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Pilgrim Notes by Valera Allen
(with husband John Allen)

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Haifa Impressions

Valera Allen

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To try to put on paper one's pilgrimage to Haifa is at once a joy and a sorrow. {{p1}} A joy, because one wants more than anything else to share with those unable to go the inestimable bounty of visiting the Blessed Spots and the heart-warming privilege of being in the presence of the beloved Guardian. It is a sorrow not to be equal to the task of putting into words the real experience of the Pilgrimage.

As we flew over the blue Mediterranean dotted with its many isles of various shapes and designs we could not help but think of the great heroine, martyr and champion of the Bahá'í World Faith, Dorothy Baker, who had so recently fallen in that vicinity, and to say a prayer for the progress of her soul and to thank God for her beautiful life of service and outstanding example of devotion to the Beloved Faith.

Nearing the shores of Israel we strained our eyes to see if perhaps we might catch a glimpse of the Shrine of the Báḇ, little realizing that we were miles and miles away from Haifa Bay, farther up the Coast, flying in toward the new and modern city of Televiv.

We arrived at Televiv about 3:45 P.M. and took a cab to Haifa, which we discovered was about 65 miles away and took over two hours in the old dilapidated Chrysler car which was minus the shock absorbers. For those who are contemplating a pilgrimage, I might say that the best way to make the trip into Haifa from the Lidda airport is via sherut or a jitney as it is known in San Francisco. These cars take about four or five people thus cutting down on the expense of the trip and is the way that most people travel from place to place in the Holy Land. Transportation is really a problem and one sees people of all ages, types and sexes standing along the sides of the roads trying to “hitch” a ride.

The country impressed us as looking very much like Greece and other countries of the Mediterranean area, with rolling hills of a desolate sand color without much vegetation or trees and covered with rocks that are painstakingly cleared from plots for the planting of crops. Houses and buildings are made of stone, rock and mortar — more recent ones are constructed of cement block.

Driving along toward Haifa we saw to the right a cliff rising, rather bare and uninviting, and the driver surprised us by saying, “This is where Mt. Carmel starts.” It continued in rather broken lines for some 30 miles before we rounded a section of the mountain that rose in a large promontory overlooking the Bay of Haifa. We later discovered that this is the site of the future Mashriqu’l-Adhkár and is so situated that it will be immediately seen by anyone approaching the Bay and certainly will fulfill the Biblical prophecy in Isaiah. 2:2: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lords house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”

That night at table we mentioned to the Guardian our surprise that Mt. Carmel was a range of hills rather than one single mountain and he answered, “Yes, Mt. Carmel is an extensive mountain. {{p2}} It has a head, a heart and a tail. The Shrine and Gardens are the heart of the Mountain.”

When we arrived, it was dark and the driver took us to a gate, honked and tried to raise someone to let us in but all was dark and silent. We tried to tell him this did not look right to us and that we should go to number 10 Persian Street, the Western Pilgrim House, but he insisted this was the place as he often brought people here — one doctor in particular. Finally, he ran around and soon came back through the Gardens accompanied by a young Persian man who directed the driver to the Western Pilgrim House. We later that he had brought us to the entrance of the Shrine Gardens which leads to the Eastern Pilgrim house — and the doctor that he had so often brought to this spot had been our dear Dr. Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím, now Keeper of the Shrine of the Báḇ.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím was the first to greet us when we

alighted at the gate of the Western Pilgrim House, and then Jessie Revel appeared asking “what has kept you so long? We expected you earlier this afternoon.” She showed us to our room saying we had about an hour until dinner. Next we were greeted by Hand of the Cause, Ugo Giachery and his lovely wife, Angeline, whom we had last seen in Rome on route to Africa.

We refreshed up a bit and by then Leroy Ioas, another Hand of the Cause and Secretary — General of the International Council, had come in and took us to his apartment. How wonderful to be with him again although by now it was all seeming very much like a lovely dream! We missed Sylvia although we had the good fortune of having seen her in California just before leaving for Haifa. Leroy looked very tired but we soon discovered that “being tired” is a constant state that all of the “staff” are in at Haifa, and of course, tired and over-worked are the beloved Guardian and his precious wife, Rúhíyyih Khánum.

Just before dinner, Rúhíyyih Khánum “breezed” in and chatted until dinner was called. She was quite concerned because she had invited Josephine Baker, the American Negro singer, to come to visit the Shrine and Gardens and to remain until dinner. She had received an affirmation answer which had said, “We will be very glad to accept.” So Rúhíyyih Khánum did not know whether “we” meant two or twenty.

Dinner was called shortly after seven, and John and I, as the latest arriving pilgrims, were asked to enter first. After reaching the foot of the stairs, we could look through a passage room and see the Guardian seated at the table. On his head was a black “taz” and he wore a tan coat. He looked so very far away and I felt even more as though I were walking in a dream. As I made my way through the room leading to the dining room, I was vaguely aware of large dark objects on each side in the semi-darkness. Later I found they were monuments and ornaments for the Gardens at Haifa and Bahjí that the Guardian had purchased while he was away. We were told he gets many things for the Gardens from old estates which are being sold. Upon reaching the dining room the beloved Guardian rose to greet us most cordially saying we were most welcome and kissing John on both cheeks. His eyes shone and one feels an encompassing love as if returning home after a long journey.

