

## CHAPTER V.

A Political Retrospect—Mr. Hammersley's Progress—Return of Mr. Townend—Clean Sweep in 1931—Municipal Politics—The Emergence of Labour.

**P**OLITICALLY the last decade has been a particularly eventful period in Stockport, both in regard to Parliamentary and Municipal affairs. In the last ten years Stockport has had no less than six Parliamentary elections and the same number of Members.

When the "Advertiser" celebrated its centenary the two local seats were held by the late Mr. William Greenwood (Coalition-Unionist) and Mr. Henry Fildes, J.P. (Coalition-Liberal), who had been elected two years previously, following the death of Mr. S. L. Hughes and the resignation of Mr. G. J. Wardle. This bye-election aroused great interest throughout the country, as it resolved itself into something in the nature of a vote of confidence in the Coalition Government.

Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Fildes, who had been dubbed the Castor and Pollux of the political firmament because of the united front which they presented to the Anti-Coalition campaign, achieved immense popularity, both in the House and in the constituency, and they had no difficulty in securing re-election at the General Election of 1922, despite the fact that the famous Carlton Club meeting had wrecked the Coalition. The two Stockport Members were now nominated by their respective organisations, but there was a tacit agreement between them not to oppose each other.

This local arrangement did not last long, however, and at the General Election of the following year, December, 1923, there were two Conservative candidates, two Liberals, and one Socialist. It was at this election that Mr. S. S. Hammersley (C.) and Mr. A. E. Townend (Lab.) made their first appearance before the electorate. Mr. Greenwood was re-elected, but Mr. Fildes was fourth, the second seat being won by Alderman Charles Royle, J.P., who had just completed a fourth year as Mayor of the town.

Mr. Hammersley did remarkably well at his first attempt, polling 18,129 votes—only 2,179 less than Mr. Greenwood, who was at the top of the poll—and it was no surprise when he was returned with Mr. Greenwood at the 1924 General Election. There were this time four candidates, and Mr. Townend was third and Alderman Royle fourth.

Mr. Hammersley, young and eager to serve, brought a fertile brain, unbounded energy, and a marked capacity for taking pains to his Parliamentary duties, and these qualities, together with an expert knowledge of the textile trade and the economics of industry, soon marked him out as one of the promising young men of the Conservative party. Since the 1924 election he has firmly established himself in the esteem of his party leaders and the local electorate, and his appointment as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr. A. M. Samuel, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1927, was an indication that the Government of the day recognised his undoubted ability.