Chapter 4
Experiencing the struggle

The outbreak of the First World War in early August 1914 was a profound shock to most British people. Indeed, that summer all the preparations for conflict, both military and political, had concerned Ireland. The Irish Home Rule Bill had been passed in 1912, but its implementation was delayed for two years by the House of Lords. The delay could not be further extended and the creation of a 'home rule' parliament in Dublin was expected to provoke armed rebellion from Protestants in Ulster who had been establishing volunteer fighting units and holding drills in Belfast in acts of threatening defiance.[1] In Dublin and the south of Ireland, Irish nationalist militias were arming themselves too and civil war loomed. On Sunday, 26 July 1914, a jeering crowd baited a group of British soldiers in Dublin who had seized a cache of arms belonging to Irish nationalists. The soldiers fired at the unarmed crowd and three people were killed and thirty-two injured.[2] This was the immediate emergency for most British citizens, not Austria's conflict with Serbia, and an outbreak of war in continental Europe had been far from people's minds. A European war erupted with great speed in the dying days of July. When the Germans attacked France via an invasion of neutral Belgium, the British government believed they had to protect Belgium and therefore declared war on 4 August. Many people accepted this decision as morally justified. Among those who did not were some MPs of the governing Liberal Party.

A significant element of the Liberal Party had always opposed involvement in any war. They were vociferous in opposition to the war in South Africa at the turn of the century and thereafter were wary of British foreign policy being wedded to imperialism and the use of force rather than diplomacy to

1 For an illustration of the then preoccupation of the popular press with Ireland, see for example: Angell, p. 179. The outbreak of war caused the implementation of Home Rule for Ireland to be suspended.

2 Marlor, p. 4.

secure its ends. They also believed that negotiation with Germany before the events of 1914 would have been more constructive than engaging in an arms race. They saw the strengthening of British ties with both France and Russia in the same period as a threat to Germany, which increased the likelihood of war instead of keeping a 'balance of power' to prevent it. The secrecy with which much diplomacy was practised was also seen by this group as equally destabilising to peace in Europe and the European colonies worldwide. They were suspicious of what military agreements had been made without recourse to parliamentary approval by the long-serving Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey.[1] As early as November 1911, a group of around seventy-five Liberal MPs had formed the 'Foreign Affairs Group', which was critical of their government's conduct of foreign policy and pressed for changes. It was unsuccessful in its aims, but was an indication of the anxiety amongst the more radical section of the Liberal party. One of the MPs who formed this group was Noel Buxton and he was its first chairman.[2]

Undoubtedly Charlie would have joined his brother had he still been an MP. Outside parliament he supported causes for peace and was a contributor to the journal *War and Peace*, launched in 1913.[3] He participated in efforts to oppose the naval rivalry with Germany and the build-up of armaments. He was involved with lobbying for Britain to keep out of any European conflict and joined a group called the British Neutrality Committee. In the days before war broke out Charlie was vociferous and unequivocal in the position he took, a stance fully supported by Dorothy. A letter to *The Manchester Guardian* was published and he wrote,

> Now is the time for every Liberal to declare that he protests against the idea of this country being drawn into war in order to support Russia and France against Austria and Germany. . . . [we should not] give an opportunity to those who believe in the false and dangerous superstition of the 'balance of power'.
>
> It is a Tory doctrine, but Liberals have been rushed into a Tory policy before now. Let us emphatically declare that we are under no obligation to support one European group against another.[4]

1 Edward Grey (1862–1933), Foreign Secretary 1905–16, Liberal MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed 1885–1916, Viscount 1916.

2 Arthur Ponsonby succeeded as the chairman in 1913 and was in that position on the outbreak of war. However, the committee's activities had diminished and when Ponsonby called a meeting of the group on 29 July, only 11 MPs turned up. Marlor, p. 42. On 30 July, with matters becoming more critical, there were 25. Marlor, p. 55.

3 Angell, p. 169.

4 *The Manchester Guardian,* 1 August 1914.

When war did break out, the Neutrality Committee dissolved itself because they felt that if an early opportunity occurred to pursue peace, any conciliation movement would be best run by a new group rather than those who had opposed entry into the war.

The new group was named the Union of Democratic Control.[1] Its founders included two liberal MPs: Charles Trevelyan,[2] who was one of those who resigned from the government as a consequence of the declaration of war, and Arthur Ponsonby,[3] who had refused government office precisely because he wished to speak out on foreign affairs. Ramsey Macdonald,[4] the chairman of the Labour parliamentary group, resigned his position when his fellow Labour MPs decided to vote for war credits and he too joined the fledgling UDC. The other leading founders were E.D. Morel,[5] a prospective Liberal parliamentary candidate, who became the UDC's secretary and organising force, and Norman Angell,[6] who was less involved in party politics, but was the most well-known of pre-1914 peace campaigners. The group published their aims as: parliamentary control over foreign policy; negotiations after the war to promote understanding between governments; peace terms that did not humiliate the defeated or re-arrange frontiers so as to leave cause for further wars. By June 1915, the UDC had 107 affiliated organisations supporting it, with a membership of 300,000, and by the end of the war this had increased to 300 and 650,000 respectively.

Charlie and Dorothy were both horrified that Britain had declared war instead of seeking to mediate. Therefore, it was unsurprising that Charlie was an early recruit to the UDC. He served on the UDC executive committee for much of the war and he was one of the most generous financial donors to the cause.[7] Charlie was a moderating influence, as

1 For a detailed history of the UDC, see: Swartz; Harris.

2 Charles Philips Trevelyan (1870–1958), Liberal MP for Elland 1899–1915 and then as an Independent 1915–18, Labour MP for Newcastle Central 1922–31.

3 Arthur Augustus William Harry Ponsonby (1871–1946), Liberal MP for Stirling Boroughs 1908–18, then Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside 1922–30, when he was given a peerage and transferred to the House of Lords. Ponsonby remembered how he and Charlie sat on a bench in St James' Park in 1914 wondering how they could bring a stop to the war, Jones, p. 229.

4 James Ramsey Macdonald (1866–1937), Labour MP for Leicester 1906–18, for Aberavon 1922–29, for Seaham 1929–35, for Combined Scottish universities 1936–37. Prime Minister January–November 1924 and 1929–35.

5 Edmund Dene Morel (né Georges Eduard Pierre Achille Morel de Ville) (1873–1924), Labour MP for Dundee 1922–24.

6 Norman Angell (1874–1967), author of the influential *The Great Illusion*, which argued that war was irrational and would be economically disadvantageous to both the victors and those defeated.

7 Swartz, p. 55 and note 35.

ever, on the UDC's policies as he believed denunciations and aggressive condemnations achieved little. He believed in negotiations even with a pro-war government, just as he did with the country's enemies.

Dorothy and Charlie may have been horrified, but they were not surprised by the outbreak of conflict. This was partly because the Balkans, where the initial conflict occurred that ignited the First World War, had long been of keen interest to Charlie and his brother Noel. As far back as the 1870s, the Buxton family had supported the small mainly Christian nationalities in the Balkans, an area mainly ruled by the Turks as part of the Ottoman Empire. Charlie's father had deplored the government's policy under the Conservative Prime Minster, Benjamin Disraeli[1], which had seen Russia as more of a threat than Turkey. He believed that the Ottoman Empire was the perpetrator of much injustice and maladministration amongst the Balkan peoples, with a 'divide and rule' policy that set the nationalities one against another. Gladstone's famous campaign in favour of the Bulgarians in 1878 had resonated with Sir Fowell Buxton: and his sons had been brought up to share his position. The way to counter the Russian threat to the eastern Mediterranean (and the 'route to India' so precious to the British) was to have the Balkan nations rule themselves as free peoples, not to prop up the despotism of Turkish rule there. Charlie in his politics consequently espoused the cause of small nations.

