, at which the Federation was at last to add the unequivocal 'Social' to its title, would report in retrospect, affirming further that 'from the first the Democratic Federation was a definite Socialist body.' And long before this the popular Press would recognise the intentions of this handful of lecturers and propagandists; almost indeed before they were aware of them themselves. Thus their assistance, (still far from certain whether they were Socialists or not), at a mass meeting of London Irish in Hyde Park in the October of 1881 was represented – with that common tendency to grotesquely alarmist exaggeration which amused, and

aided, them so greatly in their discouraging early struggles – by the *Annual Register's* 'many Socialist . . . associations were present.' The truth of the matter was in fact succinctly expressed by a member of the Federation a little later: 'their (the Radicals') aims are our means.' A political programme as a first step towards social and economic changes; towards Socialism instead of mere Labour Representation. This was what Hyndman's Conference of June, 1881, had so far achieved; the social and economic changes, already implicit, were to be openly formulated a little later. And what after all had been Chartism itself but a definite political programme aimed implicitly at undefined social and economic changes? The Chartists however had never advanced beyond their six political points. For the Federation from the first the political means were to be overshadowed by the economic ends. Indeed there were soon to be found members, subscribing wholeheartedly to these economic ends, who would nevertheless secede in protest at any energies whatever being spent upon the political means – thus reviving a very long-lived divergence in our history. For were not the political-reform agitators of 1832 followed at once by the Owenite revolutionary Trade-unionists of 1834 who were to create their Utopia by purely economic methods, and these again by the Chartists with their tumultuous decade of agitation for six political points? And would not the Socialists who believed in Parliamentary candidatures be followed by Syndicalists and Communists who professed only direct economic action?

It was no doubt, then, fairly clear to most of those who were present at the Westminster Palace Hotel in June of 1881, even if definitions and labels were avoided,

that they were to tread paths which would lead them into unexplored territory. And if there were some who supposed themselves still followers of the Grand Old Man, it would not be long before they would begin to be disillusioned. Not long after this first Conference Hyndman issued on behalf of the Executive Committee an address in which he referred bluntly enough to 'the hollowness and hypocrisy of capitalist Radicalism'– at which, with one exception, the Radical Clubs in association with the Federation immediately withdrew. It was the Federation's first experience of what was to be one of its most familiar misfortunes. Its capacity for the repulsion and exclusion of existing members would be almost greater than its power to attract new ones. Like Gideon, embarked likewise upon a formidable assault, Hyndman would impose standards and exact tests so stringent that he constantly reduced his own scanty following. Above all there remained *England for All* to reveal to members where, in fact, they were likely to find themselves; *England for All*, distributed by Hyndman to every person who attended the Conference; *England for All* with its 'clear Socialist tendencies,' and, it must be added, its unacknowledged Marxian inspiration. The first literary manifesto of a movement setting out to convert England was thus based upon the economic system of a German, who, despite his immense learning, did not seem to have understood either Englishmen or English history. Yet throughout his entire book Hyndman had not mentioned Marx by name. The Doctor never forgave him. . . . Here however was the book. The delegates were able, on returning home, to study it at leisure. It did not mention Socialism, though it denounced Toryism and Liberalism and proclaimed

the need of a comprehensive new policy. Of the actual reforms which it advocated only State Ownership of Railways and an extension of Factory and Mines Acts could be called even mildly Socialistic. But it was obvious that its author intended it to be read between the lines. He stated that he himself would have advocated 'more stringent reforms' had there been any signs as yet of a desire to change the existing system among those who suffered from it. He roundly denounced both the capitalist system and the orthodox economists, and his advice to the working-classes was 'Unite! Unite! Unite!' And the book concluded:–

> '. . . Such an ideal is not unreal or impracticable. Not as yet of course can we hope to realise more than a portion of that for which we strive. But if only we are true to one another, and stand together in the fight, the brightness of the future is ours – the day before us and the night behind. So, when those who come after look back to these islands as we now look back to Athens or Palestine they shall say "This was glory – this true domination: these men builded on eternal foundations their might, majesty, dominion, and power." '

On reading these words some more members instantly withdrew.*

II

The Democratic Federation was in existence, but that was all that could be said. Few, even of its supporters,

* Hyndman, *Record*, chaps. xv, xvi, p. 335. Bax, 95, 111. *Justice*, Aug. 9, 1884, Aug. 25, 1885. Letter of Prof. Beesly, *Justice*, Oct. 3, 1885. *Annual Register*, June 8, Oct. 23, 1881. Hyndman, *England for All*, 64, 84-5 and note, 109, 194. Hyndman, *Evolution*, 316-7.

expected that it could survive long. Almost the only exception to this diffidence indeed was the author of its being, the undaunted Hyndman. But there was very little to encourage him. The members of the Federation were few, its active members still fewer. Indeed in the retrospective survey submitted later to the Annual Conference of 1884 it is computed that in its first two years its activities were carried on by 'less than a dozen really earnest men.' 'The Democratic Federation, as Mr. Hyndman will persist in calling himself,' wrote a Conservative journal about this time, with a rare approach to accuracy, the habit of the Press being so soon to raise the hair of Suburbia with fantastic suggestions of the baleful omnipresence of Socialism. For its finances, which were of the meanest, the Federation drew 'almost entirely upon the purse of a single individual.' This individual, it is hardly necessary to say, was, at first, and before his Socialist activities had seriously impoverished him, the unflinching Hyndman, who paid the rent of the offices in Westminster Palace Chambers and the salary (two pounds a week), of the secretary. One evening early in the adventure, coming downstairs from the office on the heels of a handful of belated members, Hyndman overheard the secretary, who was among them, explaining with some gusto 'I don't believe in the concern a bit, but when I heard that £2 a week were going about, I b—— well determined to have some of it.' Hyndman smiled in his black beard but said nothing. Such were the materials with which Hyndman and his less than a dozen really earnest men proposed to transform politics and society, in a country which even Lord Beaconsfield, selecting very different methods and with no alarming goal, had confessed to finding so difficult to move.

London – and they were not at present in a position to look beyond London – betrayed naturally a complete indifference to their existence. Princess Christian continued to open Fancy Fairs and Queen Victoria made from time to time her rare public appearances, once, in February of 1882, driving to Hughenden to unveil a memorial to Lord Beaconsfield dedicated by herself, the inscription upon which concluded, in the words of the book of Proverbs, 'Kings love him that speaketh right.' Everything was as it always had been and apparently would always be. Things-as-they-are! How were a dozen idealogues to shake that majestic edifice?

There was much cogitation in the small offices in Westminster Palace Chambers, with the equivocal secretary attentive to execute what inspiration might ensue and concealing, it is to be hoped, his consuming scepticism of everything connected with the Federation save his own two pounds a week. It was obvious at once that the channels of propaganda open to the little band were strictly limited. The Press, it went without saying, was treble-barred to them. Even the hospitable correspondence columns of the *Times* which a few years later, after the 'West end riots,' were to be filled for weeks with furious and sometimes ungrammatical onslaughts upon them from merchants, colonels and country parsons, permitted the attacked no single opportunity of reply. A journal of their own, which, whatever else might be expected of it, could expect no advertisement-revenue and would certainly, as Hyndman observed, not 'meet a long-felt want,' was at present financially quite beyond their reach, and would only be made possible, more than two years later, and by the generosity of an individual still unknown to them. There remained accordingly the

one instrument of propaganda which was presumably at the disposal of all free-born Britons, their own tongues. They must preach in season and, more frequently perhaps, out of season. When possible they would arrange formal lectures – and for these the Radical Clubs of London seemed the most hopeful audiences, for they had not yet realised that these bodies were in fact more accustomed to absorb alcohol than political principles, and it was not until a little later that the adhesion of William Morris, a celebrity and indeed a respectability, would help so much to earn the Federation occasional access to more august circles such as the Union Societies of Oxford and Cambridge and to gatherings of the prosperous and cultured in the North. But for the most part, they realised, they would have to rely upon the street-corner. And after all was not the street-corner their natural battle-ground? Thanks to Hyndman they were good Marxians (although few of them, it seems, had had the advantage of reading Marx, whose work was still not obtainable in English), and they believed that they had but to render the proletariat class-conscious, declare war on property, and the few would be swept into the sea. For it was an article of faith with them that the 'proletariat was an irresistible mass of Felix Pyats and Ouidas.' The innate conservatism of the English wage-earners, together with the profound and disquieting truth that revolutions and revolutionary leaders – with some slight assistance from the nobility – have invariably proceeded from the middle classes, all this was not apparent to them.

Accordingly to the street-corners they went; with a doctrine still dallying at first with an English Radicalism turned unwontedly ferocious but speedily inclining

towards the far less native gospel of Marx. They had to brace themselves somewhat for the plunge, for the street-corner was not then politically as fashionable as, thanks to their example, it has since become.

Political campaigns in those more stately days were conducted elsewhere, in public halls with the traditional array of local magnate and water-carafe to support the speaker upon the platform and official stewards to supervise his audience. However, since no audience as yet would voluntarily come to listen to a Socialist speaker, it followed that Socialist speakers must go forth to seek their audiences where they could best hope to find them, in Walworth, Clerkenwell Green, Bermondsey, Mile End Waste, Battersea – wherever, in fact, the expropriated dwelt in large numbers. Perhaps it was to conceal from themselves the inevitable slight sinking of the heart as they embarked upon this formidable enterprise that in early days they always spoke of their promiscuous street oratory as 'lecturing.' And indeed it did smack somewhat of the lecture-room. Even if one suspected that scarcely any in the handful one was haranguing could write their own names and however painfully one simplified the Marxian doctrine it was difficult to expound Marx at all without becoming faintly professorial, and Hyndman, addressing a huge and excited crowd in Hyde Park, would even quote Virgil in the original. Gradually, in London at least, they evolved a programme of Sunday morning gatherings at fixed vantage-points at which a small inner handful of the converted or interested could be trusted to form a nucleus for the fortuitous audiences of passers-by, but at first it was a question of appearing unannounced and attracting by mere lung-power whom one could. Accordingly here

and there in the poorest quarters of London began the strange crusade, Hyndman foremost among the crusaders. The methods, and the results, varied little at first. A vivid description by an eye-witness of the first Socialist open-air meeting addressed in Bristol will serve as typical of all or any of the early London adventures. For, though it took place a little later, it was addressed by J. Hunter Watts, himself one of the London adventurers, and followed the customary course of all those first street 'lectures.'

The 'lecturer' appeared unexpectedly at a private gathering of the small local branch, which had not yet nerved itself to face the streets, and announced that they must hold an open-air meeting forthwith. Stoutly concealing their inward tremors, the half-dozen or so of members marched off with the apparently confident stranger from London. At the chosen spot they formed an expectant and somewhat self-conscious group around the speaker, whose 'air of well-being and good education' did a little, but not much, to increase their confidence. They tried to remember however that it was by these means that English society was to be transformed. Standing on the cobble stones, 'in a quiet voice which presently rose to a shout' the speaker began forthwith to repeat over and over again 'Friends, we are the Bristol Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, and we are going to hold a meeting. We shall tell you of our message to the workers of the world, what it means to you, and how it will relieve you of your poverty.' Gradually a knot of inquisitive passers-by collected, but few stayed to listen for more than a minute or two, and not one showed any signs of interest. So this was an open-air meeting! At the end the most optimistic could not deny that it had been a small one.

More spectators would have stopped to watch a dog-fight, and would have stayed longer. They could almost have wished that there had been interruptions, a disturbance, anything rather than this contemptuous apathy. This, however, it seemed, was how they were to capture political power in England. The little group separated thoughtfully, amid stares. . . . That summer it was joined by a lad of eighteen fresh from a Scottish cottage whose name was James Ramsay MacDonald.

Thus from time to time in one London slum area or another from the centre of a small knot of starers – 'labourers on their Sunday lounge,' 'respectable people coming from church,' the latter 'inclined to grin'– might have been heard issuing that magniloquent announcement 'We shall tell you of our message to the workers of the world and how it will relieve your poverty.' At the close of the harangue the three or four Branch members present would raise a feeble cheer and the little crowd of workmen, with a last stare at the apparently prosperous and respectable orator who had talked so incomprehensibly of social injustice and surplus value and the millennium, would shrug its shoulders and walk away. And this though the red banner of the Federation with its lettering 'Work for All – Overwork for none' in white had been borne aloft from Limehouse Town Hall along Burdett Road and back. Sometimes, upon exceptional and memorable days, someone would linger and consent to join the tiny local branch. Or once in a long while an old man would falter up to tell excitedly how he had once listened to Robert Owen or how it all reminded him of the Chartists. . . . The speaker would listen and nod benevolently. And yet . . . Owen . . . Chartism . . . all this was an ancient tale, and a tale

of defeat. Neither Owen nor the Chartists, of course, had grasped scientific Socialism . . . the real Marxian revelation. . . . Yet somehow they had aroused enthusiasm, struck chords, false, no doubt, to which vast audiences had proved responsive. No question then of a convert every other week. It was certainly puzzling. Even Hyndman was driven to admit that 'the open-air work was the most trying of all.' And when, after standing up square and solid in his immaculate frock-coat to address 'a gathering . . . of rather debauched-looking persons round the old pump at Clerkenwell Green,' whom he had assured that the revolution would be with them within a year or two, he would walk slowly homeward towards the West end, he would seem sometimes lost in a frowning abstraction. 'Building on eternal foundations their might, majesty, dominion and power' . . . the old pump on Clerkenwell Green.

Nor were the visits to the workmen's Radical Clubs much more encouraging. As often as not the room, with about twenty people in it, would be small, 'as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal'; or it would be somewhat larger but no less bleak. An audience of artisans with a few small tradesmen and once in a long while a solitary professional man, a haze of tobacco smoke, the clatter of mugs and glasses as the potmen circulated endlessly with gin and beer, an intermittent hum of conversation or hoarse laughter from the back, or, punctuating a polite, uncomprehending silence, an occasional half derisive burst of applause as the speaker assured his hearers that they were 'piling up riches for the classes who rob you of your labour.' 'It took the fire out of my fine periods I can tell you: it is a great drawback that I can't *talk* to them roughly and unaffectedly'

confessed one lecturer. Such were the audiences to which Hyndman and his friends preached the gospel of revolt; to which, not many months later, William Morris and Bernard Shaw would be delivering the addresses whose earliest printed reports are now bought up at ever increasing prices by the bibliophiles of two continents.*

III

During these first two years, then, even to its dozen, or less, 'really earnest' members the advance of the Democratic Federation towards the social revolution remained all but imperceptible. It dabbled, it was true, in the endless Irish agitation – coercion was the vexed question of the moment – and mass meetings of the London Irish in Hyde Park had been attended, a commission had been sent to Ireland, and Hyndman had spoken in Phoenix Park. All this, however, was Radicalism, not Socialism. It served well enough to give the Federation a sense of activity before it had finally nerved itself for the decisive step, but though it was tempting to hitch oneself on to an existing, and powerful, agitation, it was clear that the Irish clamour had nothing whatever to do with 'replacing go-as-you-please by a resolute general policy of social improvement.' Indeed up till the end of 1882 the Federation had only once succeeded in arousing public interest or producing any recognisable effect and then only by packing a meeting at which a clerical publicist was to advocate his pet scheme of compulsory thrift for the working-classes, and voting him down by a majority

* *Justice*, Aug. 9, Oct. 25, 1884. Mackail ii, 145, 173-4. Hyndman *Record* 253-4; 293, 334, 341. Henderson, 156. *Annual Register*, Feb. 27, 1882. *Times*, Feb. 22, 1886. Bryher, 23.

of two to one. The public had so long assumed as a matter of course that philanthropic schemes designed for the intimate inconvenience of the working-classes could be proposed and discussed over the submissive heads of those who were to suffer from them that it was a novel experience to read of working-men insisting upon interrupting their aristocratic and clerical benefactors and expressing their own views upon their own affairs. But even this was not Socialism. The movement, in short, was not yet under weigh. It had not even yet decisively made up its own mind. That it must somehow teach the people to save themselves from their exploiters it was aware, but beyond this undisputed terrain a bristle of problems reared themselves. Did Socialism involve atheism? Did Socialism involve violence? For Marx did not perhaps completely answer these questions. At the close of 1882 these self-questionings were still not easy to dispose of. Next year however there was to be more light. It was in January of 1883* that the Federation was holding the first of a series of public discussions on 'Practical Remedies for Pressing Needs' in the hall at Westminster Palace Chambers. Andreas Scheu, a bluff Viennese, who was one of the few active members of the Federation, felt himself nudged from behind and, turning, received from one Banner a slip of paper on which was written 'The third man to your right is William Morris.'†

* Not 1882, as is stated in Hyndman's *Record of an Adventurous Life*.

† Hyndman, *Record*, 243, 293, 296, 304-6. Mackail ii, 96. Bax, 108.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM MORRIS 1883-1884

WILLIAM MORRIS, who was now close on forty-nine and as a poet and decorative artist enjoyed a European reputation, had, like Hyndman, been through the conventional mill: Marlborough and Oxford in his case. Like Hyndman he had been born to prosperity. Like Hyndman, too, like all the early major prophets of Socialism indeed, he was bearded and looked the prophetic part. But the resemblance went no further. For Hyndman's frock coat and spotless linen were symbols as well as garments. His spirit dwelt in no far countries. He was no dreamer but a business man, making (and, after his Socialist activities began, losing) his money with a savage derision of the system which allowed it to be thus made and lost. His Socialism, like his intellect, was critical, sardonic, aggressive: he had words almost as bitter for the stupidity and servility of the poor as for the fraud and hypocrisy of the rich. Repeatedly in his speeches he would cynically thank his working-class audiences for 'so generously supporting my class' until some of his working-class followers would become quite restive at these constant reminders of the social gulf which divided them. There seemed to be scarcely a ray of tenderness or idealism in his deliveries: to some of his colleagues they appeared to be not so much *Socialism as 'anti-capitalist ejaculations.'* He was the

business man denouncing business men, yet wearing the business man's uniform. When enraged by some assault on Marx or himself he would passionately shoot his spotless cuffs. Hyndman, too, unlike Morris, had a taste for aristocratic society and even retained some footing in it, in a queer combination of Jekyll with Hyde, long after he had flung himself into the Socialist agitation. On one occasion a lady encountered Hyndman, irreproachably got up, at the Marble Arch and engaged him in small talk. It was only gradually that a certain preoccupation in his manner forced itself upon her notice and she realised that he had been leading a mob of Socialists into Hyde Park. Hyndman was a Puritan and on occasions would sternly rebuke his followers for the mildest indulgence in whiskey, and his stories, of which he possessed an immense repertoire, were of an invariable propriety. Morris on the other hand belonged spiritually to an earlier age which had never heard of Puritanism. 'I should have liked you to have a drink with me,' he would find himself murmuring wistfully to his new colleagues. But too often, he knew, the drink would be lemonade.

Hyndman's expression was apt to be domineering. His eyes were keen, restless, searching. In Morris's eyes, on the other hand, beneath a fine brow and a tousled crest of hair – thanks to which among his friends his nickname of 'Top' or 'Topsy' had survived from Oxford days – 'there was . . . that penetrating, far-away, impenetrable gaze that seems to be fixed on something beyond that at which it is directly looking.' For the author of *The Earthly Paradise*, of *News from Nowhere* and of *The Dream of John Ball*, although the record of Morris and Company showed that he had practical

ability enough, was assuredly a dreamer rather than a business man. Indeed in his rough blue serge suit and blue cotton shirt open at the throat and with his ruddy weather-beaten complexion and somewhat swaying walk he might well have been taken for a sea-captain rather than either. On one occasion indeed a fireman actually stopped him in Kensington High Street to inquire 'Beg pardon, sir, but were you ever captain of the *Sea Swallow?*' and ragamuffins in Glasgow would derisively chant after him:

'Sailor, sailor; sou'west!
Dance a jig in the crow's nest!'

The suggestion was heightened by his capacity for violent outbreaks of temper and tempestuous, even unprintable, language. 'Art forsooth! Where the hell is it? Where the hell are the people who know or care a damn about it?' would be the beginning, when a friend misjudged a Burne-Jones' painting, of a tirade which could rise to even more lurid heights. He had been known when in a passion to drive his head against a wall so as to make a deep dent in the plaster without apparent discomfort to himself; to break chairs; to throw his spectacles out of the window. These outbursts however ended as suddenly as they began. There was something characteristic and attractive about them too. 'I grieve to say,' wrote a friend, 'he has only kicked one panel out of a door for this twelve-month past.' And there was the immense gusto with which the man savoured life: his passion for rivers and the countryside and above all for the earth itself – 'the Earth and the growth of it and the life of it! If I could but say or show how I love

it'; for the beasts, and particularly the birds, of the field – of these his knowledge seemed inexhaustible; for gardens and rowing and tramping and angling and single-stick; for colours and tastes (he was a judge of wine and an excellent cook and deplored the decadence of the culinary, as of other, arts. 'There are two things,' he said 'about which women know absolutely nothing, dress and cookery'); for Keats and Ruskin and George Borrow and William Cobbett and that celebrated sportsman, Mr. Jorrocks; for early English ballads and Norse mythology and weaving and illuminated missals, upon all of which his knowledge was expert, perhaps unrivalled; and above all for the middle ages, and particularly for the thirteenth century and all its works and ways. About this he would talk, or argue, far into the night in that famous lofty room at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, with its Rossetti pictures and its huge Persian rug on the wall, smoking his black wooden pipes with endless expenditure of matches. And as he talked the thirteenth century would come alive, with its missals and cathedrals and the cavalcades of knights down forest ways. Here indeed, in the middle ages, was his spiritual home. Almost, in a sense, his actual home, since the England most real to him was not so much that Victorian England in which he so zestfully pursued his multifarious activities as a gracious, mediaeval England, still partially visible to the discerning eye but infuriatingly disfigured or obliterated by the vandalisms of a machine civilisation. Politically no revolutionary, this. To the end indeed, politics, to tell the truth, did not interest him, although in 1876 in horror at the Bulgarian massacres he had become Treasurer of the Eastern Question Association. At heart indeed he was a bourgeois, but of the middle

ages: one of those merchant-princes whose exquisite taste fostered the arts of Flanders or Venice. 'I am bourgeois, you know, and therefore without the point of honour' he had written long ago to Madox Brown. Indeed those who had seen him in camp with the Volunteers during the war-scare of 1859-60, or 'coming up from the cellar before dinner, beaming with joy, with his hands full of bottles of wine and others tucked under his arms,' or playing bowls in his garden at Hammersmith, knew him to be overflowing with the orderly, civic virtues. Nor was it politics that were turning this man into a revolutionary: it was the middle ages. Irresistibly, as time went on, that old England forced its lessons on him.

More than twenty years ago he had been building his first home. It had been comparatively easy to get the sort of house he wanted built, for he could dictate his own wishes. But when it came to furnishing it? Save for Persian carpets and blue china there was scarcely anything then to be bought in England, he found, which was not too ugly to be tolerated. How vast a decline from the old, the real England! The result was Morris and Company. The first idea of a business concern may have been Rossetti's; there was help too from Madox Brown, Burne-Jones and others; but the thing was Morris. In the decorative arts at least he was already resolved to bring about a revolution, and would succeed. And then there had been architecture. In old buildings, the most manifest legacy of the middle ages, (he cared nothing for Wren and his successors), he was passionately interested. To see them destroyed or defaced was torture to him; and everywhere they were being destroyed and defaced. Six years earlier, in 1877, he had originated

the Society for the Protection of Ancient Monuments and served as its Secretary. Far indeed from a revolutionary purpose, this: and yet here too he found himself driven to ask, Why should everything which man makes or mends to-day be so hideous, when once it was so beautiful? His answer to that question would make him a Socialist.

No doubt he was impelled to his conclusions by instinct rather than by reason. And rightly, for instinct is the better guide. At times, it is true, he tried to rationalise his conversion, but not with much success. When he joined the Federation he 'had never so much as opened Adam Smith or heard of Ricardo or of Karl Marx.' The first thing needful, clearly, would be to get up Marx's *Capital*, and, though he tried very hard, he could not make head or tail of it. Indeed a little later than this, after his first Socialist lecture in Glasgow, the question would be put to him point blank by a dour purist, 'Does Comrade Morris accept Marx's theory of value?' and he would reply, in words long admiringly remembered in the Movement, 'To speak quite frankly, I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm damned if I want to know.' Strange words for one who was then still a member of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation.

For three years now he had been moving slowly down the strange paths. 'The whole thing seems almost too tangled to see through and too heavy to move,' he had written in 1880. 'Happily though, I am not bound either to see through it or move it but a very little way: meantime I do know what I love and what I hate.' This, without doubt, William Morris had always known: few men have known as certainly. He loved good art

in a nation; he hated its absence; and out of this love and this hatred grew his creed. It was a simple one. Morris and Company had sold its products to a few of the rich: he would have liked to sell them to the people. But the people had neither the money to buy, nor, it seemed, the taste to appreciate, beauty. And of the things which cumbered the houses of the rich the greatest part they did not even want; a vast mass of trumpery, forced upon fools by fashion, itself either useless or actively destructive and poisonous, yet 'keeping many thousands of men and women making *nothing* with terrible and inhuman toil.' Surely the gulf between rich and poor must be destroyed if there was ever to be popular art again. But the degradation of the producer by Commercialism had moved Morris more deeply even than the degradation of the consumer. All work should be worth doing and of itself pleasant to do. His own work was pleasure: under no conceivable circumstances would he willingly give it up. In the old England also, the real England, the England of the Cathedrals and the Guilds (who should know better than he?) men had loved their work. To-day 'division of labour' kept each man to one minute piece of work. Of the thing he was making he knew nothing: he 'might as well be turning a crank with nothing at the end of it.' If work was ever to be pleasant and honourable again a man must know all about the ware he is making; must be allowed to think of what he is doing; must 'be for ever stirring to make the piece he is at work at better than the last;' must 'refuse at anybody's bidding to turn out, I won't say a bad, but even an indifferent, piece of work'; must 'have a voice, and a voice worth listening to, in the whole affair.' In a sentence *Nothing should be made by man's labour which is not worth*

making; or which must be made by labour degrading to the makers. Such was the simple creed which life had taught an artist. Yet, as things were, it meant, it seemed, a social revolution. 'The cause of Art is the cause of the people.' Morris had reached his Socialism through his art, as each Socialist reaches it through what in life he knows and values best. A simple creed, yes, and one which sprang from the heart of the old, half-forgotten England. Agonies of confusion of mind, as we have seen, Morris experienced when he tried to master Marx, and something profounder, a distaste, almost sometimes, a spiritual *malaise.* This was not his Socialism. For Morris, in spite of some Welsh ancestry, was profoundly English in his prejudices and training, and his Socialism sprang, as we have seen, out of the core of English history. And yet – only Socialism aimed, beyond mere political Radicalism, at social change, the Democratic Federation was 'the only Society I could find which is definitely Socialistic,' and, as he would discover when he joined it, Hyndman, the leader of the Democratic Federation, was endeavouring to persuade it that Marx was the one God and that he, Hyndman, was his prophet. Clearly there were difficulties ahead both for Morris and for the Democratic Federation.

For some reasons it was to be regretted that Morris should have joined a 'Society . . . definitely Socialistic,' should have labelled himself so clearly. For English history had already clearly shewn that, whereas English people would for a long while yet be profoundly alarmed by that formidable label 'Socialism,' they had little objection to legislation with strongly Socialist tendencies, provided it were passed by respectable Conservative or Liberal statesmen; little objection even to the preaching

of Socialist doctrine, provided that, like Ruskin, now a Professor at Oxford, the preacher did not profess himself a Socialist. (Indeed even in uncompromising and logic-loving France had not Louis Napoleon, after contriving to seize power chiefly because he seemed to be the one barrier against Socialist revolution, used the brief interval of autocracy which followed his *coup d'état* to introduce, with scarcely a tremor of public opinion, a whole series of Socialist or semi-Socialist measures?) No doubt, then, had Morris never proclaimed himself, thanks to the wide licence permitted in England to respectability, he might have become a much more widely accepted, even a popular, purveyor of what in fact were Socialist doctrines. None the less he had chosen rightly. There would be a sufficiency of politicians and publicists ready and able to advance Socialism while denouncing Socialists. What Socialism then needed was precisely the bold, the arresting, the almost sacrificial gesture of a celebrity publicly attaching himself to the ignored or deeply mistrusted handful of its professed apostles. A sacrifice indeed; for a man who has on other topics won the respectful applause of a cultured audience wider than his own country surrenders much when he deliberately turns from it to the apathy or derision of chance street-corner clusters of the poor and ignorant. Moreover it was certain that Morris would embrace his new vocation thoroughly, whatever it proved to demand of him, for such was his habit. When he was concerned with house-building had he not designed the thing in every particular? With painting it? Had he not lived on a ladder? With dyeing? He was perpetually stained blue. With printing? No one should know more than he of the technicalities of papermaking and setting type. With Scandinavian sagas? He must

travel all over Iceland. If Socialism proved to need missionaries he was not likely to flinch from the street-corners.

On January 13th, 1883, his Oxford College, Exeter, elected William Morris Honorary Fellow. He had arrived; arrived, with the prelates, Cabinet Ministers and famous scholars who customarily share this honour, within the inmost circle of the blameless and distinguished orthodox. Four days later he enrolled himself in the Democratic Federation. Of which the *Saturday Review* was about to write 'London contains a large floating population of public house loafers and members of the Executive Council of the Democratic Federation.' On his card of membership he describes himself as 'William Morris, designer.'*

II

His own experience as a poet and an artist, still more his knowledge of the world, assured Morris that, for all its faith, the campaign of the Democratic Federation was not likely to move mountains yet awhile. 'The petty skirmish of a corporal's guard' he called it; a trifle ruefully, maybe, since in the obscurest of skirmishes wounds are, for the skirmisher, as painful as in the most resounding of army corps engagements. Perhaps the most that, in this clear-sighted mood, he would have looked for would have been that measure of hope deferred with

* Mackail i, 140, 160-1, 217, 224, 227; ii, 23, 80, 86-7, 94, 99-100. Glasier, 23, 29, 33, 51, 108. Bax, 98. Mann, 40-1. Compton-Rickett, 35-6. Rider, 19. *Justice*, Jan. 19, 1884. Morris, *Art and Socialism*, 11, 14, 34, 36. Morris, *Making the best of it. How I became*, 18.

which the Christian Socialists had consoled themselves forty years before –

What though thy seed should fall by the wayside
And the birds snatch it; yet the birds are fed;
Or they may bear it far across the tide,
To give rich harvest after thou art dead.

And yet in a society so small, so highly strung, so dominated by the gospel of Marx and its confident prediction of the inevitable social revolution, it was impossible, whatever agonies of confusion the prophet's writings might cause one, not to believe sometimes in the imminence of the great catastrophe. As he wrote in April, 1884,

. . . . *for the day is drawing nigh*
When the Cause shall call upon us, some to live and some to die.

Also there was always the sustaining sense that one must be making history. There is extant a fragment of a diary which he began in 1887, 'which may one day be published as a kind of view of the Socialist movement from the inside. Jonah's view of the whale, you know, my dear.' Clearly he believed that what he was doing and seeing would have significance for posterity; this was to be, as it were, a Greville's Journal of politics below-stairs. It was with such conflicting estimates of his new vocation already present in his mind that he signed his membership card on January 17th, 1883. The Federation was in its second year and it was already obvious that there were to be stresses by which its frame-

work would be strained to the danger-point. Hyndman, for one thing, would not be easy to work with. 'Small as our body is, we are not without dissensions in it" writes Morris in August: and 'I find myself drifting into the disgraceful position of a moderator and patcher up.' There were other unexpected talents, too, besides this for moderating and patching up, of which the Socialist cause seemed to stand in need. 'The fact is,' he wrote later, 'we really want a good steady business man over the D.F. affairs: a man who could give up most of his time and who wouldn't be excitable.' A man who wouldn't be excitable! Alas! not too easy to come upon among such devotees: even Morris himself, it had to be admitted, was excitable.

Moreover, whatever the future might hold in store, there was the present. He plunged wholeheartedly, as always, into the new adventure. In the past had he not at various times plunged with equal gusto into many a new undertaking – into poetry-writing, illumination, weaving, dyeing, saga-study, protecting ancient buildings? Very well, now he would 'lecture.' His subject, in one form or another, was always the same, the relation of Art to Labour, and with his reputation and the word 'Art' in his lecture-title, he could attract large audiences, particularly in the North. There would be distinguished anti-Socialists in the chair. In his blue shirt and rough serge suit he would stalk on to the platform at one of these major, almost respectable, affairs, with that slightly rolling gait, looking like another Viking – 'Until you heard him speak, when you thought, a harper after all,' for his voice had not that powerful resonance which his appearance had led you to expect. The respectable citizen in the chair would introduce him, scurrying

apologetically over his Socialism and dwelling reassuringly on his art, his writings. 'He might introduce him (said the chairman), as a modern Socialist who thought the world had somehow gone wrong and desired to set it right, but he preferred to refer to him in the character of an artist who had striven long and earnestly to make the principles of art. . .' Morris, when this was over, would rise impatiently amid respectful applause, plant his papers firmly on the reading-stand and begin to read, or recite. Every now and again he would take a turn up and down the platform, carrying his manuscript with him in one hand, and often enough a bandana handkerchief in the other. Or standing at the desk he would shift the bandana and the manuscript from hand to hand, turn round as if to claim the assent of those upon the platform, or cast his lion's glance over the audience. There was frequent applause from these big audiences. The Radicals could not always resist the democratic sentiments and the provincial intelligentsia were tickled at hearing a famous artist waxing enthusiastic about art. But as for Socialism – when the questions were over; (why was the lecturer a capitalist, did he dine with his servants, or how could an Act of Parliament be framed in the sense of the lecturer's views?) when the converted ex-Chartist had insisted on explaining from the body of the hall that all was well with the existing system since the Post Office had recently shortened his hours and increased his wages – well, then it was a rare and fortunate occasion indeed if he 'fished two additional members.'

There was even a lecture to the Russell Club, an undergraduates' Society at Oxford, in the November of 1883. During the last ten years Oxford had become interested in social problems. It was but a few months since the

fervent Arnold Toynbee had died. He had died young, at thirty-one, but his teaching and his example had fired the rising generation with something of his own enthusiasm for social reform and for 'bridging the gulf between the educated and the wage-earning class.' From his influence, would come the settlements of University men which would soon begin to appear in the East End. Moreover, besides arousing the social conscience in Oxford and elsewhere, he had done much to bring its economic theories up to date. 'In 1873,' wrote a contemporary, 'the *laissez-faire* theory still held the field. . . . But within ten years the few men who still held the old doctrines in their extreme rigidity had come to be regarded as curiosities,' and Toynbee had been largely responsible for the change. But all this, though it meant that new ideas were finding their way into Oxford, was not Socialism; at least, not the Socialism of the Federation. To Hyndman and his disciples the interest of Toynbee and the young Oxford intellectuals in social reform, their sympathy with the poor, even their readiness (which Hyndman cannot be said to have shared) to live among the poor – all this was mere sentimental philanthropy. So far as it was not purely futile it would serve but to distract the workers from the true remedies for their distress. Moreover Toynbee had been deeply religious. Certainly Hyndman would never admit that the spirit which had been stirring dry bones in Oxford was the spirit of Socialism. And yet, writing his reminiscences of Toynbee in 1895, Alfred Milner would find himself compelled to ask 'Was he a Socialist?' And the Howard Society went to the trouble of circulating a pamphlet which pointed out that Toynbee had not 'approved of those mischievous forms of "Socialism" which are

akin to anarchy.' Undoubtedly, alien though it might find the Federation, the Oxford Morris was now to revisit was not the Oxford of his youth. On this occasion Hyndman had been thought too revolutionary for an invitation, but the Governing Body of University College, whose hall was to be used for the lecture, could not bring themselves to believe that Morris could be dangerous. Morris, it was true, had warned them as explicitly as he could, through his friend and disciple Faulkner, who was a Fellow of the College, that he was 'quite as much a Socialist' as Hyndman and an official of the same association. But the Governing Body could not quite believe it. Was he not an artist and presumably therefore reassuringly remote from practical politics? Was he not also notoriously prosperous? Above all, was he not an Honorary Fellow of Exeter? The rumours of his Socialist leanings, it was clear, must be exaggerated. The Master of the College was accordingly astounded to hear the lecturer urging his youthful audience to become Socialists. And after the Warden of Keble had proposed a vote of thanks in very carefully chosen words and after Professor Ruskin, much excited by having listened to an echo of his own old doctrines, albeit with an unfamiliar and insistent ring about them, pursuing him from the outer world into the inner cloisters of the University, had 'pronounced a sort of benediction over his pupil and the audience,' the Master rose up and, speaking very gravely, made it clear that it had not been known that Mr. Morris 'was the agent of any Socialist propaganda.' And in private he asked the editor of the *Oxford Magazine* to announce that he had been presented before the lecture with a written request from a majority of the Undergraduates in the College strongly desiring

that the name of their College 'should not be associated with any pronounced form of party politics.' With this, he hoped, he had cleared himself of his share of responsibility for the disquieting affair. By the most advanced opinion in the University it was felt, thanks to Toynbee, that they could approve of Morris when he preached a gospel of social change in general terms; and yet, somehow, the new gospel was one thing, the new gospel embodied in the Federation's programme very much another. 'To tack it on to the programme of the Democratic Federation was only to discredit the gospel itself,' said the *Oxford Magazine*. However, Oxford was at least prepared to listen to the programme. Hyndman himself spoke in the Clarendon Assembly Rooms next February. The Master of University was once again present, with Dr. Macan, Arthur Sidgwick, Sidney Ball and others. Marshall, the Economist, whose official lectures had rarely permitted him to address so large and so lively an undergraduate audience, was moved to deliver an opposition speech. Later, however, when invited to debate with Henry George in London, declined, for the strain of public meetings, he explained, was injurious to his health. Cambridge, too, admitted Hyndman to the Union, where on the division, which is traditionally generous to visitors, no less than fifty-eight members in a meeting of over four hundred voted with him. Morris revisited Oxford to lecture once more fifteen months after this original visit, not in a college hall this time. His audience now knew what to expect. There were supporters with red ribbons acting as stewards at this later meeting and there was also the howling, the discharge of chemical stinks and the other familiar manifes-

tations with which great Universities know so well how to welcome an unfamiliar idea.

But these were the brighter and more memorable episodes. From day to day there remained the bleak, drab, little gatherings at Radical and Working Men's Clubs, the open-air meetings which were so trying for one's voice and at which it was harder even than in the Radical Clubs to believe that anyone in the audience understood what one was talking about. And there were the unsigned letters which cast an all too revealing light upon the extent to which one had succeeded in conveying one's meaning to one's audience. Thus after William Morris had expressed at Bradford in almost unnaturally lucid language his painfully matured conclusions upon the relation of Art to Labour an anonymous listener would summarise his impressions. 'So the delicate, well-educated man is to work with his hands, and the rough, uncouth fellow who never could learn anything I am to take to teach my sons,' and would frankly add 'You ought to be doing some useful toil in prison with very little to eat.'

