


EMMELINE PANKHURST

SUFFRAGETTE

NOW A  
MAJOR FILM

A stylized illustration of Emmeline Pankhurst in profile, facing right. She is wearing a dark, long-sleeved dress and a sash with vertical stripes of purple, white, and green. She is holding a large white sign in her left hand and pointing with her right hand. The background features a white picket fence and green foliage. The ground is a solid purple color.

MY  
OWN  
STORY

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## About the Book

Emmeline Pankhurst grew up all too aware of the prevailing attitude of her day: that men were considered superior to women. When she was just fourteen she attended her first suffrage meeting, and returned home a confirmed suffragist. Throughout the course of her career she endured humiliation, prison, hunger strikes and the repeated frustration of her aims by men in power, but she rose to become a guiding light of the Suffragette movement. This is the story, in Pankhurst's own words, of her struggle for equality.

See also: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*



## About the Author

Emmeline Pankhurst was born in 1858 in Manchester, into a politically active family. She became interested in politics at a young age and a supporter of women's suffrage by the age of fourteen. As a teenager she attended school in Paris and on her return to Manchester she met and married Richard Pankhurst, a barrister twenty-four years her senior. Over the next ten years they had five children. Emmeline's interest in politics and involvement in the suffrage movement continued to develop and she was a member of the Women's Franchise League and later the Independent Labour Party. In 1903, frustrated by the lack of progress on securing votes for women, Pankhurst and several colleagues founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), a militant organisation devoted to securing votes for women by direct action. For the following twenty years, members of the WSPU, led by Pankhurst, endured prison and hunger strikes in their struggle to win the right to vote. Their activities were called to a halt by the start of the First World War but in 1918, the government gave voting rights to women over thirty. Emmeline died on 14 June 1928, shortly after women were granted equal voting rights with men.

EMMELINE PANKHURST

**My Own Story**

VINTAGE BOOKS

London

## Foreword

The closing paragraphs of this book were written in the late summer of 1914, when the armies of every great power in Europe were being mobilised for savage, unsparing, barbarous warfare—against one another, against small and unaggressive nations, against helpless women and children, against civilisation itself. How mild, by comparison with the despatches in the daily newspapers, will seem this chronicle of women's militant struggle against political and social injustice in one small corner of Europe. Yet let it stand as it was written, with peace—so-called, and civilisation, and orderly government as the background for heroism such as the world has seldom witnessed. The militancy of men, through all the centuries, has drenched the world with blood, and for these deeds of horror and destruction men have been rewarded with monuments, with great songs and epics. The militancy of women has harmed no human life save the lives of those who fought the battle of righteousness. Time alone will reveal what reward will be allotted to the women.

This we know, that in the black hour that has just struck in Europe, the men are turning to their women and calling on them to take up the work of keeping civilisation alive. Through all the harvest fields, in orchards and vineyards, women are garnering food for the men who fight, as well as for the children left fatherless by war. In the cities the women are keeping open the shops, they are driving trucks and trams, and are altogether attending to a multitude of business.

When the remnants of the armies return, when the commerce of Europe is resumed by men, will they forget the part the women so nobly played? Will they forget in England how women in all ranks of life put aside their own interests and organised, not only to nurse the wounded, care for the destitute, comfort the sick and lonely, but actually to maintain the existence of the nation? Thus far, it must be admitted, there are few indications that the English Government are mindful of the unselfish devotion manifested by the women. Thus far all Government schemes for overcoming unemployment have been directed towards the unemployment of men. The work of women, making garments, etc., has in some cases been taken away.

At the first alarm of war the militants proclaimed a truce, which was answered half-heartedly by the announcement that the Government would release all suffrage prisoners who would give an undertaking 'not to commit further crimes or outrages.' Since the truce had already been proclaimed, no suffrage prisoner deigned to reply to the Home Secretary's provision. A few days later, no doubt influenced by representations made to the Government by men and women of every political faith—many of them never having been supporters of revolutionary tactics—Mr McKenna announced in the House of Commons that it was the intention of the Government, within a few days, to release unconditionally, all suffrage prisoners. So ends, for the present, the war of women against men. As of old, the women become the nurturing mothers of men, their sisters and uncomplaining helpmates. The future lies far ahead, but let this preface and this volume close with the assurance that the struggle for the full enfranchisement of women has not been abandoned; it has simply, for the moment, been placed in abeyance. When the clash of arms ceases, when normal, peaceful, rational society resumes its functions, the demand will again be made. If it is not quickly granted, then once more the women will take up



the arms they today generously lay down. There can be no real peace in the world until woman, the mother half of the human family, is given liberty in the councils of the world.

