

CHAPTER XII

DEMOCRATIC INFLUENCES ON INDUSTRIAL LIFE, 1906-1920

105. National Affairs from 1906 to 1920. — By the end of 1905 the Conservative or Unionist party, which had so long held control of the government, had lost the confidence of the people, and at the elections held in January, 1906, a combination of parties opposed to it, the Liberals, Irish Nationalists, and Labor party, obtained a large majority in Parliament and formed a new ministry. It was this combined party that carried through the series of economic and social reforms to which so much of this chapter is devoted.

In addition a number of changes of a more political nature were made. In 1911 a bill known as the Parliament Act was passed giving to the House of Commons much greater power. In case of a dispute between the House of Commons and the House of Lords on any proposed bill, it would become law when the House of Commons passed it, if it were a bill concerned with taxation or appropriations, immediately, whether the House of Lords approved it or not. Any other bill, if passed by the House of Commons three times in successive sessions would become law, even if the House of Lords defeated it each time. At the same time it was provided that Parliament should not sit longer than five years without a new election. Members of Parliament, who had before served without salary, were now to be paid, so that a more democratic element might serve as representatives of the people.

The occurrence of this period of the most overwhelming importance was, of course, the Great War, begun August 4, 1914, and closed by the armistice of November 11, 1918, followed by