

# CONSCRIPTION AND CONSCIENCE

A HISTORY 1916—1919

BY

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"The Faith of a Quaker"*



LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN, LTD.  
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C. 1

*First published in 1922*

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**" I shall only consider the best means of making the path of that class  
a very hard one."**

**MR. D. LLOYD GEORGE,  
House of Commons, July 26, 1916.**

**" I ask no man to scrap his principles."**

**MR. D. LLOYD GEORGE,  
Manchester, September 13, 1918.**

**DEDICATED**  
**WITH AFFECTIONATE REVERENCE**  
**TO THE**  
**YOUNG MEN**

**WHO IN THE DARK DAYS OF THE WAR KEPT THE FAITH**  
**AND STOOD BY THEIR COUNTRY AND MANKIND**  
**WITH A COURAGE THAT DID NOT FAIL.**

*Composed by the Chartist Leader, Ernest Jones, when confined in a solitary cell, on bread and water, without books or writing materials, May 1849.*

Troublesome fancies beset me  
Sometimes as I sit in my cell,  
That comrades and friends may forget me,  
And foes may remember too well.

That plans which I thought well digested  
May prove to be bubbles of air;  
And hopes, when they come to be tested,  
May turn to the seed of despair.

But tho' I may doubt all beside me,  
And anchor and cable may part,  
Whatever—whatever betide me,  
Forbid me to doubt my own heart!

For sickness may wreck a brave spirit,  
And time wear the brain to a shade;  
And dastardly age disinherits  
Creations that manhood has made.

But God! let me ne'er cease to cherish  
The truths I so fondly have held,  
Far sooner, at once let me perish,  
Ere firmness and courage are quelled.

Tho' my head in the dust may be lying,  
And bad men exult o'er my fall,  
I shall smile at them—smile at them, dying;  
The Right is the Right after all.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

To write with complete accuracy recent history concerning matters personally known to hundreds of accessible people, and sometimes even matters within my own cognizance, has been found more difficult than might be thought. Two eyewitnesses' account of the same event do not always agree. It must be much easier to make a narrative of events long gone by, concerning which there are few or no first-hand authorities. I cannot hope to have made no mistakes, in spite of every effort to be correct, and in spite of very great help given to me by many friends. The whole book has been carefully read by Clifford Allen, A. Fenner Brockway, Hubert W. Peet, Miss Edith M. Ellis, and Miss Joan M. Fry; and various chapters have been read by Miss Catherine Marshall, Howard C. Marten, and A. Barratt Brown. To their assistance the book owes—besides many minor corrections—some general advice of high value. Ernest E. Hunter in particular has contributed definite portions of that part of the narrative which concerns the inner working of the N.C.F. organization. To all these helpers I am deeply grateful.

It will be seen that the Preface does not concern the history, but is a statement of future policy should conscription ever be imposed again. Writing here as a mere narrator, I have not felt it necessary to concern myself—or to make up my mind—with regard to a situation which we hope, by the united efforts of us all, to make so remote that I shall no longer be an actor in it.

J. W. G.

DALTON HALL,  
MANCHESTER,  
*December 1921.*

# PREFACE

BY

CLIFFORD ALLEN

*Chairman of the No-Conscription Fellowship*

THIS book was undertaken by Principal Graham at the request of the committees which represented conscientious objectors to conscription in Great Britain during the recent war. Mr. Graham is well qualified to deal with the history of that struggle. The part he played is known to all who worked for peace in those stormy days. As Chairman of the Friends' Peace Committee and of committees in the North which organized relief for the resisters, and as an untiring lecturer and speaker in favour of peace, he bore his full share of opprobrium: as a Quaker chaplain his name will live in the memory of many prisoners who looked for his coming and his inspiration week by week in their prison cells. The writing of such a book has been no easy task, since few movements have included members holding such varying opinions or advocating such a multitude of policies. It cannot therefore be expected that any history of the incidents here described will meet with universal approval, but there can be no doubt that the author has compiled a book of the greatest value and of strict impartiality, and has earned the gratitude of all who were concerned with the events under review.

Quite rightly, Mr. Graham has devoted much attention to describing the opinions of those whose resistance was due to religious conviction; the Preface therefore deals with the social and political significance of the struggle. It is chiefly by the expression of religious impulses through political effort that we may hope to change men's hearts

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and practice. This seemed to me to demand the writing of a Preface which was more concerned with the problems of the future than with past achievements, and thus I have sought to maintain the tradition of the Non-Conscription Fellowship, which always attempted to give immediate, effective and practical form to the spiritual ideas which motivated the resistance. Moreover, it is of greater value—and indeed more seemly—that those of us who took a direct part in the struggle should devote our thoughts to foreseeing and preparing for future needs rather than to dwelling on the work we have accomplished. For these reasons the Preface is what it is.

The need for a permanent record of this story is two-fold. It is desirable that the experience of the last six years should be available for reference in the event of a similar resistance becoming necessary in the future, and it is important that material should be provided for historians to decide the place of these events in the history of the growth of social liberty or the struggle for international peace.

Many people take it for granted that the end of the war implies the end of compulsory military service. They do not seem aware of the danger that an age, which believes itself to favour democratic systems of government, may falsely apply the argument of equality in service to its military organization. Nor must it be assumed that this danger will be dispelled by the advent of Labour to power. During my visit to Bolshevik Russia, I observed compulsion being applied not only in military but also in industrial affairs, and it is probable that a Labour Government in Britain, far from rejecting conscription as a matter of course, may insist that some form of compulsory military service is the only fair and democratic method of carrying out the defence of a Socialist Commonwealth. Already, even while the Labour Party is in opposition, some of its advisers are recommending this system in the belief that a professional army is a capitalist weapon, too easily exploited against Labour, more especially in these days of modern engines of warfare. Notwithstanding the manipulation of conscript armies in France, British Labour may be too readily persuaded to favour universal service for reasons



of temporary strategy in its struggle with Capitalism, and to overlook or deny the far more important moral and social issues involved in the application of compulsion for military purposes.

Attention ought therefore to be devoted to the experience recorded in these pages; but at the same time I think we should not exaggerate the value of resistance to conscription, judged as a method of spreading Pacifist or Socialist opinions. Those of us who advocate international peace and disarmament, or desire social and economic changes, would not in the ordinary course of events choose resistance to the law as the best means of promoting those objects. But on this occasion the method was not of our choosing. We could not help ourselves. By reason of sex and age we chanced to find ourselves confronted by certain demands on the part of the State, and were compelled to consider our reply with a degree of anxiety and care that may seem unnecessary to those who have not actually been potential conscripts. Since we could not avoid it, we were bound to make the best use we could of the situation that was forced upon us, and to give thought and time to problems of machinery and strategy. None the less it may be doubted whether those are the best servants of the Pacifist or Socialist Movements who are too zealous in considering resistance to conscription—with its attendant unhappy persecution—as the most successful way of drawing attention to their opinions. On the contrary, it is only in so far as persecution is not sought for, and yet unflinchingly endured, that respect will be paid to the persecuted cause. I should regret if it were supposed that the attention and care we devoted to this problem were due to a distorted view of the excellence of law-breaking as a method of propaganda. It would be equally regrettable, however, if we had esteemed it as of so little importance as to have accepted the first opportunity for compromise. Whether it was good or bad as propaganda was not really relevant; we acted as we did because we had to do so.

The probability of future resistance will naturally lead us to examine the history of our experience with a view to discovering what developments or modification of past

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policies may be expedient. We have therefore to enquire as to what is the most notable characteristic of the struggle here recorded. The answer seems unmistakable. Every page reveals that, whereas in its early stages the resistance was prompted by an individual sense of the rightness or wrongness of particular services imposed by the Military Service Acts, ultimately the main struggle centred round those men who declined to have anything whatever to do with any obligation or condition originating in conscription. It had hitherto been supposed that resistance to compulsory military service arose from religious opinions about bearing arms, but, as the workings of a Conscription Act revealed themselves, the group of resisters holding such opinions came to realize that the overthrow of conscription as a system, rather than the refusal of a particular service it imposed, must be their contribution to the wider struggle against warfare. They then worked whole-heartedly in co-operation with other resisters who opposed conscription not so much for pacifist reasons as because it was an illegitimate exercise of State power. This last opinion was due to a belief that the State would never give proper regard to the worth and happiness of its citizens in time of peace, so long as it thought itself entitled to force them to die and kill against their will in time of war.

Thus many objectors—though by no means agreed on the arguments that originally led them to resist—ultimately united in declining to examine the nature of the services and concessions offered to them, and instead centred their attention upon the overthrow of conscription itself. Consequently the protest can be rightly claimed as a great effort of citizenship, the object of which was service to the community through the defeat of an evil system. In other words, the struggle ranked itself with many of the great rebel movements in history. Technically unconstitutional perhaps, but far less so than those which secured Magna Charta or frustrated the claims of the Stuarts or drove James II from the throne. Henceforth the outlaw conscientious objector, rejecting every compromise which might have lessened his personal suffering, claimed that his rebellion was an act of citizenship.

The conclusion to be drawn from this experience is clear. Any resistance that may be called for in the future should be conducted from the outset as a direct struggle with the whole system of conscription, and must be organized upon the widest possible basis. Those who resist, as before, because their religion bids them stand always for peace and reject war, will realize that they should not rigidly confine their co-operation to those whose opposition to conscription arises from extreme pacifist opinions. Provided they endorse the methods employed, they should co-operate with all resisters whose sincerity is proved by willingness to suffer for their opinions. Such objectors may be non-pacifist Irishmen, believing in freedom of choice for their subject nation, or Trade Unionists, foreseeing the development of military into industrial conscription, or soldiers willing to fight for Belgium but unwilling to fight in a capitalist war against Russia, or in bygone days they might have been Americans in the Southern States unwilling to fight to enforce slavery. Whatever be their views on these matters, they will prefer to suffer penalties rather than be compelled to do what they consider wrong. If we must retain the term a "conscientious objector," it should mean that a man proves himself to be such rather by his act of resistance than by holding any particular creed about war. If he is willing to suffer for his belief, he is a conscientious objector.

However great may be the difficulties that must confront those responsible for the conduct of so wide a movement, I am confident that at any rate the experiment is the natural outcome of past experience, and should be undertaken with faith, tolerance and skill. Warnings as to its impracticability have a curious resemblance to those uttered to us six years ago, when the first limited resistance was decided upon.

Opposition conducted on these lines will make it impossible for any Government to solve the problem as heretofore by administrative schemes. You can only work a Tribunal system if the Tribunals have to deal with applicants who can be examined and sorted, rejected and exempted, according to their opinions on Pacifism and warfare. They are unworkable, if they are faced by a mere bald

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assertion that the applicant entirely denies the right of the State even to introduce conscription, and by a refusal to acquiesce in any of its provisions. Nor can you then settle the problem of the resister by offering him various civil alternatives to military service, for he will meet this offer each time by a complete denial of the right of the State to impose military service or any of its alternatives under conscription.

Under such circumstances either you must exempt him on the simple ground that he asserts that he objects to conscription—in which case you seem to imperil the very structure of your system by opening the door of exemption too widely—or you must persecute him more vigorously than ever and break his resistance. This latter is a questionable method, because the resister has already proved himself unmoved by persecution, and because it is likely that a more intense persecution of a very much larger number of opponents may arouse such hostility as to endanger the system it is meant to preserve.

It may seem that I have so far devoted too much attention to questions of strategy. I claim that such a careful examination is due solely to an intense desire that we should not betray the things of the spirit through carelessness about the practical form of their expression. But not one amongst us can look back upon those years of effort and suffering without realizing how vainly we should have laid our ingenious plans, and how short-lived would have been our endurance, had we not been sustained by the larger hope that the world would gain if we remained faithful. We dared to call our service citizenship, and were glad when men failed to distinguish between our religious and political beliefs.

The attempt to overthrow conscription by so direct a challenge will almost certainly find support in the first instance amongst British-speaking peoples, but I have little doubt that, if it be conducted on the lines I am here advocating, it will quickly repeat itself in other countries. I believe this, because a challenge of such a kind originates in that attitude to the State and in those ideas of social change which are likely to prompt all progressive movements during the next hundred years.

Indeed, it cannot be questioned that the adoption of such a thoroughgoing negative policy of resistance, with the various consequences that may follow, must depend for its success and its chance of influencing public opinion upon the extent to which it is founded upon a constructive social philosophy. It is therefore important not only that we should examine probable new methods of resistance, but equally that we should measure the value of the ideas that prompt such resistance. To do this effectively in the space of a preface is difficult: a short summary must therefore suffice, and for the moment I must be forgiven if I seem to deal with arguments quite irrelevant to the subject under discussion. To demonstrate the importance of these opinions I must make a short digression, the purpose of which will be quickly apparent.

It will be generally agreed that men employ to-day a new criterion for deciding the value of the many schemes of social change suggested by political parties or religious bodies. We do not examine these proposals solely with a view to their effect upon hours and wages, though these considerations are undoubtedly important. We begin to see that efforts of such a limited character would not effect any very fundamental change in the structure of society. Socialists, at any rate, are increasingly anxious to discover programmes which may alleviate present distress, but also lead directly to a complete change in the status of the worker. The kind of questions to which answers are now sought are, How can we discover a way of conducting society and industry which will change the spiritual relationship of men to each other? Must there always be "masters and men": must industry always be conducted by means of employers who think only of private gain, and employed who can only look upon their daily work as a method of procuring wages, since they are denied all part in the development of their trade or craft? Must obedience always be rendered to those who are self-appointed to control industrial life, and who retain their position by virtue of wealth, class or less reputable means? Could there not be industrial democracy as well as political democracy? Is it not desirable that all men and women should be

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conscious that they bear some responsibility in their daily work? Cannot free play be given to initiative? Is not human personality more important than conditions have hitherto permitted, and, if so, ought we to tolerate either the slavery of poverty or the slavery of the wage-earner whose interest in his work is limited to the wage he extracts from it?

We are becoming aware of a conception of society in which industries might be organized and developed by all those engaged in them as a form of service to the community. It is indisputable that men increasingly wish to order their lives in such a way that the dignity and worth of the individual worker shall not be utterly disregarded or his personality ignored. We now wish to abolish poverty, not so much because it causes suffering as because it is a denial of human dignity, and hinders the growth of man's free spirit. Incidentally we are also beginning to see that it is only by such changes that we shall discover a new road to commercial efficiency and prosperity out of the strife and loss of the present social war.

Labour is now as anxious that men should be responsible free citizens as that they should be granted minimum conditions of life and comfort.

It is at this point that the conscientious objector takes up the thread of the argument. He realizes that it is one and the same social philosophy which has built the wretched structure of poverty and wage-slavery in time of peace, and demands the conscription of men's lives in time of war. It is one and the same philosophy which denies to the individual the right to be asked his opinion in industrial affairs or the right to be consulted upon the terrible responsibility of killing his neighbour or giving his own life. Make him work, make him kill, make him die, but don't make him important. Is it likely that we shall easily secure minimum conditions of livelihood if we cannot secure the minimum of life itself? "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are *life*, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to *secure* these rights, governments are instituted among

men. . . ." So ran the quaint old American Declaration of Independence. It is the new vision of what men's status and dignity should be in the daily life of peace that leads the conscientious objector, for whom I am now speaking, to stake everything on his demand that Governments shall recognize the sanctity of human personality by "securing the right of life" at all times, even in war, and even if the life of the State itself is in jeopardy.

This last assertion involves a complete reversal of the view of the State that is generally adopted. But fortunately this challenge to the place and function of the State is not confined to the objector. The conception of the all-powerful State is everywhere in question. Hitherto it has been the most fundamental and elementary right of the State to call upon all citizens to give their lives in its defence: the individual life was not acknowledged as a right to be "secured": on the contrary, it was worthless compared with that of the State. It is easy to see how such a view fitted in with a similar estimate of the worthlessness of life, when capitalist mastery and capitalist poverty needed to be sustained. All this is now challenged. The issue of life and death must be deemed *ultra vires* when we determine the power of the State, for rather is it the business of the State to "secure" the "unalienable right" of life. And we insist upon this right, because the recognition of men's worth in time of peace depends upon it. As "Æ" has written: "... if men think lightly of death, they will think lightly of life."

I venture to emphasize this last statement, because though I realize that this argument has a more direct application to capitalist society, it is not without its relevance to a Socialist Commonwealth. Poverty perhaps will be absent, but will men necessarily be free? From what I have seen in Russia, with its military and industrial conscription, I am led to doubt whether they will be so, unless the validity of this claim on behalf of the individual as against the State is first conceded. Therefore it is that I dread lest these fundamental ideas should be overlooked when British Labour is advised to adopt conscription for reasons of temporary strategy against Capitalism.

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Do we, then, propose to attempt a final or absolute definition of the rights of the State? On the contrary: the only sane course is a constant revision of its power by the gradual denial to it of some rights and the granting of others. Of course it is to be expected that on each occasion when it is challenged, the State, which derives its power from the will of the majority, will make precisely the same claim to divine right as did the State, which took the form of monarchy under the Stuarts. And each time it will seek to sustain itself by parading the bogey of anarchy if that divine right be questioned.\* But the resister will not flinch from challenging that claim, if he is confident that his challenge originates, not merely in a passionate love of liberty, but equally in a constructive social philosophy of the kind I have tried to describe. He will act the more confidently because he will know that he denies this right to the State for no vain reason. He will hope that by this means he may help in creating a new statecraft, which will bend its effort towards rebuilding a society whose citizens will be no longer regarded as materials for the enrichment of the prosperous few or the exalting of the State. He would only attribute greatness to that nation whose citizens can rightly claim creative service from each other in return for the freedom they have been accorded.

It is in this redefining of the function of the State, with the social reorganization involved, that the Socialist objector finds unity with the religious pacifist. Amongst the multitude of causes that lead to war there always figures this exaltation of the State as an entity, distinct from its citizens, and claiming the right to extend its grandeur at the expense of its individual members. Conscription is the system which crystallizes that philosophy. Men forget that the State is only the "political machinery of government," representing the power of whichever class is dominant in the community. The philosophy of the conscriptionist has helped to delude them into believing that history must always record the eternal rise and fall of powerful States, contesting with each other for safety, power and glory, at the cost of the life-blood of their members. It is not

\* See Harold J. Laski, "Authority in the Modern State."



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for citizens such as these to concern themselves with the causes or the policies that lead to war: sufficient that they should rejoice in the privilege of dying for their respective States.

The resister desires a new internationalism, by which States are conceived of less as embodiments of power and more as instruments of social administration. It should be the business of States to co-ordinate the free service of their citizens, and to compete in rivalry as to which can make the finest contribution to the stock of the world's happiness. In such a contest between the nations, each would draw upon the special genius and wealth peculiar to its race and nationality.

The pages that follow depict a struggle for these objects. It was carried on by the resisters far too often in a spirit of half-arrogant pride, not far removed from that militarism they sought to overthrow. Of our friends, I would only ask that they would let their imagination help them to understand the strained and anxious psychology of young men—potential conscripts—aggressively on their defence in a world of enemies. Of our fellow-countrymen who once hated us, I would only beg that they will believe us when we say we acted as we did because we loved our country.

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# CONSCRIPTION AND CONSCIENCE

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

1. To appreciate the story in this book the reader must transport himself from the weary disillusionment of 1921 to the war-eager days of seven years ago. By this time Europe knows alike its sufferings and its reward. There is no military enthusiasm in the world to-day. But the young resister under the first Conscription Act did not breathe this atmosphere of disillusionment.

In 1916 the nation still believed in the noble idealism of the war. Brave young men filled our Army till it was counted by millions; hundreds of thousands had already died. The need for victory was the deepest emotion of the people. Nothing had yet come in to blur the glory of the ideal. Lonely young men here and there who would not enter the Army had to stand against the conviction and the passion of a united nation.

2. The conscientious objectors knew nothing of all that was to come. They seemed to hold aloof from the hard and dangerous work of defending their country, as defending it was then understood. The families of the soldiers who had died very naturally felt this concerning them. The protesters were called poltroons, and many a misgiving must have crossed their own minds in their isolation. Most of the bravest and best of their fellows had volunteered for the greatest of crusades. The Derby recruiting scheme had worked up an enthusiasm and a public pressure which drove before it the available men from factories and offices.

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Most of the clergy were preaching up the war as the cause of the Lord against the mighty.

The young conscript had to have faith strong enough to see beyond the public feeling of the time, and to follow his faith into practice, when he seemed to most people to be merely a shirker in doing so. The women he knew cut his acquaintance. His mother and his brothers often jeered at him at home. He was chosen by his employer to be dispensed with, and so left open to be punished for his refusal to serve, without the business exemption he might otherwise have had.

This was a test for the hardest kind of courage, in men not sustained by habits of military discipline, not side by side with equally brave fellows in the trenches, not drilled into mechanical obedience, not honoured by everybody, at any rate in words and at the moment. These young men had nothing to rely upon but man's unconquerable mind and whatever they could conceive of spiritual help in the Unseen. "Shirker," "coward," "dog," were the words they were thought to deserve, when the Derby canvassers came to their workshops or the employer interviewed them in the office. It is marvellous that so many braved the blast.

The British public heard more about conscience during the war than it ever heard before in our time, and it produced extraordinarily diverse effects upon its mind, from reverent sympathy to wild anger. During the war, I am afraid, all pleas which were merely moral were too often discounted. On a Sunday, in a debate which followed an address in the open air in Manchester, one speaker said there was no such thing as conscience, another that it was all rot, another that it was a synonym for selfishness, another that it was cowardly and a refuge for shirkers. No one spoke of it with reverence. The anonymous letters which reached me told me with varying degrees of vituperation that conscientious objectors were of the nature of vermin. From this level of perception upwards there was avowed or tacit consent to persecution for conscience' sake, and a general scepticism, even in some religious circles, as to the men's genuineness. Even after this had been proved by the endurance of long sentences, very few of those who found utterance

seemed to think that any wrong step had been taken in punishing them.

The fact is that the consciences of the few were up against the instinct of self-preservation which accompanies every war. Few people could even understand, much less sympathize with, anyone to whom the immediate call of the State was not supreme.

3. Let me try to explain the view of those who heard a higher call in conflict with it.

Their whole souls were in revolt against war. War means blind and wholesale death and maiming of innocent men. It means the torture of wounded men lying in the open, bleeding to death through hours of deadly thirst and moaning pain. It means the foul stench of decaying flesh of the living and of the dead; the kindly cruel liftings and cuttings; it makes the maimed cripple, causes years of blindness or of madness; it means desolate homes, poverty, and a fatherless generation growing to manhood. It means lonely lives of women and the hopes of parents blasted. To inflict these things upon the foe is the undisguised purpose of both combatants. Then, nowadays, there is also the murder of civilians, men, women and children, in the cold silence of the sea, or by bombs from the air in the night, or by starvation through a naval blockade.

To destroy the garnered wealth of the world, to condemn to toiling poverty an entire generation of mankind after all is fought out, to ruin every lovely and cherished possession, to put death and destruction everywhere for life and growth, to baffle the march of beneficent evolution, to spoil all the lovely work of the great Handicraftsman, the offspring of the Father of Life, to slay the strongest and degrade the race—this is the purpose and the method of war.

This evil end can only be achieved through a moral suicide no less disastrous. In war hatred becomes a duty, love ridiculous; to win the war by the denial of every spiritual faculty of man is thought to be the only possible course. Falsehood has its place in the military handbooks as a necessary weapon; fraud and force combine. The fellowship of mankind, the brotherhood of man under the

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fatherhood of God, is earnestly denied in word and deed. People are always persuaded for military purposes that the foes of the moment are incarnate devils.

In war every moral law, every habitual mental attitude of civilized man, is reversed. In the world of conduct he stands on his head; everything usually driven below is at the top and conspicuous. We labour generally to preserve life, to nurture the weak, the aged, the child. We build and sow and reap. We avoid lying, tricks and chicanery. We try to be pleasant to all; to do good to all and to receive good from all—to possess our souls in patience—to follow the "golden rule." We cherish our independence, are miserable if we cannot choose our own actions, and determine to remain responsible beings. In war all this is reversed. Even in sexual indulgence, well-informed chaplains say that the current idea of the soldiers was that, over in France, there need be no restraint, and they believe that only a rather small minority held to their home standard.

It can cause no surprise that the consciences of good men, or even of ordinary sinners, should revolt against this hideous organization of wickedness. But the nation was deceived about the political facts; it had been stimulated daily for years to suspicion and fear by its favourite papers; national traditions were full of war. Further, the men who made the war did not themselves have to suffer in it. In accounting for any war, this is a crucial consideration. About a score of men in all Europe, with ambitions to serve, or full of political hatreds, or fearing popular revolution, or knowing no better, and with strong class interests behind them, plunged the world into a war which, we are now learning, was avoidable.

4. Then England called. Our pulses beat more rapidly; the temperature of our spirits rose to that of war-fever. Even the sun's rays appeared less benignant, seemed to call for the shedding of blood. Delusion blew in on every breeze. People became afraid of shadows. Every German was a possible spy. The herd instinct, the origin of our patriotism, and in itself a glorious endowment, overcame the quiet reason of times of peace. Young men were stimu-



lated by the sight of uniforms, by the flaming pens of journalists, by the germ from women's eyes, by elderly approval. All this produced a sense of duty in most men which, though in my view mistaken, must be understood and respected like any other honest conviction. Even if perverted, the imperative of conscience must be obeyed. The conscientious objector never failed to honour his comrades in the Army.

In this atmosphere, then, isolated and despised, some sixteen thousand young men are known to have refused to join the Army because they felt it to be wrong to do so. The reader will judge before the end whether the courses into which our governors were driven show them to have been rightly guided in the persecution. For in this region also trees are known by their fruits.

The conscientious objectors thus came into an awkward clash, and, for the present, an insoluble conflict, with a Government which ordered compulsory military service. Their patriotism was as real as that of other men; but their love of their own country did not mean hatred of other countries; they were willing to serve their land in all peaceful ways under a voluntary system. By years of public work in the past, and by more years in the future, they hoped to be not unprofitable servants of the State, if they seemed to do little at the moment.

They were asked if they were willing to let the Germans come and do to England what they did in Belgium, and if not, why they let themselves be protected by the sacrifice of others. As a matter of fact the ambitions of Germany were not in England, but in the Balkans and the Near East. But I admit the awkwardness of the dilemma and the misfit between the humanitarian ideal and the war situation. You cannot, in fact, put a piece of new cloth on an old garment, or new wine into old bottles. You cannot mend a machine with a piece from an entirely different machine. You cannot patch the Balance of Power with the Sermon on the Mount, nor fill the Imperialists and the exploiters of mankind with the thought that the greatest among us is he that serveth. You cannot expect a lover of his kind to act in harmony with the European system of Emperors

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and diplomats, war offices and spies. We must begin further back—a long way further back—if we are to make an environment to suit our ideal.

I do not blame a Government for acting as the vast majority of the people desire. They cannot put new cloth on to an old garment either. Nor do I for a moment blame—nay, I honour, Quaker as I am—those men who volunteered and suffered in their country's service. Nevertheless, no one can expect us to provide a solution at the moment for a situation which has been produced by policies contrary to all our principles.

It may be replied, "That is all very well, and it does not matter much, because you are so few, but how if you became a large fraction of the nation? Then we should fail before the German arms." My reply is that then there would have been no war. One cannot imagine one nation mainly pacifist and the others military, among the Great Powers, who have, in fact, a common civilization, and are essentially of one culture. The nations move broadly together. The only hope for the world is in this very kind of conscientious feeling, and in the wide extension of unflinching Peace principles.

5. It is not surprising that the ground taken by the conscientious objectors was so varied as it turned out to be; for war itself includes a multitude of evils and attacks consciences on many sides. The Christian objection, which centred in the Society of Friends, was also represented in all the religious bodies to a small extent; though only by a tiny minority in each. The Christadelphians, the Plymouth Brethren, and some smaller sects, found war inconsistent with their Bibles, and held aloof from actual slaughter, but accepted service in the Army which did not directly involve killing anyone. The clergy generally, by preaching and working for the war, must bear their share of the evil of the war spirit, so slow, even now, to be exorcised, and so ruinous. What has become of the great claim of the Christian Church and of the unique service which it should render for Christ in the world?

The religious objection was in many men based on the

voice of God in the Soul—the mystic's authority. In others it was purely Christian, derived from the plain words of Jesus. Some Christians took Tolstoy's objection to all force, others were supporters of the police.

Numerically, the larger part of the ultimate resistance came from Socialists. Some took the humanitarian standpoint, not in essentials different from the Christian objection; others were mainly out against Capitalism. Many advocated a Socialist philosophy based upon a new conception of the relation of the State to the individual citizen. Some would not help a militarism which was the means of exploitation. Some of these would have been willing to take up arms in a violent revolution, others declined any such methods anywhere.

For the young Quaker it was not so difficult as for the others. Tradition and family influence, at any rate, he generally had on his side. It was expected of him that he would resist military service as his fathers had done. The Society officially and zealously supported him. Nevertheless, even to him, the sudden duty of realizing his principles came as a challenge and a problem. Tradition was not enough to give the strength now demanded. Every act had to be thought out afresh, every principle checked, and the right path was often far from obvious: it meant a fresh valuation of spiritual things.

To some the questioning was long and never fully satisfied; many who enlisted were harassed by recurring doubts, many who stood aside remained uncertain and confused. Was their objection a traditional scruple or a living voice from Heaven? Fortunate were those who saw from the first a clearly shining light upon their individual duty. Happy especially were those whose families and friends shared or respected their convictions.

Many and various, then, were the origins and upbringing of the men who banded themselves together to resist conscription, and many and various in consequence their beliefs—religious, moral and political. Yet, beneath the individual forms of thought and phrasing there was a fundamental faith. It was a common conviction among those who stood together in the struggle which enabled them to form so close a fellowship.

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6. The common basis of their fellowship was the belief in the sacredness of human life as the vehicle of personality. They could not assume the responsibility of taking the life of a fellow-man or of uniting themselves to an organization which was deliberately designed for the destruction of human beings. And here in military conscription they saw a measure which thrust that momentous undertaking as a binding obligation on the thoughtless or reluctant lads and men who came within its scope. They had never attempted to discourage those who had freely followed what they felt to be the line of duty and had joined the forces; but they could have no part in imposing, by compulsion, upon others what they themselves felt to be wrong. Their faith was rooted in a sense of the sacred worth of human personality, uniting all mankind in an inviolable brotherhood, transcending all frontiers and barriers, all artificial divisions of fellow-countryman and alien, ally and enemy. In all human beings of whatever colour or nationality or class, there is a universal life, a quality which makes them one beneath all differences. It has many names—the Inner Light, the Undying Fire, the Christ Within, the Spirit of Humanity. It is the hope of the world. It demands our reverence, the reverence that comes to him who, as Bertrand Russell wrote, “feels in all that lives, but especially in human beings, and most of all in children, something sacred, indefinable, unlimited, something individual and strangely precious, the growing principle of life, an embodied fragment of the dumb striving of the world.” “*Proximus est omni homini omnis homo*,” said St. Augustine, defining the answer of Jesus to the question, “Who is my neighbour?” —“The neighbour of every man is every other man.” There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither German nor English, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; beyond these differences of race and class and sex we are all one. To deny this common spirit is the essential atheism, to quench it in ourselves or others the sin against the Holy Ghost.

This was the central message of Jesus. He showed to men the value of the human soul as the abiding-place of God. No one was excluded from those for whom Christ

died. There was not a man or woman in the world whom He would not count His brother or His sister. "The great believer in man," He has been called. Sir John Seeley truly summed up the essence of Christianity as "the Enthusiasm of Humanity." Jesus Himself was the friend and comrade of everyone; He sought and enjoyed the company of outcasts and outsiders, of publicans and sinners, profiteers and prostitutes, top-dogs and bottom-dogs, men and women who were unpopular and disreputable and *déclassés*. He was the friend of Roman soldiers and of Jewish Zealots, (the Sinn Feiners of the time) as well as of Samaritan enemy aliens

But men make distinctions and preferences. We divide and classify our fellows, and apportion accordingly praise or censure, rewards or punishments, affection or contempt. When we have found the label or the epithet—"Hun" or "profiteer" or "criminal"—we act accordingly, with the appropriate welcome to our circle or dismissal from the pale. But we miss the man in men. Half the cruelty and injustice in the world arises from our fatal habit of seeing people as "cases," or in "classes," and dealing with them in batches according to some prescribed and ill-adjusted code. But the great souls who have come nearest to the spirit of Jesus, have been men who have discarded all these labels, who have been "little brothers" and have made no claim to anything but love. An outstanding example to-day is Eugene Debs, the American Socialist who has spent three years in prison for his faith. "Your Honour," he said, addressing the Judge at his trial, "years ago I came to the conviction that I was not one whit superior to anyone on earth. And I said then as I say now, that while there is a lower class I am in it, while there is a criminal class I am of it, while there is a soul in prison I am not free."

That is Christ's spirit of universal fellowship and identification with suffering humanity. Most men have only known occasional glimpses of it. Nevertheless to many of the resisters it has become confirmed as a faith since they were thrown among the outcasts of society in their imprisonment. They have lived on a footing of equality with the frequenters

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of lock-ups, and they have found good fellowship with hardened gaolbirds.

After his first imprisonment one C. O. remembers having a sudden vision of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. He says he had seldom thought of them before. "We do not often think of their crucifixion. But I am convinced that we do not think of them nor of their kind enough. For this is what it comes to. As long as we have a gallows outside our Jerusalems so long Jesus will be crucified. It is because we treat criminals like that, that we treat saviours as we do. So long as we have slums, workhouses and prisons, so long Jesus will be crucified."

7. For it is not only war that violates this universal brotherhood, it is every form of "man's inhumanity to man," every kind of exploitation of the lives and personalities of others, every degree of degradation that our social and industrial conditions mean for men, women and children. That is why these conscientious objectors were not content with a merely negative protest against war. They had a positive faith in the light of which our social relationships also must be made such that everywhere "human life may become of more account."

All men remember to-day those who will never return, homes where there are lonely hearts. That is war. Some too think of homes where the simple joys of life are shut out by anxiety and want, unemployment, and the spectres of famine and death. That is poverty. We see the tragedy of lives that are spent from first to last in the often futile pursuit of a mere livelihood, and of other lives rich in all that wealth can give but poor in everything else, because empty of meaning and interest. And seeing this, we set ourselves to change it, to make sure that men and women shall not grow old and tired of life before they have begun to live. We plan a new society, a new world; some of us call it the Kingdom of God, and others the Co-operative Commonwealth. But it is the social expression of Pacifism, for Peace is no mere negative of war, but a splendid positive ideal of active life and co-operative endeavour of which war and all the things that make for war are the denial.

The conscience of a pacifist gains a wider meaning in the light of considerations like these. It is no merely individualistic concern for a man's own purity or the salvation of his own soul, but a compulsion to champion a truth that seems to him vital to the soul of the nation and of mankind. To stand by such a truth so far as he sees it is a binding duty, and the only line of truly patriotic conduct. To betray it is to be false to one's self, one's nation, and humanity. To postpone acting upon it until others see it or until he has the support of numbers and a powerful organization is surely a temptation. All great advances in human history have been made possible because individual men and women have acted on what they believe to be true whether it was popular or unpopular, whether it was safe or perilous, and most often when it was both unpopular and perilous. To-day's great causes call for the same faithfulness. Disarmament will come about when a sufficient number of people refuse any longer to bear arms, to manufacture armaments, or to ask for armed protection. And Peace—the positive realization of human fellowship and co-operation—will be achieved in so far as we attempt in all things to live in the spirit of universal love.

8. There must have been a few men whose objection to service in the Army was based, not on such principles as these, but on fear. Conscription was the greatest tragedy of all in their case. On the other hand, it was common to meet during these decisive months the man who dared not follow conviction and be a C.O. (as the conscientious objectors came to be generally called in this age of initials). Many made no secret about it. But for the claims of their wives and children, or their mothers, many men, often in businesses dependent upon them, have said openly that they would have gone to prison with the stalwarts. Others could not resist the scorn or the entreaties of their wives or families. I knew intimately a case where a mother's influence saved her son for the Army. One of the gentlest of my friends in gaol had a young wife who did not come to see him, but wrote letters of reproach and selfish complaint instead. "Stick it out, mate!" soldiers in the camps would

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say to the C.O., whose courage they admired. Many were the admissions by the more thoughtful officers that these were truly brave men. Clifford Allen's cell in the detention barracks was decorated with wild flowers gathered by his soldier guards, who also lent him their own pillows for his plank bed.

To those of us who knew the sufferers close at hand and bore their reproach with them the statement of these general considerations is not necessary. One could not know the men without respecting their courage. The gentle Christian, the defiant Marxist, both rang true.

9. But, in fact, the alternative on which these men chose prison was, in only few cases, actual fighting service. Most of them had been admitted as genuine, and had been offered and declined non-combatant military service, or had declined "work of national importance," or, after the Home Office scheme was begun, had declined that. Only those few who had been wholly rejected from the beginning by their Tribunals and again rejected by the Central Tribunal had been left to the choice of Army or prison. Any shirker who may have put in a claim would, if refused, be likely to drop out and join the Army. If accepted as genuine, he would choose the softest option. I venture to state my firm belief that not one mere shirker was to be found in the prisons. Among the hundreds of men whom I saw preparatory to their claim at their first Tribunal, who came for advice and guidance, not more than two or three after intimate talk excited my suspicion of their honour. A friend of mine in the Home Office settlement on Dartmoor told me that among the many hundreds there he thought that two or three were merely shirking. Not all the men who started finished the race, faithful to the end. But a surprisingly small number gave in. About 4 per cent. are known to have done so, or to have been willing to leave prison to join the Friends' Ambulance Unit. The latter course would mean either compromise or a change of view, in an Absolutist.<sup>1</sup> By other men it would be quite a right course. The few men who, often with deep unhappiness and loss of self-respect,

<sup>1</sup> This term is explained in Chapter VI.



finally gave in, did it, in the cases I know, for the sake of their wives and children, left to the resources of charity. The courage and insight which held the thousands faithful will always remain memorable. Failure of moral strength in face of the enemy was punished by death or terrible conditions of imprisonment. The purpose of Army discipline is to provide this greater fear to cast out fear. The lonely "shirker" in prison had no such deterrent; everything that prison could do was done, to weaken his morale, depress his personality, lower his vitality and enslave his will. Against all the miseries of the dreadful quinquennium 1914-1919, the steadfast courage of the persecuted pacifists, like the heroism of the troops, is a glowing point, and strengthens our hope for humanity.

Professor Peake, in his honest and courageous book, *Prisoners of Hope*, writes, on pp. 97-8:—

"Yet I do not hesitate to say that, had I to choose between the lot of the soldier and that of those for whom I am pleading, I should select the former. For then I should be swimming with the stream, sustained not only by inward conviction, but by universal applause. The sense that I was in a great and mighty movement, striking my hardest for freedom and for right, would uplift me. But, choosing the other, though with the approval of my conscience, I should be pulling against a raging torrent of popular opinion, branded as a coward, my conduct explained by the meanest, most contemptible motives, my name cast out with scorn by the servants of that Master whose will I was, in this refusal of military service, seeking to do."

The late Mrs. Hobhouse in her powerful and influential book, *I Appeal unto Cæsar*, writes:—

"I answer, as the mother of sons in France, who are daily risking their lives, subjected to the horrors and discomforts of the trenches, that I feel less distress at their fate, fighting as they are their country's battles, with the approval of their fellows, than I do for that other son undergoing for his faith a disgraceful sentence in a felon's cell, truly 'despised and rejected of men.'"

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10. The great diversity of the conclusions reached by the consciences of the rebels against conscription would be enough to show, if any showing were needed, that conscience, though uttering an absolute imperative for each man is no uniform or infallible guide. Indeed, it may be held, and I naturally hold, that those who went into the war under a sense of duty were mistaken. This did not make them the less brave. But by most good men who thought on the issue a decision was reached *in foro conscientiae* to support the war. Considering what an abomination war is, it is this, not the conscientious objection to it, which demands explanation.

Since compulsion of conscience is essentially an attack upon the soul, and persecution an attempt to coerce the soul through the pains of the body and of the mind, one would have supposed that religion, which is an activity of the soul, would have been the last region of human affairs in which to find persecution. But, instead, as we know, it has been its chief centre. This fact brings out with astonishing clearness the great difference between religion and religions, between the inward life and organized Churches, between the religion of the spirit and the religions of authority. These have always persecuted; and yet how utterly futile such an attempt must be from the beginning. You cannot make a man a Catholic or a Protestant by persecution, for religion is an inward faith. You can only make him pretend to be such. Persecution for conscience' sake is a direct tyranny of the material over the spiritual.

Conscience is the faculty by which we discriminate between right and wrong in conduct, as taste is the faculty by which we discriminate the wholesome from the poisonous in food, and the eye is the organ by which we discriminate light from darkness around us. To deny its authority is therefore to deprive a man of his moral personality. Obedience to conscience is a man's only chance of self-respect or well-being. To deny it is to commit moral suicide, to move towards utter degradation.

Recurring to the metaphor of conscience as the eye of the soul, we cannot forget that "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

There is no infallibility anywhere on the earth, for everything is the product of human faculty, and human faculty is a developing thing, never perfect, always growing better or worse. Though the dicta of conscience are absolute for the individual, they are absolute for him alone. By his own conscience each man must stand or fall. Doubtless the mirror, as Ruskin calls it, into which we look and see God, is cracked and bent, but it is all we have, and our duty is to make the best of it. There is no other light given to men. Every authority which asserts sway is only accepted by its devotees at their own choice, and under such light as they have.

What we have of conscience is the result of previous visitations of divine grace, and of the previous training that we have given our souls. To speak completely, we must add that it is the result of what our forefathers also have received and of the strife of their souls. Our business is to keep up the heavenly nourishment and the inward discipline. Conscience may be likened to the accumulated limestone stalactite in the cavern, which results from the perpetual dripping of the laden water from the roof, leaving its deposit on the aspiring stalagmite below. This need not be symmetrical, for it may have been built up upon a queer-shaped rock. All that we ask is that the laden water shall still flow and the stalactite shall grow larger.

Sir George Adam Smith, at his Inaugural Address as Moderator at the United Free Church Assembly for 1916, said :—

“ To ‘ conscientious objectors ’ who appealed to the words or to the example of the Lord it might be as conscientiously, and far more reasonably, replied that the doctrines of non-resistance or of political peace at any price found no sanction in the Gospels. To put peace before justice, before the redemption of the slave, before the deliverance of the tortured, and the defence of the purity of women and of children, was to turn Christianity upside down.”

This may be taken as a type of the kind of response which was made to the resistance herein described, by ecclesiastical authorities.

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I have always held personally that the doctrine of non-resistance was untenable as an absolute law, and unsatisfactory as a Christian principle on account of its negative character. It is difficult for any thinking person to maintain that there are not cases in life in which force ought to be used. Nor is "peace at any price" a correct statement of our position. There is in morality no protective tariff; there is no moral duty, however clear or high, which is not, in the clash of competing motives, weighed and compared with other duties. What is right and wrong cannot be settled by generalities, but always has to be worked out in detail. This is because moral quality does not inhere in an act itself alone, but in the doing of the act by a person. It is the doer who is right or wrong, not what he does. This is a far-reaching consideration.

The rest of the Moderator's comparisons are equally beside the point in practice. The false antithesis between peace and righteousness was very common during the war. Translated into practice it presumably means that where your side is wholly in the right, and the other people wholly wicked in their purpose, you ought to go to war to stop that purpose. The great European war cannot be described so simply as that. Unscrupulous, overbearing and ambitious as Germany has shown herself to be, and full, as she has been, of the military spirit, it is impossible for an honest enquirer in face of the facts now known, to conclude that all the blame for the European rivalry is to be laid at her door.<sup>1</sup> It is rather to be put down to the hopeless chaos of international relations in Europe, to mutual fear and suspicion on all sides, and to the unrestrained desire to possess the land and the labour of weak peoples, of which no country can accuse any other of being uniquely or exceptionally guilty.

With regard to liberty and to the security of women and children;—war is the great cause of the destruction of these things on a wholesale scale. How can we imagine that a higher morality will ever come as the upshot of any war?

<sup>1</sup> See *How the War Came*, by Earl Loreburn; *Diplomacy Revealed*, by E. D. Morel; issues of *Foreign Affairs*, March to July, 1921; books of autobiography by Lord Fisher, Wilfred S. Blunt, Bethmann Hollweg, and others; *How We went into the War*, by Irene Cooper Willis.

Even if you slay a number of the fellow-countrymen of the criminals, you have no certainty that you have either prevented the crimes or checked their continuance.

But we are driven to a further query. Do we substitute justice for injustice, righteousness for unrighteousness, by the methods of war? We let loose a torrential flood of unrighteousness in the process; and no one can say, judging from the past, that the terms of peace by which wars have been concluded have been in themselves more just, or have led to more future justice, than the circumstances under which the wars were begun. It has generally been a transference of power, not a moral purification, which has closed hostilities.

Holding, then, these convictions, the young men with whose story this book is concerned approached their time of trial.

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## ADDENDUM TO CHAPTER I

The following article, by Dr. Alfred Salter of Bermondsey, appeared in the *Labour Leader* a few weeks after war broke out. It represents the response of the thorough-going Christian to the war, and long before conscription came it acted as the standard to which many Christians set themselves to conform. It was one of the formative utterances of this critical epoch. Hubert W. Peet tells us that by various agencies one and a half million copies were distributed in this country. He says it was translated into most European languages and into Chinese. There is definite knowledge that over eighty persons were sent to prison, one for ten years, for distributing it in Australia, New Zealand, America and South Africa.

The more purely humanitarian statement of the testimony, apart from consciously Christian influence, which inspired so large a portion of the body of protest, is well put in the Preface and in Clifford Allen's Presidential Address to the

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first N.C.F. Conference, for which see Chapter V. Dr. Salter's article is as follows :—

### “THE RELIGION OF A C.O.”

“Behind all human actions and motives there is a philosophy or creed, and behind all actions and motives that affect us deeply there is a religion. What a man thinks or does at times like these depends on what his religion is. Every man has a religion, though he may not know it.

There are only two main religions in the world, though each of them has many forms:—(1) The religion which trusts in the power and ultimate triumph of material forces—faith in materialism. (2) The religion which trusts in the power and ultimate triumph of spiritual forces—faith in God.

The materialist Religion believes in the big battalions, the millions of armed men, the weight of battleships, the superiority of artillery, the efficiency of organization, the adequacy of food supplies, the stability of financial resources. Count up your ships and your men, your horses and your chariots, your money and your allies, and put your trust in them. The scene in which you have now to act is one in which God does not count. Force alone matters. That is the gospel of Materialism, which, for the time being, seems to be the accepted doctrine of Europe, and the doctrine which is being preached from nearly every pulpit in England.

The other religion is the simple faith that the only thing that matters is the doing of God's will; that whatever happens or threatens, the last word is with Him. For the man who believes in God there is only one sure means of defence, one true line of safety, one clear path of duty—obedience to God's command. The position in which we may be placed may be a difficult one, the combat may seem very unequal—one weak voice against a roaring mob, a few unarmed visionaries against the bristling battalions of the State, a group of obscure nobodies against all the weight and splendour and authority of an Empire. But this religion teaches that the cause of right wins in the long run in spite of odds against it, in spite of temporary defeat, in spite even

of apparent annihilation. This religion believes that Truth, ignored, martyred, crushed it may be for the time, will emerge triumphant when the glory and pomp and power of Empire are vanished and forgotten. Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Rome, Spain, were all mighty world-powers that conquered by relying on material force. By each of these in turn the claims of love, of mercy, of brotherhood, of the sanctity of human life, were treated with scorn as contemptible weaknesses, and the advocates of such claims were suppressed or laughed out of court. All these military Empires in their day and generation were omnipotent. Nothing could stand against them. All have perished and gone—but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

In considering our duty as citizens and politicians, then, our actions are really determined by our religion.

My religion is the Christian Religion. I may misunderstand it, but I must speak as I have been given light. If in my bottommost heart I want to know what I should do under any given circumstances, I must ask myself what is God's command on the subject, and what would Christ do in my place. In the matter of this war I must try and picture to myself Christ as an Englishman, with England at war with Germany. The Germans have overrun France and Belgium, and may possibly invade England by airship and drop bombs on London. What am I to do? Am I to answer the Prime Minister's call; make myself proficient in arms, and hurry to the Continent to beat the Germans off?

Look! Christ in khaki, out in France thrusting His bayonet into the body of a German workman. See! The Son of God with a machine gun, ambushing a column of German infantry, catching them unawares in a lane and mowing them down in their helplessness. Hark! The Man of Sorrows in a cavalry charge, cutting, hacking, thrusting, crushing, cheering. No! No! That picture is an impossible one, *and we all know it.*

That settles the matter for me. I cannot uphold the war, even on its supposedly defensive side, and I cannot, therefore, advise anyone else to enlist or to take part in what I believe to be wrong and wicked for myself. A country,

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as an individual, must be prepared to follow Christ if it is to claim the title of Christian.

There is a great place waiting in history for the first nation that will dare to save its life by losing it that will dare to base its national existence on righteous dealing, and not on force, that will found its conduct on the truths of primitive Christianity, and not on the power of its army and navy. And there is a great place waiting in history for the first political party that will dare to take the same stand and will dare to advocate the Christian policy of complete disarmament and non-resistance to alien force. No nation and no political party (and for that matter no Church either) is at present prepared to do that, although they all, more or less, profess to be Christian. The inference is irresistible that the nations of Christendom, the orthodox political parties, and the organized Churches believe in the Religion of Materialism, and not in God.

For myself, I can see no logical or practical half-way house between the policy of being always anti-war (anti-every-war, including this war), a policy based on the teaching of Christ, and the policy of Lord Roberts, Lord Charles Beresford, Leo Maxse, and General Bernhardt, based frankly on material self-interest. The latter policy requires the keeping always ready of the maximum possible army and the maximum possible navy, equipped with the maximum possible efficiency. If we are to rely on force at all, then we ought clearly to see to it that we have a greater force on our side than our enemies can put forward. If it is right to defend one's country by taking part in war *at any time*, it is right and wise and necessary to begin the defence when it can be begun with real hope of success, not at the last moment. If it is right to recruit *now* for national defence against Germany, then we ought to have listened to Lord Roberts and the others and have had our million men, armed and trained, ready before the crisis arrived. We ought to have had their equipment, barracks, officers, and so on in being *now*, instead of hurriedly improvising a scratch army at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour. If the defence is right *now*, the Radicals, the Labour Party and the Socialists have been wrong all along in



opposing increased armaments and general military service. When this war is over the Roberts-Beresford-Blatchford party will demand, and consistently demand, that we should immediately commence to arm as never before in order to protect ourselves against the *next* war. That is the obvious logic and worldly wisdom of the situation, *if you admit the use of force at all.*

But I do not base my position on logic or worldly wisdom. I base it simply on the command of God and the teaching of Christ. Christ's teaching applies as much to defensive as offensive wars; in fact, His precepts are directed mainly to the method of defence. "Render not evil for evil," "Overcome evil with good," "Love your enemies," "Unto him that smiteth you on the one cheek, . . ." are commands which imply antecedent offence on the part of the enemy and specify the method of defence on the part of the Christian. To the great majority of the people all this sounds utter foolishness in face of the present situation; but the divine sense has always been hidden from the wise and prudent, and has only been revealed to the babes of simple faith and childlike heart.

Whatever is right is best. That is the first axiom of faith in God. Best now and best hereafter, best from the point of view of expediency and tactics as well as best from the point of view of ultimate results, if only we could see far enough and clearly enough. If "Thou shall not kill" is right, it is also best, both for individuals and the nation. Because I believe in the final reign and triumph of right, whatever happens, I believe that all killing is murder and is wrong, even in defensive wars, so called, and I will not stain my conscience with blood by going to war myself or by urging anyone else to go.

What is the result of such a policy? If I refuse to fight or support measures of defence, then I may get shot by the enemy as an act of war or I may be shot by the authorities of my own State as guilty of treason. Very well. I say deliberately that I am prepared to be shot rather than kill a German peasant with whom I have no conceivable quarrel. I will do nothing to kill a foe, directly or indirectly, by my own hand or by proxy. So help me, God. NEVER.

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If the Socialists of Germany had felt able to take this line, there would have been no European war. Many of them would, doubtless, have been executed by the Kaiser, but there would have been no war, for over two-fifths of the German Army consists of Socialists. I believe that such an action would not only have made war impossible, but would have meant the speedy triumph of Socialism in Germany, instead of its indefinite postponement. But the German Socialists were not able to take such a line because of their religion. They hold the materialistic faith. To-day Socialists are stabbing one another as eagerly as the nominal Christians—for the same reason.

We are told that Germany is arrogant, brutal, overbearing and tyrannical, threatening Europe with the menace of Militarism, and that this war will free the whole world from this menace. You will not redeem the world from the tyranny of force by employing force, you will only enthrone force in another place. You will not eliminate Militarism from Europe by opposing to German Militarism a superior British-French-Russian Militarism. You will simply establish Militarism securely in England. You cannot cast out Beelzebub by calling on the name of Beelzebub.

You only will overcome force by love: (A silly, sloppy sentiment, you say!) You will only overcome arrogance by humility. You will only conquer brutality by kindness. You will only supersede Militarism by developing in the hearts of all peoples the spirit of brotherhood and forbearance; war does not do that. This war will not do that. It will leave instead a bitter heritage of hate to bear more fruit in due season.

Friends, the only path of safety, of sanity, of salvation, is faith in God! Believe and obey. Do His will *and take the consequences*. Be sure that those consequences will be the best for you and for the world. He that would save his life shall certainly lose it, but 'he that will lose his life for My sake shall save it.'"

## CHAPTER II

### THE MILITARY SERVICE ACTS, 1916

1. It must have been known all along to the military that they would not attempt to wage a vast land war without conscription. Indeed, we have been told by one of them that the attachés in the British Embassy at Paris hailed the war with delight as making the longed-for conscription inevitable. But no such word was breathed to damp the enthusiasm of 1914. The British people hated the name and the thing. It was to them the very symbol of tyranny, a device by which the Government of France had broken strikes, an enslavement, and an opportunity for the moral degeneracy of youth. It gave the Army chiefs the chance of exercising, unquestioned, whatever harsh discipline they thought fit. It took away what control the people had over the waging of a great war. Even Lord Roberts's modified scheme of National Training had not been accepted by the people or by either political party.

So enlistment was left voluntary, till the nation was committed to a military undertaking too vast even for the number of men pressed into the Army by every act of private persuasion or compulsion under the Derby scheme. Under this scheme men were asked to "attest," that is, to undertake to serve when called up. The War Office had drained the country of all willing men who could be at all reasonably spared. But it was now represented to be a choice between defeat and a force so vastly increased that conscription was the only way to collect it. The Society of Friends, and the No-Conscription Fellowship, described later, foreseeing what was likely to come, published a protest against it in advance, giving clear notice of their opposition.

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2. Its path had been prepared by a Registration Act, declared by Mr. Asquith not to have any ulterior purpose for conscription. This was not generally believed, and a few men regarded it as the beginning of Militarism, and refused to register. Many men registered, adding that they would refuse conscription if imposed. A common declaration to this effect was made by Friends and members of the No-Conscription organizations. Conscription was not broached till there were so many men voluntarily enlisted that they and their friends would form a strong body of opinion in favour of it for other people.

Then the married and the unmarried were skilfully divided in interest. When the unmarried alone were called up, the married supported the Bill, hoping their turn might never come. When, in the next Act, it did come, the unmarried already under arms, and their friends, supported it. Similarly, the age was gradually raised; but that was probably dictated more by necessity than policy. It caused, nevertheless, the older men, still secure, to support the enrolment of the young. The whole policy was astonishingly clever. All was prepared—the interests of the nation were divided, and the great stress of the war had become apparent. The nation had come to believe that every available man must be compelled to join up.

3. The first Conscription Bill, known as The Military Service Act (2) was introduced by Mr. Asquith, then Premier of the first Coalition, on January 5, 1916.

It declared in its principal clause that unmarried men or widowers without children dependent on them, between eighteen and forty-one years old, were to be "deemed" to have been enlisted and to have been forthwith transferred to the Reserve. That is, they all became soldiers, subject to certain exceptions and exemptions, could be called up when wanted, and if any question arose connected with being called up, it should be decided by a civil court, and refusal to respond to the call should not be punishable by death. The Act was to remain in force till six months after the close of the war.

Tribunals were to be set up to examine appeals for

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exemption under various heads, among which was "a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service"; and the Local Tribunal, if they considered the grounds of the application established, were to grant exemption. It proceeds, in Clause 2 (3):—"Any certificate of exemption may be absolute, conditional or temporary, as the authority by whom it was granted think best suited to the case, and also, in the case of exemption on conscientious grounds, may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged on some work which in the opinion of the Tribunal dealing with the case is of national importance."

This last sentence was not in the original form of the Bill, but was introduced by the Government to meet the views of T. Edmund Harvey and Arnold S. Rowntree, Quaker members of Parliament.

Local Tribunals were arranged for each local registration district, or a part of it, to number not less than five or more than twenty-five persons. Above these were Appeal Tribunals for larger areas, and finally a Central Tribunal. But only by leave of the Appeal Tribunal could a case go before the Central Tribunal. No doubt, but for this clause, every case would have been carried to the Central Tribunal, and the machine have become congested.

It was a notable step forward to admit a conscientious objection on moral as well as denominational grounds.

4. Mr. Asquith, in his speech on the first reading, warmly justified the conscience exemption against the mockery of some members, by referring to the example of Pitt, who exempted Quakers from the compulsory militia during the war with Napoleon, and to the recent Australian Acts, which did the same. He pointed out that it only relieved men from combatant duties within the Army, and commended mine-sweeping as a good alternative.

Sir John Simon, in opposing the second reading on January 12th, said that the exemption from combatant duties only, within the Army, would not be accepted generally; that the Tribunals would turn out a failure; and that under this Bill no way would be found for safeguarding

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the conscientious objector without making the meshes of the net too wide.

Arnold S. Rowntree expressed the Quaker point of view that war was anti-Christian. He explained that some Friends had tried to meet the difficulty by founding their ambulance unit, which contained in the neighbourhood of five hundred Friends, and that others were in large numbers helping the war victims in France. He warned the House against beginning a religious persecution, and doubted the competence of the Tribunals.

In Committee on the 18th, Philip Snowden moved a clause to safeguard the persistent objector from the death penalty under the Army Act, Section XII (1). Sir F. E. Smith said that the War Office would not inflict that penalty on such men. It was pointed out by Mr. Snowden, Mr. Outhwaite and Mr. Trevelyan that the danger lay with those not admitted by the Tribunal to be genuine and so not counted conscientious objectors. Finally, the clause excused the conscientious objector from the death penalty for refusing to obey the call to the colours. It was, however, held afterwards that this excuse only covered the initial refusal and left the persistent objector liable to a death sentence after his forcible inclusion in the Army.

On the 19th, Mr. Joynson Hicks proposed that instead of the exemption being general it should be confined to Quakers or members of other religious bodies which include an objection to all war among their fundamental tenets. He called the clause the Slackers' Charter, was satirical at great length about these shirkers, would like to have had no exemption clause, but was willing as a practical, if illogical, measure, to exempt certain clearly definable bodies of a religious character. It is noticeable how some people only acknowledge religious or moral motives when connected with a recognized creed or church. It was a great point in favour of the British Act that it did not confine exemption to members of certain religious bodies. To guard against shirkers joining the Society of Friends, Mr. Joynson Hicks proposed to confine the immunity to those who were members on August 15, 1914, and thought it ought to have been August 1st, because presumably some might have fled

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to the safe fold the moment the war began. How little he knew his Society of Friends, with their carefully deliberate admissions, and how little he knew of the victims of the Act, many of whom expressly avoided joining Friends till the war was over, so as to avoid even the appearance of seeking shelter.

Friends had already made it known that they would accept no denominational exemption, such as was granted afterwards in America. Friends desired no special favour for themselves. They would stand with more lonely people outside.

Mr. Bonar Law declined Mr. Joynson Hicks's amendment on lines of sound argument. He made, however, the curious statement that "towards the end of the seventeenth century an attempt was made to induce the Quakers to fight, but they practically went to prison in a body." This incident has not found its way into Quaker records. It is not often that a piece of misinformation has proved so salutary.

5. T. Edmund Harvey followed with a truly great speech on the Peace position, worthy to rank in spirit with the utterances of John Bright in the same place in an earlier and less terrible day. He pointed out that the non-combatant exemption would fail to meet the needs of most men.

"We profoundly believe that the soldier and the military system belong to a stage of society which has to be transcended, and that we are working towards a state of society in which war will be a thing of the past. We believe that if there are men who feel the importance of this, and feel, above all, that if they are obedient to the dictates of religion, and to all that which is dearest and best in life, they are bound to follow what they believe to be, not only the letter, but the spirit of the teaching of Christ. They must, having accepted that point of view, endeavour to live up to the principle that they believe He laid down, and not return evil for evil, but endeavour to love even their enemies."

He said that many men would be willing to lose their lives or all their property in obedience to the Higher Law. Nor were they limited to men avowedly Christian, or even

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professedly religious. He warned the Government that compulsory civilian alternative service would not meet all cases, and that only absolute exemption would. He concluded by mentioning certain forms of hard voluntary work already being done, or which might be undertaken.

Sir Henry Craik made the significant admission that these principles struck at the very foundations of the State system. Mr. Barnes recommended that absolute exemption should include Socialists. Mr. Chaplin thought every man who preferred to love his enemies at this time was unworthy of the name of Englishman. Mr. Charles Trevelyan, in a very forcible speech, warned the House that there would be many thousands who would wholly refuse connection with war. He demanded complete exemption, not subject to any Tribunal's view; for the only judge of a man's conscience is the man himself.

Mr. Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary, made a speech on which in those days we built a large edifice of hope. He agreed that religion was not a corporate but an individual thing. "Is it really contemplated that now, when for the first time you are making military service compulsory in this country, it should be accompanied by the arrest and imprisonment of a certain number of men who unquestionably, by common consent, are men of the highest character, and in other matters, good citizens. I am sure hon. members would not wish to contemplate that there should be anything in the nature of religious persecution, or that you should have this body of men locked up in the gaols of this country." He explained that the Government could not follow Mr. Trevelyan in making a man's statement sufficient, and that they had altered the Harvey-Rowntree amendment by giving the duty of approval of alternative service to the Tribunals instead of the Government drawing up a list of approved callings. He went on, in an important passage, the foundation of much hope, to say that a boot-maker, who claimed under Subsection I (a) that his trade was so necessary as itself to carry exemption, but failed in that plea, would, if he were a conscientious objector, have his calling accepted, and obtain exemption on it. "We want to give the widest possible latitude. I have been



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asked, 'What is the difference between the classes of work?' A man may come forward and say, 'I am a bootmaker and want to go on making boots.' The Tribunal may say, 'There is a sufficient number of bootmakers already, and really it is more important that you should become a soldier than remain a bootmaker.' Therefore the man is sent to be a soldier. But if he comes forward and states, 'I am a conscientious objector, and I do not want to fight; I come under paragraph so-and-so of the Act, and I am engaged in making boots, which is a work of national importance. As such I shall do useful work for the nation.' The Tribunal may reply, 'While this is not a work of national importance, if you say you are a conscientious objector, and object to becoming a soldier, you will obtain your exemption.' That is, I believe, precisely the object of the hon. member's proposal. But the hon. member says the effect of the Government's proposal is that his friend would have forced upon him, by the requirements of the Tribunal, some particular kind of work. Surely that is exactly what he himself proposes. He proposes that the Tribunal shall give the individual man exemption, but at the same time say, 'You need not go as a soldier, because you are a conscientious objector, but it must be conditional on your performing work for the State.'" When this speech was brought before certain Tribunals for their guidance the reply was that speeches in Parliament were of no importance.

Mr. T. M. Healy, in order to widen the choice for objectors, proposed to say work of "national interest" instead of "national importance," but he was overruled.

Sir Stephen Collins asked Mr. Joynson Hicks whether he would not respect the conscience of members of the House who had no strong religious convictions as much as those of members who had. He received a blunt "No" in reply. He then recounted an argument with a group of young men in the lobby, (a deputation from the No-Conscription Fellowship), the strength of whose convictions had deeply impressed him. Sir Philip Magnus supported Mr. Joynson Hicks, but said they would withdraw the amendment in his name. Captain Craig from Ulster stated

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quite erroneously, that the Society of Friends had modified its views, and should be ruled out.

Mr. Outhwaite next brought forward an amendment allowing exemption to a claimant who made a statement of his conscientious objection on oath before two justices of the peace. He feared Socialists would not be properly treated by Tribunals.

Mr. Long, on behalf of the Government, declined to accept the amendment. Mr. Snowden supported it, though his preference would have been to have the oath taken before the Local Tribunal. (No doubt the general liberty to substitute an affirmation would have held here.) He pointed out the futility of the Tribunals' tests, illustrated by the arbitrariness of many magistrates under the Vaccination Act, which had caused their discretion to be taken away. He also alluded to the Australian and New Zealand prisons filled with conscientious objectors whose plea had been refused. He pointed out that there would be great opposition, and that the Government had failed to carry out their Munitions Act in South Wales, and had shrunk from applying this Bill to Ireland because of the opposition of its people. He alluded to the ten thousand members of the No-Conscription Fellowship, and prophesied the most unfair variety in the behaviour of Tribunals. Viscount Wolmer expressed his faith in the justice of the Tribunals.

7. Thirty-nine, against 289, voted for Mr. Outhwaite's amendment. They constitute roughly, with those who voted against the third reading, the group who, through good report and evil, and amid increasing hatred and deepening isolation, stood up for peace and for the victims of conscription in the last Parliament. They may be classified as follows:—

*The U.D.C. Group.*—Joseph King, Arthur Ponsonby, Richard Lambert, Charles P. Trevelyan.

*The I.L.P. Group.*—W. C. Anderson, F. W. Jowett, J. Ramsay MacDonald, T. Richardson, Philip Snowden.

*Other Labour Men.*—G. N. Barnes, C. W. Bowerman, J. R. Clynes, F. Goldstone, J. H. Thomas, Will Thorne, G. J. Wardle, W. Hudson.

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*Friends.*—J. Allen Baker, T. E. Harvey, Arnold S. Rowntree, J. W. Wilson.

*Nationalist.*—L. Ginnell.

*Independent Liberals.*—Dr. C. Addison, Sydney Arnold, John Burns, Sir W. P. Byles, H. G. Chancellor, W. Clough, A. G. C. Harvey, J. M. Hogge, R. D. Holt, Edw. T. John, Leif Jones, B. Kenyon, Sir E. H. Lamb, D. M. Mason, R. L. Outhwaite, Arthur Sherwell, J. H. Whitehouse.

A few of these went over to the Government position, such as Dr. Addison, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Wardle (who became members of the Government), and Mr. Will Thorne.

T. E. Harvey moved that in II (d) "objection to combatant service" should run "objection to military or combatant service." This, if it had passed, would have saved much hardship afterwards. Fifty-five voted for it.

On a further attempt by T. E. Harvey to have a special Tribunal for conscience cases, Mr. Long undertook to put on the Tribunals "men who by their training and experience would give full and fair consideration even to the more extreme cases."

If this were a drama like *The Dynasts*, the mocking spirits would be heard at this point. Such was the fair beginning of the chapter of persecution.

8. On the third reading, Sir John Emmott Barlow, Thomas Lough, Richard Denman, P. A. Molteno, Philip Morrell, James Parker (of Halifax), W. M. R. Pringle, G. C. Rees, Sir John Simon, and H. B. Lees-Smith, in addition to members named before, voted against the Bill—thirty-eight in all. The names of Dr. C. Addison, G. N. Barnes, C. W. Bowerman, J. R. Clynes, F. W. Jowett, B. Kenyon, J. R. MacDonald, W. Thorne, G. L. Wardle, J. W. Wilson, do not appear, for various reasons, in this final though hopeless protest. Some were unavoidably absent.

Sir John Simon did not follow up his leadership on this occasion by further Parliamentary action, but devoted himself instead to a large practice at the Bar. The fort in Parliament was held by a group of members chiefly from

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the Union of Democratic Control, the Independent Labour Party and the Society of Friends. Questions about the ill-treatment of men by the military, about hardships in prison, the abuses of D.O.R.A. and other evils which followed this comparatively hopeful debate, were bravely put in great numbers by Philip Snowden (most of all), by Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Whitehouse, Mr. T. E. Harvey, Mr. Joseph King and others. One visit to the House was enough to show me how hot and hostile was the atmosphere in which this group, sitting close together on a bench below the gangway, fought their good fight.

Among the great newspapers the *Manchester Guardian* continued, with its usual fidelity to truth, to insert letters exposing particularly bad cases of cruelty. With few exceptions the Press, except our own small organs, would not ventilate the case of the sufferers in the cause of peace. Question time in the House was the best check upon tyranny, and naturally resentment also was concentrated there.

9. The Bill went up at once to the House of Lords. The debate there gave opportunity for a great speech by Lord Courtney of Penwith on the second reading on January 26th. He said that those who held that war was wrong did not say to the Government, "I will not," but, "I cannot." Their resistance had formerly compelled statesmen to grant exemption, and they had then found that it worked perfectly well. He said the first exemptions of this kind were granted to the Mennonites in Holland about 1580, when the country was engaged in the deadliest grips with Philip II. Catharine of Russia, about 1775 or 1780, granted the same exemption, and Napoleon did the same as well as Pitt, all for wise reasons of state. He said Lord Chatham would have refused to serve in the American War, and Charles James Fox in the war against revolutionary France. He reminded the Peers that many of them supported the revolt of the generals in the Curragh camp against the prospect of fighting Ulster. In Committee Lord Courtney moved to alter "objection to the undertaking of combatant service" to "objection to

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undertake any service or engage in any action in support of the war or to the undertaking of combatant service." The Bishop of London opposed the amendment. He thought little of conscience till it was "educated"; that is, till he approved its conclusions. The Government refused to accept the amendment, and it was not pushed to a division. Viscount Peel wished to narrow the possible exemption to one from combatant duties only. But Lord Lansdowne refused it, as the Government wished to enable the Tribunals to give an absolute dispensation. With this important utterance Parliament spoke its last word on the Bill.

10. The stage is easy from military to industrial conscription. If the Government has the power to send every one into the Army, they have the power to exempt upon conditions, and they may make the condition that a man must take up such work as the Government may need. There was a scheme for providing labour for munition factories from among those men pronounced medically unfit for the Army; and such men were crocks indeed. The military representative at the Shoreditch Tribunal disclosed it.<sup>1</sup> The medical rejects were to be enrolled at the Labour Exchanges, and when a fit man was found in a munitions factory he might be sent to the Army, and the unfit man from the Labour Exchange might take his place. If he refused, perhaps, to leave his home, or for other reasons did not wish to change his occupation, he would be sent to the Army, medical exemption notwithstanding. The cruelty of such a course to the cripple or the invalid, his uselessness to the Army, his probable death, were not to hinder the terrorism to be exerted by the military. The form A.R.M., W.2, which the man would have to sign, ran:—"I understand that I am liable to return to military service at any time that I cease to be employed by a firm named by the Ministry of Munitions." Here we have the industrial conscription repudiated by the Government and dreaded by the Labour and some Liberal members. The *Sheffield Telegraph* stated that the Army Council proposed to carry out this "substitution

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, November 16, 1916, quoting the *Manchester Guardian*.

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scheme" for agriculture, and other badged and indispensable occupations. The scheme never matured, I believe. But it was a perfectly natural and logical part of a national system of conscription.

The industrial effect of conscription was made plain in France, where men were paid only soldiers' wages in the munition factories. If they objected they were drafted under conscription into the Army. The memorable defeat of the French railwaymen in the strike on the Nord Railway in 1910 will not be forgotten. The Government called the strikers to the colours and made them work their own railway as soldiers. The Spanish Government did the same in 1916. The ex-Kaiser openly said that was the way he would have broken the English Railway Strike. Mr. J. H. Thomas told the House on May 16, 1916, of a Dundee employer who, when his men struck, reported them to the military, who at once called them to the colours. Colonel Augustus Fitz-George, in a speech on August 26, 1915, said openly that conscription would be necessary, "because the people are getting out of hand."

II. Happening to have the opportunity of examining the forms sent down for the use of the Tribunals, I found that space was only arranged for filling in this generally futile "exemption from combatant service." Were the forms printed before the Act was passed and the alternative of work of national importance was inserted? This official suggestion may easily have had large results.

One often wondered, when moving among the machinery of compulsion, noting the piles of printed forms, and the armies of clerks attached to the Tribunals, the laborious courts martial, the increase of the population of gaols and detention barracks and their cost, the illness and enfeeblement of the victims, the great waste of all kinds of skill among thousands of capable young men, besides the ruin of businesses abandoned by conscripts, and much loss and waste besides; one often, I say, wondered whether on the whole conscription had been worth while, on a purely military valuation. I am quite incompetent to decide. But the writer of the following portion of a leading article

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from the *Manchester Guardian* early in 1921 was, I believe, an actual soldier, and his opinion has the weight due to an editorial in that great newspaper :—

“ Many ardent politicians at home seem to exult as much, or rather more, at getting into the trenches a man who feared or disliked being there, or who thought it wrong to be there, than they did at getting a volunteer. No doubt it seemed just the same thing to them, from the military point of view, or rather they did not consider the military point of view at all. But it was often a grievously different thing to a subaltern or his sergeant whether every man in their sector was a man who was carrying out a duty acknowledged and embraced by himself or whether one of them might be a man with his heart and mind not in the job.

