

CHAPTER III

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LIBERALISM AND SOCIALISM

THE Liberals of Australia, like their political compatriots in England, have ever accepted 'he maxim that the advancement of the interests of the worker, so far as they can, legitimately and profitably to the community, be the subjects of legislation, is as much the work of Parliament as the advancement of the interests of the merchant or the manufacturing classes. The differences between them and the Socialists (differences involving the very greatest margin for disagreement) lie in the application of it to the business and welfare of the community at large. The Tory will not admit this as an axiom, and will not act upon it except on compulsion from the ballot-box. The Liberal is, by reason of his Liberalism, thus enclosed within two zones of fire. He has to resist the reckless onrush against the established order of things led by the Socialists, and to weaken the apathy or break down the obstinacy of the Tory against any obligation to consider any modification or reconstruction. And all this at the peril that for any slip or mistake in the process of any form of modification or reconstruction, he will be shot from the