

"Coward Conscience."

(By PHILLIPA MACDOUGALL).

"They have tied the World in a tether,
They have bought over God with a fee,
But while three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three."—*Swinburne.*

In the final Commons stage of the new Military Service Act, Sir Frederick Banbury endeavoured to make the tenets of a man's church the only test of the machine which is responsible for the existing Hell upon Earth. That is to say, no man should have a right to plead his own conscience, but only the conscience of his religious denomination, which itself only exists to collect into one body men whose individual and personal convictions make them see fit to join in the pursuit of one Truth! It was too priceless an idea, even for a British House of Commons;

One of the most difficult experiences we anti-militarists have had is to convince people that it is the individual conscience of each man and his own reasoning power which produces his objection, not any blind obedience to the arbitrary dictate of some outside will, and this is what the military authorities and the tribunals, apart from their other ravings, have utterly failed to understand. When a canvasser called at a certain house, in the early days of the Derby Scheme and was told that the man he had come to see was a prominent member of the Society of Friends, he apologised most sweepingly and profusely for having troubled the gentleman and intimated that he quite realised that the Quaker conscience could not brook Military Service. If the canvasser had found an International Socialist, in the house next door, who refused, as a believer in Universal Brotherhood to become a slayer of his fellows, it is doubtful whether the hero from the recruiting office would have paid the same deference to the objector's conscience.

Yet, wherein precisely lies the difference between the motives which actuate the various types of conscientious objector? One man's conscience—if you will, with his reasoning power added to it, for there is no sharp cleavage between the two—tells him that this war is the outcome of the same old grabbing ambitions of the governing classes that have enslaved the people of all countries. He knows that the war he has to wage is not against his fellow-worker in Germany, but against the overwhelming, damning force, under which the powers-that-be in all countries, are waiting to crush him. Free, happy children are born to German mothers, as they are to British mothers: these are by nature destined to become honest, contented men, recognising and tolerating each other in their respective spheres. And then comes the German Imperial Government, saying to the one "You shall fight and slay your brother man, for I will it and your country demands it: go, it is your duty!" And to the other comes the "Call to Arms," the "What-did-daddy-do-in-the-great-war" poster, the Derby canvasser, the "Single Men First Campaign," and then Conscription. And they all joined hands, and with crocodile tears rolling down their cheeks, assured the bewildered individual that his King and Country are the only two things his mind has room for, and that he must proceed to go and slay his fellow man, not because there is any reasonable ground for his doing so, but because it is his "duty." And the objector sees through it all, sees that while so many thousands of his countrymen have honestly thought that it was their business to go to the war, that all this "patriotism" and "right" and "duty" lead to nothing but one universal graveyard, into which the world is pouring itself in a vast torrent. The conscientious objector is the one rock that stands firm against the onrush of the torrent. His soul is free, though the price of liberty may yet be death for the body.

Scarcely less misunderstood is the attitude of the Christian objector. The belligerents are mostly Christian nations, presumably looking for the reign of their master, yet when a man dares to believe that he is literally told to love his enemies and to do good to them that hate him, is ready to act upon his convictions and to suffer for his faith, he is promptly called a "slacker" and a "shirker" from the very pulpits where Christ is preached. A man's views on Tariff Reform cannot be changed by punching his head. The analogy surely holds good in the case of the objector's views on war. A moral wrong, the objector claims, cannot be overcome by physical force. War, which arises out of an accumulation of moral evils, cannot be ended by individual armies endeavouring to "crush" one another.

The Christian objector is told that we went into this war with God on our side and moral right at our backs. Moral right!—backed up by force of arms, by every diabolical instrument of slaughter, and now, the conscripted bodies of millions of men! And men can submit to all this, can glory in it even, in the name of the Lowly Galilean!!! The Christian pacifist will conquer, even as his master conquered; it shall be the triumph of love, not the triumph of fear. Fear lead all these nations to be bristling with bayonets and smouldering with gunfires, that at last no man could hold in check. Fear is inducing the peoples of all countries to surrender their every liberty and every privilege, lest they come to a more fearful state than that in which they already are! Fear is daily slaughtering thousands of men—lest a more fearful slaughter come in a little while. Fear will keep up a degraded, conscript nation when the powers that be have had enough of this. There is only one remedy for it all; substitute love for fear! Realise that your "enemy" is a man with a soul as noble

and as precious as your own; understand that he is your brother, instead of regarding him as something alien and apart; trust him as a fellow-man, instead of spending your time furtively watching to see whether he has any means of injuring you. But the pacifist is told that all this is Utopian and impracticable. So then were the actions of the Lord the parsons profess to serve.