In the May after he enrolled himself in the Federation he had, somewhat reluctantly, joined its Executive. Two whole working days as well as odd evenings must needs now be given up to the Federation. Fishing, visits to Burne-Jones, almost all his recreations, even poetry-writing, had to be sacrificed. And what, at the expense of all this effort, was the Federation accomplishing?*

* *Justice*, Jan. 26, Feb. 16, Feb. 23, March 29, April 19, 1884. Mackail ii, 102, 110–111, 117-120, 123, 141-3, 169. Glasier, 26. Compton-Rickett, 36. *Oxford Magazine*, Nov. 21, 1883. Montague, *Toynbee*, esp., 24-26, 35-41. Milner, *Toynbee*, esp. 49, 52. *Howard Association*, 1.

CHAPTER IV

THE FEDERATION BEFORE THE RUPTURE 1883-1884

WHAT, indeed, *was* the Federation accomplishing? On January 19th, 1884, it published the first issue of *Justice, the organ of Social Democracy.* The paper was sold at twopence and at a steady loss but, unlike all other contemporary Socialist periodicals, was to survive. Monotonously Marxian and propagandist, courageous, somewhat pedantic and supported entirely by self-sacrifice, it conveyed to a very limited and largely fortuitous public more than a little of the essential flavour of the Federation itself. Its birth was made possible by the generosity of Edward Carpenter, who, after resigning his Orders and a Cambridge Fellowship and lecturing for the University Extension Movement, had recently retired to a small farm near Sheffield and to his millennial visions. Almost from the start Hyndman edited the paper. William Morris, Bernard Shaw, Hubert Bland and Mrs. Bland ('E. Nesbit'), Henry Salt and H. H. Champion were among those who wrote for it. But it did not sell, and there was a chronic deficit, which at first was defrayed by Morris. Indeed its public consisted largely of chance purchasers at meetings: and now and again passers-by in Fleet Street or the Strand or Regent's Park would pause to stare at a bearded gentleman in top hat, frock coat and 'good gloves,' accompanied by a

ruddy-cheeked personage looking like a sea-captain and wearing a soft shirt and a blue serge suit, with a working-man or so and one or two apparently prosperous professional persons, all of whom were hawking copies of a small news-sheet at twopence each. To Hyndman at least these expeditions must have been exquisitely painful – even when they were not warned by the police to desist on the grounds that the occupants of the mansions over the way would object to 'that thing' being flaunted so near their windows. In the past he had suffered agonies, which he never forgot, at having to stand by while Henry George, unabashed, ate whelks off a costermonger's barrow. But in spite of the fact that its public must necessarily be so largely both fortuitous and working-class, *Justice*, like the Federation, declined to temper the austerity of its Marxism. It would preach the truth, undiluted and undecorated, and trust to what it preached to fulfil the proverb and prevail.

It is a strange freak of chance that the men whose generosity ensured its launching and its survival should both have been so remote in spirit from *Justice*, and indeed from the Federation itself. William Morris, who spent himself so prodigally for them, was not of their kin, and Edward Carpenter was more alien yet. Their remote objective, indeed, if he understood it aright, Edward Carpenter too desired, for it was equality. But their means to that end did not belong to the world he knew and cared for. For Edward Carpenter was a mystic and to him democracy was a mystic force, indeed was almost nature itself.

My words whether you understand or not is nothing to me –
I sort rather with those who do not read them.

And again

> *The guides are all talking. They are settling the affairs of the universe. . . . They are busy moreover distributing money and pamphlets: and surely nothing more can be needed.*

Thus wrote the generous subscriber to the treasuries of *Justice* and the Federation.

Edward Carpenter, member of a prosperous Brighton family, had been a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge; a clerical Fellow indeed, although, when he presented himself for ordination, his views upon the sacrifice of Isaac had gravely disquieted the Bishop of Ely. 'I do not think your views are those of the Church,' the aged prelate had complained, but, perhaps because, as he confessed, he did not altogether understand them, he had not hesitated to ordain him. Carpenter had combined his Fellowship with a Cambridge curacy under F. D. Maurice, by then a Professor of Moral Philosophy though thirty years earlier the evangel of the first Christian Socialism, but he does not seem to have imbibed any economic views from this source. It was the writings of Walt Whitman which, with the effect of a sudden apocalypse, opened the eyes of the shy, conscientious, dreamy young don, at once a mystic and a sceptic, to the long littleness of the life in which he seemed to have imprisoned himself. Its excessive comforts, the tedious brilliance of its endless talk, its remoteness from practical affairs, and even, in a sense, from humanity, all became suddenly intolerable. He would resign his Orders, although this would almost certainly mean the loss of his Fellowship. His colleagues did what they

could to dissuade him. Religion 'is all such tomfoolery' urged the dean of his College, who was himself in Orders, 'that it doesn't matter whether you say you believe in it or whether you say you don't.' But Carpenter had persisted and there had followed seven harassing years of University Extension lecturing on astronomy – in Leeds, where stars seemed never to be visible, in Nottingham, in Sheffield and elsewhere. Three hours' preparation of the apparatus for the lecture in some bleak schoolroom, then the hour's class, the lecture, the torture of dinner and endless conversation with the local manufacturer-patron, and at last the night made sleepless by nervous strain. He did thus, it was true, encounter common humanity but in other respects the life seemed scarcely an advance upon Cambridge and from this phase he released himself in 1881 by going to live and work, as one of themselves, with a farmworker and his family near Sheffield. The friendship of simple folk and the novel and invigorating candour of a simple life suddenly released his spirit. By 1881 he was beginning *Towards Democracy*, writing day after day in an ecstasy and always out of doors, in a sort of wooden sentinel box he had improvised beside a brook and overlooking far fields. Not for two years yet would he encounter Socialism and there is no Socialism in this strange rhapsody; only the passion for equality and the passion for simplicity. There is the inspiration of Whitman in it, no doubt, and the inspiration, for that matter, of the Bhagivat, but there is also Edward Carpenter and the book cannot be dismissed as derived from this or that, or as the mere protest of a pantheist against Victorianism, cannot indeed be dismissed at all, but has made its own way and, sooner or later, will be revalued and proclaimed both as a rare piece of literature

shot through with fitful flashes of genius and a prophetic work in which, among other matters, the soul of the Labour movement found expression before as yet there was a Labour movement. For though there are no economics in this prose poem, and least of all any Marxian economics, yet there is much of England, (observe the rich and sonorous descant which begins *I hear the sound of the whetting of scythes*); and there is much of the people of England and of its fields and lanes: and the book abundantly exhales the very spirit of that democracy which is not a policy but a religion. Indeed it savours little of the Democratic Federation and much of the Labour movement which was to be.

> *The common and universal; the servant girl tying up her hair before the broken mirror . . . the slow humour of old gaffers on the village seat in the sun. These contain you. With all your ambitions you cannot escape and go beyond them. It is impossible. . . . You try to set yourself apart from the vulgar. It is in vain. In that instant vulgarity attaches itself to you.*

Keir Hardie would understand such words, but hardly Hyndman.

It was in Hyndman's *England for All* that Carpenter first made the acquaintance of Socialism. For the details of the creed he cared little, but it stirred him as 'a call to the rich and those in power to remodel Society and their own lives.' Might not this creed and these men contrive to canalise that blind, undirected stirring of men's hearts which he had himself already discerned and enshrined in *Towards Democracy*? He did not join the Federation, although, as has been seen, he gave money

for the launching of *Justice*. (Not that he had much money, but he had learnt to allow himself few needs; and he had recently inherited £6,000 from his father and with this he could buy a house and three fields at Millthorpe near Sheffield and settle there with a succession of intimate working-class friends to work on the land, to make sandals – almost symbols of the simple life – to write and to lecture.) But three years later, after the rupture, which was to come, between Morris and Hyndman he would play the chief part in founding the Sheffield Socialist Society as a branch of Morris's Socialist League. For this as well as sometimes for the larger League the visionary – whose 'presence never impressed one with the idea of body' – would emerge to 'agitate and organise.' And here he would learn the familiar paradox of the Socialist movement –

> 'to hear Socialism spoken of from above as nothing but an envious shriek and a threat, a gospel of bread and butter, a "divide up all round"– the work of unscrupulous demagogues and tinsel politicians; and then the next moment to pass into the heart of the thing and to find oneself in an atmosphere of the most simple fraternity and idealism where the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, a kingdom of social order and decency, was entertained with a childlike faith that might almost make one smile;'

and here to find

> 'such a tenderness and patient commonsense in the mass of the people – everywhere, I believe – as to convince one that, nothwithstanding the slanders that have been heaped up by the arm-chair his-

torian, they are really more inclined to endure than to accuse, more ready to forgive than to retaliate.'

His house at Millthorpe gradually became a place of pilgrimage for devotees of the simpler life and Socialists who swarmed up the valley, as he had once humorously put it, 'like a tidal wave *or bore*.'

He had at last contrived to sever himself altogether from Cambridge and his old stifling life and for long his writings were recorded in the British Museum catalogue under two headings; the earlier being attributed to 'Edward Carpenter, Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge' and the later to 'Edward Carpenter, Social Reformer.'*

II

Justice was perhaps the chief achievement of the Federation during these years. But there were others. On August 4th, 1884, the Democratic Federation, as we have seen, became the Social Democratic Federation, thus more openly avowing the creed it was already preaching. It was natural at first for Socialist societies to find it hard to realise that they were Socialist. (It was not till June, 1885, that the Fabian Society, founded, as we shall see, in January, 1884, would first publicly print the word Socialism.) In 1883 it published *Socialism made plain*, a pamphlet which eventually achieved a circulation of a hundred thousand copies and which demanded the socialisation of the sources of life. By this time the Federation had formulated a sweeping social charter 'to palliate the evils of our existing society,'

* Bryher 19, *Justice*, July 12, 1884. Hyndman, *Record* 292-3, 334. Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* 1, 12, 26, 44, 56. Carpenter, *Days and Dreams* esp. 128-130. Salt 87-8, *Commonweal*, Nos. 12, 13. Lowe, *Souvenirs*, 104.

and the nine points of the programme of 1881 had become the 'Political Programme,' a mere means to the end. Compulsory construction of healthy artisans' and agricultural labourers' dwellings: free and universal education; a maximum eight hours' day: cumulative taxation on incomes of over £300: state appropriation of railways: national banks: extinction of the national debt: nationalisation of land and organisation of agricultural and industrial unemployed. These palliative measures however were necessarily far less sweeping than the changes implied in the creation of a Socialist Commonwealth itself. At this time the Treasurer of the Federation reported that his balance in hand was £3 less than his liabilities. . . .

In April, 1884, too, a debate, entitled 'Will Socialism benefit the English people?' was elaborately staged in the St. James Hall. Hyndman, as of course, did battle for the Federation and the *status quo* was defended by the secularist, Charles Bradlaugh, then at the height of his reputation. He had recently, by sheer obstinacy, compelled the Mother of Parliaments to accept his solemn affirmation in place of the statutory oath on the faith of a Christian and perhaps a trifle exhilarated by finding himself for once applauded by the orthodox he expected to make short work of Mr. Hyndman. Nor was he disappointed. His supporters, after the debate, were convinced that he had ridiculed the strange new creed out of existence. Unwonted congratulations were showered upon him by the orthodox Press. In the course of the debate he had taken pains to make it clear that under Socialism the words 'my house,' 'my coat,' 'my watch' would all disappear, that since all things would be owned by everybody nobody would be able to sell anything to anybody, and that

on nationalised railways passengers would not be permitted to take tickets to the destinations which they selected or on the days on which they themselves found it convenient to travel. After this, it hardly seemed as if Socialists should give much trouble in the future. And if a grotesquely attired young Irishman called Shaw (who looked like an insurance canvasser and displayed 'an unusually poor crop of ginger whiskers' and an unenviable Norfolk coat, and who had caused some annoyance at Bradlaugh's earlier lectures against Socialism by insisting upon delivering criticisms from the body of the hall), had observed after the debate to one of Bradlaugh's jubilant supporters 'Our man has been playing at longer bowls than you know,' such wild words spoken in the chagrin of defeat one could surely afford to dismiss with a tolerant smile.

But apart from these infrequent and more or less spectacular achievements the unremitting and everyday propaganda of the Federation was achieving disquietingly little. And this was certainly not for lack of talent. *Justice's* weekly list of official 'lectures,' in which mere street corner affairs are not included, runs usually to more than a dozen a week in 1884: indeed in the first week of *Justice's* life there were eleven lectures in store and three of them were by William Morris. Hyndman, H. H. Champion, Belfort Bax, J. L. Joynes, Andreas Scheu were assiduous in the van and there were at least a score of accustomed lecturers. There was at least one lecture by a clever young barrister, Mr. R. B. Haldane, who was to be a Liberal, and afterwards a Labour Lord Chancellor, and George Bernard Shaw, the young Irishman who had bearded Bradlaugh, although deeply mistrusted by most of the members of the Federation,

who considered him 'incapable of consecutive rational thought,' was only too ready to explain his views in public. He did not join the Federation, though he nearly joined it, but he was prepared to lecture for it upon 'Competition,' 'Thieves,' 'Civil War,' '*Laissez-Faire*' or 'The Socialist Movement.' He lectured ingratiatingly. He could almost persuade a middle-class audience at Wimbledon that Socialism was not a menace. He would collect 'as much as sixteen and sixpence for the cause' in his hat on a wet Sunday afternoon on Clapham Common; he would speak for an hour and a half in pouring rain in Hyde Park to an audience consisting of six policemen, sent by authority to keep the peace, and the secretary of the branch which had invited his services. He would stand at street-corners with William Morris, grateful for an audience of twenty and ready to prompt the artist-poet, who was not ready with repartee. And all this although before these early efforts his 'heart used to beat like a recruit's going under fire for the first time.' But more frequently he would address working-men and eagerly, sparklingly would explain to them the principal fallacies in the theories of Marx. This, since the working-men were almost totally ignorant of the works of Marx, would sometimes leave them a trifle perplexed. A drowsy, befuddled gathering of eight in a stifling coffee-shop in Bermondsey, a chairman, head pillowed on arms, manifestly, even stertorously, asleep, and Shaw, almost oblivious of his audience, subtly, unflaggingly exposing Marx: the bizarre picture hangs vivid against the misty background of those forgotten lectures.*

* *Justice*, April 19, 26, August 9, Nov. 22, 1884. May 16, June 6, 1885. *Verbatim Report* passim Hyndman, *Record* 338-340. Rider 15-17. Henderson, 123, 142, 152, 205. Pease, 38.

III

There seemed, to the leaders of the Federation, every reason why its membership should grow fast. Yet it grew very slowly, or did not grow at all. In the course of 1884 *Justice* appears to record at least twenty-six branches in existence or upon the verge of existence; but at the Annual Conference in 1885 only fifteen branches are represented, with two mentioned as sending no delegates; a mere seventeen in all.* There are six newcomers, but of fifteen out of the twenty-six there is no trace at the Conference. Some of them, as Edinburgh and Merton Abbey, had followed Morris and his friends in the schism which was to rend the Federation at the end of 1884. Others had quietly, unassumingly, perished. And what was the membership of the branches that existed? The regulations for the Annual Conference had optimistically made special provision for branches of over five hundred, but the entire Federation yet barely reached this total and it is doubtful whether many of its branches numbered fifty. It was remarkable too that as yet there were only two Scottish branches, although one of them, Glasgow, considered that there was 'no city in the United Kingdom where the opening for propaganda is more favourable than in Glasgow at the present moment.' At present Socialism was English; soon, in another form, it was to be an invasion from the north. Yet, although the first members of the Federation had seemed to believe that they had but to explain to the workers their exploitation

* Battersea, Blackburn, Clerkenwell, Chelsea, Hull, Marylebone, Liverpool, Croydon, Shoreditch, Tottenham, Walworth, Westminster, Glasgow, Nottingham, Staffordshire, Salford, Bristol.

by Capital for the workers to rise as one man, they were by no means disheartened by the scantiness of their numbers after so much hard work. Indeed the tendency grew among them to think of the Federation as a skeleton organisation which would provide officers for the approaching Revolution, with its Executive as a 'Shadow' Committee of Public Safety. Viewed thus, fewness of numbers, as with Gideon's army, seemed almost to be an advantage. Then there were the recurrent, if fleeting, moments when it did transiently seem as if, in spite of all appearances, they had roused the masses, as if the Revolution was at hand. Thus Hyndman, at a time when revelations in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the sales of working-class girls had roused fierce popular resentment, would write 'Social Democrats have stirred the apathy of the oppressed classes *more than they themselves knew*. It needs but a spark to fire the whole train.' The italics are not Hyndman's.

The branch members were almost all of the working-class – in one branch an adherent with white hands was challenged for a spy – but though they would applaud speakers who denounced the ruling classes most of the speakers could not help feeling, with Morris, that when it came to explaining Socialist principles 'one always rather puzzles an audience.' And if thus limited was the Socialism of the branch members, the millions of working men who were not members, even the more politically-minded of them who could be reached in Radical Clubs, cared nothing for Socialism whatever. The great Trade Union movement was non-political, was Radical, was even Tory, but showed no signs whatever of being Socialist. And in the economic depths beneath Trade Unionism weltered that thirty per cent. of London

remote and indifferent to politics of any kind. Which is, in other words, to say that in England the working-classes, like other Englishmen, when interested in politics at all were interested in so far as these could bring about immediate practical improvements in their lot; they had little taste for abstract theory. And abstract, dogmatic theory seemed all that the Federation was prepared to offer them.

Again, even the handful of wage earners so painfully collected in the branches of the Federation showed discouragingly little tendency to develop leadership or enterprise among themselves. They would applaud the denunciations of the rich and puzzle, not always very effectually over the theory of surplus value, but the work at the headquarters of the Federation remained in middle-class hands. On the Executive chosen in 1884 the wage-earners were scarcely one in three, and of those who were in effect shaping the policy of the Federation not one but was of the middle or upper middle classes. For John Burns, the Battersea engineer who was soon to cut a figure in the Socialist and other Parties, although now elected to the Executive, was not yet a directing influence, and Harry Quelch, of Bermondsey, though a valiant, stentorian and loyally Marxian speaker, was in council but an echo of Hyndman. Moreover, such funds as there were came from middle-class pockets and Morris, speaking as Treasurer in the October of 1884, had to report that so far they had relied entirely upon 'a few middle-class men.' He had been given, he said, £100 for the printing fund by a member but would like to see the twopences and threepences coming in more rapidly. But they did not. So that *Justice*, which had been launched by the generosity of an ex-Fellow of Trinity Hall,

Cambridge, was maintained in existence by the generosity of an Honorary Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. Hyndman's top hat seemed scarcely inappropriate; indeed in a sense it was almost symbolical.*

IV

The Federation seemed to have achieved but little; was it after all so very clear about what it desired to achieve? The inevitable revolution, no doubt. But was the inevitable revolution which, of course, as Hyndman unflaggingly reminded one, might always commence to-morrow, to be violent when it came? Were there to be bombs and bloodshed? The members were, in truth, somewhat equivocal. They would declare that 'all means are justifiable' and speak of 'nothing short of a display of organised force.' *Justice* would write that 'the only successful argument to use against the small minority of labour robbers is force – physical force, perhaps threatened at the polls and by demonstrations, more probably . . . expressed in open conflict,' and Hyndman declared that 'some attention would be paid to deaths by starvation if a rich man were immolated on every pauper's tomb.' Indeed one member calling on Harry Quelch (to beg him to address a Sunday School) came upon him drilling half a dozen men with broomsticks in a cramped back-yard. But they would object vigorously when critics interpreted their words to imply that they contemplated battle or arson, and their official attitude seems on the whole to have been 'The seeds of a bloody revolution

* *Justice*, Jan. 19, May 31, August 9, October 18, 1884, August 8, 1885. Mackail ii, 173. Rider 14.

are germinating. Will the middle and upper class help us to organise it peacefully? If not theirs be the responsibility for the property and lives destroyed.' (These were the words of John Burns in Hyde Park.) Indeed the Federation was thoroughly ambiguous. A revolution would come; the Doctor had foretold it. But would it come without the Federation's launching? That was the question. Difficult indeed to decide. As the *Times* would complain, its orators had a way of explaining that violence was the only hope of redress and then bidding their audiences disperse quietly. But, as we are to see, upon this issue of force or no force depended the whole problem of tactics, and not solving one the Federation could never wholly solve the other. It expected the Revolution, but did not, could not indeed, boldly address itself to promote it.* It worked rather to make Marxian Socialists. Yet its powers of persuasion were withered by its belief in the coming upheaval, which forbade all such opportunist or palliative tactics as are the core of a campaign of persuasion. What Shaw would sardonically call 'the delightful ease of revolutionary heroics' was their business rather than 'the hard work of practical reform.'† It was Shaw, too, who, with malignant shrewdness, would point out that even if positively there was not much significance in the Social Democrat's revolutionary faith, negatively there was much. For it dispensed him from many of the laborious activities of the practical reformer.

Again, surely, as Marxians, they must be strictly

* See Sanders 28-32 for the difficulties of a conscientious member of the Federation with the Marxian theories.

† Pseudonymously in *To-day*, August, 1888. *My friend Fitzthunder the unpractical Socialist*, signed, anagramatically, Redbarn Wash.

class-conscious – even though for not a few of them the class of which they were to be conscious might not be their own? Yet even here there were misgivings – albeit misgivings to be ruthlessly suppressed. A member, E. Nesbit, wrote to *Justice* to inquire, 'Can we not be Socialists without being so bitter?' The reply came immediately, from a correspondent of whom the editor explained that 'our comrade is a compositor earning now the best rate of wages' (and who was therefore better qualified to speak than E. Nesbit, who was an authoress). 'We must hate them' and our 'bitterness should be as gall and wormwood to the soul,' he wrote. And when one E. R. Pease, who had by then taken a hand in founding the Fabian Society and was for long to be its secretary, wrote to a later issue mildly supporting the view that hatred was not indispensable, there followed a tart editorial inquiry whether this did not 'display the worst sort of bourgeois feeling.' Was it possible that here too the Federation was misjudging the instincts of the English working-class?

An even more preplexing problem was the relation of Socialism to Christianity. Inquiries began to pour in on the Federation as to whether Socialism committed its supporters to dogmatic atheism. The Federation did not find it easy to answer. True, Christian Socialism was lifting its head once more. The Guild of St. Matthew, which was Radical if not yet Socialist, had been founded by Stewart Headlam, an Anglican (and Etonian) clergyman in 1877, and in 1884 it adopted what was practically a Socialist formula. Now a little group of idealists was going further. Their *Christian Socialist* had anticipated *Justice* by a few months, and in its pages Stewart Headlam with two other undaunted Anglican clergymen,

C. L. Marson and W. E. Moll, was always ready to maintain that He who had preached the gospel to the poor was the first Socialist and indeed that Christianity was Socialism and Socialism Christianity.

> '. . . the founder of the great Socialist Society for the promotion of righteousness, the preacher of a Revolution, the dethroner of kings, the gentle tender sympathiser with the rough and the outcast . . . the words which Thou utterest, the revolutionary, Socialistic words. . . .'

Thus spoke Headlam in 1883. But within the Federation opinion tended to make of atheism yet one more shibboleth. Its leaders were rationalist, sometimes aggressively rationalist in temper.* The problems with which they were dealing seemed to them to be on the material plane and they varied for the most part only in the extent to which they were prepared to exclude these opinions from their political utterances. Belfort Bax had declared unhesitatingly in Conference that Christianity was one of the enemies that Socialists had to combat and that no priest as such should be admitted to a Socialist society, and he would argue in print that no one could be a genuine Socialist who was a Christian. In the spring of 1883 Miss Beatrice Potter, (already a student of sociology albeit not yet Mrs. Sidney Webb), met Eleanor Marx Aveling in the refreshment-room of the British Museum and heard her explain, 'We want to make them disregard the mythical next world and live for this world, and insist on having what will make it pleasant to them.' Dr.

* See for the similar rationalism of the early Fabians and its causes, G. B. Shaw in Appendix I to Pease's *History of the Fabian Society*.

Aveling embarked upon a pamphlet war with Stewart Headlam and another clergyman. There were others, it is true, who, whatever their own opinions, had realised that it was hard enough to make converts to Socialism without the gratuitous obstacle of one more shibboleth and *Justice* would declare, a trifle ungraciously perhaps, that 'We are not of those who foam at the mouth because people who are helping on the Cause believe in an ancient Asiatic religion.' 'We are neither Christians nor anti-Christians,' professed a later *Socialist Ritual.* But on the whole the Federation remained dogmatically atheist. And it must be admitted that the leaders of the Federation had some excuse for hostility to the Church at least, which they did not perhaps sufficiently distinguish from the creed which it professed. For the attitude of the Church to the social problem seemed scarcely to have advanced since its hypocrisy, cynicism or apathy at the time of the first industrial Revolution had driven hundreds of thousands into the Free Churches. 'Spiritual consolation' for the starving and diseased was all that the Archbishop of Canterbury had been able to suggest after an official visit to the slums of East London. And 'Civis' was still writing to the *Times* to urge its readers to subscribe to Sunday Schools and City Missions because with their tranquillising influence these were a cheap and effective substitute for the large and costly military garrisons which were needed to overawe the working classes in foreign capitals. None the less the Federation, adding on the whole the shibboleth of atheism to its armoury of Marxian shibboleths, was but erecting one more barrier between itself and the working classes. For the organised working-classes, in this country, have almost always been religiously disposed

and their leaders more often than not prominent lay preachers in one or other of the Free Churches.*

Naturally also it was not always the political and economic traditions of society that the members would challenge. Their instinct for criticism or rebellion would run in more than one channel. Dr. Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, Marx's daughter, destined, both of them, for tragedy – thanks to Aveling, a scoundrel with dangerous personal charm – refused on principle to be married, and disclosed their views on marriage in a pamphlet *The Woman Question*. ('We contend that chastity is unhealthy and unholy' they wrote.) Belfort Bax's essays would show him to be 'a ruthless critic of current morality.' Even Edward Carpenter would, in due time, give occasion for scandal. There were passages in the later editions of *Towards Democracy* and there was a pamphlet, reprinted later as one of the chapters in *The Intermediate Sex*, whose scientific candour, whose subject indeed, was unfamiliar and disquieting to its generation. All of which, taken together, lent at any rate some colour to the feverish invective of *Socialism and Infamy*, a pamphlet in which a Sheffield neighbour charged not only Carpenter, but the Socialist movement, with criminal immorality. ('Go! false Prophet . . . destroyer of purity, and chastity, and honour; disseminator of filth and dirt vomited up from the foul pit of

* *Justice*, January 19, April 12, May 3, August 9, August 30, 1884; June 6, September 19, 26, 1885. *Times*, February 22, 1886. Shaw *F.S.* 7. *To-day*, August, 1888. *Saturday Review*, November 17, 1900. Sanders 28-32. Webb, *Apprenticeship*, 301*n*.

sin and death; agent of Hell and enemy of the human race. . . .' Thus this gentleman would find words to phrase his disapproval.)

All this no doubt was to be expected. None the less it was not calculated to expedite conversions in a generation which was shocked even by Morris's soft collar. Naturally, too, the disciples of this new and unpopular movement were apt to be disciples of other new and unpopular movements. Humanitarianism, vegetarianism, sandals, the simplification of life – if not exactly scandalous, all these tendencies were at least deeply mistrusted and it could not be denied that the new Socialists were apt to be implicated in all of them. J. L. Joynes and Henry Salt, who had both been Eton masters, were both humanitarians – Salt founded the Humanitarian League – and taught their friend Shaw to be a vegetarian as well. (Joynes had toured Ireland with Henry George, been arrested in error and, announcing his forthcoming *Adventures of a Tourist in Ireland*, had so scandalised Eton that he was asked to choose between the book and his mastership. It was the mastership he resigned.) Edward Carpenter was a Walt Whitmanite, in the tradition of Thoreau and his *Walden*, worshipped nature and comradeship and lived the simple life. A Whitmanite too was William Clark, who would be of the Fabian Essayists. Walter Crane, though he had no other conspicuous oddities, was however an artist – and paid for his Socialism by being far less known and admired in his native country than in France, Germany or Italy. Even the robust Tom Mann's long career of agitation in the Trade Union world would be preceded by a belief that a general adoption of teetotalism and vegetarianism would suffice of itself to regenerate society. The Fabian

Society itself would be born a by-product, so to speak, of the Fellowship of the New Life, whose members were deeply influenced by these unfamiliar tendencies. 'Cease to be slaves in order that you may become cranks is not a very inspiring call to arms.' Thus, remembering these days, a trifle too sardonically perhaps, would Shaw reflect twenty years later.*

VI

But in fact all that has been said of the creed, tactics and character of the Social Democratic Federation can be summed up in a sentence: it had derived all three from Marx and this source was proving itself alien to the instincts of this country. To the organised working-classes in Britain, patient, self-respecting, religiously-minded, good-humoured, proud of their country and intellectually indolent, eager for the quickest road to practical improvements but profoundly sceptical of Utopias and impervious to abstract theory, with their deep-seated instinct for compromise and a respect for their social and economic 'superiors' which can co-exist with the profession of even the most levelling of political creeds, to such as these the Marxism of the Federation, abstrusely theoretical, bitterly class-conscious, international, intolerant of compromise or partial reform and apparently anti-Christian, could make little appeal. Hyndman, and some of his followers too, were apt to be too doctrinaire for the general. They would expound surplus value at the street-corners, and Hyndman,

* Shaw, *Major Barbara*, 151, 160. *Socialism and Infamy* passim. Salt 75, etc. *Woman Question*. Mann, 54, 55. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 354-358. Henderson 48, etc.

addressing a mass meeting in Hyde Park, could quote the Æneid, *uno avulso non deficit alter*. Moreover, there is a good deal in a criticism made by Shaw, that Marx's *Capital* is not so much a treatise on Socialism as 'A jeremiad against the bourgeoisie, supported by such a mass of evidence and such a relentless genius for denunciation as had never been brought to bear before': and there is much in what he added:

> 'But the working-man respects the bourgeoisie and wants to be a bourgeois: Marx never got hold of him for a moment. It was the revolting ones of the bourgeoisie itself – Lassalle, Marx, Liebnecht, Morris, Hyndman, Bax, all, like myself, bourgeois crossed with squirearchy – that painted the flag red. Bakunin and Kropotkin, of the military and noble caste (like Napoleon), were our extreme left. The middle and upper classes are the revolutionary element in society: the proletariat is the conservative element, as Disraeli well knew.'

For the same reasons even Hyndman to all his contempt for the middle classes was compelled to add a contempt for the working-classes as well. Their chief social ambition, it seemed to him, was to be mistaken for shopkeepers. And when at last they got into Parliament, he found to his disgust, they were infinitely deferential to their wealthy opponents. The British Labour movement which was to come would not be Marxian. Hyndman himself, towards the close of his long career of agitation, was driven to admit bitterly that 'the educated middle class of this island is better prepared to accept Socialism even to-day than is the working-class, which everywhere else is its mainstay.' How could the strange phenomenon be explained? Surely the economic developments

foretold by the Doctor were there? He could only suggest that what was lacking was 'adequate intellectual capacity on the part of the members of the disinherited class.' The working-classes of the Continent, however, possessed, it appeared, the necessary intellectual capacity. The Federation greatly admired the German Social-Democratic Party. His 'views of Socialism,' Belfort Bax avowed, 'as to theory, principles and tactics' were 'entirely in accord with the German Social-Democratic Party.' He 'did not think there was any real difference of opinion about this anywhere.' And for the German Socialists advance would be along Marxian paths. Much retrospective light, indeed, is thrown upon the policy of the Federation by the present contrast between European Socialism and the British Labour movement of to-day, so much more immediate and realistic in its policy, and because so much less encumbered by philosophy or theory so much more adaptable, elastic and popular, so much more able and ready to absorb members of other classes.*

The Social Democratic Federation necessarily shared also with all political societies which impose rigid tests of orthodoxy a tendency to be rent by recurrent feuds and secessions; and with the Federation this weakness was exaggerated by the dictatorial habits of Hyndman. For Hyndman was ten years older than any of his immediate associates in the Executive of the Federation save Morris, his temper was short and he had been long accustomed to having his own way. His position as leader was incontestable, for, besides his other gifts, he was one of the extremely small minority in that Marxian

* The contrast is interestingly suggested throughout a recent German work, Egon Wertheimer's *Portrait of the Labour Party* (tr.) 1929.

body who had read the writings of Marx. For the words of one disciple, 'We felt that the Marxian theories were great, although we did not presume to understand them,' expressed the attitude of most. But unfortunately he had a way of snubbing his associates and a dangerous gift for sarcasm, and his associates, being rebels, were naturally impatient of authority, even that of the rebel leader. A secession, nourished partly by personal animosities and partly by a quarrel over tactics, became inevitable. Inevitably also William Morris became the protagonist of the discontented. No one could have been more reluctant than Morris to find himself being drawn into this position. From the first he had planned to serve as one of the rank and file in the great crusade to which he had vowed himself; ready, as he was heard to tell Hyndman soon after he joined the Federation, to do whatever he was told and to go wherever he was led. But Morris, for all his modest intentions, was by nature ungovernable. In any event a deep schism must have opened within the Executive Committee of the Federation, and as sullen subterranean rumblings began to announce the coming fissure Morris, to his consternation, found himself 'driven to thrusting myself forward and making a party within a party.' 'More than two or three of us,' he wrote, 'distrust Hyndman thoroughly: I have done my best to trust him, but cannot any longer.' There was trouble too over tactics. Was the Federation to concern itself with Parliament – with candidatures, with the political blackmailing of the Parties – or was it merely, as Morris wished, to preach? But the immediate occasion of the long-threatened disruption was the organisation of a group of Edinburgh Socialists by Andreas Scheu, in deference to their own susceptibilities,

as a 'Scottish Land and Labour League' instead of as a branch of the English Federation. Hyndman immediately launched a ukase: the League must be dissolved and reformed as a branch of the Federation. At once the air was thick with the hurtle of charges and countercharges. Long pent-up animosities burst forth in a whirlwind of recrimination. Tyranny, treachery, corruption and other ugly accusations resounded on all sides. At Christmas-time in 1884 the final scenes of the tragi-comedy were played out at a full meeting of the Executive Council. 'Last night,' wrote Morris ruefully, 'came off to the full as damned as I expected. . . .' Hyndman maintained afterwards that throughout the protracted wrangle he had had letters in his pocket from Morris, marked 'private,' which would have destroyed the contentions, both political and personal, of his opponents: but no conceivable letter could have obliterated the gulf now yawning between the two factions, and at length Morris rose to read out the resignation of the discontented, complaining of the 'attempt to substitute arbitrary rule for fraternal co-operation contrary to the principles of Socialism' and, with ten of the eighteen Council members, he walked out of the room. Next morning he was indomitably hiring Windsor chairs and a kitchen table to furnish the humble quarters of the Socialist League into which the dissidents immediately formed themselves. These men were in a majority and might have expelled their opponents and themselves have remained the Federation: but where Hyndman was, they could not help feeling, there must be the Federation.

At this moment of parting there was a revulsion of feeling. Most of the eight who remained crowded round

Morris to assure him that if they had said hard things of him they had not meant them; nobody indeed in his sober moments could suspect William Morris of unworthy motives. Jack Williams, orator of all forlorn causes, wept bitterly and there were handshakings and regrets. None the less the end of an act had come and the curtain was falling. With this the Social Democratic Federation passes from the forefront of the stage. It would continue, even beyond the limits of this record, to publish *Justice* and to proclaim unflaggingly the Marxian gospel. It would yet, as we shall see, at the time of the Trafalgar Square riots loom for a moment formidable, more formidable than before or since, upon the gaze of an apprehensive public. Of its leading members a few would play a critical part in the building of the 'new' Unionism and in the great Dock Strike of 1889. But the Federation as such had shot its bolt. For inexorably now in the world of ideas the unseen forces, which for many years past had compelled Conservative and Liberal Governments almost unconsciously to pass Socialist legislation and were busy now fashioning a widespread Socialist consciousness in the nation, were turning to other instruments.*

VI

Have we taken this Federation too seriously? I do not think so. There existed no avowed Socialism in Great Britain before the Federation.† But for the Federa-

* Henderson, 96, 204. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 144, 249, 261, 275. Clayton, 12, 13. Humphrey, 108. *How I became*, 14. Mackail ii, 125, 129.

† Mr. Pease (Pease, 61) claims that the Fabian Society was the first 'definitely Socialist body' in England, on the grounds that it was formed on January 4th, 1884, whereas the Democratic Federation did not become the Social Democratic Federation until August of that year. But as has

tion there might have been no avowed Socialism for another decade. These men had had the courage to take a first step. The path they chose proved at last for them, it is true, to be a *cul-de-sac*. But they had set great forces in motion. The Labour Party would in due course be born of the Independent Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party having been made possible by the 'new' Trade Unionism: and the new Trade Unionism was first built up by four working men, Will Thorne, Tom Mann, John Burns and Ben Tillet, three of them already members of the Federation, and the fourth speedily converted to its doctrines by his three fellow-leaders and his Trade Union experience. Far towards the practical and away from the doctrinaire though they would distort it, each of them was stamped in some degree with the impress of Hyndman's teaching. Moreover, so richly charged was the intellectual atmosphere even before this with Socialist tendencies in thought that public agitation, even by a mere handful, on behalf of a creed bearing that name almost at once released incalculable forces, forces which were to gather momentum with every succeeding year. Almost from its inception accordingly the Federation bulked larger in the public imagination than its actual numbers had ever warranted: and the public was right, for dimly visible, for a while at least, through its ill-manned ranks was to be discerned the spirit of the age.

been seen (above p. 47), the Federation was preaching Socialism for at least two years before this and is referred to in the Press as a 'Socialist Association' in 1881. It was as a 'Society definitely Socialistic' that Morris joined it in January, 1883. While if the formal public use of the word 'Social' be taken as test it may be pointed out that the Fabian Society did not use the word 'Socialism' in its publications until June, 1885. (Pease 38.)

Again it was not a little thing that, although not all these men were members, the Federation should have introduced Socialism to William Morris, to Edward Carpenter and to Bernard Shaw, to Tom Mann and John Burns and Robert Blatchford; and, at second hand, to Keir Hardie himself. In all the missionary bodies that were to come, among the Fabians, in the Independent Labour Party and on the Labour Representation Committee would always hereafter be found men who first learnt to preach social justice in the Social Democratic Federation. Moreover that rigid Marxism, the very choice of a path which in England was not to find the goal, was in itself of assistance to the cause which these men had wished to serve. As Louis Blanc had written long before:

> 'Conceivably, if there is to be progress, all evil possibilities must first be exhausted. The life of humanity is long and the number of solutions conceivable is small. Every Revolution then is useful in this sense at least, that it absorbs one disastrous possibility.'