“ Even for the late war conscription was more a political than a military expedient. It found its most eager advocates among civilians. It was never much liked by our troops already in the field ; the Australians in the field, if we remember rightly, voted against its adoption for Australia. Probably its chief real value was the political one—it may have helped to remove the false impression of many Frenchmen that we were not pulling our weight. Simply from the military point of view we should have done best for the Allied cause if we had kept to voluntaryism and given it a fair chance—not the chance that it got. The War Office killed it in Ireland. It did almost everything imaginable to kill it in England, where many recruits found it almost as hard to enter the Army as they find it now to get work. We should thus have obtained an Army somewhat smaller than the mixed one we ultimately got, but far larger than the voluntary one that we got at first, and each year it would have been reinforced, not by the whole body, suitable and unsuitable, of youths reaching military age, but by virtually everything well worth having among that body. But many politicians and well-meaning civilians can never understand that quality counts for even more than quantity in private soldiers, and that voluntaryism is the only sieve which, on the great scale, riddles out the poor qualities and keeps the good. Even when our armies

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in France had become only semi-voluntary it was still unthinkable that there should arise such mutinies in them as those of the French conscripts in the black spring of 1917.

"We shall not have any more wars in Europe as long as the men who fought in and survived the last one are alive to hold the Fochs and Ludendorffs and Churchills down, but if ever we did, strict voluntarism, organized with some intelligence and some sympathetic decency, would be the course for England, more surely than ever."

12. Brigadier-General Childs was the official in whom the persecution was incarnated. He was an able man, and among the qualities which constituted his ability was an affable and courteous attitude towards the friends of the persecuted. He was always accessible, agreeable and reasonable. But beneath the velvet glove was the iron hand, and with all the mutual courtesies there were many disappointments. All the Government schemes turned out to be worked in a worse spirit than you would gather from the anticipations of General Childs.

13. The Bill had been passed by an overwhelming majority, because members of Parliament believed that it was necessary in order to win the war. But the instinct of the people who were to be forced into the Army was in real revolt against it. Promises had been made by the Prime Minister that conscription should never be adopted except by "general consent." This then was the kind of general consent which existed. Let us take the industrial organizations.

The Trades Union Congress (January 6th) voted on the Bill, and the result gave:—For it, 541,000; against it, 2,121,000. The Miners' Federation (January 13th) showed 38,000 for the Bill, 653,190 against it. The National Union of Railwaymen passed on January 5th a resolution of uncompromising opposition.

The sub-committee of the Triple Alliance (Miners, Railwaymen, Transport Workers), on January 19th, said:—  
"As reports received from the various organizations gave evidence of the deep-seated hostility and determined oppo-



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sition of the rank and file of the workers to the measure," it was decided to remit the question to the separate Executives.

Practically unanimous votes were passed in the strongest terms by the War Emergency Workers' National Committee (January 13th), by the Scottish Labour Party (January 15th), by the Welsh miners, who threatened a strike, by workers on the Clyde, the Thames and the Mersey. The National Executive of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the National Executive of the Dockers' Union, and many other important unions, and trades and labour councils without number, were against what they rightly felt to be servitude. The meetings held expressing the voice of the middle class opposition were not reported in the Press. It is indeed a striking instance, conspicuous and on the largest scale, of the fact that in time of war organized democracy, which sometimes appears to hold the nation in the hollow of its hand, is powerless against the machine of government it is supposed to create and control.

14. The next business was to appoint the Tribunals. They were partly chosen from lists sent up by the political associations in the constituencies. No effort can have been made to choose psychological experts or men of unconventional religious sympathies or Socialist leanings. They consisted of elderly local magnates or tradesmen, often with a Labour man, known to be in favour of the war, added. One or two exceptional Quakers, who were not supporting the Society's peace views, were asked here and there, and a few women, who were generally fiercer than the men. In the larger places stipendiary magistrates and county court judges were made chairmen. Their judicial experience was a real check on the zeal of their amateur colleagues. Activity in furthering the recent Derby recruiting scheme was a passport to appointment. Tribunals were already in existence under the Derby scheme for attested men. They formed the nucleus of the bodies appointed under the Act. The Tribunals were not courts of justice, with rules and a fixed procedure. They were parts of the Executive Government, with powers not properly defined, and with a headlong, or at least very rapid, way of discharging their busi-

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ness. It was common to let the chairman decide after a word or two of conference. In trying to describe these bodies it is impossible to say anything that is universally true, except that they endlessly varied. There was nothing to check the bias of temperament. They had not evolved a type. They were, indeed they had to be, rough and ready in their judgments—though happiness and liberty for years to come, even life and sanity, depended for their victims on these momentary verdicts.

Incapable as they were of performing correctly their delicate task, unable to judge lifelong convictions which they felt to be of an eccentric type, or to diagnose his moral courage or cowardice from a man's appearance or his answers to a few stock questions, or from written testimonials, they might yet have done much better than they did, but for the presence of the military representative. He was an emissary of the War Office, a standing counsel against every application. Through being always there, often sitting at the same table with the members of the Tribunal, and being akin in sympathies, these men dominated weak Tribunals. They were treated with a deference not granted to their opponents. With conspicuous unfairness they were not, in any case known to me, sent out of the room when the appellants withdrew for the Tribunal to consult. They were generally in khaki, and often used their position to browbeat and intimidate applicants.

Publicity was afforded by statute to the proceedings. But, as a general rule, the publicity ordered by Parliament was in time refused. The sittings came to be held in small rooms, and only relatives or friends interested in the cases were allowed to occupy the limited number of chairs. The Press could not be excluded. The excellent rules for the guidance of Tribunals, sent down by Mr. Long from the Local Government Board, showed that that department attempted at the beginning to carry out faithfully the wishes of Parliament and the Government.

15. In a circular sent round to local authorities on February 3, 1916, Mr. Long wrote:—

“While care must be taken that the man who shirks

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his duty to his country does not find unworthy shelter behind this provision, every consideration should be given to the man whose objection generally rests on religious or moral convictions. Whatever may be the views of members of the Tribunal, they must interpret the Act in an impartial and tolerant spirit. Difference of convictions must not bias judgment.

"The local authority, in making their appointments to the Tribunal, should bear in mind that the Tribunal will have to hear, among the applications, those made on the ground of conscientious objection. Men who apply on this ground should be able to feel that they are being judged by a Tribunal that will deal fairly with their cases.

*"The exemption should be the minimum required to meet the conscientious scruples of the applicant.*

"There may be exceptional cases in which the genuine convictions and the circumstances of the man are such that neither exemption from combatant service nor a conditional exemption will adequately meet the case. Absolute exemption can be granted in these cases if the Tribunals are fully satisfied of the facts."

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRIBUNALS AT WORK

I. OUR rulers, then, in this Conscription Act, inflicted upon many citizens the bitter alternative of being false to the highest call or appearing to be meanly sheltering behind others. Then was instituted the most extraordinary attempt to exercise spiritual insight ever handed over to bodies of amateurs. The task would have been essentially impossible, even if exercised sympathetically by bodies of men trained to understand the ways of sensitive souls, if such men there are. But the Tribunals, as we have seen, were generally selected from such local notabilities as had shown great interest in recruiting under the Derby scheme, and such members of the Labour Party as supported the war. Then the impossible became the tragic. Suspicious to begin with, appalled by the number of conscientious objectors, blankly ignorant often of the psychology of the Christian or non-Christian idealist, and groping about with a lack of positive evidence, the Tribunals fell back on their prejudices. When the result was in doubt, it would seem that the verdict of the Tribunals generally went against the applicant. It should, I submit, have gone the other way. A lenient error only kept an unwilling soldier in useful civil work, much needed by the country. An error against the applicant rendered an otherwise useful citizen a suffering victim for years in prison or an encumbrance on the fighting strength of the Army.

In March 1916 the Tribunals settled to their work. Whilst success was impossible, they need not have failed as badly as they did. In few cases did they obtain the confidence of those whose destiny they decided. Local government is not at ordinary times a striking success

in many parts of England, and this was a branch of local government, specially autocratic in its unfettered powers, and dealing with a region of thought and conviction to which its members were usually strangers. One clear idea they had—to detect shirkers. The young applicant, a farm labourer perhaps, appearing before a ring of local squires, had often no great command of English, used only a small vocabulary in his daily life, the words of the chapel and the farm, and now stood up alone before the headmen of his village world, inarticulate with nervousness. He was met with icy manners and had to answer academic questions, not yet solved by the Bench of Bishops, about the Sermon on the Mount, the utility of force, and a German invasion. He seemed to the company and to himself to make out a poor case, not strong enough to overcome the current driving every one to the war. So that the Tribunal felt free to take the patriotic course. On this procedure the young man might suffer three years' hard labour, if he survived to the end.

2. There was little uniformity in the practice of the Tribunals. The Local Tribunal at Liverpool was hopelessly tyrannical, the one at Manchester was judicial and reasonable in the division presided over by its chairman, Mr. Edgar Brierley, the stipendiary. The Appeal Tribunal in the same building, for the Salford Hundred, was often fair and judicial in Judge Mellor's room; but I fear I have gone from Sir William Cobbett's boiling with indignation. In Parliament Square, London, two Tribunals sat, with two contradictory methods, Sir Donald MacLean holding the fort for liberty in one of them.

Mr. Prichard, a prominent Free Church minister, a well-known pacifist and a member of several public bodies in London, had two sons, both in the Civil Service. The elder one came before Sir Donald Maclean at a session of the Appeal Tribunal held in the House of Commons, with two testimonies to his character, and received exemption. The younger son appeared at Spring Gardens with four very clear and influential testimonies to his sincerity. He offered, if necessary, to resign his place in the Civil Service,

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and was willing to undertake work of national importance. His appeal was dismissed. One member of the Tribunal said that if he had been sincere he would have imitated another Battersea man, John Burns, and resigned at the outbreak of the war. But at that time he had not entered the Service and was only fifteen. Another said that a sincere man would not have used a Government tag to fasten his papers together—though it happened that the tag was his own. When he pleaded in favour of the Christian teaching, "Resist not evil," he was told that his father was in the habit of resisting gambling and drunkenness. The military representative, not knowing much of Nonconformity, sent out for a Prayer Book. Besides this, there were the usual questions about defending the attacked mother and locking the door at night. This slur upon the well-known men who had testified to his honesty may stand as a specimen of Tribunal justice.

Again, you might get justice from the Kingston Tribunal, but could hope for no exemption from the one just across the Thames. The Bolton Tribunal began by giving absolute exemptions where the Act seemed to require them; but it found itself isolated in the Lancashire district.

3. Tribunals were painful places. At Oxford, the Mayor, a tradesman in High Street, had at his disposal the liberties of undergraduates plainly of a high spiritual type. He was aided by a military representative much out of his depth, who enquired of a religious applicant whether Jesus had not said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." In reply he got half a chapter from the Sermon on the Mount read to him. The same gentleman also thought that Tolstoy was the name of a place. Such were the War Office's ethical experts. The Oxfordshire Appeal Tribunal sat for a whole day dealing with a band of about thirty undergraduates, as fine and brave a group as I have ever seen, whose sincerity was written on every face and in every attitude. The Tribunal administered non-combatant duties in the Army to all; the equivalent, as they knew, of rejection. To one only, a Quaker, work with the Friends Ambulance Unit, under a Local Government Board circular, was afterwards granted.

Scripture was oddly used at times. A military representative at Manchester asked a man if he believed in the words, "The meek shall inherit the earth." "But," he went on, "how can they inherit it without anybody to fight for them?" At a Tribunal near London a young man began to explain the meaning of a certain passage "in the Greek." "Greek," shouted the chairman, "you don't mean to tell me that Jesus Christ spoke Greek. He was British to the backbone!" Besides this, the Chairman, who thought mine-sweeping was sweeping dust out of coal mines, was only harmlessly ignorant of things outside his range. At Holborn a member of the Tribunal asked a man, "Do you ever wash yourself? You don't look it. Yours is a case of an unhealthy mind in an unwholesome body." At Shaw, in Lancashire, a member of a body bidden by the Government to be impartial and tolerant said, "You are exploiting God to save your own skin. You are nothing but a shivering mass of unwholesome fat." This was addressed to a man of high scientific attainments, employed in research under the Manchester Corporation, and asked by the British Association to join one of its Research Committees. A master at Harrow, whom I know well, was told he ought to be put across some one's knees and spanked. Such is the voice of a little brief authority.<sup>1</sup>

4. Cases of defiance of the law frequently occurred. At Seaton Delaval the Chairman told a man who refused non-combatant service that he was liable to be shot if he refused. Doubtless the idea was to make him afraid—not quite the purpose of a Tribunal. On March 8th the Leyton Tribunal told a man they had no power to grant absolute exemption. What had happened since March 2nd, when they had actually granted it? Are we to put it down to sheer ignorance of the Act that the Chairman of the Tribunal at Montrose said he had no power to grant exemption to a man who could prove that, for two years before the war, he had belonged to a society which held as a tenet that all war was wrong?

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Outhwaite in *Hansard*, March 16, 1916, a speech of great force and deep interest.

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The military representative at Sheffield told an applicant that before his Tribunal there was only one way to absolute exemption, and that was death. If he is correctly reported as calling it *his* Tribunal he was only acting, in a way not uncommon, as though he were a member of it. At Manchester once, the military representative turned angrily to the Pressmen present and ordered them not to report some words I had felt it right to address to the Tribunal. Such is the military notion of the liberty of the Press. At Wigton an applicant appeared who was dumb or inarticulate. His father appeared to speak for him, but in spite of Mr. Long's regulations that testimony and representatives should be freely heard, the Tribunal refused to hear him and dismissed the case. At Tipton a cripple, unable to appear on account of health, had sent his statement by a friend; but, quite illegally, a member of the Tribunal refused to hear an appeal by proxy. "It is not allowed." At Springhead two brothers applied. The appeal of one was briefly heard and dismissed, the second was dismissed unheard, the Chairman saying that it was "waste of time to hear the other." At Mountain Ash representation by a layman, though specially provided for, was refused. Refusals of this kind were painfully common. Attempts, more or less persistent and successful, to hold the sittings in private, contrary to the Act, were made at Falmouth, Oswaldtwistle, Helston, Bromley, Mountain Ash, Doncaster Musselburgh, Sunderland and Swansea. In the end they generally succeeded.

In one case the public were only admitted to a gallery at the far end of a long room, confessedly that they might be out of earshot. This, again, is referred to in the L.G.B. circular of March 23rd; but the Government still failed to overcome the policeman at the door of the Tribunal, so far as my observation went.

The military did not hesitate sometimes to tear up or to retain a certificate of exemption when it had been obtained. A case of that kind came under my personal notice; another is reported, and cases were mentioned in the House by Sir John Simon from Leicester and from Dewsbury. A good many of the above cases of maladministration were



published by Mr. B. Langdon Davies, secretary of the National Council against Conscription.<sup>1</sup> Some are from my own experience. Day after day questions were asked in the House, especially by Mr. Snowden. He made a long speech on the subject on March 22nd, detailing the abuses which were sent to him day after day from individuals and associations, as the man willing to plead the cause of the oppressed and in a position the oppressors could not destroy. Outside the House there was no English liberty left. It had been scorched up by the spirit of war.

The Local Government Board circular letter of March 23rd, quoted later, shows how the Act had been misinterpreted. Most Tribunals argued that since an applicant had to prove an objection to combatant service, it was only from combatant service that they could exempt him; and so they ignored their power to grant absolute exemption or work of national importance provided by Clause II (3).

The matter came before the High Court of Justice in the case of F. L. Parton on April 18, 1916, and was tried by Justices Darling, Lawrence and Avory. Justice Darling conducted the case with little dignity or self-restraint. He made small outward show of impartiality and gave his judgment to the effect that Tribunals could only exempt from combatant service. Justice Lawrence concurred, but Justice Avory could not agree that the power of Tribunals was limited in this way. It was time for the Government to intervene; they did so in the following month, in the provision made in the second Act, but only after hundreds of men had passed beyond the jurisdiction of the Tribunals.<sup>2</sup>

Another device widely practised was to tell applicants that they could not have forms of application for exemption till they had attested, as though they were applying under the Derby scheme. This was a rather obvious lie, for

<sup>1</sup> The National Council against Conscription, afterwards called the National Council for Civil Liberties, was formed to deal with the political aspects of the attack on liberty, and both Mr. Langdon Davies and Mr. Snowden were kept supplied with material from N.C.F. sources.

<sup>2</sup> Military Service Act, 1916 (Session 2), (May 25, 1916)—Subsection 3 of Section 4. (3) It is hereby declared that the power to grant special certificates of exemption in the case of an application on conscientious grounds under Subsection (3) of Section (2) of the principal Act, is additional to and not in derogation of the general power conferred by that Act to grant an absolute, conditional or temporary certificate in such cases.

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the act of attestation plainly showed that a man had no objection to joining the Army, and therefore put himself outside the conscience clause. Mr. Snowden on February 17th, Mr. Jowett on February 21st, Mr. Anderson and Mr. T. E. Harvey on February 24th, brought up cases of this kind, and Mr. Long promised to lose no time in stopping the trick, under which some men had been induced to attest.

5. Mr. Snowden's speech produced a leading article in the *Daily Chronicle* on Tribunals, criticizing "the grave scandal"—the "gross military irregularities"—"the brow-beating of men by deliberate misstatements of the law"—"the cheating of some, the kidnapping of others"—their "inconsistency, their uneven hand, their frank and avowed illegalities." The week before the Bishop of Oxford had written a brave letter to *The Times*, advising the Tribunals "to be more respectful where there is good evidence of conscientious conviction." The Bishop of Lincoln wrote a similar letter. The General Committee of the Free Church Council passed a unanimous protest. The *Solicitor's Journal* of March 18th was completely shocked by the procedure of these scratch bodies enjoying a brief tenure of power over their fellows.

It was natural that such should be the effect of the impact of these tyrannies on the minds of just men. But it did not lead to an uprising of public opinion. In war-time, it appears, standards usually accepted are thrown down. Public opinion acquiesced in the long-drawn suffering of the next three years, caused directly by these often frivolous bodies. Mr. Snowden's speech was reprinted as a penny pamphlet under the title of "British Prussianism. The Scandal of the Tribunals." It was widely circulated. It contained fifty-four narratives, similar to those I have already detailed. Mr. Snowden said that he was not reading one in twenty of the cases. The pamphlet told of men refused a hearing, denied the support of advocates, prevented from appealing, of forms of appeal being delayed or withheld, of men richly abused and insulted, of military representatives acting as members of the Tribunal, of kidnapping or carrying men off illegally, and of lawless threats of armed

action by the military. The speech was contemporary with Mr. Long's excellent circular to the Tribunals of March 23rd.

6. But the Government, after this, ceased to stand for the justice so lacking in their instruments. To all appearance popular opinion rather approved hard dealing for those who would not fight, and did not greatly mind illegalities. The state of the war, the endurance of the troops, their sufferings and their casualties filled the public mind. The persecution for conscience' sake of men dubbed faddists or even cowards seemed but a drop in the world's ocean of suffering. Nearly every family had a man or men at the war. People cannot maintain detachment of mind under such overwhelming waves of personal fear and hope. In later times the stand for human liberty made on principle by these youths will be more worthily valued.

The Government began, as it happened, with the youngest; the first batch of sufferers was, on the average, under twenty-one years old. They did not always shine in argument. They were new to this kind of dialectic.

7. For some months before, at many places, attempts had been made to afford some guidance to these young fellows. This had been arranged from headquarters in London, and was generally taken up. Every night at the Friends' Institute in Manchester, for instance, came some thirty or forty rather perplexed young men, to be advised by a group of Friends about the actual details of the procedure under the Act, the filling up of their forms, and the mazes and pitfalls into which they might be led. We had, of course, to take care not to produce bogus applicants, as we were roundly accused of doing by the less reputable newspapers. We were, in fact, honoured by visits from spies, apparently anxious about their souls. It is possible that the principal help we gave was in letting the men feel that they were not alone. We did not foresee at all correctly what Tribunals would be like. We saw some curious Biblical literalists. When I found that that was a man's line I asked him what he would say if the Tribunal faced him with "The Lord is a man of war." The answer

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came quick: "Oh, the Lord may make war as much as He thinks well. But we must not." So the business was not without its humours.

The usual poser set by the Tribunal was to ask what the applicant would do if a criminal assaulted his mother. If he said he would resist, he was a war-man; if he said he would not, he was a liar and a humbug. The proper answer required a rather careful statement of the difference between the policeman and the soldier, the difference between a testimony against organized violence in war and a testimony against all use of force—which an impatient Tribunal, even if it followed such subtleties, turned out to be unwilling to hear, and which the nervous applicant might find it difficult to formulate really well and convincingly.

Then if a man said he would not take human life, which he regarded as sacred, it was not difficult to show cases where the preservation of the lives of many depended on the death of one lunatic or criminal. But lengthy replies were not favoured.

To sum up: I have rarely, if ever, heard or read of any truly understanding and sympathetic argument at a Tribunal, such as would really bring out that depth and sincerity of conviction which it was the purpose of the Tribunal to probe. What proved to be three years of imprisonment was hastily meted out by men sufficiently incapable of a judicial temper to commit the offences described by Mr. Snowden and others above. There were, of course, more careful and dignified bodies to be found. Everything that is here stated is to be qualified by the fact that one cannot make any universal statements truthfully about the Tribunals. Variety was their note. There were a very few absolute exemptions allowed, often taken away on appeal by the military. Even in the better behaved bodies it was a shock to see men, one's neighbours and acquaintances, whom one had esteemed, suddenly transformed and appearing in a new and unpleasant light, doing what one knew to be injustice. Herein they were, after all, only in harmony with the general feeling of the time.

8. The debate of March 22, 1916, initiated by the speech of Mr. Snowden's of which some summary has been given,

was a very central one in our subject. It reveals the early situation created by the Tribunals, the unwillingness of the Government alike to permit injustice and to take drastic measures to stop it, and it shows that hopes in the good intentions of Mr. Long and Mr. Lloyd George were still cherished by the Peace group in Parliament, particularly with regard to the organizing of alternative service.

T. Edmund Harvey followed in support of Philip Snowden. He pleaded for a different spirit in the Tribunals, and mentioned that Mr. Bowes, an applicant at Bermondsey, protested that while he was stating his case one member of the Tribunal was ostentatiously reading a newspaper. The member replied, "You protest, do you? Well, you can go on protesting." The Chairman said to the applicant, "How do you know that he is going to vote in your case?" He replied, "That is what he is here for." Finally, the newspaper reader automatically held up his hand against the application. Mr. Harvey also told how Mr. Theodore Sherwell, a Friend at Redcar, was treated kindly, and even deferentially, by the Tribunal, to whom his family was known. His genuineness was acknowledged, and yet his application was refused. At Bermondsey the Tribunal refused to consider a conscientious objection by a man who had also appealed because he had tubercular disease of the spine. Apparently a morbidly tender conscience carried immunity from other diseases. Mr. Harvey pleaded with the Government to press the Tribunals to allow work of national importance, which they were ignoring. The Oxford Tribunal, he said, had before it two undergraduates, Mr. Bleloch and Mr. Postgate, who were then negotiating for work of national importance. It had refused to adjourn to permit of their arranging for it. The interruptions to this very moderate speech showed that the Tribunals in their worst illegalities had sympathizers in the House.

After an interval Mr. Philip Morrell followed, adding to the cargo of injustices already brought forward, though mentioning only a few of those the particulars of which he had in his hand. He described the case of Mr. Runacres, a scholar of Jesus College, Oxford, whom I have seen, and whose honesty is written on his face and in his every act.

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He was a theological student at Pusey House, standing, in a few months, for Honours in Theology and could have promptly entered the safe harbour of ordination. He had credentials from the head of Pusey House, from one of its Fellows, and from his examining chaplain. But a Fellow of Jesus wrote a letter to the Tribunal, saying that he was an objectionable man, being a Socialist, and he hoped he would not be exempted. Result: no exemption, and the name of his detractor refused to him. At the Appeal Tribunal he was asked whether he was a Socialist, and because of that his application was refused. While the Appeal Tribunal was considering whether he might appeal to the Central Tribunal he was illegally seized by the military. Ultimately he went to prison, to Dyce and Wakefield. He is now in the Anglican Ministry in Leeds.

Mr. J. W. Wilson followed in the House in an extremely moderate speech, urging unity of practice upon the Tribunals, and a reasonable scheme for doing work of national importance.

Mr. Arnold Rowntree, who spoke next, credited Mr. Lloyd George with a sympathetic attitude, and begged him to act accordingly. He instanced the case of Mr. Watkins, later one of my flock, or rather my friends, whom as a Quaker chaplain in goal I saw every week. The Chairman at the Ledbury Tribunal, near which my friend was then teaching, admitted that his conviction was sincere, but added "I don't believe in it"; and the Tribunal gave him no exemption. Mr. Lloyd George, thus appealed to, tried to dwell on the number of insincere applicants. He mentioned three of these, from one of which he was compelled to withdraw, the facts being known to Mr. Snowden. The second must, he said, have been insincere because he had obtained by seniority a good position in business through others going to the war—a curious argument even for a man in a difficulty—and the third was a man who had been in the Territorials. This may have been a weak case, but no details were given; and we may remember the experiences of other soldiers like Siegfried Sassoon and Miles Malleson, which were broadly of this type. Mr. Lloyd George held up to contempt those who would not join the R.A.M.C.

and save life. He had to be reminded later by Mr. Whitehouse that the difficulty was the enlistment, the Army oath, and he might have added, as was found later, the liability to be transferred from the R.A.M.C. to a combatant unit. Mr. George asked for the co-operation of the friends of the C.O.'s in arranging alternative service.

Mr. Pringle followed, telling how at Glasgow the military representative had said, "We can only allow exemption from combatant service." At Govan one of the Tribunal had said that conscientious objection was "all bunkum," thereby showing his unfitness for his work. Mr. Whitehouse spoke with misgiving of the non-combatant corps in the Army then being organized by the War Office. Mr. Long concluded by saying that no conscientious objector could possibly be sent to France and so incur the penalty of death for disobedience. How little he knew his military the sequel showed.

9. A certain circular from the Central Tribunal may find place here. I cannot do better than print the reply made to it by the friends of the persecuted, which includes the circular itself.

*To the President of the Local Government Board.*

SIR,

We desire to lay before you some considerations relative to the subject of "Conscientious Objection; Moral Grounds," which is discussed in Circular R96 (Notes of further cases decided by the Central Tribunal, circulated for the information of Tribunals). The Case No. is 55, and the decision is recorded in the following terms:—

"The Central Tribunal have had before them a number of appeals by persons alleging conscientious objection to military service not based on any religious ground. These persons are in most cases members of some Socialist organization. The cases differ.

"In some the objection alleged is based on opposition to the present war; in others on disapproval of the present organization of society, which the man considers not worthy of defence, though he would fight

in defence of a State organized in a way he approves. These opinions, however genuinely and strongly held, do not, in the view of the Central Tribunal, constitute conscientious objection within the meaning of the Military Service Acts.

“ In the majority of the remaining cases, the Central Tribunal are satisfied that the appellants have a genuine belief that the taking of human life in any circumstances is morally wrong, and the Central Tribunal hold that such an objection is properly met by exemption from combatant service. In some of these last cases the appellant has proved a genuine settled conscientious objection not only to the actual taking of life, but to everything which is designed directly to assist in the prosecution of the war. Such cases, where established, entitle the appellant, in the opinion of the Central Tribunal, to exemption from all forms of military service upon conditions as to performing work of national importance, the terms of which will be found in cases decided by the Central Tribunal.

“ The Central Tribunal have carefully considered such authorized publications of Socialist organizations as have been laid before them. On the material available they do not find that membership of any such organization is in itself evidence of a conscientious objection to military service.

“ The Central Tribunal regard the age of the man alleging conscientious objection as an important factor in the consideration of the question whether his objection is so deliberate and settled as to entitle him to exemption or to the widest form of exemption.”

1. It is clear that this finding of the Central Tribunal annuls the specific declaration of the second Military Service Act that it is within the competence and discretion of Tribunals to give absolute exemption. Under the first Act some doubt arose concerning the power of Tribunals to give absolute exemption, and in order to remove this doubt this power was categorically affirmed in the second Act. The effect of the Central Tribunal's decision is to override the plain intention of Parliament. We recognize



that the decisions of the Central Tribunal are not necessarily binding upon other Tribunals, but it is obvious that the issuing of these decisions in a Local Government Board circular gives them an authoritative character which is certain to affect profoundly the judgment of the Tribunals. It must be remembered that the conscientious objection of many men is of such a nature that it can be met only by absolute exemption.

2. We wish to point out that the distinction which is made in this decision between religious and moral grounds of conscientious objection is unsound. A conscientious objection on whatever grounds professed involves in every case an appeal to the ultimate moral authority which the individual recognizes. It is impossible to state at what point a man's moral judgment begins consciously to acquire what is commonly known as a religious or spiritual sanction, and it implies an unwarrantable assumption on the part of any body of men that it should issue a categorical pronouncement upon a subject which involves very difficult and contentious metaphysical considerations.

3. The taking of life is the greatest moral responsibility which can be imposed upon a man. It may legitimately be regarded as belonging to a category entirely separate and different from any other task which the State may require of him. Even if a man may not in all circumstances object to take life, it is morally wrong and indefensible to compel him to do so in a cause which he cannot justify to his own conscience, whatever the grounds may be upon which he has reached this conclusion.

4. We observe that it is recommended that men who have successfully sustained an objection to all forms of military service should receive complete exemption from military service "upon conditions as to performing work of national importance, the terms of which will be found in cases decided by the Central Tribunal." These terms included a proviso in one case that the "work of national importance" shall be useful for the prosecution of the war. This renders the exemption thus granted wholly nugatory, inasmuch as work which is "useful for the prosecution of the war," however indirect it may be, does by that descrip-

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tion of it become a form of service which a man who objects to war will also reasonably and rightly include within the scope of his objection. Moreover, there are men whose conscientious objection extends to any form of alternative service imposed under a Military Service Act.

5. We protest strongly against the recommendation that the age of the applicant should be regarded as an important factor in judging to what extent he is entitled to exemption on conscientious grounds. That a person's youth should make his statement of his conscientious objection crude and inadequate is only natural, but it does not at all follow that his objection is unsound or immature because he is young. Moreover, if a man be old enough to fight, he is also old enough to have an opinion whether it be right or wrong to fight; and if he is not old enough to have such an opinion, it is a moral outrage to compel him to fight. And if he be compelled into the Army at eighteen years of age because he is not considered to have a "deliberate and settled" objection, will he then be allowed to claim release from the Army, say, at twenty-one years or whatever the age may be at which his conscience may be judged to have reached maturity?

We are confident that you will recognize the weight and importance of these considerations and that you will lay them before the Central Tribunal with a view to a revision of its findings in these particular cases.

We are,

Yours faithfully,

For the Men's Service Committee of the Society of Friends,

ROBERT O. MENNELL, *Hon. Secretary.*

HUBERT W. PEET, *Organizing Secretary.*

For the No-Conscription Fellowship,

A. FENNER BROCKWAY, *Acting Chairman.*

CATHERINE E. MARSHALL, *Hon. Secretary.*

For the Fellowship of Reconciliation,

HENRY T. HODGKIN, *Chairman.*

RICHARD ROBERTS, *Secretary.*

18, Devonshire Street,  
Bishopsgate, E.C.

10. All through the conscription period questions on abuses were put to Ministers, and the art of avoiding an answer and concealing the important facts was carried to great perfection. The Government ceased in the spring of 1916 to be the champion of unpopular justice to the conscientious objectors. It suffered from the degeneracy which affected most people and institutions, as we became more deeply involved in a world of war where the moral law was wrong side up. In reply to one of these speeches, Mr. Long said that he had made many enquiries into abuses brought up in the House and had almost always found them incorrect. Anyone who knew the cases first hand would be led to the conclusion that enquiries made only of the persons accused could generally be parried with some sort of defence.

The Local Government Board wrote again to the Tribunals on March 23rd, a letter containing the following paragraphs:—

“It has been represented to Mr. Long that in some cases at least Local Tribunals, in dealing with applicants on grounds of conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service have seemed to be under the impression that the only form of exemption which could be given in such cases is an exemption from combatant duties only. If this is so, the Tribunals have overlooked Subsection II (3) of the Act. . . . Some Tribunals are alleged to have subjected applicants to a somewhat harsh cross-examination with respect to the grounds of their objection. . . . It is desirable that enquiries should be made with tolerance and impartiality. In this connection reference may be made to Mr. Long's circular letter of February 3rd.”<sup>1</sup>

The circular adds that any application made by a Friend who is willing to work with the Friends' Ambulance Unit will be acceptable to the Army Council, and will not be opposed by their representative.

The Tribunals are once more reminded that they are to hold all their sittings in private only when the circumstances of the applicant render it desirable.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter II, p. 66.

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There were many other advisory paragraphs all counseling moderation.

II. In practice, in spite of Mr. Long, and the obvious intention of the Government and the Act, the necessary discretion left to the Tribunals was abused, irrespective of what Ministers might have said in the House. Most Tribunals after a short time came to the conclusion never to give absolute exemption, and some publicly stated the fact. The War Office decided at once that it would be of no use to send all the Friends' Ambulance men back from France to stand their Tribunals, so they were exempted in a body so long as they continued this work. A few conscientious objectors who were theological students, or mission workers, or secretaries of missions, were exempted either as C.O.'s or as ministers. A very few exemptions by Tribunals at the beginning were absolute, but it is difficult to find and name definite cases. Since this was the only exemption acceptable to many, the exemption clause, speaking broadly, failed of its purpose through the action of the Tribunals appointed to carry it out. The military representative always opposed the absolute claim, presumably by order of the War Office or the Army Council. It would be interesting to see from the circulars sent down to them whether, or to what extent, the military were deliberately stultifying the House of Commons and usurping the Government of the country.

In curious contradiction to the Government hostility to the Absolutists stands the action of the Purley Local Tribunal, who early in August actually dismissed four applications because the men had expressed their willingness to accept alternative service, and so were not considered genuine.<sup>1</sup>

Quakers, as before mentioned, were generally treated better than others. Their religion was, at any rate, a concrete fact about them. When A. Barratt Brown and W. J. Chamberlain, fellow-members of the National Committee of the N.C.F., were brought up together before the Local Tribunal at Birmingham, only Brown the Quaker was allowed a conscience.

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, August 10, 1916.

At first hopes were widely held that the Appeal Tribunals, consisting of county instead of municipal magnates, would, through having greater minds, redress the impulsive irregularities of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick-maker. But this did not happen. Sometimes they were better, sometimes worse. On the average they were about the same. They had more power, because their decision was final, and it was only by their leave that any appeal could go to the Central Tribunal. This latter concerned itself with doubtful issues and the interpretation of facts, and did not always see the applicant. This made its work easier, and it saved time and expense, but it cannot have helped the correctness of their decisions. It is remarkable, as showing how far total exemption was ahead of the mind of the governing class, that this supreme Tribunal also gave no complete exemption. The conscientious objector was up against the herd instinct.

I have only seen one descriptive account of the Tribunals from the point of view of its chairman or members. This is in chapter vi. of a book entitled *For Remembrance*, by Mr. (now Sir) Harry Cartmell, who was mayor of Preston from 1913 to 1919, and has published with George Toulmin and Son of Preston an account of his long mayoralty. He was chairman of the Local Tribunal, and seems to have been a just and kindly man, and one who, whilst feeling the Tribunal's preliminary unfitness for this work, appears to have done his best, with less than the ordinary prejudice. He gives a humorous and sympathetic account of many testimonies which would generally be considered undoubtedly eccentric.

12. The only other central instruction sent to the Tribunals which we need mention is included in a batch of specimen cases, with their verdicts, which were sent down by the Central Tribunal to the Appeal Tribunals throughout the country, as a guide to their decisions.

One of these cases was that of Douglas R. Bishop, a Friend and a typical Absolutist,<sup>1</sup> about whose genuineness

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of "Absolutist" is explained in Chapter VI.

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there was no doubt. Upon it was made the following important pronouncement :—

“ The Central Tribunal, after hearing the appellant in person, were satisfied that, apart from his objection to the actual taking of life, his position was that his conscience would not permit him to accept as a condition of exemption that he should undertake any work other than work to which he felt he was called, and that of that call he must be the sole judge. The Tribunal did not consider that this was a form of conscientious objection recognized by the Military Service Act, or one that could be recognized by any organized State.”

We have here a flat denial by a branch of the Executive of a clause in an Act of Parliament, a denial both of its letter and its spirit. Parliament lays it down that the exemption may be complete, if that is what is required to meet the case of the applicant ; the Central Tribunal takes upon itself the heavy responsibility of declaring that the very kind of objection aimed at should be excluded from the operation of the clause. Parliament said that in such circumstances a man's conscience was to override military demands ; the Central Tribunal said that the needs of the organized State were to override the Absolutist's conscience. This, combined with Mr. Lloyd George's expressed intention to inflict all possible punishment upon the Absolutists, fixes the headquarters of responsibility for all that followed.

The methods of the Central Tribunal may be judged from the case of two young men named Solomon, whose father, on his death-bed, in the solemn manner customary with Jewish patriarchs, obtained a promise from his sons that they would never consent to perform military service. In pursuance of this promise they became conscientious objectors. The Central Tribunal refused to admit them as genuine because, in their opinion, the conscience was not a personal one against war, but only due to their promise to their father. In consequence of this curious limitation of the sphere of conscience, these sons were kept in gaol till the end, in spite of their willingness to accept the Home

Office scheme. A question in Parliament failed to move the authorities.

13. The Local Government Board's circular of March 23rd produced little visible effect ; it was, indeed, too late ; and on April 6th Mr. Snowden returned to the attack in the House of Commons, the only available place. He concerned himself this time with the Appeal Tribunals only, and with what had been done there since the issue of the circular a fortnight before. Non-combatant service in the Army, the verdict known to be equivalent to punishment in nearly all cases, was at this time the usual one with the Local Tribunals, and the appeals for a better verdict from the superior Tribunal were numerous. In many cases the latter body light-heartedly took away the " non-combatant " verdict and totally rejected the claim for exemption, in cases where a genuine conscience had been admitted in the Tribunal below. This was often done wholesale, without any examination. Instances of this kind were mentioned as having occurred during a fortnight or less in the Appeal Tribunals for the County of London, for Monmouthshire and for Stoke-on-Trent, where a batch of eight were summarily treated together without evidence. Ordinarily, leave to appeal to the Central Tribunal was refused. At Manchester the case papers were so marked before they came before the Tribunal at all. The Surrey Tribunal announced that " the Act does not permit exemption from non-combatant duties in the case of a conscientious objector." The Chairman of the West Sussex Tribunal announced that he had no power to grant absolute exemption. But for the state of public opinion, these Tribunals would have been discharged by any self-respecting Government. The Middlesex Tribunal admitted that a man was genuine, and then peremptorily dismissed the case, in spite of the protests of counsel. The Durham Appeal Tribunal calmly said, " We are not bound by any statement made by any members of Parliament or any circular issued by the Local Government Board." This was said to me in private in Manchester, and probably in many other places to others. The Chairman of the Middlesex Tribunal told a Socialist he could

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not have a conscience, therein following the example of the Local Tribunal at Burnley. In Midlothian the Edinburgh Local Tribunal had given absolute exemption in nineteen cases. Eighteen of these were reversed, and non-combatant service ordered. Eight military representatives were present. At Liverpool and West Glamorgan general refusal of the right to appeal to the Central Tribunal was the order of the day. The Appeal Tribunal at Manchester was being held one day in two divisions. All the men in one court got non-combatant service, all in the other had no exemption at all. It was odd that the cases should have been so divided into genuine and fraudulent. A journalist of long experience, not a pacifist, had written to Mr. Snowden : "During a long and varied experience as a journalist I have visited many courts of justice, but I have never before witnessed such a travesty. It was so flagrant that as a point of duty I have furnished a lengthy statement of it to the President of the Local Government Board, giving him a detailed account."

Mr. Snowden went on to say that, during the last five weeks, he had received 2,600 letters on the administration of the Act. That means seventy-five letters a day to the Parliamentary champion. All of us who were friends of the witnesses for Peace in those days were kept busy with letters and interviews. But the Tribunals would rarely listen. A member of a Tribunal in Wiltshire wrote to Mr. Snowden that he was convinced that these men were being treated unjustly and illegally, and that their right to a conscience was practically denied. At Plymouth the recruiting officer could write to an appellant, "You had better come and save trouble; I've had the result of your appeal already." This was before it had been heard. Mr. Snowden went on to describe a number of illegal arrests : but probably enough detail has been given already.

At the Tribunal at Willesden the Chairman asked, "Do you believe the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin?" The applicant said, "Yes," and the Chairman said, "Then would you not be forgiven if you took part in this war?" This reminds one how true it is that "if the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."



Some of the exemptions granted by the Tribunals were no less remarkable than those they refused. There was a curious tenderness to the providers of drink. A beer-taster had exemption; so had a man who supplied port wine to the troops, and a man engaged in exporting liquor to Australia; also all the brewers of the Brewery Company at Brentford. At Southwark, in March of 1916, exemption for six months was granted to twenty-one single men employed by the Amalgamated Press, one of the Harmsworth firms who print *Home Chat*, *Comic Cuts*, and such nationally important literature. At Market Bosworth all the men employed by the local Hunt were exempted.

The difficulty is to know when to stop in quoting the proceedings of these Tribunals: readers may possibly be willing to hear some more. At Oldbury:—Member of Tribunal: "Do you really mean to say you wouldn't kill anybody?" Applicant: "Yes." Member of Tribunal: "What an awful state of mind to be in!" At Worcester, to a Christian objector one of the Tribunal replied, "But the very essence of Christianity is to fight. The Old Testament is full of fighting." At Willesden an applicant quoted Jesus as saying, "You cannot serve two masters." The unabashed Chairman replied, "But I say you can serve two masters."

Very interesting accounts of the hearings given to Friends at the Tribunals were published weekly in the *Friend*, beginning March 17, 1916. The records include some of the better findings of these bodies, as well as the worse. It is difficult to select for quotation, though the cases of Henry P. Adams, H. Runham Brown, A. Barratt Brown and others sorely tempt a historian with limited space.

14. Rather than give one or two of these examinations in full, I will append a few court martial and Tribunal statements and letters, selected from a collection itself selected by the Friends' Service Committee, and printed in their pamphlet *The Absolutists' Objection to Conscription* (May, 1917).<sup>1</sup> They represent the Christian standpoint:—

<sup>1</sup> Statements from a non-Christian position will be found on other pages.

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"During my recent imprisonment I have been able not only to study the New Testament very carefully, but also to spend much time in waiting upon God, and the result has been to strengthen my conviction of the sinfulness of all war and to lead me to see that I can best serve my fellow-men by a loyal obedience to God's will. I hope, in view of these circumstances, that the court will be able to see why my refusal to wear khaki is the only course I could honourably adopt. It was this that led me to withhold any application to the Tribunal on business grounds; it also prevented me from accepting alternative service under the F.A.U. or the Home Office, and when in the Army made me refuse all medical examination. The reason is that I consider the Military Service Acts are crimes against humanity, and I cannot acquiesce in them in any way. I cannot, as it were, 'compound a felony' by accepting any form of compulsory alternative service as my price of exemption."

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is true that the 'Absolutist' position is the only one which appeals to the fighting-men. It is only by calling them to dare all and risk everything in The Great Adventure that we can attract men who have shown such wonderful heroism in warfare."

\* \* \* \* \*

"The experience I am going through is far too wonderful for words, and I really think that the last few months have been about the happiest in my life.

"I have more or less feared every stage before I got to it, but have found it all wonderfully easy when the time came, and have known in a very real sense something of the presence of God in my life. I don't think I ever felt I was imprisoned, and I found that there was no such thing as solitary confinement to one who believes in the ever-living Spirit of Jesus. I think you outside have the more difficult task at present, really. May you all know the strength that comes from our common Father."

\* \* \* \* \*

"I wish you and those who have to carry on all the burden of the work could have the joy of seeing the little group of thirty-two Absolutists at Maidstone. They are absolutely inflexible. No scheme or 'arrangement' would even be considered by them. They are all N.C.F.-ers except two; some of them are working men, Socialists, with families outside, and no personal honour to get from their stand, no reputation to make, but just their own sense of right and wrong to keep them faithful and ready for future work. Honestly, I have never gained so much inspiration from meetings and conventions and such-like as I have from these unconquerable men."

\* \* \* \* \*

"In the teaching of Christ there is no room for suspicion, jealousy and hate, only the conquering love that casts out fear. It is fear that bids the nations arm and fight against each other; until, therefore, we accept in all its literal meaning the negative commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and the positive commandment, 'Love one another, even as I have loved you,' until then we shall not only have war, but shall fail in all duty before God and man. However imperfectly I have followed that teaching in the past, my life in prison . . . has been a great inspiration to me, and I stand before you now firmer in faith than ever. I have become filled with an ever-widening sense that 'all the material force the world contains is powerless against the spirit of indomitable love.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

"I stand here reverently to witness for the heroic Christianity of Jesus Christ; for the belief that the only way to overcome evil is to conquer it by indomitable love and unwavering service. By this I mean a love that never admits defeat, that goes on loving and serving regardless of risk, regardless of possible consequences—in literal interpretation of our Master's orders: 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.'

"It will no doubt be urged that such a belief is hopelessly

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Utopian and Idealist, and cannot be brought down into the practical world of to-day."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Truth is more to me than victory, and if the great forces of love and service are ever to triumph over those of fear and mistrust, some one must try to make a beginning. I am anxious to take my place amongst those beginners."

15. Those of my readers who do not know intimately many of the more prominent conscientious objectors to war will not find it easy to realize what the refusal of absolute exemption really meant in terms of human experience. It would therefore seem wise for one who knew many of them well to try to express in a few lines what manner of men they were. The real difficulty is one of choice; for every man mentioned there are a dozen who might have been; and if I naturally select men well known and well educated, it is not that I do not realize the same unfitness in rejecting the clerk and the mill hand, who were often of as great worth and made an equal or a greater sacrifice. Indeed, the marvel of the whole movement was the rank and file. With everything to lose, and to lose inconspicuously, their courage and sincerity made one believe in human nature after all.

The men in the following list were all in prison for long periods. They had elaborate Tribunal experiences, in which they were given either non-combatant service or work of national importance, or both in turn. These they rejected as Absolutists. In some cases the Tribunals expressed regret that these were not acceptable, and that they had a (self-made) rule never to allow absolute exemption.

Clifford Allen had been a student at University College, Bristol, and an Exhibitioner at Peterhouse, Cambridge. He had devoted himself to the Labour movement on coming down from the University, and had been general manager of the *Daily Citizen*, the official organ of the Labour Party. He was not a Christian, in the usually accepted sense of any denomination; his religion was Socialism. His story

runs through all these records, as Chairman of the N.C.F. He has since become a member of the National Council of the Independent Labour Party, and has visited Bolshevik Russia as one of the Delegates from the British Labour Movement.

Walter H. Ayles was a Town Councillor at Bristol, and is a Labour candidate for Parliament. He has joined the Society of Friends, and is a member of the National Council of the I.L.P.

G. H. Stewart Beavis has resided in France and Germany, and besides his business, taught languages at the Working Men's College, Crowndale Road, N.W. His early training and his international associations led him to an intense belief in the Brotherhood of Man.

Robert O. Mennell was a London merchant and member of a highly respected Quaker family at Croydon. He was, quite unnecessarily, taken in handcuffs through his native town, on December 30, 1916, on the way to a long imprisonment. He was Hon. Sec. and Treasurer, while free, of the Friends' Service Committee, which was the active arm of the Society in the fight with conscription, and took the part of a leader at headquarters in all that happened.

A. Barratt Brown, after a course in Greats at Oxford, became lecturer on Philosophy at the Friends' educational centre at Woodbrooke, near Birmingham. He is now Vice-Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford. He was a leading member of the Friends' Service Committee, the N.C.F. National Committee, and of the Joint Advisory Council, and his name occurs elsewhere in this book. He belongs to the I.L.P.

A. Fenner Brockway was the son, the grandson, and the nephew of missionaries, and was born at Calcutta. He was sub-editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*, and afterwards editor of the *Labour Leader*, the official organ of the I.L.P. He had been a Settlement worker in Pentonville, and had travelled widely over Europe. He is at present combining with journalism the Joint Secretaryship of the Prison System Enquiry Committee, and is the Labour candidate for the Lancaster Division, and all who know him hope that his gifts may find scope in Parliament

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T. Corder Catchpool volunteered for the Friends' Ambulance Unit in 1914; had worked at Ypres when the battles raged in Flanders; and while he was in prison was awarded the Mons Medal. He finally found that the Friends' Ambulance Unit, of which he had become Adjutant, was displacing men who were drafted—with bitter complaints—to the firing line. While his friends were suffering under conscription in England, he felt that he must join them and leave his position of privilege with the Unit. He is a member of the Society of Friends, and has devoted his life to its service. He is employed in the cotton trade at Darwen.

Oswald Clark belongs to a well-known Quaker family in business at Doncaster, and was constantly occupied with the meetings and the work of the Society. His firm had refused all Government contracts, and when he found that they made leather for some firms who took such contracts he abandoned all his profits in the business.

Roderic K. Clark is a Cambridge Honours man in Economics. He is a member of many of the important committees which do the work of the Society of Friends in London.

Hugh Gibbins was a graduate in Honours of Manchester University, an influential business man in Birmingham, devoted to the Adult Schools of the Society of Friends, and would have been allowed to continue his business by the Tribunal if he had been willing to recognize that the Tribunal had any authority over him. He is an active member of the Independent Labour Party.

Stephen Hobhouse is the eldest son of the Right Hon. Henry Hobhouse. He had joined the Society of Friends and had devoted his life for many years to its ministry, and to social work in the East End. He lived, and lives, in Hoxton, in a workman's flat, a life of simplicity and privation, having renounced his position and prospects as his father's heir. He was a scholar at Eton and student of Balliol; took a First Class in Mods. and a Second in Greats. He abandoned the post he had held for seven years in the Board of Education, in order to help the refugees in Constantinople during the first Balkan War. He is physically unfit for the Army on three different counts, and

could easily have obtained medical exemption. Since the war he has devoted himself to prison reform, and has written, with Fenner Brockway, an important book upon it.

James H. Hudson, a graduate of the University of Manchester, was a teacher under the Salford Education Committee and a strikingly powerful speaker for the I.L.P. He has now joined the Society of Friends, to which in sympathy he already belonged. He might have gone on teaching under leave of the Tribunal, if he had felt it right to take so easy an alternative.

Dr. Ernest B. Ludlam is a Friend; had been a Master at Clifton College and was engaged in scientific research at Cambridge when he was arrested. The Government offered him a chance of continuing his research, but when he found that the results were being used for military purposes he refused to continue it, and went to gaol.

Hubert W. Peet is a journalist. He was Organizing Secretary of the Friends' Service Committee and one of the editors of a paper called the *Ploughshare*. He is a member of the I.L.P. and Secretary of the Friends' Central Literature Council.

Aylmer Rose was Organizing Secretary of the N.C.F. from very early days, and was kept busy with giving advice to enquirers, many of whom were helped by his clear insight. He was a distinguished debater on the side of Peace at the Fabian Society and elsewhere. He disappeared into prison in January 1917.

Maurice L. Rowntree, son of the late Joshua Rowntree M.P., took a course in Theology at Oxford and was lecturing to working people at the Swarthmore Settlement in Leeds when he was arrested. He has joined the I.L.P. He belongs to the well-known Quaker family of Rowntree, and devotes his leisure and ability entirely to the welfare of the disinherited classes. He has written two books on Social Reform.

Malcolm Sparkes had done distinguished service as the founder of the Builders' Parliament and the inventor of the plan finally modified and embodied in the Whitley Councils. He had abandoned the Directorship of his business when it became controlled. He too is a member of the Society of Friends and a Guild Socialist.

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George A. Sutherland, also a Friend, had taken Degrees in Science at Cambridge and at the Cape of Good Hope; had been a University Lecturer in South Africa; and was a Master at Harrow when conscription fell upon him. He had been a convinced pacifist for years.

Morgan Jones, M.P., is the first C.O. to be elected to Parliament. He is a teacher by profession. His father was a miner. He is well known as a Socialist speaker and leader in South Wales, where he has been a County Councillor. He was elected in 1921 by a large majority over both Coalitionist and Communist.

H. Runham Brown is a London Congregationalist, son of a Sunday-school superintendent and grandson of a minister. At his Tribunal three were for absolute exemption and four against, the result of which was the useless exemption from combatant service. The Appeal Tribunal withdrew even this admission of honesty. He served three terms of the usual length.

Wilfred Wellock had been a student at Edinburgh University; he was a local preacher, and the author of many articles and some books in favour of social reform and on religious subjects. He had carried on a pacifist periodical of his own. He belongs to the Independent Methodists, whose preachers, though they were unpaid, were exempted, but he declined to take advantage of this privilege. He was a vegetarian, and suffered a good deal in prison before a suitable diet was organized. It was my privilege to hand him in prison the earliest copy of one of his books just published.

Besides these, one might well make mention of Eric P. Southall, a member of one of the old Quaker families at Birmingham. The Tribunal stated that it was with regret and reluctance that they refused his claim. In curious contrast with this was a remark of the Central Tribunal, politely stating that they could not understand why he had not been given absolute exemption at first; which was odd, because they never gave absolute exemption themselves.

There was also Henry Smith, a member of a well-known Quaker family at Belper, brother of Lydia S. Smith, who comes later into this narrative. I have omitted the names of some others who appear incidentally in other parts of this



book. I had hoped to insert a complete list of all men who came before Tribunals, but had to abandon it. For one thing, it would have added two shillings to the cost of the book.

16. During March 1916 the machinery of exemption was enlarged in two ways:—

The Friends' Ambulance Unit<sup>1</sup> was extended for Friends only, to cover work not connected with ambulance at all. The term Friends was used as broadly as it would bear. This was called the General Service Section of the F.A.U., and it arranged for teaching, farm work, and other humble and useful occupations. The F.A.U. Committee laid it down that all who accepted work under their General Service branch should undertake to do no Peace Propaganda, and take part in no local Peace Meetings. In practice this was not enforced in very determined cases. These restrictions were not unnatural for the men doing actual ambulance work with the Army. No doubt the Committee felt that their privileged position would be imperilled if riots took place on village greens. This led to some correspondence between the Ambulance Unit Committee and the Friends' Service Committee,<sup>2</sup> who could not approve of any such limitation on general grounds; also the Service Committee disliked the plan, as being an advantage granted to Friends only, thus tending to break the full community of suffering. A Government, however mistaken, claims the right to suppress rebellion. But for a minority to convince a majority is the only course open to it, and no democratic Government is within its rights in stopping propaganda, however it may dislike them.

17. Secondly, there was a development concerning cases of men who were allowed to do work of national importance. It was extremely unusual to allow a man to continue the work he was doing, the work in which, of course, he could serve the country best. Teachers were doubtless doing work of national importance. In Germany the schools and colleges went on, and the teachers were exempted. But

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV.

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here no C.O. who had been trained to teach was allowed to do so. They had to work in quarries or on the land, inefficiently. Certain amateurs from other professions, who had not learnt how to teach, were allowed, very gingerly and occasionally, to do so. This permission to do work of national importance gave great openings for petty tyranny. In Manchester we had frequently to find home and work for men from Liverpool, whose Tribunal had a way of compelling the men to move twenty-five miles away and not to follow their own profession, a strange way to secure efficiency in a national crisis. Destitution would have followed had there been no relief organization. A man so treated had two homes or lodgings to maintain on an unskilled labourer's wage, if he could obtain such work in a place where he was unknown and untrained in new work, and where most employers would refuse a conscientious objector. In many cases sympathetic employers were prevented by their workpeople from employing a C.O. To take one instance, printed in the *Manchester Guardian*. A man from Manchester was allowed to find work there, as he had a wife and family depending upon him, provided it was poorly paid. He made thirty applications, and was finally accepted by a sympathetic firm at thirty shillings a week, half his usual salary. The Chairman of the Tribunal, when this was reported to him, remarked that the firm, being friendly, might very likely give him more, refused his sanction, and said the man must find work ten miles out of Manchester. So he faced the world again, adrift. Sympathetic employers, it appeared, were not trusted, and no others would employ him. This case is very typical. The main purpose of the body charged with the duty of careful exemption had become penal. The body set up to protect the genuine conscientious objector had become, under the herd instinct, his worst enemy. It punished him as a bad citizen, instead of granting the exemption to which he was by law entitled.

18. The difficulties about work of national importance became so great that the Government set up a Committee to advise Tribunals about it, and to endeavour to bring

the work and the workers together. Of all the bodies set up by the Government this was the most satisfactory. But its powers were, perhaps for that reason, very limited. It could do nothing but advise Tribunals when they chose to consult it about a case, and it could not enforce any advice it gave. Nevertheless it treated nearly four thousand cases and was a really useful body. It was set up by the Board of Trade and was generally called the Pelham Committee, from the Hon. H. W. Pelham, its first chairman. T. Edmund Harvey, M.P., who was the author of the amendment allowing work of national importance, was a member, and also later Mr. Charles Wright, an opponent of the war. The other original members were Mr. Charles Fenwick, M.P., and Mr. Graham S. Spicer. But for a long time many Tribunals ignored it; it could not initiate any effort to obtain or sanction work. The Clerk of the Appeal Tribunal at Manchester thought the Committee very troublesome, and did not acquaint his chairman, Judge Mellor, with the circulars about it. This chairman made a practice of giving to cases he thought genuine, "Non-combatant service under the Pelham Committee." This was a contradiction in terms; that is, in the technical terms as used. The men were carried off by the military and sent to prison. I was able to let Judge Mellor know the real situation, and he, to his great credit, set about correcting the mistake. He had about sixty cases up before him again, and gave them "work of national importance under the Pelham Committee." But alas! the Army had got hold of many of them. There appears to be no way out of the Army. It took the Judge three weeks, as it took me six, to have this wrong righted. Even at the end eight men could not be got out, and served the usual long imprisonment. To show how it worked in detail I quote an account I wrote for the Press at the time, about Harold Kiernan, the man whom it took me six weeks' effort to liberate:—

"Yesterday I was permitted to visit a brave young fellow in the guardroom at Bury Barracks. He is a working man and his parents are dependent upon him. He is hunger-striking, rightly or wrongly, and is, of course, in conflict

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with the military authority and in danger of imminent court martial for refusing to obey orders. How he came into this position is of importance to every Englishman.

“He received from the Salford Hundred Appeal Tribunal at Manchester relief from combatant duties only, and was referred to the Pelham Committee of the Board of Trade. This decision recognizes the reality of his conscientious objection. It is, however, self-contradictory, for a man excused from combatant duties is still a soldier under military orders, whilst the Pelham Committee is formed to provide and organize occupations for those who are exempted conditionally on finding work of national importance. But here comes in the curious thing characteristic of the present muddle, all of whose confusions, as it happens, tell against exemption. The chairman and the clerk of this Tribunal have both refused to take any action whatever with the Pelham Committee towards carrying out the decision. They say they have nothing to do with it, and quite wrongly assert that they have no official cognizance of its existence, though in fact the clerk has received its circulars. The Pelham Committee, on their side, are only authorized to deal with cases sent to them by the Tribunals. Between these two the victim, along with the utility of the Pelham Committee, falls to the ground; the decision becomes a mockery, the military take advantage of it and capture their man. In this case he was brought before a magistrate; his solicitor pleaded for a remand in order to get the Pelham machinery to work; the recruiting authority, with their usual sense of justice, objected, and, presumably with his eyes open, the magistrate committed the man, with an admitted conscience against the war, to the military. The authorities at the Barracks at Bury were totally in the dark about any reference of their man to the Pelham Committee, inasmuch as the papers which recorded it had been kept back by the recruiting people in Manchester, who also informed the commandant at Bury that the Pelham Committee had ceased to exist, a perfectly baseless statement. So that, if it had not been for the chance that we could turn up a newspaper cutting which the prisoner had with him, there was no evidence to prove that the whole

procedure had been a mistake. Whether the case will get worse or better I do not yet know, but I would like to ask Mr. Lloyd George, who now is 'the under dog' for whose sake he entered politics and continues there, and what are 'the Liberal principles' which are not violated in practice by the Tribunals and the military under the Act which he has set up?"

The Pelham Committee made out a list of recognized callings to which men might be put. The list was not published, but I have a copy. It is as follows:—

#### PRELIMINARY LIST OF OCCUPATIONS

which the Pelham Committee recommends to the Tribunals as being of National Importance.

AGRICULTURE.—Farm labour, market gardening and fruit growing, seed raising, agricultural machinery making and repairs. Agricultural education and organization.

FORESTRY.—Cutting, hauling and preparing timber.

FOOD SUPPLY.—Flour milling, sugar refining, margarine production.

SHIPPING.—Mercantile marine, shipbuilding and repairing.

TRANSPORT.—Railways and canals. Docks and wharves. Cartage connected with same.

MINING.

EDUCATION.

PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICES.—Sanitary services. Local authorities. Fire brigades, civil hospitals, work-houses, infirmaries, asylums.

19 To put into summary form this very variegated chapter:—We see that it records one attempt after another on the part of the authorities to remedy the worst hardships of the system. But the regulations were seldom retrospective, and always slow of application; and all the time the stream to the prisons proceeded, of men who had missed

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the later ameliorations. Irregularity of treatment was the mark of the whole system.

The sittings of these little Tribunals were mostly undignified occasions, with little that was spectacular going on. But there, nevertheless, the long struggle for freedom was being waged by the indomitable spirit of man. The State appeared to triumph and the young men went to prison. But in the suffering of three long, slow-going years their spirits won their victory over the flesh and over the world, and endured to the end, pure and strong.

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### ADDENDUM

The following sketch, written by Miss Eva Gore-Booth, begins with realism and ends with vision. It gives, I think, an equally truthful and certainly a more vivid picture of the Tribunal system than carefully collected facts by themselves can, and I think my readers will value it, and join with me in thanking the authoress for leave to print it here.

#### THE TRIBUNAL.

The ugly, airless room with its hot-looking glass roof seemed to be strewn with wreckage and haunted with memories of vain appeals and helpless protest. It was just 3.30. The watcher in the gallery, whose head was beginning to ache from the bad air, was engaged in counting up from notes, taken by her next-door neighbour, how many small businesses had been wrecked since she came in at two o'clock. It was like walking down a street looking at the remains of the shops after a Zeppelin raid. One old man, particularly, it was impossible to get out of one's head. He was a working man whose two sons had started a little tailoring business three years ago. One of them was already at the war, and the old man had come to claim exemption for the remaining son. He was so obviously frail and broken that you would have thought his case

would have wrung pity out of a drum-head court martial. He had brought with him a solicitor, who explained that if his son had to go the business would have to be shut up, and the old man and his wife of sixty-eight would have to go to the workhouse. For a moment one felt sure that even these men, with their merciless mania for destruction, must feel a touch of human sympathy and understanding. There was a moment's pause. Then the Military Representative looked up and said decidedly, "We want that man," and in a moment the Chairman was pronouncing his strange formula, "The Tribunal have carefully considered your case, and find they cannot grant you any exemption." The old man, who had stood all through the proceedings, turned and groped out of the room with a sort of lost and baffled look that was very painful. After that came a conscientious objector. He was a very young man, obviously sincere, and intensely nervous. You felt that never before in his life had he dreamt of telling the public about his religious convictions. The watcher noticed that her neighbour who took the notes was praying for him with concentrated force and energy. He was fair game for the Tribunal, especially for its clerical representative, who seemed to pursue him with the relentless animosity of the professional for the enthusiastic amateur. He was quickly reduced to pulp. It was found out that he was not really a Quaker, that he only went to the Friends' Meeting House because he agreed with their views about war, and he did not even subscribe to their funds. Of course after that he had no chance. Then the Church intervened, and the clergyman floored the poor young man with the inevitable Sphinx riddle, "If a German attacked your mother, what would you do?" The young man hesitated for a minute, then he said in a very low, uncertain voice, "I would try to make terms with him." "How I wish the Government would go and do likewise," was the thought that passed through the watcher's mind as she craned her head over the gallery railing. But down below in the Tribunal the remark was received with general derision. The clergyman stuck to his point, "Would you rather kill a German or allow a German to kill your mother?" The

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woman with the notebook drew in her breath, and prayed hard. The young man did not answer. Over and over again the clergyman repeated his question, doubtless convinced that his foe was utterly defeated, not knowing, as indeed men of his kind never do know, the difference between silence and defeat. Quickly, though after the usual "careful consideration" of a minute and a half, the man's claim to a conscience was dismissed, and he himself was hustled out. At the door, in his nervous hurry he managed to collide with the next applicant, a large and somewhat heavy-looking merchant. He had come to protest against the ruin of his business. The Tribunal were much politier to him, he was a publican, and one of them actually chaffed him about being one of his best customers. One could see they respected him as an honest, upstanding Englishman, not one of those wretched shivering cowards hiding behind their humbugging consciences. But still, for all that, his doom was sealed. The usual formula was said over him, and he went away protesting. After that two or three conscientious objectors got very rough treatment. One man, who looked refined and rather delicate, and said he was studying architecture, was asked in the good old hearty English fashion, "how often he had a bath," and if he "lay in bed all Sunday," and advised by the Tribunal "to get up early and go to bed early, and his conscience would soon cease to trouble him." The whole attack was quite unprovoked, the assumption seeming to be that the possession of a conscience indicated the presence of an unhealthy mind in an unhealthy body. Anyhow, for that young man the cross-examination began with insult and ended with injury. And all the time he was quite unmoved and gentle, yet sticking firmly to his belief that war is against the spirit, teaching and example of Christ, in the face of the Church and its official representative.

There was another applicant who gave the nerves of the Tribunal a very bad shock indeed by the crudity of his answers. He was a pleasant, smiling young man with an unperturbable temper, much at his ease, and obviously full of friendly interest in his fellow-creatures. He was asked, "Why do you consider Christ was opposed to war?"



He leant back in his chair and considered for a moment. "Well, you know," he said, slowly smiling at the Tribunal, "one can't exactly picture Jesus Christ taking a bayonet and sticking it into a German soldier or an English one either, for the matter of that!" A distressed flutter passed over the Tribunal. "Oh," said the Chairman, tactfully trying to cover up such an unexpected lapse from good taste and good feeling, "I don't think we need consider such an extreme case as that." Afterwards the same young man electrified the Tribunal by allowing that some time before the war he had lectured on "The Hypocrisy of Patriotism." By that time, of course, his case was hopeless, but he filled up the measure of his iniquities by letting out the disgraceful fact that he dared to live, and lecture too, in the sacred precincts of the Y.M.C.A. Not even content with this, when asked why he ventured to live there he said, quite unconcernedly, that it was called Christian, and therefore he thought it was a very suitable place to shelter a man with his views. Of course he had no chance, but then nobody else had either, and, at all events (the watcher thought to herself), he got a real run for his money.

At any rate, there were the three types—the nervous young man who had no fluency, but whose sincerity broke through the strain of his uneasy manner, and was quite unquestionable; then there was the other, quiet and determined; and, lastly, the straight-looking young man with the pleasant face, who knew so well how to hold his end up in that rather one-sided debate, where his adversaries had been rehearsing their parts over and over again for endless weeks of weary afternoons. Two things they all had in common, they were all sincere, and they were all dismissed as impostors by the Tribunal. The watcher had just remembered that that was the last conscience case that was going to be heard that afternoon, and was beginning to calculate how she could get out without treading on her neighbour's toes, or making too much noise, when she became aware that a new claim for exemption was being read out, which seemed to her based on rather an odd assertion: "that the Spirit of God in the hearts of men has no power to hurt or kill anyone." The Clerk read this out in a rather puzzled

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voice, whilst the new applicant sat down and looked with apparent interest at each member of the Tribunal in turn. The watcher noticed the manner of the Chairman stiffen as the man allowed he had been out of work for some years and had no permanent address. "A regular loafer," he murmured aside to the clergyman, who nodded back to him with a kind of "I-know-the-sort-of-fellow" expression. Then the Chairman began his usual conscience-searching questions. The applicant had a very peculiar voice, clear and rather high, with a curious, almost tragic, sound in it. After a few minutes the woman who took notes, and had begun writing again, suddenly shut up her book, sat bolt upright, and gazed over the heads of the Tribunal, with a look of astonished interest at the young man's impassive face. He looked up, and a glance of recognition passed between them. At the moment one was glad to see he had a friend in the gallery. He seemed a man of very decided views. When the Chairman asked him what Church or religious society he belonged to, he said, "I am not here for any Church, but for the sake of Reality and Truth." When the clergyman asked him to explain his rather blasphemous-sounding assertion that the Spirit of God had no power to kill or hurt anyone, he said, "Power to hurt is an evil thing, therefore the Spirit of God has no power to hurt anyone." "Well, I'm not a theologian," said the Chairman, "but I don't see what that's got to do with your objection to defending your country." "Don't you see," said the applicant, "that the truth in a man's soul is the Spirit of God. Therefore a man who knows his own soul can never hurt or kill a living thing. It is only they who do not understand themselves who can do these things." The Tribunal obviously couldn't imagine what he was driving at, or what all this talk had to do with conscientious objection to military service. "Anyway," one member remarked, "too much conscience seems to have a very odd effect on the brain." The young man said nothing. But when the Chairman asked him "how long he had held these views," his emphatic answer, "Always," provoked some laughter among the members of the Tribunal and one member asked him, "was he born a pacifist or

did he feel it coming on after being christened?" The clergyman frowned as if he felt this remark was derogatory to one of the most important ceremonies of the Church. But the young man answered the question at once, as if he had been waiting for it. "These ideas," he said, "are not yours or mine to come and go, and be taught to one person and not another. The spirit that has no power to hurt is your own soul, only you do not know it. When you have found your own soul you will understand my words, but not till then." The clergyman got rather red. "Since when," he said huffily, "has the Spirit of God prevented a young man like you doing his best to help his country and his friends." "I am here," said the applicant, "to show others the Reality I have found in myself, not to help them to kill each other."

"That's not what you're here for," said a member of the Tribunal rudely. "You're not thinking of helping anybody. I don't suppose a man like you ever helped anybody in his life. I take it you're here to get us to help you to get out of doing your duty and defending your country."

Now came the time for the clergyman's *coup*. "If," he said, "your mother was attacked by a German with a bayonet, would you not kill him to save your mother's life?"

"May I ask you a question in return?" said the applicant. "Do you believe in God?" and he looked straight in the clergyman's face. The clergyman was irritated. He answered sharply, "Look here, young man, it won't help your case to be impertinent; you must know I am a clergyman. . . ."

The young man answered without apologizing but without anger. "Then you do believe in God," he said. "Well, if that is so, do you not think my mother's life would be safer in His hands than in mine, stained with my brother's blood?" "I suppose you'd leave her to her fate and run away," said a member of the Tribunal, with a kind of vague spite. The young man did not answer. Another member of the Tribunal, who seemed a little friendlier than the others, asked the applicant if he would not help his country

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by doing non-combatant service. In this way he could help his friends without injuring his enemies. To this he answered with a friendly smile but a decided shake of the head, "The only work I will do is the work of the Spirit that is within me."

"In fact," said the Chairman, summing up, "you won't help your fellow-citizens, and you don't recognize your duty to the State that provides for you and defends you from your enemies. Don't you think you're rather selfish?" The young man said, "It is God, not the State, who defends us and provides for us, and all the people in the world are our fellow-citizens. I help everyone whom God gives me the power to help."

By this time the clergyman was really angry. "Do you ever read your Bible, young man?" he said. The applicant smiled. "Not often," he said. "I thought so," said the clergyman. "Then you probably don't remember that Christ told us to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." "Yes, but so few things are Cæsar's," said the young man; "some metal coins he has minted, the house he has built, the land he has seized, but never my soul or yours. My soul, my life, my conscience, my mind have nothing to do with the State. They are free as the sunshine and the air, for they belong to God alone." "You seem to me to repudiate all your most sacred obligations," said the clergyman; "do you really think you can claim to be called a Christian, in any true sense of the word?" He had taken up the telephone book, and was turning over the leaves as he spoke. There was a moment's pause. Then the applicant answered, "You may call me what you will," he said, "I am one who lives the truth he has found in his soul."

"He says he has a conscience; why, he isn't even a Christian," said a member of the Tribunal. About three minutes later the Chairman announced the decision of the Tribunal in the usual formula: "The Tribunal has given your case the most careful consideration," he said, "and, owing to your refusal to help your country in any way they have come to the conclusion that your conscientious objection is not genuine, and therefore they refuse to give

## THE TRIBUNALS AT WORK 109

you any exemption whatever." The young man said nothing, and turned to go out of the room. As he did so the woman with the notebook got up suddenly and leaned over the railing staring at him. He looked up, and there was something in his face, seen at a new angle, that startled me. I had a sudden attack of curiosity. "Who is that queer young man?" I said to her; "I seem somehow to have heard him speak before, I don't know when or where. . . ." "Oh, do you not know," she said, "it is Someone I have been hoping all my life to meet—people said He would come again, but, indeed, I never thought to find Him here."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE METHODS OF THE MILITARY

I. WHEN a man had been rejected by both his Tribunals, or had been admitted to be genuine but had received some form of exemption which he could not accept, he received a calling-up notice, and awaited at home a visit from the police. In their strange and humiliating company he was taken to the recruiting office, and thence to a police cell; there during a night of loneliness to realize the lot he had chosen, so new to his experience. He was brought next day before a magistrate, proof was given of his liability and his refusal to serve; and after having the opportunity of expressing a public testimony he was formally fined £2 and handed over to the military who were in readiness. At the barracks he committed some act of technical disobedience, such as refusing to salute or to wear khaki, and was put into the guardroom. This in time became the routine, but at the beginning confusion reigned, and all sorts of prolonged attempts, of which this chapter tells, were made to deal with these puzzling people.