Probably each one of us has a different conception of the end for which we are fighting militarism. Yet in Christian pacifism, in socialist idealism, in purely philosophic or materialistic convictions of the wicked uselessness of the whole affair, and in every other motive that actuates the conscientious objector is the striving towards one and the same ideal. To have an ideal is purely Love—and Love is God.

Henry Sara.

AN APPRECIATION.

(By P. W. HOWARD).

Since the date of his arrest comrade Sara has fought a great fight. His indomitable spirit remains unbroken. He has remained true to the spirit of the International in spite of the great physical and mental suffering he has undergone during the past two months.

Those of us who knew him, both personally and as a public speaker and writer, are not surprised at his present stand. We felt that we could trust him implicitly whatever happened, and we are not now disappointed.

There are many propagandists as great as he—many who could secure as sympathetic an audience—but I very much doubt if any succeeded in obtaining a reputation such as his, in so short a time.

About the middle of February we at Finsbury Park suffered rather a severe "smash up" at the hands of press-incensed hooligans, which though serious in its immediate effect, secured us sympathy and support from all sections of the movement.

Amongst other offers, we had a letter from comrade Sara, declaring his willingness to speak for us whenever we cared to avail ourselves of his services. We closed with his offer, and the next Sunday he spoke for us.

I think we were all surprised at the remarkable change that had occurred in him during the four or five months when we had lost sight of him. From the calm dispassionate debater, speaking on the defensive, he had developed into the passionate orator.

Many a time, after he had finished speaking, I have seen khaki-armleters shamefacedly slip their badges into their pockets, and then demonstratively cheer him to the echo.

Well do I remember the first Sunday he spoke for us of the "Herald League." The conditions were by no means ideal. The air seemed charged with excitement. It was the first meeting after our "smash up," and anything was likely to happen.

Our chairman had spoken warily; we thought he was wise not to mention the War. Sara stepped upon the platform. His first words startled us!

"I think," he commenced, "the most imperative thing for us to do at the moment, as Socialists, is to proclaim our definite antagonism to war." His voice reached to the ends of the crowd, but there was not a murmur of protest. This was remarkable, as only the previous Sunday this same audience (or at least part of it) had smashed our platform, and chased our speakers from the Park. Why was it? I really do not know, unless it was his utter fearlessness that appealed to them. By his personality, he seemed, in some inexplicable way, to dominate and overawe his audience. I have seen him change a snarling hostile mob into a quiet appreciative audience in the space of a few minutes. This he did not do by merely shouting them down, but just by the use of half-a-dozen apt sentences. Many speakers can only keep a hostile crowd in subjection so long as they continue speaking; directly they stop their influence seems to be lost. With Sara it was different. He would frequently keep his audience waiting a full minute whilst he lazily searched for a newspaper cutting appertaining to the point under discussion.

He was a great humorist, and would set his audience rocking with laughter before he had been upon the platform a few minutes. He never got out of temper, though frequently even those of us who knew his style thought for a few moments he had.

Individuals sometimes would make an interjection to the effect that he was a coward for not joining the army. Like a flash he would swerve round upon his platform, apparently in a towering rage. In bitter denunciatory language he would answer the interjection, and then almost in the middle of a sentence his head would go back, and he would give vent to deep throaty laughter. That laugh of his was infectious; even his opponents had to laugh too.

At the Sunday meeting previous to his arrest he was asked by a Canadian, if the fact that so many men had joined the Army voluntarily was not sufficient to prove that this war was a just one. He made the obvious reply that many men had not joined voluntarily, but had been forced into the army because of economic pressure. A section of the audience, evidently intent upon smashing up the meeting immediately set up a howl of assumed indignation. Epithets such as: "You dirty dog!" "Withdraw!" "Come down!" were shouted at him. He refused to withdraw his statement; he even refused to qualify it. He repeated it again more vehemently. They were set upon smashing up the meeting, so they still continued to howl.

