

THE SECRETARY'S REPORT, Ridvan 96/April 21st 1939.

(Abridged version. The full report is available at the Centre)

Dear Friends,

No individual and no community can claim to have served sufficiently at the Threshold of Baha'u'llah. How insignificant and how feeble would our efforts seem, should be invite comparison with the measure of sacrifice to which we are called. But still within the purview of our course, we can look back with satisfaction upon the year now ending. The London Community is blessed with more unity and for that we must be grateful.

A very bright feature of our work is the remarkable improvement in the attendance and the quality of the 19-Day Feasts. Last January the Spiritual Assembly sent out a general letter explaining the vital importance of the Nineteen Day Feast to the life of a Baha'i Community.

Two other circular letters were issued in the course of the year. The first one, dated May 19th, emphasised the necessity of mobilising and pooling "all our abilities and resources". The friends were asked to offer their services "in any form or shape". The response was not encouraging. The other circular letter dealt with the Funds and was sent out in March.

Last May our work was threatened with serious interruption. The Spiritual Assembly felt obliged to utter a warning, and a special meeting was called in the middle of June. That Meeting proved a fresh starting-point. The attendance was large and a true spirit of fellowship pervaded the gathering.

Subsequently three Special Meetings were held on September 16th, November 26th (The Day of the Covenant) and February 17th. Although they did not command the same degree of devotion, they were of great help and benefit.

The institution of Regional Groups was a new departure in our work. There were to be eleven groups. The only Group which has functioned consistently all along is Group No.6, and it is the only Group which has sent in a written report. This group organised a meeting on November 7th at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Forrest at Hayes, Middlesex. Since then a monthly fireside meeting has been held at the home of the Misses Le Gray at Chiswick.

Group No.7 has maintained two fireside meetings, each one held on alternate Tuesdays, at the homes of Mrs. K.V. Brown in Hampstead, and the Misses Cansdale and Wellby at St. John's Wood. Group No.8 brought forward the idea of a monthly publication which was adopted by The National Spiritual Assembly and took shape in the magazine "The New World Order".

In addition to the fireside meetings already mentioned, the following have been held: Every Sunday at the home of Mrs.E.P.Cranmer in Highgate Village, a weekly meeting at the home of Mr.David Hofman in Kensington, and a monthly one (on the second Friday of the month) at the home of Mr. and Mrs.Cohen in Hackney. Miss Gamble has held meetings on the first Sunday of the month in her home at Sydenham. Miss Zara Warman held weekly meetings at her home in Muswell Hill, but has now transferred them to the Centre, where they are held on Sundays in the afternoon. Mrs.George has held meetings in her home at Notting Hill Gate. During September and October, when Miss Beatrice Irwin was in London, Mrs.Hyett arranged weekly fireside meetings in her home at South Kensington. In August Miss Yandell organised a meeting in her home at Notting Hill Gate, which was addressed by Mr.David Hofman.

Sunday evening meetings at the Centre have shown appreciable improvement. Two unity Feasts were held during the year. The first given by Mrs.Hyett and Miss Irwin was on August 31st at Mrs.Hyett's home. On this occasion Miss Irwin gave an enlightening talk on her teaching tour in Mexico. The second unity feast was given by Lady Blomfield at her home on March 25th. Baron Rosencrantz spoke vividly on "Art and Life" and Mr.Rahmat Alai delivered a very moving talk.

During the last Ridvan we heard the sad news of the passing of Munirih Khanum. Both the feast on the last day of Ridvan and a unity feast which was to have been given by Lady Blomfield on May 7th were turned into Memorial Meetings. On April 24th, after the last session of the National Convention, a Memorial Meeting for Mrs.Thornburgh-Cropper was held, which was conducted by Lady Blomfield.

On Saturday, April 23rd, a dinner was held in connection with the National Convention at a restaurant in Great Russel Street.

Feasts and anniversaries have been regularly observed. Anniversaries such as the passing of Baha'u'llah and the Martyrdom of the Bab were very poorly attended. Here is a problem which the friends have to consider in the coming year. The Inter-Calary days were partially observed and the Centre was open during the evenings on these days. Much effort is required and also much sacrifice to make the observance of these days a burning reality.

