

## **PIONEER SOCIALIST DIES AFTER SHORT ILLNESS**

### **STORY OF MRS K. BRUCE GLASIER**

#### **COUNTED GEORGE B. SHAW AS PERSONAL FRIEND**

Perhaps the best-known and well loved personalities in West Craven was Mrs Bruce Glasier. Her death becomes a loss not only to West Craven, but to the nation as a whole, and particularly to the Labour Party. Katherine Bruce Glasier, classed by such men as Kier Hardie and other prominent Socialist pioneers as "The mother of the Independent Labour Party," had become known as an outstanding personality throughout the country.

Her death took place at her home, "Glen Cottage," Earby, early on Wednesday morning. She had been ill only for a short time, Eighty two years of age, she had taken part in political meetings at the Brighouse and Spenborough by-election, only a few weeks ago. During the general election she played a prominent part in the Labour Party campaign in the North.

It was at the Bristol Church of All Saints one November Sunday that Mrs. Glasier felt the urge to assist the working class. The church was entered by a band of hungry and ill-clad women cotton weavers who were on strike. Katherine was moved to help them and here efforts brought her into contact with the Bristol Socialist Society. There she was given Edward Carpenter's "England Ideal" to read. She gave up her job as a classical mistress in a high school and later became a teacher in the infants' department of a school in the poorer quarters of a large town in the Home Counties.

#### **JOINED FABIANS**

Still continuing her work with the poor, she joined the Fabians. As a furtherance of the aims of that society Mrs. Glasier spent much of her time campaigning and travelled the country extensively. At Bradford she helped workers in a six-months' strike at Manningham Mills in 1890.

Beginning her pioneer work in connection with the Independent Labour Party, she was responsible with a few others for the setting up of their ideals. She was one of six responsible for calling a foundation meeting at Bradford in 1893. That year she married John Bruce Glasier already a veteran in the Socialist cause, and he abandoned his career as an architect to devote himself wholly, with his wife, to the work of building the Labour movement on International Socialist and Pacifist lines. Through the whole of their life together they consistently preferred a working class life to the ordinary middle class career, and their names were well-known wherever the Labour Movement made its appearance. Mrs. Glasier gave much of her time and energy to helping her husband on the "Labour Leader" when Mr. Bruce Glasier was its editor, and trebled its circulation from 1904 to the Edinburgh Conference in 1909. During the war when Mr. Fenner Brockway went to prison for his N.C.F. and C.O. faith and work, and Mr. Bruce Glasier was struck down with fatal illness, Mrs. Bruce Glasier was asked to edit the "Labour Leader" in June, 1916, and continued to do so until the April following her husband's death on June 4th, 1920.

In the same year, Mrs. Glasier became a member of the Society of Friends and worked as a voluntary propagandist for the Labour and Socialist Movement, carrying everywhere with her Mr. J. Bruce Glasier's book, "The Meaning of Socialism." As a vice-president of the Nursery

School Association and active worker for the "Save the Children Fund," she also sought by every means in her power to further the ideals for the education and nurture of children for which the sisters Rachel and Margaret McMillan and Eglantyne Jebb gave their lives.

#### FRIENDS OF G.B.S.

Among her intimate friends Mrs. Glasier counted that great author, playwright and champions of Socialism, George Bernard Shaw. She first became acquainted with him in the early 1890's, when they worked together in support of Ben Tillet's candidature at Bradford. There was formed a friendship which has lasted close on 60 years. Although they have not met since shortly after the first World War many letters passed between them. On the occasion of her eightieth birthday, Mrs. Glasier was delighted to receive a message from him. It was ready at a meeting of Yorkshire women of the Labour Movement in Bradford to celebrate her eightieth birthday. "Give Katherine my love," said G.B.S. "I have not forgotten her and I hope she has not forgotten me. I am too old to come to Bradford to let her see what I look like in my 92nd year." Mrs. Glasier said of him - "He is a remarkable man and I admire the splendid stand he has made against every form of cruelty and oppression."

In 1938, at the age of 71, Mrs. Glasier paid a private visit to Australia, where she spent a great deal of time with relatives she had not seen for eighteen years. Her work at that time, not only connected with political matters, called for a great deal of attention to religious and social affairs. In Australia she was in touch with the Society of Friends, a body she had assisted in the West Craven district. She stayed with her daughter, who married Lieutenant C.P. Webb, who came over during the first World War with the A.N.Z.A.C.'s. Her visit was made possible through the generosity of the "Blue Funnel Line," on whose ship "Anchises," she sailed from Liverpool. The steamship company paid a great tribute to Mrs. Glasier and to her work in this country. In a letter to her they said: "If our ships can be of service to you we shall be happy to furnish you with a complementary return ticket. Your own long and unselfish service of the public cause, and your son's good service to us, make it most agreeable to me to offer you this facility ..."

#### "FIGHTING KATE."

Described as "Fighting Kate" by a Yorkshire newspaper some time ago, she was the subject of a lengthy personal note in that paper. "Mrs. Bruce Glasier," they said, "after her husband's death, carried on work in the Labour sphere alone. She will be long remembered as a prodigious worker for many Christian causes." Her spirit was truly unconquerable, and her work for the causes so dear to her was carried on until shortly before her death. Regularly, she attended worship at the Friends' Meeting House, Salterforth.

Her scholastic career and achievements fitted her well for the exacting work she was later to undertake. Daughter of the late Rev. S. Conway, B.A., of Walthamstow, and sister of Professor Conway, late of Owen's College, Manchester, she won an honours degree in classics at Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1889.

Extensive classical knowledge and a gift for literary construction enabled her to become well known as a writer as well as a speaker. Her whole life was devoted to the propaganda of Socialism, which, she maintained, "was the only economic expression of Christianity." As vice-president of the Nursery School association and an active worker for the "Save the Children Fund," she sought by every means in her power to further the ideals for the

education and nurture of children.

#### WRITER AND POET

Also very well known as a writer, and even more extensively known as a poet, Mr. John Bruce Glasier gave several well known maxims to the world of his day:- "Socialism will never starve, or curse, or imprison genius. It will nourish it and set it free." Not only did he write a great deal of poetry but many of his thoughts took the poetic line. Shortly before his wedding he wrote of this fiancé (Katherine St. John Conway), "if one man has to die, be that one man you and I."

At her home, Mrs. Glasier had lived in quiet retirement for some time and although she ranked among such prominent Socialist propagandists as Keir Hardie, William Morris, and Edward Carpenter, her quiet and reserved personality would not have led a stranger to think so. Politically, her retirement was only partial, for her love of the work to which she devoted the whole of her life had deep roots, and remained to the end. She possessed a magnificent vitality and a tremendous love of people; she remains - now but a memory - one of Craven's best loved as well as one of its most notable residents.