

CHANGING A WORLD

BY OUISE VAUPEL

A SOLDIER of fortune—seasoned by rich contact with the world, and molded by fate for great work—and a woman—beautiful, cultured and high born—had a vision.

They saw humanity, like a time-twisted hag, writhing under the incessant blows of visionless masters. They heard the clank of chains and the groans of slaves—barren of hope and impotent for even the most nebulous joys of life.

They sensed the heart-break and the soul-loneliness of multitudes—thirsting for even a sip of the Waters of Life.

Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler and his wife, Julie Chanler, seers, and lovers of their kind, therefore, on the Fifth of April, 1929, took the first step on the broad path of light which they were, throughout the remainder of their journey on earth-life, to traverse.

They founded the New History Society, principled upon the teachings of the heaven-sent Prophet, Baha'U'llah, and his immortal Son, Abdul Baha', who came into the world to establish the cause of Human Brotherhood and Oneness of Humanity, to unfurl the Flag of Universal Peace, to diffuse the ideals of Love, Mercy, Justice, Right and Liberty, and to expand the teachings of International Conciliation and Industrial Co-operation.

In their hearts burned the desire to awaken all forward-looking men and women, and to bid them arise and band together—irrespective of race, color, religion or creed—and banish from the world the specters of war, poverty, sickness and prejudice, and replace them with the spirit of brotherhood, peace, prosperity, health, tolerance and truth.

Mr. Chanler and his devoted wife found a whole-hearted and

enthusiastic aide in Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Persian scholar, poet, author, and former secretary of the Persian Legation to Washington. For eight years Mirza Ahmad Sohrab travelled with Abdul Baha, son of Baha'u'llah the founder of the Baha'i faith, on whose principles the New History Society is based. During these eight years he was in the closest of contact with Abdul Baha, acting as his associate, secretary and interpreter. He visited Egypt, England, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the United States and Canada, helping to spread the ideals of truth, beauty, justice and right, and laying the foundation of a Universal Faith, to which an ever-increasing number of people of every religion or conviction are subscribing.

Fired with enthusiasm, inspired by the teachings of Abdul Baha, and thrilled with the idea of establishing in the United States a movement embodying the widespread principles of peace, unity, and the banding together of all the nations of the earth for a warless world, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab clarions a universal and undenominational message. His words are constructive, his optimism irresistible.

And now, the Chanlers and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab are marshalling the vanguard of that host, whose marching feet are awakening echoes in the bleak corridors of human selfishness, and whose song of peace is winging its way around the world.

The writer has felt it an inestimable privilege to co-operate in an humble way in this great and noble enterprise. Her song, "Soldiers of Light," written in collaboration with Arthur Plettner, has helped to epitomize the beautiful principles of the New History Society, and render its purposes somewhat more lucid.

However, as Ahmad Sohrab himself has said:

"The Baha'i cause is perfect music, one marvellous rhythm, the breath of God throbbing in every blade of grass, the dawning light scattering the shadows of doubt, the song of beautiful being, the inner harmony of life, the turning of the human body and mind into a Divine Dynamo, the understanding of Reality through self by getting away from self, the consciousness of an inward knowledge, the storing of life's essences in a moment of unselfish Love and service, the cry of the soul for the unveiling of the Mysteries of Revelation."

As this is written, in June 1931, 1200 devoted followers of

Abdul Baha and his immortal Sire—1200 adherents of New History Society ideals—are enrolled in a Movement which shall, in the fullness of time, become world wide in scope. They number, among their members, men and women of every creed and color, from every part of the globe. To sit among them, as they listen reverently to the words of the Master, Baha'u'llah, and of the Masters, Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Moses, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Lao Tze and Krishna, is an inspiration, an experience unique in its humanitarian appeal.

This was particularly emphasized during the series of lectures, given on nine successive Sunday evenings, early in 1931, when famous speakers, representing eight different religious beliefs expounded their philosophies.