From the Federation English Socialists would learn that, unmodified, Marx's creed and Marx's tactics would not convert their fellow-countrymen. In more senses than one the early work of the Federation lies at the root of the whole Socialist expansion of the years which were to come. For the task which we have now watched them commencing they would continue unflaggingly, long after the Labour movement, which, though in a real sense it was their offspring, they would despise as too little Socialist, or not genuinely Socialist at all, was

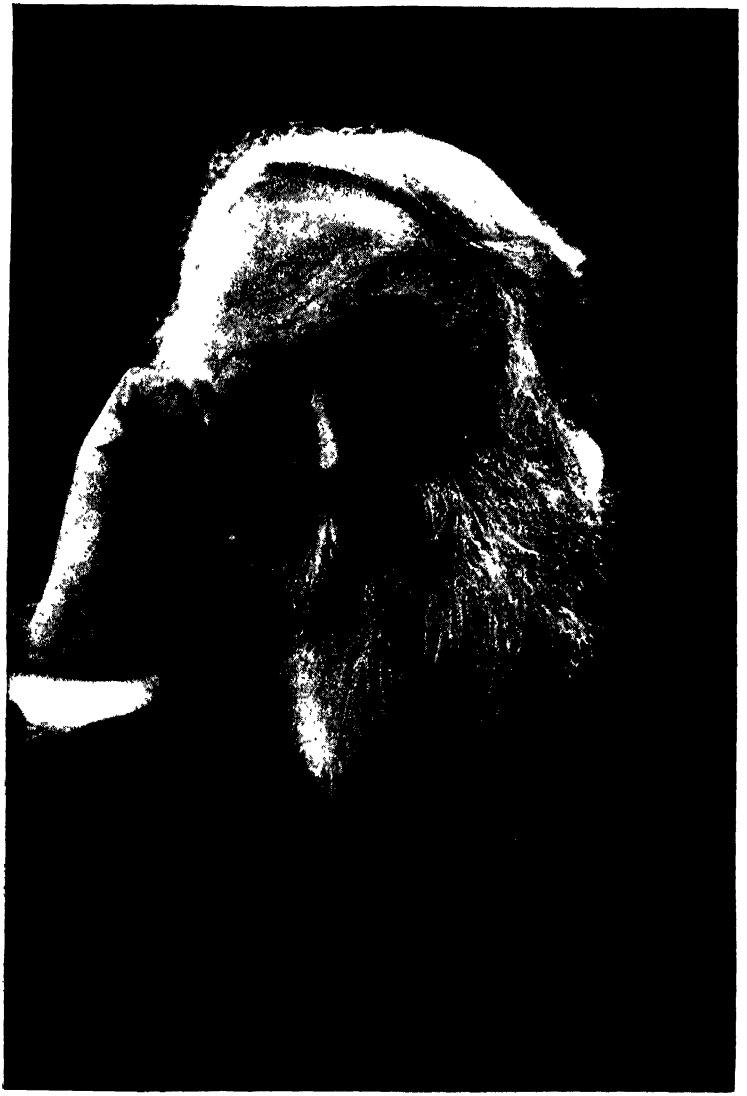

Photo by Beresford

HENRY MAYERS HYNDMAN

as an old man

counting its members in hundreds of thousands; still few in number, still obstinately doctrinaire, still optimistic – they had cherished hopes of the village of Bradfield, near Reading – still torn by recurrent secession and dissension. While always, mellowed somewhat but still obstructive, dictatorial, intolerant, bitter-tongued, major-prophetic, young-hearted and full of fight, jubilantly assuring dispirited colleagues that 'it is going ahead,' Hyndman would be at their head, Hyndman who was the Federation, Hyndman of whom nearly thirty years later Shaw would write:

> 'In the Labour Movement the experienced men will allow Hyndman no public virtue except this: that he has kept the flag flying – the red flag. And there are so many public men who have every public virtue except this, that the exception suffices. Hyndman is still Hyndman, still, head aloft and beard abroad, carrying that flag with such conviction that the smallest and silliest rabble at his heels becomes "the revolution"*.'

* Henderson, 204, Clayton, 140*n*. Mackail ii, 125-9. *Justice*, Dec. 27, 1884, Jan. 3, 1885. Hyndman, *Record*, 358-9. Bax, 77-80. *Times*, Feb. 22, 1886. *How I became*, 63.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS NATIVE TACTICS
1884-1890

By the beginning of 1885, then, there was a Federation, and, with even more scanty membership, a Socialist League, fettered, like the Federation, by Marxian traditions and destined itself at no distant date to an outbreak of philosophical anarchism, inner conflict and disruption. The prospects of the Socialist idea in England seemed dark. None the less in the world of ideas the Socialist current had been setting strongly for a quarter of a century, and was setting stronger than ever now. Hyndman had failed to harness it to his political machine, but inevitably now there would be further attempts.

Already another was shaping itself. On October 24th, 1883, more than a year before the stormy scene which broke the Federation in two, a little gathering of sixteen, three at least of them members of the Federation, met in rooms in Osnaburgh Street to hear a paper on the 'New Life' read by one Thomas Davidson, a Scot from the United States with a gift for disciple-making. The New, or Higher, Life, they were given to understand, would require them to unite in some way

> 'for the purpose of common living as far as possible on a communistic basis, realising amongst themselves the higher life and making it a primary care to provide a worthy education for the young.'

So ran the minutes of the meeting, and there was talk of Robert Owen's New Harmony Community. Utopian indeed; yet out of this apparently impracticable project were, in due course, to emerge powerful and practical political forces. These young men and women of the professional and prosperous classes were readier perhaps than had been any generation of their kind for many decades to listen to any voice which spoke to them of a New Life. For Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859, had opened an intellectual gulf between them and their parents. The older generation, for the most part, had not accepted, or rather had declined to consider, it. (A Fellow of the Royal Society had told Edward Pease in 1875 that he had no opinions to offer upon Darwin's hypothesis.) Of the younger generation, on the other hand, such as were susceptible to ideas at all had grown up with the new theories and now accepted them naturally, even uncritically. From elders, for whom Evolution meant nothing and the opening chapters of Genesis still represented the literally inspired truth as to the material origins of the universe, it seemed to them that in science, religion, and philosophy at any rate they could accept no guidance. If this were so, must it not follow that they would also have to find out for themselves the truth in the recently discovered science of sociology?

A fortnight later the group which had listened to Thomas Davidson met again and resolved unanimously 'that an association be formed whose ultimate aim shall be the reconstruction of Society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities.' A committee of five was at once appointed to prepare a scheme for achieving this desirable object. It even seems to have gone about its work with confidence. Just over a fortnight

later, at any rate, it was submitting its proposals, its mouthpiece being H. H. Champion of the Democratic Federation. All present agreed with it that the competitive system must be ended, but it was soon pointed out that this resolution embodied a material aim, whereas the original object of the gathering had been spiritual. A difficulty at once arose. What exactly *was* the spiritual object? It proved impossible to formulate one off hand and a decision was postponed. In the course of the next two meetings, however, the difficulty of combining the two objects became so acute that it had to be evaded. Two societies were formed. The object of one, The Fellowship of the New Life, was to be purely moral and spiritual. This society survived, not very conspicuously, for fifteen years and expired even more inconspicuously than it had lived. It concerned itself neither with politics nor with Socialism and is now chiefly memorable for having numbered Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis among its members and, for one year, James Ramsay MacDonald as its Honorary Secretary. The other society was in due course to prove itself a shining example of the British genius for practical politics. It came into being on January 4th, 1884, resolved to confine itself to social and political aims. It reverted, in its hour of birth, to a resolution which had been before the earlier gathering of November 7th and had asserted that 'its ultimate aim shall be the reconstruction of Society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities'; but it struck at once a characteristic note by amending these words to read 'shall be *to help on* the reconstruction. . . .' Thus early it had abandoned the dream of enlisting the entire proletariat in its own ranks and itself reconstructing Society. It would urge forward that recon-

struction by whatever means existing circumstances offered it, but it would not expect an apocalyptic transformation of those circumstances or to see the workers of England rallying overwhelmingly behind it. Already the new society was turning its back upon the most cherished traditions of the Federation.

Long afterwards, after thirty years of Marxian propaganda, Hyndman would admit that although, as it seemed to him, all the material conditions foretold by Marx were in being, there was another prerequisite of revolution which Marx had not foretold, and this, unfortunately, was absent. The people of England had not the necessary intellectual capacity: they were deficient (as he also put it), in 'psychologic comprehension.' To the Fabians, however, it had already begun to occur that it might be the preachers, and not the preached at, who suffered from this defect. You wish to change the structure of society? Then all turns upon how your changes are to be effected. If by legislation, then you are to convert a majority of your fellow-countrymen to your way of thinking. Fail to convert a tithe of them and no use to blame *them;* conditions being what they were, *they* being what they were, thus was the problem set you and conspicuously you have not solved it. If however by force – whether by Trafalgar Square riots or seizure of Government offices and expulsion of legislators from Westminster on the foreign, and surely now antiquated, model – then it is altogether a different affair. Less 'psychologic comprehension' will be required but more comprehensive organisation, underground conspiracy and martyrdom than you have yet shown a mind for. And even then, maybe, if history can be trusted, failure. It is indispensable, then, that you make up your

mind. Which do you intend, force or persuasion? The Federation had never clearly decided. It intended both. Or rather it addressed itself to persuasion, and hoped for force. Almost any chance disturbance of the peace, it hoped, might prove to be the Revolution. 'It is quite possible,' wrote Hyndman in the first number of *Justice*, 'that during this very crisis which promises to be long and serious, an attempt will be made to substitute collective for capitalist control.' And in 1912 he was still anticipating 'really stirring times' in the near future. Accordingly the Federation failed to persuade, while the Revolution by force did not arrive. All this the society now forming itself was beginning dimly to suspect. It decided at once to call itself the Fabian Society. Here too it was bidding the Federation adieu, for the reference to Fabius Cunctator was afterwards explained more fully. His 'long taking of counsel' had saved the commonwealth. 'For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently . . . but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did. . . .' The choice of name was admirable; a characteristic note had been struck at once. For by their 'long taking of counsel' the Fabians were indeed in due course, as will be seen, like their eponymous hero, to do something to save the commonwealth. But their reference to eventually striking hard was rather a gesture of deference to the Federation and the conventions of the moment than a conviction of their own and Fabius the Delayer, though his career was excellently suited to symbolise their real and immediate purpose, symbolised, yet further, the artificiality of their assumed and secondary intention by the indisputable fact that he did, as far as is known, never ultimately strike hard at anything. Even so, the

ambiguous words alarmed the public. 'What does [the] Fabian Society mean?' inquired a critic, quoting the sinister phrases. 'Socialism of this kind impresses both friends and enemies with the idea that they mean more than it is wise to say in plain language.'

Although several of the original members of this Fabian Society were members also of the Federation it was clear that one of the chief motives of this new departure was dissatisfaction with the Federation's methods. The ultimate Fabian goal, in so far at least as definitions could go, was perhaps the same; the reorganisation of Society by the emancipation of Land and Industrial Capital from individual and class ownership and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit.* But a political movement is not only its objective; it is its methods and its membership as well; it is these perhaps most of all. And in method as well as membership the Fabians would differ profoundly from the Federation. These men were tired of the vain repetition of Marxian formulas and of threats of revolutionary violence. They desired to study, to evolve new and native formulas and were neither suited, nor disposed, to become popular revolutionary leaders. They were of the middle classes, meeting in one another's comfortable drawing-rooms, and for long there was only one wage-earner in their entire membership, although after the Dockers' Strike its leaders, Mann and Tillett and other Trade Unionists were for some time members, and for the brief while that the local branches flourished these contained numerous working-class members. In the Federation and the League on the other hand the rank and file came almost solely from the wage-earners,

* Fabian basis.

while the few more prosperous leaders, Morris, Hyndman or Helen Taylor, were a generation older than the Fabians. But, although they were conscious of their desire for a new departure, (one of the earliest papers read to them being a distinction between 'The Two Socialisms'), some years were to pass before the Fabians had entirely discarded the old tactics. Several of them remained members of the Federation: and, although street oratory was not one of their own activities, several of them, and particularly Shaw spoke constantly at street corners for the Federation and the League. Only gradually did the latent differences become explicit. 'We were for a year or two' (wrote Shaw in 1892) '. . . just as insurrectionary as the Federation.' For a while they talked revolution and anarchism and expected in the near future a cataclysmic rupture with the past. But even from the first their political habits were a notable innovation.

'At this period,' said Shaw, 'we contracted the invaluable habit of freely laughing at ourselves.' 'Which has saved us,' he went on, 'from becoming hampered by the gushing enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements.' From the first the Fabians were impatient of emotion, even of 'general expressions of sympathy with the working-classes.' What they were looking for was practical suggestions and they resolutely declined to be preached at. The working-classes might submit passively to emotional declamation from their leaders, might even need it, but the Fabians believed that they knew more profitable ways of employing their time.

The full emergence of the fruitful departure which these men were in due course to do so much to initiate could only be gradual. But it will be well, since its development lies apart from the main stream of events

which we shall follow during the next few years, to look onward now to see what that development would be. It could only be gradual since only gradually would those who were to be chiefly responsible for it be drawn into the new Society. Bernard Shaw attended his first meeting on May 16th, 1884. 'This meeting was made memorable by the first appearance of Bernard Shaw' he pencilled, some while later, in the minutes. At a certain Zeletical Society this recruit encountered, about this time, another young man; a diminutive young man with a suggestion of an Imperial and a profile which consequently 'suggested an improvement on Napoleon the Third.' This young man, Shaw observed with admiration, 'knew all about the subject of debate; knew more than the lecturer; knew more than anybody present; had read everything that had ever been written on the subject; and remembered all the facts that bore on it.' In short 'This young man was the ablest man in England – Sidney Webb.' He was a clerk, it appeared, in the Colonial Office, and not long afterwards two figures, oddly contrasting in height, might have been seen pacing Whitehall to and fro past the Colonial Office door, deep in an interminable discussion. Midnight would boom slowly from the Houses of Parliament but still the talk went on. A stray Member walking wearily homeward this way would pass them by; but even if the taller figure chanced just then to raise his voice with an excited gesticulation, no words that reached the passer-by could set him wondering whether this nocturnal argument between a journalist and a Civil Service clerk might not prove to be of more political moment than the Parliamentary wrangle over Mr. Gladstone's Egyptian policy which he had just quitted. Yet, since what he might have seen was Bernard Shaw

persuading Sidney Webb to become a Fabian, the surmise, had he indulged it, would not have been far-fetched.

Fabianism has been written of as if it were no more than an industrious Information Bureau. It has been written of as a novel departure in Socialist thought. But it was in fact more than either of these things. It was the beginning of a departure in Socialist tactics. Out of these new methods would arise, in due course, a new political party. The Fabians themselves were but a handful of intellectuals – in 1886 they numbered only eighty-seven. The Fabians themselves, and their tactics, would win no resounding political triumph; but the tactics of which they set the first example and the forces which they helped to bring to birth would change the face of England. By 1887 the new orientation which they represented was beginning increasingly to affect working-class opinion – (between 1889 and 1893 three-quarters of a million copies of Fabian tracts were circulated). In 1889 would come the great Dock Strike which would heave up the social depths of Labour, set Socialists at the head of Trade Unionism and teach those Socialists the lesson the Fabians had already begun to preach, that sudden revolution was impossible, whereas piecemeal practical reform upon Socialist principle might win victories of unguessed extent. It was a signal and fortunate conjunction of dates. Did the Fabians teach the world of Labour the great new lesson? At least they began the teaching. Their relation to the change of tactics and of spirit now commencing was more than a mere precedence in time, and it must be remembered that in the history of political movements even what appears to be mere precedence in time is usually found to be charged with a deeper

significance. The new idea, then, of which in 1884 we see the growing germ, which is first Fabianism, and later, on a vaster stage, a fertile contribution to the Labour movement, is best epitomised, in retrospect, by a wise and brilliant tract written by Shaw* in 1896.

Fabianism (he explains in this *Report* to a body of foreign delegates, to whom Fabianism, and what came of it in England, was incomprehensible), is, to begin with, practical and permeative. It had recognised that Socialism, as we have seen, was unbiquitously 'in the air,' and it was determined to build upon that fact, to harness to its own purposes, and not, like the Federation, to ignore, the tremendous latent forces of its age. 'Almost all organisations and movements contain elements making for Socialism, no matter how remote the sympathies and intentions of their founders may be from those of the Socialists.' This it saw and therefore, 'caring nothing by what name any party calls itself, or what principles, Socialist or other, it professes, but having regard solely to the tendency of its actions,' it would with all its power support whatever made for Socialism and oppose whatever held it back. Moreover, more startling even than this, 'Fabians are encouraged to join all other organizations, Socialist or non-Socialist, in which Fabian work can be done.' From the smallest upward, local or national, they resolved to permeate and Socialise all administrative and legislative bodies. Fabians might be, and were, active members of the Liberal, even of the Conservative, Parties.

* (*Report on Fabian Policy . . . presented by the Fabian Society to the International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress, London*, 1896): but not signed by him, though its authorship is unmistakable even without Pease's authority (Pease 126) and the pamphlet appears in the authoritative bibliography of Shaw's writings and for collectors is one of the rarest 'Shaw items.'

Clearly a revolutionary departure from the tactics of the Federation, whose creed it was that all who were not with it were against it and were evil; and which would ever dissociate itself, as a Society apart, with its use of 'comrade,' 'citizen' and 'fraternal.' To the Federation Fabianism of necessity appeared ineffable, monstrous; the Fabians were not Socialists, were indeed anti-Socialists. Clearly, again, on the other hand such tactics would not be appropriate to a later Labour movement strong enough to grasp at political power for itself. Indeed even in 1896 James Ramsay MacDonald, a young Fabian far-sighted, if not second-sighted, in politics, who even then foresaw the still unimagined victory, demanded unsuccessfully that this tract should be suppressed, in such extreme terms did it state this characteristic Fabian opportunism, even alleging that the Society would oppose a hopeless Socialist candidature, 'in order to secure the victory to the better of the two candidates between whom the contest really lies.' However, save for the farthest-sighted in 1896, and how much more in 1885, the single-handed victory of avowed Socialism was unimaginable: Fabianism 'does not propose that the practical steps towards Social Democracy should be carried out by itself, or by any other specially organised Society or party.' Fabianism had already, in 1894, two years before the issue of this *Report*, in a *Plan of Campaign for Labor*, drawn up with almost prophetic insight by Shaw, demanded the return of a Labour Party to the House of Commons: but it was to be a Party of fifty members at utmost in a house of six hundred and seventy. For the moment, then, though it did not look yet for a Labour Party strong enough to achieve power itself, Fabianism rendered historical evolution a service by so challenging a rupture with the

tactics of the Federation which had shown that in this country they could not lead to victory.

This first and most arresting innovation in method, besides being, for the moment, a timely and pregnant reaction from the methods of the Federation, would also have of necessity to be discarded by any powerful Labour movement that might come to be. But the other distinguishing features which Fabianism would evolve, implicit perhaps in this first departure, were not only, like the first, to be signposts towards realism in the new politics but would also survive as the core of the Labour and Socialist Parties of the new century. In part, no doubt, the new Party would evolve them for itself, in part it would be infected with them by the Fabians. The Fabians, at least, first turned decisively away from the old methods and towards the new. Fabianism 'has no distinctive opinion on the Marriage Question, Religion, Art, abstract Economics, historic Evolution, Currency, or any other subject than its own special business of practical Democracy and Socialism:' it would not, that is, exclude more than it was bound to exclude. Thus, though the founders had no feeling for religion they were careful not to be anti-religious. Stewart Headlam and a number of other ministers of all denominations were among their members from the first.

Fabianism was to be constitutional: 'it sympathises with the ordinary citizen's desire for gradual, peaceful changes, as against revolution, conflict with the army and police, and martyrdom.' 'It . . . does not believe that the moment will ever come when the whole of Socialism will be staked on the issue of a single General Election or a single Bill . . . as between the proletariat on one side and the proprietariat on the other.'

It foresaw in the next forty years what it was wise enough to discern in the past forty years, a progressive Socialisation of Britain by anti-Socialists. 'Each instalment of Social-Democracy will only be a measure among other measures, and will have to be kept to the front by an energetic Socialist section. The Fabian Society therefore begs those Socialists who are looking forward to a sensational historical crisis, to join some other society.'

It would not, as was the fashion, comprehensively denounce the middle-class – 'in view of the fact that the Socialist movement has been hitherto inspired, instructed, and led by members of the middle class or "bourgeoisie".' Moreover whereas before the coming of Board Schools mere literateness was so scarce and commanded comparatively so high a price that the economic interests of any literate person were with the classes and not with the masses, now the clerk was economically a proletarian: and already by this time in this loosely defined 'middle-class' existed an immense majority of salaried persons, professional men, managers or clerks, whose real economic interest, as renderers of service for a fixed payment, must be, with that of the earners of a fixed wage, in conflict with the small class of profit-takers. Here too Fabianism, if not altogether consciously, was consonant with the latent forces of its age.

The Fabians were driven, moreover, to conclude that 'in the natural philosophy of Socialism, light is a more important factor than heat.' Socialists hitherto had proved disappointingly incapable of complying with the demands of Charles Bradlaugh and other opponents for details of their schemes. The Fabians set out accordingly to flood the political world with a series of 'authentic and impartial

statistical tracts.' There were plenty of civil-servants among them and they knew where to find the authoritative sources. The Fabian Tracts began. What was once said of another Society, 'Here's a social evil; let's read a paper on it' might have been said, no doubt, of the Fabians. But when Sidney Webb had torn the heart from a dozen bluebooks to make the paper and Bernard Shaw had drafted it, there were few more promising means of attacking a social evil. Moreover, as they delved up the facts the Fabians began to discover to their surprise that the Socialist denunciations of society at street-corners had 'almost invariably flattered the existing system.' The truth, it seemed, was darker than the fiercest orators of the Federation had painted it. The leading Fabians moreover plunged passionately into the study of Economic Theory. One or two friends, calling themselves the Hampstead Historic Club, met fortnightly to wrestle with Marx and Proudhon, each member taking his turn at lecturing the rest. They would give public lectures in order to instruct themselves and attend debates and committee meetings all over London. And as they learned, it became clear to them that Marx and Lassalle were not infallible. The famous theory of value, the iron law of wages began to present an old-fashioned, even a rickety, appearance. Clearly they must insist, whatever Hyndman said, on being as critical of Lassalle and Marx as Lassalle and Marx had been of their own predecessors, St. Simon and Robert Owen. The opponents of Socialism, they observed, were never weary of pointing out that Marx was the basis of Socialist theory and that Marx could be refuted. The Fabians accordingly resolved to deprive them of this weapon. They would refute Marx themselves. Might

not the real service of Marx to Socialism prove after all to have been the first volume of *Capital* 'which contains an immense mass of carefully verified facts concerning modern capitalistic civilization, and practically nothing about Socialism' and was yet perhaps the most effective propagandist work ever published? Battle royal was joined in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in May of 1887. The Fabians prided themselves on having become 'the recognised bullies and swashbucklers of advanced economics.'

Busy thus creating light, the Fabians, undoubtedly, took little part in generating heat. The first four years of their existence were to see the Trafalgar Square riots and 'Bloody Sunday'; soon would follow the great Dock Strike: but the Fabians stood aloof; during the Dock Strike, indeed, the Society held no meeting. They produced no orators, no leaders of the people. Shaw and Graham Wallas would speak often in the open air and Mrs. Besant had long since shewn that she could rise to eloquence, but the men to whom the masses listened, Burns, Hyndman, Champion, Tom Mann, Ben Tillett, were not Fabians. The Fabians were about other business.

This business, with all that I have said of it, cannot perhaps be better summarised than in yet another sentence from that memorable *Report*. 'The Fabian Society . . . recognises that in a Democratic community compromise is a necessary condition of political progress.' The abiding service of the Fabians to the Socialist movement was a lesson in tactics. If the voice of Hyndman could be caught faint beneath the practical declamations of the leaders of the new Trade Unionism, who had first learnt Socialism in his school, still more clearly would echoes of Fabianism be discernible in the utterances of

the most visionary of the Labour leaders to be. 'I can imagine one reform after another being won until in the end Socialism itself causes no more excitement than did the extinction of landlordism in Ireland a year ago.' The voice is the voice of the Fabians but the speaker would be James Keir Hardie. Even the widely-read *Fabian Essays* of 1890, in which their seven Essayists attempted to summarise the Fabian contribution to Socialist theory, was in reality itself much more important as a contribution to tactics. For from it, almost for the first time, the public learned that Socialists could be cool-headed and intelligible and could build their argument not upon the speculations of a German philosopher but upon the forces inevitably and manifestly at work in contemporary British society. As the Benthamites at the beginning of the century had built a far-famed philosophy and political tactics which harnessed both parties to their will out of the individualist tendencies which the evolutionary forces had then already generated in society, so would the Fabians, destined to be no less a name than theirs, make of the collectivist tendencies of their day both a philosophy and a campaign. Behind the Federation also, it is true, had loomed the almost unrecognised evolutionary forces which had so long been slowly accomplishing a Collectivist transformation of British society, the forces which had driven Conservative and Liberal governments to place Collectivist measure after measure on the statute-book; and the Federation had bulked the larger for these forces, larger than life size, like a figure seen against the sun. But it had not learnt to use them; and it had flung itself headlong against the almost impregnable ramparts of British social and political tradition. Whereas not only did the Fabians

begin the slow outflanking of those ramparts, and, later, shew the great Party which was to come that they could be outflanked, but by recognising that everywhere in the society of their day were 'elements making for Socialism' and determining to use these wherever they could be found they first exploited to the full, as once the Benthamite individualists had done, the ultimately irresistible spirit of their age.*

* Bettany, 95, 137. Henderson, 93, 106. Shaw, *F.S.*, 4, 5, 10, 16. Shaw, *Report* 2-7, Shaw, *Plan*, 22. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 85, 260-1. Webb, 414*n*. *Labour Leader*, Sept. 1904. *Justice*, Jan. 19, 1884. Pease, 17, 18, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32-4, 37, 39, 40, 60, 62*n*, 83, 90, 126-7, 134, 279, 284. Ball, 31 .

CHAPTER VI

FORCE 1885-1887

WHILE the Fabians, not yet even a name, were still groping for their new methods; while Morris was defraying the mounting deficit of the new *Commonweal* and acquiring the habit of keeping at Kelmscott House a drawerful of half-crowns against the visits of the needy anarchists who were slowly capturing his League; while Hyndman, ever hopeful, continued to encourage the Federation with his familiar 'things are getting hot'; while League and Federation alike were continuing undismayed their street-corner oratory and helping, unknown to themselves, to stir the industrial ferment which would issue in the 'New' Trade Unionism and the Independent Labour Party; while all this was so inconspicuously astir, there began about them a sequence of conspicuous and incoherent disturbances of the peace. For a little while the public would be gravely alarmed and the Socialists themselves disturbed by a strange surmise. Was this the revolution? For although these disorders were not provoked by Socialism, nor even by Socialists, for once Socialists would contrive to place themselves momentarily at the head of a wave of popular feeling.

It all began in Dod Street, Limehouse. On Sundays this street of warehouses was empty of traffic and here each Sunday the orators of the Federation were wont to hold forth to those they could get to listen to them; not

many as a rule. The police unwisely decided to prohibit the meetings, and the Federation, wisely, to continue them. Week by week they allowed a speaker to be arrested, even to go to gaol. And week by week, as it was noised abroad that the police were suppressing public meetings and that an arrest or two might be expected, their audiences grew. By the last Sunday in that September of 1885 there was a crowd of seven thousand in Dod Street. Few cared what the speakers were talking about, but they were cheerfully aware that there would almost certainly be some excitement, and that the police – who were not popular in these parts, being suspected of taking bribes from brothel-keepers and unnecessarily harassing the poor – were being flouted. Moreover they had learned somehow that Free Speech was in danger, and something deep-seated and hereditary in them smouldered at that news. And so they cheered the demonstrators with their banners and their singing of the *Marseillaise* – the Federation, the League, the London Radical Associations, the German Club, they were all there by now, sinking their differences for this once, and wondering, many of them, whether the Day was not at hand. And next morning dense crowds packed the street outside the Thames Police Court to cheer the six who had been arrested. The magistrate addressed a severe warning to the culprits, William Morris among them, fined one or two forty shillings and sent one to prison for two months. By now the police were uneasy. However, they decided to be firm. They would send a stronger force next Sunday. Next Sunday Dod Street was packed from end to end. At the lowest estimate there were thirty thousand persons there (this was the computation of the *Annual Register* and the *Daily News*).

The Federation reckoned from sixty to eighty thousand. At a second meeting, at any rate, which was held at the West India Dock gates, the West India Dock Road, seventy feet wide, was packed for half a mile. Hyndman spoke, Burns spoke, Bernard Shaw spoke, Stewart Headlam spoke, two Radicals spoke. The strictest order was maintained, but resolutions were carried with acclamation in favour of Free Speech for all shades of opinion and in favour of prosecuting the police for their 'gross perjury' in the last few weeks. The struggle was over. The police could do no more. They gave way with what grace they could muster and the Press unanimously commented upon the orderliness of the proceedings, the folly of the authorities in provoking this trial of strength and their abject failure in conducting it. The Federation had tasted the unaccustomed wine of success and found it heady. The support which had come to them from the League and the Radicals convinced them that 'a great Social Democratic Labour Party is in process of formation.' Soon, however, the Federation was holding its meetings in Dod Street undisturbed by the police and with much the same meagre audiences as of old.

This new-found unity scarcely lasted a month. The General Election of 1885 was held in November and December and the Federation resolved to put forward three candidates. John Burns essayed West Nottingham. The choice was a peculiar one, for *Justice* had expressly described it as a most unpromising constituency; but at least there was an efficient local Labour Representation Committee there, which was more than could be said of Hampstead and Kennington where two other candidatures were attempted. And here came the trouble. The two London candidates were financed by the

Conservative Party funds. Hyndman and the Federation made no attempt to conceal it. As usual they were logical. Provided that the money was used for Socialist ends, what did it matter whence it came? But, as so often, their tactics were at fault. For the use of 'Tory gold' shocked their fellow Socialists and enraged all London Radicalism, out of which, after all, they must hope to make their converts. Moreover, after the polling, when it was found that in Hampstead their candidate had received twenty-seven votes and in Kennington thirty-two, even Hyndman himself must have regretted this ridiculous exposure of their weakness. Coming so soon after the Dod Street triumph it was bitter indeed. The Fabians and the League both denounced the whole affair, the League's resolution even maliciously extending its sympathies to that section of the Federation 'which repudiates the tactics of the disreputable gang concerned in the recent proceedings.' And there were more secessions from the Federation. In Nottingham, where *Justice* had predicted victory, assuring its readers that 'there can be no doubt whatever which way the working-classes as a whole will vote,' Burns received 598 votes and was hopelessly bottom of the poll. It seemed almost a success in contrast with the melancholy London episodes. Yet so pervasively was Socialism in the air that the exposure of its real strength was soon forgotten. Everybody was talking about it, it *must* be powerful. In April of 1885 (when there were in fact but 'a few score of thorough-going Socialists' in all London), the *Annual Register* had recorded 'a meeting, said to number 10,000 people, of the Social Democratic Federation,' words which were at least ambiguous. The *Church Review* had estimated the Federation's member-

ship at four thousand. Then came the Hampstead and Kennington exposures. Yet not more than two months afterwards newspaper posters would be announcing sixty thousand Socialists marching on the West-end.'*

II

At this time one of the recurrent slumps in trade, which almost everybody thought to be as inevitable as a drought, was piling up the numbers of the unemployed. And unemployment at this time meant starvation for the unemployed and for the wives and children of the unemployed. An opinion commonly held among the prosperous at that time, as indeed at all times, was that the whole trouble could be disposed of at once if working people would take lower wages.† Working people, many of whom received less than three pence an hour, thought otherwise. There is always discontent in the East ends of great cities, but the discontent in the East end of London now was bitterer than usual. And for once this discontent was to force itself, momentarily but unforgettably, upon the horrified attention of the West end, as in a sudden illumination by lightning. And the lightning flash would reveal the Social Democratic Federation apparently at the heart of the turmoil. For a day or two many of the soberest of citizens would believe that the Revolution was at hand.

A mass meeting in Trafalgar Square had been proclaimed for Monday, February 8th, 1886, by a little-

* Bax, 96, 118; *Justice*, Sept. 19, 26, Oct. 3, 31, 1885. Hyndman, *Record*, 403, 421-2, Clayton 27*n*, Shaw *F.S.* 5-7, 25. *Annual Register*, Sept. 27, 1885.

† E.g. Letters to the *Times*, Feb. 10, Feb. 16, 1886, etc.

known working class organisation calling itself the Labourers' League, which desired to advertise its remedies for unemployment. The Fair Trade League, a recent and somewhat mysterious organisation which in view of the collapse of the sugar refineries was agitating for a revival of the sugar duties, decided to bring up its own supporters from the East end. The Fair Trade League seems to have paid this East end following, or a respectable proportion of it, for its assistance at this demonstration and in the Commons Bradlaugh afterwards offered to produce the keepers of the beer shops in which the money, subscribed by members of both Houses, had been spent. But even if this rival agitation had not been subsidised it was enough for Hyndman and for the Federation that it represented a rival nostrum, misleading because partial, and a rival claim upon the attention of the workers. The Federation accordingly proclaimed a third competing demonstration for the same day. It also took the precaution of being first upon the scene.

In the early afternoon a vast throng was assembled in the Square and John Burns had begun to address it in a voice of unique power from the stone platform beside Landseer's impassive lions. The crowd, like all crowds, contained diverse elements. The majority of it, no doubt, was from the submerged thirty per cent. The Press was convinced next morning that 'the dangerous classes' had been largely represented. Any class however can be dangerous under suitable provocation. Even more numerous, according to the *Times*, were those who were always spoken of by the workers themselves, (as it had some undivulged authority for assuring its readers), as 'those who want no work to do.' Persons of this temper

indeed were generally supposed to constitute a very large proportion of the unemployed, which two words the *Annual Register*, for example, never permitted itself save between inverted commas. A crowd, in short, of just those elements which had packed the West India Dock road for half a mile a month or two before in so good-humoured and orderly a fashion that, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, 'anyone asleep in a back or upper room of the houses lining the road would scarcely have been disturbed.' The stone platform round which the meeting surged was forbidden ground and after a while the police succeeded in clearing it. This struggle had centred round John Burns, who was now seen to be waving a red flag, and who reappeared almost immediately in front of the National Gallery. There was a roar as the man with the red flag mounted the stone parapet and resumed his impassioned harangue. A dense sea of faces looked up at him from the south of the Square. His voice rang from end to end of it, and the word 'revolution' was heard ominously recurrent. Champion followed him to much the same effect and after him came Williams. Then Hyndman climbed upon the parapet. It seemed to him that, if this was not the Day, it was at least a rehearsal of it. Suppose one were to give the word for a rising? But – a rising against whom? Against the police? Against the troops, who would no doubt presently appear armed with ball cartridge? (He had a morbid horror of the sight of blood.) And after that – if there should be an after that? The Government Offices? 'We assume control in the name of the people'? A Committee of Public Safety – Hyndman, Champion, Burrows, Quelch . . .? A telegram to the Commander-in-Chief? (Who *was* Commander-in-Chief?) 'Troops

will remain at their present stations,' signed 'Hyndman'? No; one must be better prepared than this. Obviously it all needed more thinking out. Obviously too, however, the present moment must be seized. A rehearsal for the people; a warning to the rich. One would see.... He began. *If the thousands there had the courage of the few they would very soon alter the existing system. If only they would not go away from meetings like this and forget all that they had heard. . . . He and his friends would lead if they would follow and even five hundred determined men out of the thousands present could very soon make a change.* Then Burns was up again. *Better to die fighting than to die starving. . . . How many would follow the Socialist leaders?* Many hands went up. 'When we give the word for a rising will you join us?' 'Yes' cried the audience, and also 'No.' But meanwhile a large portion of the crowd had turned its attention to the banner of the Labourers' League and the East End Fair Trade Leaguers who were now making a belated appearance at the south side of the square. But these had not such exciting stuff to offer. The Fair Trade orators, once launched, complained, rather petulantly, that they were genuine working-men while Hyndman was a dabbler on the stock-exchange and Champion an ex-officer, and they moved some nebulous resolutions about agriculture and 'useful public works.' But this was all. A Mr. Cook, Conservative candidate for Battersea, then rose to support them and 'to express himself in sympathy with the out-of-work classes.' The Conservatives, he went on to assert, had been entirely in favour of relief work for the unemployed. Amid loud and repeated inquiries from the crowd as to why in that case the Conservatives had introduced no measures of this kind

when in power, the chairman, detecting incipient chaos, hurriedly put his resolutions to the meeting, declared them carried and was immediately swept away, platform and all, by the oncoming crowd; the Fair Trade League, agitation, subscription list and all, disappearing with him suddenly and irrevocably out of sight and out of this history as an untidy whirl of legs, heels over crown, and a banner tossing for an instant above a forest of heads.

The police meanwhile had suggested to Hyndman that, if there were not to be ugly doings in the Square, he should lead his audience to Hyde Park. Hyndman agreed. He would march at the head of a mob through the West end. Nothing would come of it, of course. Not yet, at least. But it would be symbolical, and it would be good for the Federation. The crowd made for Pall Mall amidst confused cries. Burns, at its head, still waved the red flag. Most of the Fair Trade audience which had just violently engulfed its orators had attached itself and the whole swung down the street of clubs.

At the windows of the Carlton club were standing prosperous spectators. Some of them jeered. Club servants also were thought to have thrown down old brushes and shoes from an upper window. It was not surprising perhaps that Clubland should have its laugh. Laughter, we are told, is born of the unexpected and such hungry looking passers-by were not ordinarily to be met with in Pall Mall, and when Clubland did encounter them elsewhere it was accustomed to their respect. These fellows are the unemployed, you said? Very well then, they are the unemployed. None the less there is something laughable about them, seen in Pall Mall, and we laugh accordingly. Two things only

Clubland overlooked. The presence nearby of several heaps of metal for road-work, and the absence of the police. For the police who should have been in Pall Mall – someone had blundered – were in the Mall. In a few moments there were no window-panes in the windows of the Carlton. The crowd surged on. There was more jeering from the Thatched House Club and from thence all up the left of St. James Street Clubland lost its windows. And then the crowd was in Piccadilly, beginning to loot the shops. Half-Moon Street, South and North Audley Street and Oxford Street all suffered. Even peers had their windows broken, and in the Green Park men were to be seen hurriedly enduing the garments they had plundered from hosiers and tailors. Others tossed their share into passing vehicles. For many of them it was all little more than horseplay. Next day, however, the *Times* was convinced that everything had been done at the orders of concealed leaders. But in fact Hyndman and Burns saw and knew nothing of most of it, having made their way straight to the Achilles statue in Hyde Park where they held their renewed meeting and dismissed their audience with little further trouble. The memorable day was over and not a soul had been hurt. Only property had suffered. Not long afterwards John Burns was tramping solitarily eastward, with twopence in his pocket, to renew his search for work. He no longer carried a red flag. He was obviously but one more unemployed mechanic. Nobody looked twice at him.

Next morning, however, Britain, waking to its newspapers, rubbed its eyes. Could such things have been? Windowless Clubland impressed it even more than plundered shops. True, windows had been broken

before this, even in the West end, the Duke of Wellington's among others: and at Oxford and Cambridge in moments of exuberance window-breaking was almost a matter of routine. But here the poor had shivered the windows of the rich with almost conscious symbolism in the very heart, as it were, of the whole system. To Britain it seemed already all but a revolution. For a few days it was ready to believe almost anything – even that its own working-classes, whom it had never known, were ready to revolt. Riotous, or at least threatening meetings, were reported from Norwich, from Birmingham and Northampton, from Sheffield and Great Yarmouth and Manchester. Some respectable citizens of London were said to have prepared red flags with which to placate the revolutionary mobs when the day came. Angry old men who remembered the Chartist days talked wistfully of how artillery had been massed then to sweep the Mall. Yes, Wellington did things better, grumbled Lord Dorchester. Europe looked on, not at all ill-pleased that the virus of revolution should have reached Britain at last, which so long had boasted herself immune. And why should Europe have known better? Britain, however, should have known better, and would have, had her people not been Two Nations still, as in the days of *Sybil*.

