

News Letter from Baha'is of the British Isles.

March, 1931.

"Consort with all the people with love and fragrance. Fellowship is the cause of unity, and unity is the source of order in the world. Blessed are they who are kind, and serve with love."

(Baha'u'llah).

"This Period of time is the Promised Age. . . . Soon the whole world, as in springtime, will change its garb. . . . The New Year hath appeared and the spiritual springtime is at hand."—(ABDU'L BAHÁ).

DEAR FRIENDS,

We greet all, in the British Isles and abroad, with happiest and heartiest Naurooz greetings, realising that in all parts of the world Baha'i brethren will be thinking of each other, chanting the Glad Tidings of Abha, and praising God. With this Spring Festival commences the 87th year of the New Era, and, thanks be to God, the sweet call of Abha—the call of Unity and World Fellowship—rises above the discordant voices of the troubled world more insistently than ever.

We celebrate far more than an Annual Springtime, for we celebrate the Spiritual Springtime of a new world ; a time of liberation from the long winter of a worn out Age ; and the situation is worthy of recapitulation.

Mankind is born of God's Loving Thought, the mighty power of which is known as the Holy Spirit. At necessary times in mankind's development this Power pours with exceptional vibrancy and with wonderful effect into the heart and mind of a God-chosen person, who thus becomes a power of faith, assurance, and command, in a unique way. Rising as a Sun of Righteousness above all uncertain human conceptions he sheds his light upon all affairs, and the rays of his loving thought and of his judgment fall directly upon mankind. Seeing and feeling the spiritual benefits of this, and attracted by the beauty and affection of the Holy One—the Lord of Kindness—the longing, starving souls eagerly absorb the rays of his Faith and Assurance, become enthusiastic in his Glory, and are comforted by the heat of his mighty Love. Through these disciples the vibrations of spiritual life pour into the human race, awakening it to renewed activities in the right way, re-magnetising it, giving to it a grander ideal, eventually carrying it to a higher civilisation.

Such a moment is upon us now, for the Glory of the Lord has risen upon mankind, his disciples are warmed anew with Love, and there is tremendous eagerness to help in the establishing of God's Kingdom upon earth. They see in the Permanent Court of International Justice a sign in their favour, whilst other signs are seen in the numerous international fellowships.

The rough winds, the beating rains, and even the chilly snows are still felt in the Religious, Political, and Social atmosphere, but Naurooz speaks of Spring and the coming of a rich Spiritual Summer to the whole of mankind. It is nothing less than that which Christ foretold, and the new assurances have been given from the same land in which He lived !

E. T. H.

Manchester.

The meetings on the first Saturday in the month on the " Baha'i Teachings for the Individual and the Community " have been well attended. The earlier ones were devoted to the exposition of the Teachings as they applied to the Individual. Latterly, in the application of the Teachings to the life of the Community, we showed how the existing conflict of " Religions, Races and Classes " was, from the first, recognised and deplored by the Exponents of the Faith and how in the realisation of the Principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah lay the means for converting such conflict into harmony.

The meetings on the third Sunday in the month were devoted to the exposition of portions of the Baha'i Scriptures, and led to the further enlightenment of the friends on these bases of the Faith.

All the meetings were marked by the expression of loving harmony. The friends were strengthened and encouraged by the Spiritual Fellowship, the Baha'i Communion which each contributed and all received.

" I say unto you that anyone who will rise up in the Cause of God at this time shall be filled with the Spirit of God, and that He will send His hosts from Heaven to help you and that nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith."

" Therefore ye friends of God ! Appreciate ye the value of this time and be ye engaged in the sowing of the seeds, so that ye may find the heavenly blessing and the lordly bestowal. Upon ye be Baha El-Abha."

Bradford.

Meetings were held at 20, Southey Place, on December 22nd, January 30th and February 15th. Enquirers attended. Many questions were asked and answered, and much discussion took place. Most of the questions were of an intellectual or political nature. Others, however, were of a spiritual character. All were inspired by a genuine interest in the Baha'i Teachings. To most of those in attendance the Teachings were as a new Gospel, which would need time and thought before they could be accepted. The Grace of God will enlighten them. His Glory will be made manifest to them. They will learn and they will accept.

