

# **MONTHLY CIRCULAR,**

**APRIL, 1927.**

## **Death of Esther, wife of W. P. Richardson,** Durham Miners' Association

W. P. Richardson, Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, and Treasurer of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, is one whom the Trade Union and Labour Movements know and respect. It was, therefore, with deep regret that these movements heard of the death of his wife on Sunday, the 3rd of this month. The sympathy of all, I am sure, goes out to Mr. Richardson and his family in the great loss they have sustained by the passing of such an excellent wife and mother.

She was not only a great help in her husband's work as a trade union leader; with all its worries and anxieties, but she took an active part in the Labour political movement, and in the Women's Section played a prominent part in Durham. She was a well-known member of the I.L.P.

In education she was also deeply interested, and was a governor of the Durham Girls' County School.

From a girl upwards she had been connected with the Primitive Methodist Church, and was well known as a church worker.

She had been ailing for some time, and a fortnight before her death had a sudden seizure on her way to a meeting. She was conveyed home, and all that human love and skill could do to save her was done. But in spite of all, she passed away as I have said.

She was 51 years of age, and had been married about 32 years. She was a pitman's wife, with all that implies. I sometimes wonder if other wives, who complain of the price of coal, realise the terrible cost that coal, which affords them warmth and comfort, is to the pitman's wife.

The heart of the public is stirred when a mining disaster occurs, sweeping scores or hundreds of men and lads into eternity. Public sympathy then goes out to the pitmen's wives, who are bereaved by such catastrophies. But does the public realise the fear and dread that are always looming over the head of the pitman's wife when the husband is tooling in the bowels of the earth, risking every minute, while in the mine, the awful dangers of which the public hears only when a terrible mine disaster happens.

The pitman's wife understands the full meaning of Joseph Skipsey's poem, *Get Up*:

"Get up!" the caller calls, "Get up"  
And in the dead of night,  
To win the bairns their bite and sup,  
I rise, a weary wight.  
My flannel dudden donn'd, thrice o'er  
My birds are kissed, and then  
I with a whistle shut the door  
I may not ope again.

Mrs. Richardson knew all the cares, the griefs, and joys of the pitman's wife who has to rear a family on far too inadequate means, and she, too, had the experience of hearing the husband's whistle as he shut the door in the early hours of the morning, and of lying awake wandering whether or not he would return to those he loved.

#### THE FUNERAL.

The funeral took place on Wednesday, the 6th inst. The interment was in the graveyard of St. Margaret's, Durham City. There was a very large attendance. The branches of the Durham Miners' Association were very fully represented, while other bodies also sent representatives.

In addition to the family mourners, the following, among many others, were present :—

Mr. Herbert Smith (President) representing the Miners' Federation of Great Britain; and Mrs. H. Smith; Mr Joshua Ritson, M.P., represented the Durham County Labour M.P.'s ; and Mr. J. T. Robson represented Mr. Reginald Guthrie, secretary of the Northumberland and Durham Coal Owners' Association There were also present: Mr. Robert Smillie, M.P., Messrs. James Robson, Peter Lee, T. Trotter, J. Gilliland and J. E. Swan (agents of the Durham Miners' Association); Mr. W. B. Charlton, R. Dobson and G. Peart (Durham Colliery Enginemen's Association); Messrs. James Ogg and C. Thompson (Durham Cokemen's Association) ; Messrs. W. S. Hall, and J. Fletcher (Durham Colliery Mechanics), Mr. Straker (secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Association) ; Mr. J. Jones (secretary of the Yorkshire Miners' Association) and Mrs Jones; Mr. A. Smith (Yorkshire Miners), Mr. F. Hall (Derbyshire Miners), Mr. W. Hogg (Northumberland Miners) and Mrs. Hogg, Mr. J. Adair (Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association) and Mrs Adair ; Messrs. W. Pearson, H. Tunney, J. Elder, N. Reed, J. Gilliland, E. Liddle, J. Parker, S. Usher, J. Herriots, L. M. Martin, J. Robinson and W. Lawther (Durham Miner's Executive Committee) ; Messrs. T. Newton and J. Kelly (Durham Mining Federation Board) ; Messrs. R. Gray, J. L. Robson, H. Peacock, J. Hesler, M. Mellon, B. Kelly, J. Elliot, W. Swinney, H. E. Bainbridge, M. C. Larnach, T. H. Bluett, H. Belshaw, and W. Roxborough (Durham Miners' Hall Staff) Messrs. W. Walker, G. W. Hall, H. Roe; H. W. Carhart, R. Hind. W. Thompson and W. Wood (Miners' Insurance Staff); Mr. J. Gillians (Northumberland Mechanics), Mr. E. Edwards (Northumberland Miners' Association).

Others present included the Mayor of Durham (Councillor F. Goodyear), the Deputy Mayor (Ald. P. W. Waite), and a number of County Councillors. Also Mrs. and Mr. J. A. Walbank (our District Joint Accountant, and Accountant for the Durham Miners' Association).

Previous to the interment, a service was held in the Primitive Methodist Church, which was crowded to the door.

As the mourners entered the church, *O Rest in the Lord* was played on the organ by Miss L. Heslop. The large congregation joined in singing the hymn, *O God, our Help in Ages Past*, and following the reading of the lesson by the Rev. A. McDonald, the hymns *My God and Father*, and *There are lonely hearts to cherish*, were fervently rendered.

#### MINISTER'S TRIBUTE

The Supt. Minister (Rev. G. B. Richardson) paid a glowing tribute to the life and work of the deceased. Their sense of loss in the passing of Mrs. Richardson, he said, was very real. She was a good woman. Nature planned her on generous lines, and gave to her those qualities of heart and head which went to make a true human. She was a faithful wife, a true mother, a loyal friend, a generous soul, an unwearying worker in many good causes. Scorning the thin veneer of snobbery and the cloak of clap-trap she loved and laboured as only a big-souled woman could. Kind hearts were indeed more than coronets and simple faith than Norman blood. The world could never know the real value of a good wife and true mother. The service of many a man was only made possible because of his faithful, uncomplaining partner at home. Upon her fell a burden of responsibility and labours that scorned a time table and cash valuation. At the back of many a man who must figure in public life, with all its fret and chafe, stood a woman, his inspiration and mainstay, content often to welcome him home, when his every nerve was raw and his soul sick, and by her soothing healing ministries to restore his confidence in human nature, and in the cause of truth. Not less was she whose decease they mourned. She was a true helpmate, a lover to the end. In all her labours she was sustained by a simple faith in Jesus Christ. That Church had lost a willing worker, a generous supporter, a kind heart that contributed gladly to its fellowship.

The service concluded with the Benediction, and the remains were borne from the Church to the strains of the Dead March in *Saul*.