Two days later, on the tenth, London at least believed that the Revolution had actually begun. It was a day of dense fog and somehow the report ran through the town like a forest fire that John Burns at the head of sixty thousand men was marching on the West end. The placards of the evening papers billed the news. Whole families took to their cellars. An inhabitant of the Old Kent Road telegraphed to the *Times* that thirty thousand

revolutionaries were making for Trafalgar Square. Let the *Times* see that the Home Office was warned and the troops called out if London was to survive that night. The shops hurriedly closed. Special guards were placed on the Government offices. Troops stood to arms. And nothing whatever happened.

But Britain remained profoundly disquieted. What, in any case, was one to think of these unemployed? What, too, was this Federation? As to the unemployed, one remarkable result disclosed itself almost at once. The *Times* had asserted on the ninth that last night's 'work of disaster and shame' would dry up the founts of charity; all those who would have been ready to help the unemployed, whether with money or with work, would refuse to yield to terrorism. Yet the Mansion House Fund, which had long lingered, half-moribund, at about £3,000 rose in the four days after the riot to £20,000. Another five days and this figure had been more than doubled. A fortnight after the window-breaking it had passed £60,000 and was still mounting. 'It is deplorable to reflect' said the *Times*, 'on the inferences that may be drawn however unwarrantably from this sudden expansion.'

But it was more difficult when it came to devising remedies, more far-reaching than charity, for the social problem which had so suddenly taken on a new significance. The prosperous public was on the whole agreed, as it pointed out in numerous letters to the Press, that the poor should work harder, that they should work more efficiently, that they should work for less wages, that they should not listen to agitators, and that it was Trade Union regulations which resulted in keeping English goods out of almost every market in the world.

Mr. Coope, M.P., also pointed out that in times of depression there must always be suffering. Nor was it only the prosperous who were capable of reflecting profitably upon the situation. An East Sussex incumbent sent word that during an entirely uninspired talk at a mothers' meeting an East Sussex matron had observed, quite unprompted, of the unemployed: 'They do ask such wages that people can't employ 'em as would.' And as he pointed out, 'There was surely a perception in the good mother's mind of at any rate one remedy for the present distress.' A few were even able to announce that they were about to take immediate and practical steps themselves. 'I am a subscriber to various charities which I shall discontinue,' wrote a correspondent of the *Times* whose eyeglasses had been broken during the disturbances. 'I have always advocated the cause of the people, I shall do so no more.' To such, but to no greater, purpose did the average mind revolve the problem thus startingly thrust upon its attention.

And the Federation? The Federation enjoyed now for a brief while a unique opportunity of forcing its proposals upon the notice of a hitherto inattentive world. The names of Hyndman and Burns became familiar all over the country. Daily the Press denounced their guilt and demanded their arrest, and when they presented themselves brazenly at the Board of Trade or at 10 Downing Street to ask Mr. Chamberlain or Mr. Gladstone when they would initiate public works for the unemployed, although Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Gladstone declined to receive them, every newspaper would report the visit. When they addressed a mass meeting in Hyde Park on February 21st their speeches were reported more fully than a Prime Minister's.

Unfortunately the only immediate proposal which they seemed able to put before the nervously attentive public was this for the organisation of the unemployed upon public works, which was not even peculiar to themselves. Beyond this, save for a suggestion of state control of the railways, their speeches tended to mere 'anti-capitalist ejaculation.' They raised no issue at once revolutionary and immediately practical round which discontent could crystallise. Nor did they, in the alternative, openly preach revolution. To this indeed they never came so close again as on that first day of riot. Twenty-four hours later, on the ninth, it is true, before that sense of preluding the Day which had momentarily assailed them in Trafalgar Square had altogether vanished, they had called a branch meeting in a hall in Marsham Street 'to consider what steps should be taken in the present crisis'; but this had dwindled to the tamest of conclusions, a speech from Champion and resolutions in favour of the familiar remedies. And between this and the Hyde Park meeting of the twenty-first, which was their last great chance of setting the public imagination aflame, much had occurred to increase their caution. The Press, with the *Times* at its head, had repeatedly proclaimed them guilty of crimes with which they had not yet been charged and of which, when charged, they would be acquitted. 'It cannot be too clearly understood that it was to the proceedings of these men – of Mr. Burns and Mr. Hyndman and their colleagues – that all the subsequent destruction was due,' pronounced the *Times* on the morning after the window-breaking and insisted upon their immediate arrest. Correspondent after correspondent reiterated the demand. If no existing law covered their case one must be hurried through Parliament. Judge

Hughes, how long ago himself a Socialist and of how different a temper, wrote to denounce the 'notorious ruffians' and to urge Mr. Chamberlain to procure them 'a year or two's oakum-picking.' Mr. Childers, the Home Secretary, defending himself in the House of Commons, referred to them as the instigators of the violence, and *Punch* pictured himself stringing them up, as condemned criminals, to the gallows and warmly recommended them, in the alternative, a long term of hard labour. Moreover, even those from whom support, or at least sympathy, might have been expected had exhibited, in so far as they had exhibited anything, only an eager and deferential haste to dissociate themselves from the 'notorious ruffians.' On the very day following the riots, the North London branches of the Amalgamated Labourers' Union met to protest against the interference of the Socialists and to lament the drying-up of the Lord Mayor's Fund (then at its three thousand pound mark), which they anticipated. Next day, his own Union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, publicly disclaimed both John Burns and his, or any other, politics. The Nottingham Branch of the Federation itself seceded, announcing that it 'could not tolerate' the disgraceful conduct of its leaders. It certainly did not look as if the working-classes were ready for revolution.

The meeting of the twenty-first itself, supervised by dense masses of policemen and plain clothes detectives, attracted a vast concourse. Burns told his hearers that a revolution must eventually come in the interests of the workers and that it depended upon the middle classes whether or not it would be peaceable. Hyndman, gesticulating prophetically from his wagon, dealt more in theory, even skirting the Theory of Surplus Value and

quoting Latin. In spite of some rough handling by the police, who could not quite rid themselves of the idea that they were dealing with revolutionaries and who were sore at all the criticisms of their previous failure, the crowds dispersed as good humouredly as they had assembled. There was to be a revolution of some unspecified kind, they gathered, at some unspecified date. But it appeared that nothing in particular, and this after all was what concerned them most, was to happen in the immediate future.

And when on the last day of February, the authorities having unwillingly yielded to the Press demand, the trial of Hyndman, Burns, Champion and Williams did at length begin, it was an opportunity for a passionate Socialist speech from the dock, the last opportunity for such a speech to reach a wide audience, but it was no more: the general tension had relaxed. There had been many lesser trials already, of persons caught, or at least charged with, looting or damaging property on the eighth. Nineteen cases were reported in the *Times* of the tenth alone. And there had even been trials of less conspicuous victims for inciting to commit a breach of the peace. To the following effect: (the case of one John Murray.)

Mr. Mansfield. What are you?

Prisoner. A clerk.

Mr. Mansfield. Is a clerk a working-man?

Prisoner. Well, I think so. . . .

Mr. Mansfield. Why should you carry a red flag? Don't you know that Lamartine thought that a red flag was the sign of disorder and disgrace?. . . .

Mr. Mansfield. Those who have it in their power are doing all they can to relieve the distress. . . .

Prisoner. What we want is honest work.

Mr. Mansfield. What do you mean by honest work?

Prisoner. We want to work eight hours a day so that everyone may have employment.

Mr. Mansfield. What business have you to interfere with the hours of labour? Let everyone work as long as he wishes – that is liberty.

The trial of the four leaders did not go like this. They were able to protect themselves. Burns made his Socialist oration and Hyndman defended himself with professional shrewdness. All four were acquitted. And with the end of the trial the incident of the Trafalgar Square riots may be said to have closed. The public speedily forgot both it and the Federation.

This was not the last riot in Trafalgar Square at which Socialists would assist. But hereafter even head-breaking would be but head-breaking: never again the glimpse of chaos, the sudden dread which had clutched for a moment at the heart of London. London would not lose its head again, although there would remain, no doubt, many citizens who privately believed that revolution might yet be. Morris indeed among them. For on November 13th next year there was to be a 'Free speech' demonstration in the Square, where the police had forbidden a meeting. The police, and the Home Secretary in particular, still sore perhaps at the failure on the afternoon of pillage and at the hard words which outraged senators and merchants had since dealt them upon that score, were determined that there should be no lack of precaution, nor any undue leniency. A battalion of Foot Guards lined the Square, with fixed bayonets and ball-cartridge, and in the upshot there were savage bludgeonings and broken bones; 'men and women falling under a

hail of blows' and the mounted police 'charging in squadrons at a hand gallop, rolling men and women over like ninepins.' (Next week* indeed, after a Hyde Park meeting, a young workman, Alfred Linnell, would be ridden down by the police and would die in hospital; a fatality which Authority made some attempts to conceal but which the Socialists contrived to make well-known – even to the holding, in despite of Sir Charles Warren, of a public funeral at which W. T. Stead, Cunninghame Graham, William Morris and Annie Besant were among the pall-bearers. Linnell's name is not forgotten, for William Morris composed for his burying a threnody which was decorated by the pencil of Walter Crane.) But on this November 13th only Cunninghame Graham, the laird of Garton, whom we are to meet again, and John Burns, armed with 'handkerchief and tram-ticket' penetrated the cordon, to be arrested, tried and even imprisoned. However, this was not a Socialist affair. Only, it is notable that William Morris with his rolling sea-captain's gait walked with one of the columns, into which, as it approached the Square, the police charged suddenly and with great violence. A minute or so and the column was not, and Morris, objurgating violently, had been swept away in the rout. Afterwards he confided ruefully to a friend that the incident had opened his eyes. He had surrendered one more dream. Mob-revolution against trained forces was not practicable.

For a brief moment, then, in February, 1886, the

* There has been some confusion over the date on which Linnell was ridden down (Nov. 20th, 1887). Thus Mackail (ii, 192), refers it to 'Bloody Sunday' (Nov. 13th); Cole (*Short History of the British Working Class Movement*, ii, 155) to the year 1888.

THE MOB NEAR THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
13th November, 1887

Reproduced by permission from a drawing in *The Graphic*, November 19th, 1887

nation had seemed to itself to be drawing near to the edge of an abyss of violent revolution. And from this abyss not only the nation but the Federation itself had recoiled. For the Federation had been forced to realise that it had no plans for conducting a revolution, and indeed that revolution was not practicable. Maybe it had even realised, what is the truth, that in Western Europe at least violent revolution by a minority is no longer possible. Here, too, the Federation had believed too whole-heartedly in its Marx. And Marx himself, whose identification with the always approaching and inevitable revolution was one of the chief sources of his potency, had perhaps himself been misled by a misreading of French history. Twice, in 1848 and in 1871, he himself had seen France for a few weeks ruled by Paris, and Paris seemingly all but successful in imposing a new economic dispensation upon France. Let the revolutionaries but prepare, and at the third effort or the fourth, or (what matter?) at the tenth, they must succeed. But Marx had not realised that, although in the nineteenth century, France, with its exaggerated centralisation and the impotence of its local units, was the most favourable arena in all Europe for revolution, yet even in France this revolution of a minority had these two times disastrously broken down because in a country with modern methods of communication the revolution of a minority always must break down. In the first French revolution there had, it is true, been three years at least of minority rule, from 1792 to 1795, possible in the unorganised France and with the undeveloped communications of the eighteenth century. But even so the final success of that revolution was only possible because the majority of the French nation desired it to succeed. And even in France

the old days, when the stampeding of the government in Paris or the capture of some public offices could mean a successful revolution, had long since passed for ever. And with every year how much more impossible it had become in a complex modern state even to stampede a government. Impossible, for example, secretly to arm or train a revolutionary minority. Impossible, having trained it, to defeat the forces of the State equipped with those engines of modern warfare which the revolutionaries themselves could never obtain and with which even a handful of determined men could wipe out the entire revolutionary force. All but impossible, even having in some unexplained manner defeated the forces of the State, to guarantee the food and transport of an infinitely complex society, dependent moreover for most of its supplies upon the benevolent acquiescence of foreign powers.* For a *majority*, and particularly for a majority in time of war, a different, though still very difficult, matter, no doubt. But in Britain at least when a majority came to desire revolution it could be hoped that violent revolution would not be needful.

The Revolution, sudden and complete, had been discredited – negatively, as it were. Something like its prologue had been enacted and had been seen to lead nowhither, not even into the ancient realm of chaos. Very soon we shall see it discredited positively. The great Dock Strike and its sequel in the Trade Union world, extending to a vaster audience the lesson already being quietly diffused by the Fabians, would colour the imagi-

* The lessons of the French revolutions, their misleading influence upon Marx and the actual impossibility of violent minority revolution in the modern state is discussed at greater length in the present writer's *The Revolutionary Idea in France*, pp. 153-9 and 174-181.

nation of the working-class with a new hope, the belief that by a series of political reforms it could fashion for itself a new life. And since these 'new' Trade Union leaders would be Socialists, albeit forsaking the central revolutionary doctrines of the Federation from whom they had learnt Socialism, and since also none but Socialists possessed a formula for the building of the new life not yet discredited, these reforms would be Socialist reforms, and Socialism in this new hope and with this immeasurable access of strength would finally turn its back upon the old dogma of catastrophe.

Would anyone after 1886 seriously believe in the possibility of violent revolution by a minority in this country? For a long while at least, very few. But unfortunately this disbelief was due much less to any serious reflection upon the nature of things than to a vague confidence in the manifest patience and good humour of the English people and to their growing preoccupation after 1889 with piecemeal and practical reform, and to the manifest impotence of revolutionaries and revolutionary dogma, as particularly revealed in 1885. The forces which make revolution by a minority normally impossible in the modern state had not been recognised. Accordingly when many years later a far-resounding revolution was effected by a minority in Russia, but in war time and in a country in which communications and organisation were even more inadequate than in eighteenth century France, and when a revolution was effected, but also in war time and here with the assent of the majority, in highly-organised Germany, the British public, alarmed at this contagion of violence and mistakenly believing its own only safeguard to be the good temper of its fellow countrymen, began to remember

uneasily once more the half-forgotten prophecies of Marx and to wonder whether possibly, with all this wild talk about, even in England . . . ? But for the moment 1886 may be said to have enlightened all those into whose political calculations the possibility of successful violence had hitherto entered.*†

* *Times*, Feb. 9 to March 1, 1886 inclusive. *Annual Register*, Feb. 8, 10, Feb. 15-17, Feb. 21, 22, 28, March 18, 1886. *Punch*, Feb. 13, 20, 1886. Hyndman, *Record*, 400-7. *Daily Telegraph*, quoted by *Justice*, Oct. 3, 1885. Grubb 64-6, 76-7. Champion, 15. Bax, 87-8. Mackail ii, 191-3. *Death Song*, 1-4. Besant, 324-5.

† In April 1886 the Queen seems to have caused inquiries to be made as to the risks of revolutionary contagion from Belgium, where there had been Socialist riots. Mr. Childers, the Home Secretary, replied to Sir Henry Ponsonby, her Secretary, '. . . Englishmen as a rule dislike foreigners, and foreigners Englishmen, and I should doubt there being any effective sympathy between Socialists here and abroad . . .' This *insonciance* much annoyed the Queen, who replied to Sir Henry 'This is *misemble*. Really the Queen thinks she will write to Mr. Gladstone about it. He [Mr. Childers] would let everything go on and never punish anyone. He is frightened at his shadow . . . Sir Henry should write to Sir C. Warren [Commissioner of Police] to say the Queen hopes he looks out well.' Sir Charles' reply to the inquiries which resulted is instructive. '. . . Three [Belgian agitators] have been known to have come and two have returned, also there is a Belgian sailor here who was engaged in the riots, but our English Socialists are somewhat lukewarm in the matter, have subscribed very little, and do not give the Belgians much encouragement. In fact their aims and objects are not the same. Our Socialists think they have a practical object in view, viz: Less work and more pay, and are not in sympathy with the violent views elaborated on the Continent . . .' This letter was endorsed 'Satisfactory, V.R.I.' (*Queen Victoria: Letters*. Third Series, Vol. I.).

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW AUDIENCE
1889

THE working-classes, it must be remembered, were sharply divided at this time into two great sections, an upper and a lower. Above, was the aristocracy of Labour, the organised and exclusive Trade Unions of skilled artisans; below the unorganised masses of unskilled or casual workers, whence came that thirty per cent. of the population of London, which lived permanently 'below subsistence level.' History had in fact repeated itself. Thus in 1830 the bourgeoisie, in its assault upon the political monopoly of the landowner, had seemed to be voicing the claims of the nation; but in 1832 the admission of its own upper levels to a share in political power had bought off its opposition. It was content to see the lesser bourgeois, and the whole of the working-classes, remain excluded. Similarly the short-lived revolutionary Trade Unionism of the early eighteen-thirties and the Chartism of the 'forties had been an insurgence of the whole working-class against political exclusion and intolerable economic conditions. But since then the upper sections of Labour, the Trade Unions of skilled artisans, had achieved, for themselves at least, a considerable measure of political influence and economic progress. They were now on the whole contented and acquiescent. Like the bourgeoisie in 1832, although

by a more gradual and inconspicuous progress, they had been bought off. They thought no more of the unorganised masses for whom they had once spoken. Mentally and spiritually they seemed to be merging into the lower middle class. About this time the Bradford Trades Council (of TradeUnionists) objected to a proposal to amend its title to 'Bradford Trades and Labour Council' as a humiliating threat to its prestige. And special rooms were reserved in public houses from which all but woolsorters were excluded lest they should be exposed to contact with their lower-paid fellow-workers. Trade Unionism had indeed become acquiescent. Meanwhile the unorganised masses has as yet given no sign of restiveness.

Socialism as yet had stirred neither of these two great sections of the working-classes. It had scarcely contrived to ruffle as yet the placid surface even of organised Labour, and largely for this reason it had been at first a habit with the Federation to denounce Trade Unionism. Of late, it is true, there had been a change. Tom Mann in particular had contrived to persuade it to urge its working-class members to join their Unions and work for Socialism from within them. And this although the Federation's more official ideal seems to have been no sort of Unionism but an Owenite World Federation of Labour. As early as 1886 Mann had published his pamphlet on the *Eight Hours' Day*, for a few Socialist workmen had already espoused this new notion, which was to be so incalculably fertile, of putting forward immediate practical reforms, which, though tending to Socialist ends, could be accepted by men too hard put to it to bother their heads about Socialism or, indeed, about any ultimate goals whatever. Socialism itself, it

is true, had made as little apparent progress within, as without, the Unions. Its Marxian phraseology, for one thing, was so much Greek to them. Moreover Socialism was still predominantly the Federation's Socialism, which was Hyndman's. And Hyndman had little sympathy with industrial, as distinct from political, action. In the industrial field the strings would not be held by Hyndman. And when Mann objected, at an Executive meeting, to the Federation's persistent abuse of the Unions, Hyndman rose in wrath. What were the Unions after all? Who were their leaders? Were they not the most stodgy-brained and dull-witted time-servers in the country? To conciliate such would be waste of time. Moreover in the cavernous depths beneath that organised aristocracy of labour which was Trade Unionism, depths scarcely measurable even by the vast social gulf which yawned between a bricklayer and a bricklayer's labourer, between a stevedore and a casual docker, among the innumerable unorganised masses who toiled and suffered outside the Unions, Socialism, ceaselessly lifting up its voice, had certainly not yet made itself heard. For what had Socialism, when its message reached them, seemed to offer these? A golden new Society, quite unimaginable to them, about whose particulars even Socialists were not always in agreement and which was apparently to be achieved at some unnamed and distant date through some act, or process, of violence which no Socialist had attempted to describe. This was not a message fitted to spread itself among the masses, for whom the day's evils were sufficient, and it had begun to look as though no message of hope would ever stir their listless apathy. Yet now, suddenly, they were to be taught that they themselves, the weakest and most

unorganised of them, could mend their own industrial lot. And their leaders, the men who read them this pregnant lesson, being Socialists, would help, when the great strikes were over, to teach them, and the Trade Unions too, that, together, they might be able to use this new-found strength to effect changes by political means also. Out of this lesson would come the Labour Party. One of the greatest mysteries among the many mysteries of the rise of Socialism is the rapidity of its transformation from the creed of an impotent and doctrinaire handful in 1888 to a force which two years later could shake organised Labour to its foundations. The explanation of the astounding change is the story of the Dock Strike of 1889. That thirty per cent. which lived 'beneath the level of bare subsistence' was about to make history.

For Socialism would at last reach the old, close, exclusive, cautious, benevolent-fund, Conservative or Liberal skilled workers' Unions of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers' model by way of the great mass of unskilled, underpaid, unorganised labour which all qualified observers had long assumed to be material intractable to the Union method and hopelessly indifferent to politics. Low rumblings of discontent had begun intermittently, it is true, even among the Unions. 'Revolutionary changes are beginning to show themselves' pronounced the secretary of the Flint Glass Makers in 1884, but in truth, although in most Unions a small minority of younger men might dream of showing a bolder front to their employers, even maybe of political independence, the fact remained that the Unions had by now become little better than sick and burial clubs, afraid to jeopardise their benevolent funds by fighting

their masters. As John Burns, who was to be one of the first great builders of the new model, had complained in *Justice*

> 'Their reckless assumption of the duties and responsibilities that only the State or whole community can discharge, in the nature of sick and superannuation benefits, at the instance of the middle class, is crushing out the larger Unions by taxing their members to an unbearable extent. This so cripples them that the fear of being unable to discharge their friendly society liabilities often makes them submit to encroachments by the masters without protest. The result of this is that all of them have ceased to be Unions for maintaining the rights of labour, and have degenerated into mere middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions.'

The new impulse was to come from the extreme depths. Few were the philanthropists, fewer still the sociologists, who had peered into those abysses. Indeed when Charles Booth began about 1886 that first great systematic and statistical inquiry into the condition of the people it was generally supposed that impartial, scientific examination would immediately reveal the lurid exaggerations of the new agitators. And his statistics, proving so unexpectedly to support their denunciations,* even (as the Fabians were discovering) to outdo them in horror, would eventually reverberate round the world. In the wealthiest city in the world, it appeared, thirty per cent. of the population was half starved. Booth's statistics would permanently discredit professional Political Economy and

* They proved that thirty per cent. of the population of London lived at, or beneath, the level of bare subsistence. They did not, however, confirm the Marxian assertion that manual workers as a whole were in a state of chronic destitution or that the poor were steadily becoming poorer.

furnish a powerful impetus to social reform. But before they had begun their slow infiltration of the public conscience the social depths would suddenly reveal themselves, in the dockers' rising of August and September, 1889, in an incalculably shorter space of time to an immeasurably wider audience.

There had been unnoticed stirrings among the unorganised already, both outside dockland and within it. Thus on March 31st, 1886, Will Thorne and others had brought into being the Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union; an event not at first sight of much import to the world, and naturally quite unnoticed by Press or public, yet pregnant of much. For hitherto, Economists, Trade Union leaders, employers and philanthropists alike, with any fraction of the general public which concerned itself with such matters, had unanimously supposed that such low-paid, unskilled labour would never be shepherded into an effective Union. In the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, indeed, there had been a premature and shortlived outcropping of Trade Unionism among the unskilled. But it had withered rapidly and what survived of it had been destroyed by the trade depression of 1879. There seemed no likelihood of its reappearance. Yet Thorne had enrolled three thousand members in a fortnight, twenty thousand in six months. For an immediate practical aim had been set before these men – an eight-hours' day. Stranger still, in a few weeks they had extorted it from their employers, and without a conflict. Soon Thorne was establishing himself in an office as secretary to his new Union; a trifle apprehensively, for he had had no office training and but little education. But this was to be a new-model Union. It would have no sick and superannuation funds. Memor-

able indeed, the emergence of this Union. Thorne, who was a Socialist and had been trained in the Federation had been helped and prompted in his campaign by fellow members, Quelch, Burrows, Burns and Mann. Eleanor Marx Aveling came too – 'dressed in a slovenly picturesque way, with curly, black hair flying about in all directions' and 'fine eyes full of life and sympathy, otherwise ugly features and expression' – and had exhorted the men, to cries of 'Good old stoker!' Thorne thought his success the 'culmination of long years of Socialist propaganda among the underpaid and oppressed workers.' Rather, it showed how quickly a few men, fired by Socialist teaching, could stir a multitude to action when they propounded not abstract economics and a remote catastrophe but an immediate betterment within the multitude's own grasp. It was not long before they found imitators.*

II

The docks. We are in the heart of that thirty per cent. which lives below subsistence level. Through the docks passes night and day in unending stream the merchandise of what is still at this time the richest city in the world. Into them drift the rejected and broken-down of every calling. The dock-owners have already saddled themselves with certain unnecessary disadvantages. These docks have been built in competition with each other.

* Thorne, 67-80. Champion, 10, 11. *Justice*, Sept. 6, 1884. Sept, 3, 1887. *Flint Glass Makers' Magazine*, Nov. 1884 (quoted Webb 379, 380). Webb, 381. Mann, 57. *Bradford Pioneer*, June 24, July 1, 1927. Webb, *Apprenticeship*, 202*n*.

They have competed with ruinous discounts and offers of free docking. The Tilbury docks were intended to empty the Albert docks. The East and West India docks have litigated ruinously with their contractors. The land at Tilbury has been bought from speculators who passed it on at ten times the price they gave for it. On the capital to meet all these needless expenses interest has to be earned. By the dockers among others. In sheds, iron-barred from end to end. Without, three times as many as those within, waiting. Within, penned cattle-wise many hundreds likewise waiting. For the 'call' may come night or day, at any hour. One waits therefore, for a week, sometimes, night and day. Slow starvation and the furtive storing of refuse rice thrown away by coolies. The 'caller on' passing up and down without, protected by iron bars from the desperate drove within. Peering, he offers his 'ticket,' choosing, as at a cattle-market. Some may have spent their earnings at his public-house and are assured of his favour. The 'ticket men' pass through. The rest struggle like madmen for the last tickets. The ageing, the weak and starving battle desperately to keep their feet. Down, they may be crushed to death. The strong kick and punch and curse their way through the mass. They hurl themselves off the ground and plunge on towards the railings across heads and shoulders. Coats, flesh, and even ears are torn off. For the Dock Companies have arranged a process of natural selection. The fittest have survived. Or, alternatively, as a docker puts it, 'the worse a man is the more work he will get at the docks.' . . . Within the cages the defeated address themselves once more to wait. New competitors are filtered in from the outer throngs. The victors, nursing bruises or trembling with the

exhaustion of the battle and their hunger, begin their work; for fivepence an hour.

The work may last all day. It may end in half an hour and they will be back, waiting. Some will voluntarily pay themselves off when they have worked an hour and earned fivepence – to buy food, because they have had none for twenty-four hours, or to buy drink. Men are known to drop dead at the pay-box as they reach for their few shillings at the end of the day. Some die slowly at home of hunger. 'They live chiefly on "tobacco" which is a compound of sugar, vinegar, brown paper and German nicotine.' Many are brutalised – 'bestial content or hopeless discontent on their faces' – and their wives and children bear the marks of their brutality. Such, as observers report, are the docks and such the dockers. Of whom, save Booth and his assistants, economist and philanthropist know as yet next to nothing. But they do know that the docker is free; free to 'sell his labour in the highest market' according to the soundest principles of Manchester Political Economy, and some of them will tell him this when at last he draws their attention to himself. Meanwhile all are agreed that Trade Unionism, with its exclusive bar-rooms and distaste for the word 'Labour,' cannot extend to such as him.

All the same, one Tillett has been trying his hand at organising a dockers' Union. He is thirty now, had run away from home three times before he was thirteen, and has tried his hand before now as fisherman, as bootmaker and as sailor in the navy and on a tramp-steamer. Two years ago he formed the 'Tea Coopers' and General Labourers' Association.' It aimed at uniting all the dock labour, but its fluctuating membership has never reached three thousand and is often under five hundred. It has

no funds and altogether seems unlikely to survive. Nevertheless there are unrecognised forces at work making for its survival, and for more than that. For two years past, for one thing, there have been Socialist meetings at the dock-gates. John Burns, with Jack Williams, also of the Federation, has frequently left his home in Battersea at three or four in the morning, tramped to the docks, delivered speeches at three dock-gates and made his way back to his work at seven or eight. Champion has been there and Hyndman too and several others of the Federation. It has all been part of the campaign to rouse the unemployed. It does not seem, it is true, as if they have made much impression. Hyndman has found it depressing work – 'on the whole the most depressing experiences I ever had'– and when the strike comes the three Socialists who play a leading part in it will be welcomed in spite of their Socialism, not because of it, and will keep their Socialist views to themselves. Nevertheless here and there sparks have fallen and are smouldering. The dockers have long suspected that they are unjustly treated and now they have been told so. Given the fuel of a clear programme of specific improvement to demand, given due occasion and encouragement, and there will be a blaze.

Moreover there has been a notable example set them. For there are workers economically even weaker and more helpless than themselves; among them young women making lucifer-matches at a penny an hour. And seven hundred of these, inflamed by an article by Mrs. Besant exposing their sufferings ('phossy-jaw' among them) in her new paper, *The Link*, which had somehow reached them, had struck last year (1888). Mrs. Besant and Herbert Burrows had contrived to bring the facts

to the attention of the public and to collect funds, and after a fortnight the employers sullenly gave way. Their very weakness, thanks to public opinion, had enabled the weak to triumph. The lesson is not lost upon the dockers. Nor yet the companion moral: no hope of redress, for no one will be aware that there is anything that needs redressing, unless you fight. And then the organisation, this year, 1889, of the gas-workers and their astonishing capture, already described, of the eight hours' day. It is the same lesson once more.*

III

The occasion of the great Dock Strike came on Wednesday, August 14th, 1889. It was trifling, a minor dispute over the division of some insignificant 'plus' or bonus. But its cause lay deep within the past, and has been suggested above. Tillett had much ado even to keep his men at work until he had sent in to their employers their formal and sweeping demands. The strike indeed had unleashed itself almost before the dock-directors can have unsealed his letter. But his men were now not to be held back. Mysteriously at last they were aflame. Moreover, he had written to the directors six days earlier and the directors had not replied. Indeed there was no apparent reason why they should not treat the revolt with contempt. The demands were to be a rise of pay from fivepence to sixpence an hour, and from sixpence to eightpence for overtime; that no man should

* Tillett 1-13. Booth vol. I. Part II. Chap. 2 (elaborate account of Dockland). Vaughan and Nash, 31, 47, 53, 56-7. Champion, 8, 11, 15. Knott, 37. Howell, 152*f*. *Times*, Sept. 13, 1889. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 437-440. Webb, *Apprenticeship*, 298-302. Besant, 334-7.

be taken on for less than four hours' work; that the system of letting out pieces of work to small middlemen 'contractors,' who made their profit by overdriving the men and, in effect, robbed both company and workers, should be abolished, or alternatively that the pay for such work should be raised; and that specific hours at night should be reckoned as overtime. A fifth demand, that men should be engaged only twice a day at fixed hours, so that the endless waiting might be abolished, appeared intermittently in the programme but was not pressed to the end. The Companies declined to consider such revolutionary suggestions. Indeed, Mr. Norwood, chairman of the directors, had already formed the opinion that the men were rightly contented with their lot and that the whole trouble was due to the sinister activities of a Socialist Congress in Switzerland. And so the struggle had begun. Tillett's small union had about seven shillings and sixpence in its exchequer.

Unaided, the revolt must collapse forthwith and there was no guarantee that aid would come. The earliest dangerpoint was passed on the first Saturday evening, the seventeenth. The issue hung upon two Unions of Stevedores, (the dockers unloaded ships; the stevedores loaded them, were comparatively well paid and of immensely higher social status and had nothing to gain by leaving work). Their committees sat late into the night at the 'Blue Post' in the West India Dock road. Outside, thousands waited in the street, not guessing what further and greater issues hung upon this decision but well aware that the fate of their own revolt was in the balance. There was little precedent enough for the self-sacrifice that was required of the better paid men, but at last their decision was made known to the crowds

outside. They would come out. A great wave of cheering went down the street. Mr. Norwood, this is not a revolt, it is a revolution!

For a little while longer outside Dockland the world remained tranquilly indifferent. Not till the twenty-first did the Press begin to notice the affair. But by then it was already a portent. And by the September 3rd the *Times* would be giving two entire pages to it and detailed reports would be being despatched daily by telegraph all over the world. For the revolt spread through Dockland like a heath-fire before a high wind, so that those with whom it had originated were astonished each day anew. Each morning there would be news of fresh thousands who had added themselves to the strikers. Burns had brought out 3,500 from the Surrey Docks or McDougall's works had closed down. Soon there were more than a hundred thousand on strike, drawn not from the Docks only but from numberless East End trades which had never dreamt before that their grievances could be redressed, and by the twenty-seventh the Strike Committee had to issue a proclamation warning their would-be allies not to join them unless they could fight unaided. The strike funds were insufficient even for the dockers. Moreover some of their allies put forward demands of their own and it was impossible for the overdriven leaders in the haste and urgency of the conflict to examine the justice of each new quarrel. Even so, many East End employers discovered during the conflict that the laws of political economy, hitherto, with labour passive, supposed to be immutable, permitted them to raise their labourers' wages or to improve their conditions.

The leaders of this strike, since, beside Tillett, the dockers hitherto had had no leader, were from outside

the docks. They were of the 'new' Unionists. John Burns, of the Federation and of Trafalgar Square fame, came from Battersea, a short, powerful young man, dark of face, full-bearded, with dark, piercing eyes under beetling eyebrows and thick hair already beginning to turn grey. He was the son of an Ayrshire father and an Aberdonian mother, and his admirers believed that he was descended from Robert Burns himself, an honour which he would usually disclaim. As a boy he had been a gentleman's 'tiger' in Hampstead, top-hatted and top-booted, and afterwards pot-boy at the 'Winstanley Arms'. Apprenticed to a firm of engineers he had taken to addressing political meetings, and so had got himself discharged. He had worked as an engineer on the west coast of Africa and there, of all places, had discovered, and devoured, Adam Smith. 'Adam Smith, Robert Burns and my own hard lot have built me up into what I am.'

Already he was a London County Councillor and was commencing there that training in practical and immediate reform which would take him not only out of the Federation but, political currents being what they then were, into the Radical Party and a Liberal Cabinet. He brought with him magnificent gifts for mob oratory and for mob leadership and a physique which would allow him to give twenty hours a day to the most exacting work known, the leadership of a great strike. Courage, good humour, common-sense, a bold strain of Puritanism, considerable vanity and a quick temper he brought too. Early in the conflict the police have recognised his power over the people and how largely they will have to depend upon the Strike leaders for the keeping of public order, and they suggest that he should wear some dis-

tinguishing badge. And so he adopts his white straw hat, not white for long but easily recognised among the cloth- or felt-capped multitudes. And wherever men see it, they will cry 'There's Burns!' and press forward. Also an engineer and also from the Battersea branch of the Federation comes Tom Mann. He had already had two years' experience of 'lecturing,' or agitation, for the Federation in the north; indeed agitation will be his life's work and he possesses in abundance the courage, the humour, the excitability and the personal magnetism which are the characteristic gifts of the successful popular agitator. He seems made of quicksilver and does not tire; moreover he has an eye for details. These three, Burns, Tillet and Mann are the leaders to whom the East end will chiefly look and listen during the coming months. Their names will become known all over the world and on them the strategy and tactics of the strike will chiefly depend. Thorne, the new leader of the first unskilled Labourers' Union and also trained in the Federation, will preside over many of the demonstrations. Jack Williams of the Federation is active, though less conspicuous. H. H. Champion, who played an influential part in counsel and organisation, was not of the working-class and was not so potent or so well-known a figure with the crowds. Moreover once the strike had captured the public sympathy it became highly important not to confuse it in the public mind with Socialism, and Champion was well-known as one of the early leaders of the Federation. He had in fact by now already left it, expelled upon a charge of intrigue, one of that almost unbroken stream of secessionists who had differed with Hyndman on policy, and he was now conducting independently his *Labour Elector* to advocate the formation of

a Labour Party. But to the apprehensive of the public this fact was irrelevant as well as unknown; moreover, as an ex-officer of artillery he was suspect in such a galley as no genuine working-man, not even Burns, so lately 'the Man with the Red Flag,' could ever be. And from time to time an agitated letter to the *Times* would explain that the whole upheaval of the East End did not proceed from its ancient grievances but was a revolutionary movement engineered by the Federation with Champion as its veiled agent and symbol of its real origin. Hyndman and Morris, it was prophesied, would soon appear. The writers of these revelations did not seem to be aware that Burns and Mann, not to speak of Thorne, three of the four most conspicuous leaders of the strike, came also from the Federation, while Tillett was fast learning the aggressive Socialism he was soon to profess. Once more the Federation, with its diminutive membership and its complete failure to capture even an outer fringe of the working-classes, had been magnified by the prevailing sense of Socialism in the air.

To the public eye, once it had been attracted to the strike, its daily course appeared outwardly much the same. Burns and the other leaders, who were sometimes not in bed before four in the morning and worked regularly from eighteen to twenty hours a day, would be up by six and would have begun a tour, haranguing a succession of gatherings all over dockland. On one day Burns addressed fourteen of these meetings before nine o'clock, exhorting each to patience and discipline and assuring them that victory was near. There would be hurried visits to the far-flung dock-gate pickets, a quick breakfast at Toomey's, the only square meal of the day, and then the first great mass-meeting on Tower

"THOSE WHO AGREE TO THIS RESOLUTION, HOLD UP THEIR HANDS"
A Strike Meeting in Dockland

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Hill. Dockland is there already waiting in its thousands. As the straw hat is discerned there are cries of 'Here he comes.' As Burns thrusts his way towards his parapet many a hand would fain detain him. Dockers have not received their food-tickets, benevolent strangers from the United States wish to present their sovereign for the funds to the wearer of the straw hat in person, reporters inquire if there is anything new for the Press. A nod or a monosyllable here and there as he cleaves onward. But it is enough; they have spoken to Burns. Then the speech 'to all,' in the formula adopted by the Press, 'within reach of his voice,' which, it may be added, carries as far as can be expected of the human organ. His chief business is to hearten his audience and let them know, if it seems advisable, the progress of whatever tentative negotiations may be afoot. Sometimes he shows off his power over them. 'Now you stand still for a minute. If a man of you budges, I'll stop his relief.' And the huge crowd will laugh good-humouredly, and for a minute stands rigid and still, proud perhaps of exhibiting its new discipline, and half-mesmerised by the power of the speaker, which power he has mysteriously drawn from itself. And always the speech will end with a demand for a show of hands. Will they go on with the struggle? Always the innumerable forest of hands goes up.

> 'What a collection of hands, boys' cries Burns. 'Hard-working, brawny hands! Why, there is not a long-fingered pick-pocket among them. (*Cheers*). ... Now, lads, are you going to be as patient as you have been? (*Yes*). Are you going to be your own police? (*Yes*). Then now march off five deep past the dock-companies' offices, and keep on the left-hand side of the street.'

Then cheers for the wives and children of the strikers and the day's procession begins to form.