The guardroom is close to the barracks gate, at a convenient spot to which to run in "drunks" brought in late. The rooms, of which there may be two, are absolutely bare of furniture except plank beds fastened to the wall. Here days and nights with the roughest and least sober of the soldiers have to be endured. There is a choice between walking about and sitting on the floor, if all the plank beds are taken by bodies reacting from a debauch. The excellent *Court Martial Friend and Prison Guide*, issued by the N.C.F., advised a C.O. to take to the police-court for use in barracks a safety razor and a tube of "Gremos" (which is used without water), spoon and fork, lest he have to eat with his fingers (as he might in some places), comb, handkerchiefs,

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pencil, letter cards stamped, and a book and, if allowed, underclothing. A man of quiet and delicate life suffers much from this first experience, and needs all the help his spirit can gather from the Unseen. But in time there were many good guardroom talks with soldiers. It is not very difficult to get access to the prisoner through an amenable sergeant. Much writing has been done in guardrooms by C.O.'s who managed to obtain the materials. The prisoners' "court martial friend" may see him freely, and may be with him to advise and help in any way at his trial. This is conducted very deliberately and under strict rules. There was in C.O. cases no need of witnesses, but the prisoner could make a full statement of his position, which was taken down verbally. Some of these are collected in a later chapter. The Commanding Officer, to begin with, used to give short periods of detention, which he hoped would put sense into these curious youths' heads. But a District Court Martial could always be demanded by the prisoner. As drill was a part of detention, the C.O.'s were perpetually committing further acts of disobedience behind prison walls, bringing liability for further punishment, until they were taken to civil prisons.

The good intentions of the Government and of Parliament had, broadly and with exceptions, been frustrated by the Tribunals. But the Army cared neither for one nor the other. Their job was, they held, to force the men to give in. They were not going to be humbugged. They were organized to prevail by force. Was the weaker going to defeat them on their own ground? Many colonels and sergeants did not think much further than this. Thinking was an awful bore, as if a fellow had not enough to do without this puzzling business. The operation of this instinctive application of brutality, till the civil power intervened, is the subject of this lamentable chapter.

2. In a military prison in Harwich Circular Redoubt were confined daily for certain hours in irons in a dark cell a squad of men on a diet of bread and water, in April 1916. They had been forcibly put into the non-combatant corps, but were in revolt against all military service, whether

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directly combatant or not. This was, however, only the preliminary to sending the men to the fighting area, where they could be shot for an example. This was being done in face of the definite pledges of Ministers and of words in the Act which stated that men could not be shot for refusing to become soldiers on conscientious grounds. It was held that this immunity did not extend to acts of disobedience after the first refusal. So said Mr. W. Long in reply to Mr. Snowden. These acts were, of course, a continuation of the one refusal. Then ensued a race between the Government, who wished no such scandal to occur, and the military, with their purpose to make an example. If it had not been for the organized watchfulness of the No-Conscription Fellowship and the Friends' Service Committee these men would have been taken to France, their friends not knowing till too late. But the story was told in every barrack to intimidate others. Every man in the guardrooms had to face the prospect of death. That was what the military wanted. The first batch, seventeen in number, were sent on May 7th. On May 9th Mr. Asquith told Mr. Arnold Rowntree that he did not know they had gone, and told Mr. Snowden that if they had, they would not be shot. The Churches and the better newspapers began to be uneasy, and Lord Hugh Cecil uttered a speech full of wisdom and warning. The Friends' Service Committee and the No-Conscription Fellowship had located the men, and were actively at work.

On May 9th or 10th Professor Gilbert Murray, on returning from France, found in London a telegram from Rendel Wyatt's parents at Cambridge saying that a group of men had been taken to France with intent that they should be shot, and asking for his help towards rescue. He went off, soiled with travel as he was, to the House, and saw his brother-in-law, Mr. Geoffrey Howard, who recommended an interview with Lord Derby, the Secretary for War. That gentleman, seen in the Lobby, replied that no doubt the men would be condemned to be shot, and would be shot, and quite right too! He gave the impression that he knew all about the plan. Geoffrey Howard, not apparently surprised at the result, then managed to get



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for his brother-in-law five minutes with Mr. Asquith, busy as he was. "Abominable!" muttered the Prime Minister. After a moment's thought he wrote straight off a letter to the Commander-in-Chief forbidding the executions without the knowledge of the Cabinet. This probably held up the military from immediate action. After four weeks they came to the compromise we shall hear of. But if there had not existed this way to the ear of Mr. Asquith, what might not have been done?

The authorities allowed a party of journalists to visit a non-combatant battalion in France and to write remarkably similar paragraphs about its beautiful surroundings, hoping to give the impression that these were our seventeen friends, all of whom had, in fact, refused non-combatant service. They were separated from one another, and put into different companies. On May 24th Mr. Tennant parried Mr. Snowden's questions by irrelevant allusions to the above non-combatant corps. On May 29th sixteen men from Richmond Castle, Yorkshire, and eight from Kinmel Park, Abergele, were sent to France via Southampton. On May 30th nine men were sent by the same route from Seaford, Sussex, handcuffed. Not all the men of these batches appear to have been conscientious objectors. The same day the Government assured our friendly members of Parliament that these men would not be sent abroad. On June 1st Mr. Tennant read, in response to Mr. Rowntree, a telegram he had sent to Kinmel Park and to Richmond, forbidding the men to be sent. Letters had been sent to the other camps. The Commanders at Kinmel Park and Richmond replied that the men had already gone. Nor did it prevent another batch from Kinmel Park being sent next day to whose case the telegram might be said to be irrelevant. As they were taken away the band played the "Dead March" to cheer them up. Mr. Tennant continued that it was not easy to rescue them, though it was very desirable. "These men left for France free men, and those who commit themselves there will get imprisonment and will be transferred home to civil prisons. . . . What difference can it make if these men are kept in France or are brought back?" Was this ignorance or worse? Free

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men do not go "under escort," as the Kimmel Commander described it, or in handcuffs like the men from Seaford. Mr. T. E. Harvey then revealed in a supplementary question something of what had happened. "Is the right hon. gentleman aware that a question was put down by private notice and was withdrawn at the express desire of the War Office authorities, conveyed to myself and my hon. friend (Mr. Rowntree) through a Cabinet Minister, and on the absolute understanding that those men should be stopped from going to France, and when I placed before the Cabinet Minister the probability that the telegram might be sent to the wrong place I also got the assurance that steps should be taken to bring them back; is he aware that I communicated with a Parliamentary private secretary about the matter during the course of that day; and is he also aware that if a telegram had been sent to ——"

The Speaker here intervened and stopped Mr. Harvey.

What had happened had been that somebody had sent the telegrams to the original camps instead of to Southampton. Why? It looked as though the military were for out-witting the Government and making an example. Mr. Tennant said that it was desirable but not easy to rescue these men. Who, then, were the real executive of the country?

From these cowardly shirkers, proved not to be genuine by impartial Tribunals, or awarded non-combatant service in the Army, came only letters of courage and even of thankfulness for the honour of bearing the ultimate testimony. Meanwhile four of these—Stanton, Bromberger, Brewster and Foister—were known to be undergoing Field Punishment No. 1. Under this a man may be kept in fetters or handcuffs or both, and secured to prevent escape. For two hours a day he may be "attached to a fixed object." That means that he may be tied to a wheel or gun carriage or a horizontal rope exposed to the sun, to snow, and to the torments of flies. Crucifixion was the current name for it. This went on for three days out of four for a period of twenty-eight days, the maximum length of the sentence. For the rest of the day the conditions were those of imprisonment with hard labour. It is bad enough to hear of this as a standard

punishment for soldiers: and it throws light on ordinary military slavery.<sup>1</sup>

On June 15th, four men—Marten, Scullard, Foister and Ring—were paraded in front of the regiment at Boulogne and sentence of death was read out. Then a pause, that no suffering might be spared, and then commutation to ten years' penal servitude was announced. Mr. Barnes, later a member of the War Council, raised the question in the House the day the news reached England, which was a week after the event. Mr. Tennant, Under-Secretary for War, knew nothing about it, and disbelieved it. Meanwhile a letter from Howard C. Marten came describing the proceeding. He added: "Through all I have been supported by a sense of the deepest peace, and humbly conscious of my own unworthiness to bear my small share of testimony to the teachings of our dear Lord, and thankful for the blessing of His Holy Spirit. Naturally, I think long and often of all the dear ones, and sincerely hope that before being confined to prison I may be given the opportunity of seeing one or more of you, but as yet I know nothing of the future."

The following Monday, June 26th, Mr. Tennant admitted that thirty-four death sentences had been pronounced and commuted to penal servitude for ten years. It must have been a black Monday for the helpless Minister.

The names of the men sent to France are in the following list. All but the last seven were actually sentenced to death; these accidentally received less harsh sentences through being court martialled elsewhere.

Howard C. Marten, Pinner; Harry W. Scullard, Sutton; John R. Ring, Barnet; Jack Foister, Cambridge; Cornelius Barritt, Pinner; Harry E. Stanton, Luton; Geoffrey E. Hicks, Burgess Hill; Adam Priestley, Stafford; Oscar G. Ricketts, Petworth; Bernard M. Bonner, Luton; Harold F. Brewster, Merton; William E. Law, Darlington; H. G. Law, Darlington; L. Renton, Leeds; C. A. Senior, Leeds; C. R. Jackson, Leeds; S. Hall, Leeds; C. Hall, Leeds; C. Cartwright, Leeds; E. S. Spencer, Leeds; J. W. Rout-

<sup>1</sup> "Crucifixion" is now abolished in the Army, at any rate under the rules.

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ledge, Leeds; E. C. Cryer, Cleveland; Alfred Myers, Cleveland; Robert A. Lown, Stansford, Ely; John H. Brocklesby, Conisborough; A. Martlewe, York; Norman Gaudie, East Bolton, Sunderland; Alfred W. Taylor, Edmonton; Wilfred Thos. Frear, Edmonton; H. Stuart Beavis, Edmonton; E. H. Walker, Edmonton; A. F. Walling, Edmonton; Frederick J. Murfin, Tottenham; P. B. Jordan, Little Milton, near Wallingford; Rendel H. Wyatt, Cambridge; J. B. Lief, St. Pancras; H. J. Willson, St. Albans; A. Helsby, St. Helens; Oliver Rowlands, Prescott, Lancs; F. C. Bromberger, London; F. Shackleton, Pinner.

In addition to these forty-one men, there were other smaller groups, mentioned later, including the New Zealanders, sent to France, nineteen in all. This makes sixty men sent to where it would have been possible to shoot them, had not the Government, under pressure, intervened and the anti-conscription organizations been constantly watchful and ingeniously active.

A month before, when the doom of death was being held over the men in all the barracks, Roland Philcox wrote from Shoreham Camp:—

“ My five comrades have again reconsidered their positions in the light of the latest information, and all have decided to remain faithful even to the gates of death. For my part I am not depressed by my prospects. I should consider it an honour to die for our cause. I have been a soldier in the real fight for freedom all my thinking life, and although, judged by the perfect law, I am an unprofitable servant, I have sometimes been faithful, and I hope I shall not fail at the finish.”

3. Howard C. Marten has written a careful manuscript account of his experiences in this adventure; and I am kindly allowed to use it. It seems best to print consecutively some long but abbreviated extracts from it; for it was the central act of the struggle with military violence at this period, and may stand as the type of many other men's experiences. It is valuable, not because it is extraordinary, but because, except for the final scene, it was ordinary—at

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this stage of the persecution. I have also a shorter manuscript of jottings by Cornelius Barritt, covering the same experience, and usefully supplementary, though not written for quotation.

For disobedience the party had been sentenced to detention in an old circular redoubt built by French prisoners in the Napoleonic wars. Howard Marten writes:—

“At the Harwich Redoubt we refused to drill, and five of us then had our hands secured in irons behind our backs, being made to stand with our faces to the wall. A friendly cat came along and persistently rubbed itself against our legs in turn. I overheard the companion on my right remark in a low tone, ‘Why, pussy, you’re the only Christian in this place.’ A sergeant of enormous girth, with a voice to match, warned us that refusal to drill would entail dire consequences.

“Next day we were ordered three days’ cells, with bread and water. There was no stool of any kind, and except at night my overcoat and blankets were taken outside. The best device I could adopt was to take off my tunic and sit on it. The only article in the least resembling furniture was a small sheet of iron let into the wall, which served as a table. I was permitted to have my Bible, and read and re-read the Gospel of John and several of the Epistles. Often I paced up and down with my eyes closed, picturing a rural landscape or a busy highway. Three times daily I received my biscuit and water, which amounted to about eight biscuits a day. I drank but sparingly, only moistening my lips from time to time. I got no exercise, only being allowed outside each morning to wash.

“During our first Sunday we were released before mid-day, and in the afternoon held a Friends’ Meeting in one of the dormitories. We must have presented a quaint spectacle, arrayed in our khaki uniforms and seated in a circle on kit-bags, mattresses and overcoats. Such times of worship and fellowship were occasions of deep spiritual experiences.”

The stupid plan of making these men into soldiers caused constant difficulties in their minds. How far should they refuse work? When did it begin to be soldiering? When was refusal irrational?

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"It was now time to consider our general position, and after careful thought it was felt that we might agree to do purely domestic work in the Redoubt, but that we must refuse to do any drill or outside work. The latter we had tried on one occasion, but finding that it consisted in carting stones from the beach in order to make a roadway through a military camp, we immediately decided to have no more to do with work so obviously military in its character. Accordingly, we scrubbed and scoured the rooms of the Redoubt incessantly, and were not daunted at carting the refuse or the coal, but our spirits were near rebellion when we were asked, with threats and abuse, to go down on our knees and scrub the stone flags surrounding the courtyard, a job for which mop and pail would have been quite adequate. Pieces of sacking or mats on which to kneel were denied us with lurid language, and thus, in no cheerful mood, we pegged away at this senseless work. . . . Many a foul corner that had not seen soap and water for a long while was unearthed for our benefit. In the centre of the courtyard was a deep well, and the sergeant conceived the brilliant idea of setting us to empty it with a pail and a long iron chain. We extracted dozens of buckets of dirty reddish water from the depths. We might have been emptying the well as long as we stayed, but the pail was lost in the water below. We also had to clear away old and disused pots, jars and boxes from the kitchen of the officers' mess. This might mean a hasty mouthful of tea or an extra biscuit, and I well remember hugging a marmalade jar and scraping the sides with a grimy finger in order to get a tantalizing taste of its former appetizing contents.

\* \* \* \* \*

". . . It was impossible to grow fat upon the diet, and not always easy to laugh over it. We, doing indoor work, felt famished, and our sympathy went out to the unhappy prisoners who, on this miserable food, were expected to do a day's heavy manual labour, with drill morning and evening, the latter period being done with full marching kit. . . . Each night, for an hour or two after we retired, the dormitories echoed with volleys of foul language."

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The party were then returned to the barracks at Felixstowe.

" We were there told that early on the following day we were to be sent to France, and that, once there, disobedience would meet with death by shooting. This officer also said that after our removal across the Channel our ' friends in Parliament ' and elsewhere would be unable to do anything for us. Each one of us was asked whether he was prepared to obey orders, and was asked to sign the active-service pay-book. We refused to comply. During the afternoon we in the guardroom held a meeting for worship after the manner of Friends, and never, perhaps, had we experienced a time when the need of Divine help and guidance was more felt."

They were taken by a roundabout way which led through the suburbs of London. One of the ordinary N.C.C. men on the train threw out a letter here. It reached its destination, and gave to the watchful organizations the first knowledge that the men were being taken to France. After a long weary journey they were put on board at Southampton. Secrecy was evidently part of the scheme ; hence an early start in the dark.

" We were handed our few personal belongings which had been taken from us at Felixstowe. These were returned, apparently on the ground that once on a troopship bound for France we should be ' deemed ' free men in the military sense, i.e. all our previous ' crimes ' would be overlooked. Good cheer soon appeared in the form of bully-beef, biscuits and tea, the first food we had tasted after our early breakfast at 3 a.m. Never shall I forget, on emerging from our cabin later, (we were allowed the run of the vessel), the spectacle of a huddled mass of humanity occupying every available corner of the transport ; and a heartrending sight it was. The circumstances of our own position were forgotten for the moment before the manifestation of the appalling tragedy then being enacted on the battlefields of Flanders."

Space compels the omission of much that happened to them for refusing to drill or to work at munitions, after they had landed and been separated from one another.

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"One good fellow brought me some bread, cheese and onion, contributions from different men, and when dinner-time arrived I had no lack of friends. Under such circumstances to win the confidence of these men gave one a tremendous sense of uplift. Most of them, while sympathetic, strongly urged me to give up the struggle, expressing genuine concern at the punishments which they prophesied would surely be visited upon me if I persisted in my refusal to obey orders. Two men, previously among the most hostile, took me along to get dinner, and we had quite an enjoyable hour together. The greater number of the men in the shop were engaged at the time in moulding steel rails. A man took me and held my hands on to one end of a long iron bar which supported a chaldron of the molten metal ready to be poured into the moulds. Another man held the opposite end, so that when the man at my end let go his hold I was compelled to retain my grip of the bar, otherwise, by relaxing my hold, I should have inflicted serious injury on the men standing round."

Cornelius Barritt received, with several others, a sentence of twenty-eight days' Field Punishment No. 1. They were taken to a military prison at Harfleur, an encampment surrounded by two entanglements of barbed wire. Here our friends, along with a hundred other prisoners, were tied up for two hours three evenings out of four. Their arms were stretched out and tied to a horizontal fence above their heads, then feet and knees were roped close together.

It was decided to send the men to Boulogne, where, as C. Barritt explains, they would be in the field zone, and so liable to the punishment of death.

"Anyone familiar with the French railways cannot have failed to observe the trucks, minus any form of windows, with a sliding door at the side, and bearing the legend: '40 hommes—8 chevaux.' The sliding door of one of these structures had been drawn aside, and one by one we, with our escort, filed into its gloomy recesses. For a time three candles struggled with the darkness, but these soon gave out in despair, and we were left without any means of finding our way about. Laden with its cargo of kit-bags,



boxes of provisions, the rifles and accoutrement of the escort, and about 25 'hommes,' that van did not make an ideal sleeping chamber. We reclined as best we might, an inextricable mass of human beings, twisted into all sorts of odd shapes and angles, and tossed hither and thither by the uncertain motions of the train, which kept stopping and restarting at frequent intervals. We alighted at Rouen, which appeared to be almost entirely in the hands of the British military authorities. A vast shed adjoined the platform, and there hundreds upon hundreds of men were waiting the order that was to send them either to the trenches or, may be, on a brief leave to 'Blighty.' To me it was another of those striking tableaux, the first of which I have already pictured in the scene on the troopship crossing to France. How like to helpless children they seemed, tired and weary in the grip of a relentless force from whose clutches they knew of no way of escape."

At Boulogne they were taken to the Field Punishment Barracks, and disobeyed an order to drill.

"We were placed in handcuffs and locked in the cells, and tied up for two hours in the afternoon. We were tied up by the wrists to horizontal ropes about 5 feet from the ground, with our arms outstretched and feet tied together. Our cells were roughly constructed from planks of wood, the wall of the prison forming the back. Then we were confined to cells for three days on 'punishment diet' (four biscuits a day and water). We were also handcuffed with our arms behind us and then placed in the cells, to the recesses of which little daylight penetrated. Being now confined to cells, we were exempted from the nightly tying up, but during the whole of the first of the three days we remained in handcuffs (except during the short time we were being interviewed by the officers), although on retiring for the night the handcuffs were fastened with our hands in front instead of behind us. After a short time had elapsed an order was evidently given for the removal of the irons, as a corporal came to wake us up and remove them. We had practically no exercise during the time we occupied the cells.

"During the week-end I [Howard Marten] was alone in

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the first of the three cells [as a ringleader, C. Barritt explains], the remaining eleven being next door, and they naturally found their quarters rather cramped. By means of a small aperture in the partition of rough planks, we were able to speak to one another and also to exchange books. On the Sunday morning we were allowed out to do some washing, and after dinner all the prisoners, including ourselves, were drawn up in the courtyard to hear the promulgation of the death sentence passed a few days earlier on a soldier who had been found guilty of disobedience. Later in the day we held a Friends' Meeting, in which I participated, assisted by the chink in the cell partition. . . .

"Foister, Ring and Scullard having been selected, 'as ringleaders' [says C. Barritt], by the whim of the sergeant, to keep me company, we heard it rumoured that the four of us would be tried at an early date by Field General Court Martial, so that our trial was apparently to be made a test case.' I immediately applied for leave to telegraph to London in order, if possible, to be legally represented at the trial, but a few hours after my application the draft of the wire I had written was returned, informing me that the Base Commandant had refused to sanction its despatch. Thus the principal witness for the prosecution had the power to censor the defendant's telegram! On the morning of June 2nd I and my three comrades, together with two other prisoners, were marched away under escort with rifles and fixed bayonets. During the time I was reading my defence the court was very still and I was given an attentive hearing. During the hearing of my case it seemed to me that some of those participating appeared to feel their position uncomfortable. While waiting outside the court, one of our number overheard an officer remark to a companion that 'it would be monstrous to shoot these men.' Owing to a technical mistake our cases had to be retried. Accordingly, on June 7th, a second court martial, this time convened by the proper officer, heard our cases, and the whole tedious ceremony was performed all over again, no detail being omitted.

"Every three nights out of four we witnessed the tying up of one of the prisoners undergoing No. 1 Field Punish-

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ment, and were filled with unspeakable disgust at the foolishness and cruelty which made such a thing possible. At this time we had a visit from the Rev. F. B. Meyer and Hubert Peet, held in the presence of officers, and inspired by a real concern for our welfare. Cornelius Barritt was allowed to shake hands with Hubert Peet, but not to speak to him." Mr. Meyer was not shown their cattle-pen cell.

This visit was the result of the action of the No-Conscription Fellowship and the Friends' Service Committee, who took immediate steps to establish contact with their comrades in France. The ingenious and successful way in which these organizations dealt with this—the most critical moment of the military persecution—convinced the Government that it was impossible to mete out any treatment which escaped publicity, whilst the knowledge that their interests were always being watched over gave great help to the objectors.

"As time wore on we often experienced little kindnesses from one or another, a friendly word or an item of news from one of the military police, or, maybe, an occasional extra biscuit, piece of bread-and-butter, or fragment of cheese, hurriedly pushed between the bars of our cage by a sympathetic hand. . . . Punishments such as half an hour's extra drill were inflicted for the most trivial offences, and often during the period of the mid-day meal I have seen men compelled to march or run round and round the yard for thirty minutes before being allowed to have their dinner. Most of the prisoners, in addition to the rigours of imprisonment, were obliged to do a heavy day's work at the docks or elsewhere; and it passed our comprehension how the poor fellows managed it on the miserable food provided.

"Rats were not infrequent visitors. They would sit on the edge of a fire bucket to drink the water and occasionally run up one's back during a meal. Often the days spent in the cells seemed endless; we played guessing games, held impromptu debates, and did similar things to pass away the time. Even during the daytime we slept a good deal, and, in the wooden cage, one felt a strange resemblance to

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an animal in captivity, pacing up and down before meals and after 'feeding time' lying down to rest. There were now eleven of us in the one cell (for a time there had been twelve, till Evans was sent to hospital with dysentery), and the adjoining cell was occupied by twelve more C.O.'s who had been sent down from the guardroom at the Henriville Camp near by. The conditions of living twelve in a cell can be better imagined than described. We could just lie six a side with our feet almost touching; but it was a problem to find room for the bucket placed in the cell for 'sanitary' purposes. The cells measured 11 feet 9 inches by 11 feet 3 inches.

"On the evening of Thursday, June 15th, the four of us who had been court martialled were taken by an escort of military police to the Henriville Camp in order to hear our sentences read out. It was evidently intended to be an impressive function, as a large square consisting of the N.C.C. and labour battalions was drawn up on the parade ground. These men occupied three sides of the square, with a miscellaneous collection of spectators in the background, while we, with our escort, were placed on the remaining side. After a hum of conversation and comment had been suppressed by the N.C.O.'s, I was marched out a few paces in advance of my companions towards the centre of the square. An officer, who, by the way, had been a member of the first court martial to try my case, read a long statement of my crimes, and then announced the sentence of the court:—

'To suffer death by being shot.'

"I have often been asked what my sensations were at that moment and have found it difficult to recollect very clearly. I think I may say that for the time being I had lost the sense of 'personality,' and, standing there on the parade ground, I had a sense of representing something outside my own self, supported by a stronger strength than frail humanity. However, in a few moments it was evident that the whole had not been said, and the officer went on to tell (after a pause) that 'this sentence had been confirmed by the Commander-in-Chief (another long pause), but

afterwards commuted by him to one of penal servitude for ten years.'<sup>1</sup>

"Each of my three comrades then heard a similar pronouncement, after which we were taken back to the Field Punishment Barracks; personally, I must confess, with views of Dartmoor or Portland, cells, bolts, bars and gangs of stonebreakers. A row of eager faces were waiting to greet us in our cells when we returned; but their owners refused to credit our account for some while. At length we succeeded in convincing them that our story was no exaggeration. Subsequently, our remaining friends received similar sentences."

Cornelius Barritt describes a memorable visit on June 18th from J. Rowntree Gillett, a Quaker chaplain, just as they were turning in. Next morning they had a Fellowship Meeting with him, sitting in a circle on haversacks. Then, after a good personal talk, the Quaker chaplain went on to Rouen, whence Howard Marten writes:—

"One evening we had just been locked in our cells for the night when the doors were reopened and we were told to go outside into the corridor. Thence we went along to the tiny room where the N.C.O. on duty slept, and there, to our amazement, we beheld our friend Rowntree Gillett. After a moment or two of speechless surprise, we learnt that he had obtained a permit from the War Office to visit the C.O.'s in France as 'Quaker chaplain'; that he had already seen our comrades at Boulogne, and that Rouen had only been included in his passport at the eleventh hour as the result of a curious chain of circumstances which had led to the knowledge of our whereabouts. Owing to misdirections and language difficulties, R. G. had experienced some trouble in finding us after his arrival at Rouen; hence the late hour of his visit, which only gave us about twenty minutes together. We sang a few hymns together, and R. G. also read a few passages. The joy and help this short meeting gave us can be better imagined than described. Next morning I was allowed to see our Friend personally, and we spent the greater part of the morning walking up

<sup>1</sup> So Howard Marten. Cornelius Barritt thinks the confirmation came after the commutation.

and down the paths of the camp and talking incessantly. The sight of civilian clothing in the midst of all that array of khaki—the materializing of the invisible chain of fellowship which had bound us to friends in England—and the unburdening of all that had been pent up within oneself during the preceding weeks was an unspeakable relief. It is not easy to convey to others all the wonder and reality of this visitation. It was the tangible assurance of Heavenly Guidance. During the afternoon Wyatt was afforded the same opportunity of talking with R. G. as had been given to me during the morning.

“At about 5 p.m. we found ourselves on board a transport bound for ‘Blighty.’ In gaol at Winchester we felt the sudden relaxation of tension and the removal of a strain that had been constantly with us for the two preceding months.”

They had known, indeed, all that time that they were a flock of sheep arranged for slaughter and kept in pens for that purpose.

4. Analogous to this deportation was that of a group of fourteen young conscientious objectors from New Zealand whose sufferings were more prolonged, and worse while they lasted, than those of the Englishmen in the parallel case. They were deported in the night from the home prisons on the plea that they were to be counted as members of the Expeditionary Force, in spite of their refusal to be soldiers. Probably the authorities there did not want the unpopularity of persecuting them at home, and it was apparently an added pleasure to remove them out of the knowledge of their families without warning, and to allow no letter from them. Sir James Allen, when catechized, said they were sent to give them another “chance” of joining up. One group had to be carried bodily on to the transport, and one man just managed to leave word behind to his parents that they were determined to stand out to the end.

The men’s names were :—

John Baxter, Archibald McC. L. Baxter, Alexander Baxter, William Little, Daniel Maguire, Mark Briggs, Fred Adin, L. Penwright, Harry Patton, Albert E. Sanderson,

Garth C. Ballantyne, David R. Gray, L. J. Kirwan, Thomas P. Harland.

They were confined for three weeks, with short occasional intervals, in a small cabin with porthole closed, and given no basins for sea-sickness, as indeed very few soldiers were. Nearly all the men were sick. Refusing to wear khaki, they were stripped on the top of a hatch before a crowd of soldiers. Between Cape Colony and England they were subjected to brutal treatment on refusing to put on khaki. Their own clothes were thrown overboard; they were then severely treated with the hose pipe, clothed in khaki, and when they put it off, left naked on deck in face of a crowd of passengers of both sexes. They wore nothing but a towel round them all the way till, three days before reaching Plymouth, they managed to get singlets and pants, and landed in these. Three had been left for a time in hospital at the Cape, due to an epidemic of measles on board. The measles ward ventilated into their "chink." Throughout their incarceration it was more difficult for our English organizations to get into touch with them than it was with men from English districts. Finally it was achieved.

At last they were discovered by their friends in England at Sling Camp, Salisbury Plain, where they lay in irons for several weeks, and went about in singlets and pants, refusing khaki and having nothing else. Then one was sent to France by himself. For a long time they had no knowledge that our English friends were trying, against military opposition, to get into touch with them and to encourage them in their lonely case. The Labour Party in New Zealand, through Mr. H. E. Holland and others, bestirred themselves to the rescue the moment they had left. Then more were sent to France—in handcuffs. Those in France were the three Baxters, Little, Maguire, Briggs, Patton, Ballantyne, Kirwan and Harland.

The experiences of three of these men—Mark Briggs, Archie Baxter and Garth Ballantyne—are told at length in their own words in a book called *Armageddon or Calvary*, by H. E. Holland, M.P., formerly editor of the *Maoriland Worker*, at Wellington, New Zealand, and published by the author at 207, Happy Valley Road, Brooklyn, New Zealand.

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for 25. They form a pitiful record of the lot of very determined men, who were prepared to suffer anything, in the grip of a vast machine of organized violence.

None of them would wear khaki. Day by day the khaki was put on them, and by them taken off. To prevent this, they were kept handcuffed all the time, with their hands generally behind them, in the painful solid handcuffs called "figure of eight." When the handcuffs were taken off for a meal they used their hands to remove the khaki once more, which again was forcibly put on. Periods of starvation, voluntary and involuntary, alternated with periods under the doctor and in hospital. Their attitude was defiant all the time, and Mark Briggs's case was complicated by his refusal to walk anywhere under a military order, so that he had to be dragged along the ground or carried. Their line of testimony puzzled and worried the military extremely. They met a few colonels and generals and doctors of kindly and liberal mind, who understood the reason of their apparent eccentricity and admired their courage, but who were not able to do for them all they would have liked, when they were once in the Army. Below these, there was a range of increasing bullying, profanity and cruelty till we reach the sergeant of military police, who, under orders from officers at Ypres, had Mark Briggs laid on his back, weak from his cell diet, with a cable wire round his chest. Three soldiers were harnessed to the wire, and they dragged their victim for a mile up a footpath of planks with battens nailed across at short intervals. This was called the duck-walk, and was made to spare people from walking through the mud. The buttons were torn off his clothes, which were all pulled off, so that his bare back was next to the planks and battens, making on the lower part of the back a great flesh wound a foot long and nine inches wide, which became full of dirt. When they came to a shell crater, which they did three times, they threw him in and dragged him through the water. When out on the bank on the other side, they picked him up and threw him head over heels back into the water, telling him to drown himself. They then asked him at intervals to give in and walk. He was absolutely exhausted and shook



all over, but he refused to give in so long as he drew breath. He found that it was impossible to get up and walk back, so two soldiers had to half lift him along, with his feet dragging on the ground. He once asked to be put down because of his unendurable sufferings under this treatment, but the police in charge refused, in expressions fortified by profanity. It naturally required prolonged hospital treatment and terrible pain to recover from this. The man responsible was publicly "counted out" by the soldiers, who were intensely indignant, and who threatened his life with hand grenades.

The later parts of these narratives tell of removals from one hospital to another, and a final return to England. In the end the wrecks were sent home to New Zealand. One man records that his weight fell from eleven stone to eight. There were numerous instances of "crucifixion" and of solitary confinement, and of bread and water diet. They were threatened at times with immediate death on disobeying an order. They were kicked along the ground.

5. Alec Baxter, William Little and Garth Ballantyne received a sentence of five years' hard labour for disobeying an order. These long sentences, however, were given to terrify the others; and were all changed to two years on arrival at the prison; for it was not legal to keep a man abroad with longer sentence than that. These men went to a military prison camp, on the exposed low-lying swampy shore near Dunkirk. It was Prison No. 10, and though the smallest, held about four hundred men. The inmates were not criminals, but had broken discipline in some form. It seems worth while to describe a military prison, not because its hardships specially fell upon conscientious objectors, but because they were, on the contrary, the doom of ordinary soldiers. No doubt the reply of the Army would be that discipline is essential to success in war, and must be maintained, if necessary, by terror. If this be so—and probably the military know their own business—so much the worse for military discipline, and therefore so much the worse for war.

The prisoners in this camp occupied bell tents, about

sixteen men to each. Two long low corrugated iron sheds, with small windows high up in the wall, were the punishment cells. The whole was surrounded by two high barbed-wire fences, with sentries walking between them. The prisoners received a bullying reception in order to cow them down, and thirty of them had to have a bath in two small tubs of lukewarm water. It was December, but all their woollen underclothing was taken away from them. The three then refused to obey an order, and were put into solitary confinement, with bread and water, wearing figure of eight handcuffs for about twelve hours a day. Their food was 8 ounces of dry bread at seven in the morning, with water, and the same at five in the evening. The cells were 7 feet square, and the iron walls were dripping with frost. Ballantyne writes (quoted from *Armageddon or Calvary*):—

“ During the first morning I sat down on the floor to rest my legs, but I rapidly became so cold and stiff that without the help of my hands I had the greatest difficulty in getting on my feet again. This was a lesson to me, and during the remainder of my punishment I walked from corner to corner of my cell, three short strides each way, for the full twelve hours each day. My arms and shoulders ached almost intolerably, and became so numbed with cold that when the handcuffs were removed they hung powerless at my sides. For weeks and weeks afterwards I felt the effect of this punishment in my arms.”

“ This much was the authorized punishment, but during the time that a prisoner was in the cells he was in the hands of the warder in charge, who administered by kicks and blows such punishments as he deemed necessary for the ‘maintenance of good order and discipline in the cells.’ Generally, when a prisoner was sent to the cells for punishment he was first taken into a cell, stripped naked, sometimes handcuffed; then the warder would proceed to administer a sound thrashing, using both his hands and feet, one warder during his turn in charge of the cells going so far as to use a heavy leather belt. Then, when the prisoner was beginning to get groggy, buckets of freezing cold water would be thrown over him to revive him, and finally he would be given a bucket and cloth and be told to dry up

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his cell before he would be given back his clothes. Often the bumps and thuds of the poor prisoner against the iron walls and his yells and cries for mercy could be heard all over the compound.

"The next form of punishment we experienced was shot drill. This is an old form of punishment, abolished years ago in the Navy as being inhuman. It is still good enough, however, for our up-to-date military prisons. The shot in this case consisted of a round bag of about 9 inches in diameter, filled with sand, and supposed to weigh 28 pounds, although when the sand became wet it was usually heavier. To do the drill the prisoner stands with the shot between his feet. The warder stands with a whistle, and in time to his blasts the prisoner first bends down, picks up the shot, and balances it on the palms of his hands in front of himself; then, on the next whistle, he takes three quick steps forward, on the following whistle placing it down between his feet again and standing up straight; then down, up, three paces forward, down; and so on for perhaps an hour, with only one or two short rests of a few minutes. Each movement has to be made distinctly and sharply, and the warder's whistle is generally just a bit ahead each time, so that the prisoner has to go his hardest in order to keep up. It is, in fact, just an ingenious device to tax absolutely the man's strength to the utmost. The effect, I found, was to make me horribly giddy and to produce terrible pains in my back and forearms. This punishment was often given in conjunction with No. 1 Field Punishment.

"The prisoner sentenced to No. 1 Field Punishment was put with his back to a post and his hands handcuffed behind the post, and he was held practically immovable by three straps, one around his chest, another around his knees, and the other around his ankles. I have seen men kept thus in driving snow and sleet for two hours, and when released they could scarcely stand. They would then almost immediately be put on to shot drill 'to loosen their joints.' "

The three men concluded after consultation that they would agree to work, seeing that the work consisted in protecting against air raids. They were then liberated from the punishment cells. They then found that the

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ordinary rations were: Breakfast, 1 pint of thin gruel without milk or sugar and often without salt, 8 ounces of bread, 2 ounces of dripping, 2 ounces of cheese; dinner, 8 ounces of bread and 4 ounces of bully-beef; tea, 8 ounces of bread, 1 pint of soup in which—if one were lucky—there might be a piece of fat meat or a potato. This was for men doing hard manual labour in bitter cold. When the prisoners could get near the cookhouse of some other camp, they would sneak over to the swill-tubs and dive into them, pushing the stuff they picked out down their throats so as to get it eaten before the warder saw them.

Washing in the morning consisted of a long routine in which the men had to be in the open air with nothing on but shirt and trousers for half an hour, in the bleak Channel wind before the winter's dawn, often with snow on the ground. The water was generally frozen; they had to shave with public razors—very dull—freezing water, common soap and no glass. If not clean and tidy on inspection they were apt to be rejected, stripped and scrubbed with an ordinary scrubbing brush till the blood ran from them. They worked in all weathers, seven days to the week. They had to place their socks between their blankets at night to keep them from freezing stiff. Drinking ice water produced constant diarrhoea; boils and chapped hands were common, and skin diseases. The clothing supposed to be clean was so full of lice "that almost every man was crawling alive." The Chaplain carried on service once a fortnight, at seven in the morning so as not to interrupt work. The men sung lustily; but "God save the King" was usually "a duet for the Chaplain and the sergeant-major."

In an Appendix to *Armageddon or Calvary*, there is an extract from an account which appeared in the *Australian Worker* of August 28, 1919; signed by No. 3861 Private P. H. Sutton, 49th Battalion, A.I.F. This soldier says, with regard to military prisons:—

"I have seen men die from the scandalous treatment they received, and I can also give the names of two men who purposely destroyed their own eyesight to escape the horrible torture which was driving them insane."

Naturally, bad temper, deceitfulness and quarrelling were rife, and the case of any men of somewhat inferior

intellect was terrible. One of these poor fellows had tried to escape from the Army by putting his hand on the rail in front of the wheel of a slowly moving truck; but the doctors had repaired his wrist, and he was sent to prison for the act. "There he was the butt of every warder and the joke of almost every prisoner. I had befriended him a little, and he used to come to me with such questions as to what would happen to him if he were to eat sand, 'would it kill him or only make him ill?' I hardly had the heart to dissuade him from ending his misery." It will be remembered that this is an ordinary military prison, and the treatment not peculiar to C.O.'s.

Finally the three men decided that they had borne their extreme testimony long enough. They had stood threats of being shot for disobedience, and they were now willing to become stretcher bearers at the front. They only decided on this after they heard that no more C.O.'s were being sent from New Zealand. As soon as this was done, over twenty letters which had come for Ballantyne from his mother—by every mail during the year past—were handed to him. Such was the cruelty of the régime necessary for war! On release, Alec Baxter collapsed with rheumatic fever and was sent to England to a hospital. Little was wounded on the second day of his stretcher bearing, and died of his wounds; Ballantyne stayed at his ambulance work till the end.

One man came out of the hospital at Sling Camp, where he had had dysentery for a long time, a mere bag of bones, and in that condition gave in, and was allowed to write home. Gray consented to do gardening work at Sling Camp. Concerning the treatment of others:—Kirwan and Archie Baxter were "crucified," or tied to poles at the roadside, in view of passers-by, in cold weather, through a bitter snowstorm. Baxter and others were knocked down again and again by blows on the jaw.

6. A third instance of an attempt to get rid of conscientious objectors by shipping them across the sea occurred in the case of twenty-five Canadians who, after a particularly cruel incarceration in Canada, were shipped to England. On their arrival here they were "beaten and kicked around

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a field by soldiers." O. K. Pimlott gives an account in more detail of one incident.

Whilst he (Pimlott) was in hospital from scabies one of the men named Sidney was knocked about with boxing gloves for two or three hours every morning, and the same in the afternoon, for three days in succession. Sometimes the soldiers used their fists and sometimes sticks. Two men pounded him the first day, five on the second, and on the third day ten men stood around the walls of a small room, with boxing gloves, and kept him whirling about in the middle with a bleeding nose. On the fourth day Pimlott came out of hospital, and both received similar treatment, under the authority of officers. The men fell down dizzy, and were restored with cold water and with kicks and by being pushed into a deep trench. Both men lost consciousness for a time. They were then put up at a target, shot at with blank cartridge and struck with the gun, and again lost consciousness. Then they were sent to Wandsworth Military Prison. Here the whole company refused to drill, and underwent almost continual punishment for about one hundred days. This was of the usual type: three days bread and water, alternating with three days of slightly better food; close confinement in an absolutely bare cell; and no communication with the outside. Under this many of the men were "beginning to crack up." Finally the stupid attempt was given up, and the men returned to Canada, where our information concerning them ceases. They wrote that their spirits remained "in quietness and confidence."

Miss Joan Fry, one of the Quaker chaplains, but unable to visit civil prisons because she was a woman, devoted herself instead to visiting military camps. After going from official to official, she at last got leave to visit one of these Canadians who was a Friend. With joy she presented herself again at the barracks with her permit. The officer brought her back word that the man did not wish to see her, and she departed, puzzled and baffled. She found afterwards, when he had returned home, that he had only been asked if he would see the Chaplain, and had declined, thinking it was the ordinary Anglican official. Such was the cruel meanness practised by the military.

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7. Nor were these cases the only ones in which the military defied the Government. At the end of March 1917 three men were sent to France: C. H. Pett, C. J. Wright and J. Bunce. On hearing of this, C. G. Ammon, the Parliamentary Secretary of the No-Conscription Fellowship, wrote to General Childs at the War Office, and he telegraphed to France ordering the immediate return of the men. More difficult to remedy was the case of A. Catherall, who was sent to France on December 6, 1917, where he had to undergo great cruelties for disobeying orders. He was confined in an iron-sheeted, concrete-floored cell, about four yards by two, and sentenced to fifteen days' No. 1 diet; that is, bread and water for three days, and compound diet for three days, alternately. He was handcuffed and leg-ironed night and day. Instead of the regulation fourteen ounces of bread each day, he found on complaining to an orderly that he was only receiving eight ounces—in cast-iron biscuits which broke his teeth. His handcuffs were only removed for about five minutes a day. An order came that he was to be roped as tightly as possible to a post for two hours, wearing irons also. This was repeated several times, even after his sentence was over. Then came further disobedience, further punishment and hard labour. Once he was removed to another room to hear the death sentence pronounced on a murderer, "to show me what the Army can do." Ultimately, after very strenuous Parliamentary effort, he was returned to a civil prison in England on February 18, 1918. Mr. Macpherson defended his being sent to France, ignoring Mr. Asquith's pledge of June 29, 1916.

In June 1917 five men from the Manchester Regiment—Garland, Middleton, Price, Keighley and Davis—were sent in the same irregular way. Mr. Charles Trevelyan brought up these cases in Parliament. The men were finally brought back.

In the spring of 1917 Ernest V. Millwood and Charles Allen of Hackney were sent across. Millwood was an only son, to be exempted, according to Mr. Asquith. He was sent up to near the firing line at Courcelles, and was there given five years' penal servitude, being finally liberated in April 1919.

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8. The elaborate concoction of these death sentences was but the most conspicuous incident in the military terrorism of these early months.

Some Lancashire men from Darwen were taken to Preston Barracks, forcibly stripped, marched around the great barracks square practically naked and frog-marched—that is, the right arm and the left leg were held up and the man pushed along on his left arm and right leg, a terrible experience. Other men were emptied out of their clothes as out of a sack, head on the ground; one, at Preston, forcibly dressed in khaki, was kicked round the room till his groans could be heard outside. D. S. Parkes, at Winchester, was several times told to prepare for death, a rifle was loaded and presented at him, and order to fire was given. At Bettisfield Camp three men were marched across the camp, one entirely the others nearly naked. Mr. Snowden described the treatment at Preston Barracks as being beaten with sticks, handcuffed, kicked across the barracks yard, indecently assaulted when undressed, and subjected to filthy language.<sup>1</sup>

One man was handcuffed to a bar with his arms above his head for forty minutes, “standing on tiptoe to relieve the pressure on my wrists.”

The first idea of the military was, of course, violence. When a conscientious objector refused to put on uniform—usually the first order he received—he was apt to be forced into it. From Hounslow Barracks came a letter signed Templeman, Larkman, Jones, Jones, Ebeling, Forrester, Moat. It said:—“To-day our clothes have been wrenched off our bodies and a uniform forced on. When we removed it on principle, they took us from the cells to the detention room, and left us with only an undershirt for four and a half hours, with no heating. We were made to stand thus half naked before officers in front of the door and in view of the public highway.” This is mentioned not because it was an isolated case, but because it was typical of many, and represents the way some military officers reacted to the first challenge of the conscientious objector.

At Cardiff a large group of men had to lie on the floor

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, May 17, 1916.



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all night without supper, and with no meals all next day. They were asked at intervals to obey an order, and refused. In the evening bread and cheese was given, the policy of starving abandoned, and blankets provided. They taught the soldiers the "Red Flag." I happened to meet this group later at Kinmel Park, looking draggled and unshaven as all C.O.'s did. One, Dorian Herbert, held up a gold crucifix. Thereby I knew they were C.O.'s and began to greet them sympathetically, but was forbidden to speak to them; so I had to address their guards, in words loud enough for them all to hear. We had great joy together.

A letter from F. Beaumont from the guardroom at Pontefract is so typical that it may be quoted from the *Tribunal*, May 11th, pp. 2 and 3:—

"April 4, 1916.

"DEAR COMRADES,

"Still alive and fighting. Have been forcibly examined, but have refused any payment or to sign any papers, and have refused to don the uniform about half a dozen times. Consequently, I am still in civilians; but they are going to use force in the end. They have tried all means to induce me to wear the uniform—threats, demands, requests, entreaties, and, worst of all, have impressed upon me the absolute insignificance of one individual in a modern army. The officer told me that, having been handed over by the country to the Army authorities, they could do just as they liked with me. It is not until then that one realizes the worst of conscription. When I refused to be examined they told me it would be of no avail, since they could tame lions in the Army. I replied that they could perhaps make lions tame, but they could never make lambs fierce! They have offered to forgive my past offences if I will start and be a soldier from this moment, and thus save themselves a great deal of trouble and myself a good deal of suffering, they say. I expect I shall get about two years in a military prison, probably as an example. . . . Numerous kindly intentioned officers have endeavoured to persuade me to accept the inevitable, and give up acting the goat. But when a man is prepared to give his life for his ideals, surely veiled threats or suffering will not alter his decision."

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At the camp of the 3rd Cheshires at Birkenhead an outburst of violence occurred in such a public place, and was so widely reported, that the War Office intervened and issued the circular referred to below forbidding such conduct. Birkenhead Park was the drill ground, and Mrs. Beardsworth was among the public spectators when her husband, along with Mr. Dukes, was thrown over a seven-foot hurdle, pushed up an eight-foot sloping plank, and thrown into water, suffered elaborate and continued kicking of his ankles and punching of his head. The ankle-kicking and knocking about were also perpetrated on Mr. George Benson. The whole brutal treatment lasted about two hours, during which Mr. Beardsworth was dragged about on the ground, had his hair pulled out, and suffered whatever else military tyranny suggested.

Because of the publicity given to this case, the soldiers who had actually perpetrated the violence were court martialled. But Messrs. Dukes and Beardsworth refused to give evidence against the soldiers, for they regarded their officers as the real culprits. The facts were not denied, though the word "brutality" was objected to, and the effect upon the Government was achieved.

A. Robinson writes<sup>\*</sup> an account of how he was frog-marched down to parade with his equipment tied on his back. Afterwards, for refusing to work, he had a pick and shovel tied round his neck and a pack put on his back. He was then handcuffed, his feet tied together, and a cord tied from his ankles to his hands and pulled tight till his legs bent. He was left like this for two hours. Next morning he was hit about the head, knocked down, and beaten with a stick until he was black and blue. A military policeman sat heavily on his chest. Later he was knocked down, and men stood and pressed on his chest with one foot; when his hands were tied to the handle of an oat crusher, one of the police hit his knuckles till his hand was swollen. Similar treatment was accorded to another man from Pilling, at the same camp.

James Devlin of Burnley, though a conscientious objector, consented to join up under family pressure, but afterwards

<sup>\*</sup> *Tribunal*, October 5, 1916.

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obeyed his better self and resisted when already a soldier. His lot was hard, being in detention barracks at Gosport. He had solitary confinement for fourteen weeks, with only half an hour's exercise per week. His food for thirteen weeks was bread and water, with a little occasional variation. The rule that this diet should only be given for three days at a time was ignored. The doctor said he knew he was breaking rules, but would do it nevertheless. Mr. Devlin was left twenty-four hours with no sanitary clearance, and uncleaned utensils were given him on purpose. He was too prostrate to conduct his case on his second court martial, and he left the place a mere wreck.

The case of Maurice Andrews, in Hereford Detention Barracks, is of the same type. He is a Jew, Russian born. He was stripped of his civil clothes, left eight days in a cell in singlet and pants, his hands strapped behind his back for four hours daily, then handcuffs used instead; but when they found that he could then unloose his clothes, the strap torture was resumed. Along with this was the usual starvation. A soldier remarked that unless they made detention so terrible that a man would do anything rather than endure it they would never keep discipline in the Army.

It is probable that if the Act had been carried out, and exemption given as it should have been under it, there would have been some mob violence and perhaps lynchings of the exempted "shirker." Organized mobs twice attacked meetings at the Brotherhood Church, Southgate Road, in North London, with peculiar violence, not shrinking from what was nearly murder, with iron bars as weapons. The riot finally culminated in an attempt to burn the church. This was a fully organized effort. A series of noonday Peace Meetings held weekly at the Friends' Meeting House, Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, were regularly invaded and interrupted by organized opponents. There were also two savage attempts at arson, one successful. In November 1916 Canadian soldiers, otherwise famous for lawlessness, tarred the roof of a hut at Seaford in Sussex where ninety C.O.'s slept, intending to burn it over them; but they were stopped by an armed party of the Royal Sussex Regiment. On June 16, 1918, soon after midnight, the wooden house

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where twenty-five C.O.'s were sleeping at Ditton Priors, Shropshire, a quarrying centre, was burnt to the ground in twenty-five minutes, and all the clothes and property in it were burnt, worth £225. Joseph Sturge, a well-known Friend from Birmingham, went over to investigate, and was satisfied that it was an intentional burning.

By 1918, however, in most places, the feeling both in and out of the Army had come round to one of kindness to men seen to be honest and brave. The true offenders against the clause in D.O.R.A. about damaging discipline were, in fact, the Tribunals, who had placed amongst the conscripts these courageous irreconcilables.

9. The writer of the following was a young solicitor's clerk in Manchester. The letter, written on the yellow covering of a cigarette packet, was smuggled out to his family by a friendly soldier at considerable risk. Mr. Brightmore, adjudged to be a humbug and a shirker by Local and Appeal Tribunals, and similarly rejected by the Central Tribunal in its still more discriminating wisdom, had already proved his courage and honesty by eight months in prison. He was not an Absolutist, but was willing to take the Home Office scheme (see Chap. VI).

" THE PIT, SHORE CAMP, CLEETHORPES.

*" Sunday, June 24, 1917.*

" MY DEAR —,

" This is the best stuff I can find to write what may be my last letter. Everything has been taken off me, and I should not have this pencil but for chance. I was bullied horribly when I was tried, and sentenced to twenty-eight days' detention in solitary confinement—to be given raw rations and to cook my food myself. This does not sound bad, but I have found the confinement was in a pit which started at the surface at 3 feet by 2, and tapered off to 2 feet 6 inches by 15 inches. Water was struck, but they continued until it was 10 feet deep. The bottom is full of water, and I have to stand on two strips of wood all day long just above the water line. There is no room to walk about, and sitting is impossible. The sun beats down, and through

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the long day there are only the walls of clay to look at. Already I am half mad.

"I have not heard from you since I came out of prison, but I know there are many letters waiting for me. I cannot, therefore, tell what may happen when I get to France, whether the death sentence is being exacted. . . . I hunger-struck for two days in the hole here, but found I was getting too weak to resist, and my brain, too, seemed to be giving under the strain.

"I wish I could see your letters. I could be reassured or know your wishes. As it is, I feel sentenced to death, knowing that within a few days I shall be in France and shot. The fact that men are being sent to France at all is proof positive to me that the military authorities have captured the machine, and are able to do as they like with us.

"What have our friends been doing? It is nothing but cold-blooded murder to send men out into the trenches to be shot like dogs for disobedience. I am not afraid to die, but this suspense, this ignorance linked up with the torture of this pit, have plunged me into misery, despair, madness, almost insanity. [Here follow references to private matters.] The hardest thing is leaving you three dear ones behind, and the suffering and anxiety I am bringing upon you. All these weary months of imprisonment we have lived on hopefully. Now the cup is being dashed from our hands, and in liberty's name. . . . Good-bye.

"JAMES BRIGHTMORE."

The friendly soldier adds :—

"They would not listen to him. They cursed him and told him he was a soldier and they would do just as they wished. It is no use Brightmore making any complaints, because they have orders to take no notice. This torture is turning the man's brain."

He estimates the depth of the hole as 12 feet. "In fact, they were going deeper, when they found water." He adds: "He has a blanket or two, and an oil sheet on the

top," which sounds as though he was kept there both night and day.

The above account was printed in a letter in the *Manchester Guardian* on June 30th, with severe editorial comment. Forty minutes after the paper arrived at the camp, Brightmore was taken out after eleven days' confinement, the hole hastily filled up, and further attempts were made to conceal the incident. Mr. MacPherson, in the House of Commons, was supplied with shamelessly misleading information; for a visit from a superior military officer resulted in the dismissal from the Army of the Major who was responsible.

Brightmore made a further statement on July 8th, which was also communicated to the *Manchester Guardian*, as follows:—

"A hole was in course of construction when I arrived, June 18th, which was already about 4 feet deep. . . . For four days intermittently the pit was deepened a little at a time, from 7 feet on Monday night to 10 before the week was out. On the Tuesday water was struck, but instructions were given that the hole must go deeper still. For four days I was up to the ankles in mud and water, but on the Friday two strips of wood were let into the wall of the pit for me to stand on. They were not more than 3 inches wide and 10 or 11 inches apart. One of them, owing to the clay giving way, sank into the water after twenty-four hours."

He was told on all hands, and quite believed, during these days of physical suffering, that his five friends from the same camp taken to France had been shot, and that he was going to the same fate with the next draft.

"It rained very heavily one day, and I was taken into a marquee. I slept the night there, and was again taken there next day." (Then the men responsible for this act of kindness were reprimanded for putting him under cover without orders.) "Next night, about 10.15, I was roused from my blankets and taken out to sleep on the sodden ground."\*

\* I am quoting from my own letters to the *Manchester Guardian*, and have seen the originals of the correspondence; v. also *Hansard*, July 18 and 23, 1917.

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The Major, who was dismissed, made various public speeches afterwards, in protest against his dismissal. He had, indeed, acted in (apparently unconscious) disobedience to a War Office Circular of September 19, 1916, directed to stop all outrages and insist on the ordinary regulations being observed by the military. The General in command shared in his dismissal.

Concerning Jack Gray at Hornsea Camp, the first intimation that came out was in a letter from James Crawshaw, dated June 23, 1917.

“ On the Monday morning, May 7, 1917, the breaking-in processes were begun on Gray by the bombing officer, who used his powers of persuasion by means of more or less gentle ankle-tapping to bring him to attention. Then, on Gray's refusal to salute, he foamed at the mouth, and gave vent to terrible language. Subsequently he threw a live Mills bomb at his feet, after removing the pin and failing to persuade Gray to throw it when ordered. Gray stood perfectly calm and still when the bomb was hissing at his feet, and the officer who threw it had to run for cover. The officer then wanted to shake hands with Gray, saying, ' Your — guts are in the right place, anyhow,' but Gray declined.

“ After dinner there was a repetition. Tuesday morning, May 8th, Gray was introduced to the physical training staff and Lieutenant —. Here abuse and persuasion were blended, and on Gray's refusing to obey, his tunic was removed, shirt neck opened, puttee tied round his waist in lieu of a belt. Orders were then given, all of which he refused to obey, and was knocked into the various positions each time. The sergeant burst his mouth with a heavy blow. He was threatened with a ducking in the pond. Next day there was a repetition, and he had to endure a very long stand in the position referred to, facing a bitterly cold wind (the camp is a very exposed one), interluded with threats hurled at him by the company sergeant-major, who had a valise filled with stones, which Gray was to be made to carry as a pack under forced marching. Under these accumulated threats Gray broke down for the first time, the ordeal being beyond physical

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endurance. Many other and very varied acts of brutality were committed which can all be proved by eyewitnesses, such as the use of soft soap rubbed over the head and face by N.C.O.'s and others, who manifested unmitigated delight in exercising their brutality.

"One day his arms were trussed up his back by force, he was tied in that position with a rope, and a man then pulled him round the field by the rope, walking, running, etc., alternately. On another day he was stripped naked, a rope tightly fastened round his abdomen, and he was then pushed forcibly and entirely immersed in a filthy pond in the camp grounds eight or nine times in succession and dragged out each time by the rope. The pond contained sewage. He says the effect of the tightening of the rope after the second immersion cannot be described, and was still more intolerable when, after the last immersion, they put upon his wet and muddy body a sack with a hole through for the head and one for each arm.

"The foregoing is only a part of the illegal and brutal acts perpetrated upon John Gray, in such a manner that eight of the men ordered to carry out orders refused to do so, and thereby rendered themselves liable to a most serious charge and trial by court martial. . . ." So far Mr. Crawshaw's letter.

Gray finally gave in, hardly knowing what he did. The wonder was that he stood so much—a brave man beaten in body and mind. His persecutors have earned the fiercest curse that ever fell from the lips of Jesus, the woe upon those who made one of these little ones to stumble. Under pressure from Mr. T. P. Whitaker, the member for the division, a military enquiry was held and lasted four days. The officers were censured, and Gray transferred to another unit. No one was allowed to see the report.

10. Mr. C. H. Norman had an experience in Wandsworth Military Detention Barracks which also resulted in the dismissal of his tormentor, Lieutenant-Colonel Reginald Brooke. At his court martial Mr. Norman went into the witness box and gave evidence as follows:—

"I was put into a strait-jacket on two occasions for



over twenty hours," he said, "and during that time I became unconscious. I was in hospital for seven days, and was brought out to parade. I declined, and was put on a bread and water diet. Then I made a hunger, thirst, and sleep strike for forty-eight hours. For two nights I walked about my cell, and then found I could not go on. So I went on with the hunger and thirst strike, and was forcibly fed on two occasions. The process was this—I was laid in a strait-jacket on the bed on the first occasion, with three or four attendants, although I offered no resistance of any sort or kind. A tube was put in my nose, and the food was pumped down through the nose for fifteen minutes. After that I was kept for an hour and a half in a strait-jacket. The Commandant came round and looked at me, and was most abusive and insulting. I noticed that Colonel Brooke was usually most abusive and insulting when I was in a strait-jacket.

"I declined any food, and the next day there was the same process, except that it was done through the mouth, and the feed tube which was used was too large for my throat. The result was that I had twenty minutes of the utmost agony, and naturally that had very grave effects upon my general health and nervous condition. In the meantime I had got out of communication with my friends as to what was going on,<sup>1</sup> and I decided that I would not—in fact, I could not—go on, in view of the treatment I was undergoing, with that sort of thing. For several days I was spitting blood, and still had internal pains, as the result of this operation. It was unnecessary to do it this way, because if the food had been administered in the ordinary way I should have taken it. It was done as a punishment. It was a form of torture.

"It was perfectly impossible for any man with self-respect, or who calls himself a gentleman, to obey the orders of the Commandant. He called me a swine, a beast, and a coward, and I have not uttered a discourteous or uncivil word to anyone, notwithstanding the treatment I have had. I have been spat at by the Commanding Officer three times. The Commandant's excuse for the strait-jacket was that

<sup>1</sup> The N.C.F. was, however, aware of it and was acting.

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I had threatened suicide. I did not say that. I said I gathered from the treatment that I should be driven to suicide. I was put into a strait-jacket fifteen minutes after I was taken into the place, and it was deliberately done, in my opinion, to break my health. I was only given a bowl of milk to drink, and I fainted during the night. The strait-jacket, which was too small, led to a great increase of the ordinary pain."

Colonel Brooke was the sort of man to whom, whether in Prussia or elsewhere, Militarism is congenial. He was delighted to hear of the treatment of Rendel Wyatt, a Cambridge graduate, who was put in irons in a dark cell and sent to France, and "hoped the whole lot of the conscientious objectors would be treated in the same way"; he said he cared nothing for Asquith or Parliament, but would "do just as he liked with these men." "I shall continue to act in my barracks according to my orders, without any regard for what you or any of the so-called 'public' may think. I do not care one atom for public opinion." Let us hope he has learnt better now.

These records of outrage are merely typical. They are cases which became well known more through accident than otherwise. But abroad there were other sufferers, such as W. G. Tyrell, who suffered Field Punishment No. 1 at Bapaume for a month, nearly every time within the range of shell fire, so that the guard was at times afraid to stay near him. At Boulogne Field Punishment Detention Barracks the daily diet consisted of 6 ounces of beef and three biscuits, with a quart of tea without milk or sugar. A prisoner writes: "In the morning we were so hungry that we usually ate the whole day's rations, and in the evening it was a case of searching round dustbins for potato peelings and such-like scraps. The hunger was the worst of it. I asked to see the doctor; he gave me two pills, which I thought made me worse. I reported next morning, and was given one pill, the doctor saying that he did not want to see me any more. I was given half an hour's extra work that day for daring to ask to see the doctor." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Tribunal*, August 16, 1917.

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11. The purpose of this chapter has been to narrate the facts as a historian should, not as its main purpose to excite sympathy for the sufferers. The sufferings themselves only compare, even at their worst, with the horrors endured by a certain proportion of the fighting men, and the risk of such horrors was taken by all soldiers. Nor is it fitting that the testimony should be borne in such a way as to avoid sacrifice. The trouble is that these sufferings, such as they were, were inflicted, not only contrary to the law, not only wastefully from the point of view of victory and the conservation of national resources, not only by Englishmen upon Englishmen, but in flat violation of that Divine faculty which is, in the last resort, the only guide to the steps of man. It was an attempt to stifle that sense of duty on which alone a sound State can be built and ordered.

Most of these military proceedings were, to the astonishment of colonels and sergeants, quickly known to the No-Conscription Fellowship, whose organization was of inestimable value at this crisis. Mr. Snowden and others in the House, and the *Manchester Guardian* alone among the great daily newspapers, did not flinch from exposing these deeds, and compelled the Government to act. Not that it would be fair to say that only fear of public opinion caused this. There was a real difference between the civil and the military attitude. "I only wish they would let me shoot one of these fellows," (the men sent to France), said an officer at Kimmel Park to a C.O. "No, that would be a soldier's death," replied a colleague. Contrast Mr. Tennant, Under-Secretary for War, in the House, on May 20, 1916:—"I would like to say on my own behalf that, while the conscientious objector has not made my path easier, and has not eased the wheels of the chariot of war, and is not likely to do so, I am afraid I cannot, for my part, withhold my—I do not want to use too strong a word—but certainly my respect for persons who on religious grounds will undergo privation and even persecution rather than do violence to their conscience. I would make that admission at once, and I hope the House will realize that that is my view."

It was plain that the military were not the people to deal with these men, even when "deemed to be soldiers."

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And the Army, on its side, was embarrassed by them. Hundreds of rebels against their orders, quickly becoming thousands, were earning the respect and admiration, not always unconfessed, of the conscript soldiers. This would never do. Howard Marten, for instance, writes :—

“ During the journey I received an admission from one of the escort that if he had previously realized the sincerity of our views he would have shown us more consideration, confidentially informing me that he had had a good pot of tea brewing that morning and expressing his regret that he had not shared it with us. On learning that I was a smoker, he showered cigarettes upon me, and one could not but be touched by these simple words and acts of kindness. Such experiences, as time went on, were not infrequent, and eventually we came to look upon them as a natural sequence to the attitude of quiet cheerfulness and confidence which it was our invariable endeavour to preserve with the escorts and military police who had to watch our steps.”

So on May 25, 1916, Army Order X was issued, under which men passed from their court martial into civil prisons. This was to apply to all men who asserted a conscientious objection, even if the Tribunal had disallowed it.<sup>1</sup> This was hailed as the remedy for military torture. In the end it became so. But, like everything that appeared to ease the lot of the victims of the Tribunals, it was given with grudging hand. It was not retrospective at first. Every technical difficulty was put in some quarters in the way of its execution. In the end, however, by the usual means of pressure, it was universally put into force, and the final stage in the Government's methods was reached, the long incarceration in civil prisons. Brutality was mostly stopped

### <sup>1</sup> ARMY ORDER X.

#### “ OFFENCES AGAINST DISCIPLINE.

“ 1. With reference to paragraph 583 (XI) of the King's Regulations, where an offence against discipline has been committed, and the accused soldier *represents* that the offence was the result of conscientious objection to military service, imprisonment and not detention should be awarded.

“ 2. A soldier who is sentenced to imprisonment for an offence against discipline, which was *represented* by the soldier at his trial to have been the result of a conscientious objection to military service, will be committed to the nearest public civil prison, as if his offence was included in paragraph 607 (I) of the King's Regulations; the provisions of sub-paragraph IV of that paragraph shall not apply to a soldier so sentenced to imprisonment.”

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in England by a drastic letter from the War Office, dated September 19, 1916.

The letter ran :—

“ SIR,

“ I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that it appears from reports which have been received in this Department that in certain instances attempts have been made by Commanding Officers to compel conscientious objectors to perform their military duties by ignoring acts of grave insubordination and ensuring compliance by physical means.

“ I am, therefore, to request that you will be good enough to take steps to ensure that such a procedure, if it is taking place, immediately ceases, and that Commanding Officers be informed that acts of insubordination committed by conscientious objectors should be dealt with strictly in accordance with the law. The men concerned should immediately be placed in arrest and remanded for trial by court martial, unless a minor punishment is awarded, or the soldier concerned elects to accept the award of his Commanding Officer.

“ It has also been reported that Commanding Officers have been awarding sentences of detention without giving the soldier concerned the opportunity of exercising his right to be tried by a court martial under the provisions of Section 46 (8) of the Army Act. If this should prove to have been the case, the Army Council will seriously consider whether the officer concerned, who has been guilty of a grave dereliction of duty and disregard of the law, can be permitted to retain his command.

“ It should be clearly pointed out to all concerned that the treatment of the conscientious objector who is resisting lawful military commands should be exactly similar to that accorded to any other soldier who is guilty of acts of insubordination, that it is entirely subversive of discipline if a soldier who commits an act of insubordination is not immediately placed in close confinement, that any special treatment in the way of coercion other than by the methods of punishment laid down in the Army Act and King's Regu-

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lations is strictly prohibited, and that very serious notice will be taken of any irregularities in this respect which may come to light."

(This was officially signed.)

The earlier sentences of two years were shortened to 112 days, in practice about three months, for good conduct marks deducted a possible one-sixth of the sentence. The expectation was that after this experience most of the men would give in. When it was found that this, like other misunderstandings of the pacifist make-up, was falsified—the remission was dropped; two years was given in all cases, with the same sentence to follow till death, or the imminence of death, or a general amnesty, occurred. It lasted, as we shall see, for three years.

12. After the military methods of torture had been abandoned in England they were still continued in Egypt, to which place popular opinion was not expected to reach. J. B. Saunders was arrested in May 1916. He at first gave in and joined the Army, but the conviction that he had done wrong grew upon him and he did not return to the Army from furlough in October. He was court martialled and given one year's detention. After three months in Barlinnie Military Detention Barracks, he was sent secretly to France, shipped under a false name and regiment, court martialled for refusing to carry his equipment, and after seven days' detention was sent to Egypt. He reached Alexandria on April 14, 1917. He was court martialled and sentenced to six months' hard labour, and sent to Gabarree prison. He wrote in August to his wife at Halesworth in Suffolk, from Mustapha Camp, Alexandria:—

"I was kicked out of Gabarree prison on Saturday, August 11th, and since then I have been in this camp. I want you to understand once and for all that I am doing nothing. *I will not submit to conscription.* Therefore I am in the same position I was in on that memorable Thursday when I left home, and I am confidently waiting for the military to reimprison me on another false charge. Please

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understand I will *never give in*. The authorities here now admit that I am a C.O., and I am offered N.C. work. This I *refuse* absolutely, for two reasons. I was sent out here in irons by the most despicable methods anyone can conceive. I was put into handcuffs and chained to another soldier. When the handcuffs were taken off on board ship, I was locked in the cells until the ship was well out to sea and I was also in the cells below ship across the Mediterranean. I was escorted by Sergeant Williams and Corporal Findlay, of the 103rd Training Reserve, Portobello. I was told at Barlinnie that I was to be flattened out. I was told by a friendly N.C.O. on board to bolt as soon as I arrived at Alexandria. I was told at Gabarree that I was to be finished off.

" You remember I said I would face the music. You may believe what I say that I am not afraid of anything the military can do. I have been in chains and handcuffs, crucified to a tree in this broiling sun nearly every morning and evening, for five months have had bread and water and solitary confinement. I refused to do any work whatever, so I leave you to guess what five months alone in a cell, doing nothing, is like. Seven times I went down with dysentery, and seven times I managed to get on my feet and face the music. I fainted, and had to be driven away in a barrow. This tropical sun and chaining up nearly drove me mad. I stuck it, and got finally bowled out, and was sent to 19th General Schools Hospital for seventeen days. I was offered R.A.M.C. work. I refused it, and asked to be sent back to prison to do full six months. I left hospital nextday, and was doing seven days' No. 1 Punishment diet, chained up in the sun, etc., when suddenly I had the chains taken off and I was released. They have discovered at last that they cannot break me. They failed at Barlinnie, and I intend them to fail here. I am determined to sacrifice all rather than give in. Many times I thought I should hang in the sun and die. I pleaded with the sentry to shoot me. I cannot tell you the misery of it. . . . I'll die fifty times rather than endorse the wicked thing. I have several friends here. If I am to be flattened out, they can do it in jail. They can have my body; my mind I

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will destroy rather than allow the military cult to take it. I was flooded for weeks in my cell with water, two buckets of creosol were thrown in, and I was gassed. I was naked for several days and nights in chains. I had to lie on the concrete floor. However, I believe the doctor stopped these horrible proceedings. To chain a man up in the tropical sun is illegal. . . . If my letters suddenly cease, I shall be in prison in Gabarree. Don't misunderstand me. I am determined to do nothing out here."

13. A set of fourteen men were students at the Missionary Training College of the Seventh-Day Adventists, a sect whose tenet is that they must observe the Jewish Sabbath from dusk on Friday to dusk on Saturday. For about eighteen months they worked in a non-combatant corps in France and were excused work during their Sabbath. Then some military genius decided that this testimony should be outraged, and they were ordered to work on the Sabbath Day. For refusing, they were sentenced to six months' hard labour. On November 23, 1917, they entered the prison. "In the most offensive and blasphemous language we were told that this particular prison was the worst place in France, that they were able to break men's hearts there, and that after a few days we should be glad enough to work seven days a week. As soon as we ceased work, five or six sergeants armed with sticks and revolvers rushed at us and knocked us down in turn with their fists. As each man rose from the ground this treatment was repeated. The attack was renewed with sticks and we were brutally kicked whilst we were on the ground. Two now drew their revolvers, but were prevented from firing by the others. We made no resistance. We were rushed to the punishment cells, the sticks being freely used on the way, and several sergeants ran in amongst us, deliberately tripping us and throwing us heavily on the ground. We were put in irons in the cells, our wrists being gripped securely one upon the other behind the back in irons called 'figure of eight.' In some cases the irons were too small and caused excruciating pain on being screwed up. When helpless, we were again punched severely about the face



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and body, and each man was isolated in a small cell 7 feet by 4½ feet, having concrete floor and iron walls. Here we were left in extreme cold."

After this they were punished alone individually. One man was selected as ringleader because he was the tallest. The smallest pair of "figure of eights" were screwed upon his wrists. To get them on him the flesh was ripped and cut in several places and the circulation cut off. "I was pinned against the cell by one sergeant whilst the others in a rage struck me continually about the head and in the stomach. One man lifted me up bodily, and with his knee threw me backwards to the other side, causing the irons to cut me and sending acute pains through all my nerves. I dropped to the floor, was picked up, collapsed again, and was then kicked several times in the middle of the back. Finally I became unconscious. I had made no opposition by word or deed. Next morning I was again violently knocked about till I fell to the ground. I felt pains and bruises everywhere, my eye was blackened, one was completely closed, my jaw seemed locked on one side and my nerves were out of control." He was threatened with shooting. The terrible process was carried on again the next day until the Sabbath was over, when he was given six ounces of bread—the first food for twenty-four hours. I am thankful to be free to spare my readers what I consider the more horrible tortures inflicted on the ordinary soldier prisoners. They may be found in the *Tribunal* for April 4, 1918.

