

EXILE

THE train sped on bearing one sleepless passenger whose heart had been torn into shreds by emotion and suspense. My head reeled and ached, but I could not sleep. Over and over again a number of questions raced through my brain. Where was I going? What was I to do? What *was* I to do? Would I have money enough to carry me through? And then what? Where was I to go in England? Whom was I to see? What was I to do then? All of these perplexing questions arose again and again far into the early hours of the morning.

A few days in Toronto, a few more in Montreal, my passage booked, and I was sailing to a war-racked Europe with a new name and without a passport. My case was extraditable, as I was indicted on a felonious charge, and I could be brought back if my whereabouts was known. Wisdom being the better part of valor, it had seemed best to drop the name of Sanger for the time being, but I had not foreseen the difficulties awaiting me and the complications which might ensue.

England is at war, madam, said the government official

who was inspecting the passports at Liverpool. You can't expect us to let you through. We are sending people back for passports every day, and I can't admit you.

That seemed to be the final decision. I inquired to whom I should appeal who would have authority to admit me. I can never reveal what happened, but after an hour's conversation with two men higher up (keen observers of human nature), I was finally allowed to enter England without a passport.

If any of my readers know the city of Liverpool, I trust they have been spared knowing it during the months of November and December. God, what cold! Piercing chills penetrated to the marrow of my bones. The houses, the rooms, the beds were cold with a death-like chill. I had to wait in Liverpool for letters and messages from home and it seemed ages before they came. I was homesick for the children, lonely for friends as I had never been in my life, before or since.

One figure stands out in my memory of Liverpool—Lorenzo Portet, the companion and successor of Francisco Ferrer. Portet was then teaching Spanish in the University of Liverpool, and through him I was able to get in touch with many people. I followed up various leads given me by that noble and courageous man.

Lorenzo Portet was a rare individual. He was an unusually brilliant companion, a loyal, inspiring friend. He was one of those rare intuitive men who sense what you are trying to do and help you to do it. His was a fiery spirit, which had counseled and inspired many of the republicans, called revolutionaries, during the Spanish upheaval in 1906. His close friends were Malatesta of Italy and Ferrer of Spain. In 1909, when Ferrer was shot by order of the Spanish government for teaching science and evolution in his modern schools, he left Lorenzo Portet his entire fortune to carry on this educational work. Portet had established a publishing house in Barcelona, and continued to feed the Spanish mind with modern and scientific literature from Italy, France and England. He died in Paris in the year 1917 in his fifty-third year, with his greatest

wish unfulfilled—the freeing of the Spanish woman from the ignorance and dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church

A few long, bleak, dreadful weeks in Liverpool, meeting Fabian Socialists, social workers and suffrage leaders, and then at last I sped onward to London, my headquarters during my stay in Europe. I visited France, Holland and Spain before the year was over, but London was always my home. What can one say of the London of November 1914! Business as usual was the slogan on the billboards, and there is no doubt that England took the war lightly until the end of 1915.

The message of *The Woman Rebel* had preceded me to England. Especially in liberal, radical and Feminist circles was it well known.

To understand the growth and development of the birth control movement since 1914 it is interesting to recall the situation as I found it in England. My first desire was to get in touch with the Drysdales and the Neo-Malthusian organization. Upon my arrival in London, accordingly, I sent a letter to a well known printer, Mr Standing, requesting the address of the Neo-Malthusian League. Communication was established, and I was invited to come to tea to meet Dr Drysdale at his offices in Queen Anne's Chambers.

It was a rainy, wet afternoon, and the cheer of the fire burning in the grate was no less welcome to my lonely soul than the warm greeting accorded me. Dr Binnie Dunlop and Dr Drysdale received with applause the information that I had challenged the Comstock laws. It was only during the preceding year that they had decided to issue their own practical leaflet giving simple instructions on contraception. This was being sent out upon request to any married or about-to-be married adult in any country in the world, except the United States of America. It was Dr Drysdale's principle that Americans should fight their own battles with Comstock. Between us grew up a close friendship which has lasted through those stormy years to the present time.