Noel first visited the Balkans in 1899 and was especially moved by the plight of the Macedonians. When they rose in rebellion against the Turks in 1903, he and his brother were among a group that formed the Balkan Committee to lobby the British government to support the Macedonians. In 1904, Noel Buxton visited Macedonia again, part of the time with his sister, Victoria,[2] and the cruelty they witnessed in terms of burned homes and wounded villagers, mourning others who had been killed by the Turkish authorities, led them to set up the Macedonian Relief Committee.[3] Charlie's first trip to the region came in 1906–07 with his brother and Charles Masterman, after which they reported both the progress and setbacks in the region.[4] He went again in 1908, to Constantinople following the 'Young Turk Revolution', a political development which in its early days promised a reform of the Ottoman administration. He published articles on his return in *The Economist* and other journals, regretting that the British

1 Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield (1804–1881), Prime Minister Feb–Dec 1868, 1874–80.

2 Victoria would later travel in Turkey and published a book called *The Soul of the Turk*.

3 For this and subsequent points, see more in Anderson, especially 32–41, and De Bunsen, especially pp. 54–55.

4 See for example, *The Times,* 29 November 1907.

government did not see the need to encourage the new developments in Turkey. In January 1911, he and Noel returned to Constantinople to see for themselves if the new Turkish government was reforming or relapsing to its old ways. After the Balkan wars of independence broke out in 1912–13, Dorothy's sister Eglantyne travelled to Macedonia in 1913 to help with the Macedonian Relief Committee's work.[1] All these first-hand accounts from the region meant that Charlie and Dorothy were well-informed of the political dangers there long before the events of summer 1914 enfolded.

Dorothy with her children & Frau Schoene, Crowborough, summer 1914

That summer had promised much, being one of glorious warm and sunny weather. Dorothy's mother, Tye had had a house built in the Sussex countryside near Crowborough, and called it aptly Forest Edge as the accompanying land bordered a wood.[2] She had arrived to take up residence in June 1914[3] and Dorothy arrived with her children on 28 July 1914 for a few days, intending to travel to Germany with Charlie for a holiday at Wiesbaden on Saturday 1 August. When Russia declared war on Germany however, Charlie sent a telegram to his family saying the proposed trip must be abandoned. He came to Crowborough and he and Dorothy worked into the night writing letters and peace leaflets.

1 Mahood, pp. 148–149.

2 Tye's brother, Professor Richard Jebb, had died in 1905 and his American wife had returned to the USA. With Dorothy now married and living elsewhere, Tye had fewer contacts in Cambridge – so the place became less interesting for her and she desired to move. She let her Cambridge house whilst she went travelling on the continent on and off in the years 1910–14. She then sold it, and had this house built at Crowborough, a five-bedroom detached property with large grounds.

3 For this and other detail for this section, see Tye's journal for the first weeks of the First World War, BFA.

Charlie had returned to London the day before Britain declared war, whilst Dorothy had remained at Forest Edge. Dorothy sent him a telegram and Charlie responded that he found it difficult to write straight away because of 'the horror of the hour'. He noted that they could not know how much work they would be called to undertake or even what kind.[1] During the following weeks, Charlie's only solace amidst all the anxiety was when he was able to visit Forest Edge, spend time with his family and help implement the planned garden at Tye's new house. He later recalled,

> That month in England, [after] the outbreak of war. . . . was a nightmare. . . . Crowborough was the only bright spot, and I shall never forget the relief of returning there time after time, the walks across the common to Forest Edge, the digging in the garden, and the many mechanical and other works performed with E[glantyne] and D[avid] in the attic and the wood. But London and the county generally were almost unbearable – no clearly marked task for me (the tasks I was presumably most fitted for being needed in the future rather than in the present) and meantime the tide of hatred rising daily, truth & honesty at a discount everywhere, even one's own friends losing all sense of evidence, and generally, the crumbling away of civilisation.[2]

Both Dorothy and Charlie were dismayed by the upsurge of jingoistic enthusiasm for the war, with crowds cheering in the streets of London, and the popular press indulging in innuendo, rumour and downright untruths in whipping up support for the conflict. The hatred expressed for the German people rather than the policy of their government was, for the Buxtons, an appalling descent into crude racialism, exemplified by the homes and businesses of Germans and those whose names merely sounded Germanic being daubed with slogans and threatened. Dorothy in particular was distressed by the internment of German nationals who were living in Britain. She saw this as unfair as none of these people had committed a hostile or criminal act. They were being imprisoned purely because of their nationality. She offered her services via a scheme run by the Society of Friends (Quakers) that organised the sending of handicraft work to German civilian internees. Already having a German nanny resident in her household,[3] Dorothy offered

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 5 August 1914, BFA.

2 Charlie to Dorothy, 30 October 1914, BFA.

3 This was a Frau Schoene, who was Swiss-German and married to a German. Dorothy met up with her again in 1934 and commented that she was 'quite unchanged' after nineteen years and that she had kept a lock of David's 'bright yellow hair' that he had when he was very young! Dorothy to David, 5 June 1934, BFA.

7 Kennington Terrace as a place to be used for other 'internal refugees', and she moved out with her children to rented accommodation at 28 Willifield Way, not far from her new but as yet unfinished house in Erskine Hill.[1] The offer of the house in Kennington Terrace as a hostel was gratefully accepted and soon the house was full of German women stranded in London who had lost their employment. One of the German guests was given the task of 'managing' the house. Some of the guests stayed a short time, others for longer, but all were there at the Buxtons' expense, although they had to do their own housework.[2] For this use of her home, she courted criticism from some quarters, but she would not surrender to what she saw as distorted prejudice whipped up by irresponsible and dangerous newspaper reports. The Buxtons also shared their new house at 6 Erskine Hill with refugees, especially as they were away regularly, and they sometimes stayed elsewhere themselves to accommodate these guests. They had to book in to their own home on occasions to ensure there was a bed available, as people came and went.[3] Such refugees became fewer as the war progressed.

The main political concern in the war's first weeks for anyone with anti-war views was how to stop the fighting and such an endeavour had different strands as the agendas in the war were many and complex. In the first months of the war, the Ottoman Empire was not a combatant, but had strong ties with Germany and was antagonistic towards Russia. It seemed only a matter of time before it joined the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) in order to help defeat Tsarist Russia. In the event, Turkey did join the war at the end of October 1914. The Balkan Committee in London feared that when Turkey joined the conflict, it would draw in Rumania, Bulgaria and possibly other countries. It also believed that creative diplomacy might be able to prevent this escalation. Someone needed to visit the Bulgarian and Rumanian governments in particular to persuade them to stay neutral or even to join the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia) and if so on what terms. Noel Buxton persuaded Winston Churchill (First Lord of the

1 Tye's journal of the first weeks of the First World War, BFA. Tye found that the local territorials set up camp near her new home in Sussex and the sound of marching soldiers became familiar by both day and night. On 5 September 1914, 'Two officers called to ask if I should be "incommoded" by their occupying the adjoining field, & to enquire if I meant to occupy the house through the winter.' She decided to let the house to the army and rented a small house at 66 Willifield Way, near Dorothy, for the next winter. She moved back to Forest Edge in May 1915 when the army had completed its local training and no longer needed the house.

2 Testimonials about this were published in the German press, translations of which are in BFA.

3 For example, Charlie to Dorothy, August 1916, BFA: in which he asked her to arrange for the family to stay at 6 Erskine Hill when he returned with the children from a sojourn in Yorkshire with his sister Victoria and her family.

Admiralty) and David Lloyd George (Chancellor of the Exchequer) that such an initiative had value and that he could lead it, given his great knowledge of, and many contacts in, the region. These two ministers supported him, but Edward Grey (the Foreign Secretary) was doubtful and therefore insisted any 'mission' to Rumania and Bulgaria would not be official. From the beginning Noel wanted Charlie to accompany him and indeed Charlie was present at Noel's initial meeting with Lloyd George.