Other speakers might have acted more diplomatically, and for expediency sake, would have either withdrawn or qualified such a statement. Not so Sara. He refused again to withdraw. At last there was an organised rush upon the platform, and something like a free fight went on round its base. All the time Sara continued speaking, fully aware that any moment the platform might be pulled from underneath him. His fearlessness appealed to the majority of the audience with the result that they so roughly handled the interrupters, that a rush has never been attempted on our platform since.

Two days later Sara was arrested as one amenable to the terms of the Military Service Act, and Finsbury Park thus lost one of the finest propagandists it ever had. We never really realised how popular our friend was till then; wherever we go we are met with the question:—"How is Sara getting on?" On trams, buses, in the street, at Socialist and Trade Union meetings we are stopped—frequently by people we have never spoken to before—with enquiries concerning him. They all testify to his great sincerity, and express the wish that he will soon be with us again.

The objects of putting these facts and impressions upon paper, is to let readers of the "Spur," know what kind of men are fighting the battle, alone in jail, against Capitalist Tyranny and Military Despotism. May they take up the work which Sara and others have so nobly begun with increasing vigour and determination.

Instead of an Editorial.

(By ROSE WITCOP).

With a knowledge of the difficulties likely to confront me, borne of past experience—I assume the responsibilities of publication with a deal of confidence and determination—till such time when the Editor may return to his post.

With the incarceration of our comrade the mainstay of the *Spur* has been removed. A considerable number of the acknowledgements which have from time to time appeared in the "Deficit Fund" as donations have been lecture fees to which he was personally entitled, but which he preferred to put to the up-keep of this journal. That loss will need to be made up by the generosity of comrades, if the *Spur* is to live through this period of crisis. As we intend it should.

We have been asked what are our plans, and must confess to having no definite plans cut and dried. Our first and chief thought must be for the *Spur*. Our next concern will be to reprint "Socialism and War," which has had so large an influence, and for which the demand is still great. It is now entirely out of print but must not be allowed to remain so. Later, we must publish the long-over-due "Life of Carlile" which has been in the printers hands for some long time. Historically "The Carlile period" is so similar to our own—that nothing could be more effective from the propaganda viewpoint than its present production. To publish it at once as a 7d. book would be the best tribute we could pay to our comrade in prison, the most effective protest we could offer against his persecution.

Very great is the need for a fund to help our comrades who are sacrificing their liberty and their strength in defence of a country's traditions. It is urgently important to keep them supplied with the means of communicating with the outside world whenever possible, and also to communicate with them. It is essential at times to pay large railway fares in order to keep in personal touch, and get personal knowledge of their treatment, and it is necessary also to send them a little money occasionally. Daily our band of outside fighters grows smaller, and daily our work becomes more difficult. Without appealing to the comrades who are left, I expect them to show their solidarity, and their sympathy by sending more than they conveniently can to our "Resisters Fund."

Regarding the *Spur* Committee in London, I will communicate privately with those who have made enquiries, but would like to see a few more of our London friends interested before we arrange a meeting.

To those comrades in other towns who have shown an interest I would suggest the formation of Local *Spur* Committees or groups, which would concern themselves chiefly with raising the circulation of our paper, and obtaining funds for its sustenance.

Would those members of the *Spur* fraternity who have so loyally come to its rescue kindly send their views along, and any other suggestions whereby we may be enabled to steer safely out of the troubled waters of uncertainty.

Rex v. Aldred Defence Fund.

Our expenses in defending this action amounted to £30.

Workers' Friend Group	...	...	...	£4 0 0
R. E. Mason	...	...	...	0 3 0
W. Greaves	...	...	...	0 5 0
J. G. Read	...	...	...	0 5 0
A. H. L.	...	...	...	5 0 0
G. H. Wood	...	...	...	0 7
H. Duncton	...	...	...	1 0 0
H. Miles	...	...	...	0 2 6
Ammanford Group	...	...	...	0 10 0
X. Y. Z.	...	...	...	0 5 0
T. McIlwraith	...	...	...	1 0 0
F. A. Reason	...	...	...	0 2 6
J. and M. Watt	...	...	...	0 5 0
G. Bazen	...	...	...	0 2 6
E. Sylvia Pankhurst	...	...	...	0 10 0
R. Sydney Odlin	...	...	...	1 0 0
Ealing N.C.F. Branch	...	...	...	4 0 0
The Laird	...	...	...	0 10 0
C. B. N. and Friends	...	...	...	0 10 0
Anonymous	...	...	...	0 1 0
T. Dobson	...	...	...	0 10 0