

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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THE VALLEY OF DECISION

"He realises that your Assembly, and all the British Bahá'ís, are facing the most difficult and critical months of your Plan. **The friends must be made to realise that the urgency of the task during these few months which lie ahead is not only acute but temporary.** Once they make this final effort, and clamber to the top of their goal, they can rest. The opportunity for achievement is absolutely unique, for this is their first Plan, and consequently the most historic one of the many they will, no doubt, carry out in future decades. To fail, so near to victory, would indeed be sad, and he cannot but suppose, would be a severe blow to that stubborn British pride which is so famous for its tenacity of purpose! However he himself is not thinking in terms of their failure, but rather believes they can, **by one last determined drive,** be successful, even if they feel some exhaustion at the end of their race against time. They must, likewise, at this crucial hour, remember that **failure or success are never confined to the immediate community concerned, but have wide repercussions.** Their success will not only greatly enhance their prestige in the Bahá'í World, but will inspire the often flagging efforts of the believers in the East, who have so many obstacles to overcome, and are by nature and experience more prone to become disheartened in the execution of fixed tasks.

"It was the *success* of America's first Seven Year Plan which so stimulated the British Community that it, in its turn, was determined to have a Plan and a victory of its own. Now it really cannot lose; it has gone too far, laboured too brilliantly,

shown too much courage and high sacrifice, to, at the last minute, let the prize fall from its grasp!

"His prayers and thoughts are with you all, constantly, and with all the believers, toiling so devotedly all over the British Isles. With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbani.

"DEAR AND VALUED CO-WORKERS,

As the Plan, to which the entire British Bahá'í Community had pledged its support, approaches its end, **my heart turns with increased longing and expectation,** towards those who so spontaneously initiated it, so enthusiastically set it in motion, so valiantly overthrew the barriers that confronted them in the initial stage of its unfoldment, who so unitedly consecrated their efforts to its subsequent development, and who are now within sight of its final consummation. I cannot believe that a community which, motivated by so noble an impulse, capable of such prodigious efforts, dedicated so whole-heartedly to so gigantic a task, blessed by so many evidences of Divine assistance and guidance, enriched by the first fruits gathered in the course of the execution of a splendidly conceived enterprise, will allow, at the very moment when final victory is, at long last, within sight, through a momentary relaxation of effort, the magnificent prize of total success, to slip from its grasp, and the fortunes of such a potentially powerful undertaking to be marred by any feelings of impotence or exhaustion which might well, at the eleventh hour, assail those who have, for so long and in such great measure,

expended their energies for the prosecution of so mighty and far-reaching a Plan.

"The required number of pioneers, who must arise, while there is yet time, and stop the dangerous breaches, which a fate-laden Plan, now in the last stages of its development, reveals to the eyes of its prosecutors must, however costly the sacrifice, be instantly found, and rushed without delay, to the scene of action. The funds, which must enable these last minute pioneers to adjust their affairs and settle wherever most needed, must, under no circumstances, and particularly on the part of the well-to-do, be withheld, as the present critical situation moves towards its climax.

"Great and overpowering as these sacrifices may now appear, they will, when viewed in their proper perspective, be adjudged as inconsiderable, and pale into insignificance when balanced against the inestimable advantages which must accrue to a community that has achieved total and complete victory for a Plan so epoch-making in character, and so charged with undreamt-of potentialities. The sacrifices, which this fateful hour calls for, are by their very nature, individual; the loss or inconvenience they entail are at most transitory in their effect, and might well be fully compensated for in the days ahead, whereas the blessings that must irresistibly flow out, as the result of the integral success of a nation-wide historically unprecedented Plan, will enrich and ennoble the life of an entire community, exerting an abiding influence on its fortunes, and empower it to launch still mightier crusades in the course of subsequent stages in its organic spiritual development. How bountiful, moreover will be, the rewards which He who watched from on high the varying fortunes of the Plan and presides over its destinies, must either in this world or the next—and it may well be in both—choose to confer upon those, who, at the hour of the Plan's greatest need, will fly to its succour, exhibit the rarest evidences of courage and heroism, and choose to subordinate their personal interests to the immediate needs and future glory of the community to which they belong.