" O servants, if ye are possessors of insight, enter the city of the seeing ; if ye are of the people of hearing, step into the land of the hearing ; and if ye are possessors of heart, choose an abode in the fortress of the assured ones ; so that in these dark days ye may not be prevented from witnessing the lights of the Beauty of Abha. For this year is the year of the most mighty purification and the most great tests."

York.

The friends in York are looking forward to the visit of friends from other centers in March, and in connection with this they expect new developments, and hope to form a group meeting of some sort in the evenings in a larger room than the small meetings held hitherto on Thursday afternoons, which for various reasons have been discontinued. Several new people are becoming interested, and the friends are encouraged to "go on working till the drop becomes a sea."

Altrincham.

The friends here, being much scattered, have not met together of late, but the Secretary is endeavouring to arrange a meeting of the group shortly, and is hopeful of a renewed activity amongst the members.

London.

Since the last News Letter was sent out, the thoughts of the London friends have been occupied with the Round Table Conference, and prayers were offered constantly at Walmar House for the guidance of its deliberations. One distinguished member who visited the Baha'i Room and bought many books, spoke of the Movement as being in his opinion the only hope for India's future.

On Saturday, February 14th, an informal meeting was held at which Lady Blomfield gave an account of some of her experiences on her last visit to Akka.

We append a brief account of this talk which we feel will interest those who had not the opportunity to hear her.

A MORNING IN AKKA.

I accompanied the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Holy Mother and her daughter to the fortified Castle of Akka.

Here are the long flight of uneven stone steps, leading to the little barred window, from which waved the hand of Baha'u'llah, to the piteous joy of pilgrims from far off Persia.

But the most vivid impression was made by the old prison in the centre of the town.

A long low building down several steps, no air, no light, save through the door—slime covered walls, across one end is a stone seat, where the jailor sat holding a scourge, lead weighted.

The prisoners were herded together, tortured by heavy chains which cut into their flesh, whilst writhing on the muddy floor—sometimes a maddened creature would shriek—then the jailor, trampling over the bodies of men who lay in his path, would brutally flog him until he died.

Eventually the poor mutilated body was unchained, dragged to the door, and thrown into the prison yard.

Into this evil dungeon Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha were one day cast : I could not describe the expression on the faces of those beloved ladies, as they stood, for the first time, in this place of horror.

Agha Mirza Hossein, who was imprisoned at the same time, was with us, he was, therefore, able to describe what happened.

Not called upon to endure exile, prison, fortress, or vile dungeon, upon us is showered, freely, the fruit of their calamity. Shall we not let it now be seen what our endeavours will bring forth ?

NOTE. The old prison is no longer used. The Governor conducts the fortress prison on the most humane lines. Instead of chains there is training ; for flogging—there is mental care and good food. Surely the influence of Abdu'l Baha is changing the desert of Misery into a garden of Content.

"And they shall be given the valley of Achor (Akka) for the door of hope."

On February 26th, a 19-day Feast was held at Walmar House. About twenty-five friends were present, Mr. Romer acting as chairman. After prayer and reading, the friends were invited to consult freely on the affairs of the Cause in London. It was agreed that the room at Walmar House fulfilled most of the needs of the work and that especially in view of the earnest desire of Shoghi Effendi that it should be maintained, the believers should make every effort to overcome financial difficulties with unshaken faith that they will be supported and guided by the Master's Presence and Will.

This letter will appear just as the time is coming for the election of members of the Spiritual Assemblies for the forthcoming year. These elections are conducted on a method diametrically opposed to those of the material world.

The electors are begged to approach their duty as voters in a spirit of prayer and reliance on the Guidance of the Holy Spirit. Abdu'l Baha gave his direct commands again and again. "No political methods are to enter Baha'i Elections.—They must be elections through the guidance of the Spirit." And again, "When politics enter into Baha'i elections the spirit is killed and inharmony arises." If we desire to carry out the Master's wish we shall guard even in thought against premature decisions and avoid discussions and solicitations among others as to who should be elected and who should fill future offices.

