

THE CENTENARY
OF A WORLD FAITH



THE HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ'Í
FAITH AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN
THE BRITISH ISLES



ISSUED BY
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THE GROWTH OF THE CAUSE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

IT was in 1887 that the first contact was made between one of the British race and the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Edward Granville Browne who had made a special study of the Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages, was in this year made a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and the independence thus secured enabled him to undertake the journey which had long been the goal of his ambition.

The description of the Bábí Faith in *les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* by the Comte de Gobineau had filled him with a desire to study it at first hand, and he forthwith set out to learn all that he could.

There were many difficulties in the way, for persecution had driven the Faith underground, and it was only as his genuine friendship was recognised that he was admitted with much secrecy to commune with the friends. During his travels he had many opportunities of meeting followers of the Báb, who had by that time for the most part accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the one of whom the Báb had testified as 'He whom God will manifest', and through them obtained copies of some of the sacred writings.

The full account of his travels is given in his book *A Year amongst the Persians*, also in papers read before the Royal Asiatic Society and the note published with his translation of *A Traveller's Narrative*, a history of the Bábí Faith. In this he gives an account of his subsequent visit to 'Akká, where he had an audience with Bahá'u'lláh, of Whose Personality he gives a vivid impression. About this time an account of the Bábí Faith and its rigorous persecution was published in Lord Curzon's book *Persia and the Persian Question*, and information on the persecution was also available in a book by Lady Shiel—wife of a diplomat in Tihrán—in 1852.

In 1869 Bahá'u'lláh had addressed a Tablet to Queen Victoria, commending her for the abolition of slavery and recording the blessing of God for this act. He goes on to exhort governments to act as responsible to God and to work for the Most Great Peace. 'Be united, O Kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of

discord be stilled amongst you and your peoples find rest . . . Should anyone among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him—for this is nought but manifest justice.' This document was not given publicity at the time.

Sources of information had become available in the English language. There was, however, no general appreciation of the significance of the movement, though Dr. Jowett of Balliol had sufficient insight to write: 'This is the greatest light the world has seen since Christ, but it is too great and too close for this generation to appreciate its full import.'

In 1893, at a Parliament of Religions in Chicago, a paper was read by Dr. Jessup, of the Syrian Protestant College, in which he referred to the Bahá'í Faith. Some seeking souls amongst the audience taking interest in the matter, started to investigate it. Later Mrs. Phoebe Hearst and a friend set out from U.S.A. to visit Palestine in order to learn more fully. The friend was accompanied by her daughter from England, Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper, who thus became the first avowed Bahá'í in this country. On her return she recounted her experiences to her friend, Miss Ethel Rosenberg. Miss Rosenberg when a girl had been told by her mother to watch for a great Teacher sent from God, and she at once was deeply interested, and in 1901 made a pilgrimage to 'Akká where she was privileged to spend some time in the Master's household. The third believer was Mrs. Scaramucci.

In those days, when 'Abdu'l Bahá and His family lived under constant threat of persecution and death, great caution had to be observed during these visits and even in speaking of them afterwards. The Bahá'ís were forbidden by the Turks to teach their Faith in Palestine; but that could not prevent the daily lesson of the Christ-like life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was a constant and convincing testimony to His high calling. In 1907 Lady Blomfield and her daughters were in Paris, and she tells how there entered the salon of a friend, a girl with her face alight with enthusiasm and awe, saying: 'It is true, it is really true. He has come again'. The Blomfields caught the spirit of her ardour and willingly agreed to meet the bearer of the Glad Tidings, Miss Rosenberg—newly arrived from 'Akká.

Gradually a little group formed in England, some members of which were able to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

In 1908 came the news that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was freed by the Young

Turk Party, which had recently come into power. In 1911, through the interest of Mr Wellesley Tudor Pole, who had visited Him in Egypt, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was invited to attend the Universal Races Congress at the University of London. Unfortunately He was not able to be present, but the translation of a paper written by Him was read by Mr. Tudor Pole. It contained this remarkable passage: 'This Congress is one of the greatest of events. It will be forever to the glory of England that it was established at her capital. It is easy to accept a truth; but it is difficult to be steadfast in it; for the tests are many and heavy. It is well seen that the British are firm and are not lightly turned aside, being neither ready to begin a matter for a little while nor prone to abandon it for a little reason. Verily in every undertaking they show firmness. O ye people, cause this thing to be not a thing of words, but of deeds. Some Congresses are held only to increase differences. Let it not be so with you. Let your effort be to find harmony. Let Brotherhood be felt and seen among you and carry ye its quickening power throughout the world.'

