



Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*

Volume Two

CHAPTER XLV



The patriots misbehave

the spirit of our gathering, the respect for human life and liberty that was seeking public expression that evening.

When the meeting was opened and Leonard D. Abbott took the chair, he was greeted by the soldiers and sailors with catcalls, whistles, and stamping of feet. This failing of the desired effect, the uniformed men in the gallery began throwing on the platform electric lamps which they had unscrewed from the fixtures. Several bulbs struck a vase holding a bunch of red carnations, sending vase and flowers crashing to the floor. Confusion followed, the audience rising in indignant protest and demanding that the police put the ruffians out. John Reed, who was with us, called on the police captain to order the disturbers removed, but that official declined to intervene.

After repeated appeals from the chairman, supported by some women in the audience, comparative quiet was restored. But not for long. Every speaker had to go through the same ordeal. Even the mothers of prospective soldiers, who poured out their anguish and wrath, were jeered by the savages in Uncle Sam's uniform.

Stella was one of the mothers to address the audience. It was the first time she had to face such an assembly and endure insults. Her own son was still too young to be subject to conscription, but she shared the woe and grief of other, less fortunate, parents, and she could articulate the protest of those who had no opportunity to speak. She held her own against the interruptions and carried the audience with her by the earnestness and fervour of her talk.

Sasha was the next speaker; others were to follow him, and I was to speak last. Sasha refused to be helped to the platform. Slowly and with great effort he managed to climb up the several steps and then walked across the stage to the chair placed for him near the footlights. Again, as on May 18, he had to stand on one leg, resting the other on the chair and supporting himself with one hand on the table. He stood erect, his head held high, his jaw set, his eyes clear and unflinchingly turned on the disturbers. The audience rose and greeted Sasha with prolonged applause, a token of their appreciation of his appearance in spite of his injury. The enthusiastic demonstration seemed to enrage the patriots, most of whom were obviously under the influence of drink. Renewed shouts, whistles, stamping, and hysterical cries of the women

accompanying the soldiers greeted Sasha. Above the clamour a hoarse voice cried: "No more! We've had enough!" But Sasha would not be daunted. He began to speak,