Eventually permission was given for a non-official visit[1] and the two brothers set out on 1 September. The beginning of the journey was tumultuous as they had to pass through Paris at a time when the German army was advancing swiftly towards it.[2] However, they reached the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia, by 11 September.[3] Dorothy could not have been happy about her husband leaving the country at such a time, but initially at least she appeared to be supportive, as Charlie wrote, 'You *were* splendid from beginning to end, above all in seeing my point of view about coming here – no easy matter at the time.'[4] However, seeing Charlie's point of view was different from agreeing with it. Throughout Charlie's months in the Balkans, his letters all contained a certain tone of self-justification as if he knew he had repeatedly to ensure Dorothy understood his reasons for travelling. After noting the effusive reception Noel received in places along the Struma valley that they visited, he continued,

> I hesitate to stay, because I feel I might be doing more work at home (as well as longing to be with you) but on the other hand it seems that things might arise in which we might make a difference, & if so it would be a great mistake to have left. You may be quite sure that N[oel] does make a difference, difficult as it is at a distance to realise it.[5]

News soon leaked of the brothers' trip and the Greek press publicised it, speculating that the reason behind it was to promise territory to Bulgaria if they supported the Triple Entente and that this territory would be at the expense of Greece and Serbia. The Foreign Office issued a public denial at the end of September, insisting that the visit by the Buxtons was a 'private' one and that there was no foundation in the rumours about offering Bulgaria territory.[6]

1 For more on the political manoeuvres among ministers on the issues, see Fry, pp. 280–286. The government did provide the brothers with berths on a warship when they needed to cross the Adriatic Sea, so there was tacit support for the mission. Tye's journal of the first weeks of the First World War, BFA.
2 Anderson, p. 64.
3 Charlie to Dorothy, 11 September 1914, BFA.
4 Charlie to Dorothy, 30 October 1914, BFA.
5 Charlie to Dorothy, 29 September 1914, BFA.
6 *The Times,* 29 September 1914.

Charlie was anxious that Dorothy represent him and his views if questions were asked back in London in his prospective constituency or else in wider society. He was particularly concerned about the Foreign Secretary's reaction.

> The main point about anything that's said on the subject in England is that we are not on an official mission, but that we are endeavouring to use our influence in the Balkans, where we know great numbers of people & have studied the situation, in such a way as to help England's cause. From the constituency point of view it would be useful to use the words 'at Grey's request', but this you cannot do, as it might lead to Grey or our ministers here trying to repudiate us or refuse to help us, – & we need their cooperation.[1]

A few days later, he acknowledged a postcard from his wife and praised her 'sound & permanently valuable works', adding, 'Mine is of a less tangible kind – still it is also of value.'[2]

Charlie's first letters home were very guarded because of the Bulgarian censors. Some were even written in French. He restricted himself to describing trips the brothers had made and sights they saw. However, early in October, he took advantage of a 'diplomatic bag' to write a more frank letter to Dorothy, which outlined the reasons for the trip from the brothers' perspective.

> Our object is to secure Bulgaria's friendly neutrality towards the Entente, so as to liberate Roumania to fight against Austria for Transylvania (peopled by Roumanians) and to free Servia from the fear of Bulgarian attack in the rear – also to get Bulgaria to resist Turkey by force of arms if Turkey attacks the entente. The question is what terms Bulgaria will accept for this. She ought to get back Macedonia from Servia, & Dubrutscka from Roumania, if these other powers are aggrandised. It would be possible to get the whole Balkan question settled on a basis of nationality; as well as assisting our cause, if only our government would play the proper cards. Things are so uncertain that we feel we ought to stay on until the situation is clearer. We can make some real use of (a) N[oel]'s influence, which is considerable, (b) by the power which non-diplomats have of getting into touch with unofficial circles, & of bringing people together in one way and another. It is all vague,

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 5 October 1914, BFA.
2 Charlie to Dorothy, 1 October 1914, BFA.

> but there is some reality at the bottom of it, & we still think we *may* effect something of more importance than anything we could now do at home. The difficulties however are very great.[1]

Politically, Bulgaria's government was complex. Its monarch, Ferdinand I,[2] had been born in Vienna into a branch of the Saxe-Coburg family, and was distantly related not only to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, but also to Prince Albert, the consort of Britain's Queen Victoria. He was also related to the Belgian Royal family amongst others. Ferdinand had been made Prince of Bulgaria as far back as 1886, when he was in his mid-twenties, and eventually declared himself king or tsar in 1908. Charlie assumed that the king and his government were pro-Austrian.[3] Yet, the government had a slim majority in the Bulgarian Parliament thanks only to the support of Turkish deputies and, as such, keeping Bulgaria neutral promised to be a difficult task. The English ambassador (or 'minister') was very pro-Serb, which did little to help the brothers' cause, as the Serbs and Austrians were already in conflict with one another; it was their antipathy that precipitated the European war. However, as King Ferdinand was a mercurial character and not guided by fixed loyalties, he and his government were open to persuasion, depending on what territory they might gain from supporting a specific side. Charlie saw progress being made and was eager to note this to his wife:

> We think we have already accomplished something of bringing the English minister up to the point of suggesting to Grey a policy more or less in line with what we think right. He would not have done without our being here. Also our coming gave rise to an outburst of pro-English feeling in the press, etc., which has had some effect in counteracting the pro-Austrian tendencies of the Government.[4]

The brothers decided to leave Sofia as some of the Bulgarian newspapers were becoming more negative than at the start of their stay. They went on to Rumania, which was also not politically straight forward. King Carol I[5] was in his seventies and had ruled Rumania since 1869, although constitutionally his powers were limited. He was born Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, so of German descent and a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm; he made no attempt to hide his pro-German feelings.

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 5 October 1914, BFA.
2 Ferdinand I (1861–1948), Prince of Bulgaria 1887–1908, Tsar (King) of Bulgaria 1908–1918.
3 Charlie to Dorothy, 5 October 1914, BFA.
4 Charlie to Dorothy, 5 October 1914, BFA.
5 Carol I (1839–1914), Prince of Rumania 1869–81, King of Rumania 1881–1914.

However, the Rumanian people tended to be more pro-French – indeed Bucharest externally 'aped Paris' in Charlie's view. This was partly because the Rumanian regime was not democratic and the 'west' was associated with freedoms they did not enjoy.[1] The rebellion by many peasants in 1907 had been suppressed with some ruthlessness. In August 1914, the Rumanian government had opted for neutrality against the wishes of the king.

In the second week of October, Noel and Charlie went on a trip to Sinaia, near the border with Hungary,[2] where the king and queen had built their summer home, Peleș Castle. Here in the afternoon of 9 October 1914, Noel and Charlie had tea with the royal couple and were served caviar sandwiches.[3] They were especially captivated by the charm of Queen Elizabeth.[4] It was a memorable meeting and the brothers felt they had established a rapport with the elderly couple.[5] To their surprise, the very next day they heard the tolling of bells and discovered the news that the king had died during the night. The heir to the throne, Carol's nephew Ferdinand,[6] was married to a granddaughter of Queen Victoria.[7] Consequently, the new king was believed to be more open to British influence and the German press insinuated that the Buxton brothers had poisoned the old king!

King Carol's funeral was held five days later on 15 October in Bucharest. The brothers travelled to the capital and that morning they were getting into an open car outside their hotel, when a man three feet away fired a gun and shot six bullets. Their host, a son of a former Prime Minister, suffered only a hole through his hat, but both Buxton brothers were hit. The chauffeur knocked the would-be assassin to the ground so that he could be arrested. The gunman was a Turkish radical, who accused the Buxtons of stirring up enmity towards his country.

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 5 October 1914, BFA.
2 Charlie to Dorothy, 7 October 1914, BFA.
3 Noel later drew a sketch from memory of Charlie speaking to the King and Queen whilst being served the sandwiches, which is in BFA.
4 Queen Elizabeth of Rumania (1843–1916), born Pauline Elisabeth Ottilie Luise zu Wied, married Ferdinand 1869. Their only child, Princess Maria, died in childhood. They were estranged for many years during their marriage, but in old age became companions again. She wrote with facility in German, Romanian, French and English and, under the pseudonym 'Carmen Sylva', she published poems, plays, novels, short stories and other writings.
5 Anderson, p. 66.
6 Ferdinand I (1865–1927), King of Rumania 1914–27.
7 This was Marie (1875–1938), daughter of Victoria's second son, Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. She became Queen Marie on her husband's accession.

