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Bahai' Inst. Mount Carmel
Haifa, Syria

July 14th 1914

Dear friends!

By this time you are supposed to know something about Miss Mary Blomfield's appearance before the King of England and her passionate appeal for the cause of woman's enfranchisement. In a long, interesting letter written by her to a friend now resident in Haifa she describes in a cogent manner the reasons that led her to the decision of such a historical event. The letter explains the psychology back of this act and may interest those who have held the Cause of women at heart. You may not agree with all that she says but you cannot deny her passionate earnestness and her almost sober, fervent, serious sincerity. The letter is dated June 26th and is from one of the many country places in Switzerland. She writes:-

"I have been meaning to write ^{to} you for a long time, but lately my life has been so crowded with events and their consequences, that I have scarcely had any time to call my own. I expect by now you have heard various accounts of my appeal to the King at his court on June 11th, something of the truth perhaps and a great deal of incorrect information - that is to say if you read the English papers which are as a rule a fruitful source of

misguided intelligence. So, may I worry you with a true account of what happened? For a long time I have been heart and soul in the movement of the emancipation of women, which in England takes the form of the Suffrage Movement. In fact I think I must have been born a Suffragist, because the attitude of mind that belongs to this great world awakening is so much part of my very self that I cannot conceive a time in which I should not have felt the same spirit that animates me now. I think it is the same with all of us who are working for justice and liberty now. We were born for this work This seems almost unnecessary, writing all this to you, because I know you feel just the same as I do. But I should so like you to know how very deeply I have been thinking of this subject and how earnestly. I longed to do something for the cause I loved so much. I prayed with all my heart for an opportunity to prove the faith that was in me; not for a chance to destroy property - that chance was always at hand, but for a chance to make a sacrifice for the cause, and in doing so hurt no one but myself - a chance to strike a blow for freedom in the right spirit - a metaphorical blow that would have some effect. I would like to say here that I neither judge nor condemn the actions of "violence" committed in the name of liberty by my fearless sisters in the cause. One can only marvel at such utter self-sacrifice, and recognize this fact: That although the world wide movement for the

Emancipation of women is part of the great spiritual Spring-Tide. 93

The struggle for civic recognition in each country on the part of the ^{women} themselves is a very human struggle for a concrete and human right - the franchise. It is a moral and religious movement, but it is also a political and social contest for political and social recognition. In The great Army of women ordained by Providence to work out their own salvation there are many regiments - many wings - (in the military sense of the term) each with their special work. This great battle has to be fought on three planes, the plane of matter, the plane of mind and the plane of spirit. Some women are fitted to fight on one plane, some on another, but all are necessary in the vast design - the great campaign. In the United States Abdu'l Baha said that universal Peace could never come till women had gained their freedom and were given their true place in the world of humanity, so on the highest authority we have it that there can be ~~no~~ ^{no} peace without justice, no unity without equality. The women who are now fighting for freedom are also believers in Universal Peace; by hastening justice they are furthering the Cause of Peace and they will not rest till justice, equality and peace are ~~established~~. It is these women, who, however mistaken in their methods, the world may think them are sacrificing life and happiness in the cause of the uplifting of women, and it is these women who are being tortured in prison.

This government finds it easier to inflict torture than to do justice.

Perhaps it would be wrong for a Bahai to actually uphold destruction of property, but it is only just to say this, that if ever is ever justified then this war is justified; because it is a direct contest between good and evil, between false values and true values, between human life and the worship of property above life, between morality and immorality, between purity and impurity. Abdul Baha has said that on the physical plane, defence in case of invasion is justified; then if that is so, military as the women's defence against the invasion of their rights, the sacrifice of their persons, the destruction of their children is a thousand times justified and in all humanity one cannot turn against or condemn women who believe this and act upon it, though it costs them their lives. More and more this struggle is becoming a war between right and wrong; it can never be called a sex-war, a war between men and women - in England at any rate, because good men are coming forward splendidly now, though certainly did not in the beginning. Now, they are realizing what this great movement means and every true and decent man is taking his stand by the women. I seem to be digressing terribly but it all bears on what I did at the Court. I need not tell you about the Deputation to the King, and the reception it had. You must

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have read about it in the papers and it must have made your heart ache. In January when it was given out that there was to be a Deputation to the King all the Suffragists guessed how it would be received and our fears were justified. When mother decided to go to the Court and present a friend, taking Ellenor and me with her, I made up my mind to speak to the King, when I found myself face to face with him. I did not tell anyone my intention but I prayed and I prayed with all my heart and soul to be guided. I wondered at first if this was the opportunity I had been praying for, for years - and then I became certain that it was. A Persian friend once told me that when he was in trouble of mind or doubt, he always held some sacred writing in his hands and prayed for guidance - then opening the book without looking, he used to point at a certain passage. He told me that he never failed to find comfort and help in this way, so I decided to ask for guidance in the same manner. Several things troubled me. I was convinced of the justice of what I intended to do and I knew it to be right and I thought it would be good for the cause - but this is what troubled me: It was the first time in my life that I had kept any intention of mine from Mother, ^{and} also I was afraid of what might happen to her. I knew she would defend me, if they (Court officials) handled me roughly and I did not want her to be hurt in any way.