Later, in September of that year, in answer to their earnest desire, the Bahá'ís were able to welcome 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He arrived on September 3rd and was welcomed to the flat belonging to Lady Blomfield at 97 Cadogan Gardens. The Sunday after His arrival He spoke for the first time to a European audience in the City Temple at the request of the Rev. R. J. Campbell—and wrote an inscription in Persian in their pulpit-Bible. The translation runs: 'This Book is the Holy Book of God, of celestial inspiration. It is the Bible of Salvation, the noble Gospel. It is the mystery of the Kingdom and its light. It is the Divine Bounty, the sign of the Guidance of God.—'A du'l-Bahá'Abbás.'

The following Sunday, at the invitation of Archdeacon Wilberforce, He spoke at the evening service at St. John's, Westminster, the Archdeacon introducing Him as 'one who had been forty years a prisoner for the cause of brotherhood and love'; and who at the end of that ordeal could say: 'There is no prison but the prison house of self'.

Many opportunities of hearing and seeing the Master were given when He spoke at various gatherings organized by the English friends, also at the Theosophical Centre, a society which He commended for their unprejudiced search for truth.

A week-end was spent at the Clifton Guest House, Bristol, where large numbers were enabled to hear Him; He also visited the Lord

Mayor at the Mansion House, where He expressed his appreciation of the justice available for all in this country. On the day before He left for Paris a large gathering met at the Passmore Edwards Settlement to bid Him farewell. Professor Michael Sadler presided. He was supported by Sir Richard Stapley and Mr. Claude Montefiore. The Professor's opening address concluded with these words: "Abdu'l-Bahá brings, and has brought, a message of Unity, of Sympathy, and of Peace. He bids us all be real and true in what we profess to believe; and to treasure above everything the spirit behind the form. With him, we bow before the Hidden Name, before that which is of every life the inner life. He bids us worship in fearless loyalty to our own faith, but with ever stronger yearning after Union, Brotherhood, and Love: so turning ourselves in spirit and with our whole heart, that we may enter more into the Mind of God, which is above class, above race, and beyond time.'

During the whole of the Master's visit, apart from His public engagements He gave numerous interviews and talks to a constant stream of inquirers and friends, who from early morning to late evening sought Him at 97 Cadogan Gardens. Details of His stay may be found in the book written by Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, which gives an interesting record of those memorable days.

On October 3rd He left for Paris and the friends in London contrived to meet among themselves and to spread the Message with which He had charged them. Among these were Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper, Lady Blomfield, Miss Rosenberg, Mr. Eric Hammond, Miss Gamble, Miss Herrick, Mr. Arthur Cuthbert, Mrs. Claudia Coles, Miss Yandell, Miss Platt, Miss Elsie Lea, Miss Marion Jack, Mrs. Scaramucci.

On December 13th 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá again visited England on His return from America. He landed at Liverpool and spent two nights at the Adelphi Hotel, and spoke at a meeting of the Theosophical Society, and also at Pembroke Chapel. Proceeding to London, He stayed again at 97 Cadogan Gardens, and was as before visited by large numbers of friends and inquirers.

During His stay He visited Manchester College, Oxford, and also Dr. T. K. Cheyne, higher critic and oriental scholar, who accepted the Faith and wrote a book on the Cause, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*. On Christmas Day He was present at a dinner for 1,000 destitute people in a Salvation Army shelter, to whom He

spoke. On leaving he gave the officer-in-charge £20 to provide another dinner for the New Year. He was present at a performance of 'Eager Heart', a mystery play by Miss Alice Buckton.

Other meetings were held in the Essex Hall by the Women's Freedom League, when He spoke earnestly of the increasing scope of women's influence and responsibility, and in the Friends' Meeting House in St. Martin's Lane.