It will be remembered that men who had accepted, or who had volunteered, service in the non-combatant corps or the Royal Army Medical Corps on conscientious grounds, had in 1917 been forcibly transferred to combatant units. As a result of the agitation which had been raised, the men had been retransferred. But in the summer of 1918 about fifty R.A.M.C. men, at what was thought to be the safe distance of Cairo and Alexandria, were thrown into a military prison for refusing on conscientious grounds to accept transfer into combatant units. A typical case was that of Norman Stafford, a volunteer before the days of conscription, who had done three years of useful and dangerous service in

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England, Salonica and Egypt. He was sent to Gabarree prison, Alexandria, for two years' hard labour, in August 1918. He writes: "I was taken in to see the Governor, who, like the gentleman he is, gave me the best cursing I have ever had in my life, and when he could no longer find breath for foul words, ordered me No. 2 Punishment diet and a cell." Bronchial pneumonia followed, and then malaria, and, to save dying in prison, he petitioned for a release and was sent back to his regiment to be discharged. Other deaths took place in prison. Finally, thirteen men were, in May 1919, ordered home to complete their sentences in English prisons. The War Office pledges—that they would be retransferred or released—were thus broken, and that in the case of men who had done years of dangerous voluntary service.

To recount more stories like this is, I hope, unnecessary. Another equally bad story of the cruelties perpetrated on seven N.C.C. men in France who refused to collect shells, and refused to work in a military prison, may be found in the *Tribunal* for October 17, 1918.

The conscientious objectors had, in England at any rate, converted the Army to friendliness. Courtesy and indulgence became the rule. As the war became more wearying and less comprehensible, as doubts of its correspondence with its advertised purpose arose, the soldiers' and officers' attitudes towards these quietly dignified sufferers softened. Many a bit of rations and many cigarettes changed hands. The colonels, weary of the repeated courts martial, tried friendly arguments. The soldiers felt that all of them together were the victims of a cruel régime.

## CHAPTER V

# THE ORGANIZATION OF PEACE

THE machinery of military compulsion was now organized. It will be well to outline the counter organizations of the men of peace.

### I. THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

1. At the beginning of the war the Society of Friends was the only body ready organized for action.

At the Meeting for Sufferings in November 1914 a Declaration on the War was made and sent round to all Meetings of Friends. It began by quoting the testimony issued in 1804 and in 1854 stating that "all war is utterly incompatible with the plain precepts of our Divine Lord and Lawgiver, and with the whole spirit and tenor of His Gospel, and that no plea of necessity or of policy, however urgent or peculiar, can avail to release either individuals or nations from the paramount allegiance which they owe unto Him who said 'Love your enemies.' To carry out such a profession consistently is indeed a high attainment, but it should be the aim of every Christian." The Declaration proceeded:—"Whilst reaffirming this statement of our faith we cannot shelter ourselves behind any traditional tenet. We are in the presence of living issues. To-day many of our fellow-countrymen are impelled to enlist by a sense of chivalry towards the weak and by devotion to high national ideals. To-day again the members of our Society, especially the younger men, are entering upon a time of testing. We can well understand the appeal to noble instincts which makes men desire to risk their lives for their country. To turn from this call may seem

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to be a lower choice. In many cases it means braving the scorn of those who only interpret it as cowardice. To not a few it involves the loss of employment. The highest sacrifice is to contribute our lives to the cause of love in helping our country to a more Christlike idea of service. Those who hear the call to this service, and who respond to it, will be helping their nation in the great spiritual conflicts which it must wage.

“Already arrangements are being made by Friends to give opportunities in the stricken districts of Europe for the alleviation of disease, misery and starvation. We see danger to principle in undertaking any service auxiliary to warfare which involves becoming part of the military machine.

“The determined stand made by our members and others in Australia and New Zealand against their military laws, involving opprobrium, hardship and personal suffering, constitutes an urgent call to us to stand firmly and loyally to our principles.”

Then follows a quotation from the Society's official Book of Christian Practice :—

“It is a solemn thing to stand forth to the nation as the advocates of inviolable peace ; and our testimony loses its efficacy in proportion to the want of consistency in any among us.”

Quite apart from any danger of conscription, and with no view of escaping an Act not then thought of, the Society saw that its proper service was to save life, as it had done in previous wars. The story comes into this record because it affected the position of many hundreds of conscientious objectors when conscription rose over the horizon. The relief work was carried on by three large committees :—

The Friends' Ambulance Unit Committee.

The War Victims' Relief Committee.

The Emergency Committee for the Relief of Germans  
Austrians, Hungarians and Turks in Distress.

In addition, extensive Peace Propaganda were carried on by the Peace Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, the Northern Friends' Peace Board, and by local Friends

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in many places. Three hundred meetings protesting against the war were reported in the first five months. As mentioned later, the Friends' Service Committee, composed largely of men of military age, was appointed by the Yearly Meeting to help and advise all who desired to take up special work. It became the Society's organ for acting against conscription in all possible ways.

2. The Ambulance work was the first to be organized. It had an unofficial origin, and during its earlier history it was not "recognized" by the Meeting for Sufferings—the quaint seventeenth-century name of the Society's Executive. Some Friends thought its work was too closely connected with the Army to be quite free from military colour. In time this cautious official attitude of the Meeting was abandoned. The Unit reported to the Yearly Meeting, but it was not controlled or appointed by it. Sir George Newman was its chairman throughout. No doubt the Unit did provide a useful opening for men whose sense of national duty was strong, and who would gladly devote themselves to caring for wounded soldiers, even though such men might be and were thereby restored to the fighting forces, and though the Unit's voluntary work did spare the national funds available for war. These men thought that they were not responsible for ultimate results, and were satisfied not themselves to prosecute war. The membership was not in the early days confined entirely to Friends. After conscription came in, the Government insisted that it should be, except for men allowed by their Tribunals to enter. Not all the Unit men were conscientious objectors. Some few went over to the Army; and a few, after conscription came in, did not feel it right to escape so much more easily than their comrades, came back, and were thrown into prison.

The Ambulance Unit was formed by Philip J. Baker, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and his friends, as soon as war began. They organized a training centre in the old barn and buildings at Jordans Farm, the well-known Quaker centre near Beaconsfield. The British military authorities did not welcome this unofficial and unprofessional

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assistance. They were rather embarrassed in those early days by fugitive missions of mercy enthusiastically begun for a time by society ladies, and they were slow to discriminate between these and the beginning of a growing band of trained and unusually capable young men, to whom, later, nurses were added, who might be relied on to last out. The French were more perceptive, and at first not so well supplied. They welcomed a body of men who paid their own expenses; and therefore the Friends' Ambulance Unit worked at the beginning for the French armies. Afterwards the British Army officials wished they had been less professionally stiff. The first band of Friends went over to Dunkirk, not knowing exactly on what service they were to enter. On their way they had to rescue the crew of a torpedoed ship and to put back. So they landed without having had any sleep for twenty-two hours, mostly spent on the water, and very tired. They found a dreadful need ready to their hands. The large warehouses of the port were being used as temporary stations for the wounded, on their way to be shipped to hospitals at Havre. The poor men were tightly packed in straw on the floor—parched with thirst, racked with helpless pain, with wounds many days old and gangrening. A hideous stench choked the place. The living and dying lay in one rotting and screaming mass. With no orders from anybody the young men, unrested and unfed, began what relief they could—in the way of water and cleanliness and the binding up of freshly torn wounds. All night and into the next day they worked.

In time the Unit got into its stride. Hospitals were set up, hundreds of motor ambulances brought over, and dressing-stations manned at the front. The steady toil began, monotonous and rather dangerous, hard and dull, much like the work of ordinary soldiers in the medical units. The first expedition consisted of 43 men and eight cars. At the end there were 600 men working abroad, and £138,000 was spent. The Unit ran a dozen hospitals, made 27,000 inoculations against typhoid in Belgium, fed and clothed refugees, and began lace-making and other industries. It distributed milk and purified water, and managed three recreation huts at Dunkirk. It carried 33,000 men home

in its two hospital ships; the motor convoys carried over 260,000 sick and wounded; and the four ambulance trains, ever moving behind the British lines, conveyed over half a million patients. It was all done voluntarily without pay. It was necessarily in constant co-operation with the military authorities, and under their orders. Its officers were given commissions for the sake of convenience. It represented that wing of the peace army which was content to serve the nation, and to join their fellows in sacrifice, without minding all the incidental consequences of so much co-operation with the Army, or feeling called to devote themselves to direct opposition to conscription in general. Its history does not come further into this book, but may be read at length in the *History of the Friends' Ambulance Unit*, by Meaburn Tatham and James E. Miles, published at a guinea by the Swarthmore Press.\* It describes a magnificent piece of steady grind for four long years and more. Its members did not have to go before a Tribunal, but were exempted conditionally on remaining in the Unit.

A considerable group of Friends also worked with the British Ambulance Unit for Italy, under Mr. George M. Trevelyan, though it had no official connection with Friends.

3. The War Victims' Relief Committee is still in existence, and its scope now covers many countries. Some day the record of its achievements will be given completely. They do not concern this book directly, because service there did not exempt a man from the verdict of a Tribunal. The Government, with an eye to military ends only, came to value the Friends' Ambulance work, but thought less of restored French villages, pure water supply, and maternity hospitals. The men on this work had to appear at intervals, personally or by deputy, to obtain renewed exemption. If they were willing to accept alternative service, the Tribunals generally allowed this form of it. In extent it is the greatest of the works of peace and will be long remembered. The "Peace" has only increased the calls upon it, as Central Europe is overrun by famine. As I write, it is, among other tasks, feeding a million children in Eastern Europe.

\* Now George Allen and Unwin.

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The Emergency Committee—I think its long name was chosen so that it might never be used, and the fact that it had a mission to those who were technically aliens be not too obtrusively stated—did not employ many men of military age. Its work was among Englishwomen married to expelled or interned Germans, and to alien enemies in internment camps. This work, of course, also carried no right of exemption. An account of it has been published under the title of *St. Stephen's House* (Friends' Bookshop, 5s.).

4. At the Friends' Yearly Meeting held at the end of May 1915, a large gathering was held of men of enlistment age, to try to see their corporate duty, and, if necessary, to form an organization to carry it out. They made a statement to the Yearly Meeting. They spoke of the new vision that had come to them to consecrate the whole of their lives to the will of God, who is Love, and that this Love should work through them in active service.

“Christ demands of us that we adhere without swerving to the methods of love, and therefore if a seeming conflict should arise between His service and those of the State, it is to Christ that our supreme loyalty must be given, whatever be the consequences. We would, however, remember that whatever is our highest loyalty to God and to humanity is at the same time the highest loyalty that we can render to our nation.”

They proposed that those who felt that they were doing their best service should continue in it, and that others should have facilities for training for changed work. This was, of course, before conscription came. The Yearly Meeting accepted their views with joy, and asked them to nominate a committee to carry them out. This Committee was appointed by the Yearly Meeting, and known for five years as the Friends' Service Committee. Its members were admitted to the Meeting for Sufferings. The Committee became the active arm of the Society in all business that concerned conscription.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The early members of the Committee were:—

Horace G. Alexander, Harrison Barrow, A. Barratt Brown, Roderic K. Clark, J. Herbert Crosland, Robert Davis, Hugh Gibbins, Richard B. Graham,



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These were men of standing and service in the world; two-thirds of them had University degrees. Seven of them in due time were carried off to prison, and women took up their work. After the Yearly Meeting of 1916, Henrietta Thomas<sup>\*</sup> and Edith M. Ellis began regular work in the office of the Men's Service Committee. The office came to require the voluntary or paid work of nine persons. Altogether nineteen men went at various times from the office to prison. When the issue of alternative service arose (Chapter VI) most of the Committee were against it, but full personal liberty was, of course, allowed.

5. In July 1915 National Registration was ordered. The Service Committee recommended signature, but with the addition:—

“Whilst registering as a citizen in conformity with the demand of the Government, I cannot conscientiously take part in military service, in any employment necessitating the taking of the military oath, nor in the production of materials the object of which is the taking of human life.”

A Joint Advisory Council of the three bodies, the No-Conscription Fellowship, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Friends' Service Committee, for unity of action, was created in July 1915, and had an active career till the war was over, and afterwards. It was known as the J.A.C.

Stephen Hobhouse, Wilfrid E. Littleboy, Robert J. Long, Robert O. Mennell, Harold J. Morland, Hubert W. Peet; and for a short time, Arnold S. Rowntree, J. St. George Heath (till his death), J. T. Walton Newbold, C. Ernest Elcock, Charles I. Evans, H. Wilson Harris, Geoffrey Hoyland.

To these were afterwards added:—

Edwin H. Bigland, T. Corder Catchpool, John Percy F. Fletcher, J. Rowntree Gillett, J. Edward Hodgkin, Arthur Watts, Alexander C. Wilson, Roger Clark, Henry Harris, W. J. Chamberlain, A. Frank Ward.

After amalgamation with the Women's Service Committee first appointed by the Meeting for Sufferings in June 1915, there were added: Edith M. Ellis, Mary Fox, Joan M. Fry, Elizabeth Fox Howard, Eileen Barratt Brown, Esther B. Clothier, Hannah M. Clark, Marion E. Ellis, Lucy Gardner, Marion W. Matthews, Janet E. L. Payne, Lydia S. Smith, Adelaide M. Stacey, Amy E. Sturge, Henrietta M. Thomas, Theodora W. Wilson.

The men's and women's committees worked together from the early summer of 1916.

<sup>\*</sup> Henrietta Thomas afterwards died through overwork, thus offering up her life in labours on this Committee and on the Emergency Committee.

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Meantime the Service Committee sent a questionnaire to 5,000 Friends and Attenders of Meeting, made a detailed catalogue of all Friends of military age, and helped each as they had need.<sup>1</sup>

The three volumes of Minutes of the Committee testify to the manifold detail and the great variety of the services rendered. This Committee was behind all the unceasing efforts which the Society made in direct reference to the persecution, while the Peace Committee devoted itself to Peace propaganda in general.

In November 1915 the Meeting for Sufferings appointed a Committee to join the Service Committee in considering the threat of conscription. This body decided to do nothing to compromise with it, to suggest no exemption clauses nor offer alternative service.<sup>2</sup>

As Friends were being dismissed from their employment for not attesting under the Derby scheme, a Labour Exchange was begun, and was needed till long after the war was over.

6, By January the conflict with the Bill was in full blast. Letters were written and deputations were organized in all useful directions. Leaflets were issued. The Joint Advisory Council met daily. The Yearly Meeting was summoned by the Meeting for Sufferings for January 28-30, 1916, in a special session. Conscription had just become law.

The Yearly Meeting's Minute included the paragraph:—

“ War in our view involves a surrender of the Christian ideal and a denial of human brotherhood ; it is an evil for the destruction of which the world is longing ; but freedom from the scourge of war will only be brought about through the faithfulness of individuals to their inmost convictions under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. We regard the central conception of the Act as imperilling the liberty of the individual conscience—which is the main hope of human progress—and entrenching more deeply that Militarism from which we all desire the world to be freed.”

<sup>1</sup> See a fine letter in the *Friend*, October 1, 1915, by Hubert W. Peet, secretary, and Robert O. Mennell, treasurer.

<sup>2</sup> See letter in the *Friend*, November 26th, by Horace G. Alexander and Roger Clark.

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During this Yearly Meeting a gathering of about 450 men of military age was held, and reported that "the strongest body of opinion was in favour of refusal to undertake 'alternative' service, as helping to fasten conscription permanently upon the country. It is not by compromise with an evil thing, but by a passion of goodwill, that the war spirit must be met." At the same time there were letters in the *Friend* advocating the acceptance of any public service in itself harmless.

The regular Yearly Meeting of 1916, assembled at the end of May, had its imprisoned members constantly in mind. One of the Minutes ran as follows:—

Minute 136: "Throughout our Yearly Meeting we have had continually in mind the fact that some of our members are in prison or are otherwise suffering for loyalty to conscience in respect to the Peace Testimony which has been ours from the earliest days of the Society. God has honoured us by accounting these our dear Friends worthy to suffer shame for His name. We assure them of our loving remembrance, and pray that they may know Divine support in this their hour of trial."

To one accustomed to the atmosphere of Tribunals and courts martial, where poor humanity found itself in the relentless grip of the mechanism of war, this grave reference of the case to man's supreme duty and to the Divine endowment of his spirit, came as a great reinforcement. With this power behind them, no wonder young Friends could hold out. Much lonelier were the Socialists, often without backing from religious faith or family sympathy.

A Financial Committee was appointed to raise a fund for the dependents of Friends in prison. This Committee easily raised what was needed. The balance was used at the end for the training and education of the released men.

7. It was not unnatural that the Government, in the course of its attack upon liberty and upon the opponents of war, should eventually find itself engaged in an official attack upon the Society of Friends. In contrast to the unseen sufferings and sordid hardships hidden behind prison

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walls, this had a dramatic value. When Regulation 27C under the Defence of the Realm Act was promulgated, the Society of Friends announced that they would disobey it. The Regulation ordered that no pamphlet or similar publication dealing with the war or the making of peace should be issued without being first passed by the Censor. It was felt in the Meeting for Sufferings, in December 1917, that to submit to this would be to give up the whole case for liberty of speech. As the point has constitutional importance, the carefully drawn Minute the Meeting passed is here given:—

“The Executive body of the Society of Friends, after serious consideration, desires to place on record its conviction that the portion of the recent regulations requiring the submission to the Censor of all leaflets dealing with the present war and the making of peace is a grave danger to the national welfare. The duty of every good citizen to express his thoughts on the affairs of his country is hereby endangered, and further, we believe that Christianity requires the toleration of opinions not our own, lest we should unwittingly hinder the workings of the Spirit of God.

“Beyond this there is a deeper issue involved. It is for Christians a paramount duty to be free to obey, and to act and speak in accord with the law of God, a law higher than that of any State, and no Government official can release men from this duty.

“We realize the rarity of the occasions on which a body of citizens find their sense of duty to be in conflict with the law, and it is with a sense of the gravity of the decision that the Society of Friends must on this occasion act contrary to the regulation, and continue to issue literature on war and peace without submitting it to the Censor. It is convinced that in thus standing for spiritual liberty it is acting in the best interest of the nation.”

This Minute received the official endorsement of the following Yearly Meeting.

The Government and the Press were frankly informed of this action. Friends' Committees continued to issue pamphlets on behalf of the Society. One of these, called

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*A Challenge to Militarism*, a leaflet not more extreme nor more obnoxious to the Government than other writings, and consisting of information about the men in prison, was the one selected for attack. In February 1918 two ladies were arrested for distributing it at the doors of a Labour Congress at the Central Hall. They were shortly released and the summonses were deferred. When, on April 18th, their trial came on, Harrison Barrow, as acting chairman, and Edith M. Ellis, as secretary of the Service Committee, gave evidence to the effect that that Committee was responsible. The case against the ladies was dropped until proceedings should be taken against the authors. The responsible author, as in Friends' official papers generally, was the Service Committee itself, and it acted as the agent of the Yearly Meeting. It would never do to arraign the twenty thousand members of the Society of Friends, who were ultimately responsible. Many of the members of the Committee were already in gaol. The persons prosecuted were the Chairman and the Acting Secretaries of the Service Committee, two of whom had given evidence in the trial of the ladies. The personality of these three Friends showed with great clearness that the most valuable elements in the citizenship of this country were impugned by the persons conducting national affairs. Harrison Barrow, the chairman, is one of the most useful and distinguished citizens of Birmingham, who in 1914 had withdrawn from a prospective Lord Mayoralty on account of his attitude to the war. Miss Edith M. Ellis is the daughter of the late Right Hon. John Edward Ellis, M.P., for a while Under-Secretary for India. Arthur Watts of Manchester represented the active public service of younger Friends, and had fought military training in Australia. The issue was whether a Christian body owed allegiance to what it believed to be its highest duty when it conflicted with the law of the State. The court interrupted Harrison Barrow's defence by adjourning till next day, May 24. The Yearly Meeting happened to be in session at Bishopsgate at the time, and passed a Minute in support of the defendants. John Henry Barlow, the presiding officer or "Clerk" of the Yearly Meeting, was present as a witness to read the Minute. This he was not

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allowed to do, but Harrison Barrow, who was defending the case, was able to read it for him. The prosecution worried a good deal about the question of authorship, which was clear. When the Alderman retired to consider the verdict, and the court was abandoned to the usual buzz of conversation, John Henry Barlow's clear and commanding voice was heard asking for Friends in court to devote themselves to silent prayer. The Guildhall court suddenly became a Friends' Meeting. This is the moment which I hope, some day, some artist will preserve in a great picture. A few words of vocal prayer that we might follow Christ all the way were heard. The usher's habitual cry, "Silence in the court," on the Alderman's return, brought out the incongruity of the whole situation. Harrison Barrow and Arthur Watts were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and Edith M. Ellis to £100 fine and fifty guineas costs, and in default to three months' imprisonment. An appeal was lodged, and the prisoners admitted to bail. Meantime, at the hour of the trial, the Yearly Meeting at Devonshire House had adjourned its business, and sat rapt in reverent and prayerful silence, while the trial was in progress not far away.

The appeal was heard at the Guildhall on July 3rd, in Quarter Sessions. The Bench endeavoured to shut out the public, and were plainly hostile to Harrison Barrow's defence all through. But the ability and gentle dignity of the defendant were equal to the occasion. John Henry Barlow read the Yearly Meeting's Minute, confirming its previous decision not to submit to this regulation. It was easy to show that other critics of the Government had been privileged—both the Liberal and the Labour parties had made their criticisms uncensored, and so had Lord Grey of Fallodon. No weight was allowed to this plea. Finally, Sir Alfred Newton and his colleagues listened attentively to Harrison Barrow's personal statement. Edith Ellis followed, and the court was visibly impressed as, with the timbre of her woman's voice, she told in calm words of her immutable conviction. Arthur Watts spoke with something of the fire of youth in fealty to the service of liberty and peace. But Sir Arthur Newton "could hardly contain his indignation" at the way in which the defendants "deliberately

flouted the authorities and gloried in it." The appeal was dismissed with costs, and all the defendants went to prison. Edith Ellis refused to pay her fine. She spent three months in prison, which, to one delicately nurtured, turned out to be a serious strain on her health then and afterwards. The same was true in a less degree of Harrison Barrow.

At the close of the sitting rose a barrister, engaged by a few Friends who approved of the war, to say that they were law-abiding subjects, whose views were not to be identified with those of the defendants. The critical moments of human affairs are often marred by incidents which spoil their artistic completeness. This act, however, showed that the Quaker testimony was not held merely as a tradition, but had been considered afresh, not without some divergence of view.

8 One more Quaker organization must be described—the Chaplains' Committee. Prison rules allow visits by chaplains to prisoners of their own denomination. The subject arose first at the Meeting for Sufferings in May 1916, on the initiative of the Service Committee. A Committee was appointed and an office was taken. For the greater part of the history of the Committee, it was managed by Mrs. Percy Bigland.

The treatment of the men in the Harwich Redoubt, who were afterwards sent to France, made it important at once to obtain leave to send chaplains to detention barracks also. The Chaplains' Département at the War Office could do nothing in this way, since the Friends were not seeking a paid post for a minister of the Society. Application was made to the Adjutant-General at the War Office, and after three visits permits for the detention barracks were finally granted. This gave the holder liberty to visit detention barracks anywhere, until the time came when conscientious objectors were removed to civil prisons. Then the permits were withdrawn. They were held by a large number of Friends, and as women were not excluded, Joan M. Fry and Mabel Thompson of York gave valuable service here. The presence of women chaplains in detention barracks was quite new.

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The Society of Friends has no professional ministers. So it must be understood that the "chaplains" were amateurs, and held a title they would prefer to use in quotation marks.

It was an odd outcome of the chaplains' work that the largest Friends' Meeting in London was held in Wormwood Scrubs prison once a fortnight. There were 190 prisoners present on many occasions and two or three times there were over 200. Two chaplains were present, and several of the prisoners "spoke in the ministry."

The Quaker prisoners in all gaols were presented with vol. ii. of the Book of Discipline, the newly edited portion on *Christian Practice*. This was permitted because it was regarded as a denominational book, analogous to some elementary Anglican works of devotion which were ordinarily put into the cells. A Weymouth New Testament was also given to each man to stimulate his interest in Scripture reading. The authorities, I found, regarded it as a sort of Quaker Bible. Each man had also a Fellowship Hymn Book, which, again, found its useful way to the cells as a denominational book.

The prison authorities did not always realize how extensively the Quaker religion covers the whole of life. A letter arrived once from the Prison Commissioners to inform the Chaplains' Committee that "on a recent occasion at Wormwood Scrubs prison, in the presence of two Quaker chaplains—Mr. Harris and Mr. Bigland—prisoners arose and addressed the meeting on other than spiritual matters, until the officers in charge interfered." The Commissioners pointed out that if it should occur again the meetings would have to cease. It certainly is rather difficult for a Friend to discriminate at all clearly between the spiritual and its application.

Both the Chaplains' Office and the chaplains individually received and replied to an enormous correspondence. They were generally allowed in a great variety of ways to be instruments of welfare to the prisoners. The Committee had ultimately sixty-two chaplains in forty-seven gaols.

A Quaker centre was maintained at the Princetown work centre, and Friends' Meetings and lectures and social gatherings were held there from 1917 onwards. The building



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was also used as a café and as a lodging for the friends of prisoners.

At Christmas 1917, Christmas cards, which the prison rules allow, were sent round by the Chaplains' Committee. Concerning this, Alwyne A. Walmsley, now a teacher at Penketh School, who had been for some months in Wormwood Scrubs, wrote:—

“ Please express to the other Quaker chaplains my utmost thanks for the cheerful remembrance, the only outward indication at all that we had to show that it was not merely Sunday, which brightened our cells and made us the envy of the others. It is impossible for one to express the deep appreciation which we always felt of the chaplains coming down week after week . . . and sitting there from hour to hour listening to what I am afraid was not interesting to you. But to us these visits are the one touch we had with the outside world. I looked forward to Christmas for weeks . . . as a day spent in solitary reflection and communion . . . and I was not disappointed. It was one of those bright sunny frosty days which show Scrubs at its best. . . . Then chapel, with an excellent sermon from the assistant Prison Chaplain. His sermons are magnificent and wonderfully broad-minded . . . and finally at four o'clock we were shut in our cells for the night . . . with one's books propped up against the wall in front of one, and best of all, a keen appetite both for them and for one's tea. Both on Christmas eve and on Christmas morning the N.C.F. came and sang outside the wall—an entertainment which one greatly appreciated.<sup>1</sup> My time at Scrubs was in a peculiar sense a happy period ; the only punishment is the want of self-expression and the feeling of the utter stupidity and wastefulness of the whole process.”<sup>2</sup>

### 9. Friends carried on their regular propaganda of Peace

<sup>1</sup> Choirs were organized by the N.C.F. to sing outside the prisons from time to time.

<sup>2</sup> The list of Civil Gaols and their Chaplains was as follows. The names following the first were often substitutes. This was not the case, however, in the large London prisons, nor in Scotland, nor in Liverpool, nor some other places. The line cannot exactly be drawn, nor need it be.

Ayr, Glasgow (Barlinnie and Duke Street), Edinburgh, Greenock, Perth . . . . .	} R. Barclay Murdoch and Richard H. Field.
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by two Committees, the Peace Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings with Horace G. Alexander, and afterwards Edward Backhouse, as its secretary; and the Northern Friends' Peace Board, whose secretary was Robert J. Long,

Bedford . . . . .	William Machin.
Birmingham . . . . .	William A. Albright, Henry Ll. Wilson.
Bristol . . . . .	Charles J. Waterfall.
Brixton . . . . .	John Marsh Pitt, Albert Cotterell.
Canterbury . . . . .	A. J. Wood.
Carlisle and Dumfries . . . . .	Ernest Hutchinson.
Carnarvon . . . . .	Alex. C. Wilson, Ernest Driffield.
Derby . . . . .	Thomas Davidson.
Dorchester . . . . .	W. A. Clayton, Hy. Lloyd Wilson.
Dublin . . . . .	A. Webb.
Dundee . . . . .	J. A. Braithwaite.
Durham . . . . .	J. Edward Hodgkin.
Exeter . . . . .	William Brown.
Gloucester . . . . .	Arthur Sisson.
Holloway (Women) . . . . .	Margaret Ford Smith, Lueretia K. Clark, A. Ruth Fry.
Hull . . . . .	W. Dent Priestman, Frank Jefferies, Mark Lawson.
Ipswich . . . . .	Frank Collinson, G. A. Fox, Albert J. Crosfield.
Leeds . . . . .	Gerald K. Hibbert.
Leicester . . . . .	William B. Appleton.
Lincoln . . . . .	W. J. Smith.
Liverpool . . . . .	J. Herbert Crosland, George M. Benington.
Maidstone . . . . .	J. G. Alexander, Alfred Horsnaill, A. Kemp Brown, Harold J. Morland.
Manchester . . . . .	John W. Graham, Shipley N. Brayshaw, Henry Garnett.
Newcastle-on-Tyne . . . . .	J. A. Halliday, Herbert Corder.
Northallerton . . . . .	J. E. Hall.
Northampton . . . . .	H. L. Burrows.
Norwich . . . . .	D. Casanetto.
Nottingham . . . . .	Henry B. Armitage.
Oxford . . . . .	Henry T. Gillett.
Pentonville . . . . .	Maurice Whitlow, Percy Bigland, W. A. Albright, Alexander Fryer.
Plymouth . . . . .	W. C. Goodbody.
Portsmouth . . . . .	Charles Woodham, R. A. Penney, W. J. Horton.
Preston . . . . .	Percy W. Davies, Dilworth Abbatt.
Shepton Mallet . . . . .	Roger Clark.
Shrewsbury . . . . .	Charles Gillett, W. A. Albright.
Stafford . . . . .	W. A. Albright.
Wakefield . . . . .	Robert Davis
Wandsworth . . . . .	Robert A. Penney, Alfred Kemp Brown, J. Marsh Pitt, Arthur Trapnell, J. Thompson Elliott, F. B. Sainly.
Winchester . . . . .	Edward Clibborn, Charles Woodham, W. A., Albright, Silvanus Smith, Henry Harris, Hubert Cooke.
Worcester . . . . .	Charles Gillett, W. A. Albright.
Wormwood Scrubs . . . . .	Percy Bigland, W. A. Albright, Henry Harris, John Marsh Pitt, William Littleboy.

At Knutsford Work Centre, J. Herbert Crosland and Shipley N. Brayshaw were chaplains, and Robert Davis at Wakefield during the experiment of September 1918. To Dartmoor short visits were paid by many Friends.

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with office at Leeds. Two important conferences of supporters of Peace outside the Society were arranged by these Committees. The Meeting for Sufferings, under suggestions month by month from its Peace Committee, was tireless in its efforts in every direction in which it seemed possible to influence opinion. To the Government, to the Press, and to the general body of the Society, appeals, letters and Minutes were sent, dealing with the issue of the moment, whether it was an opportunity for making peace, or the need for holding meetings and issuing literature, or the case of the imprisoned men.

The Yearly Meeting at all its gatherings issued weighty Minutes and Manifestoes. The *Message to Men and Women of Every Nation who seek to Follow Christ*, issued in 1917, had a circulation of nearly a million copies. It was translated into Welsh and Esperanto, into French, German and Danish, and was in circulation in India and Zanzibar; and it was published in whole or in part in about fifty English newspapers. A request for a reply was sent with it, and large bundles of replies were received, of which 70 per cent. were sympathetic. Controversial replies appeared in *The Times* and elsewhere, and were answered. A meeting, to which were invited some of those who had replied favourably, was held at Devonshire House, and a movement for an international Christian meeting was initiated. Circumstances, however, proved too difficult for this to be carried out. Besides this effort for international Christian contact, the definite point of the Message was to urge that the time had come to stop the war.

### II. THE NO-CONSCRIPTION FELLOWSHIP.

10. We come now at length to the largest and most comprehensive of the organizations for the defence of conscience—the No-Conscription Fellowship. The organizations so far mentioned have been on a religious basis. The N.C.F. was not. It had few limitations of belief or standpoint, except uncompromising hostility to conscription and a firm refusal to serve. Full membership was confined to men who would come under the Act. The *Labour Leader*, the organ

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of the Independent Labour Party, published in Manchester, contained in the autumn of 1914 a letter signed by its editor, A. Fenner Brockway, and written at his wife's suggestion, asking for the enrolment in a Fellowship of all men who would refuse conscription should it come. Names poured in in unexpected numbers. Mrs. Brockway did most of the secretarial work at first. Early in 1915 it was clear that the Manchester editor had begun a national movement of large dimensions and that a London centre and a secretariat were necessary. Aylmer Rose became the first organising secretary and took charge of the office till his arrest.

The No-Conscription Fellowship might be described as the Headquarters Staff of the movement. From the early days of 1915 until long after the Armistice its offices were a centre of throbbing activity and restless agitation. It carried on what was in effect an illegal organization in open defiance of the authorities. It engaged in battles of wit with both military and civil departments of State, and often won. It looked after the sufferers at home and abroad, and safeguarded them from the worst effects of the war mind. It signally defeated the obvious intention of the Army to shoot resisters. It stirred a mass of intellectual opinion remarkable for its genius and standing. It roused Trade Unionism from a sleepy acquiescence in persecution to earnest protest. It broke down long-standing traditions in Army and prison, until those in authority hardly knew what they were doing. Above all, it insisted throughout in carrying on a challenging campaign for pacifism no less vigorous than its stand for liberty.

The constitution of this unique organization deserves some attention. A more remarkable illustration of the union of opposites it would be difficult to conceive. Every kind of religious, ethical and political thought was embodied in the N.C.F. Yet united action and personal loyalty were maintained to the end.

The most active part of the membership was composed of Socialists and Quakers, though there were outstanding exceptions who ranged from Mid-Victorian Whigs to adherents of the religious sect called "The Pillar of

Fire." The grounds of objection by these groups sometimes overlapped, but often they were sharply differentiated. Nevertheless splendid unity was maintained. All sections were profoundly influenced by association in a common suffering.

Of the two main schools of thought—the religious and the political—there were, roughly, three purely political or moral objectors to one purely religious objector; and of this preponderance of political objectors the majority were men who had been influenced by the teachings of the Independent Labour Party. Large numbers of these were instinctive rebels against conscription from the first. They were not much concerned with formulas nor with fine shades of feeling, but they joined the N.C.F. because it was resisting conscription and fitted in with their instinctive objection to any warlike measures, especially when these proceeded from a capitalist Government. The I.L.P., led by Keir Hardie, had always been anti-militarist. Unlike some other British types of Socialism and nearly all Continental types; it consistently rejected the citizen army idea, and had always looked towards a general strike as the most effective weapon against war. When International Socialism failed so lamentably as it did in the early days of 1914, the I.L.P. did the next best thing, and took an active part in organizing at home the resistance which had not materialized over the wider area.

Three of the original Committee were officially associated with the Fellowship from beginning to end. There was Fenner Brockway, the hon. secretary all the time and acting-chairman for several months; Clifford Allen, chairman throughout its life, who mapped out the organization and activities of the Fellowship before he retired to prison. His vision and judgment always made for unity, and helped to shape the movement on broad lines. Then there was C. H. Norman, a leader of forlorn hopes if ever there was one, a critic of critics, but a tremendous help in those days when criticism was essential. These three are inseparable from the history of the movement.

II. With the opening of the London office the Fellowship passed from a collection of individuals to an organiza-

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tion closely in touch with its members. Circular letters of advice were placed in the hands of all members. At a later stage these letters became more frequent and created a united front on questions of policy. The N.C.F. was often accused of creating conscience. This was untrue. But it did make the best of its material, and when men were agreed on resistance it did everything possible to enable them to act together. The discussion in those early days was often acute. To judge by the voting in the Minute Books the National Committee might be aptly designated as the Committee of "Sixes and Sevens." Decisions were taken on very narrow majorities, but as a rule the lead given by the Committee was loyally followed, and the efficient resistance which afterwards took place was largely due to fighting out differences as a prelude to a united policy.

The basis of membership of the No-Conscription Fellowship was adopted at the first conference, and was the subject of extensive discussion, as was bound to be the case with any form of words whose object is to express in a single formula the widest diversity of view. It becomes particularly difficult when these diversities are dearly maintained with a conviction which was the life and soul of the organization. The following Statement of Faith was adopted:—

"The No-Conscription Fellowship is an organization of men likely to be called upon to undertake military service in the event of conscription, who will refuse from conscientious motives to bear arms, because they consider human life to be sacred, and cannot, therefore, assume the responsibility of inflicting death. They deny the right of Governments to say, 'You shall bear arms,' and will oppose every effort to introduce compulsory military service into Great Britain. Should such efforts be successful, they will, whatever the consequences may be, obey their conscientious convictions rather than the commands of Governments."

This Statement of Faith was extended in the autumn of 1915 by a clause relating to alternative service, which read:—

"The members of the Fellowship refuse to engage in any employment which necessitates taking the military oath.

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Whilst leaving the decision open to the individual judgment of each member, the Fellowship will support members who conscientiously resist compulsory alternatives to military service involving a change of occupation."

The main statement never, except in the early stages, exactly reflected the feeling of all the members of the N.C.F. Many members signed, intending to prove their sincerity by the act of resistance rather than by giving deep thought to the implications of the phraseology; others signed with mental reservations; while others associated themselves with the Fellowship without formally signing the basis at all. There was, of course, a considerable section of the membership which stood inviolably by the statement, and to whom the doctrine of the sanctity of human life was fundamental. But it must not be taken for granted that this was always the view of the majority of the Fellowship. Any sitting loose towards the Statement of Faith must not be put down to carelessness or dishonesty. It was just simply that to many people resistance to conscription was the thing that mattered; forms of words mattered little. Not all working men, who formed a large part of the membership, have the same regard for formulas and phrases as some others have.

Compulsory Registration was enforced by the State in August 1915. The Fellowship suggested that its members and Friends should register, but add the note given on p. 161. From then onwards the main efforts of the Fellowship were devoted to preparing for the resistance which had now become inevitable. Thousands of members were enrolled, grouped in branches and federated in districts. Machinery was devised something of which can be detected in the Sinn Fein movement. It is certain that the N.C.F. learnt much from the Suffragists, and some of its women were among the most faithful adherents of the Fellowship.

The machinery of resistance was so devised that it became impossible to suppress the organization without the arrest of many hundreds of people. Lines of communication were laid so that instructions could be circulated throughout the country with the utmost expedition and secrecy. All

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responsible officials—national and local—were provided with “ shadows ” and so enabled to pass on their duties at a moment’s notice if they were arrested. This shadow arrangement was an almost perfect instrument for carrying on the work of the Fellowship, and the organization never broke down. If only the authorities had suspected the bona fides of the very respectable group of people who framed fanciful pseudonyms and arranged secret means of communication at the Midland Hotel, Manchester, of all places !

12. The first Conference of the Fellowship was held at the Memorial Hall, London, on November 27, 1915. The Derby campaign was going on, and all knew that the testing time was coming. The atmosphere was electric. At the public session Clifford Allen spoke as President of the newly formed Fellowship. Most of his address—historically of high importance—is printed here. After preliminary matter, he proceeded :—

“ As soon as the danger of conscription became imminent, and the Fellowship something more than an informal gathering, it was necessary for those responsible to consider what should be the basis upon which the organization should be built. The conscription controversy has been waged by many people who, by reason of age or sex, would never be subjected to the provisions of a Conscription Act. The chief characteristic of this Fellowship is that full membership is strictly confined to those men who would be subject to the provisions of any such Act ; and that being so, the importance of the organization in the controversy becomes far greater than would be the case if we were merely a society to debate the academic principles of conscription.

“ Having decided that we must have some common basis of belief, we had to look round in order to discover which one of the objections to conscription was that which met with general approval amongst our members, and so should form the basis of our organization. Upon examination we discovered the following objections to conscription. There were firstly the groups of people who strongly advocated war, but who differed as to whether the best way of carrying on war was the voluntary or the conscript system. These people also held that the contribution of our country to the



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Allied cause in this war should be a contribution of money and munitions. In addition to this argument we discovered others that were being advanced: arguments that conscription would be the gravest possible interference with individual liberty in this country of free traditions; that conscription would be a menace of the most serious character to the development of our Trade Union Movement; that, indeed, the imposition of conscription might be construed as the first step towards its inevitable conclusion, the domination of the military caste and the military spirit in Britain. We examined all those views, and, after careful discussion, we unanimously rejected the whole of the first group, which may be described as merely military or strategic. So far as the second group of opinions was concerned, those dealing with the infringement of individual liberty, and with the danger to the Trade Union Movement, it was immediately apparent that each of us held very firmly one or all of those opinions—that, in fact, our objection to conscription was intensified just in so far as we held vigorously one or all of those views. But that was not all. We discovered a fact, which is the most important characteristic of our organization, that not only did we individually hold such views as I have expressed, but that there was one objection to conscription which we shared with intense fervour, and that was a belief in the sanctity of human life. The members of the No-Conscription Fellowship base their fundamental objection to conscription on this ground; that whatever else a State may or may not do, whatever infringement of individual liberty a State may or may not effect, there is one interference with individual judgment that no State in the world has any sanction to enforce—that is, to tamper with the unfettered free right of every man to decide for himself the issue of life and death. We contend that the individual conscience alone must decide whether a man will sacrifice his own life or inflict death upon other people in time of war, and that however far the State may impose its commands upon the will of the community, the right of private judgment in this particular must be left to the individual, since human personality is a thing which must be held as sacred. Upon

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that we have built up our organization. It is because we hold that view so intensely, whilst believing in the other arguments that I have indicated, that nothing would ever induce us to betray our deep religious and moral conviction by accepting conscription. . . .

“ We are sometimes described as shirkers. I want to say very emphatically that the members of the No-Conscription Fellowship believed in national service long before many who are now advocating it. We may differ as to our interpretation of that service, we may differ as to its degree, but at the present moment we are only cut off from that particular service which our State demands from us because it is a contribution to the carrying on of war. We, though believing in varying ways in national service, cannot as an organization accept service which conflicts with our profound belief in the brotherhood of man, and in international solidarity. . .

“ We have decided so far carefully to eschew any kind of public propaganda; we decided that it was not our business to go out into the highways and hedges to increase our membership by means of propaganda; that it was indeed for each individual man to decide, having seen our Statement of Faith, whether or no he desired to take the consequences of that belief. But that does not mean that our organization has been idle. . . Night and day, members of your National Committee have been working behind the scenes. Day after day we have been laying the intentions of this organization before those who are in authority; and I want to submit to you that our real triumph lies here: that the mere existence and the maintained activity of a body pledged to resist conscription, should it become law, has had more to do with the hindering of its imposition than any other influence at work in our country. . . . It is perfectly true that at the present moment we have not got in this country what you might describe as legal conscription; but let no one mistake that there is now in existence an almost more wicked form of conscription, and that is economic conscription, the conscription of victimization under which thousands of men are suffering at the present moment. I have no doubt that you will endorse

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my view when I say that there is nothing more deplorable that has happened during this war than the way in which employers have kicked men with 30s. a week down the office stairs in order to serve their country.

“We are going to oppose this system. But there are two kinds of opposition which can be offered to any measure in Parliament or outside. You can oppose a Bill in the House of Commons, and by agitation in the country up to the time that that Bill becomes the law of the land: you can also resist the operations of that Act, should it go upon the Statute Book. I want it to be clearly known here, speaking on behalf of the Fellowship, that it is the latter of those two kinds of opposition that we intend to offer. The late Attorney-General has set a precedent with regard to resistance to a Bill which may become an Act.

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Speaking with a full sense of responsibility, I want the Government and the public to know that our opposition is not going to be a mere political game. As an organization we have attempted by our abstention from propaganda to avoid interfering with the will of the majority in the State, so far as the prosecution of the war is concerned; but we want to make it perfectly clear that if now the majority in the State through their Government, (if indeed there is a majority), decides to impose a system which violates men's deepest religious convictions, we are not going to play at opposition. . . . There are various kinds of opposition which a Government can engender in a community. It can engender political opposition and social opposition: but the most dangerous form of resistance which a Government can arouse is that which results from religious persecution. . . .

“I believe we are going to succeed in preventing the imposition of conscription. But supposing we fail in preventing that system becoming law, I wish to make this point by way of clearing up a misconception which sometimes exists as to the character of a shirker. If, despite our present determined opposition, and notwithstanding our determined opposition in the future, conscription becomes

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the law of the land, we are willing to undergo the penalties that the State may inflict—yes, and even death itself—rather than go back upon our convictions. Let it be clearly understood that the members of our organization have not formed the Fellowship in order to shelter themselves from suffering. It may be that the only way whereby we can ever convince public opinion that one class of so-called shirkers is willing to suffer will be through the process of compulsory service. Those of us who have joined the organization, those of us who have come to this decision, which may entail such results, are young men; and we have not come to it without a mental and spiritual struggle. We have endeavoured, so far as possible, to clear our minds of mere cant and hysterical thinking; and having done that, we have braced ourselves to an unqualified decision. From my own personal experience, I know that that mental struggle has not been an easy process. I repeat we are all young men; and life is a very precious thing to such men: We cherish life because of the opportunities for adventure and achievement which it offers to a man who is young. We cherish life because of the call which it offers to national and international service, and as we come to our decision here in this Conference, we do it casting our eyes over many years of opportunity which lie spread out before us. I believe there is no man amongst us who has any lust for martyrdom for martyrdom's sake; and it is well that those who praise or condemn our determination should remember the struggle through which we have gone to arrive at it.

“ But once our minds have been made up, I suggest to you that there has come to us a certain joy, because we are able now to put to the practical test the words which we have used so often in the past, and the principles which we have merely proclaimed and debated. I hold that it is a privilege that the young men of our generation should have such an opportunity of bearing witness to the faith that is in them. It is an experience which I believe must refine and temper not only our judgment at present, but our judgment throughout the rest of our lives. And yet no man has joined the Fellowship in order to advertise his willingness to suffer. Perhaps the yoke which is hardest

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to bear is our inability at the present moment to undertake the generally accepted form of service, since it appears to us to be the one contrary to our deepest convictions; that we have to stand, as it were, idly by while the rest of the world is busying itself with service. Sometimes I feel it would be a sheer luxury to be able to undertake the vilest kind of work in order that I might assuage that feeling, but directly I have examined the problem I see it is immediately answered. Just in proportion as we cannot render that particular service which the nation at the present moment asks, since it is part of the process of war, we seize upon new forms of service in order to take its place. There is no organization whose members are more active and busied in national service than the No-Conscription Fellowship at the present moment. It may be that, judged by the narrow, practical standpoint, we shall appear, because of the imposition of conscription, to have failed; but I do not believe you can judge our success or our failure by so narrow a judgment. May not we say with perfect truth that just in proportion as we men have to suffer for the cause of peace we shall advance that very cause which we have at heart at the present moment; and just in so far as we cause the Government to persecute those who believe in peace, so we may be doing the greatest service, which has been performed since the war broke out, to stimulate the national conscience in that direction. Probably far more powerful propaganda than countless meetings, or countless declarations, will be the testimony of men who are willing to suffer rather than sacrifice their convictions in this matter of peace.

“I do not know how you view it, but this hope sometimes occurs to my mind. If you examine the war at the present moment, it is the most wonderful instance that I have ever known of a State being willing to undertake one achievement at a time. In the old days, before the war broke out, many of us were urging the national conscience, so that the nation might be willing to do one thing at a time. Then it was to remove poverty and cheapness from national life. We failed. And now what a change is to be noted. The hoardings of our streets are covered with

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posters calling upon men to take up national service for one purpose. Rich and poor in varying degrees are casting in their lives and their money for the service of the community ; and why ?—for the work of destruction. The decision we must secure, the moral that we have got to point to in the future is this : that as now the community is realizing the possibility of one accomplishment at a time, so it shall admit this again in the future. But upon the next occasion, the objective shall not be the work of destruction ; the purpose of national service shall not be the mere degrading of humanity. Rather, it must be that such service in those days may make human life as valuable as it is now cheap, and may bring into human existence as much joy as there is now grief burdening the hearts of men.

“ Comrades, I want to move, on behalf of the National Committee, a resolution reaffirming our intention, and I submit to you that you should stand in silence and thus signify your agreement. It is :—

“ That we, the delegates and members of the No-Conscription Fellowship, assembled in National Conference, fully conscious of the attempt that may be made to impose conscription on this country, recognizing that such a system must destroy the sanctity of human life, betray the free traditions of our country and hinder its social and industrial emancipation, though realizing the grave consequences to ourselves that may follow our decision, hereby solemnly and sincerely reaffirm our intention to resist conscription, whatever the penalties may be.”

The resolution was then adopted, the delegates standing in silence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE N.C.F.

\* Original Members.

\*Clifford Allen, Edward Grubb, \*A. Fenner Brockway, W. J. Chamberlain, W. H. Ayles, A. Barratt Brown, Henry Davies, \*J. H. Hudson, J. Marshall, Francis Meynell, J. F. P. Fletcher, \*C. H. Norman, James Maxton, Morgan Jones (now M.P.), Ernest E. Hunter, \*Rev. Leyton Richards, Catherine E. Marshall, Hon. Bertrand Russell, James Crawshaw, Dr. Alfred Salter, Ada Salter, Joan M. Fry, Sutherland Campbell, Percy Redfern, Theodora Wilson Wilson, B. J. Boothroyd, Neil Maclean, M.P., Alexander C. Wilson, Mrs. Lees, Tom Snowden, J. Austin, Marion Daunt, Violet Tillard, Mrs. Goodwin, Rev. G. S. Woods, C. Scrymgeour, Hugh Gibbins, Nora Gibbins, J. Theodore Harris, Isaac Goss, A. W. Brunt, Henry Bolton, H. P. Bell, H. T. Turland, John Winning.

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13. When the first Military Service Bill was introduced, the organization put forth its utmost efforts. Hundreds of meetings were organized. Deputations were sent to the House of Commons, and the Political Committee of the Fellowship watched every stage of the Bill, bringing constant pressure to bear upon Parliament. But all this cost money, the chief source of which was among the Society of Friends. They gave personal service, careful guidance, and money without stint.

At the Friends' Yearly Meeting in 1915 an interview took place between some young Friends, Clifford Allen and Fenner Brockway, at the *Daily Citizen* offices, where it was agreed that the task of co-ordinating the scattered groups of resisters was a specific piece of work which the N.C.F. could best undertake. The Friends joined a committee to organize a staff and office for the growing Fellowship. At a later period it was found necessary for the Headquarters organization to be under the direct control of the N.C.F. It was then that Edward Grubb and some young Friends, A. Barratt Brown and J. P. Fletcher, were added to the National Committee in order to make it fully representative. From then onward the affection between the N.C.F. and the Society of Friends broadened and deepened until the two widely differing organizations became inseparable in the fight against conscription, whilst the war lasted. A Joint Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives of both Societies, and later of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, has already been mentioned, and held an influential place. Edward Grubb accepted the treasurership and held that responsible place till the end. He was invaluable to the movement, for which his discretion and experience were always available, though he never aimed at controlling the policy of the younger leaders. It was no light matter for a man well over sixty to take official position in a movement so full of adventure and peril, and he was rewarded with the affectionate regard of the whole membership.

14. Outside of what the N.C.F. did directly, it was always doing things with which its name was never associated. In many cases it actually did the work and cheerfully allowed

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any credit to go to other people. To get things done was its object, and wherever it could obtain publicity for its views it did so with a will. An immense amount of labour had to be performed by the Fellowship without any public recognition. It wrote material for books and pamphlets which other people, who sympathized with the cause but had not access to the facts, were willing to father. Its Parliamentary Department framed countless questions, briefed speakers, and kept alive a continual campaign in the House of Commons; it organized mammoth petitions which were conveyed to the Press and public without a hint of their source and origin; it amazed the Prime Minister by its exact knowledge of conditions at the front, which was far fuller than his own information. But perhaps its most distinctive work lay in the successful way it bound together and helped thousands of young men who were often entire strangers to each other, many of whom were isolated and inarticulate, and whose sufferings and difficulties would have been almost unbearable had they been left to weather the storm alone in a hostile nation. Conscription was a new experience in English life, and yet in three years the Fellowship, quite apart from other work here recorded, had mastered for its members military law, prison regulations, and the intricacies of the Tribunal system.

All the time the Fellowship was in ceaseless conflict with the authorities. The head offices were constantly raided. Papers and books were indiscriminately seized, and every possible method of disturbance was practised; but the organization went steadily on. For days on end the police would be visiting the building on one pretext or another. To frustrate such efforts the work was conducted by different committees of the Fellowship, nominally independent of each other, and at one time its activities were being directed from no less than six different headquarters offices. This plan proved successful, especially owing to the fact that the necessary records of these offices were kept in many copies and were secreted in different parts of the country.

During the guardroom and prison stage the Fellowship was able to establish contact everywhere. One prison

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communicated with another; news travelled; no illegal act of officer, governor or warder could be hidden for many hours from the head office. Stone walls and iron bars were broken down, and to the bewilderment of the authorities the friends of the C.O.'s knew more about the prisoners than their gaolers.

Miss Catherine E. Marshall was the genius of these activities. Coming to the 1915 Conference as fraternal delegate from the Women's International League, she threw herself heart and soul into the work, and despite criticism from some of her friends, worked unceasingly until her health collapsed for a time under the strain. She came with a wide and varied political experience, and a knowledge of people and affairs acquired during her great work for the Suffrage Movement. In the important negotiations with those in authority which became inevitable she was indispensable. Being possessed of a passionate belief in the righteousness of the cause, and being a firm Absolutist, she was doubly armed in her contact with authority; and this, added to an amazing ingenuity and great political wisdom, produced a combination which was of the highest value to the movement, whilst her instinct of tolerance made her the friend of all sections, sensitive as they were.

With her one remembers Violet Tillard, who at one time or another undertook almost every secretarial office in this network. She built up the Maintenance Organization. For refusing to divulge the names of the printers of the News Sheet, she was sent to prison under D.O.R.A. for sixty-one days. Always willing, always calm and unselfish, her faithfulness remains one of the most precious memories of those anxious days. In February 1922 she died of typhus while on famine relief work with Friends in Russia—a fitting close to a life of courageous and effective service. It would be good for the world that her name should become memorable.

The Records Department was behind most of the public agitation undertaken by the Fellowship. Therein was recorded a complete history of each man from his appearance before the Tribunal to his last known prison or camp.

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The thoroughness of this department was always clearly recognized by the authorities.

Every known C.O. had a card, and stage by stage this card was marked up with the man's movements or with important episodes in his prison or camp career. Every entry was duplicated in case of accident to the first card index. These duplicate entries were also used for the geographical index, which showed at a glance all the removals day by day. A special court martial list was also kept from which could be seen how many first, second, third or further courts martial had taken place.

A periodical bulletin was issued, giving the exact number of men arrested up to date and full statistics as to their whereabouts and category. To this were attached the names of the men actually arrested during the period under review, together with their destination. By this means friends and relations were enabled to keep in close touch. There was hardly a spot so remote that visitors did not penetrate to it during the struggle.

From the data supplied by the department numerous books, pamphlets and articles were written, and from the voluminous correspondence which flowed in daily many Parliamentary speeches were prepared. The department afterwards became the Conscientious Objectors' Information Bureau (C.O.I.B.), and was under the control of the J.A.C. It was thought safer to separate the Bureau from the general affairs of the N.C.F., otherwise its valuable records were liable to be seized by the police any day. It was from May 1916 to June 1918 under the able and zealous management of Miss W. G. Rinder and later on of Miss Morgan Jones. They are of the women to whom the cause is deeply indebted.

Closely linked with the Records Department was the work of Visitation, which made systematic contact with prisoners everywhere. "Court martial friends"<sup>1</sup> and visitors were appointed, and every opportunity was taken to

<sup>1</sup> Courts martial are nominally public courts, and the prisoner may be assisted by a "prisoner's friend." Hugh Richardson of Newcastle, being at leisure, devoted much time to attending and encouraging prisoners at these critical and lonely times.

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visit the men and to keep them in heart, particularly lonely inarticulate people. During the weary years of imprisonment and internment a fellowship was created which took the edge off persecution and suffering, and made men feel that theirs was not merely an individual protest, but that they were part of a great movement. The work of the Quaker chaplains also contributed very greatly to this. For many months the Visitation Department picketed Wormwood Scrubs and gleaned first-hand information as to the movements of newly arrested prisoners. Ways were found of carrying on correspondence with the men inside. Important decisions were conveyed to them, and the results of referenda and discussions within reached those responsible for the organization outside. Towards the end organization inside was as perfect as things can be in this imperfect world. Newspapers and periodicals found their way into prison, and more than one governor almost despaired of maintaining discipline. The organization had become too clever for the gaolers.

The work of the Political Department was many sided. It organized deputations to Ministers; it held informal consultations with Government departments, and many times gained important concessions thereby. It kept going an unceasing campaign both in the Upper and Lower Houses. One of its first tasks was the organization through the Joint Advisory Council of the deputation to Sir John Simon on the introduction of the Conscription Bill, from which developed the National Council against Conscription. An important achievement was Army Order X, ordering that conscientious objectors should serve their time in civil prisons.

Side by side with this, the publication was secured of articles giving expression to peace principles. Only those who were actually engaged in the work of this department can have any idea of the publicity for which it was responsible. This was chiefly due at the beginning to the labours of Hubert W. Peet, and when he went to prison, to those of Lydia S. Smith.

Over a million copies of leaflets and pamphlets were issued by the Literature Department. From March 1916 the *Tribunal* was published weekly.

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15. It was at the great Conventions that the genius of the Fellowship was most adequately expressed, and no account would be complete without a picture of the two outstanding gatherings which marked the beginning and end of the fight. Both were held in Devonshire House, the historic headquarters of the Society of Friends, and those who were present will preserve an unfading memory of a large amphitheatre packed with young men—in 1916 dedicating themselves to service, in 1919 back from prison and internment, preparing themselves again for the ordinary routine of life. The final Convention will be described in its place.

The one at the gathering of the conflict was held on April 8 and 9, 1916, when two thousand young men of military age, the great majority of whom were "deemed to be enlisted" under the Military Service Act, gathered together to embark upon a great adventure, the end of which was shrouded in the dark unknown.

Devonshire House crowded with young men, earnest of face and tense of spirit, was indeed a moving sight. They seemed to embody a power that was irresistible. They met with the knowledge that the world held them in contempt and that persecution hung over them, but no one who was present could doubt that the spirit which animated them would one day conquer the world.

The Convention was held under difficulties. Every possible attempt had been made by the Press to produce mob violence and to prevent freedom of speech, yet the meeting was held in perfect safety. It represented 198 branches. The *Manchester Guardian* comment conveys some indication of what was achieved.

"The No-Conscription Fellowship managed, after all, to hold yesterday its protest against the attacks on the conscientious objector, in perfect peace. If the opposition had penetrated into the Friends' Meeting House, a riot would have been certain. There would have been a repetition on a bigger scale of the discreditable scenes at Mr. Roden Buxton's lectures in the same place. The two entrances to the place are guarded by strong iron gates, through which

sympathizers with tickets were admitted one at a time. By this strategy it was possible to hold without disturbance the most formidable anti-compulsionist demonstration London has seen. The crowd outside the gate got tired of making a noise, and melted. Three sailors—sailors can climb anything—shinned over the barriers, but went astray in the dark, twisting passages of the hall. They were taken in hand by peace-loving stewards, and there was a friendly argument ending with handshakes all round.<sup>1</sup> With great self-control the conscientious objectors denied themselves the luxury of applause, so as not to guide the invaders to their meeting place. As the sailors had nothing to steer by, their boarding operation was a failure. In its intense whole-heartedness the protest recalled one of those high-pulsed suffrage demonstrations of old days."

The most important gathering was that on the Saturday afternoon, when the vast audience rose as one man at the conclusion of Clifford Allen's presidential address and adopted the following moving and impressive pledge:—

"We, representing thousands of men who cannot participate in warfare, and are subject to the terms of the Military Service Act, unite in comradeship with those of our number who are already suffering for conscience' sake in prison or the hands of the military. We appreciate the spirit of sacrifice which actuates those who are suffering on the battlefield, and in that spirit we renew our determination, whatever the penalties awaiting us, to undertake no service which for us is wrong. We are confident that thus we are advancing the cause of peace and so rendering such service to our fellow-men in all nations as will contribute to the healing of the wounds inflicted by war."

The impressiveness of this moment was deepened by the contrast between what was happening outside and the scene within. As Clifford Allen neared the conclusion of his speech the noise of angry cries came through the open windows. The noise increased, and at one point it seemed

<sup>1</sup> In fact, with a cup of tea.

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doubtful whether the conclusion of the speech would be reached. It was after the pledge had been taken and when following the solemn silence the audience broke out into rolling and irrepressible applause that Edward Grubb suggested that, in order not to provoke those outside the building, no more cheering should take place. His suggestion was adopted, and when Philip Snowden rose to speak, instead of being greeted by cheers, the whole audience stood and for several minutes silently waved handkerchiefs and papers. Dramatic, too, was the moment when Fenner Brockway read the names of fifteen members who were already in the hands of the military, and when later the first messages were read from guardrooms, the first sentence was reported and the first prisoner on bail appeared. Later, those messages and sentences were to flow on in one unending stream, but in the first announcements the assembled conscientious objectors heard the challenge which told of the coming fight, and braced themselves to act. In many a lonely prison cell and dingy guardroom the first Convention was a sacred memory which kept men loyal to a great cause in a dark hour.

It is easy for one like myself, who was not working at the heart of the organization, and only from time to time in touch with its activity, to speak unreservedly of its marvellous career. The conspicuous ability with which it was organized, the literary faculty it had at its command, the combination of selflessness, unbending principle and statesmanlike toleration in its leaders, were all the more remarkable in contrast with the Government opposed to them. Those confined rooms at 8, Merton House, Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, and afterwards at 5, York Buildings Adelphi, may become places of pilgrimage.

16. It was not to be expected that a Government armed with the not easily limited powers conferred by the Defence of the Realm Act would allow an organization of its opponents to exist with impunity, however necessary it might be to break the spirit of British institutions in order to destroy it. General Childs, the Director of Personal Service at the War Office, to whom it fell to conduct the



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persecution, was known to desire to break the No-Conscription Fellowship. The effort of the Government, all through the struggle, to destroy the Fellowship and suppress the *Tribunal*, was like a sort of comic relief to the grim tragedies of the gaols. Against the heavy hand of the police was matched an agility of mind, a courage, a spirit and a serious devotion, which went far to make for the second time the remark appropriate that the children of this world are not always in their generation wiser than the children of light. Each week at this time the *Tribunal* was sent out to 100,000 readers. It was a four-page journal, in small print on cheap paper; but it was full of fire, and written with remarkable literary power. For, indeed, there was no lack of writers in the movement. Under the title ran the ironic definition:

“**Tribunal.** A Court of Justice. (Webster’s Dict.)

W. J. Chamberlain was the editor till July 20, 1916, when he was taken to prison. Each week at this time Clifford Allen, like a true general, wrote words of encouragement, in leading articles which bore up the spirits of the oppressed.

The first move of the Government was to summon the whole of the National Committee of the Fellowship, with the curious exception of the Chairman, under D.O.R.A. for publishing a leaflet called *Repeal the Act*. It was clumsy to select this, for it had been definitely stated when the Act was before the House that any agitation for its repeal would be perfectly legal. So said the Home Secretary. But it is not easy to keep straight on a crooked course. No sooner was the Act through than the Home Secretary’s promise was null and void. The Government drew a distinction between trying to repeal the Act and trying to prevent its execution. No doubt the N.C.F. did the latter all the time, but not in this particular leaflet. Prosecutions for distributing leaflets were very common. In one, where I gave testimony for the accused, I found among the banned literature seized an extract of a purely historical character from a book of mine, *Evolution and Empire*, written some years before, and another extract, without comment, from

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a still earlier writing known as the *Sermon on the Mount*. But my friend Gwilliam was convicted all the same.

The prosecution of the N.C.F. Committee began at the Mansion House on May 17, 1916, and conviction naturally resulted, with fines totalling £800 from eight members. A further result, however, was the dissemination of the leaflet, which had previously reached three-quarters of a million, in many newspapers in the land, in millions of issues. It was agreed that five members should refuse to pay the fine, and on July 17th they surrendered to the police at the Mansion House. They were A. Fenner Brockway, W. J. Chamberlain, W. H. Ayles, A. Barratt Brown and John P. Fletcher.

Miss Catherine Marshall became acting honorary secretary of the Fellowship in place of Fenner Brockway, and B. J. Boothroyd acting-editor of the *Tribunal*.

The same day a letter to members was sent from the Committee urging that only by earnest work for peace could they justify resistance to military service: theirs was not a merely passive, least of all a selfish aim—it was not mainly to get out or to keep out of prison, but to find an end to war. This was signed by Clifford Allen, chairman; Edward Grubb, treasurer; Henry Davies, J. H. Hudson, J. Marshall and Francis Meynell, and four of the names above.

17. On August 3rd the *Tribunal* contained the farewell address of the Chairman, by that time in the hands of the police. He refused to leave his work to do other civilian alternative service.<sup>1</sup> He was removed from his post at the time it was most necessary to prevent the difference between the Absolutists and Alternativists from splitting the ranks; and his farewell was an exhortation to unity and tolerance, looking forward also across the dark years to possible annual reunions of the Fellowship in the days of peace, "under canvas on some hill-side."

It was thought best that Fenner Brockway should come out of prison to take the chairmanship. So his fine was paid for that purpose, and he remained for a while at liberty.

<sup>1</sup> Case in full in *Tribunal*, August 10 and 17, 1916.

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The illegalities of the Tribunal, which altered Clifford Allen's exemption, which was conditional on taking alternative service to one for non-combatant service, caused delay, and only on August 11th did he finally go to prison. He had been treated with great courtesy throughout by the police and officials unwillingly concerned. Whilst awaiting his second trial by court martial he was kept in an underground cell in Newhaven Fort, which he succeeded in lighting with candles stuck in bottles. The walls of the cell, revealed by the candle light, dripped with damp and mildew. There was no ventilation except a small opening near the ceiling giving into the guardroom of the fort.

In gaol he obeyed the rules during his first two sentences of imprisonment, but during his third he carried his opposition to the system so far as to refuse to do prison work. This was an issue which caused a good deal of debate among the men in all the gaols, and considerable self-examination. Was it acquiescence in an evil system or was it merely submission to punishment? Clifford Allen's frail physique was little fitted to stand the sufferings which inevitably followed disobedience. Subject to daily medical examination to prevent a breakdown he was sentenced to punishment diet of bread and water, deprived of exercise, and confined in a cell in the semi-basement, stripped entirely of every article except a mug of water and a wooden stool, and denied even access to a lavatory, having to make use of a pot in the cell. These periods of punishment took the form of three days under these conditions and then three days normal prison diet, but still in solitary confinement. Men would, it was believed, have starved to death under continuous bread and water diet. He occupied some of his time in the punishment cell picking the vermin from his body and clothes. Other complaints of dirty punishment cells are on record, but for the most part English civil prisons are the cleanest places in the world. In other respects the punishment experience was typical and kept occurring to men all the time. Finally, after some weeks of such treatment, he was visited by a prison inspector and

• See Chapter VI.

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removed to the prison hospital, where he remained for over four months.

18. The spring and summer of 1916 was the period of most interest and excitement in the movement, which had not yet settled down to its long phase of passive endurance. At that time hopes were still high that public opinion would surely break down the attack of the Government on liberty and on the principles of human brotherhood. Great efforts were therefore made to rouse and instruct public opinion. A series of pamphlets followed one another rapidly from the N.C.F. office. The National Labour Press was brave and untiring, and the Meeting for Sufferings of the Society of Friends, its Peace Committee and its Service Committee helped to flood with literature all the persons whose minds were accessible to such appeals.

Monday, June 5th, was a notable day. T. Mainwaring, in South Wales, appeared before the magistrates for a speech describing the treatment of prisoners; the No-Conscription Fellowship's office was raided by orders of the competent military authorities, and all papers and literature taken; and Bertrand Russell received the sentence of a fine of £100 and costs, or sixty-one days' imprisonment, for writing a leaflet describing the Everett case, already mentioned.

Ernest Everett, a teacher under the St. Helens Education authority, was refused exemption there, and appealed to the Liverpool Appeal Tribunal. He was unexpectedly confronted with the following letter from the St. Helens Tribunal:—

“ This man belongs to a group who are coaching men of military age to object to service. He has no religious convictions, and would see his sisters ravished or the war lost rather than do anything to help. He is willing to take Government money. He considers himself first and only.”

It appeared that the claimant was a religious man who cycled twenty miles to church. No testimony of witnesses was allowed. The appeal was dismissed; and a letter

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against him was sent to his employers. This illegal act was perpetrated because the man turned out to be against monarchy: a subject with which the Tribunal was not concerned. This "selfish coward" I knew intimately as a prisoner in gaol, from which he was finally released in broken health over two years later. He was a man of even fanatical courage, so conscientious that he would not break any rule in prison. He was the first to receive the full two years' sentence.

The Hon. Bertrand Russell, F.R.S., brother of Earl Russell, is one of a band of mathematical experts, of whom there are not many in the world, who treat the philosophical theory of our ideas of number, space and time. The Fellows of Trinity College, or rather the older ones who were left when the younger were at the war, expelled him from his lectureship there for his unpopular stand. When the younger men came back he was restored. He suffered from too much clearness of mind, aggravated by courage. The Everett leaflet had been widely circulated and six men had been prosecuted for merely distributing it. Under these circumstances Mr. Russell wrote a letter to *The Times* saying that he was the author of it, and desired to take all responsibility. The case was really a very simple one. It was whether a pamphlet which assisted the supremacy of conscience was contrary to the Defence of the Realm Act. Bertrand Russell conducted his own defence in a memorable speech, arguing that no reasonable interpretation of the Act would bring the leaflet within its scope. The section relied upon was interpreted to mean that the leaflet was likely to prejudice recruiting and discipline. The defendant argued that the pamphlet was directed towards the civil population to explain to them the persecution going on. It therefore came within the admitted right of political agitation. In fact, its effect was to inform civilians that if they chose to become conscientious objectors they would get two years' hard labour. This, Mr. Russell thought, would act as a discouragement to anyone who pretended to such an objection; also, the knowledge of the price of disobedience would hardly encourage the soldiers to resist discipline. If the knowledge of such punishments under-

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mined discipline, why were they inflicted? asked the accused. The prosecution amounted to the denial of the common right to criticize court martial sentences. The Government, in fact, appeared to be of the same opinion as himself, inasmuch as Everett's sentence had been commuted to 112 days very shortly after the distribution of the leaflet began. Mr. Russell's speech was frequently interrupted by the Lord Mayor, who was evidently unhappy under it, and it concluded with these words:—"I would say, my Lord, that whether I personally am acquitted or condemned is a matter of no great importance, but it is not only I that am in the dock; it is the whole tradition of British liberty which our forefathers built up with great trouble and with great sacrifice. Other nations may excel us in some respects, but the tradition of liberty has been the supreme good that we in this country have cultivated. We have preserved, more than any other Power, respect for the individual conscience. It is for that that I stand. I think that under the stress of fear the authorities have somewhat forgotten that ancient tradition, and I think the fear is unworthy, and the tyranny which is resulting will be disastrous if it is not resisted. I would say to them, 'You cannot defeat such men ——'"

THE LORD MAYOR: "I have allowed you a good deal of latitude because you are not an expert. Really now, you are making a political speech."

Mr. Russell's goods at Trinity College were distrained upon for the fine.

The rest of the speech thus interrupted was to have been as follows:—

"The persecution which conscientious objectors have endured has enormously increased their moral weight. It illustrates the invincible power of that better way of passive resistance, which pacifists believe to be stronger than all the armies and navies in the world. Men inspired by faith and freed from the dominion of fear are unconquerable. The noblest thing in a man is the spiritual force which enables him to stand firm against the whole world in obedience to his sense of right; and I will never acquiesce in silence while men in whom spiritual force is strong are

treated as a danger to the community rather than as its most precious heritage. I would say to the persecutors, 'You cannot defeat such men; you cannot make their testimony of no avail. For every one whom you silence by force a hundred will be moved to carry on his work, until at last you yourselves will be won over, and will recognize, with a sense of liberation from bondage, that all the material force the world contains is powerless against the spirit of indomitable love.'"

Bertrand Russell later devoted himself whole-heartedly, as Acting-chairman of the Fellowship, to the work of resistance to the Government's attack upon the sense of duty and upon elementary human liberty. He wrote every week an article of high quality in the *Tribunal*. He was refused passports to America to deliver mathematical lectures at Harvard University. He was, in a quite amusing way, debarred from lecturing in certain parts of England and Scotland, viz. in the "prohibited areas" round the coast, where his lectures might help the enemy! So that an advertised lecture of his in Glasgow had to be read by Robert Smillie, and was no doubt still more damaging in that form. It had nothing to do with the war, but was on the philosophical principles of politics, and delivered, he said, mainly for the purpose of earning his living. He had delivered it at Manchester the night before, without known harm to that city.