These daily processions, two miles long, through the heart of London were portentous. They stamped this strike upon the memory of many who had never given a thought to such matters before. At first the City was alarmed. Twenty thousand men (mostly from 'beneath subsistence level') with a Socialist at their head, marching down Mincing Lane to the tune of the *Marseillaise*! Desks emptied themselves. Windows and doorways became black with craning spectators. Was this the Revolution? But it was soon realised that the procession boded no danger and the City became friendly. All through London there was applause or friendly greetings but at the corner of Mincing Lane the cheers would be loudest and the collecting boxes would be quickest filled. First would come Burns, with Mann or Tillett, deep in converse with Superintendent Forster, who is nominally responsible for order. But in truth it is on Burns rather than on the police that order depends and for a while he is in effect Chief Constable of London. The police are proud of a nod from him. For these weeks he is a great man, as a Prime Minister or a King is great, by reason of the multitudes who follow him. . . . Then come the men five deep. Stevedores in respectable black, dockers in shapeless garments green with age, emblematic groups displaying the dockers' work or the dockers' dinner of bones and garbage in contrast with the dock directors' ample spread, brass bands, drum and fife bands, banners emblazoned with the slogans of the struggle. When the procession is over comes the biggest meeting of the day, often at the West India dock gates. Once, when it is held in Hyde Park, a hundred thousand

are present. And then at last the leaders can slip away – through squalid streets in which all day groups of strikers loiter or sit listlessly on the pavements, their backs against the walls – to patch up the improvised organisation at their head-quarters at the 'Wade's Arms'. Burns and Cunninghame Graham – looking, for all his fashionable double-breasted jacket, as if he had just stepped out of a canvas by Velasquez – are in the bar parlour. Staircase and bar are blocked with deputations, petitioners, pressmen. Pickets hold the stairs. Only with jealous scrutiny do they admit to the upper room where later their leaders in Committee will sit far into the night. Meanwhile there are disaffections to quell, meetings to arrange, imported blacklegs to intercept, mischievous rumours to allay, questions to answer, pressmen to interview, accounts to balance. Above all, there is famine to stave off from tens of thousands of families, and the picketing, on which all turns, to provide for.

In these last two departments the leaders have to improvise intricate organisations demanding much not only of themselves but of the 'unorganisables' they are leading. Here we approach the inner core of the strike. And if to the public its outward semblance is memorable enough, its inward realities are all but a miracle. During the first week there has been no relief to distribute and dockland has subsisted, not for the first time, upon patience and the pawnbrokers. On the twenty-third, tenth day of the strike, some bread and cheese was given out. But it had become known that some money was in hand, and next evening, which is Saturday, some thousands of desperate men were clamouring outside Wroot's coffee house, where the Committee first sat, for at least enough to buy a Sunday dinner. The leaders were not

there. The solitary constable at the door gave way and only six determined men within kept out the crowd. For it had been decided only to issue relief in the form of shilling food-tickets. On the twenty-eighth, the last day before the Committee left Wroot's, Tom Mann is to be seen, his back against the door, allowing four thousand strikers to creep in one by one beneath his leg, which is braced against the opposite doorpost, to draw their tickets. They are hungry men and have hungry wives and children, but they wait patiently and creep in one by one in turn. The weakest does not lose his turn. Later, Committees are formed whose business is to recognise the men. Membership cards of the great Union-to-be are issued too and serve as credentials for the applicants. The discipline is strict. Only very occasionally there are grim scenes of struggle. Moreover, the shops are never looted. Nobody begs from the inquisitive spectators who come from the West end to stare. Provided there is some money, distribution of relief has been proved possible. At first money comes in slowly. Great Unions like the Engineers' send a mere twenty-five pounds. They have not quite made up their minds about these unorganisables. Some of them feel, and say, that for a Trade Union to assist those who have not subscribed to its funds is as inconsistent as it would be for the Oddfellows to pay benefit to non-members. They will give more later, however. The public, too, increases its daily tribute to the collecting-boxes. Subscriptions come from unlooked-for quarters. The Marquis of Ripon sends fifty pounds, even dock directors post cheques to Burns. Mr. Lafone, managing director of Butler's Wharf, continues to pay his own men while on strike more than the Strike Committee can afford to pay

their comrades, thus directly financing a strike against himself; a not unmemorable incident and, perhaps it may be said, characteristic of this country. But it is Australia that finally disperses all financial anxiety, sending towards the end no less than thirty thousand pounds. From the twenty-ninth onwards the lists are open in the Antipodes and Governors, Prime Ministers, Judges, stock-jobbers and dignitaries of the church pour in their contributions. Two great banks compete for the honour of forwarding the remittances without charge. The Postmaster-General asks to be allowed to send the cables free. Trade Unions subscribe huge sums. Football clubs send their gate money. The Melbourne Chamber of Manufacturers votes a collective subscription. A mass meeting of ten thousand at Sydney passionately applauds Socialist speeches in support of the Strike. For Australia has heard that the English docker is paid fivepence an hour and does not share, it seems, Mr. Norwood's suspicion that that Swiss Congress is at the bottom of the whole trouble.*

No sympathy from outside, however, will avail to organise the struggle against blacklegs, which takes strange shapes. The Dock Companies announce in Liverpool and elsewhere that the strike is over and that more hands are needed for the arrears of work, and men come down to London in ignorance. They sleep at night in the docks to avoid the pickets and their angry womenfolk at the gates. A note is smuggled in to them and they leave work and pay their own tickets home. Or the Dock

* In round figures four thousand pounds were contributed to the strike by British Trade Unions, thirteen thousand by the general public, thirty thousand by Australia, and one hundred pounds by foreign sympathisers.

Companies offer three shillings and sixpence an hour to ships' crews from the United States and from Scotland if they will help them in their hour of need, and the crews decline and immediately send a contingent to march with the strikers' daily procession. Seventy men are brought down from Dundee and sixty-six of them leave work at once. Employers smuggle in men disguised as clerks in top hats and black coats. Hop-pickers are brought by rail from Kent. To combat all this the strikers keep men in boats on the river day and night. Every dock gate is picketed, chiefly by stevedores, whose Trade Union training proves invaluable. Men are kept travelling up and down the railways to intercept the drafts of strike-breakers and dissuade them, or they are sent in to work as blacklegs and suborn their companions or report to the Committee. Sometimes Burns will send his great voice booming over the dock gates and usually there will be a response from within. The women too are good at persuading blacklegs out.

The Dock Companies found it difficult to understand the rapid flare of the revolt throughout dockland. The obvious public sympathy with it was even more perplexing. Were the companies not, as they explained to the Press, 'fighting the country's battle?' The demands of the dockers would ruin them: the extra penny an hour alone would cost them an additional £150,000 a year. It would also, as they repeatedly pointed out, be disastrous to the docker himself, as could readily be proved according to the soundest principles of Political Economy. In the heat of the conflict however, although the principles of Political Economy naturally remained immutable, it was not always possible to work out their application quite unanimously, and a master stevedore even wrote

to the *Times*, with the assent of a 'high dock official,' that the cost of the extra penny would amount not to £150,000 but to rather less than a fifth of that sum. The Companies were also able to assure the public that very few of their men were really discontented. The vast majority had been intimidated into ceasing work and would return at once if they were allowed police protection. And with almost every new accession to the strikers they announced that the outgoing workmen had expressed their regret to their employers and had explained that only the fear of personal violence had drawn them reluctantly into the conflict. Struck by this constantly repeated phenomenon the *Times* in a leading article even expressed some doubt as to whether the vast multitude on strike could have been bullied merely into giving up its livelihood, and reported next day a curious incident concerning a man who had explained to his employers, as the workmen left McDougall's Mills *en masse*, that they had been intimidated into this decision, but who had been noticed earlier in that day himself earnestly exhorting his comrades to join the strike. 'The directors themselves,' pronounced the *Times* towards the end, 'do not now say that the pickets have been guilty, on the whole, of serious intimidation.'

This was indeed perhaps the most significant feature of the whole affair. Through the unorganisables were rapidly spreading the strange, new, infectious hopes, the not altogether analysable impulses out of which would arise the Labour Movement. Powerful indeed were these impulses, as the sequel shows. The men, moreover, came from 'beneath the level of subsistence.' Yet in this sudden and unplanned insurgence there was scarcely a hint of either collective or individual violence.

The most serious recorded incident of nearly five weeks' conflict was the probability, not completely established, that an unknown person, not necessarily a striker, had blinded a blackleg by throwing lime at him. The police, no doubt, had contributed to this memorable result by their tact and impartiality, contrasting so markedly with their conduct two years before. The troops, too, with whom the strikers on procession more than once exchanged cheers, had remained all but invisible. The leaders of the strike, moreover, had indefatigably counselled moderation in their speeches. Burns in particular had his own methods of preserving the peace. Arriving providentially on the scene of what the *Times* considered the first serious risk of violence, he called 'I will break the jaw of the first man who makes a noise.' It was sufficient, the risk was at once over. But to the rank and file, lifted out of themselves by a new hope and a new unity, the chief credit belongs. Burns would send penniless and starving dockers, whom he had never seen, to change a sovereign. Before the strike an observer of the docks had noted 'If a man . . . drops off to sleep, his companions will promptly search his pocket for the haphazard penny.' But Burns' change was never so much as a farthing short.

Were the leaders, however, aiming beyond this immediate dispute at 'more distant' – and more sinister – 'goals?' 'English Socialism has stolen a march upon the dock directors, the Press, the general public and the rank and file of the dock-labourers.' Thus warned a correspondent of the *Times*, adding that the goal was the 'nobbling' of Trade Unionism. The suspicion was fairly widely shared. In a sense it was justified. Socialism was indeed stealing a march, and a long one. But the march

does not seem, as the writer just quoted, and not a few others, undoubtedly believed, to have been stolen deliberately. It may almost be said that, like the British Empire, Socialism was being created in a fit of absence of mind. All the leaders, as well as their followers, repeatedly denied that the strike had anything to do with Socialism. Indeed, with the exception of Tillett, they had already had enough experience of Socialist propaganda and its small apathetic audiences to recognise that here must exist, and while the strike lasted, should be preserved, a difference in kind as well as in degree. At the Sunday demonstration in Hyde Park on September 1st one of the five platforms was decorated with red flags and from this Socialism was openly preached as well as the dockers' grievances: but this was the Federation's platform, not the strikers'. And when a Socialist flag appeared at a strike meeting at the dock-gates it was withdrawn at the request of the audience. They 'did not want Socialism brought into the strike.' Burns and Mann avoided even vague political prophecies, though they would stress the need for industrial organisation and prophecy 'bigger battles' on this ground. It was Tillet, now undergoing a rapid conversion to Socialism, who pointed out that the strikers had thus far received no help whatever from their political representatives and that 'if labouring men could show such power they ought to use it to get their own representatives into Parliament.' But even this, on the face of it, was rather the old demand for Labour Representation than Socialism, and the lesson which enabled Socialism to steal its march was in fact being enforced not by the leaders and orators but by the facts themselves. For Parliament, which rose before the strike was over, exhibited an unmistakable indifference

to the whole affair. Interminably preoccupied with the troubles of Ireland the Members scarcely mentioned the great conflict at their doors, although once the Home Secretary rose to assure an anxious questioner that to the best of his knowledge there was no serious intimidation of would-be workers. Mr. Sydney Buxton, the Liberal Member for Poplar, worked indefatigably, it is true, for a settlement, and Cunninghame Graham was of the strike, but these exceptions appeared to many to prove the rule. Far more typical and more provocative of unaccustomed political speculation in Dockland seemed a Mr. Edward S. Norris, who represented an East end constituency and was a dock-director. As a dock-director, he explained in the *Times*, he had always sympathised with 'deserving labour' but prolonged reflection had led him to the conclusion that in this particular conflict the dock-directors were 'fighting the country's battle.' Had not one docker, debarred against his will from work, been 'driven out of his mind by fear and anxiety?'

Dockland was learning not only that it could help itself but that, if it did not do so, few indeed were those who would. In these circumstances there was scarcely even any temptation to the leaders of Dockland – however ardent for the advance of Socialism, and even if the preaching of Socialism had not been an obvious danger to the success of the strike – to advocate it openly. Indeed their one gesture which could be interpreted as an inspiration of Socialist doctrine was also their one serious error in tactics. On August 30th, when prospects were at their darkest, they issued a proclamation inviting what would be in effect a General Strike of all London labour on the following Monday if their full demands

should not by then have been conceded. Mann and Champion were two of the sub-committee of three which drafted this document, and no doubt at any rate in their minds and in Burns' hovered memories of Marxian theory and of that revolutionary General Strike which in every country re-appears alluringly from time to time upon the horizon of organised Socialist working-men. But it was a counsel of despair, abandoned almost as soon as projected. The sympathy of the public, hitherto unmistakable, immediately and visibly cooled. Trade Union deputations arrived to protest and to promise, if the manifesto were withdrawn, more generous financial support. The relief of the leaders as they abandoned it was almost as great as that of the public.

The beginning of the end came with the concession by certain wharfingers, led by that Mr. Lafone who had paid his striking workmen, of practically the whole of the dockers' demands: after which it became increasingly difficult for the Dock Companies to continue to protest their complete impracticability. The discipline of the unorganisables even survived the return of a respectable fraction to work for the capitulating employers. Those who remained out did not complain: those who went in contributed an agreed proportion of their pay to the strike funds. Meanwhile the huge and unexpected contributions from Australia had made it clear that, if need be, the strike could be indefinitely prolonged. It suddenly became merely a question of saving the faces of Mr. Norwood and his colleagues. Mr. Sidney Buxton and Cardinal Manning, whose ascetic and spiritual presence as well as his democratic sympathies powerfully impressed the strike leaders and especially Tillett, both worked tirelessly as intermediaries. The Companies would concede

everything. All the four points were to be granted. Only the date from which the extra penny was to be paid remained in dispute. The further this could be postponed the more dignity, it was felt, would the Companies preserve. November 4th was the latest day to which, after some hitches, the strike leaders would finally agree. And on September 14th, with the powerful help of the Cardinal, whose plea made a profound impression upon his hearers, the whole strike committee was persuaded to agree with them.

During these last days Burns had been redoubling his plain-speaking to the dockers. Let them make this victory the turning-point in their lives. 'I want to see some of your wives bear less evidence . . . of your brutal ill-treatment.' The dockers do not take this sort of talk amiss. The man is their leader; and mothers may be seen pressing forward with their new born infants that he may lay his hand upon their heads. Not the least of his services to the New Trade Unionism and the new political movement of which this conflict was in varying degrees the point of departure had been the investing of them from the outset with that moral idealism with which both the older Unionism and the earlier democratic movements had been deeply coloured in the past. But even so, when all was over and the shouting crowds had carried their weary leaders in triumph shoulder high, the *Times*, which had throughout exhibited a tentative sympathy with the rank and file, could only reflect that 'Some of us may think that the poor creatures were honouring their worst enemies.' For it was difficult perhaps to grudge the dockers their 'tanner,' but their leaders – did these not aim at 'a more distant goal'? An official correspondent might have reported from time

to time, uncensored, that of the leaders he 'could not speak too highly.' But suspicion would always reassert itself. The leaders, after all, surely cherished plans. Would that the men would disown them! 'The only concern of the men can be to find leaders they can trust.'*

IV

These had been weeks significant in the long history of England. They were in many senses the link between the old era and the new. They changed Socialism from an economic system preached by a handful of doctrinaires into the religion of innumerable common men. The real achievement of the Federation had been to convert a limited number of individuals whose talents and opportunities enabled them to move the masses. And these men, remembering what they had learnt yet turning their backs not only upon the methods of the Federation but upon much of its doctrine, would in due course transform the Socialist Movement and England with it. Bodying themselves out of this unpremeditated and improvised insurgence, as from the whirl of still formless atoms, would take shape clear-cut enough a new industrial, and a new political, movement of significance

* There are several valuable first hand accounts, all of which I have used too fully for references to particular pages to be serviceable.

Tillett (*passim*), Champion (*passim*). (Accounts by two of the protagonists.) Mann, Chap. 5 (Briefer and later but also by a protagonist.) Smith and Nash (*passim*). (A fuller and particularly well-informed account by experts who saw the strike from within.) Very full accounts, and several leaders, in *Times*, Aug. 31 to Sept. 16 inclusive. Grubb, 96, 100. Howell, 65. Account of Trade Union Congress, *Times*, Sept. 3, 1889. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 437-441. Lowe, *Souvenirs*, 30-1. Webb, *Apprenticeship*, 298. *The Idler*, vol. ii, p. 669*f* (on Burns).

not yet to be measured. And therefore also the conduct of this conflict becomes something more than prophetic. For it foreshadows, because in some degree it transmits, the character of the movements which will dominate the twentieth century. In the light of which it is memorable that during these weeks in spite of many temptations to violence, an unbroken and exemplary moderation had been preserved by men brought up to a life 'beneath subsistence level' and hitherto widely regarded as the most degraded class of labour to be found in Europe. Contemporaries had indeed been astonished. Commenting in his charge to the Grand Jury at the Sessions following the end of the Strike on the presence on the charge sheet of no single case arising out of the Strike, and recalling that even of minor police-court cases there had been only twenty, several of which had been dismissed, the Recorder of London observed that 'the whole history of the world did not afford so wonderful an instance of self-control.' This moderation both of leaders and led, the practical ability of the leaders and the moral idealism with which they had striven to colour the struggle, the surprising discipline of men unused to any discipline, their determination and self-sacrifice and good humour and their reluctance or incapacity, shared on the whole by their leaders, to reflect upon, or even to discern, the wider issues involved in their own immediate conflict – these features were to be distinctive also of the political movement to come. Characteristic too were the warmth of the applause in Mincing Lane, the cheques secretly sent to the strike funds by dock-directors, Mr. Lafone and his payments to his own men, the cheers of the strikers for the troops, the tactful self-effacement of the police. All these, and a score of other paradoxical aspects

of the conflict, contribute to that characteristically illogical and unanalysable totality (as of a thing never reducible to scientific terms, of which only a confused general impression can ever approach a truthful statement) which is perhaps uniquely British and which in the future was to make the work of the leaders of the British Movement at once so much easier and so much more difficult.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW AGITATOR
1887-1890

AND so before this year 1889 (since Fabianism did not begin to make itself a public till that year), there had existed, for practical purposes, no more than two small, struggling Socialist organisations, preaching a formal, almost an esoteric, Socialism. Indeed by 1890 one of them, the Socialist League, was dead; for Morris left it in that year to the handful of anarchists who had captured it and confined himself henceforth to the Hammersmith Socialist Society, a little group which centred round Kelmscott House and its owner's personality. There had existed also, tantalisingly remote and indifferent, the vast mass of labour organised and unorganised. Across the gulf which sundered these two, Socialism and Labour, the Dock Strike had begun the building of a bridge. But only begun. A still incalculably formidable task remained – to carry the new faith of the New Unionism, its faith that only by aggressive working-class action would working-class interests be advanced, and, inextricably involved with this creed, the more particularly Socialist proclivities of its leaders, past watchful and suspicious sentinels into the domain of the old privileged and quiescent Trade Unions, and then out of the material to be found there to create by slow stages a new Party. Here were towering obstacles indeed.

The task moreover will be highly complex. For the political movement now beginning to gather momentum will be inextricably two-fold. It will aim both at Independent Labour Representation and at Socialism, and the two are not the same. Its prophets will preach sometimes one and sometimes the other, but more often both as inseparable complements of each other. Of their converts some will be more particularly attracted by the one, some by the other, but the greater part will be drawn to a creed which is compounded, in varying proportions no doubt, of both. For Socialism is ceasing to be a system of economics and is becoming an impulse.

For a decade or two past, as we have already seen, before there was any rumour of reviving Socialism, there had been an intermittent movement, or movements, for Labour Representation. But this had been what may be called Dependent Labour Representation. Labour representatives were to be returned as Liberals or Conservatives, to interest themselves in measures which concerned wage-earners and to speak for them upon technical points. Now, however, the varied experiences of the Dock Strike, reinforced by Socialist propaganda, were bringing an increasing number of wage-earners to believe that their interests could never be advanced through Parliament, as they seemed never to have been advanced in the industrial field, unless by their own independent action. They must have a party of their own; an Independent, instead of a Dependent, Labour Party. Here was the first aim of the new men. Through this independent party they would press for the particular reforms desired by their class; and first of all, no doubt, for the Eight Hours' Day for which Mann and Champion were already insistent. Beyond this, however,

they would surely need a more comprehensive creed, through which they might hope in due course to see Society remodelled to serve much less directly the interests of ownership and much more directly the interests of service. And what could this creed be but Socialism? Socialism, which was preaching in politics just such a rupture with tradition as they contemplated, and, in Industry, had achieved. Socialism, which had given them their leaders. Socialism, from whose armoury they had already accepted their first specific demand, for the Eight Hours' Day. Accordingly Socialism would become the second and wider goal. But while they were thus to learn from Socialists something of a wider creed than the mere concentration on the immediate reform which had been familiar even in their days of Dependence, Socialism itself, in return, would find itself progressively compelled by the necessities of the new campaign to concentrate constantly upon the particular, immediate and practical. As, with increasing access to the Unions, it began to find a hearing with so wide an audience, it would tend slowly to assume an altered character, vaguer and more intuitional, less a specific theory and more an embodiment of the widespread hope of a better life now re-awakening among the people. Always hard to define, as Socialists themselves had frequently complained, it would become harder still. Impracticable, soon, to apply the simpler old tests, as, Do you accept the Marxian theory of value? For Socialism is growing to be less of a science and more of a religion. *Socialism, I say again, is not a system of economics. It is life for the dying people.* . . . The words would be Keir Hardie's. Could any member of the Federation or the League have spoken thus?

II

The dockers' triumph was followed during 1889 and the next two years by a rapid development of their New Model in the hitherto exclusive Trade Union world and by the appearance of a quantity of new Trades Councils, symbols of the new ideal of solidarity between all grades of Labour.* Now to turn the new-found strength to assail and alter the too acquiescent politics of the Trade Unions! Already before 1889 the assault had begun. Its battleground was the annual Trades Union Congress and its objective that Congress's political executive, the so-called Parliamentary Committee. This body of ten members and a Secretary now professed orthodox Liberal views and its cautious and submissive temper was becoming gradually alien to that of the Congress. Its policy in 1885, indeed, was notably more moderate than that of the then Radical Joseph Chamberlain. Yet from 1874 to 1889 its members were annually re-elected almost without change, save that occasioned by death or promotion, with Henry Broadhurst, Liberal Member of Parliament and even in 1886 Under-Secretary in a Liberal Government, as its Secretary. The Congress, however, was becoming vaguely restive and from time to time would pass resolutions which the Committee, strongly disapproving, would unobtrusively refrain from carrying out. From 1883 onward the movement for a universal Eight Hours' Day grew to be a test issue between the old opinions and the new. It was initiated in Congress by a veteran Marxian, Adam Weiler, but it was the campaign of the Federation which had won it

* For a Trades Council represents all the varieties of organised Labour in a locality.

popularity. The proposal was deeply mistrusted by the Committee. A political campaign, they felt, would turn the Unions into political associations, and they encountered it with adroit delay and promises of inquiry. Nor was this the only evidence that the Committe was losing touch. In 1886 the Congress instructed it to convene a forthcoming International Labour Congress in London. The Committee refrained from doing anything of the kind and referred the matter to the Congress of 1887, which however repeated the instructions. At this Congress, and at the International gathering which ensued, one of the delegates was a Scotch ex-miner named James Keir Hardie, a man with 'an air of great benevolence and the appearance of one who had worked hard and suffered'; a look, this, which he was not to lose.

This man had actually denounced Broadhurst by name for supporting what he called Capitalist candidates at Parliamentary elections. Charles Fenwick, one of the Committee, and, like Broadhurst, a Liberal Member of Parliament, had even thought this attack worthy of notice. But he felt that he could afford to treat it with scorn. 'There are some men and some movements,' he said, 'who are like Jonah's gourd in this, that they spring up in a night and wither in a night.' Mysteriously, however, the attack did not flag. At first it took the form of bitter, and even scurrilous, personal diatribe against the leaders of the Committee, Champion's *Labour Elector* being conspicuous for its venom. And at the Dundee Congress of September, 1889, held during the crisis of the dockers' conflict, the Socialists launched upon Broadhurst and his friends an assault whose bitter personal tone signally defeated its own object. Keir Hardie reminded his audience that Broadhurst held shares in the

firm of Brunner Mond, whose employees, he said, were shamefully overworked and underpaid. He spoke with a kind of flaming directness and that Ayrshire accent which always became more perceptible when he was excited. His last sentences, as was then his custom, he began with 'Now men.' The delegates were uneasy. What manner of man was this? They did not care for his personal tone. They could not guess that, consumed as he was by an inward fire, any failure of the strictest personal independence seemed to him but the hateful reflection of that dependence in politics to whose destruction he was dedicated. Independence! He was an Ayrshire Scot and independence coursed in his blood. They could not know, either, that it was barely a year since the Liberal Party had sent this rough workingman, through no less an emissary than Sir George Trevelyan, their offer of a safe seat and three hundred a year to stand out of their way; nor with what contemptuous politeness he had declined it. Broadhurst however was ready for the attack. He would finish off this 'mixed band of free-lances' which had begun to pester him so insistently. And when he had finished his speech the delegates, amidst scenes of unmeasured enthusiasm, rejected Hardie's motion by 188 votes to eleven. Broadhurst was quite overcome by the enthusiasm of his supporters. An afternoon on the fashionable Carnoustie golf-links restored his equanimity however. And then came a long-promised visit to the mansion of Sir Leonard Lyell. Sir John Lang happened to be driving that way and most kindly gave the Trade Union leader a lift. There was a luncheon too at Glamis Castle, where the Earl of Strathmore's hearty welcome could not be forgotten. Really, it almost seemed to Broadhurst as if the

Trade Union sky was clear once more. The *Times* too, so recently disquieted by the influence of their Socialist leaders over the dockers, could now console itself with the signal failure of another firebrand to influence the aristocracy of Labour. The man Hardie would be wise, it suggested, to 'entrust his motion' on another occasion 'to some other and less suspected advocate.' 'The cause which he advocates is predoomed to fail.'

It was not long before this prophecy was falsified. Next year the triumph of the New Model in Dockland had had time to unleash new forces. The assault moreover had prudently changed its tactics. After heated debate the long-disputed resolution in favour of an Eight Hours' Bill was carried by 193 votes to 155. In this exciting afternoon the Scotch, curiously enough, played but a trifling part. Perhaps Hardie was taking the advice of the *Times*. It was the London Socialists who were the fore-front of the attack, and Burns was at their head. When the voting was announced Burns led cheering which lasted for several minutes, and then, in courtesy to the vanquished, called for 'One cheer for the new and one for the old.' In the course of that week sixty resolutions were passed and of these forty-five were Socialist in tendency. The *Times* was perturbed yet still scornful. 'These heaven-sent reformers of society (the working-classes) must have a more free hand than the world has hitherto allowed them.'

However, the flood-gates were down. A new agitation was in the field. And, not least, a new agitator.*

* Lowe, 104. Stewart, 44, 54–5. *Labour Elector*, 1888, *passim*. *Times*, Sept. 4, 5, 7 (Leader), Sept. 9, 1889, Sept. 6 (Leader), 1890. *Reports* (T.U.C.), 1889, 1890 *passim*. Broadhurst, 223*f*. Webb, 394-401, Howell, chaps. 7 and 8.

III

1836. Airdrie, a small town ten miles east of Glasgow. A diminutive, thatched, white-washed cottage. There is no light in its one room but of such faint starlight as the narrow window admits. Gradually an object or two can be dimly discerned. A rough coffin in the middle of the floor. A rude bed by the wall, on which an unconscious woman stirs uneasily. Then a fretful wail from a corner, and a dark huddle suggests itself vaguely as three crouching children. A girl of five, a boy of three and an infant. The infant has woken and is crying once more for its mother's breast. The girl can be heard attempting to comfort it. There is no neighbour to assist because the father, whose body it is in this Parish coffin, had died of 'the fever,' which the mother has caught from him. (In 1836 drainage is managed upon orthodox individualistic lines.) The boy is heard beginning to sob. He too declines to be comforted by his elder sister. Being but three years old he is unaware of the exact nature of fate's recent strokes, but he knows that it is dark and that he is cold and hungry and frightened. He clambers to his feet and gropes his way unsteadily, with an occasional lugubrious sniff and a stumble or two, for he has not long mastered the difficult art of walking, to the bed. Here he can feel his mother, who can no doubt put things right. But nothing, he finds, will rouse her. It is a mystery to him. He is baffled, then visited by a new idea. For he remembers a stranger bundling father into a box. That dim shape, surely, is the box. If his mother cannot be roused he will wake his father. With some difficulty he secures a poker. With this he begins to hammer on the

lid of the coffin. The blows, though not powerful, sound startlingly loud in the silence.*

December, 1866. The girl of five is now married and has had further experience of attempting to comfort her men-folk. There is a long lock-out on the Clyde and her husband, David Hardie, is out of work, not for the first time. One son is dying of fever. The other, who is the elder and has been christened James Keir, is now ten and has been working from twelve to fourteen hours a day since he was seven. His three-and-sixpence a week earned as errand-boy to a prosperous baker in Lancefield Street supplies just now the entire family income. One morning – it is pay-day – in the last week of the year he arrives at the baker's fifteen minutes late. The same thing had happened yesterday. It is pouring with rain and he is drenched. His father is away from home in search of work: there is no food there and his mother is about to be confined. But if this is anyone's concern but the Hardies' it is certainly not the baker's and the young lady behind the counter greets the small boy ominously. 'You are wanted upstairs by the master.' He ascends, trembling. Outside the dining-room door comes a respite. The master has not finished his prayers. After a pause which seems endless the door opens – upon marvels; a mahogany table, piled food, fragrant warmth, exquisite odours of coffee. The master looks up benevolently over the spectacles with whose aid he has been reading the Scriptures to his household. 'Boy, this is the second morning you have been late. . . I therefore dismiss you, and, to make you more careful in the

* Lowe 9.

future, I have decided to fine you a week's wages. And now you may go.'

As James Keir Hardie passes out of the shop the young lady gives him a roll of bread. It is afternoon before he ventures home to tell his mother that there are no wages and no food: only the roll. He has carried it under his vest all day, but it is soaked with rain. That night the baby is born.*

1879. Keir Hardie is twenty-three and has been for some years a miner. He has been learning much, not least to read. There has been the spelling out of shop show-cards, and of the open pages of books in book-shop windows. And a night school to which pupils brought their own candles. Once he can read, there is 'Cassell's Popular Educator' for a smattering of Latin and French. A thousand times more significant than French or Latin there are Carlyle and Ruskin. Above all, for he is a Scot, there is Robert Burns. Also he has taught himself shorthand after a fashion. A piece of whiteish rock fell one day from the roof of the mine. He blackened it with smoke and with a sharpened instrument meant for raising his lamp-wick traced the characters on the sooty film. He has cut something of a figure in the local Temperance movement too. For, like others who came afterwards to Socialism, he began by accepting the fashionable view that the distresses of the working-class were largely due to its own deficiency in temperance and thrift. 'I am very firmly convinced,' he writes in a fragmentary diary of 1884, 'that the abolition of the liquor traffic and the spread of Co-operation are the two causes

* Hardie, *Merthyr Pioneer*, Jan. 2, 1915.

that would do most for the removal of the wrongs under which Labour suffers.' And he has already begun to preach Evangelical Christianity. 'Brought up an atheist, converted to Christianity in 1878,' he noted in a few introductory lines of autobiographical summary in the diary-fragment. Indeed in these early years he was active in the Kirk. 'Brought in the New Year with silent prayer at watch meeting in Church vestry.' And 'was at prayer meeting in Auchinleck. Spoke from the words "Quit ye like men; be strong".' Thus far indeed we seem to be assisting at a familiar evolution. The poor and pious Scot, grimly self-educating, how well we know him. 'Took chair. Splendid meeting. Made what has been described as a very impressive speech.' 'Our second child born this morning between six and seven a.m. . . . During the night read a few chapters of Garfield's life.' We scarcely need to turn the pages further for the inevitable climax, unless to make certain whether it is the Liberal Cabinet-minister or the philanthropic millionaire that is to emerge. 'Unfortunately, I belong to the class of men who do not and cannot push themselves forward. . . . Believe it would be to my interest to make friends, but cannot bend to do so unless the approach be mutual.' Or 'Were I to give, as I could do, two hours every morning to study before breakfast the good to me would be incalculable. The first morning I manage it I will duly record it, and then it will be seen if I follow out the intention. I did so last summer and made some progress with Latin and French, but this is all forgotten again. . . .' The only unaccustomed note seems to be an entry, later in the month: 'Have not yet started to my studies. Must make an effort next week.' And there are essays read at the Lodge meeting; *Was*

Burns a drunkard? 'Concluded he was not. (Conclusion open to question even in my own mind but always like to be charitable.)' Here too we seem to be well within the tradition. And yet . . . In the long hours underground he is thinking. Two shillings a day for the miner. Is it so certain that Temperance, that Co-operation, will do what needs doing here?

Moreover his fellow-miners have begun to notice him. There is something perplexing, yet winning, about this young man. At least he knows the miners' grievances and is ready to voice them. He is pushed into the chair at small local meetings where grievances are ventilated, sent on deputations to managers. And one morning as he is going down into the pit the cage is stopped half way down and wound up again. For the manager too has noticed him. He is waiting with stormy brows. 'We'll hae nae damned Hardies in this pit.' And his two younger brothers are turned off with him. He has been labelled an agitator. From the first there is no mistaking this man.*

IV

In the light of unfolding experience, Temperance and Co-operation have appeared increasingly inadequate. Even in the Kirk there is disillusionment. A Minister antagonises the wealthier members of his congregation and, after a wrangle, is ejected. Those opposed to him, notes Hardie, 'were the pillars of the Church (financially), and therefore should be given in to. Fine teaching that!

* Lowe, 17-19. Stewart, 7-10. Hardie, *Labour Leader*, Jan. 22, 1909. Hardie (diary-fragment) *Socialist Review*, Jan.-March, 1919. Hardie, quoted Hughes, 138. Hardie, MS.

Principle to be thrown overboard to please Mammon. This may be Christianity, but I will have none of it.' The Kirk, it seems, if it be not content to instruct the poor that poverty is of their own making, must hold its peace and avert its eyes from the grim problems which lap round its doors. And so Hardie, at least, will have none of the Kirk. His Evangelical Christianity remains and sometimes he preaches it at street-corners. But, in effect, for the rest of his life his preaching of Socialism will be for him the preaching of Christianity:

> 'The impetus,' as he said in later years, 'which drove me first of all into the Labour Movement and the inspiration which has carried me on in it, has been derived more from the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth than from all other sources combined.'

But, since the Church has

> 'thought fit to specialise on what it most unfairly calls the spiritual side of Christianity, it became necessary for some of us to concentrate upon the human side, by way at least of restoring the balance.' 'Many of the best . . . workers in the Movement are men who know their New Testament almost by heart, and who have been driven out from the Churches by the travesty and burlesque of the Gospel which there passes for truth.'

Already he has seen the need of independent Labour representation and has begun to demand it. His Socialism adds itself by almost imperceptible stages to this first and basic demand. For although Socialism will always be to him in large measure a religious impulse (for so it can best be described), it will not come, as it came to

some, as a sudden conversion, a revelation abruptly severing the future from the past. It is rather a slow growth outward of an intuition already within him; an intuition shaped towards an economic system by Ruskin and Carlyle, by the Socialism long since, as we have seen, 'in the air,' by the economics of the Federation which reached him in 1885: an intuition, however, which would always remain an intuition as much as a system and which would be always as alien from Karl Marx as it was kindred to Robert Burns. Moreover, this Socialism, thus derived, is always the inseparable complement of the demand for the independence of Labour. As he puts it in 1887: *There is something even more desirable than the return of working men to Parliament, and that is to give working men a definite programme to fight for when they get there.* . . . Although its teachings, reaching him at second hand, played their part in his progress towards Socialism, Hardie never joined the Federation. He reached his political creed treading solitary the road that led through his own environment by way of the need of an independent Labour Party.

In 1879 he becomes National Secretary of a Scottish Miners' Federation which does not yet exist and plunges into tireless, all but unpaid, agitation and organisation, eking out for a while a scanty income by journalism for the Liberal *Cumnock News*. But to some point in the year 1885, thanks to the reports of Federation doctrines brought to Cumnock from London by one James Patrick in that year, must be ascribed, as nearly as that gradual process permits, if not his final moment of conversion at least a long stride forward towards it. At least after this there could be no more writing for Liberal journals. In 1887 he founded *The Miner*, a monthly sheet which

he conducted – largely, it would seem, out of his own savings – for two years; after which it became *The Labour Leader*. And although his own mind by now was made up – he had indeed apparently already begun in his own neighbourhood that tireless preaching of Socialism which would only end with his life – his native caution prompted in this less familiar medium of print a kind of renewal, as it were, in public of the process of conversion. Certainly at least there is no specific preaching at first of Socialism. There is much of the need for agitation, of the rottenness of the wage-system, but what *The Miner* proposes to advocate is not Socialism but 'every reform which promises to bring relief to the toiling millions.' And in 1887, adopted as a miners' candidate for North Ayrshire (although he did not go to the poll), he professes himself not so much a Socialist as a detached Liberal, only anxious that 'the wants and wishes of the working-classes shall be made known and attended to in Parliament,' and even ready to remain a Liberal if Liberalism shows any sign of achieving what he desires. The great public departure is postponed till 1888.

It is in this year that he contests a by-election at Mid-Lanark as a Labour, though not a Socialist, candidate, and speaks amidst mingled cheers and hisses of a day when Liberalism would be dead and buried in Great Britain and only the Labour Party would live. It was during this contest that he was invited to a neighbouring hotel, in which Sir George Trevelyan very courteously assured him that, if he would stand down, the Liberal Party would find him a seat at the General Election, pay his expenses and guarantee him a yearly salary, as they were doing for others. And here Sir George quoted some names. Hardie explained, as well as he was able,

why he found the proposal offensive and took leave of Sir George, who was obviously astonished. Hardie at least was well aware that he had burnt his boats. He may have foreseen too that from now until his death he would be the centre of an unceasing storm of abuse. The storm would rise and fall but never again would there be calm. The prospect, if he foresaw it, did not daunt him. Tender and sensitive at heart, he possessed an outer vein of dour obstinacy. Moreover his mission sustained him: he had seen light. There seems, indeed, to have grown on him an almost mystical sense of vocation. He never spoke of it in public. He did not claim, as other prophets have claimed, the infallibility of a special illumination. But some of his intimates were aware that he believed that 'there was a light or voice within him.' '*The meaningless drivel of the ordinary politician*,' he wrote after this contest in which he was bottom of the poll with 617 votes, '*must now give way to the burning words of earnest men, whose hearts are on fire with love to their kind, men who believe in the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man.*'

In that summer of 1888, on August 25th, the Scottish Labour Party was formed. Cunninghame Graham, Scottish laird, seeker of adventure and artist in words, was elected President. He had suffered imprisonment, with Burns, for the Trafalgar Square business of 1887. He had won North-West Lanark in the election of 1886 and was officially a Liberal but, a little way after Hardie, he was travelling Hardie's road. Hardie himself was the Secretary. The programme actually adopted included nationalisation of land, minerals, railways, waterways and tramways. And it was understood that the Party's first public statement of principles would declare that its ultimate aim was: 'To secure the nationalisation of all

the capital used in production.' This was not a Labour Party only; it was a Socialist Party. And one evidence of this wider scope was its inevitable inclusion from the first of members who were not of the working-class. Indeed in the next number of *The Miner* Hardie was defending this comprehensiveness. For though he had approached his Socialism by way of Labour representation, once arrived, he never swerved from his faith that Socialism was not a class, but a national, creed.