BOOK ONE

THE MAKING OF A MILITANT

# 1

Those men and women are fortunate who are born at a time when a great struggle for human freedom is in progress. It is an added good fortune to have parents who take a personal part in the great movements of their time. I am glad and thankful that this was my case.

One of my earliest recollections is of a great bazaar which was held in my native city of Manchester, the object of the bazaar being to raise money to relieve the poverty of the newly emancipated negro slaves in the United States. My mother took an active part in this effort, and I, as a small child, was entrusted with a lucky bag by means of which I helped to collect money.

Young as I was—I could not have been older than five years—I knew perfectly well the meaning of the words slavery and emancipation. From infancy I had been accustomed to hear pro and con discussions of slavery and the American Civil War. Although the British government finally decided not to recognise the Confederacy, public opinion in England was sharply divided on the questions both of slavery and of secession. Broadly speaking, the propertied classes were pro-slavery, but there were many exceptions to the rule. Most of those who formed the circle of our family friends were opposed to slavery, and my father, Robert Goulden, was always a most ardent abolitionist. He was prominent enough in the movement to be appointed on a committee to meet and welcome Henry Ward Beecher when he arrived in England for a lecture tour. Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' was so great a favourite with my mother that she

used it continually as a source of bedtime stories for our fascinated ears. Those stories, told almost fifty years ago, are as fresh in my mind today as events detailed in the morning's papers. Indeed they are more vivid, because they made a much deeper impression on my consciousness. I can still definitely recall the thrill I experienced every time my mother related the tale of Eliza's race for freedom over the broken ice of the Ohio River, the agonizing pursuit, and the final rescue at the hands of the determined old Quaker. Another thrilling tale was the story of a negro boy's flight from the plantation of his cruel master. The boy had never seen a railroad train, and when, staggering along the unfamiliar railroad track, he heard the roar of an approaching train, the clattering car-wheels seemed to his strained imagination to be repeating over and over again the awful words, 'Catch a nigger—catch a nigger—catch a nigger—' This was a terrible story, and throughout my childhood, whenever I rode in a train, I thought of that poor runaway slave escaping from the pursuing monster.

These stories, with the bazaars and the relief funds and subscriptions of which I heard so much talk, I am sure made a permanent impression on my brain and my character. They awakened in me the two sets of sensations to which all my life I have most readily responded: first, admiration for that spirit of fighting and heroic sacrifice by which alone the soul of civilisation is saved; and next after that, appreciation of the gentler spirit which is moved to mend and repair the ravages of war.

I do not remember a time when I could not read, nor any time when reading was not a joy and a solace. As far back as my memory runs I loved tales, especially those of a romantic and idealistic character. 'Pilgrim's Progress' was an early favourite, as well as another of Bunyan's visionary romances, which does not seem to be as well known, his 'Holy War.' At nine I discovered the 'Odyssey' and very soon after that another classic which has remained all my life a

source of inspiration. This was Carlyle's 'French Revolution,' and I received it with much the same emotion that Keats experienced when he read Chapman's translation of Homer—'... like some watcher of the skies,  
When a new planet swims into his ken.'

I never lost that first impression, and it strongly affected my attitude toward events which were occurring around my childhood. Manchester is a city which has witnessed a great many stirring episodes, especially of a political character. Generally speaking, its citizens have been liberal in their sentiments, defenders of free speech and liberty of opinion. In the late sixties there occurred in Manchester one of those dreadful events that prove an exception to the rule. This was in connection with the Fenian Revolt in Ireland. There was a Fenian riot, and the police arrested the leaders. These men were being taken to the jail in a prison van. On the way the van was stopped and an attempt was made to rescue the prisoners. A man fired a pistol, endeavouring to break the lock of the van door. A policeman fell, mortally wounded, and several men were arrested and were charged with murder. I distinctly remember the riot, which I did not witness, but which I heard vividly described by my older brother. I had been spending the afternoon with a young playmate, and my brother had come after tea to escort me home. As we walked through the deepening November twilight he talked excitedly of the riot, the fatal pistol shot, and the slain policeman. I could almost see the man bleeding on the ground, while the crowd swayed and groaned around him.