19. In these D.O.R.A. prosecutions Mr. Bodkin was the Crown Advocate. At the trial of the National Committee he remarked that "war would become impossible if all men were to have the view that war was wrong." This was good pacifist doctrine, so the N.C.F. issued a poster containing nothing but these words of the Government, and their source. Being too angry to see the humour of it, the Government prosecuted Mr. Fuller, a journalist of Stratford, E., for intending to display it. His advocate, Mr. Hawkin, made great play at the trial, where Mr. Bodkin himself was prosecuting, by demanding the Crown Prosecutor's arrest, as the author of the dangerous words: and the *Tribunal* offered maintenance to his wife and children

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if he felt it his duty to prosecute himself. But Mr. Fuller was fined £120, or ninety-one days.

No known pacifist's house was safe from raids for literature. No less than 150 N.C.F. branch officials had their homes treated in this way.

The use which was made by the Government of the clause in D.O.R.A. about prejudicing the recruiting and discipline of the forces was in no case more startlingly illustrated than in that of H. Runham Brown, chairman of the Enfield Branch of the N.C.F. Mr. Beavis brought him a letter from France from his son, H. Stuart Beavis, then expecting to be shot for refusing military service, saying that this might happen, and he might not be able to write again, and suggesting that his friends might appeal to the Prime Minister. To try to save his friend's life H. Runham Brown had the letter printed and circulated to members of Parliament and local clergy and residents. The absurd irrelevancy of the charge did not prevent a fine of £30, or two months' imprisonment.

When prisoners came out of gaol they brought with them, in certain ways which passed the warders, letters from inside, often asking for instructions. Once there was a controversy going on among the wearied prisoners in a certain gaol on whether they should break out into rebellion and defy prison rules. It was referred to the N.C.F. office for guidance. Twelve days were allowed for the time which the post might take to reach its destination and return. Either a red or a white signal was to be visible on the third tree in the avenue outside a certain prison wall before 4 p.m. twelve days later. It took eleven days for the letter, which may or may not have come out by the usual way, which it is safer not to describe, to reach Miss Catherine Marshall at Headquarters. She doubted if the tree was climbable by herself or another, feared an intrusive policeman, thought the signal might be hidden in the foliage, and was much puzzled. But she presented white kites to some children, and sent them for a walk with Miss Lydia Smith to fly them; and the children wondered why the kites always stuck in a certain tree. It was just in time, and word went silently round the gaol, where all



talking was, of course, forbidden, that there was to be no revolt.

20. The attacks upon the *Tribunal* were among the least dignified of the performances of coercion. It was taken in regularly by the War Office along with the *Labour Leader* and the *Daily Herald*, and read by General Childs.

The authorities were justifiably annoyed by the wonderful help given by the *Tribunal* to the cause. First they attacked the distributors, who were prosecuted in various places. This was ineffective. Raids were then made on the office itself to stop the distribution at its source. They were always too late. Then the National Labour Press was warned that its machinery would be dismantled if it continued to print it. This was disregarded.

In the issue of January 3, 1918, Bertrand Russell wrote on the German Peace offer which had been rejected:—"The American garrison which will by that time be occupying England and France, whether or not they will prove efficient against the Germans, will no doubt be capable of intimidating strikers, an occupation to which the American Army is accustomed when at home." For writing this, Mr. Russell, and Miss Joan Beauchamp the publisher, were prosecuted at Bow Street on February 9th. It was declared that these words would have "a diabolical effect" upon the British and Allied soldiers. The fact that they formed the basis of the prosecution, and were quoted in all the newspapers instead of in a semi-private organ like the *Tribunal*, does not seem to have had any weight, though it enormously increased the diabolical effect. In a bitter tone Sir John Dickinson sentenced Mr. Russell to six months in the second division, and Miss Beauchamp to a £60 fine and fifteen guineas costs. There was a second summons against her for publishing false statements in the same number of the *Tribunal*. These were in an article called "A Guardroom Message"—being a letter from a man in the interval between two imprisonments. It told how the soldiers had a fellow-feeling for, and were indeed inclined to honour, the C.O.'s. Miss Beauchamp's advocate stopped the prosecution with the information that he was prepared to prove the facts and

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wished to have an adjournment in order to obtain a Home Office permit to call the writer from prison. With commendable prudence the Crown decided to abandon this charge. The prisoners appealed, and were released on bail. The appeal was heard on May 2nd, and a valuable argument took place, which was widely published. It was shown from American Blue Books that the Washington Government itself issued accounts of the use of troops to put down strikes, and that serious criticism of the Americans had appeared in *The Times*. Nevertheless the appeal was dismissed; but it was granted that Bertrand Russell should serve his time in the first division, and that Miss Beauchamp—who had declined to pay her fine—should have one month in the first division. There is a good deal of difference between the first division and the others. A prisoner there has the right to a special cell, which may be furnished by himself and fitted with what he needs for his ordinary occupations. He is entitled to a servant and may wear his own clothes. He may have a visit and a letter every fortnight.

Meantime, a direct attack upon the paper was made. In the issue for February 14th, Miss Beauchamp had an article on "The Moral Aspect of Conscription," consisting chiefly of articles from *The Times* and speeches in the Upper House of Convocation by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Winchester concerning the official brothels opened in France for the use of British soldiers, and the protests made by the local people. The police raided the office, seized all the copies they could find, and dismantled the National Labour Press, which printed the paper. In spite of this a brave comrade, Mr. S. H. Street of Streatham, undertook the printing.

On April 11th the last page was occupied by a sort of poster urging people to stop the war. On April 22nd six policemen raided the works, smashed Mr. Street's machinery, including some which belonged not to him but to the owner of the premises, destroyed £500 worth of plant, and carried off the books, invoices, and all the work in hand. The same evening three detectives visited the publisher's office at 5, York Buildings, Adelphi, and asked Miss Beauchamp

if she were still the publisher. They asked her who was the editor, and she refused to tell them, in spite of their gloomy warnings of what would be the consequences of her refusal. From a newspaper cutting which they found, they thought that Hubert Peet was the editor, until they discovered that he had been in prison nearly two years. But this was not the end of the *Tribunal*. Without one week's delay it came out again—three days after the raid—and for just a year it was printed from a small secret hand-press in the back room of a house in a back street in London, by two devoted comrades. In vain Scotland Yard used all it knew to find it. Policemen shadowed the officials at the office. The two printers stayed entirely indoors for many days at a time, but the plucky little sheet, rather smaller than usual, came out every week from the secret press, until the C.O.'s were released and the prosecution abandoned. Then it came out into the open again. Strangely enough the last issue of the *Tribunal* recorded the final stage in the long proceedings against Miss Beauchamp for this publication. They began on August 19, 1918. She was summoned on the ground that the imprint on the *Tribunal*, giving her name as a printer, was untrue. The magistrate fined her £200 and twenty-five guineas costs, or fifty-one days' imprisonment. Notice of appeal was given. As she owned the hand-press, and directly employed and paid the printers, she was legally in the right. The case was again and again postponed, the Government having no evidence. It went to Quarter Sessions, thence to the King's Bench, and it came back to Quarter Sessions as long afterwards as January, 1920. By that time the Government and its Prosecutor, now Sir Archibald Bodkin, wished the thing to end as smoothly as possible, and Miss Beauchamp was sentenced to twenty-one days' in the first division, though everyone knew she was innocent. She was released after eight days.

The legal point—causing the lawyers to proceed at such length with a useless prosecution for eighteen months—was this:—

Miss Beauchamp was accused, in August 1918, of issuing the paper without the printer's name. She replied that it

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bore her name and address, and that she was the master printer. The Government denied that this was the case, supposing that there was some printing firm hiding itself behind her. But they had no evidence. At the appeal to Quarter Sessions in the following October it was discovered that the publisher could only be fined for "each such copy so printed by her." But as the prosecution contended that she had not printed anything, the Crown Prosecutor was in a fix. The lawyers considered it to be of importance to have a case in which, with no printer discoverable, they could punish the publisher.

So the paper held on till its service was over, with No. 182, when it reported the National Convention of the N.C.F. in the last issue of January 8, 1920. It ran to 736 closely printed quarto pages. There must be few writings so full of human interest. There is sorrow and pathos, cruelty and tragedy in abundance, courage and delicacy of feeling. It is full also of buoyant humour, and of a hope that did not fail. One by one its editors had gone to gaol, till only the women were left. They were W. J. Chamberlain, B. J. Boothroyd, Lydia S. Smith; then anonymity supervened for the best of reasons, and we have Joan Beauchamp the publisher facing the music. Bertrand Russell week by week wrote articles of extraordinary force till he went to gaol, and Clifford Allen wrote his weekly word of advice and inspiration in the leading article until his imprisonment. Fenner Brockway and Ernest E. Hunter were constant contributors. I cherish my complete set, in a bound volume, as one of my precious possessions. Few things in the Government's acts were more undignified than their attempts to stifle this organ of recalcitrant conscience.

The editor whose name Miss Beauchamp refused to divulge was Miss Lydia S. Smith. She had already for some time been acting in that capacity, and her name had appeared as its editor during the month of October 1917, after Mr. Boothroyd had gone to gaol. The scheme was, in fact, arranged by Miss Smith and Miss Beauchamp in conjunction with the Committee of the N.C.F. and it was decided, simply in the interests of the cause, that Miss Beauchamp should

publicly appear as publisher—and if necessary go to prison—whilst Miss Smith should remain to continue the editing which she had already in hand. In order to circumvent Scotland Yard, it was Miss Smith who had actually organized the arrangements and continued to do so, she not being so closely watched and followed about as Miss Beauchamp. The way in which these two clever girls baffled all the acuteness of the police for twelve months is a delightful story. Detectives established themselves in York Buildings opposite the publishing office and watched everyone who passed in or out. They were to be found also at the top of the street. Copy for the press never went direct to the printers in their remote premises in North London. It was taken out by an old woman with a baby, who used to call at the office, apparently for relief, and was never suspected by the police. She took the proofs home and somebody else conveyed them to the printing press. The copies were distributed and posted from six different localities in succession, so that no single post office or post pillar could be raided. Once a boy who had the bundle of copies found them too heavy, and left them temporarily on the Embankment in charge of a policeman! When he brought news of this back to the office, consternation supervened, but the worthy guardian of the law—and in this case of the gospel—had not penetrated below its husk.

The secret printing press had, of course, been bought ahead and was waiting, or all would have failed. But there was a scarcity of type, particularly of the large capital letters of the title. The two printers—whose ingenuity and devotion equalled that of their young employers—were able to “wangle” a few capital letters from fellow-printers on the Harmsworth Press! “Out of the eater cometh forth meat.” Once a capital “R” was short, and the printer had managed to borrow it, but unfortunately lost it in the dark as he went home. It was absolutely necessary to print off the next morning, so he got up as soon as it was light and searched all the streets along which he had passed till he found the missing letter. Only 2,000 copies could be printed instead of the preceding 6,000, on account of the smallness of the press. That was some success for

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the great intellects whom the taxpayer maintains to detect criminals.<sup>1</sup>

21. From 1918 onwards, after the arrest of so many of the early leaders, the Fellowship was led by Bertrand Russell, Dr. Alfred Salter, Edward Grubb, Catherine Marshall and Ernest E. Hunter. Dr. Salter was a genuine and indomitable man. His courage and outspokenness and his unflagging energy are proverbial among his friends. As chief officer with him was Hunter. He had a nimbleness and ingenuity with which to meet every contingency, and remained openly the secretary of a persecuted organization, though "wanted" by the authorities for over two years. As speaker and organizer he never abated his untiring service, though surrounded by some whose vitality and good temper had almost ebbed. Fearless without being fanatical, he conducted the Fellowship to the very end, and had the joy of being in charge when the prison gates opened and the prisoners met together in the final Convention.

The further story of the N.C.F. will be found in portions of all the succeeding chapters of this book.

### III. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

22. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was a union of Christian pacifists of all denominations, people who, Quakers or not, held the Quaker view of war. There was need and use for such a union, for the scattered members of the Churches who held to the early Christian attitude towards war were peculiarly isolated. The union was founded by Dr Henry T. Hodgkin, Miss Maude Royden, Richard Roberts, Miss Lilian Stevenson, and a few others, and was launched at a memorable Conference of about a hundred people invited to meet at Cambridge, December 28-31, 1914. Dr. Orchard took an active part in its proceedings. It

<sup>1</sup> Finding that the Government in Parliament was giving halting and evasive answers as to the whereabouts of a certain ordinary prisoner of whom they had plainly lost track, Ernest E. Hunter, at the N.C.F. office, thought it would be most amusing and forgiving to find him for the Home Office. The office, through its numerous correspondents in the gaols, was soon able to do this, and the Government was told in which prison their lost prisoner was; for which the Department wrote a friendly letter of thanks.

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appointed an executive which met weekly for many months, and spent whole days together, drawing nearer to God and to one another. They came to their decisions not by resolutions, but by the method of united prayer. "Matters often took a form which the Committee had not planned, but they found it to be the form they all desired." The methods of the organization were, in fact, the methods of an extended Quakerism, just as its principle was the Quaker principle.<sup>1</sup>

An organization which works by prayer and the propagation of a right spirit, which eschews political action, and is not in any immediate hurry to count up results, cannot be easily reported upon in summary. It had achieved in 1918 a membership of about 8,000, distributed amongst 165 groups and branches. It never ceased to issue valuable pamphlets for the help of the persecuted men and their cause. It has issued a *News Sheet* which has been a great encouragement to its members, first monthly, then quarterly; and its public journal was the *Venturer*, edited by Richard Roberts and Gilbert Thomas. Publication was suspended in September 1921. It has held annual conferences at Swanwick, and conducted series of propagandist meetings in very many places. Many of its young men were sent to prison, and its women and older men devoted themselves in all possible ways to the help of the conscientious objectors, combining for this work with the Friends' Service Committee and the No-Conscription Fellowship. Theodora Wilson Wilson's paper, the *Crusader*, was, in effect, a voice of the F.O.R. Books and papers in great numbers were written, issued or distributed. Study circles abounded, along with devotional meetings. The headquarters were at first at Miss Lucy Gardner's house. But offices of its own soon became needful to the Fellowship. Richard Roberts became the general secretary, till he took charge of a Church in New York. He was followed by Leyton Richards, who similarly became pastor of Pembroke Chapel,

<sup>1</sup> The names of the original Committee were: Roderic K. Clark, Marian E. Ellis (now Lady Parmoor), James Fraser, Lucy Gardner (hon. sec.), W. Fearon Halliday, J. St. George Heath, Henry T. Hodgkin (chairman), McEwan S. Lawson, Hugh Martin, W. E. Orchard, Mary E. Phillips, Richard Roberts, A. Maude Royden, Lilian Stevenson, Theodora Wilson, Wilson.

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Liverpool. The Fellowship continues its valuable work after the war. Its secretary is Oliver Dryer, and its offices are at 17, Red Lion Square, W.C. It is a centre of propaganda, an education in living faith in Christ.

The Fellowship devoted much labour to promoting a World Conference of Churches on Peace, but hostile forces have so far prevented its meeting.

Part of its preoccupation was always with reconciliation among classes at home. Its first Annual Report says of the F.O.R. :—

“ Its members are convinced that the present industrial strife, the uncertainty of the financial position of the wage-earner, his inferior social status, the unchecked competition which leads to sweated labour and dishonest practices, the high profits which are made by many who contribute personally nothing to the community, the general struggle for wealth as an end in itself, are profoundly unchristian.”

The Fellowship has extended its operations internationally since the Armistice rendered it practicable. Henry T. Hodgkin has had an enthusiastic reception in Scandinavia, as he preached the F.O.R. gospel there. International religious conferences on a small scale have been held at Bilthoven in Holland. The American F.O.R., founded by Henry Hodgkin in 1915, numbers 1,800 members and issues an able journal, *The World To-morrow*, edited by Norman Thomas, with a circulation of 10,000. The Bilthoven Message of October 1919 states that the organization is definitely opposed to Capitalism and Imperialism.

23. Besides the three larger organizations there were useful auxiliary bodies. The “ National Council against Conscription ” (Robert Smillie, president, and B. N. Langdon-Davies, secretary) included amongst its Committee names already identified with the larger organizations which really helped to found it. It issued an enormous number of informing leaflets and kept up a large and helpful correspondence with sufferers. Later on it became changed to “ The National Council for Civil Liberties,” and acted as a watchdog for liberty against D.O.R.A. and the bureaucracy of war. It co-operated actively with the N.C.F. during the



passage of the Acts and helped many thousands of appellants in all kinds of ways before Tribunals.

24. Before the close of the war there arose in Manchester, under the inspiration of Percy Redfern, an Alternative Service Guild, of those who, in spite of all that the Government had done to discourage alternative service and drive men to be Absolutists, still held as a doctrine that, at a time of strain due to any cause, the State had a right to arrange the service of its citizens, so long as the work in itself did not offend consciences by being directly for war purposes. The Guild was chiefly useful as a successful agency for finding work for conscientious objectors, a work to which John Mee and Mrs. Wright Robinson devoted much unselfish labour. It desired to work in harmony with the N.C.F. though it differed from its official doctrine. Finally its employment agency coalesced with that conducted by J. Theodore Harris, as a joint effort by the London organizations. It had a useful career for over two years. It had branches in London and in the Home Office Camps, but it did not in practice extend much outside Manchester. The line it took in desiring national service, and its criticisms of the weak points in the Absolutist position, led to the belief that perfect consistency is not attainable by an individual hostile to war who is also a citizen of a State engaged in war. The habit of the Tribunals to forbid any useful or specially skilled work, or any that returned a living wage, to their victims, made the employment agency often feel as though it were striking futile blows in a fog.

The Pelham Committee, even after the Armistice, tried to keep its hold on the men by issuing circulars demanding monthly reports from their employers, though the Tribunals, from whom they had their power, closed with a snap on Armistice Day. Little heed was paid to them. Organizations are apt to show a strong will to live.

25. A large Central Fund for dependents of imprisoned C.O.'s was organized under the chairmanship of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and with valuable organizing service from Miss Violet Tillard and Mrs. Salter. It handled large sums, for

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much was needed. It was felt that the suffering of a man in prison would be terribly increased if he was conscious in his hours of loneliness that his family were starving through his action. There were local and divisional funds, under the Central Fund. Each locality met its own needs so far as it could, and contributed to or drew from the divisional fund what circumstances demanded. Similarly, the division contributed to or drew from the Central Fund, according to its surplus or its deficit. Subscriptions might go to the local, the divisional, or the Central Fund. Thus localities helped one another, and yet local responsibility remained. It was an excellent plan, and worked very well. Much labour was put into this distribution till the end of the war and afterwards; many appeals for funds had to be made from time to time; and great discretion in distribution was called for. But the misery alleviated made it all well worth while.\*

### IV. THE PEACE PARTY IN PARLIAMENT.

26. A study of the pages of the *G.O.'s Hansard*, shows how diligently the cause was kept before the House of Commons at question time. It is impossible to speak too highly of the persistence of Mr. Philip Snowden in this unpopular task. To "write to Snowden" was the ever-ready resort of victims of illegal or unjust action. Mr. T. E. Harvey and Mr. Arnold Rowntree also gave assistance. Support also came from Mr. Richard Lambert, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Lees-Smith, Mr. Joseph King, Commander Wedgwood, Mr. A. H. Ponsonby, Mr. Philip Morrell, and Mr. Outhwaite. The Parliamentary Department of the N.C.F. arranged and sifted complaints which reached it, and sent them to Mr. Snowden.

\* It is not necessary to give a complete statement of the money raised by each locality, and not possible to give the total, which was raised in the manner above described, but I happen to have at hand the Manchester District accounts, of which Mr. H. V. Herford was the treasurer, and may be given merely as an illustration. These accounts show contributions of £4,022, which were treated in the manner described. This was distributed at a cost of £22 for expenses. The Friends of North Somerset and Wilts Monthly Meeting, under the treasurer'ship of Edwin L. Gales, disbursed over £600, and similar results were achieved elsewhere.

He was supported from time to time by questions from J. Ramsay Macdonald and J. Howard Whitehouse. The cause owed much to the band of unpopular pacifists and to the leaders of the Union of Democratic Control, who bore fearless testimony to the truth in a markedly hostile atmosphere.

In reply, Mr. Brace or Mr. MacPherson or Sir George Cave propounded such statements as the incriminated officials supplied, or took refuge in ignorance, promising further investigation and a private reply. Sometimes large gaps, apparently unbridgeable, were left between the grievance and the official rejoinder. In other cases, great hardship had been inflicted in a legal manner, as the law was administered under the Military Service Acts.

One or two specimen questions and answers may be recorded. On July 31, 1917 (quoting from *Hansard*), Mr. Chancellor asked the Home Secretary whether any complaints had been recorded about the conduct of the Chaplain at Winchester Prison; whether he was aware that he sneers at the beliefs of conscientious objectors and of Nonconformists in particular; whether he is aware that he told a conscientious objector that Christ would spit at him, and that he refers to conscientious objectors as vermin and lice, and if he would make enquiries as to this person's conduct from conscientious objectors to whose spiritual needs he has ministered?

Sir G. CAVE: "I have received no complaints against the Chaplain of His Majesty's Prison, Winchester, and I am satisfied that the allegations made in the question grossly misrepresent the language used by the reverend gentleman."

Mr. CHANCELLOR: "Has the right hon. gentleman enquired of any of the prisoners to whom this Christian gentleman addressed himself, or of the Nonconformist Chaplain?"

Sir G. CAVE: "I have made no enquiries."

Mr. CHANCELLOR: "Made no enquiries, and yet you deny the statements!"

Not many questions were answered so blatantly as this, but the spirit of the answer is quite typical.

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Questioned about the effect which the reduced rations had on the half-starved men in Wormwood Scrubs, Sir George Cave replied:—"There is no foundation for the statements that the rations have been reduced by half, and that these men are in a state of semi-starvation. Their health, as a body, is well maintained. If, in individual cases, the diet does not appear to be sufficient, the medical officer in the ordinary course orders extra diet."

No doubt he would do so, and did, when the man was becoming reduced to a bag of bones, i.e. "losing weight seriously." The actual facts of the diet at Dartmoor were given in a valuable, but ignored, speech by Mr. Joseph King in the House on November 1, 1917. Their 22 ounces of bread per day had been reduced to 11 ounces. Their 2 pints of porridge per day, with an extra one in the evening for full marks, were reduced to 1½ pints. In lieu of these 1 ounce of cheese was given. These men were engaged in hard physical work, and the original diet had been fixed as the minimum for maintaining health.

27. Of actual political parties the only one officially with us, and heartily supporting the fight against conscription, was the Independent Labour Party. As the idealist wing of Labour its members naturally saw more clearly into political tendencies and the long consequences of a temporarily popular tyranny than those parties whose outlook was not illuminated by an inward faith. It should give food for thought to Liberals and to Christians generally, that neither the ancient party of personal liberty nor the friends of the Son of Man—as a whole and officially—resisted this great enemy of both, but left it to certain Socialists to do so. When driven from public halls and cold-shouldered out of chapels, the advocates of liberty and peace would always find a platform and friends in the simple tabernacles of the I.L.P. and editorial advocacy in the *Labour Leader*. Most of the Socialist objectors were of this party, and one may be sure that its brave fidelity to its principles in difficult times has accumulated for it a store of energy, some day to be turned to practical account.

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28. This chapter gives, I do not doubt, an impression of extensive, varied, and efficient organization, and so it was. But many of the people in the various bodies were also members of several other wings of the organization. The whole was worked by remarkably few people altogether ; and is a striking example of what may be achieved by a group of men and women of unusual intelligence, backed by financial support, and willing to take all risks and meet all calls for sacrifice. They could not abolish conscription this time, but they saved its victims, otherwise alone in a hostile world, from collapse of body and perhaps of soul. To have been engaged in this crusade—as it may with exactness be called—will bind us together, all our lives. And the country will not be against us always.

## CHAPTER VI

### VARIETIES OF TESTIMONY

1. It cannot be denied that the path for the conscientious objectors to war was far from inwardly clear and obvious to begin with. The subject was encompassed with difficulties, for it was, in reality, one of those subjects on which "much may be said on both sides"; not using this phrase as a woolly cover for intellectual indolence, but as a statement of genuine but opposed loyalties—loyalty to the State and loyalty to the Best—the demand of Man organized as he is now, against the demand of the God within. To a man trying to give both their due, I believe no completely consistent course was possible during the war. I have yet to hear of a course of action taken by a pacifist, including my own, in which some incongruity might not be discovered by a penetrating mind. This was not our fault. We had to try to be both good Christians and good citizens, or good Socialists and good citizens; to go as far as our sense of duty allowed, but no further, in obedience to the State, though we believed that the State had done wrong. It is no wonder that great variety of action resulted. The State, during the six years that have passed since 1916, has become discredited as a helpful instrument of co-operation, has been found frequently to be an enemy of the people, and has been conducted with less than average wisdom.<sup>1</sup> The one desire now, of Socialists and Individualists alike, is to have as few controllers and other bureaucrats as possible.

2. The bulk of objectors could take no military oath, and were not willing to serve in the war at all, particu-

<sup>1</sup> Clifford Allen's preface to this book may be read in conjunction with this chapter.

larly in a rather safer place than the front line. They felt that constructively and corporately they would thus be accomplices in slaughter.

The favourite device of the Tribunals was, as we have seen, to grant a man whose genuineness was admitted "non-combatant service in the Army." It was known that this meant a sentence of imprisonment, and was a covert defiance by the Tribunals of the purpose of the Acts, in nearly every case, since such service was nearly always refused. The exceptions were the members of certain sects who followed the Bible literally.

Among the general body of conscientious objectors there remained two outstanding positions held respectively by what became known as Alternativists and Absolutists.

The former felt that the nation needed maintenance and service of all sorts, on usual civilian lines, and admitted in general the right of the State, if it saw fit—under such crises as plague, famine or war—to prescribe what work a man should do. The line of refusal would be drawn by these men if the work prescribed turned out to be in itself immoral, but not till then. Such men, if they met a reasonable Tribunal, often accepted civilian service approved by them. How the Government, blinded by the idea of deterrence, and aiming at punishment only, made this course as repellent as possible, we shall hear in its place. Had they been wise in their generation, they might have gravely weakened the Absolutist band.

3. The critics of the Alternativist line stated that every kind of permitted service was helping the war indirectly; and, further, that the man who accepted it was helping to make the Conscription Acts workable, by obeying them. The former of these arguments was easily met by showing that no one could remain in England and produce anything and pay taxes without helping England in the conflict; and that, further, objectors had no testimony against helping their country, in itself, and no wish to take sides against her.

The second argument was valid. This much of compliance was certainly not the way to destroy conscription. This

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was the main motive which spurred the Absolutist to make no compromise with such a demand of the State. He was out to make conscription impossible. Some would say that in so doing he was overstepping his individual conscientious testimony and working for a political object. He would reply that such political service was a sacred duty and bound his conscience as a citizen. He was called to it and was prepared to suffer for it. His resistance was, in fact, an act of citizenship.

The Absolutist was sustained by the faith that he was bearing a pure testimony to the Gospel of Goodwill, for which great positive idea he was a missionary and a sufferer. He was, at bottom, no negative "objector" but an active soldier, building up the Kingdom of God.

The Absolutist had one further reason for demanding nothing else than complete exemption. He pointed out that by doing work considered of national importance you were doing work considered important for war,<sup>1</sup> and were thereby liberating some one else to go to the front, who would otherwise have been considered essential at home. That this did happen is true. The question is, Was the conscientious objector responsible? If he carried the argument into all the consequences of his action, he found he could do nothing, however harmless in itself, that did not in the end liberate a man, it might be indirectly or several degrees away, for the Army. Even with complete exemption one could not avoid this. For the whole nation was under one great strain, and complete abstention from the universal effort was impossible. These varieties of type will manifest themselves all through the story.

The Absolutist denied the right of the State to conscript for war, and so would not inferentially admit that right by bargaining himself out of it. He took his stand on a universal principle, and would make no compromise. The Alternativist recognized the difficulties the State was in, and wished as an individual to save it all he could, minimizing his refusal to comply with its orders. One man desired to help the nation by civilian work in its time of strain, the

<sup>1</sup> Clifford Allen and others tested this by offering Peace work as work of national importance. It was refused.



other would not help it to fight, and made his form of service resistance to the establishment of an evil system within his country. But when the whole nation is fighting, and one cannot do any ordinary work which has no military reaction, there is little room for perfect consistency. Particularly, any change of occupation ordered by the Government would be so ordered with some idea, however unintelligent, that the war was being helped. That was supposed to be the reason why C.O. teachers were set to quarry work, and no C.O. might teach except those unqualified to do so.

In some extreme cases, men refused even to follow their own work, if it were by order of a Tribunal. The only sensible course for the Tribunals would have been to let such men alone, after being clear about their honesty. They would have helped the nation in the way for which they were qualified, and with all zeal. Popular contempt and hatred would have been their portion. This they were prepared to stand. It has manifested itself since their release, in the widespread refusal to reinstate or to employ conscientious objectors. The State would not then have played the traitor to freedom and conscience.

4. A vivid and interesting narrative which Mr. J. Scott Duckers has printed, recording his experiences,<sup>1</sup> throws clear light upon the mind of some Absolutists at this juncture. It is also valuable for its details of the prison system and of the way in which courtesy and force of character, combined with an established reputation, can succeed in taming officials of that system. Mr. Scott Duckers went so far as to refuse to go before a tribunal. The number of men who did this was small. Mr. Duckers, who had been Chairman of the "Stop the War" Committee, who had done political work on the Liberal side, and who had habitually resided at the National Liberal Club, was even pressed by the Central Tribunal in prison to appear before them; and to all appearance they would have been only too glad to grant him alternative service. Far different treatment was meted

<sup>1</sup> *Handed Over.* The prison experiences of Mr. J. Scott Duckers, solicitor of Chancery Lane, under the Military Service Act. Written by himself. With foreword by T. Edmund Harvey, M.P. (Daniel, 1s. 6d.)

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out to a poor cotton operative of Rochdale whom I knew in prison, who also—badly advised as I thought—had not been before a Tribunal. The Central Tribunal at Wormwood Scrubs prison turned him down at once as not genuine, though his genuineness was clear to the most undiscerning. Mr. Scott Duckers says that to himself the certificate would have been of no use; he would have declined any sort of alternative service "because the only purpose which the Government could have in transferring me to another occupation (or in requiring me to remain in my own) would be that in their view I should be then most useful in helping to carry on the war. Being against the war, I do not want it to continue."

Mr. Scott Duckers was within the Holborn district, and would have had to appear before Mr. A. W. Gamage, whose behaviour, as referred to in Parliament by Mr. Snowden, has been previously mentioned. Apart from any particular person, however, Mr. Duckers says that at a Tribunal he would see a man probably friendly and open-hearted in private life, "see him seated at a table in the public view, dressed in a little brief authority and accompanied by all the petty pomp and circumstance with which borough officials freeze human souls: explain to him what it is almost impossible for any human being to explain; satisfy him about something which he entirely fails to understand; answer every silly question, put up with every foolish gibe. If Mr. — will exempt you, that will be sufficient. If he refuses, you will be seized upon and ground up inside the military machine. Parliament has handed everything over to Mr. — subject only to the right of appeal to a Tribunal of super —'s in case either objector or military representative is not satisfied."

But apart from all these things, Mr. Duckers would have nothing to do with the Tribunals, though they had been models of fairness and courtesy, and had freely given certificates of exemption. He would decline to admit their jurisdiction, or the absurd fiction by which you are "deemed" to be a soldier. His line was that he was not, and never would be, a soldier, and would ask for no certificate of exemption from a soldier's duties,

When it came to a possibility of alternative service under the Home Office Committee, and by leave of the Central Tribunal, he naturally declined it "as being industrial conscription of a particularly objectionable kind."

5. It will be well that on this important issue I should quote from the statements of leading thinkers on both sides. Professor Gilbert Murray wrote in a letter quoted by T. E. Harvey in the *Tribunal* of July 27th, 1916, as follows:—

"As one who has done his best to help conscientious objectors, who has tried to understand their position, who realizes the suffering, both mental and bodily, to which they have willingly submitted for conscience' sake, and the great courage with which in some cases they have faced persecution, I venture to make an earnest appeal to those now in prison, that when they are invited to undertake work of 'national importance' they will not refuse. I assume, of course, that the work will be in no way connected either with warfare or with the Army.

"They have made their protest. They have vindicated their courage. They have established the rights of conscience. The State no longer demands that they should do anything to which, before the present crisis, they had expressed any objection. All that the State now asks is that they should be willing in some way to work for the good of their fellow-citizens in a time of extreme need.

"Some of them argue: 'The State is absorbed in war, which is a great crime; to give any help to the State is indirectly to help the crime.'

"I will not pause to consider to what strange results this argument would lead us, if logically pursued. But I would appeal to every man of ordinary feeling to recognize the utter falsity of saying that we, his average fellow-citizens, whom he regards as engaged in crime, are entirely absorbed in our criminality, and have no life outside it. Even the hardest fighter in the trenches is not always fighting. He is sometimes writing home, planting flower-beds, playing with children, reading, sleeping, eating and doing all the ordinary things of which the life of a human being is composed.

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Granted that the objectors are early Christians and the rest of us Pagans, the early Christians did not as a rule refuse all help to Pagans in distress. They did not say, 'If we save the life of this Pagan child it will merely encourage idolatry.'

"Why do I plead in this way or care so much what the objectors do? Not because of the actual amount of help they can bring to the country; but for two reasons. First, I respect and value these people with extra sensitive consciences and imperious ideals; I am on their side as against those who decide against them. And therefore I cannot bear to see them behave in a manner which savours less of brotherly love than of insatiable pugnacity, and tends to bring idealism itself into disrepute. And secondly, like most Englishmen, I hate to see decent people punished like felons, and other decent people forced into punishing them.

"If the C.O.'s will be content with what they have won, and face the problem before them in a spirit of love and not of strife, they may make a positive contribution to our national life which will have a permanent effect also in the wider world of international relationship."

6. The Editor of the *Tribunal* replied as follows:—

"Mr. Harvey goes straight to the root of the matter when he implies an objection to the word 'alternative.' It is mainly because such work is forced upon men as an alternative to military service that we object to it. If this is not so, why is it that if a man does not accept it, or says he cannot find it, he is forced into the Army? Conversely, why is it that, with negligible exceptions, a man is only exempted from the Army on condition that he does this work? Why is it, also, that even if he is already doing such work, and has been granted a conscience by a Tribunal, he is given only a conditional exemption, or even taken away from the work he is doing and sent to do similar work in another place? We submit that this is done merely because the authorities mean to make it clear that the alternative to doing such work is military service. We further submit that all these orders and restrictions regarding

those who are either doing or ordered to do such work are imposed because such work is compulsory, and is compulsory because it is part of a Compulsion Act, passed solely for military purposes.

“Dr. Murray says we have made our protest. Yes, but we feel it is our duty to go on protesting until the evil stops, and not merely protest once and then shut our mouths and acquiesce in it. He says we have vindicated our courage; this is unimportant—the soldiers have shown more. He says we have established the rights of conscience. We reply that the Tribunals, the Houses of Parliament, the Churches, the newspapers, the Universities, and the general public daily show by their actions and words that they do not yet begin to understand the word as it applies to us. To the vast majority of the nation a conscientious objector is either one who doesn't like fighting because he is a coward, or else one who, owing to a kind of malicious insanity, refuses to help his country in the only way open to able-bodied men.

“They say that all the State asks is that we should help our fellow-citizens in time of need. We reply that, by refusing to allow men to be free to continue useful work even after they have shown that they are nothing but impediments when forced into the Army, the State has shown that it is not our service that it wants, but our subservience to military law. We deny, emphatically, that we are refusing to help the community, or even the State, merely because the latter happens to be engaged in a war. We are, on the contrary, willing to help the nation; but not in a manner which would imply acquiescence in what we consider immoral.

“He says that our argument, if logically pursued, would lead an early Christian to refuse to help a Pagan child. That is the reverse of logical. Logically pursued, our argument would merely lead an early Christian to refuse to be ordered to take care of a Pagan child in order that its father might be free to go out and kill somebody. And such an order would be all the more impossible to obey if accompanied by a strict injunction not to try and persuade the father to stop killing.

“All that, however, is merely the negative side of our

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argument. We cannot repeat too often or too emphatically that our action is not negative, but positive and definite. Professor Murray is incorrect in describing our argument as a refusal to help the State in doing what we think wrong. That is like describing a sprinter as a man who refuses to stand still. If our action were merely a refusal to help our fellows because we were asked to do so by a Government with which we disagree, it would be harder to defend. But it is nothing of the sort ; it is an active protest against what we consider the greatest evil in the world ; and our method of protesting is to refuse to acquiesce by a single act or deed in a system which is indescribably evil, both in origin and purpose. By doing this—by making this protest—we believe we are doing more for the community than by doing safe civil jobs as plain-clothes conscripts.

“ We are accused of insatiable pugnacity, and asked to show a spirit of love. If it is ‘ pugnacity ’ to refuse to compromise with a vile thing, then we hope we are pugnacious. As for a spirit of love, we have no love to show for Militarism—nothing but hatred ; on the contrary, it is our love which dictates our attitude—our love for freedom. Freedom is a greater need for a nation than the temporary convenience of its Government, and freedom will never come to any land so long as men meet the commands of a military law with anything less than uncompromising hostility.”

We believe the reader now has before him all that need be said on both sides.<sup>1</sup> The choice made by the men was made partly by temperament and by intuition, and partly by reasoning.

<sup>1</sup> A number of Absolutist statements are printed in Chapter III, pp. 89-92.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HOME OFFICE SCHEME

I. THE Government set itself resolutely against the group known as Absolutists, but hoped that a new administrative proposal for dealing with the imprisoned men would be successful in solving the problem of the Alternativist and might even attract other more extreme sections, especially after they had had a taste of prison life. I now propose to outline the scheme invented by the Government for sorting out the men in prison and setting them to civilian work.

It was during the summer of 1916 that the question of alternative service became acute. It was, of course, cropping up all the time for individuals who were offered work of national importance. The Government proceeded to divide the forces of their opponents. On July 26th Mr. Lloyd George, then Secretary for War, made his famous speech in the House, which gave the key-note to all the future proceedings of the Government. Referring to the Absolutists, the man who had first risen from obscurity as the champion of the Welsh Nonconformist conscience concerning burials said: "With that kind of man I, personally, have absolutely no sympathy whatsoever. I do not think that they deserve the slightest consideration. With regard to those who object to shedding blood, it is the traditional policy of this country to respect that view, and we do not propose to depart from it; but in the other case I shall only consider the best means of making the path of that class as hard as possible."

What had become of the clause about absolute exemption, "the proper exemption to meet the case"? Why did Mr. Asquith and Mr. Walter Long and Mr. Herbert Samuel allow their Parliamentary utterances to be so flouted?

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It was popular, doubtless. Some day, in the coming time of reaction from war, we may yet hear public opinion echoed in an eloquent speech from Mr. Lloyd George on the nobility of the martyrs to a sense of duty.

Bertrand Russell replied in the *Tribunal* of August 17th :—

“ Our politicians may, for aught I know, have made a careful study of [conscience] in dictionaries and histories, but have evidently been denied by nature the opportunity to learn about it by looking within. Does Mr. George think St. Paul would have been satisfied with a certificate excusing him from preaching Paganism? Does he think that Luther would have acquiesced in a dispensation from maintaining the doctrine of indulgences, on condition that he should preserve silence as to his objections to the doctrine? Does he think that Joan of Arc would have accepted civil alternative service? Would he himself have been willing to spend all his time during the Boer War in growing cabbages? ”

We now reach the beginning of the important Home Office scheme which was intended by the Government to solve the problem of the men in prison. Had it been worked in a right spirit, it might have done something to assuage the persecution. It was launched with the usual flavour of good intention, and was sincerely intended as a relief, but it was baffled by lack of comprehension of the minds of the men dealt with, and by the dull penal imaginations of the executive instruments employed, incited always by the baying of newspapers, and relying on an abnormal inflammation of public opinion.

The gaols were becoming inconveniently crowded.† The persecution was reaching unforeseen dimensions. A certain sense of scandal had to be avoided.

2. On June, 28, 1916 (to go back to the beginning), Mr Asquith explained the scheme in the House of Commons :—

“ The procedure to be adopted by the War Office in the cases of soldiers under Army Order X of May 25, 1916

† Prison life is described in the next chapter.



sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to obey orders, is as follows:—

“ The first step is to sift out the cases where there is prima-facie evidence to show that the offence was the result of conscientious objection to military service. For this purpose all court martial proceedings on conscientious objectors will be referred for scrutiny to the War Office.

“ With regard to the cases of those who have been before a Tribunal, the records will be consulted. If the data therein are not sufficient, further investigation will be made ; answers to categorical questions will be required, and those who have knowledge of the men’s antecedents—such as ministers of religion—may be consulted.

“ With regard to those who have never been before a Tribunal, the first step will be to require them to answer the categorical questions which the Tribunal might have put. If the information is supplied, investigation will be made into those answers, and for the purpose of such investigation, and in all cases where a prima-facie case is established the Army Council will depend on the advice of the Central Appeal Tribunal, or a Committee of that Tribunal, who have consented to lend their assistance for this purpose. If the information is refused, and in all cases where the plea is not sustained, the prisoner will remain under military control, his sentence will be at once commuted to detention and he will be sent to a detention barracks to undergo his sentence.

“ The men who are held to be genuine conscientious objectors *will be released from the civil prison on their undertaking to perform work of national importance under civil control.* They will be transferred pro forma to Section W. of the Army Reserve, and they will cease to be subject to military discipline or the Army Act so long as they continue to carry out satisfactorily the duties imposed upon them.

“ The Home Secretary has appointed a Committee, consisting of Mr. W. Brace, M.P., Sir Thomas Elliott, K.C.B. and Sir Matthew Nathan, G.C.M.G., who are now engaged on the work of determining to what kind of work these men

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should be set and under what conditions, and to take the executive action which is necessary.

“ I may add to this statement two general propositions which will, I hope, meet with universal acceptance. The first is that all men whose objections to military service are founded on honest convictions ought to be able, and will be able, to avail themselves of the exemption which Parliament has provided; and, in the second place, it is necessary that men who put forward objections of this kind as a pretext and cloak to cover their indifference to the national call, and who are therefore guilty of the double offence of cowardice and hypocrisy, should be treated, as they ought to be treated, with the utmost rigour.”

3. This speech reads reasonably, until you examine it in the light of knowledge of the subject. The representatives of the men concerned replied to the effect that

- (1) Those who had been sentenced before the recent Army Order were not clearly included in the scheme.
- (2) Inquisition by Tribunals having failed conspicuously, there was little hope from a further sifting, particularly under the War Office.
- (3) There are no official reports of Tribunal proceedings to refer to.
- (4) The categorical questions will be unfairly difficult for uneducated men.
- (5) Ministers of religion will not be available to give testimony for Socialists outside the Churches.
- (6) This precarious test will result in further severity among the men who are not passed as genuine.
- (7) Men transferred, however formally, to Army Reserve W. are retained in the Army and liable to recall.
- (8) Those who do not pass the precarious test and are to be treated as cowards and hypocrites will suffer grave injustice.
- (9) The Absolutist will refuse to make the bargain suggested.

This was signed: For the F.S.C. by Robt. O. Mennell, hon. sec.; Hubert W. Peet, organizing sec. For the N.C.F.

by Clifford Allen, chairman; A. Fenner Brockway, hon. sec. For the F.O.R. by Hy. T. Hodgkin, chairman; Richard Roberts, sec.

A further forcible reply was made by Clifford Allen on the leading page of the *Tribunal*, July, 6, 1918:—

“ As we foreshadowed some weeks ago, the Government’s new proposal for dealing with conscientious objectors results from an entire misconception of our views and the character of our protest. It had been held by many that the presence of the Prime Minister at the War Office would have afforded an opportunity for a more liberal understanding of this complex problem. All such hopes have been dissipated, and there can be little doubt that the new scheme will give rise to anger and resentment in the minds of many who deplore persecution but had withheld their protest in the hope that some way out would be discovered by Mr. Asquith. As it is, the persecution will be intensified, and brutality officially encouraged as the result of a proposal which disregards the stand already made by those who have been sentenced to death, penal servitude or other penalties. One might almost describe as ludicrous the proposal to institute a further enquiry into the genuineness of such conscientious objectors through the medium of the War Office, which is the last body in the world that can or ought to deal with such matters. Months will slip by whilst thousands of cases are being investigated, and for a while men will linger in prison and penal servitude.

“ The Army Order which transferred men to the civil power was welcomed on all sides by those who believed the Government had a genuine desire to solve the problem. Their confidence must have been rudely shattered by the complete reversal of policy initiated by the new scheme, which allows the Army Council to commit such men as they fail to certify as conscientious objectors to military detention, to be treated with ‘ the utmost rigour.’

“ We may now expect a new scheme to be adumbrated by the Government, in order to modify further opposition in the country and in the House of Commons. Meanwhile persecution will continue. There is, however, every reason

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to hope that our friends and critics in Parliament are nettled by the way the Government is trifling with the matter, and that the Free Churches and many other sections of the public will not tolerate this new attempt of the Army authorities to crush a movement, which menaces their authority and contests their domination over civil rights and religious freedom.

“ Elsewhere we record our criticism of the Government scheme. It only remains for us to make clear why we believe the Government must always fail to settle this problem, unless they extend to conscientious objectors the right to absolute exemption allowed under the Military Service Act. The crux of the position lies here: conscription cannot be justly administered.

“ Let it not be supposed for a moment that the offer of civil work to the men whose consciences are recognized by the War Office is likely to ease the situation. Without doubt many of our members will, in all sincerity, undertake that work, but it is interesting to speculate how many of them, when they are in possession of the facts, will reject the conditions that will probably govern their status, or will agree to become a means of exploiting the Trade Union Movement, or consent to abstain from giving expression to their pacifist views.

“ It is only natural that the final struggle will centre round the men who decline to enter into such a bargain with the Military Service Act, and who are entirely disregarded by the Government proposal. None of us can yet estimate what measure the Government will adopt to break the spirit of these men, but all of us realize that the future of Militarism in this country will be decided by the conscientious objector, and we take courage when we hear how gladly our men are accepting the penalties imposed upon them, and how eager they are that we should maintain our uncompromising policy. Indeed, the Fellowship is unaffected by the repeated attempts of the Government to avoid doing the right thing.

“ It is possible that this week many of those hitherto entrusted with the work of the Fellowship will cease their present work, and change the character of their service.

We know now that nothing can happen in our absence to deflect the Fellowship from its true purpose. We have been urged to rest content with the witness the Fellowship has so far made. May those who remain to carry on the work have a like experience to our own and return the same answer we have believed it right to give.

“ Our strength must still rest in a full understanding of each other’s points of view, but we cannot compromise if we hope to render effective service.”

Early in August the National Committee of the N.C.F. addressed the following reasoned letter to Mr. Asquith, endeavouring to explain the conditions of success of the alternative service proposed :—

“ SIR,

“ Under their latest scheme for dealing with the problem of the conscientious objector, the Government propose to release from prison those men who agree to do work under civil control, and to continue the punishment of those who are unable to accept that condition.

“ As men in both these categories are included in the membership for whom we speak, we consider it our duty again to represent their opinions to His Majesty’s Government. They may be grouped as follows :—

“ (1) Those who, whilst recognizing their obligation to the community, cannot admit obligations imposed as part of the Military Service Act, and therefore cannot accept any form of service as an alternative to military duties.

“ (2) Those who cannot refuse work under civil control on grounds of conscience, however much they may desire to do so on grounds of policy.

“ (3) Those who feel it their duty to undertake civil work of national importance, even when imposed under the Military Service Act.

“ We believe it is of the first importance that men who feel called upon to accept work under civil control should be satisfied that they are rendering service of real value to the community.

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"The Tribunals are offering work of national importance to some conscientious objectors, not in order to give such men an opportunity of rendering useful service to the community, but rather as a means of inflicting some disability upon them in the name of what is called 'equality of sacrifice.' This penalizing of men who have established the genuineness of their objection to war was not contemplated by the Military Service Act, which directs the Tribunals to give exemption when a conscientious objection is proved. If work under civil control is to take the form of what amounts to a penalty instead of a service, it is bound to be rejected by men who would otherwise undertake it. These men are not deterred by any sacrifice which they are satisfied must naturally result from the service they render. Military duties are not imposed as penalties, but are conceived as an honourable form of service for those who believe in war, though great sacrifices must inevitably follow. The same must apply in the case of those conscientious objectors who can accept other forms of what they deem to be useful national service."

The letter went on to explain that

"The conditions should be that men should be set to the work for which they have skill, wherever possible. They should not be set to tasks connected with the organization of war, or which would liberate other men, hitherto exempted, for the conscript Army. They should not be used as blacklegs, or a labour reserve, or to maintain sweated trades, or to reduce wages. Allowances to dependents should be equal to those granted to soldiers' families; 'for they are not offenders undergoing punishment, but men who have established a claim to a particular form of exemption provided by law.' Liberty for pacifist propaganda must be allowed. The fullest information should be publicly given before any document was presented to the men for signature."

The letter proceeded:—

"Having regard to the great variety of methods by which the authorities are conducting the new enquiry amongst conscientious objectors in prison, we desire to emphasize

once again our belief that the most serious injustice must follow any further investigation into the genuineness of men who have already suffered for their opinions. Just as the Local and Appeal Tribunals, and the Central Tribunal itself in its normal working, have failed to discriminate equitably between conscience and conscience, so will this new enquiry inevitably force many sincere men back under military control, to be treated 'with the utmost rigour' as persons 'guilty of the double offence of cowardice and hypocrisy.' The sole purpose of the enquiry should be to ascertain the view taken by the prisoners concerning civil alternative work, in order to decide what form of exemption to give them.

"Whilst desiring justice for those of our members who will accept civil work, and offering our criticism upon the method so far adopted for imposing this work, we desire to stress in the strongest possible terms the inevitable disaster that must follow any further refusal on the part of the Government to grant absolute exemption to the men who cannot accept any service imposed by a Military Service Act. These include many Quakers, and some of those who have already faced the death sentence in France and are now undergoing periods of ten years' penal servitude. To them it is not the character or the conditions of the service offered that affects their decision. It is not killing only to which they object; it is war, and therefore Militarism. They believe it wrong to accept conditional exemption because they hold it to be a bargain with a *Military Service Act*, which to them is the most complete expression of Militarism yet admitted in this country. They welcome the obligation of every man to serve the community, but believe that their refusal to be a party to this Act is the highest form of service they can render.

"It is these men of whom Mr. Lloyd George stated, 'I shall only consider the best means of making the path of that class a very hard one.' Thus, for the very reason that they cannot waive their conviction, they are to be subjected to prolonged persecution, expressly authorized by the Government with a view to breaking their determination to be loyal to their sense of right and wrong."

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This paper was signed on behalf of the National Committee of the N.C.F. by Clifford Allen, chairman ; A. Fenner Brockway, chairman-elect ; Edward Grubb, hon. treasurer ; Catherine E. Marshall, hon. secretary.

4. During July rumours of this action in Parliament were rife in the prisons, and the prospect of liberation to do useful civilian work was a great encouragement. But they had to wait a long time before the scheme was carried out. Waiting in ignorance in prison, hoping that each day might bring some announcement, the men felt the delay long and hard to bear. This was characteristic of all that happened to them during imprisonment. At various times during August batches of men were sent up under an escort to Wormwood Scrubs prison, where they were interviewed individually by the Central Tribunal under Lord Salisbury. They were brought, weakened and exhausted, from their cells, in total ignorance of what was before them, to a Tribunal within prison walls, and in the prison atmosphere. The proceedings were of the briefest ; apparently about three minutes to each was usual. The majority of men were passed as genuine after being sent back to their prisons to await the publication of the verdict concerning them. Then the offer was made that the men should be transferred to Section W. of the Army Reserve and should cease to be subject to military discipline and the Army Act. Each was asked to sign the following conditions of release :—

- (1) He will serve the Committee for the Employment of conscientious objectors (hereinafter called "the Committee"), their agents or representatives, with diligence and fidelity on such work of national importance as the Committee may prescribe.
- (2) He will reside at such place as the Committee, their agents or representatives, may from time to time determine.
- (3) He will conform to such regulations as the Committee may lay down for the due execution of the work allotted to him.



- (4) He will conform to such regulations with regard to conduct, and to such as are framed to secure the well-being of men under similar conditions to himself, as may be made by the Committee or by the agents or the representatives of the Committee, or as may be made by duly appointed representatives of the men so working and approved by the Committee.

If and when he ceases to carry out any of the foregoing conditions he will be liable to complete the term of his sentence. One of the regulations made was that there should be no Peace propaganda. However natural on the part of the Government, it was intolerable to many C.O.'s. Some who refused to sign, like Howard C. Marten, were nevertheless released from prison.

5. This scheme had the theoretical possibility of giving relief and presenting a sensible solution of the puzzling situation to some at least of the men. It might have given, to all men who were willing to take alternative service, a chance of really serving their country during a hard time. But the condition of general acceptance would have been the provision of useful work and full liberty of expression, for which the Government was not prepared, and which it is fairly certain public opinion, as mirrored in the militant Press, would not have approved of. A sensible Warden of the Home Office Settlement at Wakefield, Mr. Edwin Gilbert, himself a well-wisher to the men under his control, defended the Settlement scheme on the ground that the public would very likely use violence against any C.O.'s who returned as free men to their homes. It is probable that a few such incidents might have occurred, but the men would have been prepared to face that. They would have been willing to bear their testimony in the face of violence and injury.

Whatever fair prospect of relief to conscience and work of usefulness lay in the Home Office scheme as it might have been, we shall find that it was rendered a failure by the way it was worked, and under the influence of the military

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and penal spirit was, in the end, the most unsatisfactory and miserable of all the Government's experiments. Alternative service was made as repellent as possible, as though the Government wished to multiply the number of Absolutists.

The first Settlement was at the remote village of Dyce, near Aberdeen, to which 250 men released on the ground that they were genuine, and therefore victims of Tribunal injustice, were sent to work in granite quarries, and to transfer the broken stones to where they were wanted for road metal.

As usual, it was thought that anything would be good enough for these shirkers, so they were housed in tents which had been condemned for use by soldiers, and which were therefore considered good enough in the rainy climate of the North of Scotland, for men who had been worn down by some months of imprisonment and under-feeding, and who were told to work ten hours a day at heavy manual labour, for which many of them were unfit at any time. The tents were on a hill-side which was always a sea of mud. Walter Roberts of Stockport died on September 8th, after a high fever and a very short illness.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately the men sought refuge in the barns of the neighbouring farms and in the village. Thence they were ordered back to their wet tents. There was one large dining-tent and a recreation tent, used for general meetings. Once these were both blown down. The men found that they could satisfy the local road officials by working in alternate shifts of two and a half hours each or five hours a day. There was abounding good fellowship and high spirits in spite of cold and wet. At first it was at least better than prison. Quakers and others in Aberdeen were very kind to the men who were able to visit them, and so were the people in the neighbourhood—in spite of a local newspaper. The local doctor certified many men as physically unfit for the work. At the week-end some of them would go down in their shoddy coats and corduroy trousers to the Friends' Meeting at Aberdeen. Tea was provided at the Meeting House, and after the evening meeting a convenient tram took them part of the six miles back.

<sup>1</sup> v. Chapter X.

Finally, Dyce was given up at the end of October; a week's leave of absence was granted, with a free pass home, and orders to return at the end of the week to the gaols at Wakefield or Warwick—now to be transformed and known as Work Centres. Dyce had become unmanageable. The men were in revolt against what was offered them as work of national importance; many had, in fact, not signed the promise to obey all orders; and rules were widely disregarded. A voluntary return to prison as morally preferable to these Settlements had already set in. Another company of forty-nine men were making a road at Keddington in Suffolk; which, they became convinced, was a military road. The camps were not medically organized even as well as the prisons were, and many cases of gross neglect occurred, due to Home Office agents and doctors being chiefly on the look-out for malingerers as in their prison days. One of the clearest cases of this caused the death of Bennett Wallis at Newhaven in September 1917.<sup>1</sup>

The prison at Wakefield had been transformed: the locks had been taken from the doors of the cells; dining tables were placed in the broad corridors, and the warders—out of uniform—acted as instructors. The doctor acted as the head of the establishment. The work was the usual prison work—mailbags, mats, etc. Work stopped at five in the afternoons, and the six hundred men could spend their evening in or out till 9.30. The Friends' Meeting House was again turned into a social centre, and men were frequently welcomed at the Meeting Houses at Bradford and at Leeds. For a long time the efforts of the hostile local Press did not produce any hostility among the townspeople; later on a gang of roughs was organized to attack the C.O.'s as they returned to the prison in the evenings. The example of Knutsford, described later in this chapter, spread to Wakefield. Not unconsciously, but quite intentionally, the mob there decided to follow the example set with impunity at Knutsford, and a riot was prepared for the Whitsuntide holidays of 1918. It was of the same general character as the other, and need not therefore be treated in detail. It included a good deal of robbery, and the windows and furniture of some

<sup>1</sup> v. Chapter X.

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Quaker ladies were broken. From Wakefield also the work centre was withdrawn.

It must not be supposed that the Alternativists were necessarily less courageous than the Absolutists remaining in prison, though in such a large number must have been included those whose hearts had fainted by the way, and who were willing to take the easiest course when offered them. All had to pass through the Army and prison before reaching a Home Office camp, and it should be remembered that a real shirker would in all probability have accepted the Army when rejected by his Tribunal—particularly if the service were non-combatant, as was offered in so many cases. These remarks are made at this point because it is noticeable that of the thirty-four men who had gone bravely through so much in France all but three, Messrs. Beavis, Taylor and Murfin, accepted the Home Office scheme. By December, 1916, a small group, including Cornelius Barritt, H. E. Stanton and Rendel Wyatt, wrote to the Home Office to say they would not continue under the scheme, and returned to prison, where they stayed until April 1919.

6. During March 1917 various settlements and camps were broken up and their population transferred to the large convict prison at Princetown on Dartmoor, which was converted into a Work Centre. The ninety convicts in residence were removed elsewhere. Dartmoor was the scene of the most ineffective, inglorious, tedious and disheartening experience of the whole story. The men were not called upon to show a brave resistance to the terrible experience of prolonged hard labour, which the Absolutists were suffering in the various gaols. They had larger opportunities for social life among themselves, and for engaging in controversies on the many issues which centred round their own hostility to war. They fell into two well-marked groups—the religious group, taking either the Quaker or the Tolstoyan or the more purely Scriptural line; and the political or revolutionary group. Some of these were out for the class war and were not entirely disbelievers in all force; they would, on the contrary, have fought in a war against Capitalism. There were, further, those who

were for immediate rebellion or escape—men who would break all rules and stand a siege—scattered among a majority of more sensible men whose heads were screwed on in the usual way. Poor Mr. Brace was within the lines of truth when he remarked that the C.O.'s were not all angels.<sup>1</sup>

The complete uselessness of the work set to these men in the Home Office camps, causing utter waste of their energies, was a cause of constant irritation to men of character and spirit. A letter by Lydia S. Smith,<sup>2</sup> written to the *Manchester Guardian*, puts the situation very clearly:—

“ . . . There are at the Settlement between eight and nine hundred men of all shades of religious and political opinion—Quakers, Churchmen, Socialists, Plymouth Brethren, Tolstoyans, Internationalists, and so on ; their one common belief being that war is wrong. All these men have suffered imprisonment for their convictions, and all have been adjudged ‘ genuine ’ by a none too friendly Tribunal sitting at the prison, and have been offered this work of so-called ‘ national importance ’ on that ground. Here were men genuinely anxious to render to their country every service they conscientiously could, who, before they realized the nature of the work, welcomed this opportunity of proving themselves ready to ‘ render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s ’ so long as they might also render to God the obedience they felt to be God’s.

“ What outlet did the Home Office find for the energies of these men, who are drawn from the thoughtful section of the community, whether they be doctors, accountants, University men (as some of them are) or tradesmen and skilled artisans ? Has the Government, which is calling

<sup>1</sup> Howard C. Marten supplies me with the following note:—

The classification of the “ Groups ” is not easy. Many of the political and agnostic objectors, together with those belonging to a not inconsiderable “ Artistic ” group, were usually ranged in general policy alongside Friends, Tolstoyans and members of the F.O.R. The so-called “ Religious ” group included a big section of International Bible Students, Plymouth Brethren and others who, while excellent men individually, took little or no part in the political or social life of the settlements. The most difficult section were those who belonged to the Communist group and who had little real sympathy for the true Pacifist position. In matters of policy these would at times draw to their side many of the “ Fed-Ups ” and extremists of other political sections.

<sup>2</sup> Now Mrs. Horton.

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so insistently for efficiency, made any attempt to use the talents of these men in a way which will be most helpful to the community? The answer is unfortunately in the negative. Not only is the work futile, but the conditions under which it is performed are those most calculated to discourage the worker.

“ There are attached to the prison some two thousand acres of land, on which about six hundred men are employed. Another two hundred are engaged on the internal work of the Settlement. A few, about fifty, are employed upon land reclamation under the Duchy of Cornwall. The agricultural work is penal in character; that is to say, it is organized on exactly the same lines as for convicts, when, labour being only too plentiful, the main object was to make work, the harder and more physically tiring the better.

“ A few concrete examples will illustrate my meaning. The crushing of oats is performed with antiquated machinery of the treadmill type arranged for hands instead of feet. Sixteen men are needed to work this machine and the output is six bags per day. The difference in value between the crushed and uncrushed oats is sixpence per bag. The sixteen men have the satisfaction of knowing that their ‘work of national importance’ has added three shillings to the wealth of the community. One of the men engaged on this work was, when arrested, engaged upon important research work at the Royal College of Science.

“ I saw a gang of eight men harnessed to a hand-roller engaged in rolling a field—work that one man and a horse could have performed in a third of the time. Three weeks have been spent in digging a flat field which might have been ploughed in three days. The crops grown are almost entirely foodstuffs for the animals with which the farm is stocked, and the men have calculated that the turnips, when grown, will have cost ninepence each.

“ The spades, barrows, etc., are all prodigiously heavy, with a view to tiring the users, and all the appliances and methods are of the most antiquated nature. Applications for improved appliances have been consistently refused by the Home Office. The bootmakers have asked for a machine

costing eight pounds which would save three men's work per day. They are not allowed to have it. The coke for the gasworks and furnaces is carted by hand, teams of ten men being harnessed to a cart. And yet there appear to be a large number of horses on the farm. The Home Office seems deliberately to have avoided the introduction of any device by which the usefulness of work might be increased. 'We are merely keeping the place warm till the convicts return,' said one man to me, 'and no one can pretend that it is work of national importance.'

"The result of such a policy cannot fail to be that the men employed feel that they have been cheated by the Home Office. They wished to help the community by their labour, and they are actively prevented from doing so. There is absolutely no incentive to work when they cannot but feel that what they are given to do is essentially punishment work and economically valueless. In spite of this, the farm bailiff has repeatedly stated that the farm work, both as regards quantity and quality, is better done than it was by the convicts. This is the more significant in view of the fact that the food is poorer and the hours of labour longer than under the old régime when convicts filled the prison. . . ."

7. Early in the history of Dartmoor, the Harmsworth Press thought that there was material there for a popular stunt against the C.O.'s. Newspaper men were sent down to Princetown for the purpose of taking photographs and seeking interviews. They were admitted by the authorities. Articles were headed, with more regard to alliteration than to accuracy, "Princetown's Pampered Pets," "Coddled Conscience Men," "The C.O.'s Cosy Club." Idleness and self-indulgence were freely ascribed to these worried and suffering men. Interviews, mainly mythical, were printed. A constant storm of questions in Parliament was directed to prevent the Government from adopting any less wasteful but more humane plan; and indeed, the Parliamentary attack probably produced the continually increasing severity. Meetings indignantly protesting against the presence of these men at Dartmoor were held in Plymouth, the nearest town,

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and persecution was carried on against Mr. Riley, a Non-conformist minister, who was brave enough to oppose the clamour.

Just at the time when the limelight was being thrown upon the miserable scene at Dartmoor there occurred what looks, rightly or wrongly, very like an attempt by some authority to provoke violence. One of the men had, without leave, taken a cup of milk from the farm to a sick comrade. The authorities decided to send him back to prison for doing this. They chose the one moment for his arrest most likely to produce resistance. The force detailed to take away the offender arrived at Dartmoor during the dinner hour, when the whole population was standing about the yard, full of indignation, of course, at the procedure. Then a C.O. suddenly called out, "Let us stone them"—or some similar incitement to violence, took up a stone and threw it at one of the guards. Happily no others responded to his call. This man had been a foremost inciter to extreme measures in the meetings of the men. He had been elected chairman of the Men's Committee at the very beginning when the Settlement was small, and had tried for re-election, but A. J. Mayors, a man of moderate and conciliatory views, succeeded in gaining election, with Howard C. Marten as secretary. After a career of incitement to violence culminating with the actual beginning of it, what punishment would be likely to fall upon this man corresponding to indefinite imprisonment for taking a cup of milk? The man mysteriously left Dartmoor that evening; he joined the Royal Engineers, and was afterwards heard of as teaching telegraphy, his own business, as a soldier. I leave the matter without further comment, for that is the end of my knowledge. Mr. Joseph King stated in the House on March 8, 1917, that he had information, both personal and by numerous letters, which had satisfied him, after enquiry, that "a number of police spies were set to watch and, if possible, to inveigle C.O.'s into some breach of the law." The Government spy, Booth, admitted in a libel case on February, 7, 1921, that he had pretended to be "a C.O. on the run" under the name of Comrade Bert, though he denied having acted as an *agent-provocateur*, and won his case.



On the other side, Ministers were the target of hostile questions from Sir. C. Kinloch-Cooke, General Page Croft or Major Newman. Sir C. Kinloch-Cooke in particular pursued the men at Dartmoor with a petty vindictiveness which showed little balance of mind. He wanted to know if they met their friends in Princetown and received food from them, if they supplemented their rations by buying food at the shops there; complained of money being spent on their railway fares at a time when they were earning a maximum of eightpence a day with deductions for their families. He complained of their meagre food allowance being excessive; objected to their being out till 9.30; succeeded at one time in stopping the ten days' leave per annum which they had, and, in fact, attempted to deprive them of everything that made life externally worth living. He asked that their letters should be censored and postal facilities curtailed. As a member for the dockyard constituency at Devonport, close to Dartmoor, his line may have been locally popular, as well as congenial. Though the replies to the questions put from our side were often far from satisfactory, the questions were a great safeguard to the men in prison, particularly those whose health was being undermined. If I were to record any large fraction of the stories of broken health and hardship that the questions record, this book would become unwieldy in length.

As the result of the Press outcry, the Dartmoor men were forbidden to enter any town or village except Princetown; to travel by railway; or to have Christmas leave, Christmas being then imminent and their families expecting them. The first leave of four working days had been granted after three months' service, and after a year's service a week had been allowed, until it was later withdrawn. In addition to the poor food, lodging and clothing, a wage of eightpence a day was paid for pocket money. The only provision for the families of the men was a very small allowance granted on the recommendation of the Poor Law Relieving Officer. In these cases the men's wages were reduced to twopence per day. Truly it was a wonderfully economical Government, in some spending departments. It was admitted in the House that the labour of the men at Dartmoor did not pay

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for their maintenance. Mr. Brace gave the total gross cost of the scheme to the State at £92,306 17s. 11d. from August 1916 to October 31, 1917, or about £1,500 per week. A more detailed estimate was made from official figures by some of the interned men who had access to them. They put the gross annual cost of the *Dartmoor Centre alone* at £62,000, and the Labour value of the product at convict prison rates at £15,900. These averages were obtained from the actual figures for April, May and June 1917. It shows Dartmoor to have cost the nation about £900 a week, roughly £1 a head, besides the loss of the labour of the men at their proper skilled occupations.

8. Dartmoor took less than one-third of the total number of men under the Home Office scheme. At Broxburn, near Edinburgh, a number of men were employed in making manure from bones and carcasses of animals, to which chemicals were added. They had to pull the raw material to pieces with a pick and shovel and remove it in wheelbarrows. Finally, the dust, which was the final product, had to be caught in bags by two men and weighed. Naturally the smell was foul, and the dust produced much bronchial trouble. The men coughed up green matter. This work had been generally done by casuals, who passed through, and only stood it for a day or two. The men got up at half-past four, and were housed in a model lodging-house a mile and a half from the manure factory. There was only one room for meals, dressing and recreation. Their evil-smelling clothes had to be hung in this room all the time. No private house would take them in, because of the bad smell. The latrines were public, insanitary, and in the middle of the cubicles. There was no opportunity of having a bath, and they had to ask for pegs to be put up for their clothes. All their baggage was bundled on the floor. Here worked Dr. J. C. McCallum, a Graduate in Arts and in Medicine of Edinburgh, who had been awarded the Scholarship given to the best Graduate in Surgery of his year. He could easily have obtained exemption as a doctor. It happens also that he was a leading Scottish football player. Such was the way in which the Government, bent only on

punishment, utilized the most skilled and most necessary services at a time when there were not enough doctors to go round. His father, the Rev. Malcolm McCallum, says that his son expressed his disapproval of the hard usage undergone by the ordinary employees at the manure works, and showed a spirit of independence displeasing to the overseer. He was sent back to prison.

There was also a road-making gang at Ballachulish, a well-known Highland spot. That included the local schoolmaster, turned into a navvy. There were several places in Wales where men were put to quarrying, such as Llanddeusant and Llanon. From one of these there was finally discharged, ill, Ernest Charlesworth, a cotton operative from Hyde, now spending his days in a hospital, in consumption, due to the hardships of the compound. Another from Rochdale, Frank Davenport, of sedentary occupation, I used to meet in the gaol at Manchester and came to know him well. He had been sent back from one of these Welsh Centres for being one of a large group of men who refused to go to their distant work in a snowstorm. For this offence he suffered more than two years' imprisonment. Another young man, named Wolstencroft, of the highest character, from Farnworth in Lancashire, had fled back to prison at Manchester on account of the callous neglect, in the matter both of nursing and of feeding, which he had suffered in a serious illness at Llanelly. He was ill with indigestion, was left alone in his lodging, had an unsuitable diet for four days, and when on his sick-bed was ordered to report some miles away.

Other camps were at Denton, Chelsea, Sutton, Loch Awe, Sunk Island, Grimsby and Hornsea, and small groups elsewhere. The list is not complete; many Settlements were temporary.

9. After a long time some of the men were gradually allowed to go out to work under private employers, provided the work was of the kind for which they were ill suited. Unless they contrived to find a place with sympathetic friends, as they did sometimes in spite of the vigilance of Mr. Brace's Committee, they were practically enslaved.

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The employers paid full wages and the Committee took the difference between that and the small allowance to the slave, who, at any time, if he displeased his master, could be sent back to prison. This plan was worked in truly characteristic fashion. It began by compulsory transfers at the close of 1917—true serfdom in a land of Trades Unions. This led to many returns to prison, and widespread irritation. A better plan began at the beginning of 1919, and was applied to those men who had served twelve months under the Committee. The man might not go out to seek work, but if his friends found it for him in his absence, he might apply for leave to take it. The range of work allowed was at first very narrow, and the scheme was very slow in realization, every difficulty being put in its way. I failed to secure men to whom I offered employment. Later on it was worked more liberally, and before the end was extensively used. After many months of agitation and several appeals to the Home Office, a number of men were allowed to work with the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee.

One of the numerous incongruities of this persecution arose from the fact that men who were fortunate enough to have been handed over to the guidance of the Pelham Committee to begin with, instead of being sent to prison by way of non-combatant service, were many of them employed under tolerable circumstances, and doing, if not their proper work, at least something useful under conditions of practical freedom. This although they were in reality indistinguishable in their character and views from the sufferers under the Home Office Committee.

Among the worst forms of waste which the system entailed was that the farms and market gardens previously worked by C.O.'s went out of cultivation all over the country at a time when every nerve was being strained to produce food by ploughing more land and working on allotments. If space permitted, numerous instances of these derelict farms could be mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pamphlet on *Home Office Compounds*, by Ernest E. Hunter, published by the N.C.F.; and *The Conscientious Objector and the Waste of Natural Sources*, by C. G. Ammon. (National Labour Press.)

J. S. Perry, a Cornish farmer, who owned thirty acres and rented two hundred more, was put into gaol, though he had no one to leave on the farm, nor any relatives to look after his interests. This means ruin to a farmer. The military authorities of Exeter promised to let him go back on condition that he attested before leaving the barracks. The nation and the Army would in this way not benefit at all, but the soul and conscience of the man was to be violated. Mr. Perry declined the bribe. Yet after this the Central Tribunal at Wormwood Scrubs, with great penetration, required two testimonials to the reality of his conscientious objection, and he appealed from gaol to a Quaker chaplain to help him to get them.

The waste of teachers was as marked as that of doctors and farmers. Numerous cases are mentioned in Mr. Ammon's pamphlet. A friend of mine in the gaol at Manchester, a Cambridge graduate, had been turned out of his post as assistant master at a preparatory school near Malvern, and his place taken by a young accountant who had been allowed by an indulgent tribunal to do teaching as work of national importance. This was a type of hundreds of cases.