It was in the interest of a better understanding among the different world religions, and for their unity in the cause of peace that this "Parliament of World's Faiths" was arranged. For nine weeks, leaders of the world's religions spoke, bringing to the assemblage the universal principles of their individual faiths. The religions of Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius, Moses, Christ, Mohammed and Baha'u'llah were all presented by such well known leaders as Pandit Jagadish C. Chatterji, director of the India Academy of America, Dr. P. C. Chang, vice-president of Nankai University, Tientsin, China, Rabbi Louis I. Newman, Dr. John H. Lathrop, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Syud Hossain, and Dr. S. Parkes Cadman of the Federal Council of Churches of America.

The keynote of the speeches might have been interpreted in something like this: If the founders of the world's religions were alive, what would they do today? How would they teach today? In what manner would they spread their messages? How would they meet, grapple with, and solve our modern problems? Supposing that by magic, they were all found in a room, face to face, how would they treat each other? Would Buddha frown on Christ? Would Moses repudiate Zoroaster? Would Baha'u'llah leave the room in a mood of displeasure and let the other Prophets wonder why he did so? Would they argue on points of creed and dogma, or would they converse with love and amity? Would Christ be a fundamentalist or a modernist? Would Mohammed be on the side of the Shiites or the Sunnites? In brief, what would be the outlook, the point of view of these spiritual leaders of hu-

manity in the case of the interlocked and rapidly moving civilization of today?

It was altogether an inspiring and illuminating "Parliament," provocative of a fine spirit of tolerance and magnanimity toward Man, Our Brother.

The idea crystallized in this Forum was beautifully expressed by Ahmad Sohrab, who summed it up in the admonition that:

"Religion is a personal relation between man and his Maker. For God's sake do not interfere with it, do not organize it, neither try to reduce it into so many "statements." Organization in whatever form is the death-knell of religion. Do not merely preach this. Practice and *teach* it. Let no one dictate to you what you should *not* believe and *do* in your spiritual life. The ultimate authority is the Authority of the Spirit within you and not the authority of any man, dead or alive.

"God's love is in you and for you. Share it with others through association. Do not court separation from the creatures, but unite with them in love. To know yourself through your fellow men is to know God.

"Have courage. Realize your divine origin. You are the ray of the sun of Immortal Bliss. You and the Father are one. The deathless, radiant Self is in you. Reverence your Celestial station. No harm will ever come to you. God's perfect image and likeness you are, abiding in the fort of His protection. Association with all the people will lead to spiritual unfoldment, and not to the deterioration of the soul.

Live above the world of faith and infidelity; religion and atheism; orthodoxy and liberalism; angel and devil; truth and error;and you will be living with and in God.THE GOD OF ABSOLUTE GOOD; THE GOD OF ABSOLUTE BEAUTY; THE GOD OF ABSOLUTE ART; THE GOD OF ABSOLUTE PERFECTION.

The light of lights is in your heart. Uncover it and let it shine for the illumination of mankind. Overcome malice, envy, personal spite and prejudice and you are the master of Destiny.

"Do not condemn a single soul. For in condemning him you are condemning yourself. Never for an instant forget that he is also the child of God. Upon the great spiritual sea there is room for

every sail. In the limitless sky of truth there is room for every wing!

"Be gentle. Be lenient. Be forgiving. Be generous. Be merciful. Be wakeful. Be thoughtful. Be frank. Be positive. Soar in the atmosphere of freedom. Walk in thy chosen path and let no criticism disturb you in the least.

"This is the path to success, to happiness, to glory, to health, to prosperity. Let us walk in it during all the days of our lives!"

And then, early in December of last year, those two great men, Rabindranath Tagore and Albert Einstein, spoke before the members and friends of the Society. Within a week of each other, they appeared on the platform as guest speakers. Their speeches will always be remembered by those who were fortunate enough to have heard them.

