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Mary Ellen Taylor - always known as Nellie - was the daughter of John Bennet, a prominent corn merchant in Leicester. She was the younger sister of Elizabeth Wilks and the sisters remained close throughout their lives, united in their commitment to the cause of women's suffrage.



Nellie was imprisoned in Holloway in March 1912 after smashing a Post Office window with a hammer. She was imprisoned there again in July 1913 after trying to prevent Mrs Pankhurst from being arrested. This time she used the false name of 'Mary Wyan' and went on hunger and thirst strike. She came close to death before her husband, Thomas, persuaded her to stop.

Nellie's letters and accounts of her arrests were preserved by her daughter and donated to the Women's History Library in London.



## The Bennett Family, c1890

Nellie, in black, is seated beside her father, John Bennett. Her father was Mayor of Leicester in 1879 and 1880. Behind him stands her sister, Elizabeth, also in black, later known as Dr Elizabeth Wilks.

### THREE ARRESTS

During the struggle outside the Pavilion three arrests were made; the three prisoners were brought before Mr. Denman at Marborough Street Police Court on Tuesday.

Miss Annie Bell, who was charged with obstruction and with assaulting a constable by striking him on the head with an umbrella, was fined 40s., with the alternative of 21 days. Miss Bell refused to

Miss Mary Wyan was also charged with obstruction and assault. She said that when she left home she had not the slightest knowledge that Mrs. Pankhurst would be at the Pavilion Music Hall meeting. When she realised that Mrs. Pank-hurst was to be re-arrested she was struck with horror at the thought that that noble woman was to be taken back to prison, and she sought to protect her. "The Government," she said, "are trying to use Mrs. Pankhurst's magnificent courage as a tool to murder her. I felt that no selfrespecting person could do less than stand by her side." The constable, she said, seized her by the right ann and violently twisted it. She refused to be bound over or to find sureties, because, she said, she had done nothing; in default she was sentenced to 21 days.

Mr. Paige was charged with obstructing and using insulting words and behaviour. In the witness-box he said, "The Govern-ment is entirely responsible, and it is in defiance of God that these things are done." He was fined £5, or one month in default; he refused to pay, and protested, that the magistrate had refused to tear his speech in defence.



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ERNEST BOWHEN, Detective Sergeant, New Scotland Yard, on oath

saith as follows :-

I was outside the Gardenia Restaurant on the evening of 4th March.

About 6.40 I followed 3 women who came out of the restaurant.

They walked along the Strand towards Charing Cross. They were followed by a crowd of about 20 persons and some uniform policemen.

At Charing Cross they went to the Tube Station on the Charing X and Hampstead Line.

They remained underneath about 5 minutes; then they went to the District Station, Charing Gross; and thence to Sloane Square

After waiting outside the Court Theatre, they went up in the Gallery there. They came out about 8,38 p.m. just after th performance hadi started.

They crossed the square into Kings Road and walked weatwards along the Kings Road.

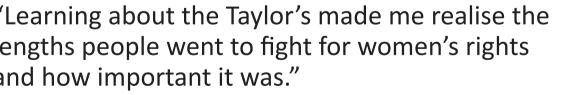
When opposite No. 9 which is a post office, they all 3 window and smashed it with the 3 hammers produced - Ex.20. one of the women Taylor use a hamme I could not see what the other 2 did. On arrest Taylor had a hammer in her hand; the other 2 I did not see what they had in their hands.

There were 3 panes of glass broken - each broke a pane. The windows were about 9 ft. x 6 ft.

Before they were arrested I could not see that they were carrying harmers. . I did not see where the harmers were taken from in order to be used.

I arrested 2 of the women; the 3rd was taken by

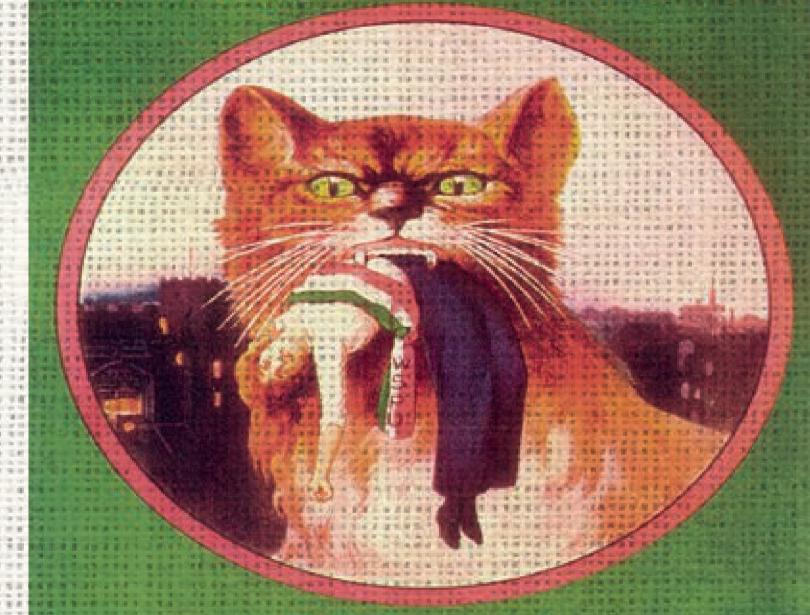
## Report by the Police Officer who followed Nellie on 4th March 1912. [Courtesy of The National Archives]





# THE CAT AND MOUSE ACT

PASSED BY THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT



THE LIBERAL CAT **ELECTORS VOTE AGAINST HIM KEEP THE LIBERAL OUT!** 

BUY AND READ THE SUFFRAGETTE MICE

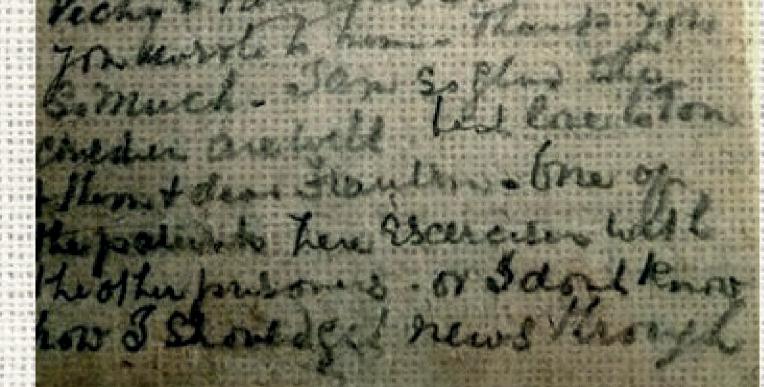
## Nellie & Thomas Taylor

## Facts

-Thomas and Nellie Taylor were married with

to her husband and children:

I was arrested last night with Miss Crocker Knightsbridge Post Office. I understand we are to receive fairly heavy sentences, so that I think you must be prepared for me to



# Letter from Nellie in Holloway, 5th April 1912

Many of Nellie's letters like this one, were written on lavatory paper and smuggled out of prison.

Nellie found the hardest thing about being in prison was being alone in a cell. She worried a lot about her children and family but also told her sister: 'Remember I feel it is a privilege to fight for this cause. Remember how much the movement has brought into my life...'

