

1, Campers Road,
LETCWORTH,
Herts.

17th October, 1935

My dear Christabel,

Thank you very much for your kind and understanding letter which I received this morning.

The following are a few ideas which came to my mind. They may be helpful in dissolving a certain atmosphere about Annie which has been created in the past through the wrong treatment in presenting her on the stage of the Suffrage movement. Your book, Christabel, can do so much to set this right.

It would therefore be better not to say anything of Annie's pre-Suffrage days, but to deal with Annie as a personality when you first met her.

I quite understand what you mean about the distinction conferred on those who overcome early difficulties etc. But the ones who get this distinction are those like the men you mention (Mussolini, Ramsay Macdonald, Lloyd George and J. H. Thomas) - men who have always worked for ambition and power, and have not cared overmuch how they attained it. The majority of people still worship temporal power and you will be forgiven much if you succeed in gaining this - not otherwise. I have noticed that if someone wishes to wound, say the film star, Greta Garbo, or try and destroy her prestige, they remind her that she worked in a barber's shop and "lathered a man". Just as Sylvia when she wants to depreciate Annie refers to her as a "cotton operative" and leaves it at that. The world is too materialistic as yet to appreciate the full dignity of selfless service at the price of health, circumstances and appearances.

If Annie had to write her book again she would have commenced it in a totally different strain because of her family and son. Before we left the movement and for some time afterwards Annie and I were too unsophisticated to deal with the world as it is - being babes in worldly wisdom. We have learnt much and

[Page 2]

travelled far since then and we would not exchange the priceless treasures of our experiences before the movement, in the movement, and after the movement for either power, position or wealth. And never do we recant by thought or word from the ideals for which we laboured with you.

Therefore it would be better to describe Annie as a personality when you met her - at the Oldham meeting and at your home in Manchester.

Wherever we go we realise more and more what a wonderful mother we had. Idle or malicious gossip mother never permitted in our home. She hated meanness, cowardice, deceit and disloyalty, and loved generosity, courage, utter frankness and loyalty.

When you met Annie you had the prevision to see all these qualities in her. It was these qualities in her that you felt you could use - not cleverness, not academic education, but those fine things which British people love - character and personality, coupled with kindness and tolerance and a fine discrimination and discretion. Had it not been for that training in our home life Annie would not have been able to undertake, apart from the organising capacity with she naturally had, the delicate work of

negotiation and diplomacy which was imposed upon her during the last phase of the women's militant movement.

With love to you as always and every good wish.

Jessie Kenney [*Handwritten signature*]