Edinburgh was visited, and Mrs. Alexander Whyte was privileged to be His hostess. He spoke to a drawing-room meeting for women, again stressing their high calling as the equal partners with men; and with some sadness, foreseeing the dire events in the near future which would cause this summons. Meetings of the Theosophical Society, organised by Dr. Graham Pole, and Esperantists were also addressed, and at a meeting of the Outlook Tower Society presided over by Sir Patrick Geddes, He explained the Principles of Bahá'u'lláh. A vote of thanks was moved by Dr. Barbour, and the Rev. A. B. Robb of Falkirk seconded, and the Rev. R. B. Drummond also spoke.

After He had left for the Continent the friends carried on as before; the European war scattered them and there was little corporate life among them. Great anxiety was felt for the safety of the Master, who was in Haifa and surrounded by enemies.

In the spring of 1918 a telegraphic message was received from an authoritative source: "A du'l-Bahá in serious danger. Take immediate action." Lord Lamington, whose regard for the Master was great, was at once appealed to, to use his influence. A letter was written to the Foreign Office explaining the importance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's position, and His work for peace and for the welfare of the inhabitants of Palestine. Through Lord Lamington's influence this was brought direct to Lord Balfour. That same evening a cable was sent to General Allenby: 'Extend every protection and consideration to 'A du'l-Bahá, his family and his friends.' When the British marched on Haifa, by these means a terrible tragedy was averted, for enemies of the Master had stirred up the Turks who intended to crucify Him and His family on Mount Carmel. Allenby entered Haifa several days before it was thought possible, and the Turks had no time in their precipitate retreat to carry out this shocking threat. Largely through the knowledge of Major Tudor Pole and his promptness of action, information as to the whereabouts and danger of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was available to the authorities, and the friends with

supreme relief and thankfulness received the words of General Allenby's cable: 'Have today taken Palestine. Notify the world 'Abdu'l-Bahá is safe.'

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We have already seen how through the efforts of Mary Thornburgh-Cropper and Ethel Rosenberg gradually a group of Bahá'ís was formed in London. Then came 'Abdu'l-Bahá's historic visits, a widening circle of contacts, and also increased membership. At the same time a small group was formed in Manchester. The first Bahá'í in that neighbourhood was Miss Sarah Ann Ridgeway, a native of Pendleton. Sarah Ridgeway was a silk-weaver who had lived for a considerable time in the United States, where she had heard of and accepted the Bahá'í Faith. In 1906 she was back in her native town, and in touch with the Bahá'ís of London. At the end of 1910, Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Hall of Manchester met Sarah Ridgeway. Mr. and Mrs. John Craven, near relatives of the Halls also joined the Faith. They were the pioneers of the Faith in that part of the British Isles. Yet another pioneer of the Cause in England was Daniel Jenkyn of St. Ives, Cornwall, who made a teaching trip to Holland—the first Bahá'í teaching in that country. Daniel Jenkyn died young.

There was also another English believer of those early days Thomas Breakwell, who too died in his youth. Breakwell heard about the Cause in Paris, and his work for it was all done there. But his story is so dramatic and so moving that it should not be omitted. In the summer of 1921, May Maxwell¹ (then May Bolles) was in Paris, explicitly told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá not to leave that city during the summer months. One day she had two visitors—Thomas Breakwell and a mutual friend who had brought him along. The next day Breakwell, called again, and this is what he said: 'Yesterday when I left you I went alone down the Champs Elysées, the air was warm and heavy, not a leaf was stirring, when suddenly a wind struck me and whirled around me, and in that wind a voice said, with an indescribable sweetness and penetration, 'Christ has come again! Christ has come again!' He asked May Maxwell if he had gone crazy. 'No,' she said, 'You are just becoming sane.' The same evening May Maxwell received a cable from 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'You may leave Paris at any time.'

Breakwell held a leading position in a cotton mill in the South

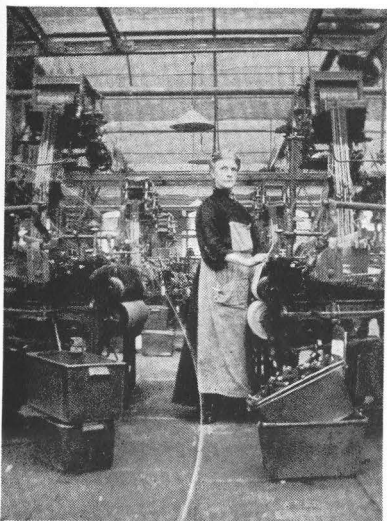
¹Mrs. Sutherland Maxwell, the mother of the Guardian's wife, who, a few years ago, died in Buenos Aires while engaged in pioneer teaching.