He asked about our trip and then launched into the subject of Africa. How many believers were there now? How was the work progressing? We stumbled around a little bit saying we were not too up-to-date on statistics as we had been to America and were just now returning to Africa, and the picture changes very rapidly. He smiled and said, “Then I shall tell you.” And we sat absolutely amazed as he told of the progress of the Faith in Africa without the least hesitation or uncertainty. We thought that surely he must have had a letter just that day to have it so absolutely at his finger-tips. And our amazement grew as we would hear him speak with equal knowledge and understanding of any and all places connected with the world-wide Crusade. {{p3}} He knew exactly who was where and what was happening. He paid great tribute to Mr. Musa Banání, Hand of the Cause for Africa, saying his great love and sacrifice were

responsible for the rapid progress of the Faith in Africa.

We asked Leroy and Ugo their opinion about the progress of the work on the new gardens and told some of his plans as to how the building should be laid out. He showed us the artist's drawing of the Archives Building and discussed various features about it. We mentioned that we had seen his most recent cable (November 24) about the expropriation and acquisition of the land that had been owned by Mrs. Sprague (Faríd's sister) and now one of the Covenant breakers. He was exceedingly pleased that the transaction was completed and now the work on the Archives Building could go ahead.

A little history of the Spragues was given. Years ago when Mr. Sydney Sprague was travelling in India with Mason Remey, he contracted the plague. One of the Indian believers [ed. note: actually, an Iranian believer living in, and having been born in India, Friborz Roozbehyan] upon hearing of it asked that he might be allowed to go and nurse him. He did so but fell ill from the plague himself. Mr. Sprague recovered but the Indian believer died. Both Mr. Remey and Mr. Sprague were very touched by the sacrifice.

Later Mr. Sprague became acquainted with Faríd and his family and married the sister. Eventually Faríd became a Covenant breaker and the sister influenced Mr. Sprague until he became alienated from the Faith. However, before his death he was reinstated but Mrs. Sprague became more and more antagonistic and when approached about the land, she refused to allow the Bahá'ís to have it in spite of the fact that it had been bought in her name many years ago when 'Abdu'l-Bahá had advised that land be purchased in the name of various Bahá'ís so that it would be available when it was needed for the development around the Shrine. It lay in the vicinity of the Monument Gardens where the Greatest Holy Leaf, Bahíyyih Khánum; the wife of Bahá'u'lláh, Navváb; the Purest Branch, Mírzá Mihdí; and the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Munírih Khánum are all buried and is part of the building site for the Archives Building. Because she had left the country when the Jews were at war with the Arabs and because of her refusal to part with or sell the land and was thus holding up the development on Mt. Carmel, the land was expropriated by the Israeli Government and sold to the Bahá'ís.

The Guardian suggested that strings be placed as an outline of the building so he could see and determine the right and exact location for it. Ugo Giachery and John volunteered to place some string for his consideration.

Rúhíyyih Khánum asked the Guardian to tell the friends at the table about the progress of his work on the codification of the Aqdas. He responded by telling us it was proving to be quite a difficult and time consuming task and he was doing it in outline form. It will include five parts, dealing with the following: (1) Appointment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Center of the Covenant and Interpreter of the Writings. (2) Laws and ordinances which comprise eighty per cent of the Aqdas. (3) Exhortations, admonitions and warnings. (i.e. Admonitions on marriage and divorce — no one can interfere in marriage before choice is made,

and divorce is not actually forbidden). (4) Tablets to the Kings, Ecclesiastics and Rulers. (5) Miscellaneous. (This last includes the section of Questions and Answers which was added by Bahá'u'lláh to clarify certain points.) In all there are some 200 items to be classified and an additional 100 in the Question and Answers section.

The Guardian mentioned the fact that the Persians had long had the Aqdas because it helped them to break away from the Muḥammadan laws and gave them laws of hygiene which they had needed.

The Guardian told a story in connection with the time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been appointed the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant and His Successor. {{p4}} He said that Muḥammad-'Alí, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's half brother, who was attempting to undermine 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority, once admitted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that he might not be the legal successor to Bahá'u'lláh but he said, "Neither was Omar the legal successor of Muḥammad." To which the Master replied, "Yes, but Muḥammad-'Alí is not as clever as Omar nor is 'Abdu'l-Bahá as timid as 'Alí."

He loved talking about the Ten Year Crusade. He spoke about the two processes going on outside and inside the Faith. God's plan was the one going on outside the Faith and this would eventually lead to the establishment of the Lesser Peace. At the same time our task was the development of the Ten Year Crusade which was clear cut and definite. He spoke of the exemplary service of the Hand of the Cause in Africa, Mr. Banání, and his family. He reiterated the need for concentrating on teaching the Africans and not wasting time on the Europeans. We asked about having mixed Assemblies in South Africa and he answered the ultimate goal was to have only Africans in all Assemblies. For the present we would have to be guided by the conditions that existed in each territory. In the Union of South Africa the decision would have to be left to the Spiritual Assembly of Johannesburg but he thought it was better to have no mixed assemblies in the Union.

