

LADY BLOMFIELD: Defender of Children

As a wealthy member of British high society, Lady Blomfield could have lived a life of luxury and ease. Instead, she devoted her life to helping those in need.

She was born Sara Louisa Ryan in Ireland in 1859. Her father was Catholic, and her mother was Protestant. While this led to religious conflicts in the family, it also caused Sara to explore spiritual truth throughout her life.

In 1887, Sara married a prominent English architect, Sir Arthur Blomfield, and became known as Lady Blomfield. They had two daughters. Twelve years after their marriage, Arthur passed away.

Lady Blomfield's life changed again at age 48, when she discovered the Bahá'í Faith. When a friend told her about Bahá'u'lláh, she said, "Great awe and intense exaltation possessed me with an overpowering force . . ." She felt this was the truth she had been seeking.

Save the Children

Lady Blomfield grew active in her new faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who led the Bahá'ís at the time, visited England in 1911 and 1913, and stayed in Lady Blomfield's home. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her the Persian name "Sitárih Khánum." "Sitárih" means "Star," and "Khánum" means "Lady."



Lady Blomfield was the first person born in Ireland to become a Bahá'í. Her daughter, Mary, wrote, "Any kind of suffering touched my mother profoundly . . ."

In 1914, World War I began. Lady Blomfield helped care for wounded soldiers throughout the war. When it ended in 1918, millions of children in Europe were orphaned and hungry. Lady Blomfield worked with Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton, who were starting the Save the Children Fund. She urged Bahá'ís to support it.

"Wherever there is impoverishment," she wrote, "there is a menace to child-life, and the Save the Children Fund, reinforced by the Bahá'ís of the world, should be the Ark to carry the children safely through this time of stress and strain."

'Abdu'l-Bahá praised the fund, calling its cause "the greatest service to the world of mankind." The Save the Children Fund spread to other nations. Today, the International Save the Children Alliance helps kids in more than 120 countries.

A Life of Service

Lady Blomfield served the Save the Children Fund for the rest of her life. She helped the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child become accepted by the League of Nations in 1924. She also promoted women's right to vote and defended persecuted Bahá'ís in Iran.

On two occasions, Lady Blomfield traveled to what is now Israel and met with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family. She published stories they told her, along with her memories of hosting 'Abdu'l-Bahá in England, in *The Chosen Highway*.

Lady Blomfield passed away in 1939 at age 80. She was honored by many. The Bahá'í author H.M. Balyuzi said she was "a gracious lady who served the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh with never-failing vigour and devotion." The Save the Children Fund called her "a devoted and inspiring friend" who "gave herself to a variety of humanitarian causes with an ardour which persisted to the last days of a long life."