A Summer School evening was held at the Centre on June 8th.

On our credit side, we have the better and more frequent use that the friends have made of the Centre during the past year. We have come to regard the Centre as our communal home. Let us try during the coming year to make of the Centre a place to be proud of in every way.

The Hospitality Committee has done its task well, chiefly through the help and the co-operation of some of our new believers. The Archives and Library Committee acknowledges gifts of books, pamphlets, pictures, and magazines from the executors of the late Miss A.S.Cather and Mrs.Thornburgh-Cropper, and from Mr.Asgarzadeh. The Lending Library has recently been given to the charge of Miss Bertha Wilson. Several books have been added to the Reference Library.

A serious problem for the London Community to consider is the matter of Study Classes. The attempt to organise a monthly class to study the Talks of the Master was a failure. The fortnightly Friday Study Class, later turned into a monthly one, has almost verged on failure, although it has dragged on existence. This situation needs no comment. It is vital to our individual lives and to the life of the Community to obtain a firm grasp of the Teachings of the Cause. We have to know, so as to be able to teach, and Teaching is a sacred obligation which no Baha'i can afford to shirk.

On August 1st a Baha'i session was held in connection with the Esperanto Congress. Afterwards a number of the Esperantists were given a warm reception at the Centre. On March 26th, Mr. David Hofman addressed the congregation of the Theistic Church at the Aeolian Hall, New Bond Street. The Exhibition at Notting Hill Gate was the most important publicity work done during the year. It was held from January 28th to February 25th, and was made possible by the encouragement and the co-operation of Miss Yandell and the generosity of Miss Nockold, who offered us the free use of the premises next to the Linden Restaurant. Many people came into the exhibition, asked questions and bought literature. Hundreds of others saw our literature and the publication "The New World Order" shown in the window. On February 11th a dinner was held at the Linden Restaurant. Mr. Grant was our guest. Afterwards he gave a short talk in the Exhibition premises.

The teaching work at Brighton was left in our charge by the National Spiritual Assembly. Mr. David Hofman was asked to go to Brighton on two occasions and speak. Mrs. Cranmer was appointed to maintain contacts. The Assembly came at last to the conclusion that without a resident Baha'i in Brighton there was not much hope of success. Then came heroic volunteers to go and settle down in Brighton. Now Mr. and Mrs. Lee, formerly of Manchester, are there. We pray for them and for their triumph. May their example find parallel in our midst.

A very happy and unique event has been the birth of Barry Blair Millar. He was born on August 8th. May his be a distinguished destiny.

During the year the following friends have joined the London Community in service to Baha'u'llah: Miss Margaret Bonney (Youth), Miss Louise Flangan (now in California), Miss Margaret Higgs, Mrs. Georgina Lam, Miss Ursula Newman, Miss Mary Shaw (Youth), Miss Alice Sheehan, Miss Betty Warden (Youth) and Miss Bertha Wilson (Youth). There have been four transfers: Mr. Fuad Afnan from Beirut, Dr. S. Ali from Rangoon, Madame Vistona from Montreal and Miss Evelyn Baxter who is now living within the London area. To them the warmest welcome. Miss Betty Haynes and Mrs. Howlet now live outside the London area and have been transferred to the list of the isolated believers.

The following friends have left London for Iran: Mr. Habib Bakeroff, Mr. Ali Dehkan, Dr. Hassan Dehkan, Mr. Ettahadiyyih, Dr. Abdullah Homayoun, and Mr. Kiyani.

Miss A. S. Cather and Miss Alice Nelson answered the call and passed into the Kingdoms beyond.

We have had the privilege of meeting a number of believers from other lands, in the course of the year. Miss Beatrice Irwin was back in London from August to November. It was a great pleasure to meet her again. Mr. Samimi of Tihiran visited London twice. He spoke to a meeting at the Centre specially called on May 29th. Mrs. Dary of Racine, Wisconsin, was in London for a short while early in December. She gave a talk at the Centre on her visit to the Holy Land. Mrs. Axford of Auckland, New Zealand, has been in this country since last May. We have been happy to meet her on many occasions. From December till April we had the privilege of having Mr. and Mrs. Rahmat Alai of Tihiran with us. Although the occasion was sad, the radiant acquiescence and the shining light of the faith of these two devoted souls brought us spiritual joy. On April 11th Mr. Alai gave a farewell talk at the Centre, and he was truly inspiring. They left London on April 22nd. Mr. Alai sent this message to the friends: "I shall never forget you. Your meeting has been a rare privilege, for 'Abdul-Baha has praised London and given this city His blessing."