9^b I took a Bible and opened it and found my finger pointing to this verse (Acts X XV. 12) "Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? Unto Cesar shalt thou go." Another night I opened the Bible again and read (Luke 2. 49) "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Then on another occasion I took Hidden Words into my hands and asked Baha-ollah for guidance. I opened the Book and found my finger on this verse, you know so well - "Justice is loved above all. Neglect it not if thou desirest Me, By it thou wilt be strengthened to perceive things with thine own eyes and not by the eyes of men, to know them by thine own knowledge and not by the knowledge of any one in the world. Meditate on this. How thou oughtest to be. Justice is of My Bounty to thee and of my Providence over thee, therefore keep it ever before thy sight." On many occasions I received great help in this way, and never once came a passage bidding me give up my intention. Up to almost the last day I was worried about my Mother getting hurt and my prayers were answered in a miraculous way and in a way that I did not understand at first. I had told a friend of my intention some little time before, because I wanted to be sure from a worldly point of view if it would be good for the Cause or harmful. A note from this friend came into my brother-in-law's hands, and my whole secret was out. You can imagine how fight-

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fully disappointed I was and how terribly miserable. I felt for one dark moment that Providence has been playing with me. I was in despair. Of course Mother decided not to take me to the Court, and Ellinor who also felt very sore about the treatment the Deputation had received said she would stay at home with me. Then the day before the Court it occurred to me that Ellinor and I might go alone, separately from Mother. In this way my prayer would be answered; because I knew if we went later than Mother she would have passed before the King already and we should pass before him later on in the evening when she had left the throne-room. If I were hurt Mother would not be there to see it. I felt a great responsibility in taking Ellinor but I knew I should not be let in alone; it would look suspicious, and she agreed with what I was going to do - thought it right. So soon after Mother and her friend had started for Buckingham Palace, Ellinor and I dressed and followed. We passed three policemen rigorously examining people's Presentation Cards and when our turn came they let us pass. Then you have read accounts of what happened inside the Palace. The words I said to the King were: "your Majesty for God's sake stop forcible feeding." I knelt to him, because I wanted to be as respectful as possible. (and yet they said I insulted him) I meant to say more, but four or five men rushed at me

and hurried Ellinor (who had turned back and put her arms round me to protect me) and me out of the Throne-room. They did not hurt us, but you have no idea of the utterly powerless, helpless feeling of being "set on" by so many strong men and swept away. Ellinor was very brave and stood by me through it all in a magnificent way. She is a sister in ten thousand. They were going to send us to prison, in fact we were taken straight to the police station in the precincts of Buckingham Palace but the King sent word to say that we were to be sent straight home..... The King could if he liked stop the torture of women political prisoners and my wish was to break through the crust of conventionality and court officialdom to his heart. To call my action an ^{insult}, is in itself an insult to the King, depriving him in the eyes of his subjects not only of the capacity of understanding but of the right to any human feeling at all. The highest praise the Press could sing of the King and Queen on this occasion was: "Their Majesties remained unmoved." And again at Olympia when a Suffragist sought to address the King: "Their Majesties remained unmoved." They are unmoved while their country is sunk in misery, while women are being bought and sold and starved into slavery and those who are trying to bring about better conditions are being tortured in prison. They remain unmoved while their country

is on the brink of a revolution and their courtiers and ^{depend-}ents are proud of their immolubility. It is all too sad... Of course most of my family are very angry with me, but the ones I love best understand - Mother understands - so I can bear the anger of the others "

I do not think the letter needs any comment. It is so full and comprehensive that the readers may draw their own conclusions. It is very plain, of course, that the Bahai Cause does not approve militant methods. In these days peaceful negotiations and the force of pen and clear arguments are more powerful than the sword or ^{the} bomb. Destruction of people's property is not justified from any standpoint. We must go to the root of the matter. Knowing that as far as creation is concerned men and women share the same faculties, they must also enjoy the same rights and ^{the same} privileges without any distinction whatsoever. Hence the equality of sexes - which is only one of the many principles of Baha-Allah. To the utmost of our ability we must include in the scheme of our lives all the principles and not one in exclusion of all the rest.

All the day I was translating Tablets. I met the Beloved in the morning and evening. He entertained friends and strangers and dictated several Tablets for the Western friends. He was every and happy talking with the believers and consorting with them with joy and fragrance.