When the Guardian, who had already triply endured himself to us in the short space of one dinner, left us, we felt very bereft but Rúḥíyyih Khánum, Leroy and the others tried to fill in the gap and stayed with us and talked over what had been discussed at the table. One of the surprising things to us was that there was considerable difference in opinion as to just what the Guardian had said or meant to imply. It made us acutely aware of why Pilgrim's notes must always remain on the basis of personal understanding and cannot have any official standing. We talked far into the night as it seems in Haifa no one (at least the Pilgrims) ever wants to go to bed. But when finally the last good-nights were said and all retired to their rooms, we found tucked in the foot of the beds hot water bottles that were placed there by the loving hands of Homa or Sheyda, the two Persian girls who assist with the work in the Western Pilgrim House. Most of those selected to serve in the Guardian's household and also those in charge of the various Shrines and Gardens are from families of outstanding and steadfast Bahá'ís which go back several generations.

Thursday morning, the 16th of December, we were up bright and early. Everyone is allowed to rise as he feels and to take care of his own breakfast. John enjoyed getting up and cooking bacon and eggs for everyone which the Revel Sisters and Leroy appreciated very much as they were in the habit of hurrying in, eating a few bites and rushing off to their manifold duties.

After breakfast we were conducted to the Shrine on Mt. Carmel by Jessie and Ethel Revel — those two staunch and efficient workers who were sent for by Shoghi Effendi in the spring of 1951 — and then at the Shrine given over into the capable hands of Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, the Keeper of the Shrine and Gardens, who explained many things of intense interest to us.

To try to explain the experience of entering the Shrine of the Blessed Youthful Martyr-Prophet is not possible. It is only something that one can experience. However, to me it was like entering into a sanctuary that completely shut out the world and one felt absolute peace, except for the anguish of one's own heart while meditating upon the tribulations and eventual martyrdom He had suffered for our sakes. We said prayers for all our friends, relatives (living and dead), for the progress of the Faith in America, Africa and all the world. One had the feeling of being really in contact with the "Prayer-Hearing, Prayer-Answering God."

Certain afternoons the Shrine and Gardens are open to the public, and people flock there from far and near. There is always an attendance of from 200 to 500 or more, and various Bahá'ís are stationed around to watch that nothing is destroyed or the plants trampled. It was my privilege to stand at the door of the Shrine and hold the cameras of those wishing to enter and to instruct them to remove their shoes. Some rebelled at removing their shoes but would walk around trying to peer into the Shrine without actually going in, but in practically every instance their curiosity overcame them and finally they would remove their shoes and go in. Many stayed a long time in the Shrine and when they came out, there was reverence and respect written on their faces, and one could see they were deeply moved. Many stayed to ask questions or wanted literature, but the Guardian prefers to let the Shrine and the Gardens speak for themselves and we give answers as briefly as possible — now is not the time to give the Message to the people of Israel, but rather we show friendship and cooperation to the new Government. Two young girls dressed in the Israeli army uniform (girls must give two years compulsory military service along with the men) stayed for a long time watching the crowd and waiting to ask a question. Finally they approached and asked why I, an American, was serving at the Shrine of a Persian religion. The act itself had been a teacher, so all I answered was, "This is not a Persian religion, it is a World Religion and you will find coming here Bahá'ís from every country of the world." I told them also that I thought they were very privileged to have in their country the World Center of a World Religion.

They asked to know more but I gave them only some of the Principles and the barest outline of the Faith.

The Jewish Nation seems to be quite happy at having so many tourists coming which brings business to their land and great consideration is given to all Bahá'í pilgrims arriving either by sea or air. Their luggage is never opened by custom officials and they are made to feel very welcome. When we left Leroy and the Giacherys went with us to the airport. Leroy invited the manager of the airport to visit the Shrine and Gardens as his guest and he would personally conduct him around. The man was very pleased and when it was time to leave he conducted us personally ahead of the other passengers to the plane and asked the hostess to show us every consideration.

Another nice thing the Israeli Government has done for the Bahá'ís in appreciation of the beautification of Mt. Carmel was to purchase the land that extends on from the Shrine Gardens and connects with the section on which the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is to be built, with the plan to develop it into a garden similar to the already existing gardens around the Shrine. This had made the Guardian and all at Haifa very happy.