The rest of the story reveals one of those ghastly blunders which justice not infrequently makes. Although the shooting was done without any intent to kill, the men were tried for murder and three of them were found guilty and hanged. Their execution, which greatly excited the citizens of Manchester, was almost the last, if not the last, public execution permitted to take place in the city. At the

time I was a boarding-pupil in a school near Manchester, and I spent my week-ends at home. A certain Saturday afternoon stands out in my memory, as on my way home from school I passed the prison where I knew the men had been confined. I saw that a part of the prison wall had been torn away, and in the great gap that remained were evidences of a gallows recently removed. I was transfixed with horror, and over me there swept the sudden conviction that that hanging was a mistake—worse, a crime. It was my awakening to one of the most terrible facts of life—that justice and judgment lie often a world apart.

I relate this incident of my formative years to illustrate the fact that the impressions of childhood often have more to do with character and future conduct than heredity or education. I tell it also to show that my development into an advocate of militancy was largely a sympathetic process. I have not personally suffered from the deprivations, the bitterness and sorrow which bring so many men and women to a realisation of social injustice. My childhood was protected by love and a comfortable home. Yet, while still a very young child, I began instinctively to feel that there was something lacking, even in my own home, some false conception of family relations, some incomplete ideal.

This vague feeling of mine began to shape itself into conviction about the time my brothers and I were sent to school. The education of the English boy, then as now, was considered a much more serious matter than the education of the English boy's sister. My parents, especially my father, discussed the question of my brothers' education as a matter of real importance. My education and that of my sister were scarcely discussed at all. Of course we went to a carefully selected girls' school, but beyond the facts that the head mistress was a gentlewoman and that all the pupils were girls of my own class, nobody seemed concerned. A girl's education at that time seemed to have for its prime object the art of 'making home attractive'—



presumably to migratory male relatives. It used to puzzle me to understand why I was under such a particular obligation to make home attractive to my brothers. We were on excellent terms of friendship, but it was never suggested to them as a duty that they make home attractive to me. Why not? Nobody seemed to know.

The answer to these puzzling questions came to me unexpectedly one night when I lay in my little bed waiting for sleep to overtake me. It was a custom of my father and mother to make the round of our bedrooms every night before going themselves to bed. When they entered my room that night I was still awake, but for some reason I chose to feign slumber. My father bent over me, shielding the candle flame with his big hand. I cannot know exactly what thought was in his mind as he gazed down at me, but I heard him say, somewhat sadly, 'What a pity she wasn't born a lad.'

My first hot impulse was to sit up in bed and protest that I didn't want to be a boy, but I lay still and heard my parents' footsteps pass on toward the next child's bed. I thought about my father's remark for many days afterward, but I think I never decided that I regretted my sex. However, it was made quite clear that men considered themselves superior to women, and that women apparently acquiesced in that belief.

I found this view of things difficult to reconcile with the fact that both my father and my mother were advocates of equal suffrage. I was very young when the Reform Act of 1866 was passed, but I very well remember the agitation caused by certain circumstances attending it. This Reform Act, known as the Household Franchise Bill, marked the first popular extension of the ballot in England since 1832. Under its terms, householders paying a minimum of ten pounds a year rental were given the Parliamentary vote. While it was still under discussion in the House of Commons, John Stuart Mill moved an amendment to the bill

to include women householders as well as men. The amendment was defeated, but in the act as passed the word 'man,' instead of the usual 'male person,' was used. Now, under another act of Parliament it had been decided that the word 'man' always included 'woman' unless otherwise specifically stated. For example, in certain acts containing rate-paying clauses, the masculine noun and pronoun are used throughout, but the provisions apply to women rate-payers as well as to men. So when the Reform Bill with the word 'man' in it became law, many women believed that the right of suffrage had actually been bestowed upon them. A tremendous amount of discussion ensued, and the matter was finally tested by a large number of women seeking to have their names placed upon the register as voters. In my city of Manchester 3,924 women, out of a total of 4,215 possible women voters, claimed their votes, and their claim was defended in the law courts by eminent lawyers, including my future husband, Dr Pankhurst. Of course the women's claim was settled adversely in the courts, but the agitation resulted in a strengthening of the woman-suffrage agitation all over the country.