It came as a surprise to me to find on the door of the League's headquarters no name other than Dr Drysdale's. I

was told that the Neo-Malthusian League was not considered a proper tenant, according to the landlord's ideas of propriety. To avoid conflict, the name of the organization was kept off the door. The Neo-Malthusian League had been organized after the Besant and Bradlaugh trial in 1877 by Dr Alice Vickery and her husband, Dr Charles Drysdale, the father and mother of the present C V Drysdale, then president of the league.

I was thrilled to hear for the first time of the celebrated Besant and Bradlaugh trial, which was one of the earliest tests of the law in England affecting birth control. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were champions of liberty and freedom. In 1876 a Bristol bookseller was prosecuted for selling Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy*, an early American book on birth control, on the ground that it was obscene literature. The publisher pleaded guilty, and was let off on paying costs. Whereupon Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, to test the law and gain a hearing, openly reprinted the book and advertised the sale of thousands of copies. They were arrested, and their case was tried by the Queen's Bench before the Lord Chief Justice and a jury. They conducted their own case before a huge audience. Their speeches to the jury set forth at length the whole Malthusian philosophy. Whenever they arrived or left the court, cheering crowds greeted them. The jury found them guilty, but the Court of Appeals quashed the sentence. Afterwards they toured England addressing large audiences and spreading the Malthusian doctrines. One hundred and eighty five thousand copies of the book were sold.

It had been the policy of the Neo-Malthusian League to educate the educators on questions of family limitation. They believed that once the practice was established among the well to do and educated classes it would be taken up by the working classes as it seeped down to them. At this time (1914) the working classes had not yet been aroused to the possibility of obtaining such information nor to a conscious desire for its benefits, so far as I could ascertain. This was true even in 1920, when I addressed over thirty groups in

England, most of them women's guilds, but at that time, while there was a sad lack of any practical knowledge, except as given in the Neo-Malthusian leaflets, I sensed a keen interest everywhere in the subject and a quick awakening to its importance as the subject became known

The Drysdales strove to advance the ideas and principles of Malthus, thus running counter to the theories of the Marxian Socialists in Germany and England. But while Malthus had advocated late marriage and strict continence until marriage, as the best solution of the population problem, the Neo-Malthusians of 1878 advocated early marriage and instruction in contraception

In 1914 there were only a few pamphlets like Charles Knowlton's, which gave all then known contraceptive methods. Most of them were out of print, and only to be found at out of the way second hand bookshops. Besides Knowlton's there were Robert Dale Owen's *Moral Physiology*, (1831), Dr H T Thrall's *Sexual Physiology*, (1866), Dr H A Albutt's *The Wife's Handbook*, (1877), Annie Besant's *The Law of Population*, (1879), *The Malthusian Handbook*, (1911)

Not until January, 1913, did the Neo-Malthusian League begin to alter its policy toward the instruction of the working class. Lectures on theory and methods were given on street corners, but their practical leaflet could be obtained only upon written application to the League. It was the name Malthus, I concluded, which kept the idea from spreading to the workers. The very mention of that name brought arguments, usually stereotyped and moth eaten, from both the radical and the working groups. It was amusing to see the different effect when the words birth control were used. At once there was acceptance of the idea, general agreement, and personal information was eagerly sought.

Many prominent people were anxious to learn about my battle with Comstock's laws. Such splendid and courageous figures as Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Olive Schreiner,

and numerous others discussed at length the problems and their solution

It was through the friendship of that intrepid rebel Feminist, Stella Browne, that I was to meet Havelock Ellis. The new world of my dreams was being constructed on the ideas Ellis had put forth in his works. To meet him was an unhopèd for privilege. Ever ready, with the weight of his vast knowledge on sex psychology, to advance the cause of woman's freedom and right to knowledge, he has ushered in a new day for womankind.

Havelock Ellis, more than any other individual, has brought the subject of sex out from the secrecy and dark obscurity where it had lain for centuries to its present open recognition as an all pervading influence and the source of the greatest enrichment and beauty to men and women. As a youth he became interested in the psychological aspects of sex, and his training in medicine, with special attention to obstetrics laid the foundation for future investigation and study. His great work, *The Psychology of Sex*, in seven volumes, is the most exhaustive and authoritative treatment of the subject that exists. Havelock Ellis is a scientific investigator, a philosophic thinker, and a literary artist combined in one, and withal he has a peculiarly sympathetic insight into the nature and needs of women. To women he may indeed seem a god sent liberator. Many other fields of life and art have been illuminated by his philosophic thought and poet's vision. He was fifty five years old at the time I first met him.