Mary Thornburgh-Cropper, d. 1938



Ethel Rosenberg, 1858-1930



Sarah Ann Ridgeway, d. 1913



Sara Louisa, Lady Blomfield
(Sitánih Khanúm), 1859-1939

of the United States. He resigned his post and gave the rest of his short life in the service of the Cause he had embraced.

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The war of 1914, with its resultant dispersals, brought about a temporary pause in the activities of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles. At that time they had no spiritual assemblies. There was a Bahá'í Consultative Council in London which was not an elected body, and it seems that whoever was available for help could be co-opted. That Council heroically continued its work through the war, although with interruptions. In the meantime through the efforts of Mrs. Florence George, the Cause was being taught in Bournemouth and its environs. That distinguished Bahá'í author, Dr. John Ebenezer Esslemont whose immortal work, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, published in 1924 by George Allen & Unwin, is now translated into thirty-seven languages, enlisted in the Cause in the early years of the war, and was associated with the group in Bournemouth. He died in Haifa on November 25th, 1925. Esslemont served the Faith not only in the capacity of an author, but as a teacher and administrator as well. At the time of his death in Haifa, he was assisting the Guardian. Sister Grace Challis was another pioneer believer in the Bournemouth area, who helped with great devotion.

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Major W. Tudor Pole visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká only a week after the Armistice of 1918. He wrote: 'The Master was waiting at the top (staircase) to greet me, with that sweet smile and cheery welcome for which he is famous. For seventy-four long years 'Abdu'l-Bahá has lived in the midst of tragedy and hardship, yet nothing has robbed or can rob him of his cheery optimism, spiritual insight and keen sense of humour.'

With the war over and communications re-established, the British Bahá'ís could resume their contact with the Master and the international centre of the Faith in the Holy Land. In 1920, Shoghi Effendi, the eldest grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the present Guardian of the Cause, came to Britain to continue his academic studies. He joined Balliol College, Oxford, and was in this country when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away. It was not until the Will of the Master was read that the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi became known and was declared to the Bahá'í world. Lady Blomfield

accompanied Shoghi Effendi on his return to Haifa. The Will was in a sealed envelope addressed to Shoghi Effendi, and therefore its perusal had to be postponed until his arrival. Ethel Rosenberg was present at the gathering where the Will was read for the first time.

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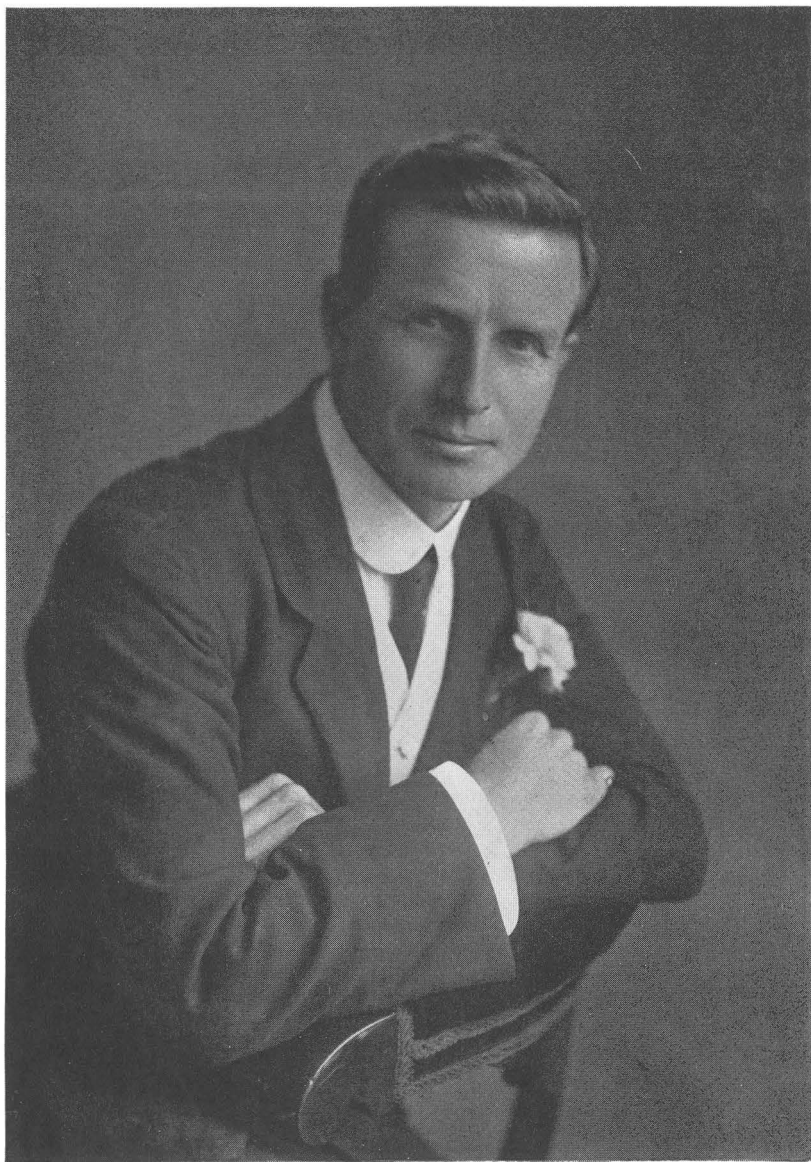
In 1919, the London Bahá'ís once again undertook regular teaching meetings, and the home chosen for those gatherings was Lindsay Hall in Notting Hill Gate. They continued their weekly meetings in that hall, right through the twenties, until 1929, when the first London Bahá'í Centre was inaugurated at Walmar House, Upper Regent Street.