Next we visited the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the One so close to the heart of the Americans because of his visit to our shores and because He had been visited by many of the American friends in the Most Great Prison who had told us countless stories of the Holy Family and particularly of the greatness and humility of the Master. He seemed very close and we said many prayers here at this precious Threshold of the One who is the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, for the success, Triumph and speedy fulfillment of His Divine Plan and that the Bahá'ís the world over would arise as one person, imbued with His spirit of selflessness to steadfastly carry out His instructions to "hasten to all parts of the world. . . travel through all the continents and islands of the globe. . . raising the cry of 'Ya Bahá'ul-Abhá'" One was so aware of the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá longed to travel throughout these regions Himself, but since He was not able to go He wanted more than anything else to see the believers shouldering their responsibilities and accepting the great privilege of taking this Blessed Message for Him. His "Tablet of Visitation" took on new and deeper meaning when we said it in this Holy Place. . . "Lord give me to drink of the chalice of selflessness; its robe clothe me and in its ocean immerse me. . ."

The rest of the morning we viewed with intense interest everything there and were deeply thrilled to stand on the spot where the Archives building is to be erected and to calculate where the "arc" for the buildings mentioned in the Guardian's cable of Nov. 24th, would be erected with the Memorial Gardens as the pivot.

In the afternoon we all "fell in" to help Rúhíyyih Khánum in preparation for the dinner party to be given in honour of Josephine Baker. {{p6}} We helped to polish silver, wash dishes, arrange flowers, set tables, clean house and do the "million and one" things that need to be done for such an event. One cannot help but have the greatest admiration for the dear Guardian's wife for the way in which she runs her house under the most trying circumstances and yet carries out all her responsibilities socially. I should say two houses as there is both the

Pilgrim House (Western) and the Guardian's House.

In all there were 22 or 23 guests who attended the party so it was quite a function. The American Consul and his wife, the Italian Consul and his wife and various other dignitaries of Haifa were there besides Josephine Baker and her entourage. All in all it was a very nice party and Miss Baker was very impressed, I am sure, and the next day when she visited the Shrine and Gardens with Rúhíyyih Khánum she expressed her appreciation and a desire to know more about the Faith. Our only regret was to have missed one evening with the beloved Guardian as he does not attend such functions but we were compensated by being allowed to stay an extra night.

Early Saturday morning there was a great deal of hurrying around, food was packed in baskets and the station wagon was loaded with various and sundry things. One had the feeling that a picnic was in the offing. We were told to take our warmest clothes, wool socks to wear to the Holy Places, and a hot water bottle was a must. In other words we were going to Bahjí for the week end. When the party finally got off the two cars were carrying, four Hands of the Cause, Rúhíyyih Khánum, Amelia Collins, Leroy Ioas and Ugo Giachery, and three other members of the International Council, Jessie and Ethel Revel and Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, Iráj Ḥakím, Angeline Giachery, Mr. and Mrs. Esfandiari Bakhtiari, Persian friends from Pakistan (He is a member of the NSA of Burma-Pakistan — India), Shadah, the Persian girl who came from along to help with the meals, John and I.

We were met by the radiant Keeper of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, Saladin Jaharrah and welcomed warmly to Bahjí. The first thing we did was to enter the Shrine in the company of such outstanding servants and loved ones of His Cause. We took off our shoes and reverently stepped into the Holiest Place in the universe, and again that "peace that passeth all understanding" encompassed us as we listened to the "Tablet of Visitation" chanted by Sala, followed by prayers from all present. It was indeed a moment that we will never forget for our minds go back constantly in memory to this "Holiest of Holies" to which all hearts must turn in adoration during prayer.

After a walk around the Gardens that are enthusiastically described by Sala as a miracle wrought by our dear Guardian in the short space of a week, Rúhíyyih Khánum and Millie Collins left us to go back to Haifa. Leroy, Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím and Dr. Giachery made the hours rich indeed telling us stories at the table of the building of the gardens, the trials encountered through the machinations of the covenant-breakers, the early history of the Faith, and trying to straighten out in our minds all the various families who are serving at the Mansion of Bahjí, the Garden of Riḍván, the House of Abbúd, etc.

After dinner we went to the Mansion, to the up-stairs, and first of all visited with awe, deep reverence and love in our hearts the room where Bahá'u'lláh passed away. It is a lovely room, large and airy and spacious with things replaced just as they were when the Blessed Beauty occupied it. Even though the covenant-

breakers robbed the room of its original pieces of furniture the room has been refurnished in the same manner and many of His own things are there. It is the same room where Bahá'u'lláh received Professor Browne, who wrote his impressions thus: "The face of Him on whom I gazed I can never forget though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before One who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!"

We were privileged to say many prayers here and then were shown the beloved Guardian's room, and rooms holding all the relics that the Guardian has collected — pictures, pictures and pictures of many and varied events and persons — the disciples of Bahá'u'lláh, the Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá among whom were several of the early American believers, documents of incorporation of Assemblies, temple models and hundreds of other articles and books of special interest to Shoghi Effendi and the Bahá'í world. The rooms were all build around one large central room that is supported by eight pillars. {{p7}} You have seen pictures of it.

After memorable prayers at dawn in Bahá'u'lláh's room and a quick breakfast the station wagon was again packed and we started off for 'Akká. Dr. Luṭfu'lláh pointed out the "plains of 'Akká" where Napoleon met his defeat, the Hill of Napoleon that he built in an effort to get an advantage in attacking the walled city of 'Akká, "the hills of Lebanon", the old aquaduct that was restored at the request of Bahá'u'lláh to bring fresh water to the city that was so vile a "bird flying over it would fall dead", and many other things that we had read about and never expected to see.