Of course the prisons as well as the Home Office compounds were full of instances of this kind of waste. Malcolm Sparkes, a Friend, the originator of the Parliament of the Building Industry, on whose plans Mr. Whitley and his Committee built up the Whitley Councils, refused to be exempted as the head of his business and was sent to prison. He was released a little before the others because the King happened to ask who was the author of the Whitley Council scheme. There were few men in England whose help at that crisis would have been more valuable to the country.

10. The Home Office Committee was under the chairmanship of Mr. William Brace, M.P., one of the Labour members who supported the Government in the war. Originally a miner, he had become a miners' agent in South Wales, and his clients had sent him to Parliament. He never replied to numerous letters which I sent him pointing

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out hardships or asking for relief for the various men who were working under him. His services in 1920 in assisting to settle the coal strike brought him such criticism from the extreme party among the miners that he went over to the other side, and has become Labour Adviser to the Government. He was, unfortunately, not gifted for dealing with conscientious objectors. It may be gladly acknowledged that in the intention of the Government, and in the hands of its first Committee, the scheme pointed to a genuine amelioration.

It was generally believed that the Chairman was not much more than a figure-head, and that his two colleagues, Major (now Sir George) Terrell, M.P., and Major Briscoe, M.P., were the true tyrants. They, unfortunately, took the place of more sympathetic men who were on the Committee to begin with. The Committee was in effect an Army Committee, under retired soldiers, and its sole idea was to trample on the men at its mercy, supported by the skill of Sir George (now Lord) Cave, the Home Secretary, in keeping the House of Commons in ignorance by evasive answers to questions. Seeing that the whole point of the scheme was that it was to be under civil control, the appointment of ex-majors as its controllers was very like other uncomprehending actions of the Government.

After paying visits to the camps, Major Terrell left behind him everywhere a trail of resentment; his one idea was to make it as hard as possible for the men. After one of his visits to Wakefield, Edwin Gilbert, the sympathetic agent of the Home Office there, and leading Adult School organizer among Friends, felt it his duty to resign his charge (October 6, 1917).

II. The central grievance of the men in the Home Office camps was their liability to be returned to prison for any trivial irregularity. They and their champions pointed out that they had been passed as genuine, and that under the Military Service Act, upon which all the powers of Mr. Brace's Committee depended, they were given the liberty of doing work of national importance. This view was taken by Mr. R. A. Griffith, the Stipendiary Magistrate

for Merthyr, who refused to return to the Army a man named Henry Thomas who came before him. The fact was that in the eyes of the Committee the men were prisoners already, under a military régime. Major Terrell, whose appointment on the Committee was the beginning of worse days, made a disturbance at Wakefield because the men had lifted their plank beds a little way from the ground on boxes, and because they had too many books in their cells. These are exactly the ideas of the Governor of a gaol. The result of the system was that hardly a day passed without men being sent back to prison. *News Sheet* (an organ issued at Dartmoor for private circulation) No. 11 gives particulars of twenty-six cases. The offences were :—

Outstaying leave for half a day or more ; going to work three minutes late, coupled with "insolence," which was denied ; refusing to work under a private employer because it was indentured labour or industrial slavery ; leaving work when soaked to the skin and fearing serious illness ; writing two letters to the *Western Morning News* defending the C.O. position when the Press campaign of lying was going on ; going to work indoors at making mail-bags when wet to the skin outside—in this case the man's mother, who was an invalid and dependent upon him, had her separation allowance withdrawn. For being ten minutes late for work a man was fined a fortnight's pay, and for then refusing to work for a fortnight was sent back to prison ; another man was sent for refusing to promise to abstain from Peace propaganda.

12. The charge of idleness, wilful slacking, with a determination to bring the Home Office detention camps to an end, was the subject of great controversy during the spring and summer of 1917. Let us try to realize the psychological situation. The plan these men had accepted was that, their genuineness being recognized, they were to be put to do useful civil work for which they were suitable, with a wide measure of freedom, and with the prospect of being really useful to the nation in its time of strain. They were all physically run down, many of them emaciated by

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prison diet ; they had spent months under a system which aimed at suppressing their personality and weakening their self-control. They were suddenly turned out in droves to gaols like Princetown on Dartmoor or Wakefield, where they found no organization for employment ready. " We came to Princetown and found the Settlement in a state of chaos ; order was unknown, labour was of a desultory character. (It is still.) None cared how the new 'shop' of the Government progressed. Topsy-turvydom reigned supreme." <sup>1</sup> There was nothing to do but to loaf about in deep disappointment over the prospect before them. At Dartmoor the warders unearthed one after another of the penal tasks formerly set to convicts, and called for volunteers, of whom there were always an abundant supply. Doing nothing was the most miserable job of all. At this juncture it was that the Harmsworth Press, with the consent of the Government, <sup>2</sup> sent down its interviewers and its photographers and began their "stunt." The public—already prejudiced—were quite easily taken in. Those who were anxious for the good name of the movement were particularly solicitous that there should be no conscious attempt to wreck the scheme by the C.O.'s who had accepted it. A general meeting of the men at Dartmoor passed the following resolution on May 17, 1917, signed by Howard C. Marten, hon. sec. :—" This meeting repudiates the charge that a policy of slacking is, or has been, pursued at this Settlement, and declares that the men here are prepared to perform the work provided in a reasonable spirit, but protests against the penal character of the work imposed by the Home Office Committee and demands civil work of real importance with full civil rights." This may stand as a corporate statement of the Alternativist position.

The Executive Committee of the N.C.F. did all that they could to guide the men into wise counsels, quiet ways and loyal obedience to the scheme they had accepted. Members of the Committee visited the chief Centres at the beginning of 1917, and sent round a circular letter on March 3rd. They also took steps to assure the Government

<sup>1</sup> Ben Hyman in *News Sheet* No. 9.

<sup>2</sup> According to C. H. Norman's letter. *News Sheet* No. 8, p. 7.



that neither the official movement itself nor any considerable fraction of it was likely to depart from their principles of passive endurance. In May resolutions were passed at men's meetings at Dartmoor and at all the other Centres but one, deploring any conscious slackness or sabotage. Some severe letters from Mr. C. H. Norman, who was at Dartmoor, to his colleagues on the Executive Committee on this subject may be found in No. 8 of the *News Sheet*. He thought the Executive were giving in too much to the Government. Thus, while there was often compulsory unemployment in the camps, due to the Home Office not fulfilling its responsibility for organizing it, there was little wilful idleness. A *Daily Mail* man, intent on criticism, easily mistook the one for the other.

Being congenitally blind to the minds of the men who had fallen into their hands, it appeared to the Brace Committee that it would be a good thing to grade them according to their character ; to give the good boys of Class A one shilling a day on condition that they exercised control over the others and kept them up to their work. It was supposed that for a mess of pottage some of the more orderly ones, Friends and religious objectors generally, might be induced to keep in order exuberant and rebellious Socialists, who were meantime to be graded in pay down to fourpence a day, in order to make the whole scheme cost nothing extra. This precious scheme of creating a number of lance-corporals and sergeants-major was universally repudiated. Part of the scheme was that the agents were to have power to order overtime at twopence an hour and to make up time lost by weather, on fine nights and Saturday afternoons, with an extra penny an hour as consolation pay.

About this time men were voluntarily leaving the settlements and camps at the rate of twenty per week. William Watson, the chairman of the special Committee at Dartmoor, left the place in order to put the position before influential Trade Union officials. He knew, of course, that he would be sent to prison, though he was in a bad state of health.

The withdrawal of the leave which they had been promised was regarded as a breach of faith on the part of Messrs.

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Brace, Terrell and Briscoe. A protest was signed by six hundred settlers, but the Home Office sent no reply.

After such incidents had kept up a constant irritation, a group of men were sent to South Molton to fell timber. The agent, on their arrival, said that he wanted expert timber fellers, not clerks and schoolmasters! They had to walk twelve miles a day to and from work. Shortly they were returned by the agent as unsuitable. This was treated as an offence on their part; they were fined two weeks' wage and had to pay their return railway fare and receive nothing for the time they were at South Molton. This cost them varying sums between one and two guineas—which is serious for men at eightpence per day. A number of similar cases occurred.

13. Under the incitement of the Press campaign, there were various lynchings. At Lyndhurst the wounded soldiers at the Military Hospital manifested hostility. "We were punched and pelted, knocked down and kicked and sneered at by hundreds of soldiers and civilians. Two of us, I and another fellow, were thrown over a bridge into a river, a drop of about 14 feet, and afterwards pelted and knocked down. Our luggage also was thrown into the river and nearly everything was lost or spoilt." At Lyme Regis too, to take an account given by a local Alderman, a riot was incited by a number of women and girls. Afterwards the men who had suffered from it were punished for it on the ground that they had irritated some soldiers, the fact being that they had a friendly conversation with some wounded soldiers during the afternoon, and the trouble did not arise until the evening.

An extensive riot occurred at the Work Centre at Knutsford, the culmination of growing friction between the C.O.'s and the hooligans of the town. It occurred on two successive evenings, and though the police had grave warning of the second day, they took no precautions for protection. The riot had every appearance of being organized. A crowd occupied the streets around the Centre and knocked down and kicked and broke the heads and tore the clothes and smashed the bicycles of the men as

they came in. Eighteen wounded men were treated that night in the hospital. The number would have been much larger but that the agent sent warning out to men approaching the town to keep away, and well-concerned residents received them into their homes. One policeman told a man lying battered and helpless on the road that he was "to get into his kennel," and many cases are mentioned in a letter to the Home Secretary from the Secretary of the men's Council, dealing with the inaction of the police. They did, however, arrest altogether ten young men, who were brought before Judge Mellor for the riot. The Superintendent of Police, in the witness box, said that there was no evidence of organized disturbance, intimated that the private feeling of the police, if they had followed it out, would have been in favour of the rioters, made much of the walking sticks carried by the C.O.'s, and much of the fact that fifty of them left the prison about eight o'clock in order to protect their friends as they came in. The witness thought that was "asking for trouble," and Judge Mellor remarked that—considering the state of local feeling—it was literally trailing their coats before the townspeople. The Inspector said he had heard of the Conchies insulting wounded soldiers and jostling them off the footpath, and had received complaints of their insulting and interfering with ladies, and that this had been a pretty common practice with them; he had also heard that a Mrs. Williams had been struck on the jaw by a Conchie in front of the prison. All this hearsay was wholly unconfirmed by any evidence, and by all the principles of our courts, should have been promptly suppressed by the Judge.

Judge Mellor said that the Bench had seen for themselves "the provocative behaviour of the men" (whatever that might mean), and went on to describe it as "lolling about, and being allowed out till 9.30 at night," "so that it did not require much to put a match to popular opinion." He bound over the defendants in their own recognizances to keep the peace for six months; that is, they were let off. The Judge added that he hoped these unwelcome visitors would soon be sent to the right-about, and the magistrate at once announced that they were all about

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to be removed. "We hope and believe," he added, amid the cheers of the company, "that Knutsford will very shortly be rid of these nuisances." Neither the British public nor British justice can be greatly commended for this incident.

14. Lord Parmoor, all through the long Parliamentary struggle, represented fearlessly and with all the weight of his great ability and legal standing, the cause of the oppressed in the House of Lords. His service will always remain memorable. An interesting debate on the whole question was raised by him in the House of Lords on April 30, 1918. He moved a resolution to the effect that the non-combatant work of conscientious objectors should be service of national value and not merely of a penal character; also that the total term of imprisonment should not exceed a fixed limit. This debate was one of the expressions of the widespread unrest felt among thoughtful people as the months and years went by and the men in prison were reaching one by one the limit of their endurance. He quoted one who had known them intimately, who said, "They are going downhill on a very steep gradient, the speed is accelerated, health is broken, nerves are unstrung, and their mental vision is clouded." He described the work of two bodies of men in two adjoining courts in Dartmoor prison. In one court they were taking up the stones, and in the next court they were putting them down, and then they were changed across from one to the other. Lord Parmoor was supported by Viscount Bryce, the Bishop of Oxford and Earl Russell. Viscount Peel, in reply, made the most of the Government's plan—which by that time was being carried out—to scatter the Dartmoor men, who had served there a year, among private employers. This was a useful concession but far too small and too late to meet the need. It was carried out, like everything else under conscription, in a rigid, inhuman way. The work was to be twenty-five miles from home, except with the consent of the local authority, or on account of exceptional skill. One of the men being thus distributed was the son of parents over seventy, one crippled and one blind. Their other sons had been killed in the war, and this survivor was the only

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one left to manage the fish-shop in Knutsford by which the family lived. But it had not pleased the Brace Committee to consider shopkeeping work of national importance, so he was compelled to seek other work elsewhere.

No one can look back upon the Home Office scheme with satisfaction. To the men under it it did not give the reaction of relief after prison which the Absolutist who resisted to the end feels now. Indeed, it goes far to justify his Absolutism, at any rate as a practical policy. To the men who accepted it, it was the collapse of a plan under which they had hoped to be enrolled in the community as useful members of the national fellowship. The best that can be said for it is that the physical and mental improvement it made in the lot of some thousands of prisoners prevented breakdowns, madness or death in a large number of cases. These sad culminations of prison conditions we must now describe, in chapters dealing with the Absolutists and others who remained in prison.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PRISON

#### I. TREATMENT

WE now come to the other group of objectors, known as Absolutists, who refused even civilian work when it was offered by Tribunals. Like the Alternativists, they had been handed over to be broken in the Army, and like the Alternativists they had emerged unbroken, and were lodged with them in civil prisons. But, unlike the Alternativists, they believed it their duty to refuse the offer of the Home Office scheme when it was made to them after examination by the Central Tribunal in prison. Consequently, as we shall see, they remained in prison until six months after the end of the war.

Along with the Absolutists in their experience of prolonged imprisonment there were nearly three hundred men who had either been pronounced not genuine by the Tribunals or had returned to prison, for punishment or by their own act, from the Home Office Settlements, or who were in prison for reasons unknown. Detailed particulars will be found in the chapter on Statistics.

1. Prisons all conform to type. Behind the vast wall with its spiky rim of iron bars is an open space within which the prison building proper stands. The entrance porch in the outside wall is large enough to hold a prison van, and is locked at both ends; so that both gates rarely need to be open at once. The inner gate is in an iron framework of bars, which project out from the gatehouse into the open space, so that any prisoners escaping to the right or left, or any violent groups, may be under fire. On a seat

in the porch wait the relatives of prisoners who have come on a visit.

In the open space stands the building where visits take place. At one side of a double row of stalls enters the prisoner, at the back of the stall; at the other side enters the visitor. But they do not meet in the middle. Two thicknesses of wirework intervene; and up and down between them walks a warder, who has to see that the talk is only of domestic affairs. At Wandsworth and at other places where "improved" boxes are in use the warder walks up and down behind the prisoners. In this way, in a poor light, meet the separated faces of husband and wife, the prisoner's ugly with a stubby beard and a hateful cap and jacket covered with broad arrows. They have twenty minutes for the first visit, half an hour afterwards. Later, however, to the C.O.'s happier times were allowed, in a room in the prison, the two separated only by a table, and the warder between. But warders are kindly, sometimes sleepy, or temporarily at the other side of the door.

In this open space also is the "reception." Here a kindly or a bullying warder may make all the difference to a fellow beginning his prison experience. Here you strip, bathe, don prison dress and are examined by the doctor and registered in various big books.

The prison proper, if modern, is built like a starfish, the halls radiating from the centre like the spokes of a wheel. Wormwood Scrubs is an exception, and consists of four parallel halls. The hub, the "centre," is the seat of control, where a warder is on duty all the time. You have one more carefully locked door to pass before you reach it. From the centre the whole interior is in view. A lofty skylight is above it, a perhaps hexagonal table is in the centre. This is on the first floor, and has a dark central cellar-like place below it, whence the punishment cells are reached. These latter are under a hall floored across on the level of the centre, making the basement dark. But most halls are open from skylight to basement, and the cells on the upper floors are reached by narrow railed gangways along the sides of the hall, to which there is access by spiral staircases at the centre. Lest anyone should commit suicide by

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throwing himself from these passages a wire network is stretched across, to catch a falling object gently. Out of these passages, or out of the hall, open the cell doors. There may be forty in a row, and four rows on each side, or 320 cells to each hall. On one floor are the men under observation, dangerous to themselves or others. Here a warder in felt slippers passes from one peephole in a door to another, and is never absent. It is a corridor of concentrated misery.

The lower floors are usually occupied, the upper ones left vacant; for prisons are not usually full. During war-time prisoners were few. When demobilization began the governors prepared more cells. There is more light and air on the top floors, but they are not so easily accessible, and convenience to officials counts every time. The prisoners come second. The usual outlook from the bottom windows of lower cells is on to brick walls not far off. Sunlight is the enemy of tuberculosis. No wonder some C.O. prisoners contracted this disease. On the corridors work in association takes place, each man sitting silent on his stool by his cell door, sewing mailbags. Other men are in workshops, or moving stones about in the yard.

2. The cells measure 11 to 14 feet by 7: just broad enough to hold a bed board across them. They have generally a floor of square tiles or rough black concrete, (at Wormwood Scrubs there were some boarded), walls of brick, painted and glazed, so that the dirt cannot stick to them, nor writing on them be easy. They are ugly in colour, of coarse yellows and browns. The upper part may be whitewashed merely. At spring cleaning time prisoners may be told to scrub these with their hairbrushes. The window is nearly as broad as the cell, but small from top to bottom; and high up, so that you have to stand on the stool to look out. This is forbidden. Sometimes the windows are of ribbed glass, put in arbitrarily, with cruel disregard of what it means to a prisoner. The door has a most elaborate lock and a spyhole from outside, so that there is no secure privacy. Hubert Peet was spied on when he was saying his prayers, and accused by the warder of using "foul language."



Privacy is a condition of individuality, and the central effect of prison life—though, I think, not its intention—is to destroy individuality. The cell is lighted in some large prisons by electricity, with the bulb inside, but usually by a gas jet in the wall by the door, lit from the corridor outside, and giving light into the cell through a thick pane of obscure glass. If gas were lit in the cells, men might easily commit suicide by turning it on unlighted; and it would be at all times inconvenient to turn on and off. The light is ordinarily sufficient to read by. But we were living in darkened air during the war, from fear of Zeppelins; and the prison windows must not give the faintest light. But curtains or blinds meant expense and trouble. So in one gaol at least the device was adopted—at the expense of the prisoner's allowance of light—of blacking over the pane of thick glass, except a piece at the bottom, so that the outside window was in gloom, and the whole cell top, except a small place by the light. There, close to the door, the man had to set his table, in order to read.

There is a bell in each cell to ring on emergency, but it is not always promptly attended to; and woe betide the ringer on any occasion not deemed serious. Its handle is so arranged in a downward curve that no rope could be hung on it. When there is to be an execution in prison, it upsets the nerves of the prisoners. I have visited cell after cell, and found the men taken out of their usual dull patience, and alive with shocked suffering. They shivered to think that a fellow-prisoner was being killed close by.

The cell contains a movable sleeping board, made of planks. The mattress and blankets are carefully rolled up in a prescribed manner during the day, and the board is reared against the wall. There is a tank provided in most prisons where these boards can be periodically soaked in disinfectant to destroy the bugs which sooner or later seem to make their home in the cracks. There is a corner shelf containing simple eating tools and a few books. These have to be arranged in a prescribed form. No slightest use of volition or personality must come in. The spoon and tin knife must lean against one another in the proper way or a military-minded governor may object. The

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tin knife is bendable. It will not cut a throat. No fork is allowed. I suppose it would be dangerous. Food is handed out in a tin. The prisoner washes his enamel plate in cold water after each meal. The books are a Bible, a Prayer-Book, a Hymn-Book, a childish book of an Anglican devotional character, an educational work (that is, something not fiction), and, when allowed after the first month, one other library book; after the second month, two. Poems may or may not be counted fiction. Reading is the one mental solace of prison life. Books are changed weekly after the first month, except "educational" books, which last a month. The amount of choice you have is irregular. You cannot always, but sometimes you can, get what you ask for from the prison library. This helplessness under the whim of officials is one of the most trying and undignified features of imprisonment. The libraries at the larger prisons are not bad collections. If a man's friends are allowed to send him books, after permission from the Prison Commissioners, they are sent to the prison library and must stay there. This enrichment of the libraries was a profit to the nation. The thirty-nine volumes of the magnificent Library Edition of Ruskin are in the Pentonville prison library. Mr. Arnold Lupton, a former Liberal Member of Parliament, had them in to read when he was in prison there.

In response to a request from my friends in the gaol at Manchester, I presented half a dozen Friends' books, selected from the devotional writings of those dangerous men, William Penn, Rufus Jones and Edward Grubb. The Chaplain, who controls the library, refused to admit them unless by instruction from the Prison Commissioners. Here he was quite in order. I wrote to that cold and difficult authority, but obtained no reply for many weeks. Being somewhat on my mettle, I wrote again. A fortnight later came permission for their use "for Quaker prisoners only." Those words were therefore written on the front leaf of each, and my men got them at last. No ordinary wife-beater, however, was to be corrupted by reading such immoral authors. It was all very characteristic of the Prison Commission.

On the walls hang some cards of prison rules, and if

you know the rule, which is not on the card, you may have, again after the first hard month, four unframed photographs of cabinet size to look at—a really merciful concession. You may also change them.

There is a small table and a stool with no back. One or two sanitary pails, bright and speckless, complete the outfit of the cell. Everything has to be kept perfectly clean. One of the small panes of the barred windows generally opens. When it happens not to, the suffering is great.

In this place, alone, you spend twenty-three hours ten minutes out of the twenty-four in the first month of your sentence, hungry much of the time. You get little exercise, and probably suffer from indigestion, headache or sleeplessness. The entire week-end is solitary unless you attend chapel. After the first month you have thirty minutes' exercise on Sunday. You would go mad but for the work. You sit and stitch canvas for mail-bags. Your fingers begin by being sore and inflamed; but they become used to it. At first your daily task can hardly be managed in the day. You struggle hard to get the reward of a large mug of cocoa and piece of bread at eight at night. It will save you from hunger all night; for your previous food—I cannot call it a meal—had been at 4.15. This extra ration, which varied and was not universal, was a war-time incentive to produce work of national importance. It was cut off as a war economy in 1918. There appears to have been variety in detail. In time, however, the work becomes less in quantity, and, from practice, easier. In my own experience the C.O.'s were treated leniently in this matter, but this was not always so. Most of those I knew became able after practice to do their day's task under the concessions of December 1917 quite easily, indeed by midday. Before that date the task was longer and harder.

The prison day begins at 5.30 a.m. and the cells are locked for the night at 4.40 p.m. Since the war the day begins later, to give the warders an eight-hour day. Every morning each man has to carry his pail of slops and empty it as a sort of drill, and clean out his cell. In some prisons cleaners take away slops.

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3. After "breakfast" comes forty-five minutes' exercise, in some gaols less. The exercise yards occupy the spaces between the spokes of the wheel. They are arranged in circular flagged walks; and round and round these, in single file, march the prisoners. They are separated by a couple of yards or more, so that they cannot talk to one another without risk of being caught by the warders on their high posts of observation. But they do talk. It is their one chance of doing so. In a conspicuous position on the exercise ground stands a clump of w.c.'s. One sees the physiological purpose of exercise, and begins to feel like an animal. At any other time leave has to be asked for this purpose, and it is not always granted. In practice you cannot ordinarily visit the w.c. between 4.40 p.m. and next morning, but must use the pail in the cell.

The rule of silence is the crowning and typical terror of the prison régime. Warders, even, may not speak to a prisoner, nor they to him, except on needful business. And prisoners must not communicate at all. This hideous order is not kept, either by warders or prisoners, except by a few very conscientious objectors such as Ernest Everett. Stephen Hobhouse, scorning subterfuge, informed the Governor that he did not intend to obey the rule, and lost in consequence all privileges—all visits and letters—and was kept in solitary confinement. There came a time when Fenner Brockway did the same, as a protest against the system, which was wearing out both bodies and minds. He was kept in separate confinement for eight months and on No. 1 diet of bread and water for three months. His early letters expressed what the strongest spirits felt in the earlier months of imprisonment. He wrote in February 1917:—

4. "I am thoroughly well and I am happy. I do not seem to be in prison. You know how contentedly I entered; that feeling has remained all through. I am calmer in spirit than I have been for a long time, and, possessing that calmness within, the harshnesses which make prison prison don't seem to exist. . . .

"My cell has seemed a quiet retreat, and within it I have rediscovered the power of prayer—not the requesting of

some Supernatural Engineer to change the mechanism of the universe on my behalf, but the reaching down into my own being and finding there unity with the Universal Spirit, with all mankind and with nature. . . .

“ And each day I have imagined myself in some beautiful natural scene—Derwentwater, Bettws-y-Coed, the Peak, Seascale, Loch Lomond, Knole Park at Sevenoaks, the New Forest, Colwyn Bay, Chislehurst, the Carpathians with Alfred, the Rhine, the woods at Berne, Monte Rosa and the Alps, Lake Orta with Harold, and a hundred other places. I have drawn in all their grandeur, and I have known something of the deep joy they can give, even though I have been in a prison cell.

“ You could not have sent me a more welcome Christmas card than the picture of Derwentwater. During those Christmas days I was living again the Christmas walking tour we had in the Lake District. Will you ever forget descending upon Ullswater that moonlight night, with the mountains covered with snow, a glistening white glory all around? Or the lunch we had by the fire you made in the wood by Thirlmere on Christmas afternoon, despite the heavy snowstorm from which we were sheltering? This last Christmas I went that tramp again with you, almost step by step.

“ I cannot describe to you the wonderful sense of comradeship there is among the C.O.'s in prison. We are not allowed to speak to each other, but the unity we feel does not need expression in speech. I shall never forget the first day I went on “ exercise ” at Scrubs,—you cannot conceive the sense of spiritual exultation and expansion received from the sight of those two hundred C.O.'s marching in step around the prison yard. It gave me a new hope for the future. And when Sunday came and I went to chapel, the joy of being one of the eight hundred C.O.'s there was almost intoxicating. You should have heard them sing

“ O God of Love, O King of Peace,  
 Make wars throughout the world to cease,  
 The sinful wrath of man restrain,  
 Give peace, O Lord, give peace again.

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“ I felt that such a body of men, nearly all quite young, could do much to answer the prayer of that hymn if they retain, all through their lives, their present enthusiasm— I mean not merely to bring peace ‘ again ’ but for ever !

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“ My mind is extraordinarily alert. I am constantly thinking out all kinds of plans for the N.C.F., for the I.L.P., for the *Labour Leader*. At times I seem flooded with ideas, and not to be able to put them into effect is, I confess, somewhat of a torture. When Allen wrote from prison, he said he had great schemes for me to work out with him in the future. I wonder if they are as Titanic as the schemes which have come to me as I have sat sewing, sewing, sewing ; I look forward eagerly to many years of close co-operation with him, in the Cause we love in common.”

The following letter was written by Clifford Allen from Maidstone Gaol on March 24, 1917. Though rather long, I give it nearly complete, as the best analysis at hand of the varied phases of the mind of the captive :—

“ I wish I could manage to give you some idea of the effect prison has on one’s mind. I am a little fearful lest men who are buoyed up by abounding good health, or who foolishly think it a sign of weakness to speak truthfully of anything but the joy of prison life, should do a great disservice to men of very sensitive temperaments or who are physically weaker than themselves.

“ I am not sure how far anyone can really speak with honesty of the kind of mental and spiritual adventures experienced here ; they are of the very essence of one’s being, and so I can only expect to make intelligible those which are the most obvious and, I suppose, universal.

“ Men who are only revealing one effect of prison life would perhaps be surprised if they were asked whether they were ashamed of Christ for passing through Gethsemane. I feel that if we speak of prison we ought not to omit any of its aspects. Naturally I can only reveal my own life. It is a very harassing one, for I am never the same individual for long together. There are moments of spiritual exaltation that neither hills, nor seas, nor sky, nor music, nor great

gatherings of men have ever given me, when in some way or another the more conscious I am of the curbing of my freedom, and of all the greyness of everything around me, the more content I seem to become. The very fact that I can, as it were, feel my bonds, gives me a more vivid consciousness of my real freedom. I can then see with unmistakable clearness the untold worth of what we are attempting, and am full of joy and hope at the memory of the effort we have made during the last two years. It does not matter then how many bars there are to my prison cell, or how high the wall opposite my window, which cuts me off from the outside world (except the tops of two trees). I seem to be in the closest contact with the other men shut away in their prison cells all over the country, and with those of you who are left in the glorious activity of the work. I know how essential it is that I should be here to make effective all our other efforts. I am spiritually proud, but I am, I think, then liable to one of many unhealthy false sentiments, a feeling of joy that I am shut up here. It makes me forgetful of my own and other men's weakness.

" There are other moments much more satisfying and I believe more eternal ; moments which are of greater quietude, when I am less restless. At these times I think not so much about the past as of the future ; I feel then not so much in spiritual harmony with men and women as with something very intimate and very precious around and within the life of the world. I suppose it is because such an experience can only be true if it finds subsequent expression in a greater understanding of human affairs, that it is at these moments that I get the clearest vision of the direction our work should take in the future. These are times when I realize most vividly that though I am now removed from the joy of striving and achieving, I can store up strength for what will be of far greater consequence than a dozen sentences of imprisonment—I mean the period immediately following the war. I don't suppose any of us can estimate how fruitful that time can be made, if we are then prepared to justify all we have now protested of our desire to render service.

" There are other mental experiences, and for me they

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are forming a somewhat large part of my life here, which I should be false to hide. They are moments of intense mental and spiritual torture. They almost seem to gather force as month after month of imprisonment, following upon repeated solitary confinement, lowers my vitality. I don't know if I can express what I mean. You know something of my life during the last five years ; I am not now concerned about its value or otherwise. It has been one sustained effort, along with many others, to create something vital in the world ; it has been a life of ceaseless action, of free spiritual expression and unending struggle. You know, too, something of what my prison life is, and seems likely to be for months, or even years, if the war goes on. I want you to picture it again, and compare the two.

“ One hundred and ninety-five days of stitching, each of twenty-three hours and fifty minutes' silence. I think the greatest torture of enforced and perpetual silence is the never-ceasing consciousness of thinking in which, it results. You cannot stop thinking for an instant. And if you seem to, it is only to listen intently to the beating of your heart drumming in your ears. You cannot escape thinking about the most trivial matters of routine. I think of the very knots in the boards each time I scrub them, until I could scratch them out of the floor to rid myself of their arrogant insistence upon themselves. One inevitable result is a consequent and hopeless inability to think of those very things that are your interest, and would stimulate and hearten you. After all, we are here for the very reason that we desire to reshape human relations, and I for one fret bitterly because we seem so stifled and frustrated in our effort to give service that will change the heart of the world. Indeed, if no one else will say it, let me. There are moments of unutterable loneliness and anguish, when I seem unmindful of the very purpose that has brought me here, and when I cannot see the ideal which I love with every fibre of my being. The freedom and the worth of human life and manhood appear idle words to me. Or, perhaps I can put it in this way :—Even if I am at such times a little faithful, it is only to suffer tenfold by doubting whether I can effectively serve that purpose by stitching here month



after month. Would you or Russell always retain your faith if you were to spend one hundred and ninety-five days picking up black beetles for the sake of the principle of cleanliness? The task would not always conduce to the remembrance of the principle at stake. For this is the vital point of the whole matter; all of us want to give such service as will reflect the spirit of development and growth in the world. Oh! can't those who love us and those who hate us understand that what goads most of all is the realization that it should be necessary to direct any effort for the purpose of *preserving* the spirit of liberty and free service? It involves a recognition that the life of the world is set back, and that it is in this way we must strive when we would give our every faculty to rendering service that would mirror progress in the world, and not its backsliding.

"And then I seem to have no way of escape from dwelling upon the horror of the war, and just because I cannot be active, my imagination is the more vivid, until I am driven almost to the breaking-point of despair by thinking of the agony of the world. And yet it is all an immense contradiction, for in those bitterest moments there often come the thoughts which give me strength to regain my still unbroken faith. Strangely enough, I often feel comfort in those moments of mental suffering, because they make me realize that I am no longer isolated from the sorrow of men and women who have sacrificed everything for this war, for that was how I used to feel in the old days of freedom and comfort.

"A day of physical pain is sometimes my salvation. I have almost come to welcome pain, not in the belief that it is good to suffer, but because pain in some weird way acts like a spur to my memory so that I no longer doubt, I know, that it is of vital moment that we should be prisoners, and that our faithfulness, even in idleness, is the very life-blood coursing through the movement from which we are cut off, and without which all your efforts would lack their *certainty* of ultimate success.

"How hopelessly artificial it seems attempting to give you even the faintest insight into all my joys and sorrows, but surely you will know that when these times of torture

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pass—as they *always* do—the vision is clearer, and the regained assurance that we are a very living part of all the old movements sweeter than an eternity of divine content.

“On the other side of my thirty-foot wall, there must be a school, I think, for I can often hear the children shouting and playing. They remind me of freedom, and I like to rejoice, as I listen to them, that behind the bars on the other side of the wall I am helping to hand on that freedom to them.”

Another vivid account of prison impressions was written by Hubert W. Peet for the *Ploughshare* (April 1917) and reprinted under the title “One Hundred and Twelve Days’ Hard Labour.” Also an article, “The Fruits of Silence,” in the *Friends’ Quarterly Examiner*, April 1920, by the same author, reprinted.

Another narrative shows how the prisoner’s interests suffer in times of difficulty.

“H. was due out of prison on January 6th, but three days previously he accepted the Home Office scheme and was sent immediately to Ballachulish. His reason was that he saw insanity looming; for he had ‘nerves’ and had not slept for five nights, and could only pace up and down the cell, thinking of suicide. He attributes the breakdown to *continuous* separate confinement, in place of the usual month of it. He brought the lack of ‘association labour’ to the notice of the Governor, who said it could not be helped as they were understaffed, the warders having been taken for the war. All the men in ‘B’ Block were so treated, and even the doors were not left open for the allotted time on that landing, owing to the absence of warders.”

Another from Stephen Hobhouse:—

“Sometimes when I feel tired and ill I long for some little homely comfort, such as a glass of hot water or some tea and dry toast. I felt cruelly the restriction of what seemed the most elementary needs. I did not think that my body with its weak points would stand it for so long. The struggle is often intense. Prison life has its own special temptations—to selfish introspection and the like. . . . I think the worst pitch of depression was one foggy and dark Sunday, when it was impossible to see either to sew or read

in one's cell, and on remonstrating in the evening with one of the warders for not giving us the gaslight, he answered, 'You are not worth it—it is not a work day!' The answer sank in."

5. The cells are supposed to be warmed by thin hot-water pipes built into the inside of the walls. They are not always in order and not generally equal to a cold spell. This letter is quoted in "*I Appeal Unto Cæsar.*"

"When I met my husband coming out of 'prison on February 10th last, I was horrified to see how very badly he was suffering from the cold. His face showed this very much, and in addition to this his hands were literally covered with chilblains and the prison doctor had painted them with iodine. I was still more disturbed when he said that 'that was nothing to what they had been.' He also told me that for the last few weeks it had been so cold that he had been quite unable to read at all—he could only pace up and down his cell. I might say that normally he does not feel the cold at all, and I have never known him to have a chilblain on his hands before."

The winter at Maidstone covered the men's hands with chilblains, the cold tiled floor abstracting heat all day, and all night contributed to the coldness of the air.

There was heat and stuffiness at times, as well as cold at others. The following letter was written by a man in camp awaiting his second court martial:—

" . . . I have seen a man go raving mad in the prison after being shut up in a warm cell from four o'clock in the afternoon until six o'clock next morning. The cells are very badly ventilated; the one I was in had all the windows fastened down so that they were a fixture. Some cells have got two little windows out, but some have not, and it gets very hot in there; especially when the sun is beating in it gets unbearable. I have seen cell doors opened in the morning and the men stretched out on the floor in fits or fainting; and the warders do not take any notice of them, but simply pass on and leave the door open. It really is very brutal. Men in the first stage are kept in the cell and not let out, only for three-quarters of an hour early in the

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morning, from 8.15 to 9 o'clock, and it is more than you dare ask to go out of your cell for anything for the first month, so you can just tell what it is like to be so closely confined this hot weather." (*I Appeal unto Cæsar*, p. 69.)

6. The happiness of life, and the health of it, depend almost wholly on the exercise of our faculties, on expressing ourselves, on doing what it is our true nature to do. Aristotle defines happiness as an "energy of the soul, on the lines of virtue, in a complete life." All love and parenthood, all games and other excitements, all hobbies and efforts, all poetry, or artistic production in whatever material, all earning of money and all religion, give joy because they are responses to our nature's imperative call.

Of all the needs of human creatures intercourse with others is central. We are gregarious animals and have been such for uncounted millenniums. That has been the environment in which all our characters have been formed and our morality evolved. We are members one of another. To express ourselves in words is a need that cannot be denied without miserable frustration and spiritual starvation. The wearing away of personality is the central effect of prison life. I doubt if this psychological effect was really intended by the authorities who made prison rules. They simply wanted to make imprisonment painful, and the only way to do that quietly and decorously led to the thinning out of personality. At the same time, and above all, the regulations must be such as cause little trouble to the gaolers. Men who are completely isolated cannot rebel or plot troublesome revenges on warders. Silence is safer and easier to maintain than noise in moderation. And the influence of the prison reformers of the eighteenth century, exerted against the evils of miscellaneous association, has worked out to a system of silence still more terrible.

This absence of all choice, of the need or the opportunity to make decisions, resulted in a really weakened will-power in some cases when the men at last emerged. They found they could not decide anything, even when to cross a street. It was some time before they ceased to feel like sheep in a flock. The will was atrophied.

Without intercourse with others the soul shrivels. Personality is dependent upon the throbs back and forth from other persons, as a nerve centre upon the stimuli of its nerves. No writing materials are allowed, except, by a concession of real value, a slate and pencil. (In 1920, long after the release of C.O.'s, the Chaplain Inspector announced that by a new rule pencil and notebook would be allowed if asked for, after six months, and for the purpose of study for work after discharge. Let us hope this will be carried out easily. It is said to be very rarely granted as yet.) Therefore, little expression by writing was possible. To men of ideas and education, this was stifling, and was frequently circumvented. So, in prison, day by day, running into weeks and months and years, the soul withers and fades.

The rules about letters are, for prisoners undergoing hard labour, i.e. for most of them:—For the first two months none may be written or received. Then one in and one out, and a visit. The letters in must be of moderate length, not more than about eight hundred words. I remember that Wilfred Wellock's wife wrote to her husband in Manchester gaol a fine long fifteen-sheet epistle, only to have it sent back undelivered. Letters in are always read by the Governor or chief warder; they must not contain slang, nor deal with public affairs. Letters out must contain no mention of prison life or criticism of prison management. Hubert Peet, parodying Hall Caine, wrote:—"And the slither shaffle of the night patrol passed on down the gallery." He was called up and solemnly bidden to erase it. The second letter and visit may occur after six weeks, the third and subsequent ones after a month. If no visit can be paid, a letter may go and come instead. Urgent business letters, news of the death of a near relative, and letters to obtain employment or help on release, are extra, by leave. Visits may be paid by three people at once. If a prisoner loses marks for misconduct, letters and visits are delayed.

7. Except on monthly visits or to the Chaplain or doctor, the prisoner is not allowed to say a single word, unless he

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has to accost a warder or complain to the Governor, for two years under the usual sentence given to conscientious objectors.

He receives, if he desires, visits from the Chaplain. The C.O. often received from him only contempt and hostility, if any visits took place. To prisoners generally the Chaplain was apt to rush round, popping his head round each door—"You all right?"—and off to the next. But he must be a brave chaplain who keeps alive the true pastoral spirit within him. I desire to mention the Chaplains of Liverpool and Maidstone as examples of success, and there may well be others unknown to me. For his grotesque failure the Chaplain is not personally responsible. The situation is impossible. The glory of religion is to broaden and deepen personality, to make it larger, gentler and sweeter. The prison system denies the possibility of enlargement, of gentleness or sweetness. Where does the Chaplain come in? He can hold services, which are a relief to the monotony of the cells, and enable men to find their voices in singing. He can attack C.O.'s from the pulpit, creating anger. At Wandsworth, Hubert Peet listened to a sermon which deduced from the fact that Paul made tents the conclusion that he was an Army contractor, "proud to do his bit for his Empire." The Chaplain's best service might be, outside his strict calling, in making friends with his charges and talking to them about anything except their souls. To do this would be to become an exception among his colleagues and would be out of the routine. To keep that up with a changing clientèle of several hundreds of poor hardened creatures would be impossible to any soul except one aflame with pity and love, and with great store of nerve power constantly reinforced by the Divine Presence. One chaplain told one of our men that by rule he could only spend four minutes per month with each man. He meant, no doubt, that it would average out at that. He was under no rule about it, and the estimate appears to me very small.

I hope the following is not typical:—A prisoner asked the Chaplain what he said to murderers before their hanging. He recounted in reply his first experience of it. "I went in to him the night before, and he began talking to

me about all sorts of things." No wonder he used his last chance of speech. "But I stopped him and said, 'Look here. I'm not here to chatter to you about all sorts of things; but I'll pray with you if you like. It's striking eight now. You'll never hear eight strike again.' He was glum, and said I could if I liked. So I knelt down and prayed, but I kept my eyes open all the time, for fear he should do me a mischief." Such is the horrible travesty of prayer and communion of soul worked out by our penal system. In such a case as this the Chaplain has become a sort of magic medicine man, who fulfils his routine of prayer.

8. The Anglican and Roman Catholic chaplains are regular prison officials, quite properly paid. The Nonconformists are looked after as a whole by a Nonconformist minister, paid very little indeed, at threepence per visit or thereabouts. Other denominations, like Quakers, may apply for their own minister, who comes voluntarily. This was a precious inlet for the help of the C.O.'s. It brought them into contact every week with a real friend and sympathizer. Perhaps a personal narrative may be excused as a better way to describe the Chaplain's service, than impersonal summaries. Seldom is it given to us to render so much service at so little personal cost. Certainly I came away from Strangeways Gaol, Manchester, every time feeling like a sucked lemon, from entering sympathetically into the lives of twenty sufferers at six minutes each. But how well worth while it was I did not need to be told. Two afternoons took me round my nearly forty cells. That was the programme for one week.<sup>1</sup> For the other we held a Friends' Meeting in the chapel, and no further visiting was allowed that week. The warders (all but one hater of C.O.'s) allowed me to take charge. I occupied the chief warder's stool myself, relegated him to an inconspicuous corner and gave him a hymn-book; he was glad to join in. I put the men close together instead of a yard and a half apart. The preliminary hymn, which they chose, I conceded, because of the silence rule being strong enough

<sup>1</sup> It was more usual for the visits to be paid in a gloomy room used for solicitors, with a warder at the door. This was where the numbers were small.

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in the prison already. Nominally we had only half an hour, but we always exceeded it. Into these short opportunities I did not feel it necessary to go with an unprepared mind. The men also took frequent part, helpfully. We ended with a hymn; and then I gave them a talk on public events—the war, the chance of peace, Dora, and the work of the N.C.F. I did this because the Chaplain told the news at the close of his service, but with intent maliciously to insult, sent the C.O.'s out first as not being good citizens. At the end I had a word and a handshake with everybody, and some messages to give and take. My friendly Governor, whom I induced to be present one day, called it my levee.

I think I had more liberty than most chaplains. I asked the chairman of the visiting magistrates to take me the first time and introduce me to the Governor, Captain Sanders. He was a gentleman and a good man, and gave me all the liberty he could. He has now gone on, after a long illness, to a place beyond the reach of the Prison Commissioners. An untoward accident limited his kindly intentions. The one grumpy warder was once in charge of our meeting, insisted on occupying a side pedestal, regimented the men a yard and a half apart, refused a hymn-book and wrote a report to the Prison Commission to the effect that the men and I talked chiefly politics. I was asked by the Prison Commission to report on this. Then the men all went to the Governor in a body and said that they would strike against all rules if I was dismissed. Ultimately I was cautioned, and went on as before. As I sat before this select company of choice spirits I asked myself whether they had any marked characteristic. Nor had I any doubt about the answer. They were a company of men of unusual sweetness and gentleness of expression. This shone through their stubbly beards, pale thin faces and ungainly clothes.

They were mostly non-Friends really. A prisoner could choose his religion when he entered a prison. Attempts to change afterwards failed. So word of the Quaker chaplains went round, and on any fresh sentence the number of "Quakers" rose by one. They did it veraciously by just asking for a Quaker chaplain. I tried to see all the (non-Quaker) C.O's.: my little adventures in that direction



caused the Governor to be overhauled; and after that a warder "escorted" me round, but did not come inside the cell. So the letter triumphed over the spirit. Everything in a prison is minutely regularized, and religion with other things. But here, to regularize is to kill. Clifford Allen, declining guile, took the bull by the horns and wrote to the Prison Commissioners arguing that a Socialist non-Quaker should be allowed a Quaker chaplain. He actually persuaded that impenetrable iron-barred body to his opinion. This is, to my mind, the most marvellous incident it falls to me to record.

One Anglican chaplain told the C.O.'s that "they ought to be drowned." Being asked by a father to break to his C.O. son the news of the death of his favourite cousin at the front, he did it as brutally as possible, and took the opportunity to abuse his charge as coward and shirker, sheltering himself behind such brave men as his cousin.<sup>1</sup>

W. J. Chamberlain tells a story of a criminal in the row behind him who was affected to a passion of repentant tears on hearing the words "Almighty and Most Merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep." He bowed his head on the form in front, his shoulders heaving. A warder saw him, walked over the bowed heads of the prisoners, interrupting the minister's prayers, and quenching the flaming flax of the newly roused soul, he pulled the man roughly back into an upright position, calling out in a loud, brutal voice, "Now then, kneel up, can't yer?" The young man's eyes, as he left the chapel, were full of hatred and revenge.<sup>2</sup> To that warder it was not the service of religion, only drill, that was performed in the chapel.

Following the example of W. A. Albright, I made a practice of carrying in flowers in my hand or in a Gargantuan button-hole. I was not allowed to leave a man a flower, but no one would interfere with the Chaplain's hand or coat. I was not allowed to leave my flowers at the hospital either. But the Governor regretted this when he heard of it. The whole atmosphere was one of fear; nobody was trusted.

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, September 20, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, September 21, 1916.

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Well out of sight of the chief warder or any other warder, many a good talk in many prisons did the warders have with their novel type of criminal. Pacifists were not unknown among them, and sympathizers became numerous as they noted the quiet dignity of their prisoners.

9. The punishments for breaking a rule, for talking, lending a library book, getting in a clandestine letter, lying on your bed before bedtime, looking out of the window, having a pencil in your possession, not working, and many other such acts, were savage. If these things were reported to the Governor, there would be, say, three days' bread and water in a gloomy basement cell totally devoid of furniture during the daytime. This was famine. In addition your exercise might be taken away, and your work in association, your letter or visit, would be postponed a fortnight, whilst your family were left wondering what had happened, and marks, with the effect of postponing your final release, would be taken off. What a strain the system placed on the warders was plain from the zeal with which they welcomed the blessed hour of 4.40 p.m. when they lined up at the centre for dismissal. If, to finish my round, I kept a warder five minutes too long, the grievance was real, and I tried to avoid it. They were in appearance a good, weighty, respectable set of men, doing a hopeless job. When all the men were released at Durham, J. E. Hodgkin invited warders and ex-prisoners together to a farewell supper, with the approval of the Prison Commissioners. All the warders at liberty accepted, and they had a cordial time together—a unique incident.

It was to be expected that an organization so rigid as the prison system would make itself ridiculous sometimes. Bertrand Russell, when he was in prison in the first division, was able to write a learned book on mathematical philosophy, full of abstruse algebraic symbols. He applied for this to pass out to the publisher. This was permitted provided the book first passed the prison officials. He asked who was to read it, and was told, the Chaplain.

Miss Rinder wrote to him in prison a gossipy letter full of personal details about their common friends, who were

described by their initials. He never received this letter, and on enquiry being made about it he was told that the Governor was so puzzled by so many initials that he thought it unsafe to let him have it. Who knew, one reflects, that the initials might not signify Lenin or De Valera?

A suffragette reports how kindness and compassion are stifled among criminals.

“When in prison I saw a woman give a piece of bread to another prisoner who was hungry. She was severely punished. Once a prisoner sat weeping bitterly and another one put her arms round her and kissed her. The warders promptly stopped it, and punished the woman for her kindly act.”

10. The treatment of prisoners in Scotland differs from that in England. Things are easier in Scotland in the matter of literature, but in most other ways worse; To judge by the following extracts from a letter from an artist in Calton gaol, Edinburgh, they seem to be worse:—

“The most objectionable thing about being shut up inside a cell is the lack of fresh air, which one feels very keenly. Except at exercise one is not allowed access to a ‘convenience.’ The result is that for a considerable part of the day one is breathing in an atmosphere which can only be described as insanitary. Unfortunately the diet up here is of a kind which causes one to need frequent relief. On a hot day the smell becomes unbearable. Another effect of the diet is that it necessitates one’s getting up frequently in the night. It is therefore impossible to get an unbroken night’s sleep. This fact is not peculiar to me alone, for I have made enquiries of other C.O.’s and have found my experience corroborated. . . . At bedtime two warders come round and compel the prisoners to put all their clothes except their shirt and undershirt outside the cell door, which is then shut. In the morning the prisoners take them in again. The nights are often so cold up here that one is sorely tempted to sleep fully dressed, and it may be that this precaution is taken to prevent this. Last winter the cold was nearly unbearable. One could not sleep at nights owing to the fact that it was absolutely

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necessary to keep up a continual friction of the feet and hands against each other in order to ensure the necessary circulation. It was the same when one stopped work. One could not sit still without keeping up a continual stamping of the feet which left moist marks on the cold stone wherever one remained for any length of time. . . . Drawing was often out of the question altogether, as one had to bury one's hands in the depths of one's breeches (there are no pockets) to keep them warm. . . . The diet referred to consists almost entirely of porridge and sour milk, and soup and bread. On one day only, Friday, when potatoes are given, can it be called solid food."

Prisoners in Scotland only wrote a letter and received a visit once in three months. There has recently been some assimilation of the two systems, causing a great improvement in the Scottish prisons during the last eighteen months of the time treated of here. The C.O.'s there were treated under the rules for untried prisoners, and were allowed to use their own clothes and have meals provided by their friends. The administration of the Duke Street prison, Glasgow, was at all times gentle and charitable. The cold during the winter at Barlinnie prison was intense.

II. The prison doctor has an uphill fight against conditions. You break down digestion by poor food and little exercise, you encourage tuberculosis by sunless cells, you ruin nerves by imposing the suffering of unsatisfied instincts of many kinds, you weaken the resistance to influenza, and then you set a doctor the task of keeping men free from disease. For the official doctors I met I have great respect. They were faithful men, I thought, and kindly. General testimony shows that they were exceptional. Cases of bad or poor treatment I have known of in several places have been due to the half-time visiting assistant who is in practice outside. A complaint of brutal treatment I was able to bring home to one of these men in a London prison was followed by his dismissal, which is a point in favour of the Prison Commission. He had accused a man falsely of having venereal disease. As the Commission never replied to my complaint, which was well attested, I only infer the

causation. There were signs that at Wandsworth a doctor was accusing men of having venereal disease and setting about most damaging reports. One of the men so accused managed, by the use of the secret post, to let his wife know. She reported to the No-Conscription Fellowship, who demanded at once a full enquiry, and settled that particular lie. The hospitals were in some places as good as they could be under prison conditions. They varied with the doctor. The patients had more change in diet and better beds, but might not talk, and when in separate cells with nothing to do the men were often very unhappy there.

The prison diets have been changed often. The following was typical of those in vogue in some places in 1918 :—

<i>Breakfast.</i>	1 pint of thin porridge with no milk.
<i>Dinner.</i>	1 pound of potatoes and 3 ounces of bread ; and the following besides :—
<i>Sunday.</i>	4 ounces rice, 4 ounces parsnips.
<i>Monday.</i>	2 ounces bacon, 2 ounces beans.
<i>Tuesday.</i>	2 red herrings, 3 ounces pudding with sugar.
<i>Wednesday.</i>	1 pint soup, 4 ounces parsnips, 4 ounces rice.
<i>Thursday.</i>	4 ounces meat, stewed, with $\frac{1}{2}$ pint soup from it, 2 ounces beans.
<i>Friday.</i>	1 pound fish (to avoid ecclesiastical complications).
<i>Saturday.</i>	Like Wednesday, but less rice and parsnips.
<i>Supper</i> (at 4.15).	12 ounces bread, 4 ounces potatoes, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce butter or margarine, and either 1 ounce of cheese or 4 ounces more of potatoes. Cocoa generally.

This was not the diet I used to see every afternoon. It was porridge like breakfast with bread. The suet dumplings given in some gaols twice a week were quite uneatable by some. Vegetarians were during the latter part of the time provided for on application. There was one case of a large supply of salted herrings, too dry and meatless for Army use, handed over to the prisoners, and found equivalent to nothing at all.

Hubert W. Peet gives the following account of the diet at Wandsworth before any changes were made. It therefore

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represents the ordinary prison diet. Unfortunately the pre-war diet has not been reintroduced at the time of writing.

For a sentence of seven days a man gets practically nothing but bread and porridge. For a longer sentence he gets for breakfast 1 pint of gruel and  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of bread ; for supper 1 pint of porridge and  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of bread ; for dinner every day  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of potatoes and 6 ounces of bread. At dinner, in addition, is served on

*Sunday*, a small slice of bully-beef weighing 4 ounces.

*Monday*, 10 ounces of haricots and 2 ounces of crude-fat bacon. ("Beans in candle-grease.")

*Tuesday and Friday*, a pint of thick soup in which meat *has* been found.

*Wednesday and Saturday*, 10 ounces of suet pudding ; "good if received still hot."

*Thursday*, 4 oz. of meat, not without fat or gristle.

After four months you reach a diet where cocoa is served, including your first taste of sugar.

This is from a letter from a man recently released, quoted by Mrs. Hobhouse :—

" . . . One thing I want to draw your attention to, and that is the necessity of keeping a cat at —, as the rice *invariably* disclosed the fact that there must be a swarm of mice in the prison kitchen or store. This tended to sicken one, although low feeding made me proof even against this—I had a black beetle in my mouth one day. This I readily admit was an exception, yet I mentioned it to a wårder, and he told me not to say anything about it, because the other prisoners may ask for them too ! Yet the mice's dirt was the rule, and never a day passed when we had rice but that I picked out half a dozen or more lumps of evidence."

A prisoner's note sent to the Information Bureau states :—

" The test of the diet does not come until all the resources of the body have been brought down to the irreducible minimum and you rest entirely upon the nourishment provided.

... The common experience is that a man passes into one or all three of the following stages :—

- (1) Merely very hungry all day.
- (2) Hunger more acute, with pains in the stomach intermittently.
- (3) Extreme weakness, nervousness, and constant and very acute pain.

There is a sharp contraction of the muscles, the face may be seen (or, more bitterly, felt) to twitch with pain, and the face also becomes dark, particularly about the eyes. Some of the men, in one or other of these stages, may be sent to hospital; many recover somewhat by lying down every available moment; not that they need rest, but if you lie down you do not feel hungry quite so soon. . . ."

"Does not this slow elimination of life," asks Professor Herford—"for, carried through a two years' sentence it is nothing less—bear an unpleasant resemblance to the gradual executions in China, where the suspended culprit hangs with the tip of his toes touching the ground? Is it, in any case to be tolerated in an English prison?"<sup>1</sup>

This, I am sorry to say, is from a verifiable source :—

"I can bring evidence to prove that the doctor (at — prison) did nothing but abuse our men who were called up before him to be examined for outdoor manual labour at — Road Board Camp."

And this, quoted by Mrs. Hobhouse :—

"Prison officials treat any complaint with scorn. Governor says, 'You are not at the Carlton.' Doctor says, 'You are not in a blooming incubator.' On putting down to see him continually for medicine he threatened to report me to the Governor—which would mean punishment—so I ignored him and his medicine too."

One more letter on health in prison.

"... The insomnia continued—sometimes complete—all through my time in prison, and continues still. I have not slept for more than about two hours any night (with three exceptions) since February 1st, and on two

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, May 2, 1918.

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occasions at least I was light-headed in the night, and telling endless nonsense out loud, and became hysterical in the daytime on the least occasion. The prison doctor could or would do nothing for me, saying that only fresh air and exercise could cure me, and warning me that an indefinite prolongation of my condition would lead to a serious breakdown. He was rather kind to me, and I felt what he said was true. . . . I had passed six nights without sleep when I appeared before the Tribunal on March 10th. . . .”

The writer was transferred to Dartmoor, whence the letter was written, March 19, 1917.

12. Among the many records of broken health which did not end fatally we may select one as typical. The actual deaths are treated in a later chapter.

J. A. Skinner was a clerk in the General Post Office at Manchester, and for ten years had never had a day's sick leave. In his family record there is no trace of tuberculosis. Those who know the devoted work which Mr. Skinner and his wife put in for the cause of the sufferers throughout the period of the persecution realize how genuine his case was. His plea was disallowed at the Local Tribunal. The Appeal Tribunal offered alternative work of national importance, which he refused; and after the usual trial, journey to the military depot at Ashton-under-Lyne, and thence to camp at Prees Heath, he found himself on the last day of 1916 in Wormwood Scrubs under a two years' sentence—commuted to 253 days. After some weeks he was offered, and refused, the Home Office scheme. It was a bitter winter; he was a vegetarian, and no vegetarian diet had as yet been granted. He suffered terribly from hunger and cold. His sentence, with commutation, was completed by the end of March 1917. A further refusal of military service brought a second sentence, and he reached Wandsworth on April 12th. He had collapsed from faintness after exercise before leaving Wormwood Scrubs.

At Wandsworth he began to have a festering sore in the palm of his hand. The doctor ascribed it to a strained tendon. He was put into a hospital cell, locked up by himself. He wrote that he was almost incessantly hungry.



He began to have an inflamed arm and knee. These were both wrongly and persistently diagnosed as rheumatism. He served his second sentence of one year—commuted to 141 days—and was taken by ambulance, under escort, to a London hospital. Finally he was brought home and discovered by Dr. Vipont Brown to be suffering from surgical tuberculosis, which was confirmed by the authorities at the Baguley Sanatorium. The physician there wrote:—

“He has a tuberculous knee joint and a tuberculous elbow with multiple discharging sinuses and subluxation of the head of the radius.”

Amputation at the elbow would have taken place but that the knee would have continued as a centre of trouble. Finally the elbow was operated upon twice, and the next year the knee joint also. In January 1920, on crutches and wearing a heavy splint, he obtained work; at the end of February 1921 operation on the other leg was necessary, to be followed by several months' complete rest. What the end of this prolonged suffering will be we do not know. Surgical tuberculosis is a poverty disease, due to under-feeding and lack of light, air and exercise.

Health is ruined in this way in the Army also, in innumerable cases, and the trouble is met—so far as it can be—by pensions. But these sufferings were inflicted by our own administrative bodies upon one of their fellow-citizens. They bear a similar relation to wounds given in war as the sufferings due to reprisals in Ireland bear to ordinary military violence.

13. Since there is no pen, ink or paper permitted, it seems strange to record that nevertheless a number of magazines were issued in the prisons and surreptitiously circulated from cell to cell. This became much more easy under the later regulations, when conversation was allowed in the exercise yard, and men could walk two or three together. But some issues were produced before that. After the earliest days C.O.'s had in practice more liberty in little ways than ordinary prisoners. The *Walton Leader*, a Liverpool organ, ran to over a hundred issues. One determined man, Albert Taylor of Bacup, who was arrested

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at the moment of his Parliamentary candidature for the Rossendale Division, spent nearly all his time in solitary confinement on bread and water, because he refused to obey prison rules. At the end of each period of punishment he had a week under ordinary rules, and then for a fresh offence was sent back for many weeks to his loneliness. How he managed to endure at all I cannot understand, but he told me that he also edited a magazine which they passed round outside from window to window. These productions were nearly all written on brown toilet paper, the only material available. Prison pen and ink were appropriated as opportunity arose. Leads for writing were imported. Pencils and the precious manuscripts were concealed inside waistbands and the hems of waistcoats. An innocent-looking ball of wax used in the daily work might be discovered to have a movable top, revealing a bottle of ink underneath. I have in my possession one of these pathetic publications. It is No. 6 of the *Winchester Whisperer*, the Christmas number for 1918, issued fortnightly on the day after the cells were searched for pencils. The edges of its leaves are tattered, in spite of its cover of sacking decorated with an inscription. It begins with a good imitation of Kelmscott printing and contains several poems by "Radoteur," of which one has a title from Sappho, printed in beautiful Greek capitals, addressed to "EVENING."

It is given here :—

### ἘΣΠΕΡΕ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΦΕΡΕΙΣ

There is no praise that I may say of thee,  
Evening that bringest all things beautiful,  
Shadows, and stars, and the soft winds that swell  
Murmuring in moon-kissed tree-tops faerily ;  
And their twin harmony of mystery,  
Earth greeting Heaven with the Ave-bell ;  
And rest, and dreams half-fathomed which foretell  
Delights that life shall yet unfold to me,  
Yet this one prayer I raise thee as I cease  
The toils of day to lose my griefs in deep  
Communion with thy beauty, hear my voice !  
That she, who loves thee as I love, rejoice  
In thee beside me, till we fall asleep  
Close-folded to thy heart and find thy peace !

This magazine finds room for much poetry—serious and humorous; for pictures of the C.O.'s marching with their pails of slops in their hands as "Christmas Waits," and drawings of their faces changing as their day of release grew more hopelessly remote. It finds room also for an advertisement of the prison cocoa. "One teaspoonful makes a quart of delicious and nourishing food; Invaluable for the Nursery; Will not stain the tablecloth." There is also a Chess Corner, and excellent caricatures of Lloyd George and the typical Tory, and a hymn beginning "What a friend we have in Asquith."

A selection called the *C.O. Clink Chronicle*\* was printed by the N.C.F. from a number of these journals. Those from which it quoted were:—The *Canterbury Clinker*, edited by A. Barratt Brown, the most literary one of them all; the *Joyland Journal*, published in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, bound in cloth, containing Arthur Hagg's sketches and designs; the *Winchester Court Martial*, the predecessor of the *Whisperer*, edited till he broke down by W. J. Chamberlain, and entirely devoted to humour. It was written in imitation print like a newspaper, and claimed to be "the organ of the Absolutely Its." The *Literary Outlet* was issued by W. Dixon of Huddersfield, whilst in prison at Birmingham and Hull. Dorchester gaol issued a handsome magazine entirely in Esperanto called *Instigilo*. There was also a *Lincoln Leader*, principally a news sheet, and a publication was issued at Durham. One of Barratt Brown's poems from the *Canterbury Clinker* began in the following style:—

Gin a conchy meet a conchy  
Comin' thro' the Clink,  
Gin a conchy greet a conchy  
Should a conchy wink?

Ilka conchy has a comrade  
Ne'er a one hae I,  
But all the comrades smile at me  
Comin' on the sly.

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\* The Friends' Bookshop, 140, Bishopsgate, London, E.C. Price 3d.

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Here is a poem of a different character written by Oswald Clark in Armley gaol, Leeds:—

### “THE CELL WINDOW.”

Blue sky, grey flying clouds and shining stars  
Are all that I can see between the bars  
Of my cell window. Yet what more need  
Of beauty, than the stars and clouds and sky ?

Blue sky that spans the earth, an azure dome,  
I know is boundless. And when far from home,  
Upon a cloudless day I glance above,  
It tells me of a Father's boundless love.

Grey stormy clouds, that hang aloft like lead,  
While muttering thunder fills the earth with dread,  
Are filled with God's own rain, His precious gift,  
And when the rain has fallen, clouds will lift.

Each tiny star, that shines above at night,  
Is really one vast world. 'Tis my poor sight  
And human vision dwarfs the distant view,  
As oft I dwarf God's love and goodness too.

For limitless as is the boundless sky,  
And filled with goodness, as the clouds that fly,  
Magnificent as those vast worlds above,  
So is the Father's overwhelming love.

Pencils and letters were brought in and out by the “foot post.” I leave the reader to imagine the nature thereof. Chess was not unfrequently played from cell to cell, of course without boards or pieces, or words audible to warders. Albert Taylor of Rossendale was a constant practitioner; Clifford Allen played games with Scott Duckers five cells away. Each game lasted about thirty-four days, the moves depending upon whether the players were within whispering distance of each other at exercise or emptying slops. The games were marked on their slates. Finally they organized a sort of chess tournament over half the prison. So their brains were kept from atrophy.

## CHAPTER IX

### PRISON

#### II. DISCUSSIONS, CONCESSIONS AND RELEASE

It was only to be expected that a discussion would sooner or later arise regarding two prison problems. The first was concerned with the question as to how far the organizations representing imprisoned objectors should devote attention to working for their release and for the amelioration of their prison conditions, and the second as to whether the imprisoned men themselves should pursue any other policy than that of passive acquiescence in their imprisonment.

We shall now attempt to record the history of these two discussions, the incidents that accompanied them and the final release.

I. The Society of Friends issued a number of weighty documents during the course of the war. One of these was issued "To our Friends in Prison for Conscience' Sake" by the Yearly Meeting held in May 1917, and is so short and forcible that it deserves a place here, as an epitome of the Quaker point of view.

"DEAR FRIENDS,

"We thank God for the faithful witness which you are bearing to the Truth, and to Christ's gospel of love. We rejoice that strength has been given to you to bear all hardships cheerfully and bravely. We stand by you and long that you may know how closely we associate ourselves with you.

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“ We know that the sacrifice you are making will not be in vain, but will be richly rewarded both in your own souls and in the service and help of mankind.

“ Such was the price paid by our forefathers, in their more bitter days—in their great struggle for religious liberty.

“ We rejoice to know that many of you have been able like William Dewsbury to enter ‘prisons as palaces and to esteem their bolts and locks as jewels,’ and that you have been upheld by the presence of One whom no bars could keep out.

“ To you, we believe, has been given a notable place amongst those who are saving the country from permanent conscription, and it may be, the world also, from military domination. We look forward to the time when, prepared and tested by all that you now experience, you will step into freedom to take your part, in a very special way, in bringing the service of Christ into all our service for the future, with its new hopes and new responsibilities.

“ Your faces are set towards a glorious day of love and liberty in the light of God. Whether it comes sooner or later depends in some measure on us all. We pray that in the outward desert of prison life your souls may be continually refreshed by the upspringing of the living water—the presence of the Christ of God.

“ (*Signed*) JOHN H. BARLOW,

“ *Clerk* ” (*i.e.* *Chairman*).

It was not easy to get this letter into the prisons. It was thought to be an encouragement in rebellion.

2. But a difference of opinion, which would hardly have been expected by the outside public, and which may be incomprehensible to many, arose as to whether it was right for the Society, through its Committee or its declarations, or through personal pressure upon the Government, to make any direct official effort to liberate the imprisoned men. What might be called the ordinary reasonable view found voice in a Minute from Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting in July 1917, addressed to the Meeting for

Sufferings. The Minute shows that there had been some diversity of opinion, but the conclusion was, "To urge upon the Meeting for Sufferings the duty laid upon us, as a religious Society which has always stood for civil and religious liberty, to press for the absolute and unconditional release of all these men." But one of the Yorkshire representatives to the Meeting for Sufferings was John P. Fletcher, who differed from the Minute, and wrote a letter to that meeting from the military detention rooms at Whitley Barracks, in Northumberland, to urge that no such attempt should be made. He said that the actual conscripts who had been forced into the Army needed our sympathy even more. One conscript had said to him, "We would all be conscientious objectors if we had the courage." He believed that the presence of C.O.'s among the soldiers was an encouragement to such men. The matter was discussed at great length at the Meeting for Sufferings in September. It was found that most members of the Service Committee agreed with John Fletcher, and the meeting followed their view, though with much difficulty. It had taken the same line after a discussion the previous May. Finally that Committee appointed three Friends, of whom one had been in prison, to write a statement of their position. This they did in the *Friend* for November 2nd. They said that the reasons why the Society could not take action under the Yorkshire Minute were :—

(1) Friends were too closely identified personally with the sufferers to wish to complain too loudly about them. It was better to leave that to others, such as the authoress of "*I Appeal unto Cæsar.*"

(2) Such an appeal, if accepted, would probably mean the release of our own members only—or of religious objectors only—which would be a fatal separation.

(3) Stronger than the above is the vital principle that we are against war and conscription itself, and demand their complete repeal rather than their "just administration."

(4) J. P. Fletcher's point in his letter above.

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(5) It would be wrong and impolitic to have the prisoners released in advance of public opinion. It would embitter the whole position. Albert Seery (not then a Friend) wrote: "We are returning to prison to act as a bursting strain on the surrounding bands of Militarism."

(6) We regard imprisonment as a triumphant opportunity for a widespread mighty influence.

(7) Nevertheless, Friends everywhere are giving the fullest sympathy and help to conscientious objectors and their relatives, and are doing all they can to form public opinion.\*

This was signed by A. Barratt Brown, Edith M. Ellis and Robert Davis on behalf of the Friends' Service Committee.

This letter was supported by another from Mrs. Alexander C. Wilson of Manchester. She and her husband were spending all their strength in working for the cause. She said that the exemption clause in the Act was in advance of public opinion and therefore had not been carried out, and dwelt emphatically upon the reward which comes to those who suffer.

It could, however, hardly be expected that these lofty views should not appear far-fetched and disappointing to many both inside and outside prison. Personality was being eaten away, as month after month passed in hunger and humiliation within the ugly walls of their cells. It was just at the hardest moment before dying men began to be let out, and before taking more exercise was allowed to some of the prisoners. Letters gradually saw the light in the *Tribunal* urging that it was so wrong for men to be suffering that all should try to alleviate it; that no one could "complain too loudly" about this great wickedness; that the release of the conscientious objectors would greatly help to destroy conscription; that logically the Friends' Service Committee should advise Friends not to appear before any Tribunal; and that the imprisonment was partly a pacifist failure as well as a glorious act. This is a summary of a letter from Thomas Talbot. The

\* Also printed in the *Tribunal*, December 27, 1917.



practice of the early Friends was quoted on both sides of the discussion. Letters to the above effect were written by Thomas F. Drayton and by Douglas R. Bishop, who himself suffered a complete breakdown in prison. He said that of eight men to whom he had shown a copy of the letter in the *Friend* for November 2nd, seven were surprised and even indignant at it; that every form of persecution is bad for the State as for the sufferers. Oswald Clark, in the interval between his third and fourth imprisonments, wrote in the opposite sense, supporting the Service Committee's view, and desiring no release that should be due either to a legal argument or a technicality, or to personal influence with politicians, and being ready to continue in prison till the people should desire to liberate the conscientious objectors as such. Another letter by Mr. Williams appeared in the *Tribunal* in reply to this, pointing out that before public opinion had changed many of the C.O.'s would be beyond earthly release. In the following February J. E. Hodgkin found that only about seven out of over forty men in Durham prison agreed with the decision of the Meeting for Sufferings, and three dropped attending meetings. In April the Chaplains' Committee and the Friends' Service Committee met jointly on the subject, but though the feeling in favour of trying for release appeared strong, nothing was done. The same want of unanimity made another conference in May abortive. Meantime hope through a policy of patience was being lost in many of the fortresses of evil; the day of utter physical breakdown was coming nearer; and rescue was badly needed.

The matter came with great urgency before the Yearly Meeting of 1918, on the Meeting for Sufferings Minute, and by appeals to make efforts for release sent up by five Quarterly Meetings. The Yearly Meeting sympathized with this strong expression of feeling, and wrote an *Appeal to the Conscience of the Nation*, which was distributed to the number of 421,000 copies. As it was an appeal to the people rather than to the Government, it was acceptable to both sides in the controversy, as Yearly Meeting Minutes often are.

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This story has been told here not because it had any striking consequences, but to exhibit the spirit in which the persecution was met by those most closely concerned.

Questions of policy of this nature, about acts helpful to sufferers but by some held to be tainted by being arranged with the Government, constantly arose in the N.C.F. Committee and throughout its membership all through the period. In fact, there could be no clear line between what you could or could not rightly do in conference with the Government.

In July of 1916 the National Committee of the N.C.F. formulated its policy in favour of working for the exemption of C.O.'s by political and other means. Disapproving of this, J. P. Fletcher resigned from the Committee. In the autumn the new Committee introduced the same policy, and rejected a resolution, proposed by A. Barratt Brown, which urged that the Committee should make no effort, direct or indirect, to alleviate prison conditions, or obtain for the prisoners exemption of any kind; devoting its energies solely to arousing the public conscience on war and conscription for war. A. Barratt Brown, however, did not feel it most useful to resign at that time, but finally did so in June 1917, by reason of the continuance of the efforts of the National Committee in the direction of mitigating the lot of the sufferers. To him it appeared to relax opposition and to facilitate the work of conscription. He maintained this position after himself suffering a year in prison. This resignation, however, did not break off Barratt Brown's friendly helpfulness to the Committee and to the movement. Those who took the other view thought that release (of course without compromise), would go far to prevent conscription continuing after the war. They noted that Sir George Cave, resisting release, said: "To go further than we have gone . . . would imperil very much now and in the future the system of military service which has been set up."

This policy was continued by the N.C.F. partly because it was held that acquiescence in persecution meant permitting the State to do something no less harmful to itself than to the persecuted. It was held that to secure

unconditional release would be the most effective means of striking a final blow at conscription. It was argued that the continuous imprisonment of C.O.'s was intended by the Government as a means of overaweing the ordinary soldier and maintaining the terror of military discipline for the Army and the rest of the nation. So much, indeed, was admitted by the Government, as recorded above. Under such circumstances unconditional release was essential to the overthrow of conscription, quite apart from the propagandist value of constantly bringing the issue and the facts before the notice of the public.