I was too young to understand the precise nature of the affair, but I shared in the general excitement. From reading newspapers aloud to my father I had developed a genuine interest in politics, and the Reform Bill presented itself to my young intelligence as something that was going to do the most wonderful good to the country. The first election after the bill became law was naturally a memorable occasion. It is chiefly memorable to me because it was the first one in which I ever participated. My sister and I had just been presented with new winter frocks, green in colour, and made alike, after the custom of proper British families. Every girl child in those days wore a red flannel petticoat, and when we first put on our new frocks I was struck with the fact that we were wearing red and green—

the colours of the Liberal Party. Since our father was a Liberal, of course the Liberal Party ought to carry the election, and I conceived a brilliant scheme for helping its progress. With my small sister trotting after me, I walked the better part of a mile to the nearest polling-booth. It happened to be in a rather rough factory district, but we did not notice that. Arrived there, we two children picked up our green skirts to show our scarlet petticoats, and brimful of importance, walked up and down before the assembled crowds to encourage the Liberal vote. From this eminence we were shortly snatched by outraged authority in the form of a nursery-maid. I believe we were sent to bed into the bargain, but I am not entirely clear on this point.

I was fourteen years old when I went to my first suffrage meeting. Returning from school one day, I met my mother just setting out for the meeting, and I begged her to let me go along. She consented, and without stopping to lay my books down I scampered away in my mother's wake. The speeches interested and excited me, especially the address of the great Miss Lydia Becker, who was the Susan B. Anthony of the English movement, a splendid character and a truly eloquent speaker. She was the secretary of the Manchester committee, and I had learned to admire her as the editor of the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, which came to my mother every week. I left the meeting a conscious and confirmed suffragist.

I suppose I had always been an unconscious suffragist. With my temperament and my surroundings I could scarcely have been otherwise. The movement was very much alive in the early seventies, nowhere more so than in Manchester, where it was organised by a group of extraordinary men and women. Among them were Mr and Mrs Jacob Bright, who were always ready to champion the struggling cause. Mr Jacob Bright, a brother of John Bright, was for many years member of Parliament for Manchester, and to the day of his death was an active supporter of

woman suffrage. Two especially gifted women, besides Miss Becker, were members of the committee. These were Mrs Alice Cliff Scatcherd and Miss Wolstentholm, now the venerable Mrs Wolstentholm-Elmy. One of the principal founders of the committee was the man whose wife, in later years, I was destined to become, Dr Richard Marsden Pankhurst.

When I was fifteen years old I went to Paris, where I was entered as a pupil in one of the pioneer institutions in Europe for the higher education of girls. This school, one of the founders of which was Madame Edmond Adam, who was and is still a distinguished literary figure, was situated in a fine old house in the Avenue de Neuilly. It was under the direction of Mlle Marchef-Girard, a woman distinguished in education, and who afterward was appointed government inspector of schools in France. Mlle Marchef-Girard believed that girls' education should be quite as thorough and even more practical than the education boys were receiving at that time. She included chemistry and other sciences in her courses, and in addition to embroidery she had her girls taught bookkeeping. Many other advanced ideas prevailed in this school, and the moral discipline which the pupils received was, to my mind, as valuable as the intellectual training. Mlle Marchef-Girard held that women should be given the highest ideals of honour. Her pupils were kept to the strictest principles of truth-telling and candour. Myself she understood and greatly benefited by an implicit trust which I am sure I could not have betrayed, even had I felt for her less real affection.

