

**GOD'S HEROES, A
DRAMA IN
FIVE ACTS**

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God's Heroes, a Drama in Five Acts by Laura Clifford Barney

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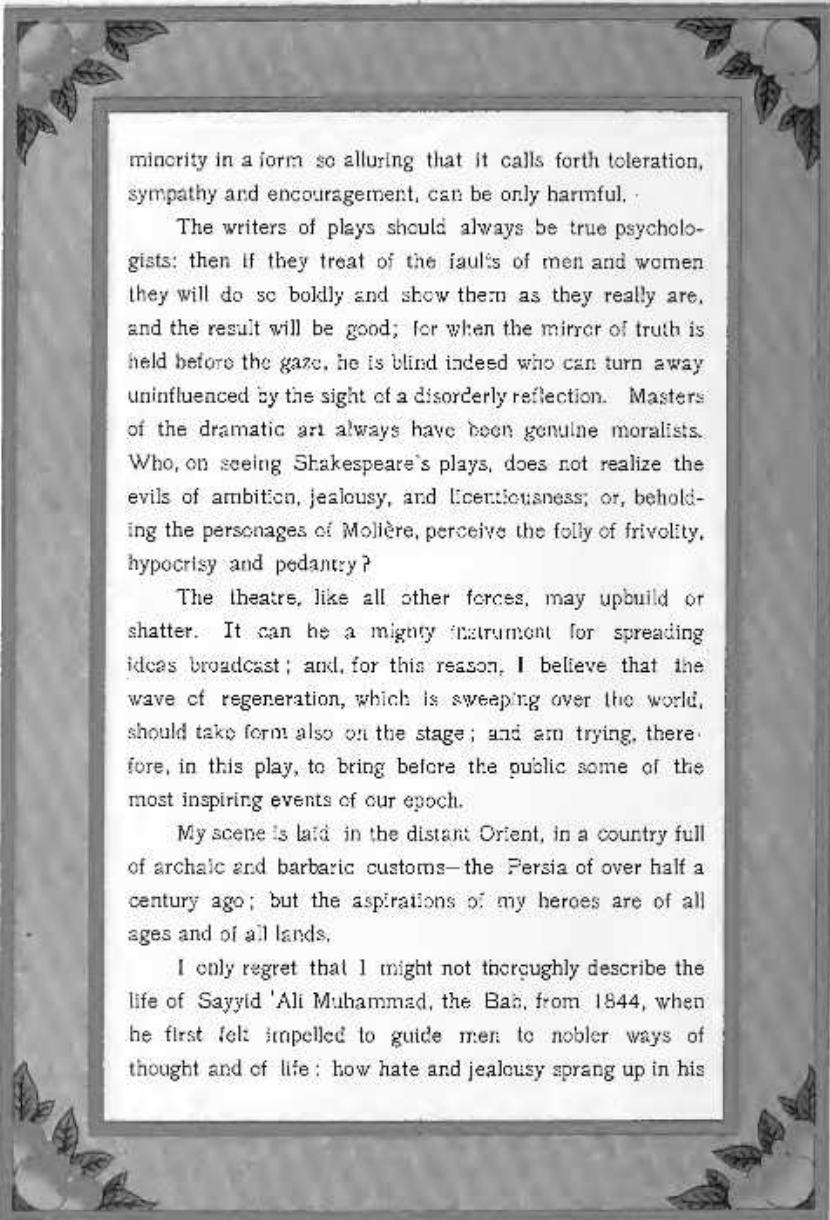


PREFACE.

Introductions should often be divided into two unequal parts—one for the reader of little patience; the other for the heroic investigator. So, first, I shall briefly say that this work portrays but a fragment of one of the most dramatic periods in history, and is but a limited presentation of the most vast philosophy yet known to man. For the rest, beware! hasty reader, and turn over these pages, unless you feel the wish to know what my subject really is, and why I have chosen to express such a subject in drama.

From earliest times it has been the office of the theatre to present the forces and events which form the lives of men. It originated in antiquity at the foot of the altar of the Gods, whose will was there shown forth to mortals in sacred performances; also, in the middle ages fervent Christians acted the mystery plays in the very shadow of the Church. But another theatre arose almost simultaneously with these sacred performances—a theatre dedicated to the portrayal of human passions; and from this is descended the theatre of today.