In approaching the "Most Great Prison" of 'Akká, Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím took us first beyond the moat overlooking the Prison from which the worn and weary pilgrims in days gone by had traveled hundreds of miles on foot hoping to catch a fleeting glimpse of the face of the Blessed Perfection and a wave of His hand from across the moat. The moat, toady, is filled and a highway goes past the door of the Prison which is partially used to house the mentally deranged, and the window from which the white handkerchief of Bahá'u'lláh waved is considerably larger than in the days when the Blessed Beauty was incarcerated there so we were told, but as one gazes toward that window and hears the lapping of the sea behind him, it takes little imagination to put oneself in the place of those early pilgrims and one almost expects to see a hand wave from the window and then with a guilty start you realize you have not trudged the long weary miles to deserve such a bounty but rather you have flown in swiftly and comfortably to Haifa airport and then were brought by the luxury of a car the rest of the way. The same feeling of unworthiness goes with you as you climb the steps to the cell that has been set aside as a Holy Place. The Cell, itself, is adorned with lush Persian rugs which look very much out of place except that they have been

placed there by the loving hands of the followers who wished to bring some gift to their King, as in days of old precious gifts were brought to the Christ child in the manger. But the beautiful carpets do not completely cover the cold, hard, rocky floor that had been the resting place of the beloved of the World for over two years, and snatches of the “Tablet of Aḥmad” jumps into your mind. “O Aḥmad, forget not My bounties while I am absent. remember My days during thy days and My distress and banishment in this remote prison.” We are told this much beloved Tablet was written in Adrianople yet it seems also to apply to “the Most Great Prison.”

As you leave this sacred room after reaching out through the medium of His Holy Communes to that Holy Presence that you know is the Hope of All Mankind and is felt so strongly in this Spot, you visit the room occupied by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and some of the others. You visualize the loving ministry of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during the times of sickness and near starvation suffered by fellow-exiles privileged to share this living martyrdom.

Outside your these rooms your attention is called to the spot where the Purest Branch, Mírzá Mihdí, fell to his death while reciting prayers on the roof of the Prison. You try to recall the beautiful Tablet revealed by Bahá’u’lláh on this occasion for His beloved son, “I have, O my God, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united.” You remember that this lovely youth, “created the light of Bahá” chose that his life not be spared but rather that it might be offered as a ransom for “all those who were prevented from attaining the presence of the Beloved.” and you pray you, too, might become worthy to lay on the alter of sacrifice some gift that might help hasten the unity of mankind and dispel the darkness of error.

When the barracks of the Prison were needed for quartering the Turkish soldiers who were being mobilized, Bahá’u’lláh, His family and followers, were shuttled around from house to house, still within the Walled City until eventually they were placed in the House of Aboud, as it is now called. It was so insufficient for the needs of the party that thirteen persons of both sexes were forced to stay in one room. Dr. Luṭfu’lláh told the story of one night when one fell out of an upper bunk onto the ones below and caused no end of commotion.

It was in this house, overcrowded in the extreme, that the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Laws, was revealed by Bahá’u’lláh and written down by the pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. You see the room where this Mighty Work was born.. Our Guardian tells us in “God Passes By”, p.213, that provisions of this Most Holy Book of the Bahá’í Revelation, “must remain inviolate for no less than a thousand years, and whose system will embrace the entire planet, may well be regarded as the brightest emanation of the mind of Bahá’u’lláh, as the Mother Book of His Dispensation, and the Charter of His New World Order.” {{p8}} And again “the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, revealed from the first to the last by the Author of the Dispensation Himself, not only preserves for prosperity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest, but

ordains, in addition, to the function of interpretation which it confers upon His Successor, the necessary institutions through which the integrity and unity of His Faith can alone be safeguarded.” We felt fortunate indeed, to be in Haifa and hear the Guardian discuss his work of codification of this Most Mighty Book and has difficulty in getting it condensed into outline form.

We were served lunch in this house of Aboud, at the same table where the Master had so often served Their guests and then were taken into the courtyard where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had distributed alms and bread to the poor. We walked along the little winding streets that were little more than alleys. We saw tiny shops where trinkets and food are now sold or a cobbler sits on a stool mending or making shoes. It might be termed “picturesque” if it were not so tragic to see human beings living in such unsanitary conditions and see small children so poorly clad and all crowded into these dirty little streets — the only place to play. In one of these crowded little “flats” we were served tea by a man who was doing some work on the Shrine of the Báb.

As we left the City of ‘Akká with all its poignant, heart-stirring memories, we passed the Muḥammadan Mosque where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was wont to go and pray: We went inside for a quick tour of its nice garden and to appreciate the lovely tile that was in such evidence. It was sacred to us because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s eyes had looked upon it and he had come here to pray.