My roommate in this delightful school was an interesting young girl of my own age, Noemie Rochefort, daughter of that great Republican, Communist, journalist, and swordsman, Henri Rochefort. This was very shortly after the Franco-Prussian War, and memories of the Empire's fall and of the bloody and disastrous Commune were very keen

in Paris. Indeed my roommate's illustrious father and many others were then in exile in New Caledonia for participation in the Commune. My friend Noemie was torn with anxiety for her father. She talked of him constantly, and many were the blood-curdling accounts of daring and of patriotism to which I listened. Henri Rochefort was, in fact, one of the moving spirits of the Republican movement in France, and after his amazing escape in an open boat from New Caledonia, he lived through many years of political adventures of the most lively and picturesque character. His daughter and I remained warm friends long after our school-days ended, and my association with her strengthened all the liberal ideas I had previously acquired.

I was between eighteen and nineteen when I finally returned from school in Paris and took my place in my father's home as a finished young lady. I sympathised with and worked for the woman-suffrage movement, and came to know Dr Pankhurst, whose work for woman suffrage had never ceased. It was Dr Pankhurst who drafted the first enfranchisement bill, known as the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill, and introduced into the House of Commons in 1870 by Mr Jacob Bright. The bill advanced to its second reading by a majority vote of thirty-three, but it was killed in committee by Mr Gladstone's peremptory orders. Dr Pankhurst, as I have already said, with another distinguished barrister, Lord Coleridge, acted as counsel for the Manchester women, who tried in 1868 to be placed on the register as voters. He also drafted the bill giving married women absolute control over their property and earnings, a bill which became law in 1882.

My marriage with Dr Pankhurst took place in 1879.

I think we cannot be too grateful to the group of men and women who, like Dr Pankhurst, in those early days lent the weight of their honoured names to the suffrage movement in the trials of its struggling youth. These men did not wait until the movement became popular, nor did they hesitate

until it was plain that women were roused to the point of revolt. They worked all their lives with those who were organising, educating, and preparing for the revolt which was one day to come. Unquestionably those pioneer men suffered in popularity for their feminist views. Some of them suffered financially, some politically. Yet they never wavered.

My married life lasted through nineteen happy years. Often I have heard the taunt that suffragists are women who have failed to find any normal outlet for their emotions, and are therefore soured and disappointed beings. This is probably not true of any suffragist, and it is most certainly not true of me. My home life and relations have been as nearly ideal as possible in this imperfect world. About a year after my marriage my daughter Christabel was born, and in another eighteen months my second daughter Sylvia came. Two other children followed, and for some years I was rather deeply immersed in my domestic affairs.

I was never so absorbed with home and children, however, that I lost interest in community affairs. Dr Pankhurst did not desire that I should turn myself into a household machine. It was his firm belief that society as well as the family stands in need of women's services. So while my children were still in their cradles I was serving on the executive committee of the Women's Suffrage Society, and also on the executive board of the committee which was working to secure the Married Women's Property Act. This act having passed in 1882, I threw myself into the suffrage work with renewed energy. A new Reform Act, known as the County Franchise Bill, extending the suffrage to farm labourers, was under discussion, and we believed that our years of educational propaganda work had prepared the country to support us in a demand for a women's suffrage amendment to the bill. For several years we had been holding the most splendid meetings in cities



all over the kingdom. The crowds, the enthusiasm, the generous response to appeals for support, all these seemed to justify us in our belief that women's suffrage was near. In fact, in 1884, when the County Franchise Bill came before the country, we had an actual majority in favour of suffrage in the House of Commons.

But a favourable majority in the House of Commons by no means insures the success of any measure. I shall explain this at length when I come to our work of opposing candidates who have avowed themselves suffragists, a course which has greatly puzzled our American friends. The Liberal Party was in power in 1884, and a great memorial was sent to the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable William E. Gladstone, asking that a women's suffrage amendment to the County Franchise Bill be submitted to the free and unbiased consideration of the House. Mr Gladstone curtly refused, declaring that if a women's suffrage amendment should be carried, the Government would disclaim responsibility for the bill. The amendment was submitted nevertheless, but Mr Gladstone would not allow it to be freely discussed, and he ordered Liberal members to vote against it. What we call a whip was sent out against it, a note virtually commanding party members to be on hand at a certain hour to vote against the women's amendment. Undismayed, the women tried to have an independent suffrage bill introduced, but Mr Gladstone so arranged Parliamentary business that the bill never even came up for discussion.