Noel took a bullet in the jaw, but was not seriously injured.[1] Charlie, however, took a bullet that entered in the front of his torso and came out the other side, grazing one of his lungs during his passage. The brothers were hastily carried back into the hotel. Noel thought at first that Charlie was dying. There was pandemonium in the hotel room, culminating in the gunman, guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets, being brought handcuffed before the brothers so that they could identify him as the man who shot them.[2] Eventually, the Buxtons were taken to St Elizabeth Hospital where Charlie's condition gradually improved with the help of the skilled nurses. He claimed to have little pain, just 'raging indigestion' and fatigue, and having to lie still on his back made sleeping difficult.[3]

The incident made the British papers the day after the shooting,[4] and this is how Dorothy learned of the event; further information came via the Foreign Office and telegrams, and eventually some letters also came through.[5] Her anxiety can hardly have been relieved by Noel's initial jocular communication, typical of the then fashionable male dismissal of any hardship. 'You will have had wires – private & in the press – & I now send newspapers to give the story. It was a marvel that this man shot so badly, but as we *did* escape we are delighted with it all politically & personally! Nothing could have been better arranged. It was exciting! Do write & tell us what you think & hear about it.'[6]

What Dorothy wanted was her husband home. She wrote to him on 19 October – and his reply suggests it was a strong letter:

> How I have read & re-read your beloved letter of Oct[ober] 19. It was indeed a joy. How well I realise (indeed I did already, but the letter renewed the impression) of all you felt about the attack – deeply and strongly, & reaching out to me – Trotz der Ferne [despite the distance] – with powerful & timely aid – and yet without the enfeebling fear & anxiety to which so many are slaves. It is not necessary for you & me to use many words on this subject.

1 He hid the scar that it left by growing a beard, which he sported for the rest of his life.

2 Anderson, pp. 66–67. De Bunsen, p. 66. The gunman's name was Hassan Tahsin Receb (born Osman Nevres) (1888–1919).

3 Charlie to Dorothy, 19 October 1914, BFA.

4 See for example *The Times*, 16 October 1914.

5 Tye's journal of the first weeks of the First World War, BFA. 'Days of anxiety followed – some of the papers seeming to suggest a danger of "complications" arising from the wounds. Two of Charlie's friends offered to go out to him – but it was felt this would be useless. The post was very slow & delivery of letters doubtful – News came chiefly through the Foreign Office or in letters send [*sic*] along in the govt. dispatches.'

6 Noel to Dorothy, 17 October 1914, BFA.

7 Noel to Dorothy, 17 October 1914, BFA.

> Rest satisfied that all is going very well. We will return the first moment our work allows. All sorts of precautions are taken for our safety, but personally I believe the occurrence was an isolated & unique thing, the sort of thing which doesn't recur.[1]

However, the brothers felt that their work was not complete – indeed the attempted assassination had enhanced their credibility with the Bulgarians. Once Charlie was well enough, the two returned to Sofia to a rapturous welcome. The city even named a street after them – still so named to this day.[2] Dorothy wrote again and must have put further pressure on him to come home quickly. Although the letter has not survived, she must have been insistent given Charlie's reply.

> Your second beloved letter has arrived. They *are* bliss! Also your telegram. What you say is very important for I know you would not have wired unless you had formed a well[-]considered opinion based on all the facts. I simply *long* to come home but there are very strong reasons which detain us a little longer. These you would appreciate if you knew them. It is difficult to balance all the considerations, but I have made up my mind without much hesitation, for the present. . . .
>
> These late events have made me think more of you than ever. I have thought much about your thoughts & feelings at the time of the outrage, & I think I understand them all.

Did she hint to him that he was not thinking of her feelings? Certainly, he went on to acknowledge that he had not always done so:

> Also my mind has travelled back very much to the past. I have especially thought – I don't know exactly why at the particular juncture – of my own grievous want of sympathy at certain grave & critical times in the past, especially E[glantyne]'s & D[avid]'s births & their *operations*. I hope it was more a want of outward sympathy than inward: but outward sympathy is just as important in its way. Calmness can be carried too far. I carried it much too far. I should not do so again: I feel that I was wanting in real appreciation of what you went through, & I blame myself much for it. Better things shall be done in the future, tho[ugh] we must grieve over the past.[3]

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 9 November 1914, BFA.

2 The whole area around Buxton Brothers Boulevard is now referred to as the district of 'Buxton'. The road in south-west Sofia is notable for still being paved with setts rather than being surfaced with tarmac.

3 Charlie to Dorothy, 20 November 1914, BFA.

He wrote again justifying why he was not coming home before Christmas.

> The reasons for our still staying on is that things have reached a very important stage here, & probably in the next few days Bulgaria will make the most important decision of all. When that occurs, we think from the position we have got here, we shall be able to exercise some influence, & we are confirmed in this by the opinion of others. We feel that this is really a case where duty outweighs all inclinations – & they are very strong – on the other side. We might be leaving our work just before putting the finishing touch to it – a finishing touch which *we* could put & also could not. – I don't forget your opinion about my being needed at home. I know it's carefully formed, & that *I* cannot judge the matter. On the other hand it is only I who can judge the matter here. So I must make the best choice I can.[1]

Charlie & Noel on the way home after the escape from assassination

In the event, Noel and Charlie's Balkan expedition did not achieve all for which they had hoped. Grey would not follow their advice in announcing an overall Balkan policy, but preferred to keep options open for individual negotiations, something the Buxton brothers opposed as it was likely to lead to competition between the small nation states, all to the detriment of the Triple Entente. Eventually, Bulgaria would declare war on the side of the Germans, Austrians and Turks in October 1915, whilst the Rumanians joined the war in 1916 on the side of the Russians, British and French. Yet, this could not have been certain at the time so the Buxton brothers were convinced that their efforts had been worth the hardship.

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 24 November 1914, BFA.

Before they left the region they had another encounter with their would-be assassin. They visited him in prison. He turned out to be in his mid-twenties, an attractive and educated young man who had read philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. He insisted to Noel and Charlie that he was a Turkish patriot who wished to punish those whom he felt were enemies to his country. He claimed his reason for shooting at the brothers was because they were 'responsible' by their political work for shedding Turkish blood. He acted alone and tried to encourage his contemporaries by an act of bravado. His failure to kill the brothers he put down to bad cartridges rather than his poor aim.[1] Noel placed a revolver on the table and invited the young Hassan to aim again! The gun was unloaded, but the Turk declined Noel's offer.[2] For the Buxtons, this was proof that talking to people made violence less likely.

The brothers arrived back in Britain in January 1915 after visits to Rome and Paris. Dorothy met Charlie at Victoria Station and then he visited his mother-in-law that evening, showing off 'the two holes neatly darned by his nurses, where the bullet had gone in on[e] side of his body & come out at the other'.[3] Whilst staying in Rome, Charlie wrote an appreciation of his wife. The separation and the brush with death had certainly made him reflect on his marriage and its importance. He wrote that the absence from Dorothy had made him see her more clearly.

> I am glad that I have been separated from her through four months of travel and active work. I have been able to see her life as a whole. I have escaped from the tyranny of the moment. It seems possible now to say what I have desired to say – but could not say, because I could not detach myself sufficiently from little things. I have desired to say what I knew and what I felt about this woman, one of the chosen spirits of the world, with whom my life has been linked by a strange and happy chance. I am the only man who can tell the truth about her. If I do not tell it, it will lie buried, with all the other good things that have perished for want of words.

He went on to extol her spiritual strength, her lack of fear, her love of nature and then her advocacy for those fallen into misfortune and need.