An invitation to call came from him. It was a few days before Christmas, in the dark year of 1914.

My homesickness was acute. I was thinking only of my children across the ocean. I was then staying in a small room on the top floor of a dismal rooming house in Torrington Square, near the British Museum, where I went for daily study. That little room was heatless; there was a miniature fireplace, but I could not afford the luxury of a few coals to keep the place warm. I could not afford even to have the slatternly Cockney maid bring up evening tea. I went each morning

to the basement dining room for my breakfast, thereby saving about a shilling a week

Havelock Ellis, with characteristic foresight, had given explicit directions how to reach Dover Mansions. I got on a crowded bus at Oxford Street. Even though it was war time the spirit of Christmas—the English Yuletide—was in the air. It accentuated my own stark loneliness and yearning to be with the children and their Christmas tree.

Dover Mansions was located across the Thames in Brixton, just opposite the police station on Canterbury Road. Strangely enough, there was an auxiliary police station in Dover Mansions, directly under the apartment of Havelock Ellis. Ellis himself opened the door. His tall, straight, slender figure, his great shock of white hair, his massive head, his well kept though straggling, shaggy beard, his wide, expressive mouth—that of a faun—all combined to give one the impression that here indeed was a veritable god.

I stuttered with embarrassment. He was silent. No other human being can be so silent and remain so poised and contented in silence as Havelock Ellis. I thought of the psychic indigestion which reading his studies in sex psychology had given me a year before. Dared I tell him that? The embarrassment of that silence does one of two things to visitors: either you like it and feel at home in it, or you leave it never to return. With his own hands he prepared the tea and toast and carried the tray into the room. We sat before the fire and talked and talked, and as we talked we wove into our lives an intangible web of mutual interests and, speaking for myself, I developed a reverence, an affection, and a love which have strengthened with the years.

Havelock Ellis became the guiding spirit in my study. Regularly we met in the reading room of the British Museum and lunched or dined together. He gave me clues to much valuable information which I stored away for future use.

Unlike Portet, Ellis was conservative and reflective. He urged caution and prudence. He believed so strongly in my case that he wanted to see me avoid all possible mistakes. To



THE EXILE 1915



INDICTED

know him has been a bounteous privilege, to claim him my friend, the greatest honor of my life

As spring came on, beautiful as only spring in England can be, I longed to get out into the country I was fortunate enough, through the kind efforts of that charming and courageous pioneer Feminist, Dr Alice Vickery, to find lodgings in a private home in Hampstead Gardens next door to that dear old lady's house Serene, modest, an inveterate advocate of family limitation, Dr Vickery was still, as the age of eighty, actively engaged in carrying this message of Malthus to all organizations concerned with human welfare She had been the first person to propose in 1917 that contraceptive advice be given to needy women at government welfare centers, a concession that was fought for over a long period of years, and finally won in 1930 She had broad interests, was alert upon all the questions of the day, and was always actively engaged in writing leaflets or articles pointing out the weak spots in modern social programs

For my benefit she brought out of her attic old circulars and mementoes of the earlier days of the Neo-Malthusian campaign She opened her files for me, and thus I was enabled to familiarize myself with the unpublished history of this campaign through these old letters, reports and records, which I fear have since been destroyed Often, when we found ourselves alone, she would reminisce concerning the stirring days of the Bradlaugh Besant trial Alice Vickery had attended the court every day She told me that that great battle in the courts was won almost entirely because of the radiant personality of Charles Bradlaugh and the charm and eloquence of Annie Besant