"The interval during which a decision so momentous, so rich in promise, must be taken is steadily and inexorably shrinking. The golden opportunity which such a decision offers will never again recur. The issues hinging on such a decision can neither be overestimated nor visualised while the fate of the First Plan embarked upon by the British Bahá'í community still hangs in the balance. The invisible hosts of the Kingdom are ready and eager to rush forth to the assistance of such as will have the courage to weigh the issues involved and to take the decision commensurate with these issues. To such as take it, while there is yet time, the present generation, as well as those who will succeed it, will be eternally grateful, for theirs will have been the privilege of sealing on the one hand, the fate

of the First Historic Plan in British Bahá'í annals, and on the other of paving the way for the initiation of the successive enterprises that must follow in its wake.

"To reach such a decision, to face willingly and cheerfully its consequences, will, above all, earn the good-pleasure and commendation of the One Who, well-nigh a hundred years ago, so gloriously made the supreme sacrifice of laying down His life that the Cause for which the present prosecutors of the Plan have so wholly dedicated themselves might live, prosper and bear in the fulness of time, its fairest fruit in both the East and the West.

"Dear friends! As the tale of the woes and trials He endured is called to mind, during the months preceding the Centenary of his martyrdom, and destined to witness the conclusion of the Six Year Plan sponsored by the British Bahá'í Community, a resolution, born of the love and admiration which the memory of His heroic life and tragic death must evoke in every Bahá'í heart, should seize, and galvanize into action, the little band of His lovers and followers, who, of their own accord, and at the dawn of the second Bahá'í century have risen to launch the first collective enterprise in British Bahá'í history, and chosen to associate its consummation with the Centenary of the death of the martyr Prophet and co-Founder of their Faith. The Centenary of the inception of His Mission has witnessed the initiation of so praise worthy, so vast and potent an enterprise, extending its ramifications over the entire territory of the British Isles. The observances, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the last act of His life, must, as pledged by its initiators, synchronise with the successful termination and glorious triumph of that same enterprise through the length and breadth of that same territory.

Your true brother,
SHOGHÍ."

THE FIRST RESPONSE

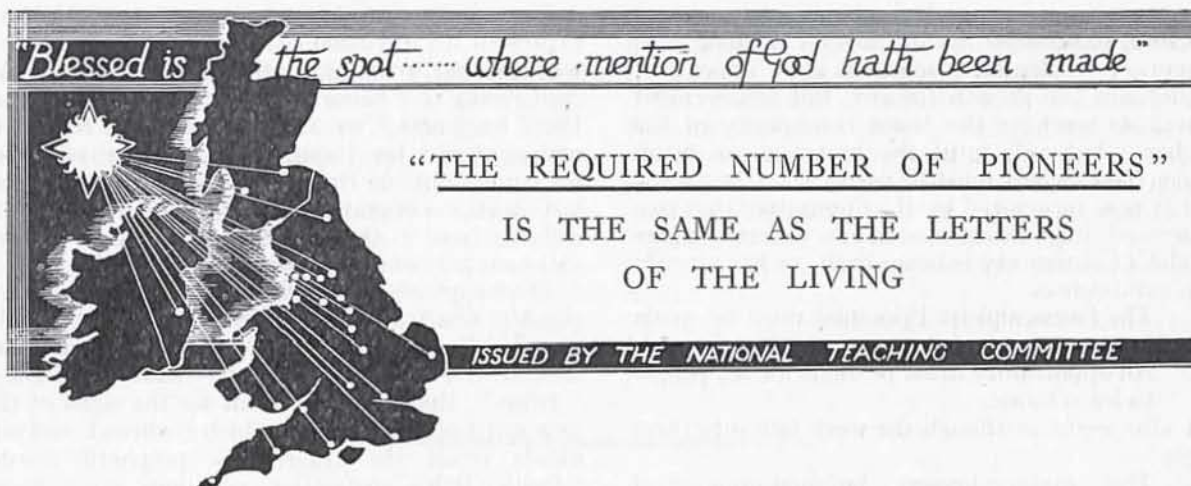
Within a few hours of receipt of the Guardian's letter, Alma Gregory placed herself unreservedly at the service of the N.T.C., to go anywhere or serve in any capacity, as soon as plans have been completed for her daughter to enter boarding school.

Next please!

SUMMER SCHOOL

The School this year was a great success, many friends saying it was the best they had known. Between 130 and 140 adults, and some 32 children attended. A full report and photograph will appear in the next Journal.

Edward Rudd of Newcastle, and Charles Farrington of Liverpool have been warmly welcomed into the Faith.



"Blessed is the spot..... where mention of God hath been made"

**"THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF PIONEERS"
IS THE SAME AS THE LETTERS
OF THE LIVING**

ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

On September 28th, 1949 we need 54 believers in 15 places.