> 'These critics,' he wrote, 'go on the assumption that a Labour Party should consist of the begrimed ones only. Those who argue thus are for the most part they who do not wish to see any Labour Party at all and who hope to create prejudice against the new movement by appealing to the prejudices of the working-classes. It is well that this matter should be faced at once, and made clear to all whom it may concern. . . . If anyone, peasant or peer, is found willing to accept the programme and work with and for the Party his help will be gladly accepted.'

The words are memorable. Thus early they differentiated the British, from the Continental, Socialist movements. They distinguished it sharply too from the partisans of old fashioned 'Labour Representation,' in the Labour Electoral Association, a Liberal-Labour body soon moribund, for whom a Labour representative must always be a working man. Writing in the *National Review* in February, 1894, Threlfall, the Secretary of the Association, complained that the Independent Labour Party 'makes adherence to its platform rather than the direct experience of the workman's life a sufficient

reason to bring out a landowner or even a millionaire as a Labour candidate.' A few months later, in the *Labour Leader* for July 31st, Hardie rejoined: 'The Labour Electoral Association holds that only manual workers are eligible and would, I suppose, exclude brain workers. On the face of it this idea is absurd. A worker is one who renders useful service to the Community – whether by the pen or the spade matters not. The only true conception of a Labour Party is that in which all useful work is honoured and all engaged therein are united to assist in exterminating the common enemy of each – to wit, the parasite who battens on their industry, himself rendering no useful service in return.' Even class-consciousness was becoming out of date.

'The propaganda by class hatred is not one which can ever take root in this country – which I regard as a most fortunate circumstance.' 'Socialism, it cannot be too often repeated, has nothing whatever to do with class antagonism.' British Socialism, before which the barriers had at last fallen at the Trades Union Congress of 1890, was about to set out upon new, and native, paths.*

* Hardie in *Miner*, July, 1887, September, 1888, *Labour Leader*, July 31, 1894, Aug. 17, 1901. Hardie MS. Hardie quoted Hughes, 10, 140-1. Hardie (diary-fragment), *Socialist Review*, Jan.-March, 1919. Hardie, *New Party*, 384, Lowe, 22; Glasier, K. H., 10. Stewart, 11, 12, 25-6, 44. *Glasgow Herald*, April 10, 1886. *National Review*, Feb. 1894.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW AGITATION
1890-1894

THE barriers which had long stemmed the onrush of the new ideas into the world of organised Labour had fallen, but the new agitators still lacked the organised coherence without which the new agitation could never become formidable. Yet, as always when barriers are falling in the world of ideas, the novel conceptions and aspirations were becoming discernible at the same time in many unexpected quarters. In the Established Church, for one. Here Socialism had made unexpected headway. (The Free Churches remained reluctant to 'throw over the Nonconformist capitalist' on whose often dictatorial generosity so many Chapels were dependent. It was a Methodist organ which, in an article entitled 'Lot in Sodom,' compared Stewart Headlam and the Church clergy who joined the Socialists with Lot in the Cities of the Plain.) None the less, Stewart Headlam's Guild of Saint Matthew had presented a memorial to the Pan-Anglican Conference of Bishops in 1888. 'Your memorialists respectfully submit therefore,' they had written, 'that with the main contentions of the Socialist, the Christian is not only able but bound to agree.' And in 1893 this Socialist body included seventy-seven Church clergy among its two hundred and eighty-five members. In 1895 the figures were respectively ninety-nine and three hundred and sixty-four. In 1895 the Christian Social Union numbered twenty-eight branches and about

2,600 members. Of this Canon Scott Holland was for long the leading figure and, though less openly Socialist than the Guild of Saint Matthew, it was founded 'to awaken the Church to the social implications of the Creed and the Bible.'

Outside the organised churches, too, Socialism was allying itself with the religious impulse. In 1891 a 'Labour Church' was founded in Manchester by John Trevor and in 1895 at least twenty towns had their Labour Churches. 'The great religious movement of our time is the movement for the emancipation of Labour,' asserted the *Labour Prophet*, the first organ of the Labour Churches, and the Preface to the *Labour Church Hymn Book* claims that the Labour Church 'appeals especially to those who have abandoned the traditional religion of the day without having found satisfaction in abandoning religion altogether. The call of the Labour Church is to men everywhere to become God's fellow-workers in the era of reconstruction on which we have entered.' The new politics were to have their reflection in a new church. Reducing dogma and organisation to a minimum, it was to express the religious impulse which was felt to be part of the growing movement. For all the existing churches, it was thought, would insist upon religion being kept severely apart from Socialism. Before the turn of the century, however, the Labour Churches were languishing. For at least as high a proportion of the new Labour leaders, as of the old, proved to be prominent figures in chapels or churches and had no wish to leave them, and by 1900 the *Labour Church Record*, to which the more ambitious *Labour Prophet* had given way, is making the approaching collapse apparent. The rank and file of the new move-

ment did not need a new Church; they were remoulding the old ones. As late as 1904 the Bradford Labour Church was in existence but it was an all but solitary survival. While they lasted, however, the Labour Churches, which were in effect Sunday gatherings for the singing of Socialist hymns and the hearing of Socialist addresses, rendered Socialism at least two services. They provided an opportunity for political propaganda within doors on Sundays where it would otherwise not always have been possible and they popularised Socialist songs. The songs, it may be added, were seldom of much literary merit. For though William Morris's verses were poetry,* it was unfortunately impossible to sing them to familiar tunes, while such compositions as could be sung to familiar tunes were not poetry. Of the latter, the *Red Flag*, which accommodated itself to the tune of *Maryland*, gradually established itself as favourite, and in due course even became a symbol. It was written by Jim Connell, an adventurous Irishman and ex-Fenian – 'a hefty fellow with the kindly eyes and ruddy countenance of the lover of the open air' – to express the aspirations of revolutionary movements the wide world over. Later, Edward Carpenter's *England Arise*, (with much higher literary qualities and music by the author), almost rivalled its popularity. This was a more native product written to celebrate the first triumphs of the new and native Socialism.† Though the religiously-minded Socialist was apt

* Collected in Morris, *Chants for Socialists*. For an appreciation of Morris's poetic contribution to the Socialist Movement see Glasier, *Socialism in Song*.

† It is partly for this reason that I have used its opening words as a title for this book, a large part of whose theme is the failure of imported methods of Socialist propaganda and the emergence and triumph of a characteristic native movement.

to find himself, like Keir Hardie, driven from his church or chapel by what seemed to him 'the travesty and burlesque of the Gospel which there passes for truth,' there were exceptions to this rule in which Socialism unexpectedly had the opposite effect. Thus is 1893 rumours circulated insistently that Tom Mann was about to take orders in the Church. It was the mercurial Mann, too, who, bidden to an interview with Benson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, found that prelate anxious to discuss with him his reiterated charge that the Church was neglecting social problems. After some talk the Archbishop turned and took a volume from his shelves. It was by himself and in it, as he explained to his visitor, he had already urged that the Church should pay more attention to such matters. Mann realised gratefully that an Archbishop could hardly be expected to go further.

But of the diverse forces now gathering their strength beyond the boundaries of the recognised Socialist agitation in these last years before the destined departure of 1893 which they could scarcely yet foresee, the most unexpected, and perhaps the most potent, was a popular journal. A boy who had been brought up to brushmaking ran away, enlisted and became a sergeant in the Dublin Fusiliers, left the army and become a clerk; tired of being a clerk, became a journalist and passed from *Bell's Life* to the *Sunday Chronicle* in 1885. Here he was earning a thousand pounds a year and rapidly developing unique gifts for popular journalism. His name was Robert Blatchford. In 1888 or 1889 he chanced upon *Socialism made plain*, a pamphlet by Hyndman and Morris, and realised that he was a Socialist. It was Morris rather than Hyndman who had converted him.

For Morris's blunt commonsense and Morris's artist's vision of the real England beneath the tawdry and heartless commercialism of that time he retained an abiding reverence. 'Presentation at court! Why, I have smoked a pipe with William Morris.' He was a Socialist and in 1891, accordingly, he burnt his boats once more. Abandoning his lucrative employment, with a friend or two and a capital of four hundred pounds he founded a weekly journal, *The Clarion*.

For a while the venture seemed likely to meet the customary fate of Socialist periodicals with at least the customary rapidity, and when its fortunes were at their most obscure Blatchford was offered a salary of £150 to abandon it. This he declined without hesitation. He had his new faith. He had also his pen. He believed that, though it had never yet been done, it was possible to make Socialism both intelligible and attractive to the average citizen and, moreover, that he was the man to do it. He began a series of articles on Socialism. He had never read a line of Marx but he had understood William Morris and he knew his fellow-countrymen. Also, as was slowly becoming apparent, he was the most effective popular political journalist since William Cobbett. In 1894 his articles were reprinted as *Merrie England*. Seven hundred and fifty thousand copies of the penny edition of this book were sold at once. It was translated into all the chief languages of Europe and more than two million copies were sold in England and America within the next fifteen years. And *Merrie England*, though it was a work on Socialism, could hardly be taken for a work on economics. For here, too, Socialism was assuming a distinctively English form. After the publication of *Merrie England* the circulation of *The Clarion*

rose at once by ten thousand copies a week and soon reached eighty thousand. It became a force. It was read far beyond the limits of Socialist opinion. It was a demonstration that Socialism could be humane and light-hearted. It invited its readers to join a Clarion Fellowship and they did so, in large numbers. For the paper, thanks chiefly to Blatchford, had a personality. It was Socialist, yet it did not take itself seriously: its staff was a group of friends who shared a cult of good-fellowship and a cheerful zest for life in which there were veins both of sentiment and of an almost Epicurean cynicism. It was Socialist, yet none of its staff, as Blatchford avowed, 'has read Karl Marx or agrees with anyone else or himself. Nevertheless 80,000 Socialists buy it every week, and like, help and marry each other for reading it.' Indeed it was perhaps not Socialism that was stamped on every page of *The Clarion* so much as Robert Blatchford and his beliefs, which included agnosticism as well as Socialism. Socialism however remained, during the years of its wide influence, the paramount interest of both the paper and its editor, and during the next few years it rendered incalculable service to that cause. In 1894 the 'Clarion vans' were sent out to tour England with Socialist speeches and Socialist literature.*

* Bettany, 78. Paget, 204, 211, 242. *Christian Socialist*, April, 1884. *Labour Prophet*, No. 1. *Labour Church Record*, April, 1899, April, 1900, Jan. 1901. *Labour Leader*, Sept. 2, 1904. Webb, 65, 66. *New Party*, 384. Mann, 113-114, 121-123. Taylor, 123. Lowe, *Souvenirs*, 97-100. Lyons, 89-97, 110-112, 165. *Labour Annual*, 1896, 45, 46. *Labour Church Hymn Book*, Preface. *The Labour Magazine*, March, 1929 (article by J.S.M.).

II

The success at the Trades Union Congress of 1890 had been hailed as a far-resounding victory, pregnant of much. Already it had alarmed the politicians. Miss Beatrice Potter noted in her diary in February, 1889:

> 'Had a long talk with John Morley. He is anxious about the Socialists at Newcastle. Up till now he has treated them with indifference, not to say contempt, but they mustered two thousand votes at the last School Board election, and Morley began to take them seriously. . . . In his speeches he asserts that the social question is the one thing to live for; he ignores imperial politics and wants to cut off England from all foreign relations. And yet he has evidently never thought about social questions; he does not know even the ABC of labour problems.'

None the less, in view of what had yet to be done, it was obvious that this victory had been no more than the skirmish of an advance-guard. Was there not an independent party to be got together somehow – to carry the New Unionism and its new brand of Socialism into politics? A Party which, at first no doubt an inner core of pioneers within the vast mass of Labour, must in due time make of Labour itself a Party? The first May-day celebration, held in Hyde Park on May 4th, 1890, as a direct outcome of the agitation for an eight-hour day, had been attended by an immense crowd. 'Hundreds of thousands' said spectators. But how many of this great multitude, ready to demand a 'Labour' reform, had been Socialists? The victors of 1890 were well aware of the task which next awaited them.

In 1891 the London Trades Council formed a Labour Representation Committee, avowedly to work for an independent Party in Parliament. At Bradford and Salford, in the Colne Valley and elsewhere the example was followed. Joseph Burgess's *Workman's Times*, which gallantly maintained its existence between 1890 and 1894, helped to keep the scattered groups in contact. In the Trades Union Congress of 1892 the new men endeavoured to carry their victory a stage further. They proposed that Trade Union support should be refused to all candidates for elective bodies who were not Socialists. They were defeated only by twenty-five votes. During the Congress week they resolved, at Keir Hardie's suggestion, to summon a national Conference of their own. This Conference met at Bradford on January 13th, 1893, determined to launch the new Party. Hardie was in the chair; with some reluctance, for he had wished to be free 'to follow my inward light whithersoever it might lead.' There were one hundred and twenty-four delegates; ninety-four from independent Labour organisations, twelve Fabians, five from the Federation, two from Socialist Societies, three from Trades Councils, one each from the Labour Representation League and the Eight Hours League and seven from 'new' Trade Unions. Among them were almost all the men and women who had so far played a conspicuous part in the movement and many who would do so in the future.

The Conference shewed at once that it was agreed that a Party must be formed. The object of the Party, it was proposed, should be 'to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange;' that is, to achieve Socialism. An amendment, supported mainly by the Trade Union delegates,

suggested in place of this: 'to secure the separate representation and protection of Labour interests on public bodies.' That is, the less far-reaching only of the twin objects of the new men. The amendment was lost by ninety-one votes to fifteen.* The new Party was to be Socialist.

What was to be its title? 'Socialist Labour Party' was proposed. At once there was opposition and 'Independent Labour Party' was suggested. Alderman Ben Tillett spoke for this alternative with some heat. 'In practical democratic organisation there was nothing like this old country,' he said. He desired to capture the Trade Unions, and little in the Socialist agitation as it had been hitherto conducted seemed to him likely to attract them. For the trade-unionists 'were men who did not advocate blood-red revolution and when it came to revolution sneak under the first bedpost.' 'If there were fifty red revolutionist parties in Germany, he would rather have the solid, progressive, matter-of-fact, fighting trade-unionist of England, and for that reason he desired that they should keep away from their name any term of Socialism. He preferred a man who had spent his life in the Labour movement to those chattering mags who had neither the courage of their convictions nor the capacity to deal with details of their opinions.' Thus spoke the leader of the dockers. The speech was in effect a denunciation not only of foreign methods but of the Social Democratic Federation and almost all it stood for and on this day which saw the birth of what was to become the first powerful Socialist party in Britain the assembled delegates

* There is some trifling disagreement as to the exact figures of the voting (thus Hardie, *Labour Leader*, Jan. 1914, gives 91-16) and as to the number of delegates present (the *Times* report gives 115).

found it so much to their liking that by a thumping majority they decided to label themselves 'Independent,' rather than 'Socialist,' Labour Party, thus expressly declining to proclaim that major objective which, with equal unanimity, they believed to be indispensable.

The decision, so illogical and so prudent, was characteristically British. It could be argued in its favour that a number of the local Labour groups had already given themselves this name. But the decisive reason in most minds must have been the certainty that 'Socialism' would scare away many of those whom they hoped to attract. For it was not to be now, as with the Federation, only a question of making Socialists. No doubt, those who in time to come might join the Independent Labour Party would thereby consciously profess Socialism. With all the rich gifts of self-deception proper to our soil this at least could hardly be disguised. Nor indeed were those who might be expected to join this handful of enthusiasts likely to be of the sort that greatly fears labels. Indeed, if recruiting for their own fellowship of pioneers had been all that was in prospect, few indeed would have been the reasons against affixing to themselves their proper title. Much more than this, however, was in view. For they were well aware that no Independent Labour Party they would ever see could hope to rival the ancient Parties or change the face of England. If Socialism was to be carried into the inner citadels of authority they must base themselves upon the wide organisation and economic power of the Trade Union movement. This was the 'Labour Alliance' which Hardie was to be unwearied in preaching. And this 'alliance' was wholly consonant with the two most powerful forces which were shaping British history in the nineteenth century. The first of

these was the slow rise to power of the working-classes. At first mere impotent applauders of the bourgeois victory which had broken the political hegemony of the land-owning aristocracy after 1832 they had gradually in the second half of the century made it plain that they too could not be denied a further emancipation of their own. Marked out ever more clearly as the political heirs presumptive of the commercial bourgeoisie, they were slowly but inevitably drawn into conflict with them. Inevitably too as the conflict-to-be loomed plainer they became almost insensibly alienated from the Individualism which had served as the political creed of the epoch and the class which were to be superseded. Meanwhile, contemporaneous with this process and in a sense part of it, went on a second, the steady diffusion, so often remarked above, of Collectivist ideas, representing not so much the rise of a class as an increase, made inevitable by the new machine civilisation, in collective social activity, by which, incidentally, that class must benefit. This new creed, forced upon men of all classes, and even of all parties, by the very nature of the new machine age may be said to have slightly preceded the process of class emancipation and its corollary of class conflict. For the creed insensibly captured the minds of those sensitive to ideas, themselves for the most part outside the working-class, more rapidly than the sense of its new power, and the desire for yet more, could spread through that class. Hence, as we have seen, there were Socialists before there was a Labour Movement. But hence also as the Labour Movement grew it found a political creed, Socialism, ready shaped for its adoption. The Independent Labour Party, Hardie's Labour Alliance, was the link between the two.

It was not to be expected that these masses of organised Labour should become converted to Hardie's Socialism in any sense that Hyndman would have allowed to be conversion. Hardie and the rest would preach Socialism to them as an aspiration, not a system, and the preaching would draw them, if not to avow themselves Socialists at least to support an independent Party and to accept programmes of immediate reform which would be constantly Socialist in tendency. And so it might even be that the Socialist Commonwealth would arrive at last as a thief in the night. 'I can imagine,' wrote Hardie later, 'one reform after another being won until in the end Socialism itself causes no more excitement than did the extinction of landlordism in Ireland.' No doubt at Bradford, in all the glow and stir of their new achievement, these young men – and they were 'chiefly between twenty-two and thirty-three years of age' – did not think with such conscious caution as this. They did not lack the happy British instinct which shuns thinking to a logical conclusion. But beneath the high spirits and the self-devotion such half-conscious calculations must needs be stirring. And an outcome of such calculations was their prudent and illogical choice of title. For how could these men forget that five years ago Socialism was still all but impotent among the working-classes? The name could scarcely yet have lost its capacity to alarm and repel. Moreover, some at least of them were aware of what signal proofs the public had long been giving of readiness to welcome Socialist legislation, provided that it was not labelled Socialist. The conclusions seemed obvious.

Neither the Federation nor the Fabians joined the new Party. The Fabians intended to continue their tactics of permeation. On the London County Council, thanks

largely to Sidney Webb, they were already exercising a considerable influence. For the battle-front all over the country they provided a large part of the ammunition. For this too they had chiefly to thank the Webbs. Wherever at a street corner the unknown Socialist orator bawled damning fact or figure the chances were that it had made its way, circuitously maybe, into his slender armoury from the library in which Sidney and Beatrice Webb pursued their indefatigable labours. 'Both of them,' wrote Frederic Harrison as early as 1894, 'have personally studied every phase of industrial life and have enjoyed the intimacy and confidence of almost every active worker in the industrial movement. Few persons living have seen the entire industrial field so exhaustively, from the offices of the great industrial magnate down to the sweaters' dens of Whitechapel.' The Webbs indeed must rank in history with Jeremy Bentham as inspirers of the political outlook of an era. This study is only indirectly concerned with Socialist doctrine: none the less no student of the Socialist advance of the 'nineties can forget that behind the preachers and the politicians who were more and more engaging the attention of the country stood the Webbs, patiently and inconspicuously equipping the new movements with knowledge. If Keir Hardie was the soul of the Labour movement and if MacDonald was to be its leader the Webbs were already its brain. At Bradford Shaw was present as one of the Fabian delegates – somewhat insecurely, for their credentials were only accepted after a division and by the narrowest of margins – to bless the new departure. In its whole tone and in its projected policy indeed the Fabians could see many of their own precepts embodied. The intention to advance by piecemeal reform, the

abandonment of the Marxian jargon, of dogmatic atheism and of mere 'revolutionary heroics' all followed an example which they had been the first to set. But for themselves they were resolved to continue working for Collectivism through any instrument or Party which offered them an opportunity. As for Hyndman, from the first he considered the new Party no more than 'a half-way house to Socialism.' And there are those to-day who, having seen two Socialist Labour Governments in office and looking back down long perspectives to this scene at Bradford in 1893, can see in it now only the beginning, imperceptible maybe for some years to come, of a decline; the dawn of a new Socialism, 'the Socialism which Trade Unionists and Liberals, and indeed all men and women of good will, could accept;' the Socialism of Hardie and MacDonald with its 'Socialism marks the growth of Society, not the uprising of a class' triumphing over the class-conscious Socialism of Hyndman and the Federation. Socialism preaches the abolition of poverty by the substitution of national for private ownership: Social Reform proposes to mitigate the miseries of poverty through taxation, not to end the system which allows it: and the new Socialism, it has been argued, was, in the twentieth century, to become no more than Social Reform.*

This view in so far as it is historical, and not due to a natural impatience with the slow movement of contemporary politics, is based upon a confusion. Thus the Bradford Conference decided upon a programme which included, besides the main objective of collective ownership of the land and of all means of production and distribution, abolition of child labour under fourteen; the

* This view is the main theme of *The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain*, by Joseph Clayton. See especially pp. 113-117 and 126*f*.

statutory eight-hour day; State provision for the aged, sick, disabled, widows and orphans; abolition of indirect taxation with taxation to extinction of unearned incomes; organised work for the unemployed; extension of political rights and the democratisation of government (under which head appeared the abolition of the monarchy and of the House of Lords). Now these objectives are not notably less Socialist than those which the Federation, though its list was a trifle longer, had long since adopted* 'to palliate the evils of our existing Society.' Neither programme was intended to embody a Socialist Commonwealth. Both were meant to accelerate the transition to it. And the ultimate aim of the Independent Labour Party, 'to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange' was Socialist enough for the Federation itself. Once more the distinction is a distinction of circumstances and of the tactics born of circumstances.

In the first place, there had always been a fundamental inconsistency in the doctrine of the Federation. It had preached the inevitable and complete social revolution. As to when and how the cataclysm was to come, the Federation could hazard no prophecy, yet meanwhile palliative measures, in the strict view, by making the existing system more tolerable, could only postpone its arrival. Yet 'at other times, especially during elections, we laid stress upon the value of the eight-hour day, the public feeding of school children, old age pensions, and the like as means to the permanent improvement of the lot of the worker.' The contradiction between the theory of the Federation, which forbade palliatives, and its practice, which necessarily included them, was inescap-

* See pp. 79–80, *supra*.

able and the new Party, by abandoning this doctrine of the cataclysm, could devote itself to an immediate practical programme with a sincerity and consistency which had been hitherto impossible. Moreover – and perhaps this distinction is even more important – henceforth, as Socialism found itself appealing ever more widely to the 'solid, progressive matter-of-fact fighting Trade Unionists of England,' and with the narrowing of the at first seemingly immeasurable gulf between Socialism and political power, the preachers of Socialism were compelled to concentrate ever more narrowly upon immediate issues. And the immediate issue was never the establishment of the Socialist State. Year by year it was to become gradually less practicable to rest content with stirring the apathetic by preaching only the ultimate Commonwealth, only that new conception of social values which is Socialism: more and more it would become necessary to expound the methods of transition to it. Imperceptibly the pioneer days must pass. Every voter converted would mean that, as the goal – the assent of a majority of electors – became manifestly more attainable, the need to convert more voters grew more urgent. And a majority of the electors could not be expected to accept, as a member of the Federation was required to accept, the full Socialist economic system. None the less it might be brought to accept transitional reforms, increasingly Socialist in tendency. And in large measure it might even also come gradually to adopt that changed and moralised view of the social order which to many seemed the essence of Socialism. There are thus two aspects of the change which the new Party was gradually to bring about in the Socialist evangel. It would become less uncompromising, because more practical,

than the Federation. '. . . the S.D.F. has based its propaganda on the class-war theory and the result is dismal failure,' wrote Hardie. 'How could it be otherwise? Mankind in the mass is not moved by hatred but by love of what is right.' And its message would become more intuitive, less completely rationalised, than hitherto, speaking less to the economist and more to the man in the street. 'Few people are scientists but all are human,' said Hardie. 'It is not by talking economics that the world will be made better.' And it is Hardie and MacDonald – shrewd Scots, both of them, with an eye for possibilities, yet both endowed with that native vein of mysticism which could transform an economic system into a religious impulse – who typify this new phase of Socialism. Inevitably the pioneer gives way to the politician, and it is the unique distinction of the Socialist movement in this country that more than one of its leaders has possessed the qualities of both.

The Federation on the other hand would not thus be worked upon by circumstance. To the Federation the goal was always all. To the Federation, though it drew up its programme of 'palliative measures,' the immediate reform, the bridge to the goal, would remain of little moment. Never would its converts become so numerous, its approach to political power so close, that it would be compelled to compromise, to shift its emphasis from end to means. Once only its purpose seems to have been shaken by a strange temptation. In 1898 it favourably received a suggestion – supported by the *Clarion* – that Socialists should so modify their policy as to attract the co-operation of greater numbers of the respectable – of those bishops, editors, authors, artists, Labour leaders and democratic politicians who stood already near the

border-line of Socialism. They had not crossed the Rubicon: shift the Rubicon ever so little, then, it was argued, and they would find themselves almost involuntarily upon the nearer bank. Even Hyndman dallied with the idea. But independence was the core of Hardie's faith. Here he would never yield an inch. It was not the suggestion of a programme of compromise which angered him so much as the thought of seeking alliances in the fringes of the Radical Party, of treating with the members who had left him solitary in the House, the Labour leaders who had betrayed the militant spirit arising among the Trade Unions. He had taken many shrewd buffets in the cause of independence and they had embittered him. 'I can afford to wait,' he wrote, 'the advent of the Independent Socialist to Parliament, if need be I can go down to the grave without seeing one there, but I will not be a party to betraying the Socialist Movement into the hands of its enemies.' The positions, for a moment, were strangely reversed. Now it was Hardie who protested 'by developing a healthy spirit of revolt among the workers we are doing more for human progress than could be accomplished by a truck load of Acts of Parliament' and it was Hyndman who seemed for a while ready to leave ends for means. But the reversal of rôles was not lasting. The Federation, apart from this brief aberration, adhered to its intransigence. Indeed, although in its earliest days it may have dreamed that it needed but to expound the theory of Surplus Value to find the wage earners ranged, all but unanimous, behind it, it had now long since ceased to hope for, or even, perhaps, to aim at, a wide appeal. It was naturally well aware that, if Socialism was to come by legislation, somehow or other a wide appeal must be

made; indeed its refusal to turn its back altogether upon Parliament had been largely responsible for the secession of the Socialist League, and Hyndman himself would contest three Parliamentary elections at Burnley. But it never abandoned the belief (which at last almost became rather a mystic article of faith than a rational calculation) that the existing order, such was its inherent debility, would somehow be violently and unexpectedly overthrown, not by a Socialist majority but by the conflicts or the chaos which it itself inevitably engendered. Long would Hyndman reiterate his hopeful 'Things are getting hot.' It was indeed his faith alone which logically justified the Federation's refusal of all compromise, since, only if 'things' did in fact become as 'hot' as Hyndman expected, would there be no need of majorities.*

III

Hardie had come to this Bradford Conference a Member of Parliament, its first Socialist Member. In 1891 he had been adopted candidate for South West Ham. The invitation came from a group of Socialists and Radicals. The sudden death of their candidate took the orthodox Liberals by surprise and, making a virtue of necessity, they decided to support Hardie and even endeavoured to believe that he might be regarded as a Liberal. From the first he gave them little excuse for this illusion. 'Generally speaking,' he said, 'I am in agreement

* Webb, *Apprenticeship*, 306. *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 35, p. 958*f*. *Times*, Jan. 14 (and *Leader*), Jan. 16, 1893. Bax, 96. Hardie in *Labour Leader*, August 24, 1898, August 17, 1901, September 2, 1904. Clayton, 113-117, 126*f*. Humphrey, 133. Sanders, 30-1, 84. *Labour Annual*, 1895, p. 40.

with the present programme of the Liberal Party so far as it goes, but I reserve to myself the absolute and unconditional right to take such action, irrespective of the exigencies of Party welfare, as may to me seem needful in the interest of the workers.' And, asked whether he would join the Liberal and Radical Party, he replied that he expected to form an Independent Labour Party. In the General Election of 1892 he was returned by a majority of 1232. At this election John Burns and J. Havelock Wilson, both then regarded as Socialists, were also returned, for Battersea and Middlesbrough respectively. Fourteen other Independent candidates were unsuccessful, among them Cunninghame Graham and Champion. Their votes ranged from 991 cast for Champion in South Aberdeen to the nineteen obtained by a Socialist in Hoxton.

Hardie made his first appearance in Parliament in August, 1892. He arrived in a waggonette which contained a number of West Ham dockers, one of whom sounded resonant blasts upon a cornet. The Press next morning announced that he had been escorted by a brass band. As the august portals admitted the rough figure in cloth cap and tweed suit the waggonette of dockers sent up a hearty cheer. They were aware that this was an historic occasion.

The boisterousness of this arrival had been none of Hardie's planning: he took his mission and himself too seriously for that. But his costume, cloth cap and tweed coat, which shocked Press and public even more profoundly, was in part his own deliberate choice. His felt hat had not been to hand when he set out for Westminster and finding that his cap provoked such uproar among the respectable he determined to retain it. These

were his customary clothes; more, they were the clothes of his class. To retain them was symbolical. He would be true to himself and to his own people. He had no intention of sinking his identity in 'the Best Club in the World,' of proving, like the Broadhursts who had preceded him, that he could wear a top-hat with the best of them. Hugging to himself the fierce, secret pride of the poor Scot, he was almost aggressively ready to discern the blandishments which he was so determined to repel. And so in 'a light cloth cap' and a workman's tweed suit, like Cromwell incensing the fastidious Cavalier Members with his 'ill country clothes,' he entered St. Stephen's to take his oath. The newspapers next morning reported that, until sharply called to order, he had even advanced up the gangway itself with the offensive covering upon his head. And though there seems to have been no more justification for this statement than for that about the brass band, it filled the Press for some days with highly-flavoured gibes. But Hardie neither valued the gratuitous advertisement nor was distressed by the insolent criticisms. It was all of a piece with what he had expected. Indeed he almost welcomed abuse and misrepresentation, like a mediaeval ascetic hugging his hair shirt the closer, reassured by it that he was playing his allotted rôle. Already *Punch* had coined its nickname 'Don't-keir-Hardie.' For that which seemed to him to matter he 'cared' no doubt more than any other of the six hundred Members of Parliament; but there was this much truth in the soubriquet, that to the glitter as well as the thorns of his new position he was determined to preserve a proud outward indifference.

He would never be an effective Parliamentarian. His roots were in first principles. His political faith was

his religion. He had neither aptitude nor taste for the manoeuvre and compromise by which Parliamentary advantages are won. He was too single-minded, nor was his intellect supple enough. Within Parliament, as outside it, he considered his mission to be to proclaim the right and to denounce the wrong, not to bargain with the wrong for some trifling step towards the right. In his eyes those that were not for him were against him; there were no others. His amendments, when dexterous wording might have threatened a Government, would be so framed that no one could vote for them save the one or two who were of his faith. He was never a Parliament-man. None the less in Parliament he played a great and twofold rôle. He was a nucleus and an inspiration round which a Party formed itself. Moreover, he struck the imagination of his time, so that both within Parliament and beyond it he became a symbol, a disquieting portent of what might come. Within Parliament indeed, as Shaw finely wrote after his death, he came at last to fulfil somewhat of the function of the crucifix which hangs in a French Court of Justice. For if the Figure in the French Court could speak, it would make the smart barristers and the grave judges as uncomfortable as on occasion Hardie could make the House of Commons. And outside Parliament Hardie's symbolic fame carried his words far and wide and made easier and more fruitful his true life's work, which was to preach Socialism tirelessly in every corner of the land.*

* Stewart, 70-1. Smillie, 99. *Stratford Express*, June 25, 1892, quoted Hughes, 19-22. *Punch*, August 13, 1892. *Times*, August 6, 1892. Shaw, *Merthyr Pioneer*, Oct. 9, 1915, quoted Hughes xv. Humphreys, 128.

IV

Eighteen months after the foundation of the Independent Labour Party, Hardie received a letter from a young Scot, who had been earning a precarious living addressing envelopes in London. The letter was written from a gaunt block of workmen's dwellings, Duncan Buildings, E.C. 'I am now making personal application for membership of the I.L.P.' it began. 'I have stuck to the Liberals up to now, hoping that they might do something to justify the trust that we had put in them. Attercliffe came as a rude awakening, and I felt during that contest that it was quite impossible for me to maintain my position as a Liberal any longer. Calmer consideration has but strengthened that conviction, and if you now care to accept me amongst you I shall do what I can to support the I.L.P. . . .' This letter was signed 'J. R. MacDonald.' The two men in whose hands now chiefly lay the future of Socialism were both within the new Party.

MacDonald's thoughts, however, had turned to Socialism long before this. There is a letter in the *Christian Socialist* for February, 1886, signed James MacDonald and written from Lossiemouth, Elgin, N.B.* The writer was then twenty, and he speaks for

* This letter has recently been re-discovered and noticed in the *Star*, and parts of it are quoted in Mrs. M. A. Hamilton's *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (1929, pp. 23–4). There is, further, an article of this period signed J. R. MacDonald and published in the *Christian Socialist* for May, 1886, which, as far as I know, has never since been unearthed. It is entitled 'The Professors and Socialism' and is an assault upon a certain Mr. Smart, of Edinburgh, who seems to have delivered himself of some of the most familiar and least effective criticisms of Socialism. Taken together, the letter and the article are interesting as shewing that MacDonald's acceptance of Socialism came very early and was almost exactly contemporaneous with that of Hardie, who was ten years older.

his own generation. 'Thoughtful young men in all parts of the country are beginning to see that the end of the present state of things is near . . . their hearts go forth to the misery of the poor. Still being upright, they feel as if throughout their lives they would dare to stand aloof from injustice . . . Now I have thought: Why cannot these men be united? Why cannot their sympathies, so easily blunted, be deepened by being based on principles? Cannot these humane feelings be the foundations of ideas?' And the writer concludes 'I make bold to suggest that a Socialist Union of Young Men be formed.' Now, eight years later, it was such a Union that he had joined.'*

* Stewart, 96-7. *Christian Socialist*, February, May, 1886. Hamilton, 23–4.

CHAPTER X

THE MOVEMENT
1883-1900

In the gasworks the resident engineer hails one of his workmen. 'Thorne, what is this Socialism I hear you are always talking about to the men?' Thorne knows that Socialism is his dream of a fuller life. But the engineer will want definitions. So he pulls out of his pocket a copy of John Burns' speech from the dock. With one foot on a pile of coal he twists himself so that the uncertain light of the retorts falls upon the ill-printed page. 'Socialism is a theory of Society which advocates a more just, orderly and harmonious arrangement of the social relations of mankind.' He cannot help declaiming the words. Yes, but the engineer will want definitions. He turns the leaves and finds one which will do. But what sticks in the engineer's mind is perhaps those first vaguer words . . . 'A more just arrangement . . .'*

One or two Socialists have tramped out to a mining village. The leader climbs on to a broken wall and begins to talk Socialism. There is no one to listen, except the two who have walked out with him. He goes on speaking. Then one by one miners lounge up. They stand apart in little groups, or sit, spitting and talking among

* Thorne, 62–3.

themselves. All with their backs to the speaker. He goes on. Still they talk and laugh and spit among themselves. Then one by one they become silent. They turn to stare at him. As they turn and stare their jaws drop with a queer effect of consternation.*

A textile worker in the later 'eighties, in a factory in which there is no machinery. He twists threads in his fingers: all day the same motion over and over again. But there is nothing to prevent him talking and thinking. Unfortunately he cannot read. But a workmate, who has come across a pamphlet by William Morris and the *Commonweal*, reads them aloud to him in the factory, a page or two at a time in chance intervals. They argue, and find themselves Socialists. At meal times they assail the other men with arguments, figures . . .†

William Small, a friend of Keir Hardie's, one of the earliest members of the National Administrative Committee of the Independent Labour Party. He is a draper, but his leisure is spent in organising a miners' union, of which he ultimately becomes the chief official. In due course, as his activities become publicly known, he is evicted from his home. Unable to find another, he hires the corner of a field, rigs up a tarpaulin shelter, and from this residence continues his activities with unabated enthusiasm.

* Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 134.
† Jowett, 13.

George Lansbury, a mill-hand in the East End, at thirty shillings a week with a growing family. Each Saturday when work is over he takes train for the provinces, harangues a Socialist meeting on Saturday night, and three more on the Sunday. Nobody pays him and the meetings are frequently riotous. The railway returns him to London in the small hours of Monday morning, usually between three and five. He walks back through the silent streets to Bow and reaches home in time for the day's work in the mill.*

Socialism comes to John Furniss, a quarryman, in the early 'eighties. He is a devout Christian, a local preacher. Once a week he will march the five or six miles over the moors to Sheffield and preach his new social gospel from the Pump or the Monolith. And back over the moors in the dead of night, to be up before dawn for his work. For many years he does this and then he moves to another quarry, also within reach of Sheffield. Thence he does the same for another twenty years.†

George Lansbury, a working man who has now made something of a name in the politics of the East End. He is a remarkable speaker and organiser, and has helped to win several elections for the Liberals. He has even been brought in to speak on behalf of women's rights in West end drawing rooms. A group of prosperous folk whom he has attracted offer to subscribe a fund to maintain him in Parliament, for why should he not be adopted

* Lansbury, 74.
† Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 133.

as a Radical candidate? He intimates that he has recently been converted to Socialism, and can only stand as a Socialist. A wealthy Liberal Member invites him to the House and tries his hand. Why sacrifice a career for an unpractical dream? If he really wants to 'do something for the masses' the Liberal Member will procure him a safe Liberal seat. His career will be assured. The stubborn fellow repeats that, being a Socialist, he wishes to preach Socialism. 'Don't be silly,' says the Member, 'I am a better Socialist than you. I give a tenth of my income each year to the poor.' The working man explains that he has an infinite respect for the Member and his benevolence but that, as a Socialist, he does not approve of charity, and indeed considers the nine-tenths which the Member retains to be excessive. 'But think of your wife and children,' says the Member. 'I will give you a start now in Whitechapel at five pounds a week as my agent.' This, of course, means wealth to the working man. No more long days in the mill: something like luxury for his wife: a better chance for his children. The Member goes on at once, 'And we will get you a seat in this place,' and he nods casually at their august surroundings, 'at the first opportunity.' It is a dazzling prospect; and the Member has left his subtlest bait till last. '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.' After all there are no Socialists in Parliament yet. Perhaps there never will be. Why should one not become a Member? After all – if there ever is a Socialist Party and one still feels so disposed – one could transfer one's allegiance with all the prestige of an already well-known public figure. But it is only as a matter of form that the working-man

replies that he will talk it over with his wife. Whether any natural, human regrets traverse his wife's mind for the new carpets and children's boots, let alone the dazzling career, which are all now being declined, this we do not know. But the letter which is posted next day, though it expresses warm gratitude, is an unequivocal refusal.*

Victoria Park. Beneath a spreading elm-tree the prosperous poet-Socialist holding forth. A little crowd has collected. The core of it listens intently. To its fringes casual or facetious passers-by are constantly adding themselves for a transient stare. 'What's this? Ah! The share and share alike crowd.' 'Poverty, eh? He looks all right, don't he?'†

1893. A working man joins a local branch of the Labour Church and is no more seen at the Church 'Mission' which he has hitherto frequented. His absence is noted and in due course there is a visit from a lady missionary. She enquires, somewhat acidly, over a cup of tea, what a Labour Church may be and her involuntary host does his best to enlighten her. The remainder of the characteristic interview is best described by the backslider himself in a letter which, in the emotion of the moment, he addressed to the *Labour Prophet* and which that journal printed unaltered:

> 'This Lady remarked all this sounds very well but will it save the workers souls I answered that it had

* Lansbury, 76.