> Yet she does not live in the spiritual world as a spirit, in the nature world as a bird. These worlds do not make the world of men and women an unsubstantial thing to her; she is in it and of it. She

1 Anderson, pp. 68–69.
2 NRB4, p. 128.
3 Tye's journal of the first weeks of the First World War, BFA.

> shares the weaknesses of the world; she yields to fatigue, and irony, and anger. She sees in our world, too, her true sphere of action. She is the friend of the unbefriended, meeting them on the ground of their own needs, spending herself without stint to help and strengthen them. She would mould this world of ours if she could, nay, break it and recast it. She has equipped herself for it. She has made her brain a keen sword, and kept it sharp. She is a fighter in our human battle-ground, clear in the choice of ends, relentless in the pursuit, not sparing the men and women who wince at the defiance of custom, or the exposure of their own cherished opinions. A champion of God, smiting without hesitation, without fear, without even sober self-retreating.[1]

It was this championing of the underdog and the neglected that would rise to the fore in Dorothy's life. The events of the opening months of the First World War had had a profound effect on Dorothy. She had had to cope without Charlie's presence for four and half months and with him being too far away to consult. She had had to take responsibility and decisions for their children, home and finances, including organising the move to their new house – and even more significantly, she had not been involved with his work. She had had emotionally to face the real possibility of losing him and being a widow. When Charlie returned, their personal relationship remained strong, if not stronger because of what they had been through. However, significantly, these months were crucial to breaking the pattern of Dorothy acting primarily his helpmate and her work being principally an extension or support of his. Things would now develop differently. She had no part to play in the Balkan negotiations and she did not take a significant role in his political work for the rest of the war years. He edited and published books about his Balkan experiences and the political situation, [2] but Dorothy had little involvement with them. Charlie was not a pacifist,[3] but he made speeches advocating a negotiated peace, during

1 Charlie, memorandum dated Rome, 31 December 1914, Box 10, 7EJB/B/01/03/07-13, WL. These quotations are from sections I and VIII. Copy also in BFA.

2 With Noel, he wrote CRB4; books he edited include: CRB3 – Charlie's own essay in this is called 'Nationality'; CRB2.

3 He did not believe he should fight in the First World War, but realised his health would mean he would never be accepted in any case if he volunteered. Later he was 'called up' when conscription was introduced and consulted his doctor again: 'He says the notice "calling me up" has been issued in the ordinary way to every one of military age, & without reference to, or knowledge of, my medical examination & its result. So that when I go up I confront them with a *fait accompli* in the shape of my classification card showing that I am passed only for "sedentary duties." He says that they will then say they don't want me. I hope he is right. He strongly urged me

which he was sometimes shouted down and vilified.[1] Dorothy supported his stance, but did not join him as a speaker on the platform. He was involved in by-elections all over the country in the later stages of the war,[2] campaigning for candidates who were in favour of a negotiated peace, yet Dorothy was not at his side.

Instead, Dorothy had found something she regarded as her own mission, stemming from her work with German internees, which absorbed most of her energies. She reached the conclusion that the only way to counter the appalling jingoism of the press and public discourse was to illustrate how those on the other side of the conflict felt. She wanted to show that the citizens of the Central Powers were also human beings, who suffered from anxiety and distress and bereavement – that they, too, were being swept away by the fear incited by their own governments and press. She also wanted to reveal that there were those amongst the enemy who also saw the possibilities of a negotiated peace – that they, too, longed for the conflict to cease and were willing to participate in dialogue. For this, Dorothy's remedy was to reveal what was being written in foreign newspapers. She had a strong knowledge of German and French and translated articles, but recruited others to help with additional languages, one of the first recruits being Mosa Anderson,[3] who had studied Russian in Paris. Mosa moved into the Buxton household and practically became a member of the family. She has been referred to as Charlie's 'secretary', but this was in the sense of a personal assistant, with others employed to come in during the day to do any typing.[4] Although distributing the translations to a large audience would initially be difficult, Dorothy could easily do so within her own circle of friends and acquaintances and, from there, onto others with influence in government or the media or academic.

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not to appeal to a tribunal for exemption. I had come to this conclusion myself, on reviewing all the pros & cons.' Charlie to Dorothy, 24 June 1916, BFA.

1 See for example *The Times* 11 January 1916 and 18 January 1916.

2 Including Rossendale (Lancashire), Stockton and Aberdeen in the early months of 1917 and Keighley in April 1918, details of which are in letters Charlie wrote to Dorothy, BFA.

3 Mosa Isabelle Anderson (1891–1978). Mosa remained an important help and friend to the couple throughout their lives and was buried in the same cemetery as Charlie and Dorothy at Peaslake in Sussex. She wrote the biography of Noel Buxton.

4 'And by degrees she was taken over by my father as his assistant (though described as his 'secretary' she was much more than that; also *less*, as she could hardly type). One way and another she was practically adopted by my parents & usually lived in the house as a member of the family. She was also strongly influenced by them and I believe they so scorned the advances towards her of some young man that she gave up all thoughts of matrimony for good.' David Buxton, autobiographical notes, BFA.

She had two problems in trying to fulfil this idea. First, she had to obtain the newspapers printed on the Continent. The government had granted itself draconian powers of censorship and control of propaganda at the outbreak of war – it seemed hardly likely it would allow her to translate and distribute words from the enemy camp. According to Charlie's brother Harold Buxton, Charlie used his influence with David Lloyd George in particular, so that the Board of Trade issued a licence to import continental newspapers, which were obtained through neutral Scandinavia.[1] Even though some in the government would have been wary of granting such a freedom, in many ways Dorothy and her team would do something which otherwise civil servants would have to do. The resulting consequence of this information being more widespread was not sufficiently dangerous enough to bar the activity. To ensure that this balance of interests was not tipped against her, Dorothy ensured that none of her translations were of articles to do with military matters. She concentrated on social conditions and political issues. Throughout the rest of the war, the government did not intervene to stop Dorothy continuing this work.

Dorothy's second problem was how best to distribute what she had produced. At first, she brought the material out as leaflets.[2] Then she decided to approach Charles Kay Ogden,[3] the editor of a weekly publication called *The Cambridge Magazine.* Ogden was a talented classicist and linguist, best remembered today for his campaign for basic English, the idea that the English language could be cut down to an essential vocabulary so that it could be used as the international medium for communication. He was something of an outsider and a little eccentric, but he was respected for his wide learning and interests. He had started *The Cambridge Magazine* when he was still a student in Cambridge as a general weekly for the arts and literary pieces as well as politics, attracting contributions from literary giants such as George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy and John Masefield. On the outbreak of war, Ogden pursued a more political line, principally commenting on the war and the international situation. His impaired health meant he was unable to fight himself, but in any case he was sympathetic to the pacifist position and wanted to oppose the jingoistic tone of the daily newspapers. Dorothy's material fitted his purposes well and he offered space in every issue for her 'Notes from the Foreign Press' (later renamed 'Foreign

1 Wilson, p. 170, note 4.

2 Mosa Anderson wrote a memorandum about the history of the Notes in *The Cambridge Magazine*, copy in BFA. Also, there is extant a copy of the circular letter Dorothy sent out with the early leaflets. Dated 12 August 1915, it requested that recipients keep the Notes confidential and did not make the issuing of the circular publicly known 'as this might give rise to misrepresentation'. However, they could make use of the information the Notes contained.

3 Charles Kay Ogden (1889–1957), read Classics at Magdalene College, Cambridge, Editor of *The Cambridge Magazine* 1912–22.

Opinion: a weekly survey of the foreign press'), beginning with the issue for 28 October 1915. It was more than a mere column for it came to fill between one third and more than half of each issue during the university terms. In the vacation time, it occupied almost the whole issue. Circulation of the magazine rose to an estimated 20,000 copies per week.[1] The cover cost of a mere one penny made it cheap relative to other journals.