I am not going to write a history of the woman suffrage movement in England prior to 1903, when the Women's Social and Political Union was organised. That history is full of repetitions of just such stories as the one I have related. Gladstone was an implacable foe of woman suffrage. He believed that women's work and politics lay in service to men's parties. One of the shrewdest acts of Mr Gladstone's career was his disruption of the suffrage

organisation in England. He accomplished this by substituting 'something just as good,' that something being Women's Liberal Associations. Beginning in 1881 in Bristol, these associations spread rapidly through the country and, in 1887, became a National Women's Liberal Federation. The promise of the Federation was that by allying themselves with men in party politics, women would soon earn the right to vote. The avidity with which the women swallowed this promise, left off working for themselves, and threw themselves into the men's work was amazing.

The Women's Liberal Federation is an organisation of women who believe in the principles of the Liberal party. (The somewhat older Primrose League is a similar organisation of women who adhere to Conservative party principles.) Neither of these organisations have woman suffrage for their object. They came into existence to uphold party ideas and to work for the election of party candidates.

I am told that women in America have recently allied themselves with political parties, believing, just as we did, that such action would break down opposition to suffrage by showing the men that women possess political ability, and that politics is work for women as well as men. Let them not be deceived. I can assure the American women that our long alliance with the great parties, our devotion to party programmes, our faithful work at elections, never advanced the suffrage cause one step. The men accepted the services of the women, but they never offered any kind of payment.

As far as I am concerned, I did not delude myself with any false hopes in the matter. I was present when the Women's Liberal Federation came into existence. Mrs Gladstone presided, offering the meeting many consolatory words for the absence of 'our great leader,' Mr Gladstone, who of course had no time to waste on a gathering of women. At Mrs Jacob Bright's request I joined the

Federation. At this stage of my development I was a member of the Fabian Society, and I had considerable faith in the permeating powers of its mild socialism. But I was already fairly convinced of the futility of trusting to political parties. Even as a child I had begun to wonder at the *naïve* faith of party members in the promises of their leaders. I well remember my father returning home from political meetings, his face aglow with enthusiasm. 'What happened, father?' I would ask, and he would reply triumphantly, 'Ah! We passed the resolution.'

'Then you'll get your measure through the next session,' I predicted.

'I won't say that,' was the usual reply. 'Things don't always move as quickly as that. But we passed the resolution.'

Well, the suffragists, when they were admitted into the Women's Liberal Federation must have felt that they had passed their resolution. They settled down to work for the party and to prove that they were as capable of voting as the recently enfranchised farm labourers. Of course a few women remained loyal to suffrage. They began again on the old educational lines to work for the cause. Not one woman took counsel with herself as to how and why the agricultural labourers had won their franchise. They had won it, as a matter of fact, by burning hay-ricks, rioting, and otherwise demonstrating their strength in the only way that English politicians can understand. The threat to march a hundred thousand men to the House of Commons unless the bill was passed played its part also in securing the agricultural labourer his political freedom. But no woman suffragist noticed that. As for myself, I was too young politically to learn the lesson then. I had to go through years of public work before I acquired the experience and the wisdom to know how to wring concessions from the English Government. I had to hold public office. I had to go behind the scenes in the

government schools, in the workhouses and other charitable institutions; I had to get a close-hand view of the misery and unhappiness of a man-made world, before I reached the point where I could successfully revolt against it. It was almost immediately after the collapse of the woman suffrage movement in 1884 that I entered upon this new phase of my career.

In 1885, a year after the failure of the third women's suffrage bill, my husband, Dr Pankhurst, stood as the Liberal candidate for Parliament in Rotherhithe, a riverside constituency of London. I went through the campaign with him, speaking and canvassing to the best of my ability. Dr Pankhurst was a popular candidate, and unquestionably would have been returned but for the opposition of the Home-Rulers. Parnell was in command, and his settled policy was opposition to all Government candidates. So, in spite of the fact that Dr Pankhurst was a staunch upholder of home rule, the Parnell forces were solidly opposed to him, and he was defeated. I remember expressing considerable indignation, but my husband pointed out to me that Parnell's policy was absolutely right. With his small party he could never hope to win home rule from a hostile majority, but by constant obstruction he could in time wear out the Government, and force it to surrender. That was a valuable political lesson, one that years later I was destined to put into practice.