† Mann, 48–9.

quite as good a chance of saving the people as the churches and in fact I believe it has a better as the Labour Church preaches the Whole Gospel But the other Churches keep part of it Back She said we always had the poor with us and she believed God always intended that there always should be the Poor She then went on to qote several passages of Scripture showing where the Lord had Commanded the Rich Men of Old to be Just and Charitable to their Porrer Bretherin She goes on to say if the Lord did not intend that there should be poor why Should He tell these men to look after them I told Her that i thought she was expounding the Scripture wrong i pointed out to her that under the present competitive system what misery and poverty it entailed upon the masses while the Idle rich live in luxury and extravagance i pointed out to her the fact that the working classes are the producers of all the wealth of this Country did she not think it would be better if the toilers were to receive a larger share . . . she contended that the working classes to a great extent were the cause of their own poverty by their improvident and careless habits they should be more provident and frugal and live within their income She goes on to say that she thought that 18/- per week was a very comfortable wage and that an ordinary working man's family might live comfortably on that amount asking Her to shew me how to live upon 18/- a week she says don't you think that the working classes ought to curtail their expenses i told her that they were obliged to curtail their expenses to live at all I asked if she did not think that it would be better if the wealthier classes were to do a little of the curtailing Business so give the workers a better chance of existence She replied Oh never mind

about these people leave them to the Lord he will look after them i stated Ah that's all very well but i believe its my Duty to help the Lord a little in questions of this kind She contended that all this Social Reforming Business was all very well but she was afraid it would make the people so contented with this world that they would neglect their Souls again quoting Scripture what would it profit a man if he gain the whole World and Loose his own Soul She stated that During her visits to the members homes seeing some of them so comfortable and Happy and contented in this Life that they had grown quite careless and cold towards the Lord When she had got home she has had to get upon her knees and ask the Lord to take their fine Furniture from them or to reduce their circumstances if only to Draw them nearer to Himself i make no remark but leave you to make your own inferences on this point.'*

* * *

William Morris is paying a week-end visit to Glasgow. It is Sunday: he has addressed a meeting in the morning and is to address another in the evening, but after lunch he will spend the afternoon with the members of the branch. Snow is falling heavily as Morris is escorted to the small branch room. The gas jet has to be lighted thus early and there are only seven or eight members present but in that small glowing chamber with the great expanses of cold and dark outside they are as eagerly prepared to hear a revelation as ever were the adherents of the loneliest of the Churches visited by Saint Paul. But Morris asks *them* questions. What made *them* Socialists? Somewhat shyly they make their con-

* *Labour Prophet*, Jan. 1893.

fessions. All, it seems, can remember from boyhood a vague sense of injustice. They had read Robert Burns or Carlyle or Ruskin and the rankling suspicions had begun to crystallise. Then had come the Highland Crofters' revolt and Henry George's teaching. *Sybil* and *Alton Locke* and Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* are also recalled. But no one mentions Marx. And no one, it seems, has read any of the earlier Socialists, Sir Thomas More or St. Simon or Fourier or Robert Owen or Louis Blanc. Born Socialists, Morris rightly concludes. Was not Socialism in the air, these days? And he launches into one of those rich coloured discourses upon his beloved Middle Ages and their Socialist ideals. Then Scotch songs are sung and it is suddenly time to set forth to the evening's meeting. They sing 'Auld Lang Syne,' hail the coming Revolution, of which they have now no lingering doubt, and trudge off through the snow, still glowing with a new vision of what the world once was and what, some day, it will be.

When the public meeting is over and Morris has been escorted back to his hotel by a handful of members (perhaps, as on an earlier Glasgow night, to the strains of his own 'March of the Workers') a working man among them observes as they turn thoughtfully homeward: 'This is the greatest day of my life and I can never hope to see the like again. I no longer doubt the possibility of an Earthly Paradise. If one can speak of a God amongst men, we can so speak of William Morris as he has been with us this day in Glasgow.'*

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* Glasier, 67-71.

In the late 'eighties a Socialist observer in Glasgow noticed on successive Saturdays considerable crowds listening in the West Port to an open-air speaker, 'a sturdy man who had a natural gift of oratory.' In his left hand the orator would hold a sheaf of newspaper-cuttings from which with his right, like a conjurer selecting a card, he would constantly pluck a specimen and proceed to comment caustically upon the facts contained in it. The speech over, he would replace the cuttings in his pocket and walk away. No collection, it seemed, was ever made. From the man's speeches it was obvious that he was a Socialist. Moreover, it appeared that on Saturday evenings it was his habit to hold forth at the Lamp in the Greenmarket and on Sundays in yet other places, such as the High School Gate and the Barrack Park. His audiences were frequently abusive, but the man had a natural gift of oratory. Nor, which impressed them much, did he ever hand round a hat.

Through the medium of a local barber the observer was able to make the acquaintance of the orator. His name, it appeared, was James Duncan. During the next few years the observer met him from time to time. Duncan was continuing his weekly oratory and his influence over his audiences was obvious, 'yet on no occasion did he evince any inclination for office, reward or acknowledgment.'

Many years passed. For some time now 'office, reward or acknowledgment' had been within the reach of influential Socialists to an extent undreamed of by the eighteen-eighties. Once more the observer called at Duncan's house. Duncan, it seemed, in this long interval had not stood for Parliament; he had not been made a Justice of the Peace nor became a town, county, nor even a

parish, councillor. He was not at home. He was out, making a Socialist speech in the Greenmarket.*

A casual labourer at the docks, Will Pearson, becoming converted to Socialism, joined the Federation, and forthwith set himself by assiduous practice to correct his pronunciation and intonation. He succeeded completely, and when he left the docks at the end of a day's work, would have passed, dress, demeanour and conversation alike, for a handsome and 'highly-cultivated University man.' He would work for a few days at the docks; then, having earned what he considered sufficient to keep himself for the rest of the week, he would don his West end apparel and away to the British Museum and there study from the opening of the doors in the morning until they shut in the evening. He became master of more than one recondite subject. But chiefly he would ponder the problem of the Land, and its future in a Socialist state. He became a vigorous and, when roused, a bitter controversialist, and his colleagues in the Federation, recognising his ability, would constantly urge him to secure, as he so easily could, some livelihood less hazardous and more lucrative than casual labour in the docks. Nothing however would persuade him to surrender the independence of a docker's life, still less to abandon his class, and in due course he met a fate not uncommon among dockers and was killed instantaneously at his work.'†

* Lowe, *Souvenirs*, 58-60.
† Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 442-4.

It was when he was ten, and had spent nearly all his ten years in various workhouses that Jack Williams climbed the wall of Hornsey Union and escaped. Almost at once he began to read Irish Nationalist newspapers, and became a fervent supporter of Fenianism. Soon he was paying his school pence to a Fenian fund instead of to the local schoolmaster, and then tramping from London to be present at the execution of the Fenian prisoners in Manchester. Fenianism died down and he flung himself into the agitation on behalf of the Tichborne claimant, going down to Stoke-on-Trent to work for Dr. Kenealy and collecting as much as £84 for the Claimant in the various places in which he managed to find employment as a casual labourer. After this the Commons Preservation League; he was among those who burnt the fences on Plumstead Common and Hackney Marshes. By 1880 he was eagerly helping the Anti-Coercion Association to organise protests against Gladstone's Irish policy; at one of which meetings an enraged Gladstonian cut his head open with a ginger-beer bottle. It was in the course of this agitation that he met Hyndman. The rest of his life was given to Socialism and the Federation.*

By 1922 Barnsley will be represented by a Socialist. But this is 1897. The newspapers announce a Parliamentary vacancy and the Council of the Independent Labour Party meets to consider the desirability of putting forward a candidate. Very desirable, they conclude; but how to contrive it? They possess no funds, are, in fact, in debt, and an election will cost from three to four hundred pounds at the least. The upshot is that

* *How I became*, 34-39.

Hardie is deputed to visit Barnsley. Something perhaps will turn up. Barnsley, for electioneering purposes, is a large straggling area which includes some score of towns and villages and one small and somewhat anaemic branch of the Independent Labour Party. The branch is summoned to meet Hardie, and fourteen members assemble in a small and evil-smelling loft above a stable. Naturally, the first question is, what funds can be raised towards the required hundreds? Each member is invited to guarantee as large a sum as possible which he will undertake, by one means or another, to produce before election day. After much consideration of possible sources of revenue, the promises are made and are found to total £2 13s. 6d. Despondency descends upon the loft. Then a working jeweller, who had once a business of his own, pulls a diamond ring from his finger and flings it on to the table. 'That will fetch £25 in any pawnshop.' It is to be his contribution to the funds. The meeting immediately adopts Pete Curran candidate by acclamation and clatters down hopefully from the loft. And though 'every parson, every newspaper, and every trade union official of any standing' is against them, although they are stoned by the miners, who form the bulk of the electorate, and hooted by women and children in the streets, and although few indeed are those, besides Hardie, who dare publicly move the customary votes of confidence in the candidate, the campaign never loses the unexpected élan with which it opened and 1091 votes are cast for Curran. This is 1897. But in 1922 Barnsley will be represented by a Socialist.*

* *Life Stories*, 46–7, quoting Hardie.

CHAPTER XI

SOWING. 1894-1900

THESE were Keir Hardie's years. As Socialism grew into a Parliamentary force its fortunes would pass into other hands. But these were the years of the prophets and the agitators, and Keir Hardie was the chief of them. 'Rude, wild, unkempt agitators. . . . Of smooth, smug, respectable politicians there are already enough and to spare'; they were his own words. And 'rude, wild and unkempt,' it may be said, was Hardie the agitator. Unlike the British protagonists of Marxian Socialism he came of the working-classes and he never left his class. And at this stage what was needed by the new movement setting out to link Labour and Socialism was a working-class leader who should show himself proud of his class and proof against all temptations to climb from it, all the flattering distractions which might sever his direct contact with its hopes and needs. 'He was the first man from among the working-classes who completely understood them, completely sympathised with them, completely realised their plight and completely championed them.' 'He taught them not as a teacher but as an elder brother. He led them not as a tribune but as an apostle.' Thus wrote an intimate associate.

Dressed habitually in early years in blue serge suit – across whose 'double-breasted waistcoat, from over the shoulder, were several long threads of silver chain' – and hard bowler hat and wearing his hair cut short, in the

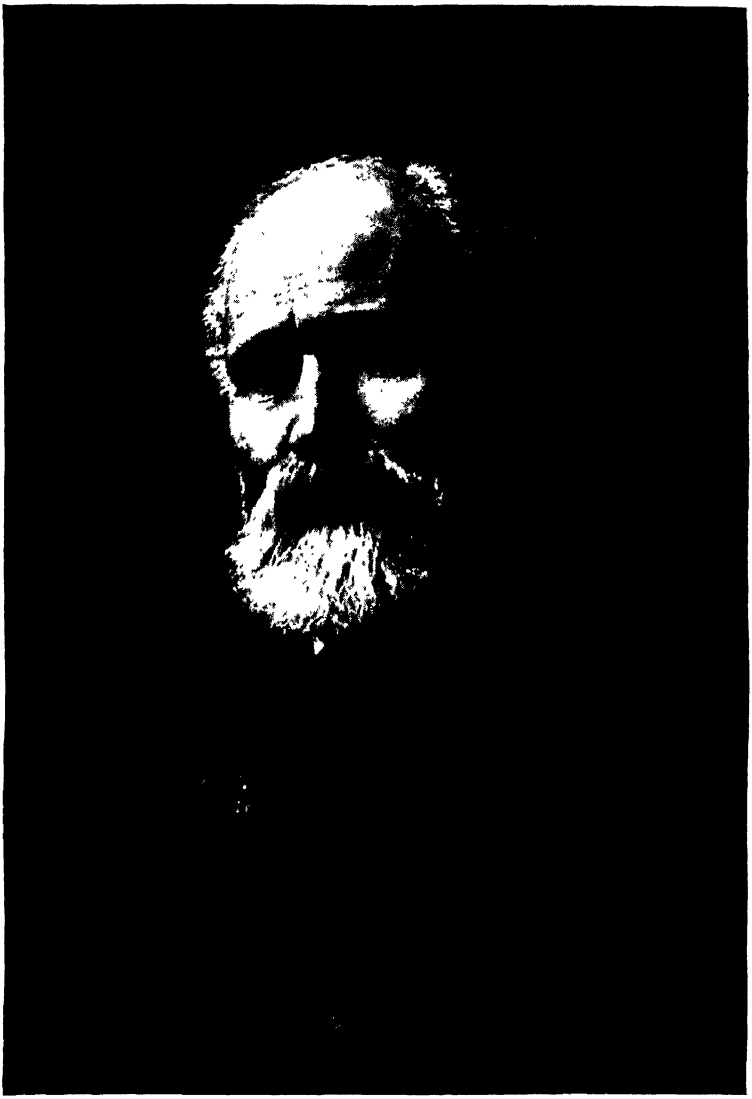

Photo by Beatrice Cundy

JAMES KEIR HARDIE

later phase he took to soft hat and luxuriant hair and even an artist's cloak and tie. There was hardness and even bitterness in the man. 'How happy I always feel,' he had written in his diary of 1884. But life lay heavy on him now, and sorrow never left him for long. Without a vein of hardness he could not have lived through the long conflict which was his life. And his roots were in bitter soil. 'I have known, as a child, what hunger means, and the scars of those days are with me still and rankle in my heart.' To his enemies indeed and to some of those who had no intimacy with him the bitterness and the hardness often appeared to be the reality of the man. Yet the essential Hardie was tender. He loved children and he loved the common people. Shown over a home for orphaned and deserted babies he wept. And though always bitter against pride or oppression he was always tender to suffering and sorrow. 'The only times I have known him to be positively rude to people was towards very rich or exalted personages,' wrote Glasier. 'Many a time have I seen him, when matters of serious importance have claimed his attention, stop to say a cheery word to a crying child, or stroke a mangy-looking cat,' said another. And once when a wealthy Member of Parliament, who had been an implacable and unscrupulous opponent of Socialism, suffered a tragic bereavement Hardie said 'When I saw the grief in his face I wanted to go up to him and put my arms round his neck.' The very young always loved him: and as he sat gazing into the fire and smoking his corn-cob pipe in the workmen's cottages in which he would lodge at the end of his long day's journeying and preaching, the children would steal up and lean against his shoulder.

But there was grimness and dourness in his nature. He laughed with his intimates and he is remembered dancing Scotch reels at Labour 'socials' but in truth relaxation seemed to him a waste of time. 'Even as a boy he had not time to engage in the games of other boys.' He fought too long and was too well hated and too often and too bitterly attacked for this vein in him not to grow into a hard, protective shell. He was constantly slandered and traduced. For to the world he personified Socialism – some Socialists, indeed, and Blatchford in particular, denounced him for this very reason – so that in traducing Hardie the enemies of Socialism attacked the thing they hated. Daily the post brought him vitriolic abuse. Sometimes MacDonald and Hardie would read their anonymous letters together, and marvel. The public attacks were almost as insistent. That he gave champagne suppers, that he advocated Atheism and Free Love, that he had been divorced, that he 'ate ten course dinners and asked the rank and file to pay for them,' that he was bankrupt, that he was extremely wealthy and possessed a country mansion and a retinue of servants in Scotland – all these statements, and many others of the same kind, were circulated in leaflets or in the Press, usually by Liberal opponents. For the most part he ignored them. Some of his friends, indeed, marvelled at his Christian meekness. 'I wondered at the meekness with which he met the foul attacks made by his Liberal opponent,' wrote Canon Adderley, 'when everything that any German atheist had said against religion for the last forty years was placarded about the towns and villages as representing Mr. Keir Hardie's views about God.' But it was perhaps not so much meekness which so often kept Hardie's lips closed as that secret Scottish pride

which flourishes the more that it is trampled upon. And though he could never have stooped to the falsehood of many of the attacks upon himself, none of his enemies exceeded, and few rivalled, the plain and bitter speaking with which, like an Old Testament prophet, he could denounce not only hypocrisy or injustice or bad faith but the individuals who obstructed the cause he served. 'The plain truth, stated with brutal frankness,' he wrote of Cecil Rhodes, 'is that Mr. Rhodes is a confirmed drunkard.'

> 'Henry Broadhurst, M.P., for Leicester, and ex-Secretary to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress; John Wilson, M.P. for Mid-Durham, and Secretary to the Durham Miners' Association; Charles Fenwick, M.P. for the Wansbeck Division of Northumberland, who is paid by the Northumberland miners, together with some smaller fry, such as Richard M'Ghee, M.P. for an Irish constituency; and Leslie Johnson, both of whom claim some connection with the Dockers' or Seaman's Unions, all took part in the contest in support of the Liberal lawyer, company promoter, and brothel landlord. The two latter lied so openly that one of them has since had to abjectly apologise and is threatened with expulsion from future Dockers' Conferences.'

Or

> 'Mr. Pickard's intimates know him as a man of few ideas, of a narrow, intolerant cast of mind, and altogether lacking in judgment or discretion . . . like all small-minded men, he is intensely egotistic. As a chairman he is unfair and biased, and ignorant of even the elements of the rules of debate.'

And in 1898 he devoted two columns of the *Labour Leader* to an exhaustive analysis of Pickard's income and its sources.

But Hardie's attacks were not often so personal as this. He seldom assailed the man, but rather the principle behind the man. There have been few more damaging exposures of hypocrisy and oppression than his denunciation of a certain Lord Overtoun, philanthropist and reformer of public morals, 'the leading spirit of the religious life of the West of Scotland,' a prominent supporter of the Y.M.C.A. and the Lord's Day Observance Society, who worked his men at from threepence to fourpence an hour for twelve hours a day in the poisonous fumes of his chemical factories, so that they were forced to snatch their meals in mouthfuls while still at work with poison-stained hands, and this for seven days a week, for there were no holidays and the patron of the Lord's Day Observance Society fined his men Monday's wages if they stole time to attend Sunday's chapel. The whole reasoned denunciation has all the passion and, which is not common with Hardie's writing, more than a hint of the rich clangour, of the Old Testament prophecies. But it is apparent in every line that the thing assailed is something greater and more anciently established than this Liberal peer.

> '. . . Christ spoke these words, not of dead hypocrites, but of those by whom He was surrounded – the Lord Overtouns of His day, of those who took part in foreign missions, and were the religious leaders of the times, but whose lives were driving the people to atheism. I presume Christ would do the same to-day were He with us, and what He would do is surely the right thing for every

professed follower to do. . . . I am not attacking religion, but I mean to try whether the conscience of the Christian Church cannot be so stirred up on this matter as to insist on men who make so much profession of Christianity as Lord Overtoun makes first of all giving some evidence of the faith that is in them by their treatment of their work-people. If they will not treat these humanely, then the Church should not accept for its altar the blood-stained gifts which have been procured by the destruction of men, body and soul. . . .

'. . . But Lord Overtoun can be generous when he pleases. Rev. John M'Neill, the evangelist, is a protegé of Lord Overtoun's, and as saving souls by means of a gospel preached by the poor and for the poor, and originally by the poor without money and without price, is so much more laborious an occupation than chrome-making, his lordship pays John £1000 a year. . . . I now ask John M'Neill and the religious bodies of the West of Scotland whether they will, now that they know the facts, continue to accept this man's money? . . .

'. . . the clergy of Glasgow are dead as moving automatons can be. Servility, hypocrisy, mammon worship, the cult of respectability have eaten like canker worms the marrow from their bones, until they have become the mere outward appearance of men. I say this, knowing that there are among them men who are uneasily conscious of the truth of all this, and yet do not know how to set about the remedy, nor where to begin. Would that my words could reach these. Begin where you are, my brother, and press resolutely forward whither the

> Spirit of God leads. If half a dozen of the clergy of Glasgow were prepared to sacrifice all for Christ's sake, the worst would be past. I am asked to remain silent concerning a great wrong, because if it be made public it may damage Christianity. As if God could be hood-winked, as if Christ would bless an effort founded on a lie, and financed by gold stained with the tears and the blood of those for whom He died. Out upon such enemies of the Gospel! They are worse than cumberers of the ground; they are active, powerful agents of the Devil, they and their aiders and abettors in the Press.'

The attacks on Hardie did not come only from the anti-Socialists. There seems to have been jealousy between the *Labour Leader* and the *Clarion*, which was a better written if more erratic journal; jealousy which caused, or was caused by, bitter feeling between Hardie and Blatchford. Blatchford, though his power came only from his pen and though he had no political ambitions, was at this time Hardie's only rival for popularity and influence within the Movement. He warned his readers against Hardie's dominance in the Independent Labour Party, which he considered undemocratic, and told them that since, in the eyes of the world, Hardie had come to symbolise Socialism it was dangerous that he should be 'despised by your enemies . . . and . . . despised by some of your friends.' Hardie kept silence for some while, but he was driven at last to complain publicly of 'the howlings of political wire-pullers and place-hunters' and 'the unworthy suspicions of nominal friends,' and in private he would refer sardonically to Blatchford as 'the great man.' Yet, though he resented and resisted such attacks, Hardie did not prize leadership

for its own sake. At various times in later years he would urge both John Morley and Mr. Lloyd George to place themselves at the head of the new movement, and more than once he made it clear that he would have accepted the leadership of John Burns in Parliament.

But to this well-hated man attacks, even when they were the attacks of friends, were among the least of his trials. The allurements too of the kingdoms of this world to which all down the ages reformers have succumbed – *All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me* – tempted him but little. He was aware indeed that he could be tempted: the proud ostentatiousness of his independence itself goes to show it, for it cloaked the resolve here at all costs not to be led into temptation. Hardie's mouth and chin, though usually 'not discernible' beneath his beard seemed sometimes to suggest unexpectedly 'a weakness for sensuous good things.' Aware that he could be, he took care that he was not, tempted. 'Many are the temptations which beset the feet of those who would travel (in the pathway of reform),' he wrote, 'and not the least seductive is the chamber into which the politician invites you to come and leave the dreamers and take your place among the practical men of the world.' Others he had seen enter that chamber. Bradlaugh and Michael Davitt and John Burns – any of these, he thought, could have led the democracy of Britain whither he pleased. But time and again the rebel degenerates into the useful Member of Parliament and the people turn away with an impatient sigh to wait again; for this is not the awaited one. This chamber door was still open and fingers were ready to beckon. 'Society,' we are told by one who knew it in those days, 'was ready to welcome the leaders of the new

democracy;' and had they 'not been singularly refined and retiring and, be it added, puritanical men,' they would have been enmeshed. Hardie was careful never to approach within hailing distance of this chamber. He needed no cloth cap to symbolise his resolute adherence to his own class and his own principles. Every inch of him, every movement, every sentence proclaimed his independence. A humble young Scottish woman was speaking to Hardie in the lobbies of the House of Commons about some measure which concerned working-girls when a prominent Member came up to him and began to praise a recent speech of his. Hardie looked at him coldly. 'I am engaged just now.' And when the politician had retired and the young woman looked her surprise he added, in his native tongue, 'I'm no carin' for their soft sowther.' .Once, passing through the division lobby with an acquaintance, he encountered Mr. Gladstone leaning against the fireplace deep in animated conversation with one of his colleagues. Hardie's companion walked up to the old man and spoke to him in an undertone and Hardie was suddenly certain that he was asking permission to introduce him. He stood there waiting, a rough uncompromising figure, yet watching the scene with conflicting emotions. For Gladstone was by now an almost legendary figure; moreover, although Gladstone had long since pronounced 'I deeply deplore . . . the leaning of both parties to Socialism, which I radically disapprove,' Hardie respected his genuine devotion to liberty and to religious principles. However, the great man was seen to be vigorously shaking his head. Perhaps he recognised that here was one on whom his well-known charm would not exert its customary influence, one whom nothing could transform into an admiring

follower. As for Hardie, he was conscious both of an unmistakable sense of relief and of an increased respect for Gladstone. He was thankful to have been spared one more attempt at nobbling, and by so formidable a practitioner of that art. When Gladstone died he recalled the incident gratefully.

But the greatest trial of the pioneer of ideas is not the enmity and the dangers, nor yet the temptations, which he must encounter. It is the apathy, the immense inertia of indifference, in the world. He seems so often to be hurling himself not so much into briars or barbed wire as into a vast quagmire of mud. How often would he welcome the most virulent abuse if he could but exchange it for the infinite stolidity of those that have no ears to hear. It is not because Jerusalem kills the prophets and stones them that are sent unto her that the prophet's heart is broken, but because so often and often he would have gathered her children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *she would not*. The ancient inhibitions, the inherited prejudices and age-old taboos compel her still. That innermost thing in the heart of every man which must be roused from slumber, sleeps, like the princess in the fairy tales, within wall after wall of its enchanted castle. How shall one make it hear? Not at least without ceaseless effort. And Hardie never rested. For years he was a Member of Parliament to whom correspondents wrote from all over the country; he must write every week for his *Labour Leader* and he was Chairman of the Independent Labour Party. And above all he was an agitator. He once published, in reply to a correspondent, the itinerary of a fortnight. It included train journeys from Scotland to London, from London to Halifax, from thence to Yeadon, to Mex-

borough and to Kettering, from Kettering to London, from London to Pendlebury (five hours), and thence to Walkden and Manchester and on to Scotland again. It included speeches at fifteen public meetings as well as one all day sitting of the National Administrative Council of the new Party, three other Committees, two Conferences and a Social Gathering. As always, at each place visited he was introduced to numberless strangers and talked nightly into the small hours with comrades old and new, by whom this day, when they could lay their difficulties before the apostle of their faith, would be remembered all their lives. There would be differences to compose, hopes to revive and misgivings to allay. And during the same fortnight in bleak station waiting rooms or crowded third-class carriages he must write his columns for two issues of the *Labour Leader* and laboriously answer seventy-five personal letters from unknown correspondents, a total which must have left, as was usual with him, a formidable accumulation of still unopened envelopes. For he detested letter-writing and he received every week, in addition to those addressed to the office of the *Labour Leader*, much nearer one hundred than fifty private letters.

For this fortnight's labours Hardie received in fees a sum of £4 18s., which included his train fares. For addressing meetings in London or Glasgow, which he could reach without travelling, he habitually asked nothing. For speaking in the provinces the most that he ever received, including train fares and hotel bill, was three guineas. No other Socialist speaker at this time was paid so much, and not a few of them, with no other source of income, died before their time and in extreme poverty. Even so, intermittent complaints found their way into

the correspondence columns of the *Clarion* against 'paid lecturers' who battened upon the movement. Hardie was not the paid servant of a Trade Union and Members of Parliament then received no salary and during his first years in London he had to maintain himself in his humble lodgings off Fetter Lane and support his wife and family in Cumnock solely from what he could earn, chiefly by writing for an Ayrshire paper and for *The People's Journal.* He sent his wife twenty-five shillings a week. The rest went to meet the losses on the *Labour Leader*, which trembled permanently upon the margin of bankruptcy. Nor were there lacking fingers to beckon into yet another comfortable chamber in which he might 'leave the dreamers' and take his easy place 'among the practical men of the world.' Why should he remain penniless? Might it not even be said that he owed it to his cause to make himself some security? Thus prompted the beckoners. And there was reason on their side. 'My present income of £210* a year is the largest I have ever enjoyed in my life,' wrote Hardie in 1911. 'I pay £120 a year for the rent of my rooms in London, postage and clerical assistance: I never work less than fifteen – more often seventeen – hours out of the twenty-four whilst Parliament is sitting, and spend week-ends in travelling long distances to speak for Socialism. That is to say, my net income as a Member of Parliament is £90 a year, out of which my wife and daughter have to maintain themselves and I have to find food and raiment. Were it not for an occasional magazine

* This came chiefly from the Labour Party's Maintenance Fund, which was raised by a special levy of a penny per member per year, and was payable at the rate of £50 per quarter from 1906 until payment of members was enacted.

article the thing would be impossible.' The statement, which was published, is characteristic. No 'practical man' would have lived such a life: few 'dreamers' would have been so ready with the figures.

The beckoners had much to offer. The three hundred pounds a year with a safe seat which had been promised him by Sir George Trevelyan on behalf of the Liberal Party, if he would betray his faith, was always to be had for the asking. And there were prizes even more glittering to be won. During his tour of the United States in 1895 the Mayor of San Francisco who, having made a large fortune in silver-mining, was an enthusiastic advocate of bimetallism suggested to Hardie that he should induce the Independent Labour Party to declare in its favour, or at least, as Chairman of the Annual Conference, should himself devote an address to its manifold advantages. For this trifling service to the advancement of economic truth he offered to pay Hardie twenty thousand pounds. Earlier than this, at the end of 1892, two elderly spinsters, bitten with advanced ideas, proposed, after exhaustive and embarrassing inquiries into his private life, to pay him £300 a year as long as he remained in Parliament. They were almost as astonished as the bimetallist Mayor by his blunt refusal, for they knew him to be penniless and believed him to be the only Scot who had ever refused a gift of money unaccompanied by any conditions. But they were reckoning without the pride of the poor Scot. In later years they sent him a hundred pounds, which he distributed between the Independent Labour Party and the strike funds of the Engineers and of the Washington miners. And later still they sent a thousand pounds, and again two thousand, all of which he passed on to the Independent Labour Party.

In 1893 Hardie was offered 'a bag containing five hundred sovereigns' by an enthusiastic publicist for a vote against the third reading of the Home Rule Bill. And about 1902 an elderly lady from Ulster informed him that she was worth somewhat over twenty thousand pounds and had decided to make him her heir. Only one condition, it appeared, was to be attached to this munificent bequest. He must undertake a campaign against the Pope. On learning that Hardie considered himself to have both enough money for his needs and a sufficient objective for his campaigns she became highly indignant. Hardie never joined the practical men: he remained to the end a dreamer – and an independent.

But all that has been so far said has scarcely touched upon the essential Hardie, for what has been said so far goes only a little way to account for his hold upon the people. Even with that inner core of tenderness, something more than courage, pugnacity, independence and unwearying devotion, something more, too, than a fortunate conjunction of political tendencies, was needed to make him the accepted prophet of Socialism, canonised by the common people within ten years of his death. What gave him that power over the imagination of mankind which makes a man's name live? It was not eloquence. He was an effective speaker, no doubt. His speaking was homely and direct. He meditated his subject before he spoke and used no notes. He had the nervous sensitiveness without which there can be no eloquence. 'For myself, I usually begin a speech, literally, in fear and trembling. Not only so, but when it happens that I approach a meeting in a spirit of cold indifference, as sometimes is the case, my speech is certain to be a failure.' He could rouse audiences to fervour by the

natural eloquence of powerful emotion simply expressed. But he had not humour and he had not that rare poetic gift of inspired phrase which makes great oratory, nor yet the richly cultivated mind which can sometimes almost supply the lack of it. Nor again was it his pen which gave him power. He wrote prodigiously, for he could not escape writing, but he seldom wrote well. The style was never quite the man. As far as manner goes the old *Labour Leader* is mostly grey, stiff stuff and a column from Cunninghame Graham gleams out in it bright and mobile, like a flower in a bed of clay.

'There was a light or voice within him;' so he believed himself. He was a prophet and, as with the prophets of old, his strength was ultimately of the spirit. He had surrendered himself, and his own interests, to his call: in the language of revivalism he had accepted Christ. This was the final source of his power over those who heard him; for the political movements of the working-classes in Britain have always been deeply coloured with religious feeling. 'I am not guided so much by a consideration of policy or by thinking out a long sequence of events as by intuition and inspiration. *I know what I believe to be the right thing, and I go and do it.*' These last words put the same truth from a different angle. In this age in which few know what they believe there is special power for such as have no doubts of what is required of them – and go and do it. In all ages indeed those who have chiefly moved the world have been men of one idea. And with Hardie this all-mastering idea was deeply tinged with spiritual insight. He was a mystic. He knew himself to draw upon an unseen source of strength. 'How often,' said MacDonald after Hardie's death, 'have I been in his company when he was silent, feeling that he

was giving me far more by his silence than he could give me by his words. I felt that this man was never persuaded of the reality of material things at all.' A hard saying for some ears, that this preacher of Socialism was 'never persuaded of the reality of material things at all'; yet it is of the essence of Hardie. His strength was of, and in, the spirit and it was this strength which brought him through the fires unscathed, for he was not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. In this strength he survived such trials as a man does not survive unless convinced that 'he is the voice,' the words, again, are MacDonald's of Hardie, '. . . of a power, of an authority, not material, not of to-day, not of yesterday, not of to-morrow.' Rugged, denunciatory, often harsh, yet touched with tenderness and mysticism, he was the prophet of the Old Testament inspired by the doctrine of the New. The core of his belief was that there must be justice on earth and that this was the Kingdom of which Christ spoke; not a heaven beyond space and time, but the embodiment of His principles in human society. His profound conviction of the righteousness of this struggle for such a Kingdom on earth became to him as an inward light. He knew what he believed to be right – and he went and did it, for the knowledge came from God. 'The Kingdom of God meant the establishment right here upon earth of a condition of things in which human life would be beautiful and free to develop along Godlike lines.' This fundamental belief would well up, not only when he preached, as from time to time he did, in Chapels and Brotherhoods or in the highways and byways of Ayrshire, but in his most characteristic orations to great political audiences. Here is Hardie and one of his audiences:

> 'On this Sunday afternoon . . . with the birds full of song, with the harvest ripe for reaping, with the fruit in the orchard, the flower in the field and the lamb in the meadow there is joy, beauty, peace and prosperity everywhere, except in the homes and lives of the common people. (*Applause*). Oh, men and women in the name of that God whom you profess to believe in, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth who died to save your souls, how long do you intend to submit to a system which is defacing God's image upon you, which is blurring and marring God's handiwork, which is destroying the lives of men, women and children? Do not you think that God, who made everything else beautiful, intended you to be free also? And here you are, in bondage. Come out from the House of Bondage (*hear, hear*), fight for freedom (*cheers*), fight for manhood, fight for the coming day when in body, soul and spirit you will be free to live your own lives (*applause*) and give glory to your Creator. (*Loud and prolonged cheering*).

From this inner core of his being proceeded those piercing sayings with which, though he was no phrase-maker, he sometimes caused the familiar semblances to crumble away, to the consternation of those who heard him, in the pitiless light of reality. When Hardie said in the House of Commons 'Most of the Members of this House have a more direct interest in the Stock Exchange than they have in the sufferings of the poor,' there were angry cries of protest. Coming from others such words have been received with laughter as an empty taunt, but spoken by Hardie they seemed suddenly to tear away the wrappings of convention and lay bare a raw, unwelcome aspect of the truth. Again, in 1894, three

public events fell within the same thirty hours. A son was born to the Duke of York, who would one day be heir to the throne, the French President Carnot was assassinated, and two hundred and fifty-one Welsh miners lost their lives in the Albion Colliery in South Wales. The British Press treated both the murder of Carnot and the birth of the Royal infant as news more important than the two hundred and fifty lost lives. In the House of Commons addresses of condolence to the French people and of congratulation to the Queen were moved, but no resolution of sympathy to the widows and children of the dead miners. Hardie attacked both Press and Parliament with fury. 'For the lick-spittals of the Press,' he wrote, 'who have no ears for the cry of the poor widow and orphan and who attempt to see in the birth of a child to the Duke and Duchess of York an event of Divine significance to the nation, there can be nothing but contempt. The life of one Welsh miner is of greater commercial and moral value to the British nation than the whole Royal crowd put together, from the Royal Great Grand-mama down to this puling Royal Great Grandchild.' And in the House he opposed the address to the Queen, after an amendment in which she was to be invited to express sympathy with the relatives of the Welsh miners had been ruled out of order, in a speech which was a bitter attack upon the monarchy. He was a republican in days when republicanism was not quite dead in Britain; he was a miner, enraged by the public callousness to what he held to be the murder of his fellow-miners – for their pit had been long since reported as specially dangerous – and he spoke with concentrated passion and some exaggeration. Yet with it all, in reminding the world that the many are more than

the one, once more he had torn away the conventions which are of this time and that place and had exposed, disturbing, unfamiliar yet unmistakable, the truth which is of all times and all places. The House did its best to howl him down. The Press told him that his speech was due to 'a hatred of Christ and Christianity.' Yet elsewhere he had not failed to strike responsive chords. To his surprise, he received many hundreds of letters of congratulation on this speech and next to none of abuse. And it is reported that when the account of the speech reached the compositors in the office of a great Conservative journal all work was suspended as the men flocked round to hear the copy read and cheer after cheer went up. At last the editor himself was summoned, to find an excited group dancing in a ring and singing *La Carmagnole*, with intermittent cheers for Keir Hardie.

These were the years of the agitators and Hardie was the chief of them, but he was only the chief of them. In London John Burns, at first not yet wholly alienated, with Will Crooks was making a name in Local Government, and the Fabian bugle was sounding the assault. And in every town in Britain and in many of its villages the aspiration which called itself Socialism was being preached by men and women to whom it had become a sacred cause. They had nothing to gain by their labours, and there were friends, ease, money and sometimes their own lives to lose. But the missionaries were never wanting and the Labour movement rests upon countless forgotten sacrifices. There are those still living who remember and speak of these men and women, though soon this memory must pass. Their names, and some faint flavour of their personality, survive here and there

in the scattered records of those days. To catalogue curtly in these pages, for no more could be attempted in such a chronicle as this, the names of even those, better known among them, with whom any student of the records makes acquaintance – Enid Stacy, Katherine St. John Conway, Tom Maguire, Caroline Martyn, James Sexton, Margaret McMillan, and a score of others – this would be unworthy of them. A full biography of any one of them, were the materials to hand, would be a portrait in miniature of Britain at the parting of her ways. I leave them unrecorded; they would not have expected otherwise. They were ready to give without recompense, even the recompense of belated recognition; like that gifted and generous lady who wrote in her journal 'O God, thou hast not given me Thy best gift . . . if I should use it for myself and him instead of for Thee and Thy other children, keep it from me till I am ready to have it, however far away that time may be.' But whether or not fuller works in time to come do justice to their devotion and their achievement, the fact remains that these men and women were the Socialist Movement.