Riding from the City of ‘Akká to the Garden of Riḍván, Dr. Ḥakím and Leroy Ioas told stories of happenings at the world center which had taken place during the time they had been associated with its development. It was all most intensely interesting.

Arriving at the Garden of Riḍván, called by Bahá’u’lláh, “Our Verdant Isle”, is, in reality, a small island in a river, covered with pomegranate, tangerine and various other fruit trees. It is truly a bit of paradise and as one sits by the softly flowing fountain and walks the paths that you know were trod by the feet of the Blessed Perfection and attempt to capture the feeling that one would have being confined within prison wall for nine long years you see added beauty to every leaf, flower and drop of water. The custodian of this lovely spot is a tried and trusted follower who is the father of one of the girls employed in the household of the Guardian. He lives at the garden with his wife and his greatest joy is to show the pilgrims every “nook and cranny” of the lovely Hallowed Garden.

It was growing late as we walked around the “Verdant Isle” and we had to hasten back to Bahjí to be there before too late. Sala had taken the day off and gone with us to ‘Akká but in no time he had the lights on in the Shrine and we all went in and again lifted our hearts in thanksgiving for having been “quickened with the water of life.” the “Tablet of Visitation” took on a new and deeper meaning as we prayed, “May my spirit be a sacrifice to the wrongs Thou didst suffer, and my soul be a ransom for the adversities Thou didst sustain.”

As this was the last night we were to spend in Bahjí we decided to rise at dawn and go to the Shrine for prayers. And what a rewarding experience! It

is, in truth, the place where “the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls — a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds — that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendor.”

After breakfast we all felt a little sad for we knew that soon we must leave this Most Holy Place and we walked around the garden trying to saturate our minds and hearts with its beauty and spirit. We wanted enough to last a life time, if need be, of this heavenly atmosphere. We wanted to absorb every detail so that we might share it with others and carry it always in our hearts. We were told that in days to come no one would be allowed to enter the Shrine itself but would only circumambulate it. The Gardens, now are taking on a circular shape with paths going out like spokes of a wheel. We took pictures and pictures.....

On our way back to Haifa we went by the house to which Bahá'u'lláh moved when He first left the Walled City. We were served tea and cakes that were most delicious and were told stories of the early days when the Blessed Beauty lived here.

Soon we were reminded that we were expected for lunch at the home of two of Shoghi Effendi's cousins in Nazareth. {{p9}} The luncheon was in the nature of an occasion because the transaction had been completed that had given to the Bahá'ís a section of land adjoining Bahjí. It is one of those strange events that convinces one that “God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.” It seems that the land had once been owned by a staunch Christian who used to observe Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and was impressed enough to recognize that these men were not molded of ordinary clay yet he was antagonistic in the extreme. So much so that he made his son promise that the land would never be sold to the Bahá'ís. The son was very friendly to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and in order to cover up his friendship he would tell his father that he was associating with ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in an effort to convert him to Christianity. However, he did promise his father not to sell the land to them. Time went on and the old man died and the son needed money so he sold the land to some Arabs. When the war between the Arabs and the Jews broke out the owners of the land fled from the country and the Government took it over. Now the cousins of Shoghi Effendi lived in Jordan and their farm land was appropriated by the Government because it was in the war zone. The cousins made application for an exchange of their farm for the land adjoining Bahjí and it was granted to them. They immediately gave it to the Guardian and this was the event we were going to Nazareth to help celebrate. And what a celebration! The luncheon had been prepared for Rúḥíyyih Khánum, Millie Collins, Leroy Ioas and the Giacherys and John and I were invited because we happened to be on pilgrimage so were included. Rúḥíyyih Khánum came down with a very bad cold at the last minute and could not go and I could see well why one with a cold would not, or could not eat the terrifically rich food that was served to us. There were courses and courses of all kinds of delicacies we had never heard of or tasted. We ate from 1 o'clock until 3 and then had to go over to the other cousins house and had

sweets which lasted for another hour. We really had difficulty rising from the table when it was over! They were really two of the loveliest families one could ever want to know, and with them was living a little old lady who was a relative of Bahá'u'lláh and looking very much as if the least breeze would blow her away yet her eyes shone with an inner brilliance as if she might have 1000 watt lights concealed behind them.

While we were in Nazareth we were able to see some of the spots that are sacred to the Christians. We were mindful of the fact that here Jesus spent his early youth as a carpenter. We saw the well where Mary used to go and draw water — still in use. It really is a very pretty little town nestled in hills and not nearly as barren as the section around Jerusalem. We were sorry that we did not get to visit more of the Holy Land but were able to spend Xmas night in Jerusalem. The only indication that it was Xmas were the strings of colored lights that were strung from the tower of the Y.M.C.A. building directly across from the King David Hotel where we were stopping and Christmas carols were played over a screechy loud speaker. But, I think, if we could have been allowed to go over into Old Jerusalem we would have found more of the Christmas spirit as we were told that if tourists applied in time they were granted permission to visit Old Jerusalem and Calvary. But this was war territory and many sections were surrounded with barbed wire entanglements. The next day we started on the road to Galilee but had to turn back because it was too far for the amount of time we had before our plane took off for South Africa.