Coverage included articles from neutral countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland plus Britain's allies France and Italy, not just the German and Austrian enemy countries.[2] In time, when translators became available, items from Russia, Hungary, Poland and the Balkan states were included. Views on war aims in different countries were an important topic covered, as was the presence of pacifist views even in countries like Germany where there was no provision for conscientious objection.[3]

As weeks turned into months and then years, the scale of the translation operation grew and Dorothy had a team of volunteers covering a range of languages. One of her team from early 1917 was her sister Eglantyne, who came to help after recovering from a thyroid operation and she lived with Dorothy and her family. Their mother, Tye, sold her car to provide money for hiring an additional typist.[4] The large attic at the Erskine Hill house became a place of continuous activity to which all other calls were subordinate, something which had a large impact on Dorothy's children as we shall consider in a later chapter. Mid-week was always the heaviest time as copy had to reach *The Cambridge Magazine* for Friday as the publication came out on a Saturday. Dorothy would work with few breaks and then when the latest issue was done, she might recuperate with a day in bed.[5] Charlie helped her with some issues when he wished to collect items on particular subjects of significance to him[6] and when she needed to go away.[7] This was an interesting reversal of roles from their pre-war work. He now helped her.

'Notes from the Foreign Press' annoyed some people, but was much praised by others, including General Smuts from South Africa.[8] Many

1 Florence, p. 58.

2 A list of publications covered can be found in Florence, pp. 59–60.

3 See Florence, pp. 61–66; also Hammond, pp. 50–51.

4 Eglantyne to Tye, 'Wednesday', no date but from 1917–18, Box 12, 7EJB/B/01/03/22, WL.

5 'Mind you have your day in bed tomorrow, dearest.' Charlie to Dorothy, 29 January 1917, BFA.

6 Charlie to Dorothy, 16 April 1918, BFA.

7 'I can undertake complete responsibility for the *C[ambridge]M[agazine]* for the weekend Sept 14–16. And if necessary, 21–23.' Charlie to Dorothy, 27 August 1918, BFA.

8 'By the way, Smuts told me he has read the *C[ambridge] M[agazine]* throughout the war, & in E. Africa it went regularly round his staff too! He was enthusiastic about

THE
1D. CAMBRIDGE MAGAZINE. 1D.

30TH VACATION EXTRA NUMBER. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1916.

FOREIGN OPINION.

A weekly survey of the Foreign Press.

Edited by Mrs. C. R. Buxton.

THE SITUATION IN GERMANY.

THE PROSPECTS OF PEACE.

Cover from an edition of Foreign Opinion

eminent people were known to read the Notes.[1] In advertisements for the magazine in *The Times*, a dozen or so quotes from MPs are used in commendation without names being identified.[2] Thomas Hardy, the novelist, allowed his words to be used with his name, saying he read the Notes every week as they 'enable one to see England bare and unadorned – her chances in the struggle freed from distortion by the glamour of patriotism'. George Bernard Shaw and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch are others who supplied similar named commendations.[3] What became clear was that *The Cambridge Magazine* became essential reading for anyone serious about understanding the war and wanting to be fully informed. This included journalists and editors of British newspapers, local as well as national. The editor of the North Eastern Daily Gazette at Middlesbrough noted to Charlie: 'Thank your wife for the C[ambridge] M[agazine]. I set it down as one of the things that *must* be read.'[4] A non-conformist divine preached a whole sermon at Brighton about the magazine.[5] Workers at a by-election, supporting a 'peace' candidate, 'vociferously applauded' when Dorothy's name was mentioned.[6]

you, and said "She must be a *great* woman!"' Charlie to Dorothy, 15 May 1917, BFA.

1 Wilson, pp. 170–171; Mulley, pp. 220–221.

2 *The Times*, 17 October 1916 and 20 October 1916. In a duplicated list of early subscribers to be found in BFA, the following MPs are named: Hastings Lees-Smith (Liberal for Northampton); Richard Denman (Liberal for Carlisle); John Dillon (Irish Parliamentary Party for East Mayo); Noel Buxton (Liberal for North Norfolk); Willoughby Dickinson (Liberal for St Pancras North); Joseph King (Liberal for North Somerset); Sir Alfred Mond (Liberal for Swansea); Arthur Ponsonby (Liberal for Stirling Boroughs); Aneurin Williams (Liberal for North-West Durham); Philip Snowden (Labour for Blackburn); Charles Trevelyan (Liberal then Independent for Elland); Sir Ernest Lamb (Liberal for Rochester) and Sir Henry Fitzherbert Wright (Conservative for Leominster).

3 *The Times*, 1 November 1916.

4 Charlie to Dorothy, 4 March 1917, BFA. In Stockton, a Sunderland friend said to Charlie that he could not help reading every page of *The Cambridge Magazine*; 'One sees how your work tells.' Charlie to Dorothy, 10 March 1917, BFA.

5 Charlie to Dorothy, 16 April 1918, BFA.

6 Charlie to Dorothy, 22 April 1918, BFA.

It was used more particularly by those wishing to advocate for a negotiated peace, as its contents revealed that there were those on the opposing side who might respond positively. For this, both the magazine and Dorothy's section were castigated for being pacifist. One group to make such an accusation was the 'Fight for Right' organisation which wished to 'refuse any temptation, however insidious, to conclude a premature peace'.[1] Britain was 'right' and therefore needed to fight to a successful finish whatever the sacrifices. The leaders were Sir Francis Younghusband[2] and Sir Frederick Pollock,[3] but others who spoke at its meetings included the Bishop of Winchester[4] and the Chief Rabbi.[5] Such 'pro-war' and 'patriotic' groups deplored in particular *The Cambridge Magazine* because to them it appeared to be formally connected to the University of Cambridge (which it was not) and therefore was attributed a false official status.[6] Such concerns led to a question being asked in the House of Commons in November 1917.[7] Others supported *The Cambridge Magazine* because of freedom of the press even if they were not in agreement with its content.[8]

Dorothy's work had significance for both sides of the argument as it provided unbiassed and direct evidence of the views and events

1 See for example *The Observer* 5 March 1916.

2 Francis Edward Younghusband (1863–1942), British army officer best known for his 1904 expedition to Tibet. He was also President of the Royal Geographical Society 1919–22 and was a founder in 1936 of the World Congress of Faiths.

3 Frederick Pollock (1845–1937), Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford 1883–1903, and a prolific editor and writer on legal matters.

4 Edward Stuart Talbot (1844–1934), Bishop of Rochester 1895–1905, of Southwark 1905–11, of Winchester 1911–23.

5 Joseph Herman Hertz (1872–1946), Chief Rabbi 1913–46.

6 Dorothy and Ogden refuted the claims of Sir Frederick Pollock to Charlie's satisfaction: 'Yours & Og[den]'s return blow at that snuffly old Pollock is simply crushing! I never thought you'd do so well.' Charlie to Dorothy, 26 March 1917, BFA. Pollock had been a lead signature in a letter to *The Morning Post*, dated 23 February 1917, published under the heading 'Insidious pacifist propaganda'. The letter complained that the Notes were 'remarkably free from any exhilarating belief in the victory of the Allied arms or predominating righteousness of their cause'.

7 This was from John Butcher (1853–1935), MP for York 1892–1906, 1910–23. He objected to the government paying for adverts for war loans in *The Cambridge Magazine* as he judged the publication a 'vehicle for pacifist propaganda of a kind repugnant to the great majority of members of Cambridge University and of the people of this country'. The reply was that the advertisements had been stopped as soon as the contents of the magazine had been made known to the National War Savings Committee. *The Times,* 13 November 1917.