Some regard it merely as a temple of art; others believe that its highest expression is attained only when it contributes, also, to the moral development of society; and, consequently, they deplore certain abuses of the present theatre which appeal too often to the base emotions of men and array vice in the multi-coloured veils of dissimulation. This modern tendency to present the heedless conduct of the



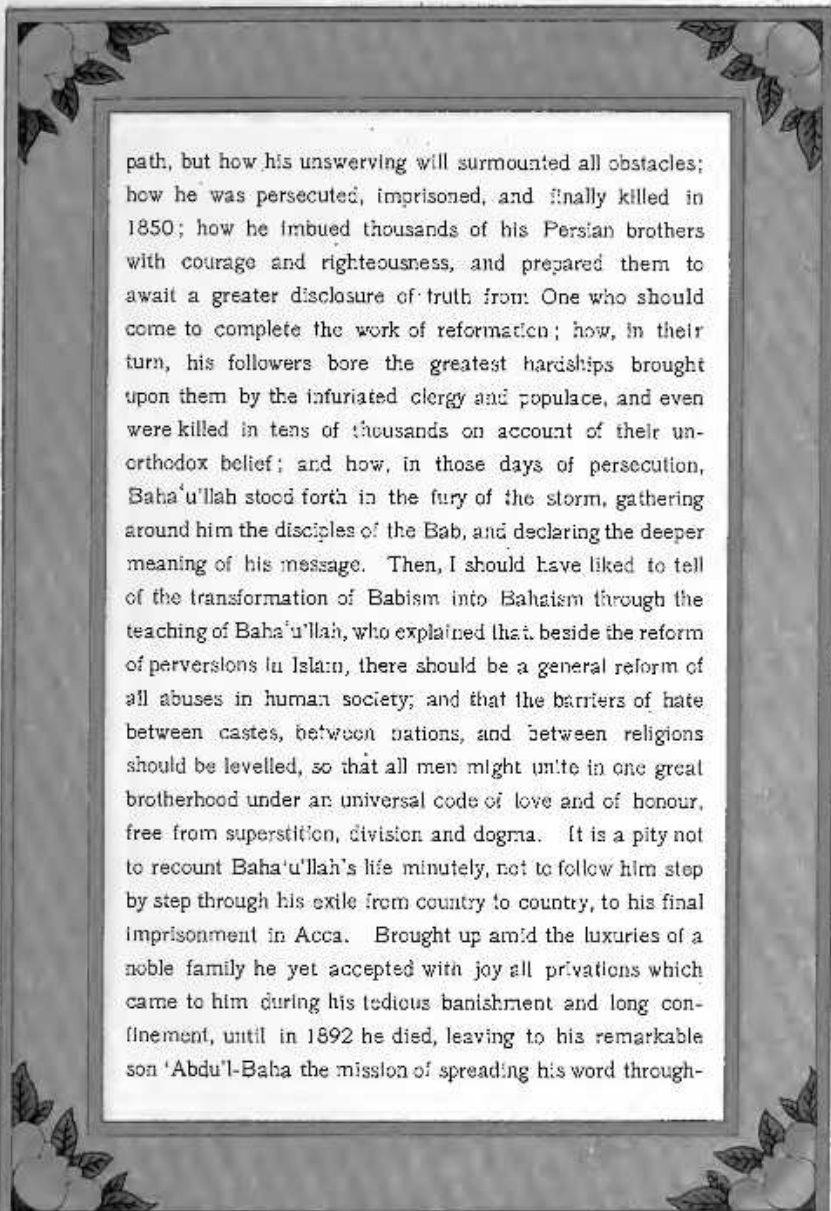
minority in a form so alluring that it calls forth toleration, sympathy and encouragement, can be only harmful.

The writers of plays should always be true psychologists; then if they treat of the faults of men and women they will do so boldly and show them as they really are, and the result will be good; for when the mirror of truth is held before the gaze, he is blind indeed who can turn away uninfluenced by the sight of a disorderly reflection. Masters of the dramatic art always have been genuine moralists. Who, on seeing Shakespeare's plays, does not realize the evils of ambition, jealousy, and licentiousness; or, beholding the personages of Molière, perceive the folly of frivolity, hypocrisy and pedantry?