The following year found us living in London, and, as usual, interesting ourselves with labour matters and other social movements. This year was memorable for a great strike of women working in the Bryant and May match factories. I threw myself into this strike with enthusiasm, working with the girls and with some women of prominence, among these the celebrated Mrs Annie Besant. The strike was a successful one, the girls winning substantial improvements in their working conditions.

It was a time of tremendous unrest, of labour agitations, of strikes and lockouts. It was a time also when a most stupid reactionary spirit seemed to take possession of the Government and the authorities. The Salvation Army, the Socialists, the trade-unionists—in fact, all bodies holding outdoor meetings—were made special objects of attack. As a protest against this policy a Law and Liberty League was formed in London, and an immense Free Speech meeting was held in Trafalgar Square, John Burns and Cunningham Graham being the principal speakers. I was present at this meeting, which resulted in a bloody riot between the police and the populace. The Trafalgar Square Riot is historic, and to it Mr John Burns owes, in large part, his subsequent rise to political eminence. Both John Burns and Cunningham Graham served prison sentences for the part they played in the riot, but they gained fame, and they did much to establish the right of free speech for English men. English women are still contending for that right.

In 1890 my last child was born in London. I now had a family of five young children, and for a time I was less active in public work. On the retirement of Mrs Annie Besant from the London School Board I had been asked to stand as candidate for the vacancy, but although I should have enjoyed the work, I decided not to accept this invitation. The next year, however, a new suffrage association, the Women's Franchise League, was formed, and I felt it my duty to become affiliated with it. The League was preparing a new suffrage bill, the provisions of which I could not possibly approve, and I joined with old friends, among whom were Mrs Jacob Bright, Mrs Wolstentholm-Elmy, who was a member of the London School Board, and Mrs Stanton Blatch, then resident in England, in an effort to substitute the original bill drafted by Dr Pankhurst. As a matter of fact, neither of the bills was introduced into Parliament that year. Mr (now Lord) Haldane, who had the measure in charge, introduced one



of his own drafting. It was a truly startling bill, royally inclusive in its terms. It not only enfranchised all women, married and unmarried, of the householding classes, but it made them eligible to all offices under the Crown. The bill was never taken seriously by the Government, and indeed it was never intended that it should be, as we were later made to understand. I remember going with Mrs Stanton Blatch to the law courts to see Mr Haldane, and to protest against the introduction of a measure that had not the remotest chance of passing.

‘Ah, that bill,’ said Haldane, ‘is for the future.’

All their woman suffrage bills are intended for the future, a future so remote as to be imperceptible. We were beginning to understand this even in 1891. However, as long as there was a bill, we determined to support it. Accordingly, we canvassed the members, distributed a great deal of literature, and organised and addressed meetings. We not only made speeches ourselves, but we induced friendly members of Parliament to go on our platforms. One of these meetings, held in an East End Radical club, was addressed by Mr Haldane and a young man who accompanied him. This young man, Sir Edward Grey, then in the beginning of his career, made an eloquent plea for woman’s suffrage. That Sir Edward Grey should, later in life, become a bitter foe of woman’s suffrage need astonish no one. I have known many young Englishmen who began their political life as suffrage speakers and who later became anti-suffragists or traitorous ‘friends’ of the cause. These young and aspiring statesmen have to attract attention in some fashion, and the espousal of advanced causes, such as labour or women’s suffrage, seems an easy way to accomplish that end.

Well, our speeches and our agitation did nothing at all to assist Mr Haldane’s impossible bill. It never advanced beyond the first reading.

Our London residence came to an end in 1893. In that year we returned to our Manchester home, and I again took up the work of the Suffrage Society. At my suggestion the members began to organise their first out-of-door meetings, and we continued these until we succeeded in working up a great meeting that filled Free Trade Hall, and overflowed into and crowded a smaller hall near at hand. This marked the beginning of a campaign of propaganda among working people, an object which I had long desired to bring about.