It was Tagore's farewell to the United States. He chose as his subject "The First and Last Prophet of Persia" and spoke at length of his desire for unity and his approval of the New History Society and its work, expressing his hope that it would grow and continue to spread the universal principles of love and brotherhood, as taught by that great prophet, Baha'u'llah. Tagore concluded his speech with this inspired tribute.

"The first Prophet whom we know in the history of man was Zoroaster, who preached God as the universal truth of unity, the eternal source of goodness and love; and it is significant that in the same soil of Persia which gave birth to him arose the other great Prophet of the modern age, Baha'u'llah, who also preached God as profoundly one, in all races, tribes and sects, the true worship of whom consists in service that has reason for its guide, and goodness and love for its inner motive principle.

"We are here tonight to offer our homage to Baha'u'llah. He is the latest Prophet to come out of Asia. His life is certainly a glorious record of unflinching human search after truth; and his message is of great importance for the progress of civilization."

A note of pathos at this meeting was the presence of Miss Helen Keller, famous deaf and blind woman, who had previously appeared as guest of honor of the Society. After hearing Tagore, she said: "With Rabindranath Tagore's beautiful words still echoing in your thoughts, I do not know what I can say that you will hear. . . . I think many ideas will be sacrificed for one, liberty, and

many beliefs will be destroyed. But in the loneliness and disillusionment that will follow the vanishing of the old order, the races will draw closer together, the heartache of the world will be forgotten in co-operation for the welfare of mankind, and out of the earth, soaked in blood and watered in tears, shall spring the Heavenly flower of Brotherhood."

On the never-to-be-forgotten Sunday evening of December 14, 1930, in the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Professor Albert Einstein spoke on "Militant Pacifism."

It is said that Professor Einstein received more than four hundred invitations to appear before societies, organizations and various meetings, but out of them all he accepted but one—the invitation to address the meeting of the New History Society. It was indeed a great honor for the Society—an honor, the significance of which it is impossible to over-estimate.

In introducing Prof. Einstein, Mr. Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler reminded the great audience, gathered to hear Einstein that:

"The earth has one surface. God has not divided this surface by boundaries and by barriers to separate races and creeds. Man has set out and established these imaginary lines, giving to each restricted area a name in mitigation of a nativity or nationhood. By this division prejudice is engendered; impelled by this prejudice races and nations declare war against each other. The blood of the innocent pours forth, and the earth is burned by violence. Therefore, it has been the decree of God in this Day that these prejudices and differences shall be laid aside!"

Of the Professor's speech a great deal could be said, although it is indeed doubtful if there is a civilized country to which his message of militant pacifism has not already been carried. It seems more than probable that his "2% pacifists" will become as famous as his relativity theory. It was a magnificent challenge which he made, one never to be ignored or forgotten, and one from which great things have already sprung. "If only 2% of the men liable for war service were to refuse," said Professor Einstein, "there would not be enough jails in the world to take care of them."

By advocating a "militant pacifism" and urging the pacifists of the world to co-operate internationally, Einstein planted the seeds of a movement which, if it spreads throughout the world, will indeed insure international peace. The whole world thrilled to his

speech, editorials were written about it, organizations were formed to put into effect those things which he advocated.

Ahmad Sohrab summed up the essence of this message in these words:

“Dare to dream the dreams of God—then coin these dreams into deeds which will vibrate through the coming ages. Let your sun-kissed lips blossom into rose-gardens of smiling acts. Pave the world with Intelligence and light it with Wisdom. Be compassionate to the race of man. Seize life by never seizing it, and work untiringly in this blood-drenched superstitious world for the emergence of a race which will change that world into a moonlit and dream-visited planet.

“The New History Society has received this night a new spiritual birthday. A new chapter was opened in the record of our pilgrimage.

“Let us write on its white pages in letters of gold—actions which will transform this realm of darkness into a realm of light, this world of hatred into a world of love, this kingdom of war into the Kingdom of Peace!

“Come! Let us try!

We shall succeed!

God is with us!

Baha'u'llah is with us!

Abdul Baha is with us!

We need not fear!

“The future is bright with the effulgence of the Merciful!”