The establishment of the administrative order and the proper functioning of the duly elected spiritual assemblies, both local and national, was the urgent step required, in the early twenties. The first attempt was made in 1922. The London, Manchester and Bournemouth Communities elected nine representatives to the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly for England. It was apt that this first elected assembly should meet at the start at the home of Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper (the first British believer) in Westminster. Three local spiritual assemblies were also elected and organised. But it was not until the following year that the 'National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles' had its first meeting on October 13th, and it was composed of the following members: Lady Blomfield, Dr. Esslemont, Mrs. Florence George, Mr. E. T. Hall, Mr. J. Joseph, Miss Rosenberg, Mr. Palgrave Simpson and Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper.

Henceforth, the administrative order took its natural course of development, and as years went by it was further consolidated and strengthened. Until 1927, the membership of the National Spiritual Assembly was apportioned to different local communities, but from that year onwards this practice which was not in full conformity with the requirements of the administrative order was dropped, and the National Spiritual Assembly was elected from amongst the entire national community.

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Local communities had always issued either at regular intervals, or whenever they thought necessary, news letters of different sizes. The first National News Letter came out in July, 1929, and the



John Ebenezer Esslemont, M.B., Ch.B., F.B.E.A., 1874-1925

initiative in this matter belonged to the Manchester Community. This publication which was known as *The Newsletter from the Bahá'ís of the British Isles* went on until June, 1935, when it gave way to the Bahá'í Journal, which is still issued under this title, and is the official medium of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Since reference has been made to periodicals, it is as well to mention *The New World Order* at this juncture, although it is of a much later date. This publication was undertaken by the National Assembly in December 1938. In connection with it an exhibition was held in Notting Hill Gate, early in 1939, which lasted for a month, and attracted many visitors. In all 24 numbers were issued, the last being in June 1941. There was then a gap of more than two years, and publication was resumed in a new form. Today the *New World Order* is a quarterly.

The Manchester Spiritual Assembly issued in 1925 a full history of the establishment and the development of the Cause in their city, under the title *The Bahá'í Dawn: Manchester*. Bahá'í publications in the twenties included new editions of the *Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, a pamphlet by Dr. Esslemont, with the title *Bahá'u'lláh and His Message* (revised and reissued in 1938), a new edition of *Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Given in Paris* compiled by Lady Blomfield, *Unity Triumphant* by Elizabeth Herrick, and *The Coming of the Glory* by Florence Pinchon. Esslemont's great work, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, was mentioned previously.