And now began a new and, as I look back on it, an absorbingly interesting stage of my career. I have told how our leaders in the Liberal Party had advised the women to prove their fitness for the Parliamentary franchise by serving in municipal offices, especially the unsalaried offices. A large number of women had availed themselves of this advice, and were serving on Boards of Guardians, on school boards, and in other capacities. My children now being old enough for me to leave them with competent nurses, I was free to join these ranks. A year after my return to Manchester I became a candidate for the Board of Poor Law Guardians. Several weeks before, I had contested unsuccessfully for a place on the school board. This time, however, I was elected, heading the poll by a very large majority.

For the benefit of American readers I shall explain something of the operation of our English Poor Law. The duty of the law is to administer an act of Queen Elizabeth, one of the greatest reforms effected by that wise and humane monarch. When Elizabeth came to the throne she found England, the Merrie England of contemporary poets, in a state of appalling poverty. Hordes of people were literally starving to death, in wretched hovels, in the streets, and at the very gates of the palace. The cause of all this misery was the religious reformation under Henry VIII, and the secession from Rome of the English Church. King Henry, it is known, seized all the Church lands, the abbeys

and the convents, and gave them as rewards to those nobles and favourites who had supported his policies. But in taking over the Church's property the Protestant nobles by no means assumed the Church's ancient responsibilities of lodging wayfarers, giving alms, nursing the sick, educating youths, and caring for the young and the superannuated. When the monks and the nuns were turned out of their convents these duties devolved on no one. The result, after the brief reign of Edward VI and the bloody one of Queen Mary, was the social anarchy inherited by Elizabeth.

This great queen and great woman, perceiving that the responsibility for the poor and the helpless rightfully rests on the community, caused an act to be passed creating in the parishes public bodies to deal with local conditions of poverty. The Board of Poor Law Guardians disburses for the poor the money coming from the Poor Rates (taxes), and some additional moneys allowed by the local government board, the president of which is a cabinet minister. Mr John Burns is the present incumbent of the office. The Board of Guardians has control of the institution we call the workhouse. You have, I believe, almshouses, or poorhouses, but they are not quite so extensive as our workhouses, which are all kinds of institutions in one. We had, in my workhouse, a hospital with nine hundred beds, a school with several hundred children, a farm, and many workshops.

When I came into office I found that the law in our district, Chorlton, was being very harshly administered. The old board had been made up of the kind of men who are known as rate savers. They were guardians, not of the poor but of the rates, and, as I soon discovered, not very astute guardians even of money. For instance, although the inmates were being very poorly fed, a frightful waste of food was apparent. Each inmate was given each day a certain weight of food, and bread formed so much of the

ration that hardly anyone consumed all of his portion. In the farm department pigs were kept on purpose to consume this surplus of bread, and as pigs do not thrive on a solid diet of stale bread the animals fetched in the market a much lower price than properly fed farm pigs. I suggested that, instead of giving a solid weight of bread in one lump, the loaf be cut in slices and buttered with margarine, each person being allowed all that he cared to eat. The rest of the board objected, saying that our poor charges were very jealous of their rights, and would suspect in such an innovation an attempt to deprive them of a part of their ration. This was easily overcome by the suggestion that we consult the inmates before we made the change. Of course the poor people consented, and with the bread that we saved we made puddings with milk and currants, to be fed to the old people of the workhouse. These old folks I found sitting on backless forms, or benches. They had no privacy, no possessions, not even a locker. The old women were without pockets in their gowns, so they were obliged to keep any poor little treasures they had in their bosoms. Soon after I took office we gave the old people comfortable Windsor chairs to sit in, and in a number of ways we managed to make their existence more endurable.

These, after all, were minor benefits. But it does gratify me when I look back and remember what we were able to do for the children of the Manchester workhouse. The first time I went into the place I was horrified to see little girls seven and eight years old on their knees scrubbing the cold stones of the long corridors. These little girls were clad, summer and winter, in thin cotton frocks, low in the neck and short sleeved. At night they wore nothing at all, night dresses being considered too good for paupers. The fact that bronchitis was epidemic among them most of the time had not suggested to the guardians any change in the fashion of their clothes. There was a school for the