Out of this 54, at least 19 are required "without delay" to "stop the dangerous breaches." These 19 will be distributed amongst those places where the need cannot be satisfied by confirmation, for a "breach" is *not* just a shortage of numbers, but is a gap of a special kind. For example, a community of new and inexperienced believers may need an older member trained in administration; or a loosely scattered group, where the pioneers are all in lodgings, may need to have a pioneer who can offer a home; and so on.

Perhaps many more than 19 may be required if our teaching does not help the other 35 to be confirmed, but it is the carefully considered view of the N.T.C. that this number is the smallest we can get by on. Even if there were 40 or more declarations in the Goal Towns—and this there might well be in these last few months, the 19 would still be required to give the stability and experience to the newly elected Assemblies.

So far this year, 7 Pioneers have settled in Goal Towns, so that a further 19 would only beat the record number for one year (25 in 47/48), by one pioneer. It is certainly not beyond the capacity of this community, which has already raised 53 Pioneers to carry our 81 projects.

Here then is the picture to-day, and the breaches, as compared with the state in August, 1949:

Town	August	Now	Breaches	Comments
Belfast -	2	2	3	Two needed to form a home.
Blackpool -	4	5	Nil	Present pioneering plans sufficient.
Brighton -	3	4	2	Two needed to form a home.

Glasgow -	2	2	3	Increased assistance from Adopting LSA
Liverpool -	4	6	1	Mature pioneer needed.
Newcastle -	3	4	2	Two to form a home.
Oxford -	7	7	Nil	Present plans sufficient.
Sheffield -	1	2	3	Two to form a home.
St. Ives -	2	2	4	At least one nuclear pioneer.
Bournemouth	8	8	Nil	Increase by confirmation.
Bristol -	8	7	Nil	Increase by confirmation.
Cardiff -	9	8	Nil	Increase by confirmation.
Dublin -	9	8	Nil	Increase by confirmation.
Nottingham -	9	7	1	Plus Increase by confirmation.

The key words of the Guardian in his recent letter are *'instantly found and rushed without delay, to the scene of action.'*

In a community where numbers have dropped below 9, or in a Goal Town where work is going ahead, and the need can be met by sustained, systematic teaching. Where there is a breach, however, no amount of teaching can be enough—it is like a canal or the sea, flowing through a breach in the canal bank or the sea wall. Pouring teaching in, under these circumstances, is just pouring money, energy, as well as precious time, down the river to waste. As each breach is filled, however, we can pour in all we have, for nothing will be lost, and all efforts made will carry the work along towards that "future glory" which may yet be ours.

The teaching programme designed for these last few months will depend largely upon the rapidity with which the breaches are filled. As more

wrote them, spent forty years in bondage. When released His health was broken and His physical powers were taxed to the utmost. But to teach the Cause of God, in His 67th year He embarked on a three-year long arduous journey that took Him from Cairo to London, from Budapest to San Francisco.

"The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings,

purged themselves of self and passion and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps."

THE CALL OF THE MARTYRS

by George Townshend

Now in this crisis of our fortunes time brings round to us the centennial of the great martyrdoms in Persia.

The Siege of Tabarsi closed in the spring of 1849 with the death of almost all its defenders including one half of the "Letters of the Living"—Mulla Husayn and Quddus among them. In March, 1850 the Seven Martyrs were beheaded in the great square of Tihiran. In May of that year the investment of the Bábís in Zanzan opened. In June Vahid the "*unique and peerless figure of his Age*" was martyred, and most of his companions at Nayriz after him. On July 9th the Báb was shot to death in Tabriz. Early in 1851 Hujjat was killed, and some 1800 fellow believers perished with him. Then in 1852 came the universal holocaust of torture and massacre which involved Tahirih and thousands of others and did not cease till every discoverable Bábí was slain or cowed or driven into exile. The authorities then were assured the movement was at an end and its fires quenched for ever.

Little did those blind and wicked men know the power hidden in this cause or the profound effects of self-sacrificing faith.

With unflinching firmness the martyrs went to the doom for which they had longed and prayed, counting such a death a boon and a reward. They endured their sufferings with superhuman patience, breaking their stubborn silence, if at all, only to utter words of forgiveness to their executioners or to chant a hymn of thanksgiving to the Beloved into whose presence they were passing.