3. It was never easy for the prisoners to decide, all through the struggle, how far they ought to go in protest and refusal. From the time when it became clear that the imprisonment was to be of indefinite length, a persistent demand arose for some sort of protest in order to hasten release. The differences of opinion which arose in the pacifist organizations were all phases of this issue. The points being generally matters of conscience, were felt keenly, and disputed long. One of these was the question whether the men in prison ought to do prison work or to strike against it. The majority of prisoners always regarded it as part of the punishment of prison, which they were not bound to kick against. Others who differed from them regarded it as a form of conscription, saying that the Government which had tried first to conscript them into the Army, and afterwards offered them the Home Office scheme of compulsory labour, was carrying out the same purpose of conscript service within prison walls. The old "substitution" difficulty which had been felt concerning work of national importance was not got rid of in prison; for if C.O.'s made mailbags, other prisoners were enabled to make munitions. They also said that to plead compulsion in prison was a course which might have excused men from protesting against the Act at all. It was also said that to do prison work was to admit guilt. Intermittent strikes by individuals and groups frequently occurred.

The National Committee of the N.C.F. took the matter

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into grave consideration in May 1917, upon the request of its chairman then in prison. Hitherto they had been against work-striking; now they passed a Minute to say that they were opposed to the organization of work-striking in prison, but that the Committee would support those who adopted the plan as a matter of conscience. Clifford Allen, whilst urging the prisoners to remain perfectly loyal to the National Committee, himself decided, on his third imprisonment, to decline for the future to do prison work. He wrote, from a military camp on Salisbury Plain, a letter to Mr. Lloyd George announcing and explaining his change of action.

He defended the men in prison from the charges both of cowardice and of a lust for martyrdom, pointing out that many of them had been offered work of national importance, which they had refused. For this they had been—after, in some cases, brutal treatment—sent to prison. They had further refused the offer of the Home Office scheme, the conditions of which they had rejected—particularly the promise not to engage in Peace work. He pointed out that he and others were being sent back to prison, with hard labour, for the third time, with a prospect of an unlimited number of sentences to follow. He claimed that their fear was not of physical, but of spiritual death. In reply to the Government argument that the test of genuineness must be a hard one, to prevent so many claiming under it as to destroy the system of conscription, Clifford Allen replied that out of nearly 5,000 prisoners less than 150 had been rejected as fraudulent, and that the victims had accepted successive imprisonments. The course of the Government had become nothing less than a deliberate persecution of genuine opinion. It was succeeding in exacting from the men in prison work similar to that exacted in the Home Office Centres. He had therefore concluded to refuse to be involved in the Government's scheme in any form, and so would refuse, at all costs, to do any more work in prison.

On the following page of the *Tribunal*\* Dr. Salter put the other side, urging all prisoners to avoid work-striking

\* June 14, 1917.

as being sensational, and not so effective as the method of all-persuasive reasonableness. He pointed out that work was necessary to the preservation of sanity; that, as a matter of sheer fact, practically every C.O. who had hitherto carried out a work-strike in prison had become insane, and that work in prison was even more necessary for the maintenance of mental balance than work outside. He believed that hard labour was simply part of the penalty. He urged that only a few isolated men would take part in it; that the Quakers would not participate; but that if it were to succeed, it would have to be universal. The men were scattered in thirty-nine prisons; only a very dexterous secret organization could achieve success, and this the National Committee had declined to undertake. He prophesied that the attempt would end in bitter defeat and humiliation, the break-up of reason and *morale*, and the loss of usefulness in future life. He pointed out also that this was the method adopted by the suffragettes, now discredited.

Later, Fenner Brockway and other leading men in prison adopted a policy of striking in one form or another, for various reasons. For the last part of the period of imprisonment the prisons were full of discussions on this subject. Manifestoes on both sides passed from one gaol to another, as openings arose when men were discharged and re-imprisoned. Such is the value of a canny organization. The number of work-strikers remained very small until near the end, as described at the close of Chapter VII. Clifford Allen believes that the disturbances of that last period helped to drive the Government to release the men.

There is sufficient evidence to encourage the view that if obstruction had been efficiently and nationally organized release would have come sooner, and that in any case the obstruction which became more and more general towards the end did materially shorten the period of imprisonment for a large number of men.

Organized resistance to discipline might probably have broken up the prison system; as it did, in fact, when such a policy was adopted unofficially by only 130 of the men out of 1,100. The final decision of the Government to

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release the "two-year men" was, it is thought, caused by the grave situation which arose in some of the prisons in consequence of the determined resistance of a few of the men.

James H. Hudson, in gaol at Manchester, wrote a memorandum in favour of a general strike to be organized for May Day 1919, which was circulated to all the prisons. He argued—

(1) That continued passivity in prison would not be sufficiently powerful to arouse the public conscience to the tyranny and iniquity of conscription.

(2) That, by the Labour Movement, acceptance of penalties might reasonably be regarded as acquiescence in tyranny.

(3) That Labour desired active opposition rather than passive and inert submission.

Against these suggested strikes was put forward a document from a minority of the Winchester prisoners in October 1918. It urged that—

(1) A strike was a sign of impatience, and would create the opinion that men were acting without any guiding principle.

(2) The cause would be damaged by a release gained by such methods.

(3) The value of recognition of our principles depended upon it being won by persuasion and not by "force."

It concluded: "The steady and convinced growth of the true pacifist spirit amongst people in response to our true pacifist spirit is real positive gain and, moreover, makes no enemies. Do not let us be carried away by mere policy and by the fighting spirit within us. Submission is never pleasant to an ardent spirit, but it is our strongest weapon. Let us continue to trust to our appeal to the conscience of the nation."

Hunger-striking was keenly discussed. This was never put forward from responsible quarters, but it was adopted by a number of men who unquestionably obtained earlier release as a result. It is to be feared, however, that their health was considerably impaired thereby, although on

the other hand the general physical and mental vitality of large numbers were damaged whether they were submissive or rebellious. In any case, whether one agrees or not with the hunger-strikers, admiration for their high moral and physical courage cannot be withheld.

The controversies here related are proper matters for history. They make clear the consistent urge towards unity and loyalty which the N.C.F. exerted. Not one split occurred in the ranks at any time, and when finally the general release came and the Fellowship regathered, everyone who really counted was present either in person or in spirit.

4. There was, all through the period, a small number of men who succeeded for a time in escaping arrest and did not object to doing so. A few contrived to cross to Ireland, others were lost sight of by the military without any attempt at concealment on their part. Ernest E. Hunter, for instance, spent two years openly working in the office of the No-Conscription Fellowship without arrest, though the place was constantly being raided by the police. Maurice Whitlow, a Quaker chaplain, visited the gaol regularly for three years, during two of which he was liable to incarceration. A number of men whose health had become precarious simply walked out of camp in the intervals of their imprisonment and went home for a holiday, sending their addresses, and content to await arrest. A hut on the moors between Lancashire and Yorkshire was a rendezvous of a few others who were definitely on the run.

The Government regulations concerning such men were drastic and, on the whole, comparatively effective. Anyone who harboured a man who was wanted, or anyone who gave him employment, was liable to a fine of £20 a day or imprisonment. Extremely few employers would risk such a penalty. A man's own parents were, of course, liable to this, but in practice it was not often carried into effect against them where there was no attempt at concealment. An exception was the harsh imprisonment of Mrs. Waplington at Smethwick.

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Runham Brown organized very successfully a scheme for the employment of such men as window cleaners, cobblers, and doers of odd jobs, with no definite person in the position of employer. The responsibility for each branch of N.C.F. service was carefully concentrated on one person, so that all might not be in prison together. Miss Catherine Marshall calculated that she was at one time liable to about 2,000 years' imprisonment for her many offences against this regulation.

5. Methods which might well have been used by the Government, had they so desired, to ameliorate the conditions brought about by the failure of the Tribunals to carry out the intentions of Parliament, were pressed in a speech in the House of Lords by Lord Parmoor on May 24, 1917. He said that the men should have been put into the first division, where any Judge would put political offenders, or people condemned because of their opinions. Secondly, that their offence, according to all the principles of civil law, should have been expiated by one imprisonment, after which they should have been dismissed from the Army. He also pointed out that the form of the Act precluded the prerogative of mercy. Any man pardoned would at once be arrested again, and so constitutional practice was violated.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, with a liberal flow of hard words against the conscientious objectors, followed, supporting Lord Parmoor on grounds of common sense. Lord Derby gave the uncompromising answer of a dull man, and Earl Russell replied to him. For two years more the successive imprisonments went on.

The conscientious objector was, so far as he knew, in prison interminably. The plan adopted, to begin with, by the military courts was to reduce the first sentence to 112 days. I know of no single case of a surrender after this first release. The men I knew never seemed to have considered it. They came back to go a second or third time through the hardships of the first month. During that time you have a lower diet to bring you down to an amenable mind, and to use up any fat you may have brought



in. You sleep on a plank without mattress for the first fortnight. I imagine you do not sleep. Think of the degrading slavery of the new experience ; ordered about, horribly dressed, hungry, always sitting on a stool without a back, never seeing a fire, denied for the first two months a letter or a visit or any news of the outside world, and trying to sleep on a plank. How many of us would sleep much ? Later on the men, through the efforts of the N.C.F., were excused going through this period more than once. They were, in that detail, recognized as being in again for the same offence.

When the military found that they were not breaking the men's spirits, the reduction was abandoned, and two years' hard labour became the standard sentence. It represents the maximum heinousness of military disobedience by soldiers in war-time. On its expiration a man was received by a military escort before he passed the prison gate, taken to his regiment, given a formal order, which he disobeyed—and after a week or two in the guardroom and a court martial he went back to prison for two years more.

It is believed by the authorities that the suppression of personality which is the effect of "hard labour" cannot be carried on for more than two years without risk to life or sanity. It is the severest punishment short, if it be short, of hanging which can be given. For longer periods the more tolerable conditions of penal servitude are prescribed. The late Lord Justice Fry and the Recorder of Swansea and Lord Parmoor have declared that they never gave such a long sentence of hard labour to the worst criminals. The conduct of the man who chose to go to prison a second or third time was wonderful. He came from long suffering under the dull heavy cruelty of the cell. He knew that his life was being taken from him piece by piece ; that his mind was being dulled ; that he suffered from sleeplessness or indigestion ; that all that was fair and happy for other men was denied him ; that, servile and despised as he had been in prison and would be again, he could escape at once by giving in and becoming a soldier. I still marvel at the matter-of-course way in

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which these men would say good-bye to me, with the hope that they would be sent back to the same prison, and we should meet again. The terrible wear and tear of prison denudation was held at arm's length by faith. They endured as seeing the invisible: some of them would say "Him that was invisible"; others, perhaps even braver because they had less help, could not say that. But all deserve a place among the men of faith in the eleventh of Hebrews.

The fact that the repeated sentences ran directly counter to ministerial declarations might be expected, from the lack of cohesion then become habitual in the administration of the Coalition. But the disappointment of their reasonable hopes was none the less terrible to the prisoners. I well remember the blow falling when the first man who had served two years was sent back. On July 4, 1916, Lord Sandhurst stated in the House of Lords, "If a man will not do national work, he will complete his sentence of civil imprisonment and then be discharged from the Army." This discharge in disgrace was a regular part of the Army code, and might have been utilized, as it actually was at the end, at any time, had not the Government's policy carried out Mr. Lloyd George's promise to be as hard as he could to the Absolutists. Lord Derby, on November 14, 1917, in the House of Lords, explained that there were to be no more reductions to 112 days, so "there will not be successive punishments, but the punishment that is given in the first instance by the court martial." Lord Derby, a long time afterwards, explained that he had not meant what he said. It was only a muddle.

The situation moved reasonable public opinion eighteen months or more before the men were released. *The Times* wrote on October 25, 1917:—"When a man has deliberately refused to avail himself of two alternative ways of escape from prison labour; when he has, more than once, of his own deliberate choice, gone back to gaol; when he shows himself resolute to go back again and again rather than to submit to that military service against which he asserts that his conscience raises for him an insuperable barrier—when he

thus proves repeatedly his readiness to suffer for what he proclaims to be his beliefs, is it either justifiable or politic to go on with the punishment ? ”

6. As time wore on men began to be released from prison, broken, ready to die. The number who died mounted month by month. Many more were made hopelessly consumptive, and some became insane. Anyone with physical or nervous weakness to begin with was pretty sure to collapse.

The conscience of many influential people was roused. The fire of questions was kept up in Parliament by the devoted band there, under the evasions of Ministers and the mockery of the warlike who sat at ease. The *Manchester Guardian* reported these questions and admitted letters. The *Daily News* followed, as matters grew worse, in airing the facts. The death roll of men promised exemption by an Act of Parliament, who had proved their honesty by dying for it, produced uneasiness.

Fenner Brockway wrote from Liverpool gaol towards the end of the period that one man in six was in hospital, that one in six of the remainder had been examined that week by the doctor for serious loss of weight. He said that three men had fainted in chapel on the last Sunday. My own experience as chaplain is that the men generally began to find their heads fuzzy ; power of concentration failed them ; they read and read without understanding ; their thoughts wandered. Their brains, in fact, were starved and becoming inoperative. They sometimes had not strength to walk round the yard for the prescribed time.

Among the official bodies who protested against the continuance of the persecution were many hundreds of Trade Union branches, seventy local Trades Councils and Labour parties, and the official Labour Party unanimously at its Nottingham Conference. Protests were signed by 1,000 Anglican clergymen and 2,500 Free Church ministers, and by many distinguished people.

The *Manchester Guardian* of March 21, 1918, said that “ in the hands of those who care for justice and freedom

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of conscience lies the power to make this even yet a prime question, and to secure that the law of the land shall take the place of a senseless persecution of which the better part of public opinion is becoming steadily more ashamed."

In June 1918, J. Edward Hodgkin wrote of a visit to Durham:—

"Visiting the prison after five or six weeks' absence, I am struck by the marked effect which the continued confinement and low diet is having on the men. Several spoke to me of feeling depressed, and as if there were a cloud over them. They do not respond or take the same share and interest in the service as they used to do a few months ago. . . . I am uneasy about the mental condition of —. He assured us to-day that he knew the war was over and that this information was being withheld purposely by myself and the warders; and in other ways behaved very curiously and made erratic irresponsible statements."

The protests of the men and women usually taken as embodying the national conscience became by the end of 1917 loud enough to rouse the Government.

Wholesale release would have been the right thing. For granting this, reasons good or indifferent could easily have been discovered by the alert mind of the Prime Minister, by the use of such processes—say a further reference to the Central Tribunal—as might have saved the face of the War Office. But that plan would not have been popular, so in December 1917 a number of concessions calculated to ward off death and madness were granted to those men only who had already served the equivalent of twelve months (reduced to ten for good conduct). The younger ones might be reckoned on to endure that length of time without great scandal.

The concessions were: freedom to talk on exercise, and to walk about in groups of either two or three, at their own choice; to have two exercise periods per day, and to have their own books sent in four at a time. Still no writing materials and no change in diet. The latter would have been a wonderful boon, for a last screw of cruelty had been turned in the provision of food. As

already mentioned, when rationing occurred throughout the nation, and people generally had to limit their consumption of some articles, the prison diet, already calculated—even if digested—merely to feed a low flame of life, was further reduced. Nothing shows the spirit of the Prison Commission more clearly. The oatmeal, or oatmeal and maize, of which the gruel or porridge was made, the potatoes and meat of poor quality used, would not have impoverished a wasteful Government much if granted undiminished.

There were other concessions of less value. The men might wear their own clothes, and many did. That, of course, was a Government economy. And they might hire another prisoner to clean out their cells at 6d. a day. This every one scorned to do. The Commissioners were of a different spirit from their captives, and never even began to understand them.

Besides the grant of a fortnightly letter, the monthly visit was allowed to be in a room instead of a cage, but with a warder present as before.

These concessions, known as 243(a), had been originally devised for the militant suffragists. There was a curious and very characteristic niggardliness about them. The books prisoners might read were not to have any bearing upon current events. Current events, of course, might be found disastrously interesting. The fortnightly letter was only to be half the length of the monthly one they had hitherto written; and the monthly visit in a room was only to last a quarter of an hour instead of the half-hour one behind the wires. This surly provision was afterwards relaxed. What an expression it was of the prison mind! Those whose health had been so broken in prison that scandal might result from too numerous deaths were to be liberated. Clifford Allen, declared by the prison doctor to be within a few days of death, and Stephen Hobhouse, had been set free under an old prison rule in early December 1917, to be returned to prison when recovered. Their deaths would have moved the public, and they were not rearrested; but we shall see that some humbler unknown sufferers were allowed to stay till they

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died. Finally, it was recognized that the Tribunals had sometimes refused absolute exemption between the first and second Acts, up to May 1916, on the ground that they believed that they had no power to grant it, under Justice Darling's decision. Tribunals were now, months of imprisonment having passed by, allowed to reconsider these cases, frankly admitted to be cases of injustice; but a concession so difficult and troublesome to apply was not availed of by these busy and hostile bodies. If they had offered absolute exemption, it rested with the War Office to act on it or not. Most Tribunals answered that they had always known they had the power, nine did not reply, one or two revised their decisions but did not change any. Little was to be hoped for from these bodies, to whose door must be laid the chief responsibility for the imprisonments.

In Maidstone gaol seven men refused the privileges, carrying the idea of no compromise to its extreme limit. In that gaol the visits of thirty minutes every month were in a private room if available. A man there wrote.

"The Governor objected to shaking hands, but some of the warders would say nothing to it. The Governor gives us as little as he can help, and we have as little to do with him as possible. Till the end of March we were kept a full year before being afforded privileges; then we spoke to the prison inspector and got this corrected to ten months if full marks had been earned."

7. A last trial came to some of the Absolutists in September 1918, when most of them had been in prison for two years or more.

The Government, under growing pressure from the leaders of thought in the country, realized that those who spoke for the national conscience were being rendered increasingly unhappy by the persistence of the imprisonment of the sufferers for conscience' sake, and decided to ease matters for those who had actually served over two years' hard labour.

The idea that the Act might be at last carried out by their complete release did not find favour. The North-

cliffe and Hulton papers and Bottomley would have given voice. So an attempt to mitigate the long suffering of hard labour was made. Men were quietly transferred in small groups to the gaol at Wakefield from other gaols all over the country.

A well-informed contributor to the *Manchester Guardian* of September 27th continues the story:—

“The early arrivals discovered the hesitation in the mind of the Home Office. While they were congregating, under escort, from the four corners of the land, the Home Office was still wondering what it should do. They descended on a gaol which was not ready to receive them, and which, when it had taken them in did not know, in the absence of instructions, how to treat them. But there was food and shelter, and assured of these necessities, the inmates began to organize the life of the place according to a model of their own. The Governor of the gaol, having no instructions, had to let them do pretty much as they liked. The staff of warders numbered less than a dozen; the prisoners were counted by scores. The locks, which were taken off the cell doors when the other conscientious objectors, those who had accepted the Home Office scheme, were in the gaol as a work centre, have not been replaced; and their successors, within the limits of the high boundary walls, have so far been free to do pretty much as they have wanted. They have appointed an advisory committee, with Councillor Walter Ayles of Bristol for its chairman, and P. T. Davies for its secretary; Scott Duckers of London, W. H. Thompson (a North Staffordshire solicitor), and T. W. H. Sara (a social lecturer) are among its members. There is a house sub-committee, which details the men required to do each day's cooking and the rest of the kitchen work. The warder in charge is 'permitted to help' (I was told) if he likes. There is also a labour sub-committee, which arranges for the cleaning and tidying of the cells. The prisoners, by the bye, call the lockless cells their private rooms. They have only once been in conflict with the prison authorities. This was last Tuesday, when the Governor proposed to give them tasks. They refused to

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perform them, and when no punishment followed they learned that the Home Office had left him without instructions.

“ Finally the instructions were communicated to the prisoners at a mass meeting. It would seem that, as a matter of convenience, or perhaps expediency, the prisoners’ organization has a certain amount of ‘recognition.’ The Governor, at any rate, asked Mr. Ayles to make known the Home Office intentions. The Home Office evidently hopes that the Absolutists, now that they are all together and fortified by each other’s companionship, will undertake to do work at Wakefield which they have refused to do for two years past when left to their individual resolution. The Home Office ‘terms’ are that the Absolutists should work with regularity and diligence, and then, in addition to concessions regarding correspondence and visitors, they will be allowed three-pence a day and the opportunity to spend these three-pences (but not more) at a prison canteen, which will be sanctioned if they run it themselves. The work expected of them was not specified in the communication. The making of mailbags is a customary prison employment, and Wakefield gaol has a small foundry, and it used also to have a ropewalk.”

Finally the men issued a manifesto stating their resolve not to co-operate with any of these schemes of partial amelioration. As always, they showed that they were not out for easy terms or for personal relief, however great might be the temptation to worn and partially broken men, but that they were determined to maintain their testimony to the end. Their statement ran as follows:—

“ H.M. Prison, Wakefield.

“ In view of the great misunderstanding and misrepresentation concerning the principles of the Absolutist conscientious objectors, we issue the following brief statement:—

“ (1) Our vital principle as Absolutists is not a refusal to serve the community. It is that we cannot accept either military service or any compulsory work organized to facilitate the prosecution of the war.



- " (2) Therefore we cannot accept any scheme of work involving our actual or implied consent to the carrying out of any such purpose.
- " (3) We are faced with a situation, submission to which may involve the complete denial of our principles, by implicitly introducing an element of voluntary or semi-voluntary co-operation on our part.
- " (4) It appears that the Government still misunderstand our principles, in that they take for granted that any safe or easy conditions can meet the imperative demands of our conscience. No offer of schemes or concessions can do this. We stand for the inviolable rights of conscience in the affairs of life. We ask for liberty to serve, and if necessary to suffer, for the community and its well-being. As long as the Government deny us this right, we can only take with cheerfulness and unmistakable determination whatever penalties are imposed upon us. We want no concessions. We desire only the liberty to serve.

" Signed on behalf of the Absolutists in Wakefield Prison, Walter H. Ayles, *Chairman*; P. T. Davies, *General Secretary*; W. H. Thompson, Eric P. Southall, Henry Sara, J. Scott Duckers, Geo. Horwill, *Members of the Advisory Committee*.

" *September 14, 1918.*"

Tens of thousands of copies of this manifesto, written by men with no prospect of release before them, were circulated by the No-Conscription Fellowship. It was thus clearer than ever that no plan of concessions would meet the case. These unconquerable men were then returned to their prisons to continue their sentences.

8. The terrible strain was causing widespread unrest. A hunger-strike was initiated in the prison at Newcastle on February 18, 1918, "as a protest against the incom-

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petence and inhumanity of the prison doctor.”<sup>1</sup> The account given in the *Tribunal*, a periodical in which accounts are carefully checked, states that the same tube was used up their noses to feed all eleven men forcibly, and that no attempt was made to wash it out between cases, though one of them was believed to be suffering from lung trouble. After strong protest, separate tubes were used for each man.

“One comrade had a disease of the nose, and suffered terrible agony through the doctor trying to force the tube up his nostril; another had a tear vein burst through the violence of the operation; all bled profusely from the nose or throat, so roughly were they handled. Moreover, on one occasion the doctor pulled a handful of hair out of a man’s head in his anger, and frequently used epithets such as ‘dirty filthy scoundrel’ and the like.”

On March 10th Colonel Wedgwood asked a question in the House on this subject, and Mr. Shortt denied the truth of all the allegations “on the information he had received”—no doubt ultimately coming from the prison doctor. Our readers must form their own conclusions.

At this period hunger-striking was becoming common in the prisons. It occurred at Maidstone, Winchester, Wandsworth, Carlisle, Canterbury and Hull. The authorities met it sometimes by forcible feeding, sometimes by temporary release under the “Cat and Mouse Act,” or in both ways. The first men forcibly fed in Wandsworth were denied water by the doctor. The water was taken out of their cells and a jug of milk substituted. This, of course, was food. The water given for washing was made soapy, so that they could not drink it. In consequence they suffered terribly from thirst, especially after each forcible feeding. Colonel Wedgwood obtained a promise from Mr. Shortt that this practice should cease.<sup>2</sup>

In November 1918 the Armistice was signed amid unexampled rejoicing. We little knew the years of diplomatic and economic war that were before us. The spirit of the Government, now familiar in other connections, was

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, February 27 and March 27, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, March 13, 1919.

manifest at once in their refusal to release the men in prison or camp. While the war was on, and conscripts daily reaching military age, the example of the men in punishment might theoretically be of use to the war as a deterrent to possible shirkers. But that baneful utility was now done with. Industries needed restoration, and everything should have been done to restore society. But what prevailed was the idea that thus the "conchies" would score off the returned soldiers. When the returning men are counted by four or five millions, four or five thousand liberated prisoners would have had an infinitesimal effect on the labour market. Many had businesses of their own, or posts awaiting them, and against the rest there was still the war feeling. Few outside their sympathizers would give a C.O. work if an ex-soldier could be found for it. Even now in 1922 the Post Office and some other civil services and the public teaching authorities and the railways refuse for the most part to reinstate Absolutists; and some are still out of work. They have permanently lost their careers. But no doubt the newspapers which play the part of the dogs of war would have given tongue, and their readers would have been influenced. The Government took the safe course, and the miserable experience of hope deferred was added to the ordinary miseries of the prisons. Men continued to go out when their sentences expired and were sent back for two years more, in time of peace.

9. This continuation of imprisonment after enlistment had ceased produced in Wandsworth gaol an outbreak of rebellion on a large scale. The fact that the rebels complained of the "lack of support by the respectable element and challenged them to discuss the business" shows the inevitable difference of opinion on such a course. On October 16, 1918, we find that twenty men were already on strike against prison rules—a few weeks before the Armistice—so that the trouble cannot be entirely put down to that, but to the general nervous situation produced by protracted suffering. Quite independently of this many of the strongest minds had become convinced that a strike

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and release were necessary for the cause—that suffering had done its work. Others took the opposite view, as has been recounted. A commendable attempt at reconciliation was made at that time by a Prison Commissioner, who offered to wipe out all their punishments and to give them a fresh start if they would submit to regulations and do prison work. It was not, however, enough to reconcile them to their situation. “Of course they continued striking and forced an hour’s talking exercise, and then two, per day. I arrived at that moment. We then asked for books, letters and visitors (these were all stopped), but were refused. We then refused to come in from exercise. Officers draw batons and get excited. This happens at three exercises; it is then knocked off. We had our little concerts through the window, and a little tin-rattling and door-banging. On December 4th we were suddenly removed to the basement.”<sup>1</sup> These cells were described as damp and filthy, and as having been in disuse for years. This act, like every form of coercion, only produced more rebellion. At exercise time speeches were made, and communication opened up through the windows with the neighbouring wing in which soldiers were confined. Much fraternisation followed mutual explanations. A number of the cells had all the furniture in them broken to pieces. The glass of the gas aperture in the cell walls and the glass of the spyholes were broken in all the cells to make communication easier. With his head in the gas recess, so as to be heard in the ward generally, Guy Aldred, who is a Communist, delivered a lecture on Bolshevism. Through the cell windows a concert consisting of twenty items was given, so that the people in the houses over the prison wall could hear. The “Red Flag” and “The International” were sung in the resounding central hall of the prison when the men were going in from exercise, as well as constantly during the time of exercise. The Governor received several deputations; one threatened to break up the furniture in all the cells unless the men under punishment were released. The latter threw their dry bread out of the window, or left it uneaten. Finally, after

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Ellison’s MS.

a week's hunger-strike, the strikers were released under the "Cat and Mouse" Act.<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that prisons are not staffed in such a way as to deal with a large body of desperate men, organized, intelligent, trusting one another, and without fear of consequences. When, however, the warders could deal with a single individual their methods were these:—

On January 2, 1919, one of the C.O.'s in Wandsworth had been very unwisely mocked at by the chief warden because the main body of them were enjoying the privileges won by their comrades on strike, and saying that they, the quiet men, were afraid of enduring similar punishments, but were hiding behind the strikers' backs. To show the untruth of this, the C.O. in question smashed his cell windows, furniture, pots and pans, and declared himself on work and hunger strike. He was pushed out of his cell, seized by about seven warders, frog-marched along the landing, being kneed in the back every few steps, and half strangled, and punched on the back of his head. They attempted to hurl him headlong down a flight of steps, but he managed to grasp a rail and averted it. More frog-marching, and a second attempt to hurl him down from the landing resulted in a warden getting a nasty spill. After much banging about he was put into a body belt, with hands cuffed to his side, in a punishment cell. One hand was released to enable him to take his tea. He refused to do it; the hand was locked up again, and he was left for the night. Next morning the doctor told him that he was a lunatic and was to be treated as such; he was put into a strait-jacket in a padded cell. A convict was assigned to feed him, but he refused. The strait-jacket was strapped too tightly and prevented his breathing, cramping his shoulders so that he suffered terrible pain, walking up and down and flinging himself at intervals on a mattress, with vomiting and other sufferings. He was kept twenty hours in the body belt, and twenty-three and a half in the strait-jacket, with half an hour's respite. He was refused, except after prolonged delay, all chance of relieving nature, and his sufferings and the words used

<sup>1</sup> From the *Spur*.

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by the warders are unprintable here.<sup>1</sup> After a week's hunger-strike he was released under the "Cat and Mouse" Act for a month, to recover and then begin again. It is not surprising that a new Governor—Major Blake—was appointed at Wandsworth, and his style may be gathered from a letter descriptive of it, sent to Commander Wedgwood by E. W. Harby from the gaol. It stated that he paraded fifty C.O.'s, saying, "I will not have these stinking C.O.'s mixed with respectable men." Sewell Harris, a well-known young Friend, replied to one outburst, "Thank you, sir," for which he was ordered into irons, but this was not carried out in the punishment cell. The Governor went on (according to the C.O.'s letter), "To hell with the C.O.'s, to hell with them!" Pointing to the writer of this letter, he said, "Look at that swine!" The Home Secretary, Mr. Shortt at that time, denied the statements contained in this letter. Major Blake's own version of this is that when he reached the prison the C.O.'s were in the hall making a great noise, singing the "Red Flag" and shouting rudely at him. He responded, "March these noisy devils out of here; I won't have them disturbing the decently behaved prisoners." The Major explained that he restored order and got the rioters' "tails down." Then he says, "I went to Major Briscoe and explained that I had acted illegally because I had 'cursed and damned' these fellows until I frightened them." A Parliamentary enquiry under Mr. (now Sir) Albion Richardson, M.P., was ordered into the case, from whose report some of the quotations come. The report dwelt on the Governor's good intentions and difficult task, and was mostly written in whitewash. Commander Wedgwood, who was present at the enquiry, found that the charges made by him in the House of Commons—based upon E. W. Harby's letter—were supported with unanimity by all the twenty or thirty prisoners who gave independent evidence, and denied by the Governor and his warders with equal unanimity. Readers who know the varying value of testimony can form their own conclusions. Throughout February, punishments, hunger-

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, January 23, 1919.

striking, artificial feeding and removals to hospital were the order of the day at Wandsworth. There was unwisdom on both sides.

10. In January an extraordinarily influential memorial was sent to the Prime Minister urging the release of the 1,500 men still in prison. It was organized by Miss Rinder, one of the N.C.F. staff. The signatories were literary and University men of national reputation, Labour leaders, bishops and leading clergy of all denominations, representative men and women in various walks of life. The memorial was presented by the Rev. E. W. Barnes, Master of the Temple, Colonel John Buchan, Professor Gilbert Murray and Lord Parmoor. Apparently it produced no effect. A local appeal, organized by Alexander C. Wilson in Manchester, was signed by more than half the clergy and ministers appealed to, by thirty-six city magistrates, and fifty county magistrates in Lancashire and Cheshire. The men who had been released under the "Cat and Mouse" Act were constantly returning to begin the miserable round of protest and punishment again. Some went back recording their feeling that this would be their last arrest. The next would be from the hand which, sooner or later, arrests us all.

Complaints of the neglect of prisoners' health became more numerous as the year 1918 went on. Philip Snowden and Joseph King were the Parliamentary champions of the sufferers, and did knightly service. But one would gather from the replies of Mr. Brace and Mr. Macpherson that the prison world was an abode of order, contentment and fatherly care. Men like myself, who were in the prisons once or twice a week, found ourselves sympathizing with Mr. Snowden and Mr. King rather than with the reports from officials which the Ministers read out as replies.

One of the grievances was that now that so many men were undergoing their second or third year's imprisonment, their weight when they entered on a new sentence was already reduced to its lowest safe minimum. But it was, in accordance with prison routine, taken as their base, or ordinary weight, and until they had lost consider-

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ably more they were not regarded as having lost weight and needing more food.

Another trouble was that, after the concession with regard to conversation and two periods of exercise per day had been granted, this concession was withheld from the men who were in hospital, who continued to have only one period of exercise, and that in silence. This was done purely to save trouble to the hospital attendants, who would have had to be on duty three times a day instead of once. I have known men go back to their ordinary hard labour when they ought to have remained in hospital on this account. Sir George Cave, however, refused Mr. Snowden any satisfaction when he complained. His reply was that the men at Liverpool, concerning whom the question was framed, had complained only to the doctor and had not carried it to the Governor. At the prison I knew best, the Governor himself well understood the rule and the reason for it, and that must have been the case everywhere. But the warders were reduced in numbers by the war, and the hospital patients suffered.

II. On April 2, 1919, at long last, the Government announced that all kinds of prisoners under the Army Act who had served two years would be released. This would include the C.O.'s, though they were not treated alone. The attempt to avoid an outbreak in certain newspapers was continued by granting no dramatic or spectacular or immediate release of the whole number. The release was spread over several weeks, and took place irregularly. A dozen were sent out here, a score there, and no one knew when his turn would come. It was a last trial of patience. Two years' imprisonment means in practice for men of good conduct one year and eight months, and no one knew at first whether the official two years would be taken or an actual period of two years. Finally it was decided that release should occur after an actual twenty months' incarceration.

By the end of April nearly all the two-years' men were out. When they were liberated another attempt was made in the House of Lords to render more tolerable the



continued imprisonment of the others. The remarkable feature of it was the intervention of Lord Salisbury on the side of mercy. As chairman of the Central Tribunal who had examined the men in prison he had a real knowledge of the Absolutists. But the Government could not take a large view.

Those left were the oldest and the youngest, those who were only conscripted at the last age extension and those who had recently reached eighteen and had been in prison less than twenty months. There was no sense in retaining them, except to inflict punishment for adopting a course provided for by Act of Parliament. On May 9th 650 were still in prison.

As no popular clamour had followed the April release, and as the Triple Alliance of Labour threatened direct action if this and other points were not righted, the War Office began in the second week of June to reduce the remaining sentences on the following plan :—

First sentences were reduced to 112 days, second sentences to six months from the date of the second sentence, third sentences to nine months from the date of the third sentence.

This extraordinary plan reveals the military mind. The man who had already endured the most was to suffer more still—on the theory that he was the greater villain. Comment would be superfluous. During July, under this order, the remaining men were liberated, one by one. On July 30th Mr. Winston Churchill, with only slight inaccuracy, said that all were out. The imprisonment had lasted three years and a quarter. Some men, if their health had lasted, had, with intervals in camp and guard-room, suffered three years' hard labour. They were all discharged from the Army for "misconduct," and were threatened on the printed form with two years' hard labour if they ever tried to enter it again! This grim joke might have been used by the War Office at any time had it been inclined to mercy. These discharge papers are much valued by their recipients, and will become heirlooms.

## CHAPTER X

### DEATHS

I. THE first of those who died was Walter Roberts of Stockport. He died, as has been mentioned in Chapter VII, of high fever, contracted from being constantly wet through in the rotten and condemned tents on the muddy hill-side at Dyce. He was nursed in a stable, and was only ill for five days, dying in a broken-down cottage. His death—being the first—affected us all very much. Fenner Brockway wrote about him in the *Tribunal*<sup>1</sup> as follows:—

“ I first met Walter Roberts on the eve of the hearing of his claim for exemption by the Local Tribunal at Bredbury. I was so attracted by his quiet strength and transparent sincerity that I decided to put off another engagement in order that I might be present at the proceedings. I believe Roberts was the first conscientious objector to appear before a Tribunal. In all our subsequent struggles he has typified to me the cause for which we have been witnessing.

“ The members of the Tribunal were aged and experienced men. Roberts looked younger than his twenty years. ‘ Are you not very youthful to hold such decided opinions ? ’ the Chairman asked. ‘ I have been taught from my mother’s knee that to hate and to kill is contrary to the teaching of Christ,’ he answered, with frank simplicity. The members of the Tribunal were dumbfounded. It was not so much the words which struck them; it was the serene and confident bearing of the young man which conquered them. They seemed conscious that they were in the

<sup>1</sup> September 14, 1916.

presence of a Power and a Spirit greater than the things of this world.

"Often, in my mind, I have likened the scene to the Gospel story of the lad Jesus confronting the wise men in the Temple. Roberts sat facing the men in whose hands his fate lay, with calm faith born of certainty of the course he should pursue. His religion shone in his face. Scarcely another question was put to him; he was dismissed within three minutes. Four days later he heard that all exemption had been denied him.

"Before the Appeal Tribunal at Stockport, Roberts bore himself with similar nobility. When he had answered the questions put to him, his father spoke passionately of the Christian upbringing he had given his boy. 'I and his mother are responsible for the views he holds,' he pleaded. 'We have taught him to love his enemies and to be kind to all men.' It was of no avail. The Appeal Tribunal upheld the decision given at Bredbury."

Fenner Brockway happened to accompany him also on part of the first journey to prison. "In the carriage was an obviously prosperous business man. 'What a nice young fellow!' he remarked about Roberts when we had said good-bye to him and his comrades. 'It's a shame that lads who think it wrong to fight should be treated like this.' Afterwards I learned that my fellow-traveller was a munitions manufacturer, on his way to London to interview Mr. Lloyd George. 'If I get the chance,' he said, 'I will tell him what I think about all this.'"

2. From the close of 1917 deaths, in prison or after release on medical grounds, began to be numerous. The earlier ones naturally shocked us the most; later they became commoner events. They were nearly all of one type. A man was emaciated by want of exercise and nourishment and by mental and physical suffering, so that he was unable to resist influenza or bronchitis or pneumonia or consumption, when they attacked him. After reading the accounts readers will judge whether medical neglect ever gave the last push to the weakened patient.

Arthur Butler, the holder of a scholarship from Stock-

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port Grammar School, was classified A.1 by the military, and arrested in July 1916. He received his third sentence, of two years, in May 1917, was committed to Preston gaol, and developed consumption. On November 10th he wrote that he coughed and spat blood and had pains in the chest and shoulders. The doctor ascribed these to influenza. His family reported to the Home Office that one of them had died of consumption; but without effect. The Home Office—acting, of course, on local medical evidence—persisted that Butler was only slightly unwell, and on December 11th assured an enquirer in Parliament that there was no cause for anxiety. He died the next day, Wednesday, the 12th. On the 11th Butler's friends heard that he was dying. The Home Office was approached and his mother was allowed to see him. He was gasping for breath, and, conscious that he was dying, begged that his mother might remain. The Governor refused it as against the rules. Late that night Butler said, "They have been kind to me now, but it is too late." The prison doctor whose conduct was in question was nevertheless entrusted with the *post mortem* which the relatives demanded, and that gentleman reported that death was due to pneumonia. Butler had, however, complained previously that he was as weak as a kitten through lack of food, and a fellow-prisoner remarked that during the last month "he looked really awful; I hardly thought he was the same chap." The jury exonerated the doctor. Arthur Butler appears to have been one of the most precious of human types thrown to the rubbish heap.

3. Arthur Horton of Manchester was seriously ill at Shrewsbury on December 4, 1917, when Lord Curzon promised that such men should be released, but no release was granted him till January 5th, when he had become too ill to be removed. He died on January 16th. He was classified A.1 on entering prison fourteen months before. He had complained of under-feeding; the cells were cold and the men had to tramp round for hours to keep warm; but this made him dizzy, so he took down his mattress and covered himself with rugs. He was for-

bidden to do this. He developed a severe cough which echoed through the prison, called by the doctor "a little cough." The doctor never examined him, but gave cough mixture. Death was ascribed to "natural causes following pneumonia." Charles E. Gillett of Worcester was the Quaker chaplain at Shrewsbury, and wrote an account to Mrs. Percy Bigland, from which the following extracts are made:—

"I was met at the station by Elizabeth Horton, who informed me that her brother passed away the previous day. We went together to the prison and saw the Governor. I asked if she might join us at our meeting, but this was refused. I opened with a short prayer, asking for the Divine presence and comfort in our sorrow, remembering the relatives and giving thanks for the life closed. This was followed by a long silence of possibly six minutes, when Albert Mann spoke very sweetly and nicely, followed by E. E. Johnson. Then James H. Hudson spoke, suffused with tears. 'Enter ye in with thanksgiving' was the central thought. He said 'that A. H. remained true, and deviated not at all. To us the sense was overpowering now, and at first we felt apt to be bitter; but this must not be; love must prevail.' I followed on with the thought that here and now we had the opportunity of choice, and the importance of its right exercise. Others present spoke feelingly. At the close we all remained standing for a short period before we separated. A message of sympathy to the relatives was asked to be conveyed; also a wreath 'from his comrades,' both of which I have written about. I shook hands as they were going out. W. broke down, clasping my hands, falling on my breast sobbing as if his heart would break; all I could catch was 'my mother, my mother.' After all had passed out I told the warder I must see W. I could not leave him like that; so I went to his cell and tried to comfort him, telling him he must bravely take up the work our comrade had laid down. He said he would search for the Truth, and I left him calmer, but found him prostrate in his cell. He has not been well the last four or five weeks, and never having had a letter in or out from his people, the horror of it must have suddenly seized him."

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"The remains were laid out in hospital. On a windowledge were a few grapes; the ward was all sweet and clean. The jury at the inquest could see the grapes, never tasted, and hear that two nurses were in attendance; but how misleading! Doubtless everything was done that could be done, when too late. Though I think the doctor is much to blame, yet it is all part of a system, anti-human. Under-nutrition weakened an otherwise strong frame, and when, as A. H. said to me, he could not eat, more than enough food was provided, but, from what I could see, not tempting enough for an invalid. Why he was kept in a cell so long I do not know, but put it down to short-handedness; I always understood that with pneumonia a steam kettle was a *sine qua non*.

"The Governor and all concerned were most kind and considerate to his sister, and assured her there was no need for her to stay for the inquest, as she was anxious to get back to the old parents, and the warder sent round to inform her again reiterated this view.

"I do not know whether a personal representation to the Prison Commissioners would have any value, but before uttering much about it I feel that it is only courteous that they should be informed.

"Rules I recognize there must be, but is the Governor to be so tied hand and foot? He looks to the doctor; the doctor works under regulations, and from what has been told me by others, is—what shall I say?—unsympathetic, especially towards C.O.'s."

Horton, like others, had suffered by the diminution of diet which followed the rationing outside. When the bread was already at the margin of bodily maintenance to reduce it seriously was enough to produce casualties of this kind. Complaints that the proper weight was not given were common from prisoners in various places. Sometimes the men demanded that it should be weighed, and received thereby quite a great deal more.<sup>1</sup> A Friend who was in Wormwood Scrubs, in a letter to his wife in August 1916, reported:—"Food has grown rapidly worse these last few weeks. We are suffering acutely; we cannot

<sup>1</sup> See *Tribunal*, January 24, 1918.

rest or sleep for want of food. A great many are having to give in ; they cannot stand present starvation."

4. Henry W. Firth of Norwich died at Princetown on February 6, 1918. He had served nine months in prison at Wormwood Scrubs and Maidstone. At the latter prison he became so ill that he applied on November 21, 1917, for the Home Office scheme, but it was not granted till December 31st, by which time he was a "mere bag of bones." At Princetown he was put to work in the quarry on totally unsuitable tasks. He constantly complained of weakness and thirst and could never eat the dinner provided. On January 4th he gave up work at the quarry owing to cold, and visited the doctor, who told him there was nothing the matter with him, and he was sent back. Three days later the doctor told him that he was very selfish and must remember that the soldiers in the trenches were cold. He tried again and again to get into hospital, unsuccessfully. About January 23rd he was transferred to a whitewashing party who worked all night, but he was too ill to work. He was weary and dreadfully thirsty all the time. He tried again to work the second night, but had to be put into hospital. The next morning the doctor saw him, but took no notice of him and gave him no medicine. Two days after the doctor sent him out, on a Saturday. On Monday, January 28th, he went to the quarry again—in vain. He went to hospital on Wednesday, the 30th, and on the 31st had cod-liver oil, the only medicine he received. On Monday, February 4th, the Chairman of the men's Committee interviewed the doctor, with the result that he was allowed a milk diet. On Tuesday—at last—the doctor saw the seriousness of his case and consulted the visiting doctor, after which Firth asked if he could be allowed eggs in his milk, but was told that eggs were wanted for the men in France. He died on Wednesday. The next day three eggs were sent for him. On the day he died one of his friends again interviewed the doctor, and asked if he should wire for Mr. Firth's wife. A wire was refused but a letter was permitted—too late, of course. The verdict, as usual, made no accusation of

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negligence against the doctor. Throughout the Princetown Settlement the greatest indignation was felt. Seven hundred men struck work for the whole of a day. That the cook-house men might join also, the others fasted. A memorial meeting and a service were held, and the whole Settlement the following day made a procession to the station with the body. The train moved away to the singing of the hymn "Lead, kindly Light." The inquest was held irregularly. An essential part of the publicity of the proceedings is that the jurors should be sworn in in the presence of the parties interested, so that they might be challenged by the representatives of the men's Committee, who were instructing the solicitor who appeared for the widow. They were not admitted until after the jury had been sworn. The bias of five out of the seven jurors was well known, and they would have been challenged. At the end of the inquest the Press and the widow and the men in the Settlement were put out of court, but the two doctors whose conduct was impugned, and the prison officials, remained with the jury. The doctor admitted that the cause of death was diabetes, and that he must have had it all the time.<sup>1</sup> The Home Office, in response to the one day's strike, arrested C. H. Norman and I. P. Hughes. This was after a visit from Major Terrell. Probably seven hundred would have been too many to punish at once. The two men were taken to Exeter gaol, because they were supposed to have caused an act which was in fact spontaneous. I. P. Hughes was afterwards allowed to do work under the Home Office, but C. H. Norman was left in prison till the end. The Government felt safer so.

5. Ernest England, a Leeds Quaker, was arrested in June 1916, taken to York Barracks, and after a forcible medical examination was released as being medically unfit. When the Act was passed ordering the re-examination of men of low category he was called up, arrested, and handed over to the military. His mother, who attended the court and after a day in town visited the railway

<sup>1</sup> The details of the evidence may be found in the *Tribunal*, February 21 1918.



station to see him taken away to York, was attacked by illness at the station and her condition rapidly became grave. A few days afterwards, on the morning of his court martial, he received a telegram to the effect that his mother was dying. Military officers held out no hope of leave to go home, but late at night, after the court martial proceedings, a telephone message from the family to the Brigadier-General in charge resulted in leave being granted to return home for twenty-four hours under escort. No trains were running at that late hour, and it was necessary to find a taxi-cab at double fare for the journey from Ripon to Leeds. He arrived a few hours before the death of his mother. Following a telegram from the escort, extension of leave was granted to attend the funeral. On June 17, 1917, he was taken to Wormwood Scrubs for a two years' sentence. After what he had gone through with a weak constitution, it is not surprising that during the first night he was taken very ill with internal pains. There was no chamber vessel in his cell. He was refused one, on repeated application. Nature at last gave way. When the warder saw this he buried the poor man's face in it, an act not to be characterized. He suffered at Wormwood Scrubs for seventeen weeks, and finally, under the doctor's advice, took on the Home Office scheme, to save his reason. He was at Knutsford from November 1917 to May 1918, at Wakefield till August, and then at Dartmoor till the end of January 1919. His letters from Dartmoor show him shivering with cold, working in the snow with wet feet, and suffering from the diet. After a day of hard shovel work tea consisted of a thick slice of bread (6 ounces) and a scrape of margarine ( $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce) and a mug of tea. Occasionally a little treacle was added. It is curious that he should write from Dartmoor, "Nearly all the chaps that go on the new scheme [to individual employers] walk straight into the 'flu'; quite a number that I know have died." Six weeks later his enfeebled frame succumbed to influenza at home on March 6, 1919.

6. Bennett Wallis, a Plymouth Brother, was on the Home Office scheme at the Denton Road Board Camp,

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near Newhaven. On September 5, 1917, he stopped work through indigestion, and on September 8th visited the camp doctor in Newhaven. (The dates are of importance in this narrative.) The doctor said he was suffering from dental dyspepsia, due to septic poisoning from bad teeth. He was given medicine and a diet, but no attention was paid to his teeth. On September 11th, as he was no better, he got stronger medicine and was ordered port wine, which was refused by the Agent. The doctor also emphasized the necessity of having the bad teeth removed; but nothing was done. On the 18th the sick orderly visited the Agent, who said he would send Wallis to Wakefield to get his teeth attended to; but nothing was done. On the 20th the doctor ordered him a month's leave home for dental treatment; still nothing was done. On September 26th the Agent finally gave leave for him to go home. He had now been ill for three weeks. The Agent said, notwithstanding Rule 18, that he had not the power to send him home without the special permission of the Home Office. It was too late to travel north that day, but the next morning his condition was so critical that the doctor certified him as unfit to travel, and ordered him to go to hospital. He was very averse to this, and hoped that if he waited till the next day he might be well enough to go home; nevertheless, in the evening an ambulance came, and Wallis went into the Union Hospital at Newhaven, under protest. One of the doctors told him, "We don't want you to die here, old chap." The Master of the Union described him as arriving in a dying condition. This was the evening of the 27th; he died in the small hours of the morning of the 29th.

7. W. E. Burns was a belt weaver of Failsworth, near Manchester, and was arrested on August 1, 1916. He accepted the scheme, and worked at Llandusant, but was threatened with arrest for taking part in a strike; gave himself up to the police, by whom he was handed to the military officials; was court martialled for disobedience at Cleethorpes on November 11, 1917, and taken to prison to serve two years. He began to feel shaky on his legs, and

a comrade, W. E. Hopper of Jarrow-on-Tyne, testified at the inquest that from February 11th he had become decidedly worse, and thinner in the face. He petitioned to be allowed to return to the Home Office scheme, and after that petitioned for transference to Manchester prison. Failing both of these, he determined to hunger-strike. He was forcibly fed for three days; on the fourth day the food—which was milk and cocoa—went down into the lungs through the use of a tube which was too short. He choked violently; and this was followed by a choking cough. The doctor admitted that this was the first case of artificial feeding he had had at —, and agreed that the trouble would have been avoided by the use of a longer tube. He died in the agonies of choking on March 14, 1918. The jury found that death was due to pneumonia accelerated by forcible feeding, but added the usual formula that no blame was attached to the doctor.

This incident is a repetition of the events which caused the death of Thomas Ashe, a Sinn Feiner in Dublin.

8. Walter Bone of Birkenhead died of influenza in Winchester prison on February 23, 1919. He had been a year and a half in gaol and his health had been gradually but completely shattered. He suffered from acute digestive trouble and glands in the neck, and died very soon after being discharged at the end of five or six weeks in the prison hospital. A. W. Haycock was allowed to speak for the widow at the inquest. He stated that the prison officials had done what was possible, but Bone had been murdered by the system. He also stated that on his discharge from hospital the deceased had been put into a cell vacated by an influenza patient. The coroner recalled the Governor and the doctor, and the latter admitted that this was true. The jury added a rider to that effect.<sup>1</sup>

9. Paul Leo Gillan died in Winchester prison on March 16, 1918. His aged mother and two sisters had not heard from him for ten months. He was not allowed to write letters, being on work-strike. Suddenly a wire came

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, March 6, 1918.

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to say that he was dead. On the day of his death the Governor wrote to inform his mother that her son was seriously ill and might be visited. Eight days before he had written, in reply to an enquiry, that Gillan was alive and fairly well. The enquiry was due to the mother's strong and repeated intuitions that her son was dead or seriously ill. The Governor's letter stated that he died from heart disease, from which the medical officer reported he had suffered for some time. Why then, it may be asked, had he not been released under Lord Curzon's promise?

His history may explain it. He was a Roman Catholic and a Sinn Feiner. He was so ill at Wormwood Scrubs that he had accepted the Home Office scheme, and was so weak when he reached Warwick that the Agent allowed him to lie in bed and sew his mailbags there. After being six months under the doctor at Warwick, he was transferred in March 1917 to Dartmoor. One morning he was a quarter of an hour late for work through illness, and was punished with loss of a fortnight's pay.

For writing a defiant letter in reply Gillan was returned to the Army and thence to prison at Plymouth. There he struck against work. As there was no opportunity to attend Mass, he protested and was removed to Winchester in February 1918, where Mass was said. A friend of his writes:—"Paul Gillan was a rebel of the first rank; his spirit was too strong for his poor worn body. Gillan was a gallant gentleman."

10. We cannot record in detail further cases, but conclude with a list of all the men who died under imprisonment, before or after release, seventy-one in number—one among the many rolls of honour of the war. The first ten died in prison, the others in consequence, in nearly all cases, of their treatment.

Among the deaths were a few suicides. The conditions were too intolerable for life to these poor men, but not so intolerable as to make them give in. One case was that of a man who, worn and broken in nerve and body by imprisonment, had finally given in under pressure from

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the court martial, but soon after in the guardroom found a razor lying conveniently, and cut his throat. There is little doubt that he felt remorse for not having held the fort to the end.<sup>1</sup> Suicide under sufferings like these can hardly be accounted a weakness, much less a crime. Conscience and despair stretched the powers of the mind too far.

Bone, Walter . . . .	Birkenhead
Bridle, O. S. . . . .	Brighton
Burns, W. E. . . . .	Failsworth
Butler, A. . . . .	Stockport
Campbell, P. . . . .	Isle of Skye
Gillan, P. L. . . . .	London
Horton, A. . . . .	Manchester
Wilkinson, F. . . . .	Dulwich
Wilson, A. . . . .	Blackburn
Winter, J. G. . . . .	Cornsay
Allen, Peter. . . . .	Nelson
Allen, Tom . . . . .	Nelson
Allen, Walter G. . . . .	New Southgate
Barlow, A. . . . .	Mansfield Woodhouse
Battenham, F. . . . .	Downham Market
Benyon, H. . . . .	Swansea
Bowden, F. . . . .	Oldham
Brentnall, A. G.. . . .	London
Brightman, H. . . . .	Camden Town
Cainey, Thomas . . . . .	Manchester
Campbell, N. A.. . . .	Glasgow
Cobb, C. J. . . . .	Croydon (0)
Crosby, Ernest . . . . .	Liverpool (12)
Dardis, G. H. . . . .	Risca
Deller, L. . . . .	West Brompton
Dunbery, P. . . . .	Blackburn (1)
England, E. . . . .	Leeds
Eungblut, A. . . . .	London, N.W. (2)
Evans, J. Ll. . . . .	Cardiff (3)
Evans, R. G. . . . .	Reading

<sup>1</sup> See *Tribunal*, July 26, 1917.

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Firth, H. W.	Norwich
Gouldsborough, H.	Blackburn
Hall, Percy	Old Dalby
Haston, H.	Chesterfield
Henderson, A.	Dundee
Hirst, H. M.	Stalybridge
Hurst, A.	Southwark
Hoad, H.	Chart Sutton
Hooper, R.	Bradford
Hurley, W.	Camberwell
Hurst, H.	Manchester
Jackson, Theodore	— (4)
James, Albert L.	Kingston (5)
James, H.	Worcester
Linscott, S.	Newton Abbot (14)
Malcolm, W. W.	Glasgow (6)
Marriott-Dodington, S.	Hereford
Martlewe, A.	York (7)
Matchett, T. D.	Bath
May, W.	Edinburgh
Moss, —	Morley (8)
Mountfield, J.	Manchester
Parkin, W. H.	Sheffield
Parton, F. L.	Chiswick
Peddieson, A.	Glasgow (14)
Phipps, H.	Harringay
Richmond, Royle A.	Brighton (13)
Rigg, J. A.	Barrow-in-Furness
Roberts, W. L.	Stockport
Rudall, A.	Newport
Slater, A. J.	Glasgow
Stafford, N.	Hyde
Stanton, W.	Leicester
Statton, —	Cardiff
Swettenham, W.	Liverpool
Taylor, J.	Silvertown (9)
Thompson, C.	Norwich (10)
Todd, G.	Willesden (11)
Wallis, B.	Newmarket
Whinnerah, G.	Barrow-in-Furness

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Whilmore, P. A.	.	.	Coventry
Woodward, E.	.	.	Birmingham
Zachnies, C.	.	.	Glasgow

(0) A clerk by profession. Unpaid preacher and Sunday-school teacher. Served five terms; 3½ years in prison. Released from Winchester in the last stage of consumption, and died three weeks later, March 17, 1919. Why was he not released before? He had also curvature of the spine, due to carrying coals at Pentonville for ten weeks. (*Tribunal*, March 27, 1919.)

(1) Died in the Military Hospital at Bangor, May 1916.

(2) Removed from Wormwood Scrubs before the conclusion of his sentence, and died at Epsom, June 1917.

(3) Contracted consumption during his imprisonment at Cardiff and detention at Newhaven Camp; sent home from Wakefield in a dying condition and died at home, May 1917. A clerk and student for the Baptist ministry.

(4) Died in Clipstone Camp, December 14, 1916.

(5) Died of consumption at Wakefield, May 17, 1917, due to the cold at Wormwood Scrubs.

(6) Released on furlough from camp and died at home, June 1917.

(7) Sentenced to death in France, June 1916. Worked under the Home Office scheme at Dyce; left it on September 12, 1917. Drowned in the river Ouse.

(8) Died in York Military Hospital, March 1917. Further particulars refused.

(9) Died at Wakefield, January 20, 1918.

(10) Drowned, August 2, 1917. Had joined the Non-Combatant Corps after serving one term in prison.

(11) Left Wakefield without leave and died at home, November 1917.

(12) Lingered till March 1921. Finally died in hospital from the effects of imprisonment.

(13) An artist. Had disease of the heart, but declined medical examination on principle. Was discharged in six weeks. Died January 4, 1917.

(14) Died at Red Roses Camp, Carmarthen, of influenza under terrible conditions of crowding and neglect. Peddieson strove to nurse the others in the epidemic, in spite of the Agent's obstructions and insults, till he collapsed himself.

## CHAPTER XI

### FINAL

I. THE last attempt of the Government to exploit the man power of the country was made during the state of anxiety which accompanied the German advance in April 1918. Already in January of that year a Military Service Act had been passed empowering the Government to quash all exemptions on occupational grounds, whilst it raised the age of compulsory military service to fifty-one years. In April it was proposed to give the Government power by Proclamation to withdraw certificates on grounds of health, on grounds of conscientious objection, and on grounds of domestic or business hardship; that is, the power to quash all the proceedings of the Tribunals was to be made universal. Vigorous speeches against it were made by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Snowden and Mr. Herbert Samuel, and the Government gave way by admitting that the men who had been excused under a medical certificate, and those excused on grounds of conscience would both be useless in the Army. Sir George Cave took the opportunity of sneering at the C.O.'s, saying that "many of them were of weak physique and many of them were deficient in other ways."

In the *Daily News* of April 7, 1919, appeared an odd incongruous statement by the War Office as follows:—

"As a matter of fact the Army authorities themselves recognize that the lot of the conscientious objector is a hard one. They recognize that he has been the victim of ineptitude. Their view is that many hundreds of these men have been thrust into the Army whom the House of Commons never intended should become soldiers. The Tribunals, they consider, rejected the applications of



hundreds of these men whose consciences were sincere, and to protect whom the conscience clause was expressly framed by the House of Commons. The Army did not want these men, and would have discharged them if it could. But the legal view taken was that having been made soldiers by Act of Parliament they could only be unmade by a similar measure, and the Government was unwilling to take that necessary step."

So our contention in this book and in all our literature is admitted after all.

This belated confession, made uselessly on the eve of release, is a flag of surrender run up from the headquarters of all the evil. The assertion of War Office impotence is manifestly false. The men were in the end released by Government order, without legislation. They were dismissed in (nominal) contumely from the Army. Then why not earlier? The Government, under the influence of the War Office, is responsible for the persecution, for all the cruel developments of it, and for the broken good intentions of Sir Herbert Samuel, Mr. Long and Lord Sandhurst. By April 1919 the temptation to do wrong from military fear had been removed, and the War Office, thus liberated, began to do right. But the War Office's representatives at the Tribunals had rarely failed to appeal against any occasional just decision; and long after the few absolute exemptions had been granted, a general attempt was made to revise them, as in the case of A. Barratt Brown.

2. As time went on the amount of suffering to be endured outside the prison walls grew. There were no pensions here for those who had been wounded in the fight; no maintenance allowances for the families of men in prison. There was also the task of providing a holiday and the chance of restoration to health for the men released from prison as physical wrecks. Isaac Goss, from June 1918, took charge of this very extensive task under the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which worked it at the suggestion of the Joint Advisory Council of the three organizations. The men provided with holidays numbered 149,

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many of whom went to the convalescent home at Fairby Grange in Kent, organized by Dr. Salter. No fewer than 900 garments had to be provided also for necessary clothing. Meantime, the Friends' Service Committee devoted itself to providing vocational and educational training for the men who had to make a fresh start in facing the battle of life. Miss Violet Tillard did excellent work along with Mrs. Salter in this service of maintenance. In June 1919 all the various relief organizations were organized into one body called "The Joint Board for Assistance of Conscientious Objectors and their Dependents." Dr. Salter was the chairman, Edward Grubb and Ramsay Macdonald the hon. treasurers, and Ernest E. Hunter the hon. sec. Between June 1, 1919, and April 30, 1920, £7,185 were spent in direct relief.

3. At this point may be mentioned a deprivation which, though enacted before, did not come into force till the end. On November 20, 1917, the House of Commons carried a sub-clause of the Representation of the People Bill in these words:—

"Any person who has been exempted from military service on the ground of conscientious objection, or who, having joined the Forces, has been sentenced by court martial for refusal to obey orders, and who alleged conscientious objection to military service as a reason for such refusal, shall be disqualified from being registered or voting as a Parliamentary or Local Government elector."

Wives of conscientious objectors disfranchised did not lose their vote.

Amendments were carried to the effect that the disqualification was to extend to five years after the war. There were granted exemptions from disfranchisement to men who had joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit, or other similar bodies, or had satisfactorily performed work of national importance under the Tribunals. Men were required to prove their right to this exemption before the Central Tribunal within a year from the close of the war. Thus the class already favoured by circumstances in being

allowed work of national importance was still further favoured. Men who had obtained absolute exemption were disfranchised along with all the other conscientious objectors, unless they had voluntarily engaged in work of national importance and could prove it before the Central Tribunal within the year above named. The war was not technically over till September 1, 1921, and it would appear as though the Central Tribunal will have to remain in existence to grant these exemptions for a further year. In all probability the whole disfranchisement will become a dead letter. It will be difficult to enforce properly, particularly where men change their residence, and I imagine that no one will really wish to enforce it. Nor do I think that men disfranchised under such an unjust and insulting law are bound to disfranchise themselves.

The debate was made memorable by a noble speech by Lord Hugh Cecil. He pointed out vigorously the impropriety under the Constitution of punishing retrospectively those whose offence had been to avail themselves of a legal right, expressly granted by Parliament. I quote some powerful passages.

“ Take, for example, one crime which sank, and deservedly sank, into our hearts, and which roused us to passionate indignation—I mean the execution of Miss Cavell. It is not disputed that Miss Cavell was, according to the strict law of the war, guilty of a war crime. Why did we say it was inhuman and iniquitous to put her to death? Because, according to a higher law, she had a strong claim to the respect and gratitude of the German Government and people who put her to death. Precisely because there was a higher law she ought not to have suffered as she did, and precisely because we believe in that higher law we uttered the cry of indignation at her death. Are we to be told now, in the language of her murderers, that the safety of the State is the supreme law? No, sir. We cannot make any such answer. We are Christians first and Englishmen afterwards. Christianity can never compromise with any national claim. It must have its disciples all in all, soul and body, leaving no sphere out, and

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to reserve to the State any supremacy is to part company with the Christian system altogether."

In reference to the disfranchisement of men court martialled for disobedience under the plea of conscience, he said:—

"That reminds me at once that there are a great many other people who have been court martialled besides conscientious objectors. The disqualification is there carefully limited, and it must only be for refusal to obey orders, and only if that refusal has assigned to it a conscientious cause. There are also those who have been insubordinate, and deserters, and all those who have been sentenced for various military crimes and for crimes not merely military but civil, those guilty of criminal vice of the worst and most atrocious kind—all these may have votes. All those who have been sentenced by civil Tribunals, such as pickpockets, robbers, all those concerned in fraud, acts of violence, and those animated by the most odious lusts, the names of whose offences must not pass honest lips—all those may have votes. And why not? There is, at any rate, nothing conscientious about them. They are free from the damning taint of a strong but unenlightened conscience. Even if I accepted the basis of my right hon. friend's argument, I should still feel this amendment was a scandalous absurdity. If you are really going to disfranchise persons because they are disobedient to the State, you must certainly disfranchise all those who have been disobedient by way of crime as well as those who have been disobedient by way of a conscientious objection. To draw a distinction by which you admit all the worst people in the world, the thieves, the miscreants, and only exclude the conscientious objectors, will not commend itself to the religious bodies of this country.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I am most anxious that this country should maintain the proposition that there is a higher law, that we view with admiration any appeal to that higher law, and that we will not listen to the doctrine that the State's interest

is to be supreme, but, on the contrary, that we will make our authority conform to the high standard and keep the State within its proper function, and within its proper scope.

“ Belief in the State cannot help us to bear the sufferings or control the passions of the war. It is a barren faith, as well as a degrading faith. It does but encumber us and shut out from us that higher world in which we ought to live. It is like a mist that hangs over the surface of the earth, beyond which the sunlight and the sky of the higher life shine serene. I was taken up in an aeroplane on a misty day, and all was hazy and dark below. We passed through, and there was the sun shining in strength and the sky radiant and brilliant; the mists were no more than a white carpet beneath our feet. So we ought to rise, if we are to face the dangers and difficulties of this war, above the belief in the doctrine of the State. We ought, on the contrary, to maintain that the State must conform to this higher law.”

The disfranchisement was carried through in spite of speeches of great value in the House of Lords from the band of men of weight who during the war redeemed the character of the Upper House and made it a better echo of the right-thinking part of the nation than the House of Commons. The speeches there on January 16, 1918, by Lord Parmoor, the Marquess of Crewe, the Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord Sheffield, Lord Harries and Viscount Bryce were of real historic value.

• 4. By November 1919 the time had come for the concluding Convention of the No-Conscription Fellowship, held on the 29th and 30th in the Friends' Meeting House, Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, the place where the Fellowship had met in April 1916 to decide on the great question of Alternative Service. Four hundred delegates and many hundreds of members were present. The hour had come to close down. It was like a mighty homecoming. The men were not so exuberant as in the days when the fight was young; they had been sobered by their experience;

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many were damaged physically, and not quite used to the noise and rush of the outside world; but their determination was unshaken, and they would have gone through the same trial again if the occasion had arisen. The Convention had a twofold purpose, one to reassemble C.O.'s from all over the country, to exchange greetings and experiences and to feel the joy of reunion; the other to discuss ways and means of avoiding sectionalism and of reabsorbing the conscientious objector in the ordinary work of the world. That the N.C.F. fight should have ended by producing men with grievances would have been a tragedy indeed, and the essential task of the Convention was to prevent that and to turn men's minds away from prison and suffering to the fuller life without. This was the dominant note of Clifford Allen's speech from the chair, which may stand here as the farewell utterance of the No-Conscription Fellowship by the man who was best qualified to utter it:—

“ Three years ago there assembled in this hall a very notable gathering. It represented men who held every variety of religious and political opinion. We were on the eve of a memorable experience. We were setting out on a voyage of discovery; discovery not only of the working of conscription, which was new to us and the British people, but a discovery of our own ideas. We stood here in silence and made a pledge. That pledge was to resist conscription and the military power.

“ To-day we reassemble. We have survived the test, and I suggest to you that that fact is in itself of very great significance. It demands from us humility. I am not prepared to accept that criticism which urges upon us what I conceive to be a false and sentimental humility; but, on the other hand, it seems to me that every one of us must be only too conscious of how terrible is the comparison between the anguish of those who have died and been mutilated in the war and the test to which we have been subjected. Although it is an established fact that prison has greater terrors for the soldier than the trenches, not one of us would dare to compare our suffering with

that of the men who were actually engaged in warfare. Many of them are dead, but we have still the opportunities of life before us. Our lives are now forfeit.

“ Let me recall for a moment the mood of the world in 1916. The human race was in the grip of contrary instincts. On the one hand were bitterness, hatred and terror, so that men were afraid to be isolated from the life of the nation. On the other hand you had from countless individuals who believed in the war what I suppose is really the most wonderful exhibition of self-sacrifice and unselfish heroism of which history has record. Above all things men were held by a world spell, and that was the spell of the military machine. Fearless men, keen-minded men, gentle men, believed it their duty to bow before that machine. Others held it to be infallible and irresistible. We, like others of our generation, were called upon to become part of this world adventure; we were challenged by the community to bow before the military power; we were expected to engage in war and acquiesce in conscription. It is not possible for any man or woman to estimate the mental and spiritual struggle of facing that challenge unless they have in fact been potential conscripts. I know that often we expressed ourselves with arrogance, but I beg our friends to realize that situated as we were—cut off as a minority from the community, brought before Tribunals where we were placed always on the defensive, always on the lookout for traps set for us and our creed—we were forced to become self-conscious, so that it became difficult to say what we wished to say in a convincing and genuine fashion.

• “ Once we were involved in this resistance, we pursued many different lines of policy. The choice of those policies depended upon the emphasis we laid on the incentive of an individual consciousness of right and wrong and the incentive of a citizen's duty. Whenever we tried to organize consciences we blundered, but it is a significant fact that every section of conscientious objectors achieved one object in common; all broke the spell of the military machine.

“ It matters not whether we were in the Non-Com-

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batant Corps refusing to bear arms, whether we took alternative service, whether we became part of the Home Office scheme, or whether we were Absolutist and remained in prison—all of us shattered the infallibility of Militarism. That, to me, is a mighty achievement, and I am not willing to allow any false sense of humility to prevent my glorying in it.

“ We are proud to have broken the power of the military authority. We have witnessed its brutalities. We have seen the cruel degrading of human personality upon which its discipline depends. We have seen how it leads to contemptible forms of punishment—often men are ‘ crucified ’ to gun wheels as a means of breaking the human spirit. We have seen how it deprives its victims of that most sacred right, free judgment on right and wrong ; how the system makes men hate each other, bully each other, despise each other, till they become so dehumanized that they can be made even to kill their fellow working men at home. We have defeated it ; we will defeat it again if conscription should be continued.

“ So much, then, for our resistance to conscription. What positive views had we for this negative action ? Such views as we hold were by no means static ; they have been constantly developing and changing, and I think it would be true if I were to say that probably the opinions we hold are rather the result of our experience than its cause. That experience has made clear to us ideas which we only partly understood when we determined to refuse military service.

“ I will deal only with two main groups of opinion. Some of us hold the view, based either upon religious opinion or philosophic creed, that all warfare is not only wrong but must be abstained from. It is our belief that war is evil not so much because of the suffering it involves—others preach that—but because it depends for its process and very existence upon a fundamentally wrong conception of the relationship of human beings to each other. Our basis contains a much-criticized phrase : ‘ The sanctity of human life. ’ I do not wish on this occasion to argue the merits of that phrase, but what we meant



by it was this : that Pacifism is a philosophy which teaches men to respect each other. It is because our attack upon war arose from this fundamental philosophy as to the relations between human beings that we could not permit other arguments to sway our decision.

“ We believe that you cannot decide this issue by consenting to weigh up the comparative justice of each successive war. That method will never compel our statesmen to put real zeal into framing policies which will preserve peace. They must have a defined conviction that war is fundamentally wrong because it places men in an immoral relationship to each other. Then and then only can the will to peace really inspire our foreign policy. It is only by such conviction that our statesmen will come to insist upon the only practical policy—that of proposing to all nations mutual and simultaneous disarmament.

“ Together with our fellow-pacifists we declared the foreign policy of our country to be a dangerous policy before the war. We were not heeded. War came. We believed it to be our duty as a minority to maintain our position and to preach the gospel of peace in season and out of season. Such a minority will constantly fail ; it will be constantly overwhelmed by the tide of warlike passion ; but it must stand apart, not idly, but seeking peace. It is clear that such action must be unpopular, and not the cleverest tactician among us can make it acceptable to public opinion in time of war ; but as the ages go by that minority will increase, and we must hope that each war will produce a larger and larger number of people in all lands who will desire to create the machinery of peace.