It was nearly dinner time when we arrived back in Haifa from Nazareth but were still uncomfortable and only because we would not miss seeing the beloved Guardian did we go to the table.

He was very happy and jovial and showed great interest in our trip to Bahjí and 'Akká. He spoke again of the Covenant Breakers and how they were all being punished and their efforts to destroy the Faith brought to naught. While he was speaking he was heaping our plates high with pilau. We told him how much we had for lunch and begged for small helpings but he continued to heap food upon our plates kidding John about always having a good appetite. He is extremely hospitable and usually serves the pilgrims himself but takes very little notice of what he eats or scarcely is aware of the food in front of him. Rúhíyyih Khánum told us that often he forgets all about lunch and only because she gets so faint from lack of food will he stop working or suggest that she take time out to eat.

After serving our plates he started to speak about marriage in different countries. He told us that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had observed much on his trip to America although he said little. He said that in America the husbands were slaves to their wives. {{p7}} The husbands would work hard all day to make money which they turned over to their wives and then when they came home from work wishing to relax and be comfortable the wives insisted on dragging them off to a cocktail party or the theater. Then the husbands would die young and the widows would travel. He commented that Americans for the most part like to travel but were not such good settlers. He said that intermarriage between the Germans and the

Americans was good because the Germans dominated their wives too much and the wives were the slaves. He mentioned that in America we over-emphasized everything. Machines run people and even our administration is excessive. The British he believes are the most balanced although they are afflicted with class prejudice and in America there is race prejudice. He said in Italy the women dominated the men just as they did in America and he mentioned that the kissing of hands must be abolished.

He spoke about Bahá'í elections and said the minority of the community should always be given preference in a tie vote. There was no need for a recasting of a vote in the case of a tie but the one belonging to the minority group should automatically be chosen. This applied to either religious or racial minority groups. He cited Egypt as an example. The Persians were the majority among the Bahá'ís in Egypt so the Egyptians should be given the preference in case of a tie vote. It is not good to have a stronger group dominate a community. In America the minority race is negro and one of the minority religions is Jewish.

He spoke frequently about Africa. The pioneers must remain free to move about as the African should be deepened and encouraged to take the leadership of his people as soon as possible. The pioneers should convert the African and then move on.

The Ten Year Crusade was always very much in his conversation and obviously in his thoughts. The various homefronts were frequently discussed also. He stressed strongly that the Cause should not be just another occupation. It must be THE occupation. That is the reason that living in a village is better than a city as there are not so many distractions. He told us that in Persia there were 600 centers and in America there were 1300 yet the numbers of believers were in reverse. And if one-tenth of the Bahá'ís of Persia would disperse it would double the membership of the world.

He said that after this Crusade there would be others. There would be a series of epoch and a series of plans. The virgin areas in the course of successive plans would have to be consolidated and the administrative order would have to be developed until NSAs were formed everywhere. In future the plans will take in more Sovereign States and other Islands. now we have reached only the Chief Dependencies and the Chief Islands.

We are now in the 2nd epoch of the Formative Age. Probably this will last much longer than the first. {{p11}} The Golden Age of Bahá'u'lláh will end with the coming of a new Prophet when there will be new laws.

He said the important thing in teaching the Christians is to stress the things we have in common with Christ. It is good to quote from the Gleanings. Teach that religion is progressive and religious truth is relative and not absolute. Always identify the Bahá'í Faith with the maturity of mankind. The Bahá'í Teachings could not possibly have been given in another age. The world has passed through its age of infancy, its adolescence and now it is in its maturity.

The friends from Rome presented their plan for the purchase of an Ḥazíratu'l-Quds which was a suite of offices in one of the down town buildings. It would cost \$17,000. He said that was too much. If he accepted that plan for Rome then he would have to accept equally central and expensive Ḥazíratu'l-Quds for all the capital cities. It would be nice for Rome to have a nice Ḥazíratu'l-Quds as it is an important center but all they had to think about was Rome and he had to deal with the whole world and they would not understand. After all these places are all temporary. Even the Temple sites may be temporary and can be exchanged. The Persian Temple must be larger than the one in Germany and not so large as the one in America.

On the evening of the 23rd of December, two new pilgrims arrived. Laura Davis from Canada and Olivia Kelsey from Monoco. He asked Olivia about the pioneering work in Monoco and she told him some of her problems. He gave suggestions. Then he asked about Canada and the friends. He said many wonder things about the Canadians. They have the best qualities of both the Americans and the English. He said that the Center of Canada was Toronto and the heart was in Montreal where the Master had visited. Then again he spoke on the Ten Year Crusade and the succession of plans that would be given until the whole earth would have been reached by the Teachings.