8 For example, the letter published in *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 March 1917, signed by many literary figures including Thomas Hardy, Rebecca West, Arnold Bennett and Jerome K. Jerome.

in the enemy countries. However, whilst informing many people and countering popular prejudices, it did not succeed in changing many hearts and minds. The bitterness that many people felt having had relatives killed in the conflict, and the experience of their lives being irrevocably changed, meant they could not abide the thought of not eventually emerging as 'victors'. Peace was longed for, yet not at the price of making their loved ones' ultimate sacrifices appear to be in vain. Germany and its allies had to be crushed and 'made to pay'. For Dorothy and Charlie this was a short-sighted view. It was understandable in emotional terms, but not when viewed from a more neutral political stance, when long-term consequences were considered. As they judged, the pursuit of 'Victory at all costs' by the coalition government would only lead to humiliation and enmity that would far outlast any potential outcome and lay the foundations of another conflict. Charlie wrote prophetically in late 1914 that whilst he believed a victory for the Triple Entente would be the best outcome of the war, nevertheless, 'I have many misgivings about an Entente victory – e.g. the excessive crushing of Germany, leading to another Armageddon, and the excessive strengthening of Russia, leading to more powerful tyranny than before.'[1]

The war brought other significant changes too for the Buxtons beyond their work. Charlie's father died in October 1915 and his mother in August 1916. They had been a fixture in Charlie's life, interested yet not interfering, in all his and his family's doings. Their last great celebration had been their Golden Wedding in 1912,[2] marked with a family gathering at Warlies, in the photograph of which occasion the elderly couple are surrounded by their descendants, including Dorothy, Charlie and their children.[3] The family house was little used after the outbreak of war and the Buxton parents died when living at Cromer. Charlie took time to visit his mother in her last months and to participate in a rota of relatives to keep her company. When she died, Charlie took it in his stride, grateful that she had survived so long:

> No, there is no tragedy about all this: it is natural, beautiful, and there is nothing in it that one could wish otherwise. The tragedy which arouses fierce indigestion & pain is the tragedy of the young, slain in the flower of youth through the folly & vileness of men. But here, all was peace and satisfaction.

1 Charlie, memorandum sent to Dorothy, written 30 October 1914, with revisions (including this quotation) added 26 January 1915, BFA.

2 *The Times*, 5 August 1912.

3 10 children and 28 grandchildren.

> What one feels is the strange break in the family life. Mother *was* the family home – in the local sense, that the real feeling of home was wherever she happened to be for the moment: & also in the spiritual sense, that one thought of her and felt her as the true centre of the life of the family. In this second sense, she still continues to be what she was for us. But in the other, the local, sense, all is changed – and that's the element of sadness in it all. That is what makes her death a sort of milestone in one's life. Most people pass this milestone much earlier than we have done. Ours has been an exceptionally fortunate family life in that respect.

For Charlie, the death of Sir Fowell and Lady Buxton may have symbolised the end of the family's old pattern of living, a pattern that was being destroyed by the First World War. The country house life-style in which Charlie had been brought up and the trappings of privilege that went with it had been laid aside by him and his wife, but with these deaths they could be abandoned forever. There was no going back to the old life, but there would be now no echo of it either. Warlies ceased to be the 'family seat'. Charlie's elder brother, Victor,[1] who inherited the baronetcy, decided not to move there during the war and died in an accident soon after it ended. His young heir in turn took the decision to sell it and for many decades afterwards it served as a Dr Barnardo's Home for orphaned and abandoned children.[2]

Other mainstays of the Buxtons' world also 'died'. Charlie and Dorothy could no longer feel comfortable in the Church of England, however nominal their membership had become. They had long been unhappy about the closeness of the Church of England's leadership to the Conservative Party. Then during the First World War, they felt the bishops had colluded too cosily with the government's decision for war and its resolution to continue it. In London, the bishop, Arthur Winnington Ingram, held recruiting drives for the armed forces on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral and too readily appeared to associate with the jingoistic language that the Buxtons deplored. Archbishop Cosmo Gordon Lang of York also supported the campaign for recruiting soldiers in 1914–15. Nevertheless, in one public speech, he expressed reservations about a vulgar lampoon of the German Emperor. Yet he soon allowed himself to be rebuffed as his passing and mild criticism of anti-German sentiment created a furious reaction in the press and he was vilified. The incident dogged him for the rest of the war

1 Sir (Thomas Fowell) Victor Buxton (1865–1919).

2 It was converted into offices in more recent years, but the outside of the house and its grounds have been preserved.

and he thereafter remained silent on the subject.[1] This kind of reaction was not the morally courageous witness against shallow nationalism for which they had hoped from the representatives of the Church. With the Church of England leadership so compromised in their eyes, the Buxtons had inevitably felt distance from their Anglican roots.

Dorothy's religious views were evolving, as we shall examine in a later chapter, and she was not sure how she would describe her position, so she found it simple enough to stop going to church. But for Charlie, who remained a mainstream Christian in his beliefs, the issue of religious allegiance weighed heavily: he needed to be part of a community of Christians. The obvious home was the Society of Friends, the Quakers, even though there were aspects of the Society he found difficult.[2] He had attended their services on occasions even before the First World War[3] as he was attracted by their anti-war position and he had Quaker ancestry. He was also drawn to the lack of ritual and 'constant words', as he had become uncomfortable with finding in church 'something always going on'. He had come to find even architecture, music and liturgy spiritually distracting.[4] Both Buxtons knew the Friends from their social work too. When war broke out, the stance of the Quakers in opposing it became even more significant. In addition, there was a Friends' meeting house in Central Square, round the corner from 6 Erskine Hill. Early in 1918, the Buxtons took the step to take up Quaker membership. Eglantyne wrote to Tye,

> You'll be interested to hear that Charlie & Dorothy are now Quakers! Dorothy had not felt at all sure whether they would take her, considering her higher thought views, but the lady who was sent to talk with her had them herself!! A man & a woman came together as a sort of deputation . . . Charlie & Dorothy began by explaining that they didn't agree with *each other* at all, but their interviewers correctly replied that there wasn't any necessity for that.
>
> I am very happy about it all. I feel that Charlie & Dorothy have been so very warmly welcomed by people who already had a great respect for them, & who were sincerely glad to form this link with them, that their association with the Quakers has at once brought them a great deal of happiness. The Quakers, I suppose, had long realised that Charlie, if not Dorothy too, agreed with them a good deal, just as Charlie & Dorothy knew that the Quakers thought

1 Lockhart, pp. 248–251.
2 De Bunsen, pp. 97–98.
3 Dorothy to Tye, 11 March [1918], Box 10, 7EJB/B/01/03/10, WL.
4 De Bunsen, p. 96.

> much as they did. But the avowal of sympathy seems to have led to the discovery on both sides, that the unity went far deeper than they had supposed – & this was, of course, a very inspiring discovery.[1]

Political party allegiances had changed even earlier in the war. When Charlie attempted to address a series of public meetings in London in the early months of 1916 to advocate for a negotiated peace, the unpopularity he courted alarmed the members of the Hackney Liberal Association. Fearing Charlie was making himself unelectable, they de-selected him and he was no longer their candidate for any future election.[2] Lawrence Hammond sent him letter of commiseration when the news eventually reached him; Charlie's reaction showed a certain resignation, 'it was very good of you to sympathise about Hackney. The whole thing seems very trivial when compared with the vast issues at stake. The future is so uncertain that it is not worth calculating upon it.'[3]

Charlie and Dorothy were not as disappointed as they might have been had this move been made even a year earlier. By 1916, they perceived the Liberal Party as being too pro-war.[4] Prior to 1914, their own radical wing of the party had been represented at the highest level of government by David Lloyd George, but his commitment since then to winning the war outright instead of trying to negotiate a peace had disappointed them. Lloyd George's bellicose attitude would propel him into the position of Prime Minister by the end of the year, replacing Asquith. In December 1916, he rejected a possible offer to negotiate from the Central Powers and an invitation to discuss peace terms by President Woodrow Wilson of the USA (whose country was still at that time neutral).[5] This approach deeply depressed Charlie and Dorothy.[6] The change of leadership also marked a deep split

1 Eglantyne to Tye, 7 February [no year given but 1918], BFA. I am grateful to Ben Buxton for confirming that Charlie and Dorothy's reception was recorded in the *Westminster & Longford Monthly* meeting minutes for 1918.

2 *The Times*, 18 February 1916.

3 Charlie to Lawrence Hammond, 28 April 1916, MS Hammond 8, HP.

4 For example, when Trinity College, Cambridge, blocked the Union of Democratic Control meeting in which Charlie was to talk about the Balkans in November 1915, the Liberal Club in Cambridge also cancelled a replacement booking for the meeting. Charlie was in no doubt of his unpopularity in the Liberal Party in general, not just Hackney. (With a huge audience, the meeting was eventually held in the Guildhall.), Florence, p. 36.

