



this by visiting Bahá'ís such as Florence George and Jeanne Stannard.

In about October 1916, Esslemont began to write a book about the Bahá'í Faith. When the First World War ended, Esslemont made plans to visit `Abdu'l-Bahá. There was some delay in this as `Abdu'l-Bahá had asked Esslemont to complete the manuscript of his book and bring this with him. Eventually Esslemont was able to travel to Haifa with the manuscript of his book, arriving there 5 November 1919. He remained over two months, during which `Abdu'l-Bahá went over with him many matters relating to the book, and he was also able to draw on the knowledge of the many other distinguished Bahá'ís whom he met there.

On his return to Britain, Esslemont threw himself into the work of revising his book. He had finished this by August 1920 and sent the manuscript off for `Abdu'l-Bahá to read. Meanwhile Esslemont worked to increase the activity in the British Bahá'í community. On `Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions, he revived the Bahá'í Council which had lapsed during the War. It held its first meeting on 7 December 1920. The Bahá'í group in Bournemouth also grew. Among those who became Bahá'ís at this time in Bournemouth through Dr. Esslemont and who were later to render important services to the Bahá'í Faith were Sister Grace Challis, who served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, and Florence Pinchon, author of *The Coming of "the Glory"* (London: Simkin Marshall, 1928).

Unfortunately `Abdu'l-Bahá had only corrected a little more than three chapters of Esslemont's manuscript before his passing in November 1921. Immediately after this Shoghi Effendi, who had formed a close friendship with Esslemont, stayed for a few days in Bournemouth recovering from the shock of `Abdu'l-Bahá's passing. In 1922, Esslemont was able to obtain from Shoghi Effendi some further suggestions for changes to his manuscript. Eventually Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era was published by George Allen and Unwin, London, in September 1923. An American edition was published by Brenato's, New York, in October 1924.

In May 1922 a National Assembly was formed for England and Esslemont represented the Bournemouth Bahá'ís on this. The Bournemouth Bahá'ís themselves formed a Spiritual Assembly on 11 April 1923. Nine days later, Esslemont left Bournemouth as the Home Sanatorium had been sold due to the ill-health of its owner. For the next year, Esslemont lived mainly in Aberdeen although he made trips to Manchester, London, and Bournemouth. In May 1924 Esslemont completed a small pamphlet on the Bahá'í Faith called Bahá'u'lláh and His Message. In June 1924 Esslemont's own health deteriorated and when Shoghi Effendi extended to him an invitation to come to Haifa, he accepted, arriving on 21 November 1924. Esslemont set about improving his Persian and assisted Shoghi Effendi with his translation of the Hidden Words (q.v.) and the Tablet of Ahmad (q.v.).

When Shoghi Effendi invited Esslemont to make Haifa his permanent home and to assist with the Bahá'í work there, Esslemont agreed immediately. By February

1925, Esslemont was acting as Shoghi Effendi's English-language secretary, and thus Esslemont's letters from this period that were written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi are regarded by Bahá'ís as authoritative text.

Unfortunately, tuberculosis struck Esslemont again. In spring 1925, he had a relapse and spent over two weeks in hospital. This left him weak and it was felt advisable for him to spend the summer away from the heat of Haifa. He went to Germany where he stayed at the house of a German Bahá'í, Victoria von Sigsfeld, in the Black Forest to recuperate. While there he worked with his hostess on the German translation of his book.

Esslemont returned to Haifa at the end of September 1925. He was still unwell and had a further bout of tuberculosis in early November. He was just recovering from this when he suffered a stroke at midnight on 21 November. Shoghi Effendi stayed up with him the whole of that night but Esslemont had a further stroke and finally died at 7:00 p.m. on 22 November 1925. He was buried in the Bahá'í cemetery in Haifa.

Esslemont's outstanding achievement is of course his book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. Before this book there had been no satisfactory general introductory book on the Bahá'í Faith and many erroneous ideas about the Bahá'í teachings were current among the Bahá'ís of the West. By his careful scholarship, Esslemont was able to focus on the core of Bahá'í teaching and present this accurately and without bias. For many decades, even to the present, this book, revised to bring it up-to-date, has remained the best-known and most-used text-book of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi encouraged translation of the book into different languages; to the Indian National Spiritual Assembly, he wrote: "Even though the book was written by a Christian and was meant to be for people of that Faith to read, yet it is a very fine presentation of the teachings as a whole . . ." (DND 37). It has now been translated into 60 languages (four of these are extracts from the book only) (see "Apologetic Literature".)

Shoghi Effendi felt the loss of Esslemont keenly, for he had been a close friend and companion as well as an able assistant in Shoghi Effendi's work as the head of the Bahá'í Faith. In a moving letter written on 30 November, Shoghi Effendi paid tribute to Esslemont: ". . . he served even unto his last day with exemplary faith and unstinted devotion. His tenacity of faith, his high integrity, his self-effacement, his industry and painstaking labours were traits of a character the noble qualities of which will live and live forever after him. To me personally he was the warmest of friends, a trusted counsellor, an indefatigable collaborator, a lovable companion." In the same letter, Shoghi Effendi states that "by the beauty of his character, by his knowledge of the Cause, by the conspicuous achievements of his book, he has immortalised his name, and by sheer merit deserved to rank as one of the Hands of the Cause of God" (UD 43). Esslemont was the first Hand of the Cause named by Shoghi Effendi.

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Views18178 views since posted 2003-10-02; last edit 2022-02-05 03:59 UTC;

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