So unexampled was their resolution and their fortitude that it astonished and bewildered be-

holders, attracted hearts, made converts (secret or open) to the Báb, spread His fame and that of His followers beyond the borders of Persia and inspired many a revering tribute from western scholars or diplomats and others who told in glowing phrases of the "rare and beautiful spirit of self-sacrifice" which distinguished the Bábís and of "the sublime and unassuming devotion" with which they defied their torture-mongers.

To an American correspondent who in after years wrote of these dreadful scenes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied in a Tablet which has since found its way into print that these martyrdoms fanned the fire of the love of God, spread the word of God, uplifted the standard of God and drew from the Tree of Life fragrances of holiness that were diffused through the world. We of the West have seen the proof of the enduring effects of this heroic devotion to God in the deep, strong, steadfast faith that distinguishes to-day the Bahá'ís of the Land of the Martyrs. Bahá'u'lláh in a great prayer for forgiveness of sins has permitted us to plead "*the blood of Thy lovers who were so attracted by Thy sweet utterance that they betook themselves to the lofty summit the Mount of Great Martyrdom.*" His pen has written "*O Son of Being! Seek a martyr's death in My path. . . . O Son of Man! By My beauty! To tinge thy hair with thy blood is greater in My sight than the creation of the universe and the light of both worlds. Strive then to attain this, O Servant.*"

They gave their lives simply for love of God, that they might be true to Him, be close to Him, be united with Him. Love and longing for God uplifted, transformed them, gave them a strange new strength and held them firm through every trial.

Nothing less than this divinely given rapture could have animated such utter self-abandonment as was theirs. It was not firmness of character, not love for the principles of the Faith, not love for its ideals, nor for its reforms, nor even love for virtue and for the attributes of God, which inspired their heroism: but rather an unreserved, all-absorbing, all-forgetting devotion for one in Whom they saw God Manifest.

Before they knew Him, they had, one and all (even the valiant Husayn, even Tahirih) been ordinary men and women, with their selfishnesses and their doubts; till love came upon them and transmuted their whole being, changed the gnat into an eagle, the hare into a lion, gave them the mastery of life and ushered them into new ranges of ecstasy and power.

That Heroic Age is past. The martyrs stand to us as an example and a challenge. They shew us what an appeal, a charm lies in this Faith for hearts that are sensitive to its influence.

But the battle which they fought is still unwon, the Faith for which they died has not as yet prevailed. In a world perverse, preoccupied, obfuscated with doubt and pride, a new opposition has taken form, a new foe has reared his gloomy ramparts against the advancing Truth. From their bloodstained graves the voice of the martyrs calls on us believers of a later day, for a love, a courage as deeply based as theirs that shall now achieve that ultimate victory which their Lord promised them and which their hearts foresaw.

Their courage was infinite. None can measure it. Tried to the uttermost it showed no tremor but only triumphant strength. Earth's bitterest cruelty tried to break it but only made it burn higher and with an intenser flame.

Bahá'u'lláh in a "Word of Wisdom" reveals the secret of their power.

The essence of courage, He tells us, is the promotion of the Word of God and steadfastness in His love.

The Qu'rán writes "*The truly brave are those who stand firm and behave patiently under ills and hardships; their patience is only for God and not to display bravery.*"

It is the cause that matters. It is the cause that distinguishes from all lesser kinds of courage the courage that rises in the soul, that lasts on into the hereafter, that is a permanent possession. It is the cause that opens these hidden reserves of strength and rapture; and this all-hallowing cause is none other than the selfless service of God and of His Beloved.

The story of the martyrs as handed down to us shows on every page, in every word that the ground of their heroism was the ardour of their faith. In Nabil's record and in the testimony of Bábís quoted in it, doctrine fills but little place; faith is all in all. The Báb's imprisonment separated Him from His

disciples and they had few opportunities of receiving His instructions; but through their deep strong ardent faith they reached the end of all learning and exhausted knowledge—they became one with God. To us in this Formative Age doctrine is much, teaching problems are urgent, constructive work is vital; yet no service can take the place of Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave us a command and imposed on us a Covenant: "*As your faith is, so shall your blessings and your powers be. That is the standard. That is the standard. That is the standard.*"

Unquestioning belief in the Manifestation; an unshadowed vision of God in Him; impassioned love for Him; this is the handle of every weapon in the armoury of the Soldiers of Light.

It is not enough that we should believe; we are required to deepen our faith continually. It is not enough to acknowledge Bahá'u'lláh and love Him; we must love Him more and more. Faith and love are living growing expanding things, as seed, as leaven. A believer once started on his way, cannot stand still without incurring grievous loss. If he does not go forward, he slips back.