The question of publications takes us to the formation of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust in 1937. One more major Bahá'í book (apart from reissues) before the days of the Publishing Trust, was *The Promise of all Ages* by Canon George Townshend, which was published in 1934 under the pseudonym 'Christophil' by Simpkin & Marshall. The Publishing Trust was launched because a Bahá'í publishing agency was becoming an urgent necessity. The Trust started with funds given by the National Assembly and a generous gift from the Guardian. The works issued by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust include *A Selection from Bahá'í Scriptures*, *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, *Security for a Failing World* by Stanwood Cobb, and *The Unfoldment of the World Civilisation* by Shoghi Effendi. The Publishing Trust has built up a large stock of books, and well satisfied a real demand.

Another notable book of the thirties was a second work of George Townshend—*The Heart of the Gospel*, which was brought out by Lindsay Drummond.

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A further development of the Cause in Britain is the institution of Summer Schools. These, the first of which was held in August 1937, at Cromford Court, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, have maintained a steady progress and improvement, and have proved extremely useful both to the Bahá'ís and to their friends and earnest inquirers. Only one year, in 1940, due to national exigencies, a Summer School was not held.

In August 1939, the National Spiritual Assembly was incorporated under the Companies' Laws, as an unlimited company without shares and dividends. This step gave legal status to the supreme administrative body of the Cause in this country.

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Now we must turn our attention to the activities in the teaching field, and the formation of new groups and communities. To begin with, we must pay tribute to the help given by the Bahá'ís of other lands in this sphere, from the very earliest dates. It is impossible to give here an exhaustive list of all those who came to us from abroad, and give proper acknowledgement for their manifold services. In the early days Sidney Sprague and Charles Mason Remy from the United States gave valuable help. Stanwood Cobb was one of the first visitors after the last war. Lutfullah Hakim, a believer from Persia, lived in this country for a number of years, and did much to serve the Cause. Mrs. Mary Hanford Ford, another American believer, came year after year in the late twenties and travelled to many parts of the country to spread the message of Bahá'u'lláh. Harry and Annie Romer, also from the United States, did yeoman service over many years. Harry Romer lies in Hampstead cemetery. F. St. George Spendlove of Canada contributed greatly to the work of the London Community. Mountfort Mills of New York, Dr. Yun s Afrukhtih of Tihrán, Mme. Dreyfus-Barney of Paris, Mrs. Schopflocher of Montreal, they all gave much to the Cause in this country. Then there was the indomitable, glorious Martha Root, that intrepid soul whose sincerity, devotion and high-mindedness were indeed exemplary. She came more than once, and did much. One of her visits was in 1926 when the International Esperanto Congress was meeting in Edinburgh. Charles and Helen

Bishop, also from the United States, stayed more than a year, and did a great deal. Mark Tobey, another American believer, served the Cause in Britain both as a teacher and an administrator. It is beyond the scope of this book to mention full details of all the teaching work done by these and other friends.

In 1924, at the conference of Living Religions Within The Empire held in connection with the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, the Faith was represented, and Lady Blomfield gave a reception at Claridge's to all delegates. Again in the World Congress of Faiths held at University College, London, in 1936, there was a Bahá'í session at which Viscount Samuel presided. These were his remarks on that occasion—'If one was compelled to choose which of the many religious communities of the world was closest to the aim and purpose of this Congress, I think one would be obliged to say that it was the comparatively little known Bahá'í Community. Other faiths and creeds have to consider, at a Congress like this, in what way they can contribute to the idea of world fellowship. But the Bahá'í Faith exists almost for the sole purpose of contributing to the fellowship and the unity of mankind'.

The Bahá'í paper on this occasion was read by Canon Townshend on behalf of Shoghi Effendi.

An editor who has for some sixteen or seventeen years generously given his columns to the discussion of the Cause and the review of its publications is Mr. R. J. G. Millar of John O'Groat's Journal in Wick, Scotland.

The *Christian Commonwealth* (which has now ceased publication) gave very wide publicity to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visits to Britain, at times carrying several columns of Bahá'í material.

Many papers, periodicals, etc., have on different occasions published articles, reviews, and items of news related to the Cause. The *Morning Post* and the *Manchester Guardian* gave long obituary notices regarding 'Abdu'l-Bahá. An article by the correspondent of *The Times* in the Middle East, which appeared in the September 17th, 1919, number of that paper, was of particular merit.