A meeting is held on Sunday afternoons at 4 o'clock by Mrs. George, at her house, 15, Fernshaw Road, King's Road, Chelsea. After a short address questions and discussion are welcomed. This meeting was instituted 12 years ago by Mrs. George, and is appreciated by those who attend it.

Bournemouth.

There is no special news to report during the last three months. Meetings are held weekly at Broadstone, and a fortnightly Study Class in Bournemouth. We feel that work is progressing surely though slowly, and we are encouraged to press on in faith, giving the message wherever there are seekers found, knowing that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Announcements.

Lady Blomfield has kindly undertaken to give the Naurooz Feast, on March 21st, at her home in Hampstead.

A gift of £25 has been offered by a Manchester friend, to be used for provincial propaganda. There are openings for immediate work in Altrincham, Bradford, and York, and this gift is most acceptable. Another friend, one of the London Baha'is, on hearing of this offer, immediately promised a cheque of £5 to add to the above fund. Other gifts will be most gratefully received by the N.S.A. Treasurer for the progress of the Cause in England.

Books and literature may be bought from the Secretary, Baha'i Reading Room, 288, Regent Street (Walmar House), London, W.1., who will also attend to orders by post.

The new volume of Baha'i World has recently been published, and copies are obtainable at Walmar House, at 10s., postage extra. Shoghi Effendi's new translation of the Book of Iqan will shortly be available.

Walmar House.

The Reading Room is open each day from 1 to 5 p.m. (except Saturday and Sunday).

The registered cable address is, for cables—Bahalonsa, London. Telegrams: Bahalonsa, Wesdo, London.

For the National Spiritual Assembly, cables—National, care Bahalonsa, Wesdo, London.

Information concerning the Movement can be obtained from the Secretaries,

MRS. ROMER, at Walmar House, 288, Upper Regent Street, W.1.

MR. A. SUGAR, 16, Lily Street, Hr. Crumpsall, Manchester.

MR. J. CRAVEN, 15, Norman Road, Altrincham, Cheshire.

MISS CHALLIS, "Rizwan," Broadstone, Dorset.

"Every spring has an autumn and every autumn has its spring. The coming of a Manifestation of God is the season of spiritual spring. For instance, the appearance of His Holiness Christ was a divine springtime . . . the Sun of Reality dawned, the cloud of mercy poured down its rain, the breezes of providence moved, the world became a new world, mankind reflected an extraordinary radiance, souls were educated, minds were developed, intelligence became acute and the human world attained a new freshness of life like unto the advent of spring. Then gradually that spring was followed by the autumn of death and decay. . . . The people became negligent and oblivious. Minds weakened until conditions reached such a crisis that material science rose in the ascendant. . . . The nations were enmeshed in superstition and blind imitation. Discord and disagreement arose, culminating in strife, war and bloodshed. Hearts were torn asunder in violence. Various denominations appeared, diverse sects and creeds arose and the whole world was plunged into darkness.

At such a time as this His Holiness Baha'u'llah dawned from the horizon of Persia. He reformed and renewed the fundamentals and realities of the Christ's teachings. He endured the greatest difficulties and underwent the severest ordeals.

Praise be to God! that the teachings of God are re-voiced, the light of reality has dawned again, the effulgence is increasing daily and the radiance is shining more gloriously in the zenith."

(ABDU'L BAHA).

Baha'u'llah says: "O ye humankind! verily ye are all the leaves of one tree; ye are all the fruits of one tree; ye are all one. Hence associate with each other in amity; love one another; abandon the prejudices of race; forget for ever this gloomy darkness of ignorance, for the Century of Light, the Sun of Reality, hath appeared. . . . For six thousand years ye have been contending and warring. It is sufficient! Now is the time for unity. Ye should abandon selfish purposes, and know ye for a certainty that all mankind are the servants of one God and all are to be mutually bound."

(Abdu'l Baha).