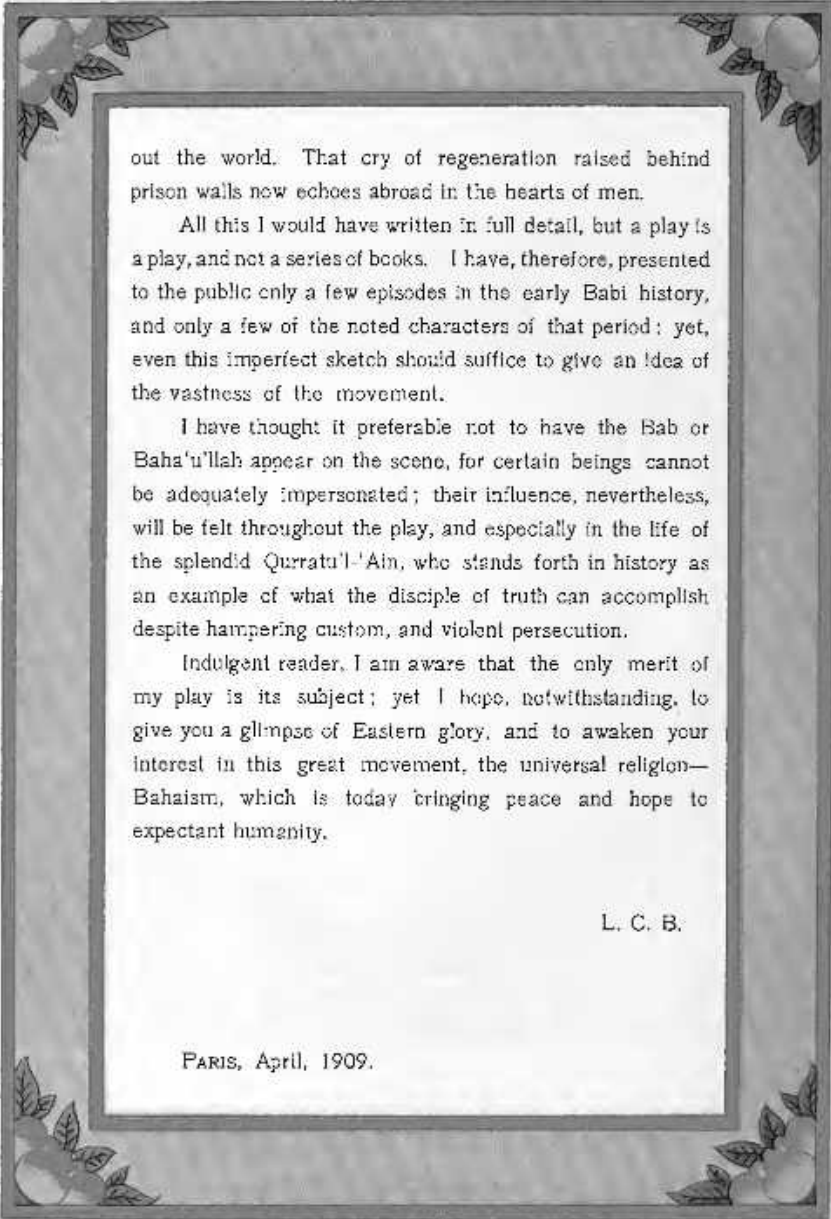
The theatre, like all other forces, may upbuild or shatter. It can be a mighty instrument for spreading ideas broadcast; and, for this reason, I believe that the wave of regeneration, which is sweeping over the world, should take form also on the stage; and am trying, therefore, in this play, to bring before the public some of the most inspiring events of our epoch.

My scene is laid in the distant Orient, in a country full of archaic and barbaric customs—the Persia of over half a century ago; but the aspirations of my heroes are of all ages and of all lands.

I only regret that I might not thoroughly describe the life of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad, the Báb, from 1844, when he first felt impelled to guide men to nobler ways of thought and of life: how hate and jealousy sprang up in his



path, but how his unswerving will surmounted all obstacles; how he was persecuted, imprisoned, and finally killed in 1850; how he imbued thousands of his Persian brothers with courage and righteousness, and prepared them to await a greater disclosure of truth from One who should come to complete the work of reformation; how, in their turn, his followers bore the greatest hardships brought upon them by the infuriated clergy and populace, and even were killed in tens of thousands on account of their unorthodox belief; and how, in those days of persecution, Baha'u'llah stood forth in the fury of the storm, gathering around him the disciples of the Bab, and declaring the deeper meaning of his message. Then, I should have liked to tell of the transformation of Babism into Bahatism through the teaching of Baha'u'llah, who explained that beside the reform of perversions in Islam, there should be a general reform of all abuses in human society; and that the barriers of hate between castes, between nations, and between religions should be levelled, so that all men might unite in one great brotherhood under an universal code of love and of honour, free from superstition, division and dogma. It is a pity not to recount Baha'u'llah's life minutely, not to follow him step by step through his exile from country to country, to his final imprisonment in Acca. Brought up amid the luxuries of a noble family he yet accepted with joy all privations which came to him during his tedious banishment and long confinement, until in 1892 he died, leaving to his remarkable son 'Abdu'l-Baha the mission of spreading his word through-



out the world. That cry of regeneration raised behind prison walls now echoes abroad in the hearts of men.

All this I would have written in full detail, but a play is a play, and not a series of books. I have, therefore, presented to the public only a few episodes in the early Babi history, and only a few of the noted characters of that period; yet, even this imperfect sketch should suffice to give an idea of the vastness of the movement.

I have thought it preferable not to have the Bab or Baha'u'llah appear on the scene, for certain beings cannot be adequately impersonated; their influence, nevertheless, will be felt throughout the play, and especially in the life of the splendid Qurratu'l-'Ain, who stands forth in history as an example of what the disciple of truth can accomplish despite hampering custom, and violent persecution.

Indulgent reader, I am aware that the only merit of my play is its subject; yet I hope, notwithstanding, to give you a glimpse of Eastern glory, and to awaken your interest in this great movement, the universal religion—Baháism, which is today bringing peace and hope to expectant humanity.

L. C. B.

PARIS, April, 1909.



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