Many societies and churches, specially the Theosophists, Esperantists, and the Unitarians have provided platforms for Bahá'í speakers, and given speakers to Bahá'í meetings. Here again it becomes impossible to enumerate all these occasions, and render due acknowledgements.

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The teaching work in Bradford owes its inception to the efforts of Alfred Sugar of Manchester. In 1929, Mr. Sugar was living in Bradford. He was able to interest a number of people in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The first occasion when the Faith was presented at an organized meeting in Bradford, was in November of that year, when Alfred Sugar addressed a meeting of the members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In 1931 Miss Marion Burgess (now Mrs. Arthur Norton) joined the Cause, and she was the first believer of Bradford. Later Arthur Norton and Mrs. Wilkinson came into the Faith, and they formed the nucleus of the group which grew into a community. The first Spiritual Assembly of Bradford was elected in 1939, and in January 1940, the Bahá'í Centre at 68 Great Horton Road was opened. In 1941, the Summer School was held in Bradford. Mrs. Mary Hanford Ford from U.S.A. and several other visitors from abroad and from other parts of the country gave valuable help in establishing the Cause in this promising town of Yorkshire.

The work in Torquay and its neighbourhood began with the pioneering activity of Mark Tobey, an American artist, and was greatly furthered by visits from Helen Bishop. Mark Tobey organized study classes in Dartington and gave lectures at Torquay, as a result of which Mrs. Lilian Stevens and Mrs. Constance Langdon-Davies joined the Faith in 1937. Mrs. Scaramucci, one of the first Bahá'ís of the British Isles was living in Devonshire at this time. Within two years Torquay came to have a Spiritual Assembly. On March 21st of the same year, 1939, the first Bahá'í Centre of Torquay was inaugurated at Castle Chambers. Since then it has moved to 14 Market Street.

We have previously referred to the opening of the first London Bahá'í Centre at Walmar House. That Centre, which was opened in 1929, was the first of its kind in the whole of the British Isles. In this Centenary year, the London Centre is at 1 Victoria Street. It is not only the local Centre but also houses the offices of the National Spiritual Assembly. The Manchester Centre was first established in 1937 at Commerce House, 39 High Street, Manchester 4. These four Centres serve as the focal as well as the radiating point of all Bahá'í activity in this country.

The younger Bahá'ís have had at various times their own specialised organisations and gatherings. Their functions have ranged from public meetings and study circles to social evenings

and picnics. They took part in the first international symposium of Bahá'í Youth in March 1936, as well as in subsequent years. They were also able to send delegates to the annual Bahá'í Students' Conferences in Paris, which used to be a regular feature of Bahá'í work in the French capital over a number of years.

From 1937 to 1939, a Bahá'í Theatre Group existed in London, which presented a number of public performances. Although this group worked under the direction of the local Spiritual Assembly its membership was by no means drawn exclusively from the Bahá'í Community. Indeed it had a number of non-Bahá'í members, and there was whole-hearted co-operation all round.

The teaching work has not only been confined to the cities with communities and centres. In many other towns and cities the Cause has been presented in various ways. They include Newcastle, Liverpool, Blackburn, Blackpool, York, Leeds, Doncaster, Sheffield, Harrogate, Birmingham, Nottingham, Ilkeston, Northampton, Cambridge, Orpington, Salisbury, Cheltenham, Bristol, Plymouth, Exeter, St. Ives. There are Bahá'ís in most of these places, who are furthering the knowledge of their Faith and building up groups and eventual communities.

This war, though so much more devastating than the last, has not interrupted the Bahá'í work in the British Isles to the same extent, because the Bahá'í Faith was more firmly established at the beginning of this war than at the beginning of the last, when there were no administrative institutions.

This account of the development of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the British Isles, has necessarily been only an outline, short and concise. Many details have had to be omitted. But enough has been said to show that the Cause has grown steadily, gradually enlarging its scope. Thousands have heard directly and indirectly of the creative message of Bahá'u'lláh, who in turn have passed it to still others. And in the meantime the Faith has been consolidating itself, laying a firm, unassailable foundation in the hearts of its adherents.

It is not only within the circle of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, in this or any other land, that one witnesses the powers of His Revelation. The world at large is becoming daily more conscious of those laws and principles which Bahá'u'lláh announced to humankind some eighty years ago.