5 In his memoirs published in 1930, Edward Grey (Foreign Secretary in 1916) admitted that in hindsight this may have been a lost opportunity. However, he doubted Germany would have agreed the terms so the British rejection was irrelevant. He believed speculation about a possible ceasefire in 1916 was a case of 'building castles in the air; and if the future is too clouded for this, we build them in the past'. Grey, pp. 131–132.

6 Charlie to Dorothy, 21 December 1916, BFA. Lloyd George, now Prime Minister,

in the Liberal Party that did not heal until the mid-1920s, by which time the Labour Party had greatly increased its parliamentary representation and had become the 'alternative government' to the Conservatives. Radically-minded Liberals began to leave the party during the war years. Charles Trevelyan sat as an independent in the House of Commons from 1915. Other founders of the UDC, such as Morel and Ponsonby had joined the Labour Party by 1918. Noel Buxton had begun his own journey to the left. In the first post-war election of December 1918, he stood as 'Liberal-Labour' candidate, but he lost by 200 votes, after which he joined the Labour Party.

For Charlie, not then an MP, the transition was simpler. During the war, he went to meetings in different parts of the country to put his case for a negotiated peace and in doing so found most of those who responded and agreed with his position were socialists. He realised that he needed to collaborate with those whose economic ideas were further to the left than he then espoused[1] in order to create a united front concerning a peace policy. In the context of 1917, it was the Independent Labour Party that Charlie judged the most significant for supporting peace candidates in by-elections.

At this time the Labour Party was an umbrella organisation, which had various groups affiliated with it, including trade unions, pressure groups such as the Fabian Society and also the Independent Labour Party. Up to 1918, people would join one of the affiliated groups rather than the Labour Party itself. This federated approach produced some political anomalies. For example, after the 1918 General Election, the Labour representatives were the second largest group to take their seats[2] in the House of Commons after the overwhelmingly victorious Liberal-Conservative Coalition MPs. However, the Labour MPs did not have a formal leader until early in the 1920s and were not technically a 'party' in parliament and so did not become the 'Opposition'. Instead, one of the non-Coalition Liberal MPs (a smaller group) had to serve in the role of Leader of the Opposition.[3]

had made a speech in the House of Commons on 19 December.

1 It should be noted that, in later years, he claimed his move to socialism had begun when he was Principal of Morley College. 'I *started* on the road to Socialism through the rage which I felt at my Morley College friends having never had, & being never able to have, the vastly greater chances, which Fortune had heaped on me with lavish hand.' Charlie to David, 8 April 1934, BFA.

2 Sinn Fein, the party advocating Irish independence, would not take their seats in the Westminster Parliament, otherwise they would have been the official opposition to the Coalition government, as numerically they had won more seats (73) than the Labour Party (57).

3 The Labour MPs elected a 'chairman' of the Parliamentary Labour Party. This had been Arthur Henderson and then Ramsey Macdonald, but the latter had resigned

During the First World War, the Labour Party contained a very broad range of views. Some members of the ILP regarded the Labour Party as too weak on social reform and foreign policy, its radical edge diluted because of its many constituent parts. In August 1914, for example, the ILP was the only part of the Labour Party to refuse to support the War. There were individuals who were opposed, but other constituent elements of the Labour Party believed that to support the war effort was a necessary evil.

It was the ILP therefore that was closest to Charlie and Dorothy's views on the need for peace. In January 1917, Charlie decided to attend the Labour Party Conference in Manchester. He was a 'guest' and sat in the gallery of the Victoria Hall. He judged that two-thirds of the delegates were for a peace, although when the trade union block votes were used the two-thirds majority swung the other way. After meeting ILP members at the conference, Charlie was then invited to attend the National Council of the Independent Labour Party.[1] His association with them in time led to him joining as a member. It was a natural evolution from his campaigning. However, it was a transition that came because of foreign policy and peace issues, not economic policy. Although he became the ILP's Treasurer in the mid-1920s for three years, he was a moderate voice in their deliberations, still concentrating on foreign and colonial policy.

Dorothy's politics were in contrast moving far more swiftly to the left; she was to outrun Charlie by some way. By 1918, she was unequivocally a socialist and had it not been for her pacifism would have possibly called herself a communist. Two influences were prominent in this transformation. First, the work on the Notes had converted her to an internationalist outlook and approach to political problems. She saw all the working people of every nation as having far more in common than they had with the classes who ruled them. She was convinced that only cooperation across national boundaries could create a new era in which all could be included in economic progress. Only international cooperation could deliver both

in 1914 on the outbreak of the First World War because he was opposed to Britain's involvement, an opposition not shared by all Labour MPs nor the Trade Unions' leaders. Arthur Henderson (1863–1935) then resumed the leadership of the group, but resigned in 1917 after his suggestion for an international conference to end the war was rejected. Neither Macdonald nor Henderson held their seats in the 1918 general election. William Adamson (1863–1936), a former miner and MP for West Fife (1910–31), was the parliamentary leader from 1917 until 1921. Sir Donald Maclean (1864–1932), leader of the Liberal group of MPs in the House of Commons, acted as Leader of the Opposition during 1919–20, until H. H. Asquith returned to parliament in a by-election early in 1920. As the Liberal Party leader, Asquith then served as Leader of the Opposition until 1922.

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 25 January 1917, BFA.

peace and prosperity for the poorer members of society and only socialist parties appeared to advocate this approach. The Liberals and even trade unions seemed to Dorothy to be too nationalist in their attitudes.

The second influence on Dorothy's politics came from events in Russia. The Tsarist autocracy had been overthrown in a revolution in March 1917 (February 1917 in the old Russian calendar). It is hard for a modern observer to appreciate the excitement in many quarters at this extraordinary development that seemed to herald a new democratic and free society in Russia. The Labour Party had supported a special conference in Leeds in June 1917 to express solidarity with the new government, a conference at which Charlie had been a speaker. The new government, from July 1917 led by Kerensky,[1] introduced many reforms and promised democratic elections. It also offered to end the war on terms involving neither humiliations nor reparations, but the gesture came to nothing. Before many of the reforms came to fruition, in November (October in the Russian calendar) a further revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power. Few among the British left-wing of politics could then envisage the later developments of the Soviet Union or the attempt to eliminate Christianity – communism did not automatically equate with totalitarianism as it would for later generations. All that they registered in 1917 was the advent of Russian governments that promised equality and social justice with the abolition of class privileges. Any repression that followed the Bolshevik revolution seemed to be an understandable fight for survival against the many hostile forces that wished to eliminate communism before it had chance to establish itself. For Dorothy, this revolution seemed like the beginning of a new era when many of her aspirations could come true. There is no evidence that at this stage she had ever studied works by Karl Marx – her interest in the Bolsheviks came from reading their declarations not studying their political antecedents. So, for her, this Revolution was a matter of excitement and hope and she wanted to welcome the new politics. As ever, incapable of half measures, her espousal of the cause was not nuanced. She did not possess Charlie's caution and he worried that her enthusiasm would be misunderstood. When Charlie was a candidate for the Labour Party in the December 1918 election, he wrote to her before she attended a meeting with him,

> You need not suppress your Bolshevism, but let there be *love & sweetness* in it. Appeal to the idealism of those who want a state of society *here* which gives expression to their inmost (but generally

1 Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky (1881–1970), Minister of Justice (February–May 1917) and then of War (May–July 1917) in the Provisional Government of Russia. Prime Minister July–October 1917.

> *buried*) belief in brotherhood between the peoples. You can say that it had been your business for 3 years to follow the Labour & Socialist movement in every foreign country, & how it has been *concealed* from the public here; and what a tragedy it would be if the great uprising of the peoples now were to meet with no answering voice, no hand of fellowship, from ourselves.[1]

It was amidst this whirlwind of changing allegiances and new possibilities that the First World War came to an end. The Armistice of 11 November 1918 was a relief to both Charlie and Dorothy. Yet it did not mean that their work would end, but only that it changed emphasis. Dorothy had been devoted to informing people during 1914–18. After peace was declared, significant economic and political problems had to be faced. Dorothy realised that she did not need only to inform people – she needed to campaign for those left in dire need.

1 Charlie to Dorothy, 9 December 1918, BFA.