“ Other members held an opinion which was different and yet similar. They were concerned chiefly with conscription. They agreed that war was a terrible thing, but could not bring themselves to say that on all occasions should men abstain from it. None the less, they were profoundly convinced that public opinion throughout the world should be urged to agree that engaging in war must be left to the free judgment of the individual. The State may compel our lives in many directions, but it has no

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right to deny men freedom in deciding for themselves this issue of life and death. It involves actions that are so fundamental, and results that are so irreparable, that only the most passionate belief in the righteousness of a cause can justify a man in giving up his life or inflicting death. It is a fatal debasement of human dignity to force men to do these things against their will or without conviction as to the justice of their actions. In these conscript days it will only be when Governments are aware that they must depend for support upon the voluntary consent of their peoples that they will exercise some measure of caution in developing those foreign policies which lead to war.

“ If you examine the opinions of these two groups of resisters you will see that there is a common philosophy beneath. In each case it is a belief that no international policies and no political or religious creeds can ever achieve happiness for the world which do not recognize the dignity and value of human personality. We in our prison cells have therefore expressed consciously or unconsciously that vision of the future of the world which inspires the new Labour movement. And thus, strange though it may appear, we are linked by our negative action with the most vital ideas motiving men's actions to-day.

“ Why do I say this? Let me explain. In the old days Social Reform was concerned with material readjustments in the economic system; it did not challenge the relationship of master and man. It kept the incentive of profit-making which causes men to exploit each other; it was therefore prepared to tolerate poverty. And all because no recognition was given to the value of human personality or the importance of respect between human beings. To-day the most vital social forces in the world stand for a contrary opinion. It is true that they are still concerned with wages and hours, but those demands are playing only a small part in their programmes. The cry of the working classes to-day is for responsibility, for a new status, for the opportunity to be free servants of the community, for the chance of carrying into the era of Peace the spirit of National Service they learnt in time of war. The responsibility of man to man is the key-note

of the new social outlook, and that is precisely the ideal for which we have stood.

"If this be a true description of the views that have inspired our resistance, I think it is clear to all of us how definitely our negative action has taken the form of positive and constructive social service. And yet these ideas may be admirably conceived and our achievement be memorable, but if, now that men are willing to listen, we fail to live out our lives in service, the world will become once more disillusioned. It did not heed what we said when it was suffering. It is prepared to listen now. We have declared that hate destroys and love is creative. But men are in a cynical frame of mind and need convincing of this. They are rejecting many of their old political myths; they are amused with religion. It is true that they need new political programmes, but they need far more a new motive which will inspire their lives, and we have a chance now to take no small part in rebuilding constructive hope in the world.

"I cannot see how we could avoid the charge of disloyalty to our nation, but I would now plead that we may be considered genuine in our citizenship, believing, as we did, that if we remained faithful we might help in preserving those very ideas of liberty for which the nations had gone to war. Our fellow-pacifists, who by reason of sex or age were not personally liable to military service, were devoting their lives to advocating these same new conceptions of national well-being and international cooperation, of justice between nations built upon a righteous peace. We were younger; we had not their experience or their influence, but we had a chance of giving some evidence of personal sincerity and willingness to suffer for the ideas which they were spreading. It seemed to us to be the highest contribution we could make. Perhaps we did it clumsily, perhaps we did it in much the same spirit of pride in which the militarists of each nation waged war; but we did believe that our stand was a genuine expression of citizenship.

"There have been times when I wondered if the struggle was worth while. But the certainty of hope for me lies

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in this: it was not some outworn isolated creed that we cherished. We have discovered in our prison cells that very notion which is to-day challenging the old world order—the notion that men will only feel obliged to serve the community, of which they are a part, when they have come to respect each other's liberty.

“ We were in prison. To-day we are free, but the world is still in prison. It can be released by the spirit of unconquerable love. ‘Ye that have escaped the sword, stand not still.’

“ I now submit to you the following resolution, and I suggest that you should adopt it standing:—

“ Throughout the war we have stood for the brotherhood of man, and in the name of that ideal have resisted conscription. We now reaffirm our unity of aim with those in all countries who have given their lives that they might serve the cause of freedom, but declare our belief that it is not by bloodshed that freedom can be won or Militarism destroyed.

“ We acclaim the new hope of human liberty now challenging ancient tyrannies in industry within the State and between the nations, and dedicate the liberty we have regained to such service as shall contribute to the healing of the wounds inflicted by war, and to the building of a world rooted in freedom and enriched by labour that is shared by all.

“ It is in this spirit that we go forth to meet new tasks, confident that through its long and bitter suffering mankind must yet come into the way of love.”

The great meeting, stirred by the memory of the resolution of the Convention three years before, adopted this dedicatory resolution by standing in silence.

The assembly also stood while the names of our dead comrades were read—then sixty-nine in number—who had been faithful to the end.

Clifford Allen himself was broken in health. The gaol had fixed upon him, never robust, its distinctive disease—consumption. His first imprisonment lasted 88 days, his second 147 days, and his third, under a two years' sentence,

lasted from June till December 1917, when he was released, utterly broken in health. He has since been in sanatoria abroad, a shadow of himself. Considerably restored, he is now (1921) back in England, and enjoying improved health, which we hope may long continue.

The Convention had been preceded by long and careful discussion. A representative gathering was held at Jordans, where the questions at issue were privately thrashed out from all points of view. The columns of the *Tribunal* were opened for discussion. There were those who held that the No-Conscription Fellowship must be preserved as an entity at all costs. Their view was natural and backed by sentiment. During the years of war the N.C.F. had meant very much to all its members. Few organizations, indeed, have received such affection. The idea of disbanding was like a cold douche to warm hearts and loyal souls throughout the country. Others, however, saw the situation shorn of sentiment, and in its naked reality. Men had united on one specific issue—resistance to war service and all that it implied—but beyond that unity there were conflicting loyalties, varying views on social affairs, and different religions. To have continued the N.C.F. in its then existing form would have meant one of two things: either it would have become a cockpit for heated altercation on social ideals, and when one side or the other had won, they would have been in possession of an organization which had no relation to its past, and was of very little use to the present; or it would have consisted of a few people with divided loyalties, and gradually would have petered out—like many another useful society which struggled on after its specific work was done.

The continuance of the N.C.F. was also otherwise undesirable. Difficulties had already arisen over the limited Statement of Faith. It was felt by many that if resistance to conscription had to be organized again it had better be on a wider basis, one which would include every possible kind of resister, and one which did not embarrass him with formulas and definitions. This meant that it would be necessary to reshape the movement in the future.

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There were two main tendencies: (1) The anti-conscriptionist from any reason; (2) the pacifist first of all. They were not opposing tendencies, they merged and overlapped, but each had its distinct function, and to attempt to join them in a cast-iron organization would have meant disaster.

It was for these reasons that the National Committee laid before the concluding Convention a series of resolutions which read as follows:—

“That this Convention declares its belief that all systems of conscription can only be sustained by the denial of liberty of conscience, and that it is not within the rightful jurisdiction of a State to deny any man the right of free judgment in offering his life or to compel him to inflict death on others.

“It further appoints a Committee to initiate a new organization to oppose conscription no matter by what kind of Government it be imposed, or for what purpose, which shall associate all those who will resist conscription, and shall get into touch with appropriate people in other countries with a view to the establishment of an international organization.

“That this Convention appoint a Committee to take steps (a) to establish a new society whose object shall be the spread of the pacifist doctrine of life and resistance to all forms of Militarism, and (b) to get into touch with people of like belief in this and other countries with a view to the establishment of an international organization of which it shall function as the British section.”

These resolutions, moved by Fenner Brockway and seconded by Dr. Salter, led to a long and animated discussion, of which a pressman said:—“It assumed a more intense tone than on the previous day, every speaker giving evidence of a depth of sincere conviction, but no conference the writer has ever attended (and they are not a few) was ever conducted with greater good temper.” Eventually the vital decision was taken on an amendment advocating the continuance of the N.C.F.; 171 votes were given for this amendment and 244 against. The specific

work of the N.C.F. was done, but its members went out into the world strengthened and inspired to make better and finer contributions to the great society of the future. The resolutions were adopted and indicate the line of policy laid down should the question arise again.

No printed words can convey an adequate picture of the closing scenes. There were not only the business sessions of the Convention above described, there was the Saturday afternoon when Ramsay Macdonald, Maude Royden, Dr. F. B. Meyer and Mrs. Swanwick came to tell the men what the world thought of their stand, to sum up gains and losses and administer praise and blame. There was the great reunion at the Central Hall, when 1,500 people sat down to supper. At the central table sat six London Labour Mayors, one an ex-Army officer (Major C. R. Attlee) and another a C.O. (J. J. Vaughan). There were the great demonstrations which brought the Convention to an end, with speeches by Clifford Allen, Philip Snowden, Robert Smillie, Dr. Clifford, Bertrand Russell, Captain Gill and Lord Parmoor. Last, but not least, there were the groups of C.O.'s billeted all over London, in private houses, institutes and hastily improvised hostels, sitting up far into the night living over again their experiences, telling tales of guardroom and prison, renewing old acquaintance, and happy in a reunion which would be a treasured memory in the days to come. So the N.C.F. passed to wider service, and left behind a record of work well done and a goal achieved. If its epitaph has to be written, it might well be found in the words that Bertrand Russell addressed to its concluding demonstration :—

“The N.C.F. has been completely victorious in its stand for freedom not to kill or to take part in killing. The whole power of the State has not been able to compel the members of the N.C.F. to kill or help in killing. In winning this victory you have won an even greater victory; you have won a victory for the sense of human worth, for the realization of the value of each individual soul. It is that, above all, that we must assert and put

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before the world, that sense that each human soul, each individual growing and living, has within him something sacred, something that must not be warped and destroyed by the imposition of outside forces."

The Fellowship did not entirely vanish. Three Watching Committees were appointed, to act together or separately, as need might arise, viz. :—

### THE ANTI-CONSCRIPTION COMMITTEE.

Clifford Allen, A. Fenner Brockway, W. J. Chamberlain, Guy Aldred, Catherine E. Marshall, H. Runham Brown, Ernest E. Hunter, Charles G. Ammon.

### THE PACIFIST UNION COMMITTEE.

Clifford Allen, A. Fenner Brockway, W. J. Chamberlain, Dr. Alfred Salter, C. H. Norman, Edward Grubb, Joan M. Fry, J. Rowntree Gillett.

### THE COMMITTEE TO OPPOSE MILITARY TRAINING IN SCHOOLS.

Joan Beauchamp, W. J. Chamberlain, J. P. Fletcher, John Langdon-Davies, Theodora Wilson Wilson, John W. Graham, James Maxton (Glasgow), Stanley B. James.

5. I have now brought the story to its conclusion. With what summary thought will my patient readers leave it? It has been a definite attack upon conscience by the State.

Is conscience so common and so cheap that the nation can afford to flout it and try to destroy it? It is the most costly and the most precious national asset. Lives of parental devotion and years of strong self-control have gone to its making. For its strength and purity Christ lived and died. For its sake all churches and chapels have been built and clergy have been ordained. In the long run, on it and not chiefly upon force depend the soundness of our business life, the security of our civilization, and all the hope of the world. The alternative to it is the rule of blood and iron—Machiavelli, Nietzsche, Bismarck. With the good and great of all ages looking



down upon us, let us not now, in a day of panic, loose the ancient anchorage and sail away into the dim twilight of the gods.

The nations have fallen down and worshipped the false god of Force: and Futility, the shadow of Force, has followed them all the time. It would be a slur on the nobler Paganism to call Force a Pagan god. He, or It, resembles rather those dim shapeless figures, dull and dreaded, whom bright Zeus and his shining children overthrew: Chaos and Old Night, Earth, the grip of Necessity, the Furies, and blind Fate.

Against all this, in a day of violence, arose the quiet denials in the Tribunal committee rooms and in the camps. The brave men of this record have, in their youth, borne the testimony of a lifetime, which will always give them strength and standing in future service. We give them thanks and honour.

For the first time on any considerable scale a Government at war has been met by flat disobedience, followed up by the weighty weapon of passive endurance. It will be a lesson to Governments, as Carlyle thought that the execution of Charles I read a lesson to Kings.

I have endeavoured to write with charity and comprehension about the motives of the governing bodies whose deeds—in themselves evil deeds—I have described. But so long as I live my love and reverence will abide towards those young men who bore the banner of love and peace all through the heat of the long day.

## STATISTICS<sup>1</sup>

1. IN the *Tribunal* the total number of members of the No-Conscription Fellowship in its early days is given as about 15,000. This and all other figures in this chapter concern Great Britain only. But this figure was compiled by adding totals sent up by the various branches, some of whose records may have been loosely kept, and may have included people attached to the movement who were not of military age or who were not actually subscribing members. It may be taken roughly as a somewhat liberal estimate of those who, at the first blush, rose up against conscription under this, the central organization. But there were many conscientious objectors outside the ranks of the No-Conscription Fellowship, members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit already abroad, other Friends working with the War Victims' Committee, and a number from the smaller Christian bodies whose testimony depended upon a literal observance of Bible texts. These would generally be outside the Fellowship. Moreover, there were a few outside all organizations. We have, therefore, no reliable knowledge of the actual number of men who rose up against conscription.

One can well believe that, amongst those who agitated with the Fellowship, may have been men of low ideals or feeble temperament who refused to face the consequence of resistance. It is impossible to imagine that a real shirker would go far in the direction of popular shame and indefinite imprisonment. Many could take to the comparative safety of the Non-Combatant Corps or work of national importance. (Thoroughly conscientious men, of course, also accepted these, as mentioned below.) Others

<sup>1</sup> A few facts which have already been mentioned, are also embodied here, for Statistical completeness.

would prefer the Army to the gaol. *So that the men with whom this history is concerned had been sifted, and were a selected body.*

But in several entirely creditable ways the original number was reduced. Mankind is not divided by any hard and fast line into martyrs and cowards. It was not uncommon to hear men say that the prospect of leaving mother or wife nearly destitute prevented them taking the stand they would otherwise have taken; and one must admit, if not the validity, at least the force of this plea. Those of us who have not been tried in this way should not be the first to cast a stone.

Next, there were men who belonged to exempted trades. These were very numerous in colliery and railway centres.<sup>†</sup> Frequent instances occurred of men who were not exempted, when they otherwise would have been but for their claim on grounds of conscience. This shows the particularly Satanic temper of safely placed employers at this time. This course did not ease the wheels of government nor provide a soldier for the Army, but it punished by prolonged imprisonment the man with the sensitive conscience, and so achieved its object.

2. We now reach the men who went before the Tribunals and were satisfied with the exemption they received. Some, no doubt, had appealed from selfish motives, and when they were rejected accepted the Army. It is very doubtful, however, if many of these were members of the N.C.F. Unfortunately the Tribunals have, so far as I know, collected no record of the total number of men who appeared before them on conscientious grounds. It would be difficult to collect; some men appealed on more than one ground, and the habit at the Tribunals of giving temporary exemption and compelling the men to come

<sup>†</sup> A few men, like Dr. Fairbairn of Hampstead and Dr. MacCallum from Argyllshire, refused the immunity their profession afforded them, and, declining all privilege, went to prison with the rest. Similarly, J. H. Hudson of Manchester was offered the chance of exemption subject to continuing his profession as a teacher, but declined to recognize the Acts to that extent. There were a few other similar cases, those of Hugh Gibbins of Birmingham, Dr. E. B. Ludlam of Cambridge, and others.

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up again would add to the complication of counting. But before we reach the men who were arrested we must take into account the very considerable number of genuine men, both inside the N.C.F. and outside it, who accepted the verdict of the Tribunal.

The number of those who received absolute exemption was very small; such judgments date from the early days of the Tribunals, before they had been induced by military influence to make a universal rule against granting complete exemption. Even these were appealed against successfully in many cases. The men who were exempted, so far as I have heard, were nearly all men engaged in religious work but not strictly in Holy Orders: secretaries of religious societies, local preachers, and a few well-known Quakers. J. Edward Hodgkin received from his friends and acquaintances on the Tribunal at Darlington exemption conditional on retaining his present views—an odd way of avoiding absolute exemption. Exemptions were granted to the members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit while working at the front. These numbered 640 altogether; not all of them were Quakers, and not all were conscientious objectors. Conscription found them already abroad to the number of from three to four hundred. The Government naturally accepted their voluntary and unpaid services, and after that was very particular that no one but actual Quakers should take that alternative except through Tribunals which continued to offer it. It was, in fact, an alternative occupation, not an absolute exemption. Viscount Peel stated in the House on April 2, 1919, that there had been 600 complete exemptions. This is an incomprehensible figure. It includes, of course, the Ambulance Unit, inaccurately, and very few besides. Neither the N.C.F. nor anyone else knew or knows of many complete exemptions, which were maintained.

Next come the large number of men who were allowed to do work of national importance and were willing to accept it. Of these, 440 were enrolled in the Friends' Ambulance Unit's "General Section" and were employed chiefly in agriculture, but also in teaching and some other employments. The Tribunals developed a habit of offering

a man work in the Friends' Ambulance Unit to an extent beyond the available funds of the Unit, and to men who were unsuitable for the hard physical work involved. But the Unit's good reputation with the Government enabled it to organize these men in various home employments—and very useful service it was. It may, however, be doubted—such was the ignorance of some Tribunals—whether in all cases they were aware of the kind of work to which they were sending the applicants. The Unit also employed about 300 men in various hospitals in England, doing the work of servants and orderlies. These hospitals were:—At Haxby Road, York, a large building belonging to Rowntree & Co. and built by them for the dining and recreation of their workpeople; at Uffculme, Birmingham, formerly the residence of Richard Cadbury; at King George Hospital, Stamford Street, London;<sup>1</sup> and at the "Star and Garter" Home for incurable cases at Richmond. This gives a total of 1,400 men altogether under their control. Of these we may estimate that not less than 1,200 were conscientious objectors. In this total are included those who worked at the administrative office of the Unit.

Besides these forms of work of national importance there were 3,964 men who worked under the Pelham Committee, and an undetermined but considerable number under the direct oversight of the Tribunals. Among the Pelham Committee cases were 1,400 Christadelphians. They were exempted by the Army Council on condition of doing

<sup>1</sup> This represented an attempt to work a military hospital along with the military authorities. It showed the catholic spirit of trust which inspired the Unit's leaders. But the 110 young men who went to work there were not met in the same spirit; there were another 120 orderlies not belonging to the Unit. At the best the work was hard and distasteful, and all the routine drudgery and dirty work was put on the Unit men. Charwomen's work in a huge building six stories high, with three miles of corridors and twelve lifts, was not exactly a form of shirking. Finally the men's food was stolen; and at length the Unit withdrew its men in December 1916, after five months. There had been a hostile demonstration against them on the night of their arrival; after that the persecution came from the non-commissioned officers, and was not stopped when the Commandant was appealed to. But Mr. Pettifer, the head of the Unit men, could not do that often. The plan must be regarded as a mistake. The nurses and medical staffs were very sorry when their most trustworthy and considerate assistants were withdrawn.

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"work useful for the prosecution of the war." They and some others were thus the nearest of all conscientious objectors to the Government position. The authorities interpreted the words liberally; the difficulty of most C.O.'s, in fact, was to find work that was not of that character. Subsequently the Army Council withdrew its certificates and left the Pelham Committee to issue their own.<sup>1</sup>

There were about 3,300 men altogether in the Non-Combatant Corps of the Army. This was formed to occupy men who had been granted non-combatant service and had accepted it. It must be distinguished from the ordinary Labour Corps.

3. We now approach the reliable statistics collected with great pains by the Conscientious Objectors' Information Bureau. They record that 6,261 men resisted the Acts and were arrested.

The number of men who have been court martialled is 5,739; of these 655 were court martialled twice, 521 three times, 319 four times, 50 five times, and 3 six times. Of the 6,261 men who were arrested, 267 were discharged from the Army for medical reasons; but most men refused medical examination, preferring not to accept that way out. They preferred not to obey a military order when it was to their personal advantage to do so.

4. Taking all these classes into account, I venture the suggestion that the number of genuine conscientious objectors who faced the Tribunals or otherwise refused to join in the war may have been 16,100. In this I include those—chiefly from the Christadelphians, the Plymouth Brethren, and similar sects—who felt it consistent with their beliefs to accept work in the Non-Combatant Corps or in the Royal Army Medical Corps. That these men were genuine became apparent later on when authority with a crass military mind endeavoured to drive them into ordinary military work.

<sup>1</sup> Information from T. Edmund Harvey, a member of the Committee, whose report is not published.

There was also a sprinkling of men who evaded arrest and succeeded in escaping, or who were unmolested by mistake.

The estimated total number of about 16,100 is reached as follows, the round numbers are only estimates. Those completely exempted are too few to count in this list.

Arrested . . . . .	6,261
Pelham Committee's cases . . . . .	3,964
Friends' Ambulance Unit . . . . .	1,200
War Victims' Relief Co. . . . .	200
Working directly under Tribunals . . . . .	900
Non-Combatant Corps . . . . .	3,300
Royal Army Medical Corps . . . . .	100
Evaded the Act . . . . .	175
	<hr/>
	16,100

5. The number of men arrested who later on accepted combatant or non-combatant service was 351. This figure represents a last sifting of all the men who gave in. Again I say, Let no one who has not been similarly tried cast a stone at them. Probably their spirits as well as their bodies were enslaved in the Army, and their lot became altogether miserable. Victims of more brutality than they could bear, they gave away their souls, and so made the colonels and sergeants happy. That 94 per cent. of those who began resistance held through to the end is a great testimony to their quality.

. The plan adopted by the Government was thus to let the shirker and the coward—or, to speak more justly, the men of less courage and weaker will—off easily, and to punish most severely of all those whose honesty—if not more real than that of some others—was at least more obvious, and more severely tried. Thus the purpose of the conscience clause was reversed.

6. We will now classify the 6,261 men who were arrested, taken from the Information Bureau records in their latest and most accurate form.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Careful revision has taken place since the figures were provided for the N.C.F. *Souvenir*.

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Absolutists (subject to deduction in paragraph below) . . . . .	1,543
Home Office men . . . . .	3,750
Men who accepted combatant or non-combatant service . . . . .	351
Rejected and discharged on medical grounds	267
Deserted . . . . .	21
Released owing to special circumstances .	12
Deported . . . . .	2
Evading or on indefinite furlough at time of general release . . . . .	45
Records incomplete . . . . .	270
	<hr/>
	6,261

6. The total number of Absolutists (subject to a deduction below) may be classified as follows:—

- 843 were released on completion of sentence amounting to two years or more (April 1919)
- 221 were released under the commutation of sentences scheme (July 1919).
- 334 were released on medical grounds in accordance with Lord Curzon's statement of December 4, 1917. (Five of these men subsequently died.)
- 55 records are incomplete.
- 49 deserted from their units while awaiting further court martial.
- 14 died in addition to the five mentioned above, eleven actually in prison.
- 19 were released on account of exceptional circumstances.
- 8 were discharged on medical grounds prior to Lord Curzon's statement.

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1,543

From this number of Absolutists should be deducted men who were kept in gaol until the final release, from other causes than their refusal of the Home Office scheme. There were 158 men up to July 30, 1917, who were deemed



"not genuine" by the Central Tribunal, in spite of their voluntary suffering, and who may or may not have been Absolutists in principle. These men, thus denied the chance of the Home Office scheme, were, so far as I knew them, men who had refused to go before the Tribunals, or in whose proceedings some irregularity had occurred, or who were theoretical anarchists, matters which had nothing to do with their genuineness. Of the three I knew in gaol, one had declined to acknowledge the Tribunals, one had shown some inconsistency in his religious affiliation, and one had apparently argued with the Central Tribunal. There were also in prison till the end 96 men who had been returned to prison for some breach of rules under the Home Office scheme, or had voluntarily returned from the scheme to prison for reasons which have been given in Chapter VII. Among these reasons was the Absolutist reason. There were also 31 men who had returned to prison for reasons unknown. From the above total of 1,543, then, some number less than 285—the total of 158, 96, and 31—should be deducted, in order to obtain the number of Absolutists.

Sir George (now Lord) Cave stated in the House that up to November 3, 1917, 192 Home Office men had been returned to the Army or to prison, and 78 had voluntarily left. These figures are rather higher than those returned at the end. Some of them may have been released by illness or by death, or may be among those whose record with us is imperfect.

My conclusion would be that there were not more than 1,350 Absolutists, one in twelve of the total number of C.O.'s. Whether we agree with their doctrine or not, they certainly bore the brunt of the suffering, and they have inflicted the most damaging blow upon conscription.

The men who were released on medical grounds were men so broken down that the doctor's opinion was that continuance in prison would imperil their lives or their permanent health.

The men who died after arrest, at a time of life when few men die in the ordinary way, was 71. The number who lost their reason was 31. So the number who

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bore the last martyrdom possible to man was just over one hundred.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Souvenir* of the N.C.F. are published some figures roughly indicating the nature of the conscientious objection of the men arrested.

The total number of members or attenders at meetings of the Society of Friends of whose imprisonment particulars are known was 279. Of these, 142 were Absolutists, 102 Home Office men, and 35 unclassified. The total number of Socialist objectors of whom particulars are known was 1,191, of whom 452 were Absolutists, 613 Home Office men, and 126 unclassified; 805 of the Socialist Objectors were members of the I.L.P. The relative smallness of the number of Quaker objectors is partly due to the smallness of the total number of the Society, to the fact that they were better treated by the Tribunals, that many of them before conscription came in had entered upon relief work abroad, and that 32 per cent. of the available young men in the Society entered the Forces. In all religious bodies there are some nominal members, particularly in one with hereditary membership. Most of those who enlisted were of this type. There were among the C.O.'s a small number from every known religious body, and of course many who belonged to none.

<sup>1</sup> There is a curious discrepancy between some of these figures and those which were given as official by Viscount Peel on April 3, 1919. He made out that at that time there were only 404 two-years' men in prison, whereas Lord Parmoor's figures, provided by the N.C.F., gave 773. Subsequent research revealed that the difference was due to the fact that the Government did not include in their figures the men still in prison who had been regarded as not genuine by the Central Tribunal, nor, naturally, did it include those who had died, or who had been released as broken down in health, or those who were temporarily in the guardrooms, or on furlough under the "Cat and Mouse Act," or on indefinite furlough. These were found to account for the above difference in numbers. Similar considerations cover the discrepancies in the number of deaths. Of the 59 deaths which had at that time occurred, the Government only recorded 9 who had died in prison, and 24 in the Home Office camps. Lord Peel gave 20 certified insane, as against our 31. The latter, however, included a number who were sent to military insane hospitals or who were actually afflicted without being certified.

## APPENDIX

THE main subject of this book is the record of the resistance to conscription in Great Britain. But the story in the colonies and abroad is also very instructive; so some attempt is made here to give a brief sketch of it so far as it is known, and on a scale necessarily much smaller than that of the record at home. Our colonial and foreign friends will, I trust, allow for this need for brevity.

### I. AUSTRALIA.

Australia escaped conscription during the war. The Commonwealth refused in 1916 to follow Mr. W. M. Hughes in his agitation for the compulsory service of grown-up men. But for the last ten years there has been in both Australia and New Zealand a system of compulsory military training for boys between fourteen and eighteen years of age. This was brought about by influence from the Government of the mother country, and it was not concealed that it was intended by the military as a model for us at home to follow. This resulted in the imprisonment of many thousands of boys, and in unceasing police-court proceedings due to widespread attempts at evasion, of which doubtless only a portion was due to conscientious objection. A large book has been published by John F. Hills and J. Percy Fletcher, recounting the story of the agitation which they and others have continuously maintained against this militarizing of free colonies. Of course it began mildly, but it grows. There is an attempt at the present time to extend compulsory training to a period of seventy days for the first year. The promise that it shall be correspondingly diminished in future years is not

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generally accepted at its face value, and everyone believes that the stipulation that the service is only for home defence would snap in a moment in time of war.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance, to the future of these wide lands of the South, of the result of this conflict with Militarism. To the Empire as a whole it is hardly of less importance whether the colonies are to be united to the Empire and to one another by a union of hearts or by union in military operations. The people there are frightened by talk of the danger of an invasion from Japan and the necessity of maintaining a "white" Australia. It is curious to note that any attack by Japan would be a naval attack upon the Australian capital cities, for meeting which a land army would not be of any use. It is further curious to note that the Japanese Navy—her only possible weapon of attack—has been to a large extent built in British shipyards and in the yards of Vickers, Maxim & Co., a British firm who have a branch in Japan. In addition, fifty skilled aeroplane officers have this year been lent by our Government to Japan to establish for her an air force. Relieved, therefore, from any genuine fear of Japan, we can only conclude that the Australian levies would be useful for imperial purposes in any part of the world, to enforce exploitation, to put down rebellion, or to extend the Empire.

The full story of this Australian campaign of peace does not come within the scope of this book, either in time or in place, so we must be content thus to summarize a long story of efforts and sufferings.

### 2. AUSTRIA.

(a) *German Austria*.—The Social Democrats as a political party were Marxists, and accepted defensive war, i.e. of course any actually waged war as described by those who waged it. Their object was to substitute a popular militia for the Imperial Army, and they were openly hostile to Pacifism. Thoroughgoing peace sentiment was held in Austria by scattered groups and individuals who followed Tolstoy and Kropotkin, theoretical "anarchists" and

Christian communists. There were about 2,000 of these in all, kept together by a fortnightly journal, *Wohlstand für Alle* (Welfare for All), edited, in German, by Pierre Ramus. He is a Nazarene, a body which, like the Quakers in England, refuses all oaths. On this ground, in the years of peace, this paper outspokenly repudiated the Army and the Oath of Allegiance. It existed from December 1907 till the outbreak of war. Its last article, calling for a general strike against the war, came out on July 24, 1914, the very day before martial law was declared. This happy accident saved the life of the editor, but he was incarcerated in military prisons, with short interruptions, till the fall of the Imperial Government. The readers of the paper were organized in a Federation called the "International Anti-Militarist Association," founded in 1904 by the late Domela F. Nieuwenhuis, with whom a brisk correspondence was kept up. It was anti-militarist, anti-nationalist, against violence of all kinds, and fearlessly outspoken; but, like similar bodies elsewhere, did not become a mass movement.

All the members of the Federation were faithful to their principles, refused military service and were imprisoned to the number of many hundreds. A full account of the persecution was written by Pierre Ramus in his book *Friedenskrieger des Hinterlandes* (Warriors of Peace behind the Front), a series of articles reprinted from *Erkenntniss und Befreiung* (Conscience and Emancipation), the paper he has run at Vienna since the war. The leaders and speakers of the movement were Johann Magerer (artist), Josef Mottitschka, Josef Mojzes, Adolph Grossmann, B. Mandl, L. Barral. All have been long years in prison and otherwise maltreated. Grossmann was put into a lunatic asylum, though quite sane. Mojzes was sentenced to five years' hard labour as a disobedient soldier, for he was "deemed" to have sworn because he had heard the oath administered. The conclusion of the war saved his life.

Since the war the Conscientious Objector Movement in Austria has increased. Lists are being collected by Mrs. Olga Misar and others of those who pledge themselves not to serve in the "coming" war.

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(b) *Bohemia*.—Before the war the Young Czechs were a patriotic anti-militarist organization, counted by many thousands. At every conscription booth they would appear in mourning, or would sing peace songs or they would absent themselves. They included men of varying conviction, from Christian non-resisters to anti-German patriotic rebels. When the war broke out men in masses refused to swear. This was put down by martial law, relentlessly—one in five or one in ten of the recalcitrant regimental bodies were shot. The people were taken unprepared. There was no real Peace organization. The Socialist leaders, as in Austria, were not pacifist, and supported the war. Thus a movement composed of anti-conscriptionists of all types was extinguished in blood.

(c) *Hungary*.—In this purely agricultural country there prevails great Christian piety among the peasants. There are many villages wholly inhabited by Nazarenes. They were always at issue with the Government over conscription in time of peace. There were also Nazarenes among the intellectuals, such as Dr. Skarvan, who refused to practise for the Army. The Government forces fell upon the Nazarene villages and devastated them: men were killed in hundreds, or executed for refusal to serve. There is no accurate record of the numbers or the details of this Terror, which was at its worst during the first weeks of the war. By the end of October 1914 the Hungarian Government became alarmed or scandalized at causing so much bloodshed, and stopped the persecution. The Supreme Military Court decreed that Nazarenes were 'to be allowed to serve in ambulance, sanitary and non-combatant work. A private executive order added that they were to be put into the most dangerous places, in the firing line and in cholera hospitals.' Apparently some felt free to accept this non-combatant service. The oath, which was a strong point with them, was exacted by the Government. But the military have not kept to the law, but

<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by Dr. Stern of Zagrat, Yugoslavia, who told J. P. Fletcher that he saw, in the fifteenth month of the war, an order in a military hospital that the Nazarenes were to be given the hardest cases to look after.

have broken it all the time, Herr Ramus says in "many thousands of cases." A Commission of Investigation has been examining these cases since the Republic was founded. One instance may be given. Maxa Dilber served first as a driver for civil purposes, was transferred to the ranks, refused to handle a gun, and for "insubordination" was shot. Some were hanged, when they should legally have been shot. Also many Nazarenes were Absolutists, refused all work connected with war, and were sent to prison.

All these particulars from countries in the old Austrian Empire have been kindly sent me by Pierre Ramus, editor of *Conscience and Emancipation*, and a conspicuous bearer of this pure and noble testimony. His narrative, coming from the central source, is of deep if painful interest. His address is Klosterneuburg, Schiebstättgraben 237, Vienna.

There are still (in September 1921) a number of Nazarenes in a Hungarian prison, estimated at about two hundred. The reason of their continued imprisonment at the hands of the reactionary Government is not known. Friends are trying to reach them.

The Hungarian anarchist and anti-militarist, H. Vilianyi, now a refugee from the White Terror, writes that the Liberal writer Karl Eötvös has written, in the form of a work of fiction, an account of the Nazarene martyrdom. He says that there were also thousands of refusals to serve, on grounds of political principle, that the courts were continually busy with passing sentences of death; but that many also escaped, always on the run from village to village. Before the war there were anti-militarist propaganda among students and other intellectuals. When the war broke out they distributed in the barracks tracts inciting to refusal to serve. A young man and a young woman received five years' imprisonment for this; and the organization was stamped out, till the Republic was founded.

Dr. Stern of Zagret in Jugoslavia reports that the Nazarenes exist there also, and suffered, like those in Hungary, under the old Austrian Empire, the extreme of cruelty.

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### 3. CANADA.

Conscription in Canada was authorized in the summer of 1917. The Act contained a conscience clause, available only for members of any organized religious denomination, well recognized in Canada, whose tenets forbade combatant service. Exemption was from combatant service only. The penalty was imprisonment on summary conviction with hard labour, for not more than five years. Printed matter in opposition to the Act was to be suppressed, and author and publisher fined or imprisoned. Members of religious bodies who were exempted were to be disfranchised. Chapter IV contains a narrative of the sufferings of certain C.O.'s who were shipped to England.

### 4. GERMANY.

From Germany, at the beginning of the war, came reports that some hundreds of Christian C.O.'s had been summarily shot. The story lacks detail and confirmation. Most of the German Socialists supported the war, but a number of distinguished intellectuals, such as Professor Foerster of Munich, Professor Nicolai of Berlin (who was imprisoned), Dr. Quidde, Professor Sieper, and the famous Professor Einstein, maintained an outspoken opposition to all war.

It is very difficult to hear of any actual cases of shooting, though officers may at times have taken the law into their own hands at the front. Enquiries made at the Quaker Embassy at Berlin and of the secretaries of Peace Societies in Germany and Holland have brought no cases to light. A public enquiry in the pages of *Menschheit* has led to no response. A common plan was to offer the objector non-combatant service, and if he refused, to get rid of him by declaring him insane. This happened to one of the former staff of *Vorwärts*, who was confined as a lunatic, and also to a lawyer named Dr. Daniel at Stuttgart, who was, however, left at large. Apparently the objectors were so few that the question was not prominent. Herr Röttcher, secretary of the German Peace Society, gives two C.O. cases only as personally known to him.



There, are however, some, though not many, Nazarenes in Germany, and besides them the sect of the "Adventists" is fairly strong, and contributed a great many conscientious objectors.

Since the war the *Nie Wieder Krieg* (No More War) Movement has become a great popular force, and can collect thousands in processions and public meetings.

From G. W. Meyer of Bremen I learn that a number of C.O.'s were confined in the fortress of Spandau, and others in a camp near the Danish frontier, where the military endeavoured to break their resistance by scarcity of food and other bad treatment. G. W. Meyer himself had been an officer in the Army till the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk convinced him that the German Government was not striving for a peace of reconciliation. He fled by way of Russia to Finland, in order to work for such a peace. Endeavouring to pass to Norway via Murmansk, he was captured by the British and interned in England for a year. Since his return to Germany after the Armistice, he has been organizing the "No More War" Movement, which has obtained many thousands of signatures to an uncompromising declaration to that effect. He says:—"Our movement is really the result of the brave stand which the British C.O.'s have taken during the war." Thus the spirit of peace as well as the spirit of fear spreads from land to land.

#### 5. HOLLAND.

There are in Holland a great many Mennonites and some other small pacifist sects, but the bulk of the seven hundred men who went to prison up to the summer of 1921 were working-class International Socialists. The Peace organization is large. It issues literature, translates English books, and held during the war—so long as it was allowed—open-air meetings. It issued a proposal for an International League, and showed the true Dutch spirit of courage and independence. All told, there were some five thousand refusals of military service in Holland.

The remarkable thing about Holland is that imprison-

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ments for anti-militarist work were still going on in 1921. J. Giesen of Heerenweg 14, Utrecht, is the secretary of the International Anti-Militarist Union, which held a large International Congress at The Hague in March 1921, of which I have seen an impressive photograph. The Union maintains an organ, *De Wapens Neder*, now in its seventeenth year, and issues circulars internationally. Conscientious objectors continue hunger-striking in prison, where from thirty to forty were still, in the summer of 1921, confined. The circular for July 1921 may be quoted as typical of the Union's work and the need for it:—

“B. de Ligt, president of the International Anti-Military Bureau, has been imprisoned owing to his propaganda for the liberation of H. Groenendaal, a refuser of military service, who is on hunger-strike, and for the liberation of all the refusers of military service throughout the world. Albert de Jong, my co-secretary, has been imprisoned for the same reason. Henri Delecourt and so many other comrades in France are in prison for anti-military actions. Bajatierra in Spain and a lot of others, Syndicalists, etc., are in prison owing to acts of anti-militarism and revolutionary Syndicalism. Danes, brave comrades, continue to be kept in prison owing to their refusing military service, and continue hunger-striking. Linn Gale, our correspondent, was made a prisoner in Mexico and is kept a prisoner in U.S.A.”

This is the only information which has reached me which refers to conscientious objectors in France, though there are now several strong and active peace associations there.

### 6. NEW ZEALAND.

If anyone had hoped that the British colonies, which are often thought of as progressive communities, free from conservatism and the vested interests of ancient institutions, would have shown more regard for individual conviction than the mother country, such a hope was wholly disappointed during the war. Indeed, it is very remarkable how events in New Zealand paralleled events in England.

Besides the religious and the Socialist objectors, there were there also the Irish and the Maori objectors, representing hostility to the Empire by conquered races. By the treaty which closed the last Maori war, sixty years ago, the Maoris were expressly exempted from British military service. So it was written on a large scrap of paper. At the outbreak of war, Sir James Allen, Defence Minister, without consulting Parliament, promised to send 8,000 men, and to maintain them by a monthly reinforcement of 1,000. Later on these forces rose until about 2,400 men were drafted every four weeks. A General Election came at the height of the war fever, in December 1914, followed by a Coalition Government, with a tiny Opposition of four Labour members. Then began a Press campaign in favour of conscription, in order that "we might keep our obligation to the Empire," just as we at home had to keep our obligation to France. Then came a National Register, with solemn protests by the Government that it had no reference to conscription. Oddly enough, however, men between nineteen and forty-five were asked whether they were willing to join the Forces. 78,000 declined to be sent abroad, though some of them would take service at home; 120,000 were willing to go abroad, but only 34,000 of these were single men without dependents and therefore likely to be summoned. The Labour Party held a great anti-conscription conference, representing two hundred organizations, in January 1916, corresponding to the similar Labour movement here. Nevertheless, conscription was ordered by Parliament in June.

The Bill was fought at every stage by the tiny Labour minority. As in England, the existing Parliament twice prolonged its own life. The municipal halls, as usual here, were closed against Labour meetings called to discuss conscription. About half the platform speakers of the Labour movement were put into prison. Government shorthand writers and detectives dogged every Labour leader. The entire correspondence of pacifists and others was opened and delayed with the stupidity familiar here. The miners struck; and to get them back to work they were practically guaranteed against conscription.

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In its final form the Act included a conscience clause for the benefit only of men who, before the war broke out and continuously since, were members of a religious body whose doctrines forbade military service, and who conscientiously accepted those doctrines. This relieved only the members of the Society of Friends, the Christadelphians, and one or two other small bodies. Even they had to be medically examined, and to attest; and the exemption was only from combatant service. They had to agree to perform non-combatant service under the Act.

The next stage is also an echo of what happened here. The Catholics objected to the conscription of their priests; the Government feared them, and finally exempted all clergy—not by law but by individual certificates. The severest penalties, up to three years' hard labour, were ordered, as in England, against anyone—including parents—who harboured, and anyone who employed, C.O.'s. They were also "deemed" to be soldiers. In New Zealand there is much wild country, and many men fled to the wilderness and, amid the winter snows and the summer bush-fires, and under the pursuit of informers, maintained a precarious existence. The sentences—as happened in England—began short and went on to two years' hard labour, when it was found that the men could not be broken. The incident of the sudden deportation of fourteen men by night has been recorded fully in Chapter IV along with their experiences. The Government did not attempt it a second time, under pressure from New Zealand opinion—or probably from the British Government. I have referred in that chapter to the book *Armageddon or Calvary*, from which this record has chiefly been compiled.

Altogether between three and four hundred men were imprisoned in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> This is more in proportion to population than anywhere else. As in England, the sentences were repeated; in some cases two or three or four times, and, as in England, they were for extremely variable periods. Six of the Baxter sons, five of the Cody

<sup>1</sup> The Government reported that 445 persons had been imprisoned by court martial in the three years 1918-1920, of whom 226 received a sentence of two years. A very large majority of these were C.O.'s.

sons, and three of the Wright sons suffered under variable sentences. The imprisonment of Mr. C. P. Webb, M.P.—a leading Labour man—is somewhat analogous to the imprisonment of Mr. Morel and the Hon. Bertrand Russell in England. Mr. Webb is still disqualified for public office for ten years.

The military methods which were used in England were paralleled at the Wanganui Barracks, under a lieutenant whose character may be deduced from the fact that when in a governing position at Samoa he had become involved in trouble with native women. A court martial had acquitted him of serious immorality, but he was found guilty of having thrashed a half-caste woman with a stick. This man now proceeded to break in the C.O.'s. They were already suffering punishment for refusing to be soldiers, and for continuing to refuse to drill they were sentenced to two hours' pack drill. A weighted pack of 80 lbs. was put on the prisoner's back, a rifle fastened to his side by handcuffs, and he was ordered to march round the yard. Refusing to do this, he was pushed from behind, kicked on the heels, in two cases a rope was fastened round his neck and he was pulled along. In three cases the men's hair was pulled out in dragging them along; when they got to the corners they were pulled or pushed against the wall, so that their faces were raw and bleeding, and spots of blood were found afterwards about the walls. When they fell down they were kicked and water was thrown upon them, and the time they were on the ground was deducted from the two hours of their punishment. One man was dragged for some distance along the ground. The prisoners were kept going like this round and round ceaselessly till they were completely done up, and yielded. There were four cases of this kind, and they each stood it for about three-quarters of an hour.

I am quoting from the findings of a magisterial report which with great unwillingness and delay was finally produced by the Government. A lengthy military court martial was afterwards held "in order to enable the lieutenant to clear his character," and so far as the court martial had weight with anybody, it did clear him. This

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verdict was very astonishing to anyone who reads the evidence in the ten days of the trial. The responsible bully and his staff were removed from the barracks, but he was given another post.

Finally an Act was passed ordering the publication of a complete list of military defaulters, with the view to boycotting them in the future. There were 2,000 Europeans and 117 Maoris on this list. They were all still liable to prosecution. They were also deprived of civil rights for ten years. In these ways, and in the more limited nature of the exemption permitted, New Zealand was worse than the mother country.

An important document was issued by a number of leading Friends, protesting against the privileged position they received under the Act. Nevertheless twenty-one members and attenders suffered imprisonment, refusing alternative service. Eleven were declared medically unfit, but it was suspected that the unfitness was spiritual rather than physical. Twelve served with the R.A.M.C. or on similar work.

The religious objectors were not generally placed on the defaulters' list, and an attempt was made by the Government to ease the situation by encouraging the imprisoned men to plead religion. Instead, therefore, of taking the pleas which they had offered before the Tribunals, and which were already on record, the Commission, consisting of two ministers of religion, an inspector of prisons and a tame Labour man, went round the prisons in much the same way as the Central Tribunal sat in Wormwood Scrubs to proclaim men genuine. The plea of religion was accepted, and even welcomed, by this body. Anyone who refused to come before them was put down as "irreligious," just as the corresponding people in England were put down as not genuine.

The Government's system of alternative service was farm work at Levin in the North Island, but very few men availed themselves of this. The road to it was by a statement under which a man promised to do any non-combatant work he might be set. The prison treatment was very much easier than it was in England. The C.O.'s

were not in the ordinary prisons, except a few who were considered dangerous and extreme. These were abominably treated at the prison at Mount Eden, Auckland. The other C.O.'s were at the Borstal prison at Invercargill or in huts at a high elevation in the country at Waikeria, Roto Ira, and Kaingaroa; and for Maori prisoners, at Narrow Neck. The men did outdoor work, clearing the scrub or farming; they had plenty of food, and their friends could send them books, periodicals, or parcels of food, and could pay visits. The cold and the lack of good medical attention were the principal hardships.

The colony has also suffered since 1909 from the compulsory training of boys from fourteen to eighteen years under the Territorial and Cadet system. Under this scheme, which is supported by Conservatives and Liberals and opposed by Labour, as many as 7,030 police prosecutions took place in one year, and in hundreds of cases the lads were imprisoned.

Prosecutions for what was called sedition—that is, for opposing conscription—affected most of the prominent Labour leaders, of whom at least twenty-eight suffered imprisonment. One notable prosecution was that of Harry Urquhart, M.A., teacher at a Technical College and mission worker, who wrote a pamphlet called *Men and Marbles*, describing the morality of the conscription ballot. The Judge said that this was so well written that the writer was dangerous at large. There was one prosecution of parents—Mr. and Mrs Price—"for concealing their son." They received six months' imprisonment, but the mother was released before her time was up.

- The whole New Zealand story is a profound disappointment for those who have hoped much from Democracy and from Women's Suffrage.

## 7. RUSSIA.

The Russian genius for religion has produced, at all epochs of which we have a record, a number of sects holding the faith and enthusiasm of Christianity in pristine purity. These bodies have generally arisen among the

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Russian peasantry without external suggestion, and they illustrate on a large scale the truth that the gospel which may be hidden from the wise and prudent can be revealed unto babes. Such bodies are the Stundists, the Doukhobors, Novo-Israel, and the various societies grouped under the general name of Molokans. The German Mennonites in the Ukraine form a well-marked community. There are pacifist Baptists in the Caucasus and, among the intellectuals, groups of Tolstoyans. There are also bodies who bear the name of Quakers. These sects number several millions altogether.

Under the Czar's Government the C.O.'s were usually imprisoned, even to the extent of fifteen years' hard labour. There was a sensational trial of seventeen young Tolstoyans before the fall of the monarchy. The men were acquitted after several days' trial. The President of the Court—a well-known Lieutenant-General—wrote afterwards to the Press, saying that he had been converted by the defence of the young men, and had become a Tolstoyan himself. A Friends' Relief worker, named Frank Keddie, reported at the beginning of 1919, somewhat vaguely and with no definite note of time, that "perhaps a few C.O.'s were shot, but the majority flogged and then given—if they would accept it—some non-combatant work."

The important fact about the Russian situation is that the Bolsheviks alone among the Governments of the world have both frankly recognized a conscientious objection and organized a not unsympathetic treatment of it.<sup>1</sup> Lenin was approached by a Council of delegates from many religious groups under the chairmanship of the well-known Vladimir Chertkoff, an intimate friend of Tolstoy. The Soviet Government replied by a decree on January 4, 1919, stating that those who declared themselves unwilling to undertake military service on account of their religious convictions might serve their fellow-creatures for an equal term in hospitals for contagious diseases or in some other work of public utility, at the choice of the individual concerned. The above Council of Religious Groups, with

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, September 18, 1919, based on a booklet entitled *The New Russia*, by Paul Birukoff, published by the I.L.F.



Chertkoff as chairman, along with the Communes of Moscow, were to report on the validity of the objection in each case. Thus, for the first time, a sensible sympathetic body was appointed to adjudicate on these cases, assisting for this purpose the National Tribunal. Lenin declared that the Government was, in principle, itself anti-militarist, and could not persecute those whose conscience compelled them to refuse to be soldiers.

Finally, the Absolutist position was fully recognized. The decree proceeds:—"Under exceptional cases, the Joint Council of Religious Groups and Communes may have recourse to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, with a view to securing complete freedom from service, without the substitution of any other service, if it can be shown that such substitution is incompatible with religious convictions; the proof to be taken from writings on the question and also from the personal life of the individual concerned."

Mr. Birukoff states that during the Great War, before the rule of the Bolsheviks, about a thousand refusals to fight on conscientious grounds were registered by the authorities, and the men put in prison. The Revolution set them free, but the renewed war against the Allies and the home reactionaries raised the question once more, resulting in the decree above described, which marks an epoch.

At the Zurich Women's Conference some not very clear account was given in broken English of a Russian sect expelled over the border into Austria and driven to the trenches with their muskets tied round their necks.

• Clifford Allen reports that during his visit to Russia he was very warmly received by Chertkoff and the pacifist group. They told him that even under the Bolsheviks about fifteen C.O.'s had been shot—a sign of the limited power of the central government. One difference from our ways was very noticeable. Here no C.O. organization would have undertaken the invidious task of sitting as a tribunal and punishing rejected men. The Russian C.O.'s had controversies which almost exactly tallied with ours. One difference was that absolute exemption did not

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release a man from the universal obligation to compulsory labour.

Albert P. I. Cotterell writes in the *Friend* of January 6, 1922, that he has met in Buzuluk, in the province of Samara, members of a sect who are called Quakers, and who have a strong family likeness to the Quakers of England and America, from whom, according to their tradition, they originated. They number about a million. In the Czar's time 609 of them refused military service and were usually imprisoned for doing so. Some had been shot. Kerensky, on March 11, 1917, knocked off their chains and told them to go and register. They refused, and preferred to stay in prison, but were released nine days later. The Soviet Government had completely released them from military service, but had, in one hard case at least, been unable for a time to control a local authority. They finally, however, discovered and released the imprisoned man.

### 8. SCANDINAVIA.

(a) *Denmark*.—The organization here describes itself as composed of anti-militarists who were prepared to take the consequences. They were chiefly Socialists and Syndicalists. It was founded during the war, and its members were imprisoned. They hunger-struck, were forcibly fed, and many subsequently released. The maximum sentence was one and a half years. Some continue hunger-striking, as noted above by J. Giesen.

(b) *Sweden*.—There was no organization, but there have been large numbers of C.O.'s.

(c) *Norway*.—Religious objectors, irrespective of denomination, were granted absolute exemption if they could satisfy a military court of the genuineness of their claim. The Government provided a system of alternative service. Socialists were advised by their leaders to enter the Army in order to carry on propaganda and form Soldiers' Councils like the Soviets. Some refused to do this, and we have heard of one man being sentenced to twenty-four days' imprisonment.

## 9. SWITZERLAND.

So far as we know, there were only isolated cases of conscientious objection here. One which was published in *Le Chrétien Libre* was of an encouraging type. Jean Baudraz, a schoolmaster, was condemned to imprisonment as a pacifist C.O. But Swiss opinion was so roused that the General remitted the sentence, and when the military accused several pastors of being responsible for this eccentricity, four ministers wrote a strong and beautiful letter endorsing his action and supporting it by their own.<sup>1</sup>

## 10. THE UNITED STATES.

The story of conscription in the United States is too long to be treated fully here. It is, besides, to form the subject of a volume to be written, along with Roger Baldwin, by Norman Thomas, associate editor of *The Nation* of New York, and centrally concerned in the movement.<sup>2</sup> From him I have received a great part of the substance of these pages, and some is in his actual language. Some is from MS. communications, which were printed in the *Tribunal*. The Quaker part of the story is from material in chapters v., viii. and ix. of *A Service of Love in War Time*, by Rufus M. Jones, an account of the work of the American Friends' Service Committee, of which he was from the beginning, and still is, the indefatigable chairman.

Conscription in America began with national registration on June 5, 1917, it being found at the beginning of the war that the voluntary system was not providing enough recruits. In July a draft of 687,000 men was ordered under a Selective Conscription Act. The men were selected by lot under Local Boards, with certain powers of appeal. There was some opposition in Congress to the passage of the law, but it was easily overthrown under the pressure of the war-mind and of the supreme influence of the President. The Secretary of War added his personal assurance

<sup>1</sup> *Tribunal*, November 16, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> A critical book on the subject by Mr. Kellogg, an army officer, already exists.

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that brutalities such as had occurred in Great Britain would be avoided. We shall see how this was kept. The penalty for not registering was not more than a year's imprisonment in a civil prison.

At the beginning, the pacifist movement rose up against conscription hopefully and with considerable apparent strength. Socialist parties and Trade Unions and pacifists formed themselves into Leagues against Conscription and against Militarism, and were strongly supported from the Universities, particularly from Columbia University, New York City. It reminds one of the early hopeful days of the corresponding organizations in England. But on neither side of the sea would we then estimate the flood of frantic and feverish opinion in a nation at war, driven by the need for victory.

While many evaded registration, very few were courageous conscientious objectors. The usual policy for honest objectors was to register, but to state that they were objectors. According to the War Department about 65,000 made claims for non-combatant classification, presumably on the grounds of conscientious objection. Of these, 20,873 were afterwards inducted into service. Most of the rest would have been if the war had lasted longer.

Only about 4,000, however, persisted in their claim for exemption from either combatant or non-combatant service. It is a striking fact that in America the number of objectors of all sorts was so small. They would have to be multiplied by ten to reach the English proportion to population, and by a very large number to reach the proportion in New Zealand.

The rapid conversion to Militarism of men who had intended to be objectors was due to the pressure of public opinion. Even more than in England, people in America become mob-minded. Most men were converted by their friends before they got to camp. Others were converted in camp by ridicule, persuasion or fear. When C.O.'s began to go to camp the War Department issued a secret order providing that they be treated leniently, and segregated under officers of "tact and consideration." It must be said from the beginning, that an honest effort was made

to break men down by persuasion and force of camp sentiment rather than by actual brutality. However, as time dragged on, this policy ended. Soon the weaker men took ordinary combatant service, while another group were easily satisfied by non-combatant service. Some of the C.O.'s took Medical Corps service of a rather difficult and dangerous type.

The American Conscription Act gave or purported to give exemption only to members of recognized religious sects who bore an official Peace testimony, releasing thus from actual fighting Quakers, Mennonites, Dunkards and a few others.

As in England, conscription found Friends in America already active with relief work. They also had felt that their abstinence from fighting should be accompanied by voluntary national service. Only three months intervened in America between the declaration of war and the draft law for compulsory service, as against seventeen months in England. So that the unit that hoped to join the War Victims' Relief service of English Friends in France had not yet sailed. In the same month of July as the first draft was made one hundred young men, carefully selected from a much larger number of applicants, assembled at Haverford College to learn French and to train for sanitary or other service. The first difficulty was to get permission for them to go to France.

The draft law, in its exemption clause for special religious sects, concluded with the words "no person so exempted shall be exempted from service in any capacity that the President shall declare to be non-combatant." On reflection, one sees that this curious piece of literature means that the President—which in practice meant the War Office—should decide what they would permit an exempted man to do. As in England, the military interpretation of the Act went a long way to nullify it. The Provost-Marshal ruled that the men were to go with other men of their quota to a mobilization camp, where their duties were still left indefinite. It was also laid down that they were still in the military service of the United States. The President persistently delayed his decision as to what

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kind of work would be accepted by the Government. This was done for the same reason as severity was practised in England, in order to frighten possible claimants. The Friends' Service Committee was in constant and active communication with Washington, where the unwilling wheels went round very slowly, and where every officer was fully occupied with carrying on the war itself. Finally the members of the Haverford Unit were nearly all exempted by the Local Boards, corresponding to our Tribunals, and it sailed to Europe in September; its voyage, the forerunner of a long series of similar sailings, accompanied by heavy transmissions of money. Both processes are still going on. The men left behind were held as soldiers, yet they were not soldiers, nor treated as soldiers. The position was impossible. Although for many months the War Department tried to protect these men, the method they adopted made "hazing" of a rather brutal sort wellnigh inevitable.

Nearly all the young Friends left behind, if drafted, had gone to one of the camps as ordered. Their lines of action were varied and uncertain, corresponding to the variety we were familiar with in England. Some refused to drill, others consented to that but refused to carry arms. One accepted uniform but drew the line at the cap, which was, to his mind, a military emblem. Some refused all orders, including the salutation of officers. They had, indeed, gone so far in obedience that the right line was difficult for each of them to find. Disobedience was followed in due course in many camps by brutality. At Camp Cody, S. W. S. (one would like to know the names of these brave men) was beaten cruelly, and the corporal gouged his thumbs into his eyes whilst blood from his nose was made to run down his clothing, and he was kicked and knocked down during the process. For some weeks his eyesight was injured, but was ultimately restored. He was threatened with twenty-five years' imprisonment if he did not change, and the threat was a perfectly genuine one. He says:—"I have been stripped and scrubbed with a broom, put under the water-tap with my mouth held open, had rope round my neck pulled up choking tight for a bit, been fisted,

slapped, kicked ; I carried a bag of sand till I could hardly hold it and go, and then under a shower bath until pretty chilled. If this knowledge will do no good for others, thou may just burn this letter and let it go." . . . " I earnestly desire I may not falter to the weakening of the cause. I do not want my parents to know how I have been used until the battle is over."

At Camp Dodge, W. R. refused to salute, received hard labour, and refused to labour, particularly in the way of extra drills. He was kept in one corner of the guard-house, and not allowed to communicate with the others. He ate when the others had finished eating, often had only two meals a day, got no exercise ; and letters and visits were cut off for the most part. A Friend who finally got into the camp reported :—" W. R. showed a beautiful spirit ; he was very broken, and could hardly talk most of the time."

During the long months in camp, some of the most brutal things occurred, many of which have never been satisfactorily brought to light. One man committed suicide, not as an act of cowardice, but as, in his opinion, a dramatic protest against his treatment, which he hoped might lighten the lot of those who followed. Other men were prodded with bayonets, immersed in filth and the like. Assistant Secretary of War Keppel himself admitted that some of the objectors in camp received " pretty rough treatment." This was a mild statement. The ill-treatment was usually worse if the man was a foreigner, that is, did not speak English well, and of course there were many such.

• At length the President's ruling on non-combatant service was issued, in March 1918. This service included medical and ordinary non-combatant work in the Army, but not Friends' Relief Work ; nor any work of national importance outside the Army. The men in the camps who refused it, and who constituted the large majority of the objectors, were to be segregated in the camps, " and placed under the command of a specially qualified officer of tact and judgment, who will be instructed to impose no punitive hardship of any kind upon them, but not to

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allow their objections to be made the basis of any favour or consideration." It was thus hoped that persuasion and weariness of the idle futility to which they were condemned would bring many round; it had some effect in that way. Disobedience, however, frequently occurred as military orders clashed with conscience, and some of the cruelties that followed are detailed below. The segregation included all sorts of conscientious objectors, not only those who claimed a sectarian objection.

G. L. was sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment, and placed in military confinement in the Hole at Leavenworth for three weeks. For the first week he was chained to the door of his cell for nine hours a day, his arms were thrust through the bars and handcuffed on the outside. In spite of a small leak of compromise, through lack of mental clearness, the majority of the men held out. The Friends' Service Committee worked for them all the time, and some prison visiting was organized. The impossibility of the position was finally brought home to President Wilson, who, along with his Ministers, was all the time afraid of dealing justly and following the spirit of the Act, for fear it should induce others to become objectors.

An attempt was made, without success, to have the arrangements of the C.O.'s placed in the hands of a Committee of the Society of Friends, the Mennonites and the Dunkards. The only country, however, which has dared to follow this plan is the Bolshevik Government in Russia, as is mentioned above.

Ultimately it was decided that the conscientious objectors were to have "furlough" granted for agriculture or for relief work in France. The Act passed the Senate on March 9, 1918. A Board of Inquiry of three persons was sent round the camps to decide on the sincerity of the victims, apart from their religious affiliation. This corresponds to the Central Tribunal's wonderful sittings at Wormwood Scrubs. It is very curious to note how the military mind operated in analogous fashion on the two sides of the sea. The American Board was composed of serious, high-minded and kindly disposed men. By the beginning of July practically all the Quaker conscientious



objectors received, and accepted, this furlough, and went to Haverford College and to a large farm at Rosedale, to train for Europe.

What then about the Absolutists? Rufus Jones says of Friends that "a tiny few declined to accept any way out." Norman Thomas says there were none among Friends, but it is easier to miss a fact than to create it, and one named G. H. Hallett has since visited England. The contrast between this and the Absolutist attitude of so many Friends in England startles one at first sight. The difference was due to the fact that Friends in America are much more separate from the Socialist movement than is the case in England. Also there was no such body as the No-Conscription Fellowship in America, binding all the men together. This shows us how strong was the guiding and unifying effect of the Fellowship upon the movement in England.

It must also be remembered—and it is extremely important—that the work offered in America was worthy and adventurous service for the help of humanity in the war-stricken lands, and cannot be paralleled with the miserable fiasco of Dartmoor. Besides its utility, the work offered in France had the charm of travel and novelty to a man who became also a member of a unit composed of his own friends. The lamentable part of it, of course, was that the Socialist Absolutists were left alone to fight conscription regarded as a public issue, not as a purely individual testimony.

The President's order provided that objectors who would not accept non-combatant service should not be punished therefor, nor be made to don the uniform if they did not wish to. This order made comparatively little difference in camp, and in some cases seems never to have reached below the Divisional officers. There were many hitches in the machinery, and some men admitted to farm furlough were still kept for months in camp, where they received extremely bad treatment.

Moreover, impatient Army officers, without waiting for the Board of Inquiry, had court martialled and sentenced conscientious objectors to twenty and thirty-year terms as

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disobedient soldiers. Mennonites particularly were victims of this policy. At the end of the war it was discovered that over a hundred men, mostly Mennonites, were confined in Fort Leavenworth who by any reasonable interpretation of the President's own orders should have been admitted to farm furlough.

The men provided for by this executive order did not include the genuine Absolutist who felt that he could not take even farm furlough. In the summer of 1918 these men were one by one court martialled as disobedient soldiers and in many cases sentenced to death. But such sentences were promptly commuted, usually to twenty or thirty years' imprisonment.

So it came to pass by the late summer of 1918 that there were in the United States the following groups of conscientious objectors who were suffering more or less severely :—

- (a) Objectors still segregated in camps awaiting the determination of their case.
- (b) Objectors who had refused to register and were confined in civil prisons.
- (c) Some hundreds of objectors sentenced to the military prisons for long terms. These men included those sentenced contrary to the spirit of the President's order, and the genuine Absolutists.

Their sufferings were terrible. The tortures practised at Frenston, at Fort Leavenworth, at Fort Riley in Kansas, and on Alcatraz Island were not one whit less—indeed, rather worse—than those recorded from military prisons abroad in Chapter IV of this book. I am thankful to be able after reflection to spare the reader any complete recital of such doings.

Two typical extracts should perhaps find place. The following extract is taken from a diary kept at Fort Riley :—

“ . . . Kaplan, after refusing work, was similarly questioned by the officer, and likewise said that he could not stand ‘attention,’ nor do any work of a military nature. Thereupon his arms were tied, a rope fastened

round his neck, the free end being thrown over a rod above and held by one of the guards. He was ordered to stand 'attention.' Upon his refusal his feet were kicked from under him by the officer of the day and the prison sergeant; and finally the latter took the free end of the rope from the guard and pulled it, lifting Kaplan off his feet. When the latter's eyes began to bulge and his tongue to stick out, he was let down and asked if he would do some work. He again refused. The rope was then taken from his neck and fastened round one arm, between his elbow and shoulder. The rope was again pulled, and Kaplan lifted from the ground. The pain was intense, the arm was being forced out of joint, and he emitted loud, agonizing cries, imploring them to shoot him rather than torture him thus. While in this position he was again asked whether he would do some work, and he again refused. The Lieutenant then ordered that the hose be turned on his face. The force of the stream of water tended to hinder his breathing, and he began to choke. Asked now whether he would agree to work, he finally said he would polish up around his cell, whereupon the officer ordered him to be released."

The victims in the next case were Ivan Susseff and four other Russian Molokans.

"The Colonel gave orders to bring a fire hose. The spirit of God supported us and we were ready even to be shot down. When they found out that none of us would obey their orders, they commanded to turn on the water and put the fire hose against our faces. After being tortured like that for two hours, half dead we were dragged back to prison, where we thanked God for His mercy.

"A soldier told us to prepare our meal, but we refused and did not eat for eight days. At last the doctors came and told us we were going to Fort Riley. As we could not move, many soldiers packed up our things and put us on wagons, which carried us to the station. Now I am in the hospital and the others are in prison.

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"When we got here they began to torture us again. They dragged me like an animal with a rope round my neck. They peeled the skin off my neck. They shaved my head. They cut my ears. They tore my shirt to pieces and wanted to put me in a uniform. I did not count how many times they beat me. They pulled the hairs off my head like feathers. I was motionless. I only prayed God to take me from this world of horrors.

"Good-bye, my dears. Pray God to give me strength to stand all the pains of my soul and body."

The Russians did not yield to torture.

With the end of the war conscientious objectors, still segregated in camps, were rapidly demobilized. The terms for those who had refused to register automatically expired. The only real problem left concerned men serving twenty or thirty-year sentences in military prisons. And that problem was peculiarly severe, for some of them felt obliged for conscientious reasons to decline to work under military orders, even in prisons. Shortly before the Armistice the solitary cells at Fort Leavenworth were filled with such men. Their treatment was brutal in the extreme. They were kept in dark cells hardly bigger than closets and manacled in a standing position for eight or nine hours a day. They were kept constantly on a diet of bread and water. So severe was the censorship of mail that it was practically impossible to get out news of their fate. Finally, as a last desperate resort, a few American conscientious objectors, led by Evan Thomas, also refused to work in order to call attention to the evil.<sup>1</sup> At last news<sup>o</sup> began to leak out, and slowly enough public sentiment was aroused sufficiently to compel the Government, first to revoke the practice of manacling prisoners in solitary cells, and later to secure confinement in a special stockade for conscientious objectors whose spirit could not be broken by the solitary cells. These changes took place in the

<sup>1</sup> \* One of the most consistent of these objectors was Howard Moore, awarded a hero medal for having rescued a girl from drowning. He was in solitary confinement when the award was made!

period between December 5, 1918, and January 5, 1919. From that time on the lot of the conscientious objector was on the whole more free from brutality; but there were many lapses, during which in one military prison or another objectors were brutally treated. The War Department reviewed the sentences of men who ought in the beginning to have received farm furlough, and they were released. So that little by little the only conscientious objectors confined came to be the genuine Absolutists.

While the great majority of conscientious objectors acted on religious grounds, the majority of the Absolutists acted on political, economic or humanitarian grounds. The War Department for a long time tried to distinguish between objectors to all war and objectors to this war, but it was a principle which as time went on proved more and more difficult to sustain.

During 1919 the efforts of the sufferers' friends outside were directed towards a general amnesty. This both the President and the Secretary for War refused to consider. They pretended to deal with each case on its merits; an impossible task, which resulted in most glaringly unfair discrimination. They protested that they would never yield, but little by little they yielded, letting men out on the most haphazard methods. It should be added that all conscientious objectors profited by the reduction of extreme sentences imposed on military prisoners during the war.

The Socialist wife of a millionaire received a long sentence for advocating a policy of peace in a way which was quite commonly done in England. Even persons who had not invested in the war loans—and became conspicuous thereby from not wearing the investor's badge—were mobbed and boycotted, and dismissed from their posts. The rage and intolerance of the people knew no bounds, stimulated by the Hearst newspapers, which went one worse than the corresponding papers in England. Popular prejudice was so strong that the Government dared not release its prisoners except by driblets. Most remained in until after the liberation in England; and to the end it was done slowly and unostentatiously.

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By the summer of 1920 all were out of prison except a group who had been transferred from Fort Leavenworth and were confined in a sort of detention camp near Salt Lake, Utah, and another smaller group at Fort Alcatraz prison, near San Francisco. Towards this remnant the War Department hardened its heart, and it was only late in November 1920 that the last of them was discharged. The latter part of their confinement was under decent conditions. The most dramatic event connected with their release was the hunger-strike of Benjamin Salmon, a Roman Catholic, an objector to war on religious and economic grounds. To bring matters to a head he hunger-struck and was mechanically fed from July 13th to the liberation.

Some peculiar share of responsibility for this savage record must fall upon the singular obduracy of President Wilson and Secretary for War Baker. Both these gentlemen had been Liberals. Mr. Baker had been known as a pacifist.

Far more melancholy was the failure of the Church to grasp the issues involved. Even less than in England was there any considerable body of Church sentiment in behalf of justice. It was not the Churches who led even in the protest against brutality. And it would be the testimony of everyone who was concerned with the position of objectors that, with few exceptions, representatives of the Churches and the Y.M.C.A. were harder to deal with than military officers themselves. Labour also in America was slower than in England to ask for amnesty, although on the whole Labour awakened before the Church.

To summarize:—There were in the United States four thousand conscientious objectors known to the military. Of these all but five hundred accepted non-combatant or alternative service, alternative service being on farms or in the Friends' Reconstruction Unit. Many of these men suffered severely in camps before they were granted such service. Five hundred men were imprisoned in military prisons, the great majority of whom were religious objectors. These, however, were released as a rule more rapidly than the objectors on other grounds, and it was the latter whose cases came most prominently before the public.

## AUTHORITIES

THE bibliography of this recent story consists of fugitive literature, in periodical, leaflet, pamphlet and booklet form, with a few small books.

THE TRIBUNAL—the organ of the No-Conscription Fellowship; 182 numbers, from March 8, 1916, to January 8, 1920, containing 736 closely printed quarto pages—is the chief authority. It came out weekly till near the end, when such regularity ceased to be necessary. It is to be feared that few complete sets survive. They should be bound and preserved.

THE NEWS SHEET, the organ of the Home Office Camps for private circulation, ran to at least sixteen numbers before it was suppressed. They bear no date, but contain four excellent cartoons.

THE C.O.'S HANSARD, published by the N.C.F. A well got-up reprint of events of interest in the House, taken from the uncorrected daily *Hansard*. The seven numbers issued retrospectively cover from January 5, 1916, to July 15, 1916. The ninety currently issued numbers cover from July 17, 1916, to April 10, 1919. They are in 2 vols. and contain 1,152 pp. 8vo.

THE FRIEND, the Quaker weekly (Leominster), gave accounts of Tribunals, letters from prison, and other matters, from March 10, 1916, to September 12, 1919, in a long supplement. It is of the highest value.

### BOOKS.

I APPEAL UNTO CÆSAR, by Mrs. Henry Hobhouse, with introduction by Professor Gilbert Murray. (George Allen & Unwin. 1917. 1s.) This had a great sale.

PRISONERS OF HOPE, by Dr. Arthur S. Peake. A collection of articles in the *Primitive Methodist Leader* (September–December 1917). (George Allen & Unwin. 1s. 6d.)

HANDED OVER, by J. Scott Duckers, an autobiographical account, with foreword by T. Edmund Harvey, M.P. (C. W. Daniel. June 1917. 1s. 6d.)

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MADE FREE IN PRISON. Letters written from prison by E. Williamson Mason, with an introductory note by Edward Carpenter. (George Allen & Unwin. 1918. Cloth, 3s. 6d.)

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**ARMAGEDDON AND CALVARY**, by H. E. Holland, M.P. (See Appendix on New Zealand.)

**AN ENGLISH PRISON FROM WITHIN**, by Stephen Hobhouse. Preface by Prof. Gilbert Murray. (George Allen and Unwin. 1s.)

**MR. STERLING STICKS IT OUT**. A novel by Harold Begbie, of which the history of the hero is based more or less on that of Stephen Hobhouse. (Swarthmore Press. Cloth, 6s.) Suppressed by the Censor during the war.

**N.C.F. SOUVENIR, 1914-1919**. An attractive illustrated brochure of 86 pp. edited by Fenner Brockway. (5, York Buildings, Adelphi, W.C. 2. 1s.)

**CAROLS OF A CONVICT**. Humorous parodies written in prison by Allan M. Laing. (Headleys. 1s. 3d.)

**THE RECRUIT**. A one-act play written in a Guardroom and about Guardrooms, by Fenner Brockway. (National Labour Press. 1s. 1d.)

All are in paper backs if it is not stated otherwise.

The pamphlets and leaflets have been very numerous and valuable. They run to hundreds.

I have also had access to the Minutes and Papers of the N.C.F., the Friends' Service Committee and the Chaplains' Committee, to several MS. diaries and to extensive verbal information first hand, and I have drawn also upon my own experience.



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*Printed in Great Britain by*

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, THE GRESHAM PRESS, LONDON AND WOKING