In this work MacDonald – he lectured widely for the Fabian Society in 1896 and 1897 – and Philip Snowden and George Lansbury were already acquiring the powers which would bring them fame. Indeed the leader of the new party was already marking himself out. MacDonald had already begun his special life's-work; the shaping of the enthusiasms of the new party into a Parliamentary force. In many a lecture-report in the files of transient and forgotten local Socialist journals he can be glimpsed tirelessly reminding his hearers that sooner or later pioneers must become politicians. Thus we find him at Rochdale in October, 1896, devoting

a lecture on 'What we have now to do' to the need of widening the Socialist appeal beyond the mere enunciation of Socialist first principles.

> 'The speaker' (says the *Rochdale Labour News*) 'appealed for Socialists more frequently to put themselves in the position of the man in the street, who is on the whole sympathetic but who does not want to follow out economic complexities. We can talk Socialism seriously to him and we will likely disgust him; we may gas sentimentalities to him, and we may capture a member who will only be one more impossibilist in our movement; we may show him what we can do now, *show him that we are as interested as he is in doing the smaller things that lie at our feet*, and he will become a valuable supporter. . . . He therefore urgently recommended the alliance of the Independent Labour Party with the two or three leading questions in progressive politics at the moment. We have in fact two great duties to perform at this moment. We have to preach Socialism and familiarise the public with our opinions and general standpoint, on the one hand, and on the other we have to convince the genuine progressist who is not an out-and-out Socialist that in our hands the minor, as we think, reforms are quite safe. The high superiority of so many Socialists to the political interests of their day was all very well when a nucleus of chosen souls was being formed for the Party. Now we want a little more generosity, a little closer application to facts, a little more honest recognition of our duty as a political party.'

First he would stir them with the Socialist message, an eloquent and reasoned version, but much, no doubt, as it was preached by other pioneers (this Rochdale warning

was preceded by an address upon 'The Breakdown of Commercialism') and then, passing to his own peculiar task, he would remind them that, if they were to achieve their dream, their dream was not enough. Their feet must be firmly on the ground. The more closely that the new movement approached political power the more crucial would MacDonald's influence become. But from the first, long before he grew to a national figure, he had begun, in the words Disraeli used not more truly of himself, to 'lead his party out of the wilderness.' Bruce Glasier, the Scot, too, once shepherd and always visionary, who wrote little because 'he allowed himself to be spent upon meetings' was speaking three times each Sunday and once every day of the week – the sardonic 'Men who have risen: Jack Sheppard and Jay Gould' was a favourite lecture with him. And many who would in time reach Parliament but had yet no thought of it were living laborious days. The country was astir.

The pen did what it could – it was not much – to supplement the tongue. Edward Halford's *Bradford Pioneer*, *The Bolton and District Pioneer*, the work of Fred Brocklehurst, local candidate for Parliament, *The Glasgow Commonweal* (controlled 'by the rank and file'), *The Rochdale Labour News*, the Darlington *Clarionette* and a number of other local Socialist organs struggled into brief existence about 1896, resolved at least to 'let a little light into some of the dark places around us.' But more numerous than the writers or speakers whose names can still be disinterred from the drab files of ancient journals were those who even there have left no memorial. And besides these there were yet others whose voice was never heard in public, who wrote no word, stalwart spirits whose idealism held the rank and file together

in dark days, quietly prepared to put the Socialist cause above all else.

It was this small *corps d'élite* which kept the Independent Labour movement alive in the barren days after the Election of 1895. The fortunes of Socialism were now in their hands, for the day of its first apostles was passing. Hyndman still resolutely ploughed his lonely and unfruitful furrow, but Champion, who had quarrelled with Hyndman after the unemployed agitation of 1886, and who had given valuable assistance in Hardie's Lanarkshire campaign of 1888, had embarked upon what was in effect a contest with Hardie for the leadership of the movement in 1893 and had failed, and soon in this country the movement would know him no more. A leader of talent, restless and courageous, he had done much for Socialism; but he was no follower. The latter part of his life would be spent in Australia. And in 1896 William Morris died. After the collapse of his Socialist League he had returned to the Federation in 1890, but in his last years his enthusiasm had been spent rather upon the Kelmscott Press than upon Socialism. But he had left the cause he served so well an inspiration and a memory more affectionately cherished than that of any other member of that Federation to which he was in truth so curiously alien in spirit. 'Maybe there shall be no barricades,' wrote Glasier in the *Labour Leader* after Morris's death, 'but if there be, somehow we shall believe that William Morris will meet us there.' A strange epitaph, perhaps, for a poet and artist, but Morris would not have wished it altered.*

* Hardie in *Labour Leader*, June 30, July 21, 1894, July 13, 1895, October 10, 1896, September 11, October 9, December 11 and 25, 1897, May 14, 21, 28, 1898, February 28, 1903. In Diary-Fragment,

II

What were these men and women preaching? What had their Socialism come to mean? An interesting definition is put forward by a writer in the *Westminster Review* for November, 1896. Socialists, he suggests, are 'all who desire to hasten *in other than a natural way* the changes which the advance of time inevitably and naturally brings about in Society and who advocate reforms by revolutionary methods when the process of Nature is too slow to satisfy their wishes.' And this view, compounded of memories of both Hyndmanism and Fabianism, represents, no doubt, the attitude of many at this time who had begun to learn from the Fabians that Socialism was but the liberation of natural tendencies inherent in society and yet had not forgotten the 'revolutionary jargon' of the Federation. But to-day we can distinguish the blending elements more clearly. We have seen that the destined function of the Independent Labour Party was to link together the two vital evolutionary forces of the nineteenth century, the beginning of the rise to power of the working-classes and the wide diffusion of the Collectivist theories which for some decades had been distilling themselves out of the necessities of the new machine civilisation; in a word to unite

Socialist Review, Jan.-March, 1919. In *Pioneer*, May 27, 1911. In *Young Men*. Hardie, quoted in Lowe, 161-2, in Hughes, 141, 146-7. *Clarion*, Nov. 16, 1895, July 30, 1898. Whiteley, 7. MacDonald, 102. Morley, *Gladstone* ii, 346. Hansard, Aug. 10, 1914. *Rochdale Labour News*, June, Oct. 1896. Smith, 2-3. Lowe, *Souvenirs*, 35, 148-151. Stewart, 55-6, 121-2, Lowe, 67, 96, 161, 188. Hughes xi. Smillie, 100. Leatham, 35. Sanders, 26, 39-41. *Glasgow Commonweal*, Vol. I, No. 5, Aug. 1896. *Bolton and District Pioneer*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1895. *Labour Leader*, Sept. 30, 1915 (obituaries of Hardie). *Memoir*, 9, 24, 26, 42. Webb, *Apprenticeship*, 51.

Socialism and the Labour Movement. We have seen further, that, viewed from another angle, in relation, that is, to the Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation, the creed of the new Party was at once more practical and more intuitive than its predecessor's. This growing concentration upon the immediately practical appealed primarily to that element in it which was Labour rather than Socialist. To the average Trade Unionist the new doctrine presented itself at any given moment as some proposed reform which would increase the power, or mitigate the hardships, of the working-class. Yet there exists always even in the most severely practical politician a taste for generalisation, an instinct which turns from the reform to the creed. To the Federation the generalisation had seemed infinitely more important than the particular; the immediate reform mattered little, the Marxian creed was everything. With the Fabians and the Independent Labour Party, however, the particular attained a new importance. Moreover, when they turned from it to speak not of some Socialist reform but of Socialism, they did not mean precisely the same thing. Socialism to the Fabians meant above all a rapid and purposeful extension of that Collectivism by which social legislation was being already so effectually if unintentionally transformed. It meant more than this, no doubt, but it meant this most of all. Social conflict, the emancipation of a class, interested them less than a new recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the State. To them as to the French Physiocrats of the previous century, poverty meant not so much the suffering of the poor as the inefficiency of the State. To the Independent Labour Party at this time, on the other hand, Socialism was above all an aspiration towards economic equality, the struggle

for the emancipation of the working-classes sublimated into the conception of a Co-operative Commonwealth. For its Socialism was not only linked to the Labour Movement but deeply coloured by it. 'I am a Socialist because Socialism means Fraternity founded on Justice, and the fact that in order to secure this it is necessary to transfer land and capital from private to public ownership is a mere incident in the crusade.' The words are Hardie's. Later, in the new century, MacDonald would give the Socialism of the new Party a firmer intellectual basis, deeply coloured by his own scientific studies and by the doctrine of evolution, and in his writings and speeches the teachings of the Fabians as well as the lessons of history itself would be seen to play a significant part. But in these last five years of the nineteenth century it seems true to say that the characteristic message of the new missionaries was an aspiration which was at least as near to a religious revival as to an economic system and that to many thousands of their hearers Socialism, when it did not mean agitation for some particular reform, meant a new and vague, but heartening, faith in the possibility of what had so long seemed impossible, a Society in which the common man should receive his due.

III

1893 had been a year of high hope. Not only had it seen the launching of the Independent Labour Party, but the Trades Union Congress of the same year had actually resolved to establish a special fund to support independent working-class candidates, and, further, by 137 votes to 97, that only those should receive assistance

who accepted the Socialist formula – 'collective ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.' Even Hardie's motion for the establishment through Congress of an independent working-class Party was defeated only by 109 to votes 96. Moreover, the Congress had voted its thanks to Hardie for an amendment to the Address which he had moved in his first Parliament, an amendment in which he sought to censure the Government for introducing no reference to the unemployed into the Queen's speech. On this occasion Hardie had been listened to by a full House, which included Mr. A. J. Balfour 'at his limpest.' That statesman, redolent of the eighteenth century at its best, with his charm, his subtlety, his immense, languid distinction and his deep-rooted and cynical mistrust of all enthusiasm, may have heard the speech with mixed feelings. That it almost completely lacked the arts and graces of which he was so discriminating a judge, that the speaker was not only intellectually greatly his inferior but was consumed by just that almost fanatical enthusiasm which he most condemned – this was no doubt apparent to him at once. But it may have been apparent to him too that none the less something obscurely formidable had reached the floor of the House, that through Hardie was speaking something greater than he. Could enthusiasm be about once more to play its part at Westminster, which had scarcely listened to that note since the last of those earlier Independents, the Puritans, fell silent? A crude, untutored reality this, beside which none the less even his own exquisitely finished personality took on more than a suspicion of the unreal. The voice of the twentieth century addressing the eighteenth? One of the governed appearing unexpectedly to arraign his rulers?

For certainly the Parliaments to which Mr. Balfour was hitherto accustomed had seemed to house no flesh and blood specimen of the common people who are the raw material of politics. These had rather hovered phantom-wise over the debates, disembodied; to be remembered – or forgotten – according to one's predilections. They had not presented themselves and their demands solidly and unescapably within the ancient Chamber itself. For such working-men as had hitherto added themselves on this side or that to the ancient rivalry of the Parties, so deferential, so anxious to strike no discordant note in the familiar game, had certainly not suggested an embodiment of the governed. It was one of these indeed, W. R. (afterwards Sir Randall) Cremer, who, invited by Hardie to support his amendment, had replied that he was 'not disposed to censure the Government for an omission which might be due to inadvertence'. . . . If any reflections of this nature did transiently suggest themselves to Mr. Balfour, he dismissed them, no doubt, with a shrug.

1893 had been a year of high hopes for the Independents, but disappointments were soon to follow. A check, and then an ebb, had become discernible in the hitherto triumphant tide of the 'New' Trade Unionism. The trade boom which had begun in 1889 gave way to the inevitable slump. Membership decreased. Moreover even the newest and most militant of the new Unions began to dispense certain of the friendly benefits which their founders had previously denounced as obstacles to a militant policy. Could they be becoming respectable? All this had its effect upon the Independent Labour Party. Then came the General Election of 1895. The Party put forward twenty-eight candidates. They

received 44,321 votes between them but not one of them was elected and Keir Hardie lost his seat for West Ham. Hyndman made the first of his unsuccessful onslaughts on Burnley and secured 2,498 votes. Stoutly refusing to compromise or conceal a single opinion, and seeming often to delight in antagonising the electorate, he made a courageous and picturesque, but an impossible, candidate. The results of the Election as a whole were officially considered by Tom Mann, the Secretary of the Independents, 'an achievement of much hopefulness.' None the less a sense of discouragement, which Hardie did his best to dispel in the *Labour Leader*, became general, and an added bitterness was the success of John Burns at Battersea, and of J. Havelock Wilson, both of whom by now left no doubt of their hostility to the new movement. Burns, who had once seemed its destined leader, had been gradually transformed by his experience of the London County Council. In the early 'nineties he was still the chief of the new demagogues. 'Office,' he cried with a fine scorn (to the *Idler's* interviewer), 'I am prouder of my present office, Judge Advocate-General of the Poor, than I should be of the Premiership itself. . . . They come to me, I tell you, my dear fellow, because they *know* that I am working for their good and not for my own. The conviction is born in them that I am after neither office nor money and they trust me.' But gradually as the new possibilities of usefulness and distinction disclosed themselves the old, sweeping theories and the laborious agitation began to seem increasingly barren. In Parliament too he had begun to look forward to the same sort of usefulness. A little while and he would be a Liberal Cabinet Minister and Liberal newspapers would be describing him as 'the

voice of the people.' His new admirers contrived to forget his past. 'They (the Labour Party) have become Socialists; he is no more a Socialist than ever he was,' wrote the *Spectator* in 1907. The world was the poorer for this transformation. For although the *Spectator*, in grateful recognition perhaps of his new moderation, spoke of him as 'a born administrator,' in truth the man with the red flag was quenched by Whitehall. But he had been an agitator of genius. Just now it was suspected that among the objections which Burns was developing to the Socialist movement was the fact that the post of leader seemed to be already occupied. Certainly in Parliament, as elsewhere, relations between him and Hardie had been strained. It was of Hardie that he said in Battersea Park after the Election that 'Parliamentary anarchism always meets its fate and unscrupulous demagogy, whether in a Tory or a Labour leader, is soon found out.'

The Labour Electoral Association, whose function had been to return Liberal working-men to Parliament, added its senile voice to this chorus of lamentation. 'Disaster has fallen on us,' it protested, 'not from *without*, but from *within*. The Labour barque has been treacherously piloted upon the rocks by frothy ecstatic dreamers and administrative failures, who seek to ruin and destroy, by spite and spleen, all homogeneity and unity in the ranks of Labour.' At the Trades Union Congress itself the President lent his official thunders to the storm: ' . . . A majority,' he said (of the Independent candidates), 'were nominees of an electoral association rejoicing in the title of the "Independent Labour Party." An impression was widely current that these labour candidates were champions of trade union opinions. When the

Congress would think it worth while to correct that notion it was not for him to say. . . . Whatever good intentions the members (of the new Party) harboured, the outcome of their hopeless electioneering campaign was to undermine some candidates most in sympathy with the demands of those Congresses . . . to convert the term "labour" candidate into a by-word of reproach and mistrust, and finally to unmistakably demonstrate that the worst enemies of the advancement of Labour might be those of their own household.' And he concluded by inquiring sternly who subscribed the funds of the new Party.*

The same complaint, indeed, was to be heard from more sympathetic spectators. 'My bitter complaint,' wrote Canon Scott Holland, 'is that they have wiped out both themselves and all the Labour Party: they have ceased to exist . . . They have annihilated all the sympathetic Radicalism that could mitigate the warring individualism of Property.' Nor was criticism confined to the electoral failure. The Federation, for its part, could find no good word even for the first Socialist Member's three years in Parliament. Hyndman considered that Hardie had 'made a laughing-stock of himself' before the Royal Commission on the Unemployed. 'What should be done in regard to the unemployed has been formulated over and over again,' Hyndman pointed out, and it was scarcely necessary to add that it was he who had formulated it. 'The whole of his answers go to prove to me exclusively that he does not comprehend scientific economics at all.'

None the less, Hardie did not share these misgivings. He had not, maybe, 'thought out a long sequence of

* The speaker himself became a Labour Member of Parliament in 1906.

events': even if he foresaw the triumph of his cause it was not that which gave him courage. But he had 'known what he believed to be the right thing' and once more he had 'gone and done it,' he and the enthusiasts about him. Once again instinct had been a surer guide than calculation. What, after all, would it matter if every workingman Member who was not with them vanished for ever from Westminster? What harm could the annihilation of sympathetic Radicalism do their cause – seeing that, if they had retained a shred of trust in sympathetic Radicalism there would have been no independent Party, and that in their view every one of those who were not with them was against them?

Yet for a time discouragement undoubtedly clouded the movement and for a brief while Socialism ceased to advance. The fusion of the new Party with the Social Democratic Federation was long debated but proved impracticable. The methods and the ideals of the two organisations were not compatible and it was suspected that Hyndman would not long work with a Society he could not dominate. In two articles in the *Labour Leader* in September, 1897, Hardie made the obstacles plain. During this interlude of stagnation the new Party was held together by its enthusiasts: for a while Socialism lived upon its inner resources.

And almost at once a heavy blow was dealt it from another quarter. For in the same year, 1895, the Trades Union Congress accepted three important changes in its constitution, all of which were aimed at the Socialists. The Trades Councils,* which were the especial home of the new ideas, were excluded from future Congresses; their membership, it was alleged, implied 'dual repre-

* See p. 175 *supra*.

sentation' since their constituent branches were already represented each through its own national Union. Again, delegates, unless they were Trade Union officials, were henceforth to be men actually working at their trades. Burns (who was largely responsible for these changes) and Keir Hardie, as well as Broadhurst, would attend no more Congresses. Lastly, voting in future was to be by the 'card vote,' that is the vote of each delegate would count, not one, but a number representing the membership of his Union. By an astute manoeuvre the authors of these changes applied them without submitting them for the approval of the Congress and even the vote in which their action was challenged was taken by the new method. The result was at once apparent. Hardie's Socialist resolutions had been carried by large majorities in 1893 and 1894: in 1895 a similar motion was rejected by 607,000 votes to 186,000.

The industrial world had for some time been uneasily aware of the strange stirrings in the political world with which it was so closely linked. And in 1897 and 1898 two great struggles convulsed industry. In the engineering industry the conflict, which had been some time brewing, began in September, 1897. As is customary, the employers called it a strike, the men a lock-out. It seems however to have been precipitated by the employers who intended (they said) to be 'masters in their own shops.' The engineers failed to make their case completely intelligible to the public. None the less it was widely realised that the full demands of the employers meant that the engineers must abandon collective bargaining. Philanthropists, a number of clergy, Brentano, the German economist, and fifteen Oxford dons publicly supported the men; nearly £120,000 was sub-

scribed, chiefly by Trade Unions. But the employers won. And, as is usually the case, the defeat of the men in industry stung them to new interest and energy in politics. Throughout the struggle Hardie had tirelessly underlined its political lesson.

> 'Who is to govern the nation – worker or employer? Property-owners have all but a monopoly of the Government . . . Governments, whether Liberal or Tory, are composed of three classes – landlords, employers, lawyers. Occasionally a member of some other occupation finds a place in a cabinet, but that is because he can be trusted not to do or say anything to endanger the interests of the great monopolists. Is it any wonder, then, that the forces of the State are either openly on the side of the employers, or, as in the case of Lord Penrhyn, timorously neutral? It is the natural order of things that they should be thus, considering that Tory and Liberal workmen vie with each other in their desire to augment the forces of property owners in Parliament as often as elections provide opportunities. . . .'

This is the Labour Movement undiluted, but he does not forget its complement and before the article ends he is writing

> 'Last of all there is no solution of the Labour problem outside of Socialism. If you say there is, I will be glad to learn what it is. . . . You, the worker, go on week in and week out, toiling and moiling, and adding to the wealth of those who employ you. Then when you wish the smallest extra share of the ever-increasing results of your toil, they use the wealth which your work has created to punish you for your insolence!'

And impersonal arguments could always be poignantly clinched.

> 'Herbert Gladstone goes to Leeds, and opens Liberal clubs and makes speeches, and although thousands of his constituents are in the streets – locked out by Sir James Kitson, the Liberal M.P.– Mr. Gladstone never once refers to the matter.'

How could a hungry and exasperated engineer resist such arguments?

Before the engineers were back at work the South Wales coalfield was paralysed by a grave conflict in which 90,000 miners were involved. The employers called it a strike, the men a lock-out. No act of violence was committed by the men, yet the Government drafted troops into the district, as if to make it clear to the miners that it supported the owners – as if, indeed, to emphasise Hardie's teaching. Hardie went down to take part in the struggle and found a ready hearing for the lessons he drew from it. Huge crowds stood motionless in torrents of rain to listen to him contrasting the sum earned on each ton of coal by the royalty owner and the miner, condemning 'Mabon' the miners' leader for his spinelessness, or picturing 'the good time coming when industrial strife would only be a hateful memory of the past and when poverty of gear and poverty of life would alike have passed from their midst.' Here in South Wales he discovered yet again 'how eagerly the people will drink in the teachings of Socialism, when placed before them in language which they can understand.' The two-fold result of the long struggle, however, differed little from that of the engineers. The men were defeated and the Socialist faith rooted itself firmly amongst them.

Moreover, they had learnt to know Hardie. And gradually on the walls of many a miner's cottage the faded oleographs of Chamberlain or Gladstone, whose tight-lipped glare had long confronted the wedding group or the framed marriage certificate, began to give way to the enlarged photograph of a working-man with a tweed cap and 'the appearance of one who has worked hard and suffered.' Such was the beginning of Hardie's special connection with South Wales, which was to make him Member for Merthyr from 1900 to his death in 1915 and which has left in its villages and valleys a legendary memory cherished with a devotion such as the primitive Church gave to its first martyrs and apostles. And slowly in the Trades Union Congress, where, if anywhere, Hardie's 'Labour Alliance' must be cemented, the Socialists were restoring the majority which had been filched from them in 1895. In 1897 and 1898 there were motions for the establishment of a political fund to make possible 'the election of members pledged to act irrespective of all other political parties.' They were defeated by huge card majorities. A few Unions were accustomed to support their own Members, but to contribute to a common fund for representatives of other Unions as well as their own, and for representatives who were apparently to be professed Socialists, this was a very different matter. In 1899 a similar proposal was again repulsed. The objective however was approached anew and more circuitously at the same Congress. It was proposed that the Parliamentary Committee should be instructed 'to invite the co-operation of all the Co-operative, Socialist, Trade Union and other working-class organisations, to co-operate in convening a special Congress of representatives . . . to devise ways and

means for securing the return of an increased number of Labour Members to the next Parliament.' Judiciously, nothing was said of a political fund. The resolution had been drafted by MacDonald. The debate which ensued was prolonged and heated. A Mr. Ashton, spokesman of the 'old' Unionism, alleged that not one Trade Unionist in ten thousand would interest himself in the matter. Why, then, waste the time of the Congress with it? At length the votes were counted. The motion had been carried by 546,000 to 434,000. It was an equivocal resolution and nobody quite knew what it meant. Soon the delegates were dispersing with but the faintest sense of having assisted at a historic decision. None the less out of this day's work was to come the Labour Party. At last Keir Hardie's Labour Alliance was at hand.*

* *Reports* (T.U.C.), 1895-1899, especially 1895, p. 28, 1897, p. 53, 1899, p. 65. *Times*, Sept. 7, 1893, etc. *Workman's Times*, Feb. 11, 1893. Webb, 420-1. *Labour Annual*, 1896, 37-8. *Labour Leader*, April 13, July 27, 1895. Sept. 4, 11, 1897. June 9, 1898. Humphrey, 137. Paget, 204. Tiltman, 73. *Spectator*, April 6, Aug. 24, 1907.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT ALLIANCE

THE members of the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress, to whom it would normally fall to carry out the resolution of the Congress, were still on the whole Liberals, and little could be hoped for if the matter were left in their hands. Fortunately, however, for the Independents, the Committee was so sceptical of the whole affair, and so accustomed, moreover, to politely ignoring unwelcome instructions from its constituent body, that it proved comparatively easy to arrange that a special committee should be appointed for this particular purpose. What was more, it was provided that the committee was to contain only four members of the Parliamentary Committee with two each from the three Socialist societies. This was one of those fortunate and anonymous transactions behind scenes which make possible great public events. For not only were two of the four representatives even of the Parliamentary Committee Socialists and a third a Fabian Radical,* but among the other six, who were, naturally, all convinced Socialists, were Hardie, MacDonald, and Bernard Shaw.† It may be assumed that the two last dominated the discussions which ensued. Hardie, the prophet-agitator, was the acknowledged

* Will Thorne (a member of the Federation), Richard Bell (who had Socialist leanings at this time) and W. C. Steadman (Fabian Radical).

† As well as E. R. Pease and Harry Quelch.

chief, and of that which would soon be gathered he had been the chief sower. But his primacy lay outside the council-chamber. This was an occasion less for intuition than for 'thinking out a long sequence of events.' The far-sighted plans which were now to be framed were chiefly the work of MacDonald, assisted by scintillations from Shaw. For Shaw, who had always had a 'knack of drafting things,' had already shown, in his *Plan of Campaign for Labour* of 1894, an uncommon prescience both of the problems now arising and of the tactics which would solve them. And MacDonald was now standing upon the threshold of his true life's work. His was to be the directing intelligence of the new Party. He had played his sufficient part thus far in the van of the agitation, and had already, as we have seen, done his best to teach the agitators that they must be politicians too: but now the dimensions which the new Party was about to assume were to bring it seriously within the orbit of Parliament, and he would be a Parliamentarian of genius. Already he scented the wider battlefield from afar and addressed himself to this first obstacle with a kind of restrained passion.

A series of eight resolutions was drafted,* calculated, without alarming the Unions, to inaugurate 'a distinct Labour group in Parliament, who should have their own Whips and agree upon their policy.' The group was to be 'sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour movement.' It was to co-operate with any party 'engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour.' Its financial basis, and its relation to the Trades Union Congress were suggested. And nothing whatever was said about Socialism. Indeed, the method of voting

* A fuller epitome will be found in Beer ii 318, 319.

proposed for the annual conferences of the new Labour Representation Committee* was closely modelled upon that introduced into the Trades Union Congress, to the discomfiture of the Socialists, in 1895. So anxious were the Socialists, who were now laying their plans to build the Socialist movement firm at last upon organised Trade Unionism, to reassure their prospective allies. At Bradford in 1893 a gathering of Socialists had launched a Party whose object was to popularise Socialism but which they were careful not to call Socialist. After six years of ceaseless effort to diffuse Socialist ideas among Trade Unionists the time seemed ripe for cementing a formal alliance with the Trade Unions. But now, as they broke wider ground, even more than in 1893 did the need of caution impress itself upon them. They would not invite the Unions to declare themselves Socialist. They would invite them only to form an independent Labour Party in Parliament. And like the men of 1893, the men of 1900 would be content with a title less formidable even than their aims. The men of 1893, whose object was to spread Socialism, had called themselves an Independent Labour Party. The men of 1900, whose object was to create an independent Labour Party, called themselves a Labour Representation Committee.

Exactly similar tactics were employed by a Scottish Labour Conference which was held just before the crucial settlement in London on January 6th, 1900, in the Free Gardeners' Hall in Edinburgh. Robert Smillie was in the chair; Keir Hardie, Bruce Glasier, Joseph Burgess

* The term 'Labour Representation Committee' was used both of the actual executive committee (of 12) appointed at the first conference, and also of the whole body of affiliated Trade Unions and Socialist societies. In this latter sense the more accurate term 'Labour Party' was also in use from the first, but did not become official until 1906.

and other Socialists were the moving spirits. The Conference agreed upon the necessity of 'direct independent working-class representation,' and declined, by a large majority, to strike out the critical word 'independent.' But it showed itself equally determined not to declare as its object 'the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.'

The resolutions for the London Conference were drafted, the plans laid. The Conference met in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, at the turn of the century, on February 27th and 28th, 1900. Its significance was not recognised by the public. The *Times*, on March 1st, gave it less than a quarter of a column. Nine times as much space was accorded to the report of a Shire Horse Show. (The same issue of the *Times* contained a poem by Swinburne entitled 'The Turning of the Tide,' which commenced :

'Storm strong with all the bitter heart of hate
Smote England, now nineteen dark years ago.'

The poem, however, despite the coincidence of its title and of this reference to the year of the birth of the Social Democratic Federation, dealt with South Africa.) The chairman of the Conference was W. C. Steadman; an admirable choice, for Steadman was a member of the highly official Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress and a Radical, but he was also a Fabian. He was thus placed as exactly as possible upon the border line of opinion between the Labourites of the last century and the Socialists of the new. Who should more suitably preside over the congress which was now to unite the two? His opening speech struck the required note of cautious advance. It prepared the delegates for a step

forward without alarming them by suggesting that they were about to be asked to identify themselves with the men whom not five years back the President of the Trades Union Congress had charged with 'converting the term "labour" candidate into a by-word of reproach and mistrust.' Keir Hardie, alert in the audience and well aware that his life's work was at stake, knew that the Conference had opened well.

But there were rocks ahead, and Hardie and MacDonald knew that once more a middle course must be steered. Was not John Burns there, for one? Not much attention was paid to him, it is true. No longer was he the centre of disturbance, as once at that Trades Union Congress of 1890 which passed the 'Socialist resolutions'; for then he had been riding the very crest of the advancing wave of the new movement, whereas by now he was well astern, steering, it was suspected, for the comparatively placid waters of Liberalism. Yet might he not put in a word for Liberal-Labourism – and prove not to have lost all his old thunder? And failing Burns, there were Liberal spokesmen in plenty in the hall. Moreover, there sat Quelch, unswervingly faithful to Hyndman, to Marx and to the class war, with James Macdonald*, also of the Federation, eager to plead for Marxism and class consciousness. Hyndman himself had considered that, not being a working-man, he was not qualified to attend, but the voice of Hyndman might be expected to speak through the lips of any delegate from his Federation.

* Long Secretary of the London Trades Council. Not of course to be confused with James Ramsay MacDonald, although Hyndman (*Reminiscences* 268-270) professed to believe that in electing the latter first Secretary of the L.R.C. the delegates had in fact made this confusion. A sinister manoeuvre, he calls it.

Little wonder that Hardie and MacDonald sat anxiously alert.

The discussion which followed had indeed its critical moments. There was the proposal that outside a selected programme members should be free to follow their own political inclinations, being merely required to be 'sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour movement.' This meant in effect that the Committee should be but a new Labour Electoral Association and return a handful of working-class Liberals. This proposal was provoked by the resolution, extreme in the opposite sense and inevitably put forward by the delegates of the Federation, to demand that the new Party should be 'based upon the recognition of the class war' and should 'have for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.' Once more the two roads lay open. But this was the Federation's last chance. Quelch and James Macdonald supported their motion in speeches of which Hyndman afterwards warmly approved and which accurately reflected his opinions and indeed much of his phraseology. They told the Conference that working-men had been long enough 'tools of the despoilers in their political sham-fights' and that Socialism was the only possible basis for a Party which desired to emancipate the working-class. In brief, they denounced what Hyndman called the 'disgusting addiction of modern Englishmen and Scotsmen to compromise – which of course is only an euphemism for the surrender of the weaker side.' It pleased Hyndman afterwards to recall that their speeches were warmly applauded. Sexton opposed their resolution. 'Very magnificent, very heroic,' he observed, 'but not war;' and the bitterest things that Hyndman had said

of the vice of compromise seemed justified when he added that he would vote for such a resolution in any other place, but not then or there.

When it came to voting, the main amendment, moved by the watchful Hardie, and committing the Conference only to that 'distinct Labour group in Parliament, who should have their own Whips and agree upon their policy . . .' was carried by a large majority. Burns had had his say against it. Already for four or five years past, he said scornfully, there had been a district Labour group in Parliament. 'They had not called themselves independent, they had not worn Trilby hats and red ties, but they had done the work.' No doubt they did not always vote together. Three out of the five of them would be voting against the Miners' Eight Hours' Bill, but how could the three be excluded? The lion roared as of old, but his voice spread no terrors as it had in 1890: indeed when he cried oratorically, 'I want to know where we are now' an irreverent voice replied 'The Memorial Hall.' And so there was to be an independent Party, pledged to obey group discipline, not Liberal, yet not openly Socialist, and the nearest approach to a Socialist declaration would be contained in the remarkable resolution moved by James Sexton:

> 'that this Conference . . . while it deprecates the introduction of mere party politics into the trade union movement . . . urges upon trade unionists the necessity of combining on an independent platform for the following purposes: (1) The defence of the legal right of combination, (2) the passing of such laws as will put an end to a system under which the producer of wealth has to bear an

enormous burden in the shape of rent and profits which go to maintain large classes of non-producers.'

Which, however, it will be noted, is in effect to say 'we deprecate the formal adoption of Socialist politics by Trade Unionists, yet urge Trade Unionists to become Socialists.' The Conference accepted this pregnant resolution decisively. Had not Socialists listened for decades past to bitter denunciations of Socialism from politicians who steadily filled the Statute-book with Socialist measures; had they not themselves, without labelling it Socialist, made the Independent Labour Party into a highly-tempered spear-head of the Socialist advance? And now, with the aid of the same judicious reticence, they possessed themselves of forces which would in due course enable them to challenge the ancient Parties themselves. Yet who, reading Sexton's resolution with Hardie's, can fail to see that, taken together, the two do in effect, despite their framers' characteristic British reluctance to commit themselves to a clear-cut logical position, envisage the same goal as the Federation's? Moreover, the Socialist intention of the new Party was made clear in another way. In this first year the number of Trade Unionists affiliated to it through their Trade Societies would be just over 350,000. It is true that, since the decision to affiliate, like the decision to strike, lay with a majority, by no means all these were necessarily in sympathy with it: a considerable minority, no doubt, were even active supporters of one or other of the ancient Parties. None the less, on any computation, the Trade Unionists outnumbered the members of the three Socialist Societies, of whom there were less than 25,000, by more than ten to one. Yet of the twelve

members of the Executive Committee it was agreed that five should come from the Socialist Societies. Twelve Trade Unionists to six Socialists had been proposed, and the suggestion of five Socialists to seven Trade Unionists had been met with ominous grumbles which Hardie adroitly, if not altogether logically, countered with the reminder that the smaller the committee the cheaper and the more efficient. And, surprisingly, this view carried the day by forty-four voices to thirty-eight, and on a card vote being challenged, by 331,000 to 161,000. It was indeed a fortunate day. And to crown it, after two other candidates proposed for the Secretaryship had withdrawn, the name of James Ramsay MacDonald was put forward and accepted unanimously. Who better could blend the prophetic enthusiasm of the pioneers with the novel discretions imposed upon a great Party?

There were dangers, no doubt, in the alliance. Would the great mass of Labourism gradually outgrow and stifle its inner core of Socialism? Or would Socialism 'leaven the whole lump,' as Hardie, for one, expected? ('Everything else will follow,' he wrote.) And there were other destructive possibilities, less clearly foreseen at the time. Supposing Socialism, which 'is concerned with the industrial well-being of the whole community and not merely of those working-men who are Trade Unionists,' should give place to a Labourism which was only 'class legislation in the interests of Labour?' A few years later this danger was presenting itself forcibly to Stewart Headlam. 'Labourism . . . is an unnecessary challenge to the middle classes, who stand to gain largely by Socialism,' he wrote, 'but who for the most part do not know this.' Labourism, he thought, was driving the middle classes 'into the camp of the monopolist.' Why

should Labourists demand special arrangements for housing carpenters and not for housing curates? Would not a Socialist state be equally tender of both? Undoubtedly the danger was there, but undoubtedly the alliance – to which indeed there existed no practical alternative – was worth more, much more, than its price. And in the event though 'everything else,' maybe, did not follow, much more followed than in 1900 the pessimists allowed to be possible.

Thus the two great forces which had dominated the second half of the nineteenth century, the slow emancipation of the working-classes and the steady diffusion of collectivist principles, had at last been formally linked. What matter if the great alliance were named Labour, after the first, or Socialist, after the second? As the old century ended, its two most potent and expansive political forces were uniting to form a third, which would be more powerful than either. Sooner or later in the new century the dreams of the countless forgotten devotees must come true. The pioneering days were over. A new era had begun.*

* *Report*, L.R.C. *passim*. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, 259-271. Stewart, 162-165. Humphrey, 144*f*. *Times*, March 1, 1900. *Labour Leader*, Aug. 17, 1901. Headlam, 72-4.

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[*Note.* Journals and pamphlets are entered in *italics.*]

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A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1832.	First Reform Act.
1832, 3.	Owenite revolutionary Trade Unionism.
1836-48.	Chartism.
1847.	First great Factory Act.
1848-54.	Christian Socialism.
1850.	*Alton Locke.* By Charles Kingsley.
1860.	*Unto This Last.* By John Ruskin.
1862.	*Munera Pulveris.* By John Ruskin.
1866.	Gunpowder explosion in Sheffield.
1867-9.	Royal Commission on Trade Unions.
1871.	Criminal Law Amendment Act.
1874.	Two 'Labour' Candidates returned.
1877.	Guild of St. Matthew founded.
1879.	*Progress and Poverty.* By Henry George.
1881.	(Jan.) Hyndman's interview with Disraeli. (June 8th) Democratic Federation founded. *England for All.* By H. M. Hyndman.
1882.	Henry George lectures in Great Britain.
1883.	(Jan. 17th) William Morris joins the Democratic Federation. *Christian Socialist* first published. (Oct. 24th) Thomas Davidson's paper on The New Life.
1884.	(Jan. 4th) Foundation of Fabian Society. (Jan. 19th) First issue of *Justice.*

(April) Debate between Bradlaugh and Hyndman.

(Aug. 4th) The Democratic Federation becomes the Social Democratic Federation.

(Dec.) Secession of William Morris and others from the S.D.F. and foundation of the Socialist League.

1885. J. R. MacDonald in the Bristol Branch of the S.D.F.

(Sept.–Oct.) 'Free Speech' disturbances in Dod Street, Limehouse.

(Nov.–Dec.) General Election. Two S.D.F. candidates financed by 'Tory gold.'

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(Feb. 8th) 'West end riots.'

(Feb. 21st) Great Hyde Park Meeting.

(Feb. 28th) Trial of Hyndman, Burns, Champion and Williams begun.

1887. (Nov. 13th) 'Bloody Sunday.'

(Nov. 20th) Alfred Linnell killed after meeting in Hyde Park.

Keir Hardie founds *The Miner*.

1888. Strike of lucifer makers.

Keir Hardie contests Mid-Lanark.

(Aug. 25th) Scottish Labour Party formed.

1889. (March 31st) Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union founded by Will Thorne and others.

(Aug. 14th–Sept. 19th) Great Dock Strike.

(Sept.) Dundee Trades Union Congress. Attack on Broadhurst fails.

1890. (May 4th) First May-day celebration.

Fabian Essays published.

(Sept.) Trades Union Congress passes resolutions in favour of Eight Hours' Day, etc.

1891. *Clarion* founded.

1892. Keir Hardie returned for S.W. Ham.

1893. (Jan. 13th) Independent Labour Party founded at Bradford.

1894. *Merrie England* published.

1895. J. R. MacDonald joins the I.L.P.

General Election. All I.L.P. candidates defeated.

(Sept.) Trades Union Congress changes its constitution.

1896. Death of William Morris.

1899. Trades Union Congress resolves to convene a Congress with a view to increased Labour representation.

1900. (Feb. 27th, 28th) Labour Representation Committee founded.

INDEX OF PROPER NAMES

(*Note.* Authors of works referred to in the bibliographical footnotes are not included.)