Other friends from abroad whom we have been happy to meet are: Dr. McCormick of Chicago, Miss Allen from Baltimore, Miss Mollie Moore of Vancouver, Miss Josey Michael of Budapest, Dr. and Mrs. Asgarzadeh of Abadan, Iran, Miss Kruda of Miami, Florida, Mr. Arnold van Ogtrop now of Frankfurt, Miss Valerie Lynch of Geneva, and Mr. Kazimzadeh of Moscow. Meeting these fellow believers furthers our consciousness of citizenship in the Kingdom of Baha'u'llah.

WOMENS SERVICE COMMITTEE. Report for year 1938/39.

A sum of £2.14.0. was collected and sent to the Czechoslovakian Relief Fund.

Financial assistance to the value of £7. was granted.

The annual collection on behalf of Miss Olive Stockley, which the Hon. Secretary made in conjunction with Mr. Cole, amounted to £2.14.0.

A Cake Sale was held at the home of Mrs. K.V. Brown. The fund benefited to the extent of £4.

A box was placed at the Baha'i Centre during the Intercalary Days and an amount of 7/- was received.

The Committee expresses thanks for the many articles of clothing received. These were distributed to the German-Jewish Aid Committee and other non Baha'is.

Gifts of fruit and flowers have been sent to sick friends during the year.

The year opened with £14.19.7½. in hand and closed with £12.9.3.

Cash in hand	£14.19.7½.	Financial assistance	£7. 0. 0.
Donations	7.0.	Postages, etc.	7.8.
Percentage on ticket sales. (The Love of King Y)	8.8.	Flowers, Fruit, etc.	7.10½.
Gift of Doll (raffled)	6.6.	Chocolates	14. 0.
Cake sale proceeds	4. 0.0.	Balance in hand	12. 9. 3.
Sale of chocolates	10.0.		
Intercalary Days contributions	7.0.		
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Loss on chocolates due to burglary.

LONDON BAHAI YOUTH COMMITTEE. Report for year 1938/39.

Prior to the introduction by the London Community of the regional group method of spreading the Teaching, the Youth Group functioned primarily as a teaching unit, and a number of meetings were held during the early part of the year 1938/39 with the main object of teaching Baha'i doctrine.

With the adoption of the Community's regional scheme, the meetings of the Youth Group extended beyond Teaching, and at different times the following speakers have addressed very appreciative audiences on subjects of general interest: Chief Kenyatta gave an illuminating sketch of the customs and religion of his people; Mr. David Hoffman gave a talk entitled "Thirty Thousand Miles in North America"; Mr. A. W. Madsen spoke on "The Moral Aspect of the Teaching of Henry George"; Mr. Hart, representing the Jewish People's Council, explained that "Antisemitism is not only a Jewish Problem"; Miss Audrey J. Marshall gave an eloquent talk condemning racial prejudice; and Mr. David Homan gave an interesting talk on the proposed "Ministry of the Child".

International Youth Rally, 25th Feb. 1939. We had a very large attendance on February 25th, when a Symposium entitled "The Unfoldment of World Civilisation" was presented by the following speakers: Mr. Hasan Balyuzi, Miss Marguerite Wellby, Miss Zara Warman, Miss Molly Brown, Mr. Louis Rosenfield and Miss Dorothy Jacobs.

Among our social arrangements we were able to manage one picnic, which was well attended. It afforded many people a preview of Cudham, Kent, where the Summer School was held last year. We have had several indoor socials, all of which proved happy occasions.

Funds. Our funds are in a somewhat sorry state. Hitherto our only source of income has been from those who attended socials for the second or subsequent time, but our visitors have increased in number so much that the consequent increase in catering costs has more than accounted for the money received from those eligible to pay. We have to thank those friends who responded to our appeal for a subscription that at the end of this year we can report a credit balance of 4/4d.