"*Let your morning be better than your evening, and your day an improvement on the morning,*" was the command of Bahá'u'lláh.

"*It is not permissible for two days to resemble each other,*" said Muhammad.

The Bábís were for ever eager and active in the cause of God, for ever facing danger. They associated with one another. They called on the Sacred Name, they chanted their prayers together. The joy of their love so radiated from them that it was commonly said one could not have tea with them without wishing to join their society. Their enemies charged them with magic, with casting spells of love on those who came to them. And when the summons came to dare and to die for their Beloved, they were ready.

The Source on which they drew for their strength is within the reach of all of us. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has expressed it in these words:—

Our Strength is the Strength of the Blessed Perfection!

Though all mankind unite against us,

Yet shall His Strength be ours;

Nor can all the world despoil us of it.

His Strength is our weapon to wield for evermore,

With it shall we conquer all things.

His strength is a sword that rusteth not,

A treasure that knows no bounds.

TEACHING CONFERENCE

Manchester will be scene of Teaching Conference on January 7th and 8th, the last national gathering before the end of the Six Year Plan.

POINTS FROM THE GUARDIAN'S LETTER

He has already cabled you about the appropriate manner for commemorating the Centenary of the Bab's martyrdom, so I will not go into the subject again here.

Now that the Cause is spreading so rapidly throughout the world, the National Assemblies must be vigilant, and do all they can to protect and assert its independent status, and to give assistance to isolated or repressed assemblies, when they are turned to for help or advice.

He had recently received enthusiastic letters from Mrs. Preston in Kenya, and informed her that when she needs advice or assistance she should turn to your Assembly, while, of course, keeping in close contact with him as well.

A New Book by RUHIYYIH KHANUM

The friends all over the world have heard with great interest of Ruhiyyih Khanum's forthcoming book. It will be published some time before Christmas by George Ronald, and the Bahá'í Publishing Trust can supply it to all Bahá'ís, and Bahá'í libraries in the British Isles. Its title is:

"PRESCRIPTION FOR LIVING"

and it will be in two editions:

Cloth 7/6 and paper 3/6.

Ruhiyyih Khanum writes: "What I have tried to do is to tell the people what we teach about personal reform. There are such wonderful teachings, so psychologically sound, in our Faith, on the aspect of character building and everything to do with one's internal hygiene."

The last three chapters are beautiful pen portraits of the Founders, showing Them in Their humanity as well as Their divine station.

The book is written in everyday language, humorously and with deep insight. It is not propaganda for the Cause, but will fill a great need.

CABLE TO THE GUARDIAN

Sent from the NSA meeting of September 23rd-25th:

"Humbly grateful inspiring letter which raised concluding day radiant Summer School greater heights, conscious success Plan depends response adequate challenging call, sustained knowledge your confidence and continued prayers. Edward Rudd, Newcastle, Charles Farrington, Liverpool accepted. Loving devotion."

THE FUND

To date pledges have been made by:

- 10 Spiritual Assemblies,
- 37 Individuals

in response to the scheme launched by the NSA in July. The Guardian cabled about this "*Highly approve*" and he himself pledged, and later sent, £1,000.

The NSA wishes to call the attention of the friends to the relevant passages in this latest letter from the Guardian, where he appeals not only for pioneers, but for friends as well.

In this connection we wish to clarify the nature of the assistance given to pioneers and teachers, and quote from the Guardian's letter of May 29th, 1946:

"Pioneers who volunteer for work, if they are not able to support themselves should be supported by the National Fund until they either find work or their task is completed. Likewise travelling teachers should be assisted financially to carry out the 'projects' assigned to them. . . . The friends should not for a moment confuse this type of support with the creation of a paid clergy. Any Bahá'í can, at the discretion of the NSA, receive this necessary assistance, and it is clearly understood it is temporary and only to carry out a specific plan."

PERSONAL

Mrs. Little spent a short time with the NSA on the eve of her departure to Geneva, and gave us an encouraging account of her visit to Glasgow and Ireland.

Our dear old friend Mr. Asgarzadeh is recovering from a very painful illness. We feel sure the friends everywhere will join us in prayers for his full recovery.

STOP PRESS

Two cables from the Guardian:

"Overjoyed success Summer School assure newly enrolled believers Newcastle Liverpool loving welcome prayers surrounding entire community acceleration momentum carrying it attainment Goals appointed time."

"Dearly beloved distinguished co-worker Amelia Collins arriving London en route Poland show great consideration praying utmost benefit visit."