Nearly every afternoon I was invited to take tea with her in her charming garden Nearly always she had guests—women of distinction, pioneers in other lines of thought and reform It was in her home that I addressed a group of Feminists in the month of June, 1915 Among those present were two vigilant and progressive workers for suffrage, Louise Thompson and Mrs Edith How Martyn The latter embodied

the indomitable courage and the audacity of the pioneer English suffragists. A graduate of the University of London, she had specialized in the study of Economics. She was a candidate for the London County Council, and was shortly after elected. Fearless, outspoken, an indefatigable worker for the cause of women, Edith How Martyn immediately took up the cudgels in my behalf. She threw herself whole heartedly into the cause of birth control. In the fifteen or more years since I first met her, that burning interest has never waned. Louise Thompson, modest, reticent, likewise seized upon the importance of my case, and they asked if I would relate my story and present my cause before a group of influential women at a meeting to be arranged for at Fabian Hall in July. Mrs How Martyn sent out a letter to women representing the various social and progressive organizations, calling their attention to my case and inviting them to hear me tell my own story at Fabian Hall. The meeting was held and was well attended, women executives from nearly all the important organizations in London being present.

It was there that I first met Dr Marie Stopes. She was accompanied by that charming gentleman, Aylmer Maude, the celebrated translator of Tolstoy. Dr Stopes remained after the meeting and invited me to her home at Well Walk, Hampstead Heath. I accepted. We talked freely and intimately on that eventful afternoon. She was then writing a book, *Married Love*, which was to deal with the plain facts of marriage. She expected it to electrify England. She then explained to me that, owing to her unfortunate previous marriage she had had no experience in matters of contraception nor any occasion to inform herself in their use. Her husband, she said, had been unable to make her happy and her marriage had not been consummated, and was later annulled. She realized, however, she said, from the address I had given in Fabian Hall, that such knowledge on contraception was important in the lives of women. Could I tell her exactly what methods were used and *how* they were used? I replied that it would give me the greatest pleasure to bring to her home

such devices as I had in my possession. Accordingly, we met again the following week for dinner in her home, and inspected and discussed the French pessary which she stated she then saw for the first time. I gave her my own pamphlets, all of which contained contraceptive information. Since that time she has advocated almost exclusively a device copied from the French cervical pessary, shown to her on that memorable occasion.

When Dr. Stopes wrote her book, *Married Love*, it was not her intention to enter the campaign for birth control. It was sex knowledge of a general kind which she wished to impart. It took but the slightest reference in her book to the need of contraception to push her into the front ranks of the battle, where she must have been much surprised to find herself.

The economic struggle in England, the feminist and suffrage movements, Labor's ambition to live well and learn more, all of these forces gave a glorious opportunity to anyone who should carry the torch to the masses. People everywhere welcomed the phrase birth control as a new weapon, a new instrument in the battle for population control.

No one can overstate the splendid work done in England by Dr. Marie Stopes on birth control since that time. Her path was prepared for her by years of labor of the pioneers who had preceded her. For over forty years Dr. Alice Vickery and other brave women fought valiantly and consistently to inculcate the idea of family limitation into the minds of a generation of the English people. It needed only a new voice, articulate and clear as Dr. Stopes's voice certainly was, to gain momentum. But had the ground not been well prepared through years of ploughing by such scholars and thinkers as Ellis, Mills, Place, Carlyle, Drysdale, Knowlton, Besant, Bradlaugh, Anne Martin, and Dr. Vickery with her Feminist friends, and had not numerous pamphlets and leaflets been circulated by the *million* the present situation in England would be vastly different. Dr. Stopes finds herself at the head of a movement she was tossed into by the very impetus of

the work the pioneers before her had done. She is to be congratulated for her quick wit and the ready faculty with which she switched her efforts from the plans which inspired the writing of *Married Love* to espousal of the birth control movement.

When her book was completed I took the manuscript to America and sought to get it published. Insult and derision met us on all sides. Finally, after two years, I succeeded in finding a publisher courageous enough to tackle the task. Dr. William J. Robinson undertook its publication, but only the expurgated edition was allowed to pass through the post office censorship. It has had a tremendous circulation in England but its value for America lay in the expurgated parts.

Very recently—April 6, 1931—the ban has been lifted which prohibited the importation of the complete edition of Dr. Stopes's book into this country. In his enlightened decision concerning one obscene book entitled *Married Love*, Judge John M. Woolsey of the Southern District of New York declared he did not find anything objectionable anywhere in the book.