When dinner was finished he cleared the place in front of him and said that he had read a most important news item. He produced a copy of the "London Times", December 16, 1954 and read to us the following excerpt: "Mr. Wyatt asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill) whether he could state with greater exactness the number of atomic and nuclear explosions that he was advised would make lethal the atmosphere over substantial areas of the world and whether he had now studied the evidence that he (Mr. Wyatt) had submitted to him." The Guardian called attention to the reference in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, "Words of Paradise", (B.W.F. p.183) where He wrote: "A strange and wonderful instrument which has the power to change the atmosphere of the whole earth, and its infection causes destruction." He said the word "wonderful" was not right, a better translation would be "astonishing" and "instrument" was also a wrong translation but he could not put his finger on the right word. We all tried to help out with suggestions but he said none was exactly right. He told us that there is a difference in translating a word correctly and using a term to explain the meaning. Just to explain the meaning he said that probably "substance" would be the nearest word.

The Guardian said he was impressed because of the use of the word "atmosphere" in the paper and the idea that the "lethal" properties could cover large areas of the earth. Bahá'u'lláh had prophesied a third stage — covering the whole earth. The beginning or the first stage was the explosions in Japan that had effected the immediate areas. The second stage was the covering of large areas of the globe such as the article in the "Times" referred to and the third was the one anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh as a teaching point. And added as an afterthought that one could easily see how the prophecy in Daniel regarding 2/3 of the earth

being destroyed could come to pass.

The last night of our pilgrimage, December 24th, was a sad one for us. The beloved Guardian was very tired having had a hard day. He told of the work on the Gardens and the progress on the ground work for the Archives Building. He said the plot of ground owned by Faríd's sister was already an integrated part of the landscape.

The question was asked if the Guardian when in his recent cable (Dec. 24th) he mentioned that the completion of the buildings housing the institutions of administration of which the Archives Building was the first would synchronize with the establishment of the Lesser Peace, if that meant all the buildings of the "arc" must be built before the Lesser Peace would come to pass. He answered that by synchronizing meant that the Lesser Peace would be developed simultaneously with the erection of the institutions. These were the two processes going on. One was on the outside and one was within the Faith. {{p12}} A third process was the further development of the local and national institutions.

He went on to explain that the culmination of the one process would be in the evolvement of the Lesser Peace into the Most Great Peace and the evolvement of the World Center Institutions would culminate into the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. These two processes would finally emerge in the World Commonwealth.

He stressed the point that the Bahá'ís must always point out that the Message of World Unity is unique in that the world is coming into maturity and therefore needs a Message such as Bahá'u'lláh's. Up until this time it had not been possible because the world had not all been discovered, therefore could not have been united.

He mentioned the seven stages of development through which the Faith would pass. These have frequently been discussed in other Pilgrim Notes and are mentioned in "Advent of Divine Justice, p. 12) so will only mention them briefly. These stages are not in chronological order in every country for the Cause is developing through different stages in different countries and some countries skip various stages. The stages are: 1. Obscurity. 2. Persecution. 3. Emancipation. 4. Recognition. 5. Establishment. 6. Assumption of rights and privileges as a Bahá'í State. Institutions of the Cause will assume the function of government. 7. World wide Bahá'í Commonwealth.

Just now in teaching we refer only to the first four points as misunderstandings may arise from the last three. The stage of obscurity is always the protection of the Faith until it is firmly established then it can enter subsequent stages. Obscurity was also the protection of the Faith of Christ. When it became known the Romans persecuted the Christians until the time when Constantinople instituted it as the State Religion.

He said the Bahá'í Faith would develop into the World Commonwealth but would still be under the Bahá'í Cycle.

He was asked if interplanetary unity would be the goal of future Dispensations or if it might be achieved in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. He answered it would be a goal of the future but science is developing so fast that it was difficult to know how soon it would come, but it might at least soon be possible to observe life on other systems that are in various stages of development — some lower and some higher than ours.

The Guardian was asked if the meaning of the verse in the Bible “the day that would not be followed by night” meant that succeeding Manifestations would not be persecuted but immediately accepted by the people. He answered, “No, there will always be evil in the world and doubtless the succeeding Manifestations would be persecuted though in a lesser degree.” The meaning of the verse was that the Guardians would be sources of guidance and protection for the Faith until the coming of the subsequent Manifestation which might not be for 6000 years although He might come any time after 1000 years — depending on need.

We became slightly involved as to why the people would probably not accept the new Manifestation if they had the Guardian to guide and direct them which led to Shoghi Effendi recounting for us the functions of Guardianship. He stressed the Infallibility of the Guardian as being the essential thing that kept schisms from developing the Faith. One could not say that he was infallible only as Interpreter of the Writings but he was infallible in anything that he stated he was infallible in. He was the only one who could know when he was guided infallibly. That was the very nature of infallibility. Regardless of what he talked about if he gave his word as an infallible statement then it was so — if it were a suggestion he would say so. In speaking of the Guardian as the Head of the Universal House of Justice he said that the Universal House of Justice was bound to accept the Guardian's authority if he spoke from the Station of Infallibility, because of statement in the “Will and Testament of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá” which says: “It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the Guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him.” He spoke with great power and authority when he mentioned the Station of the Guardian and the functions of the Guardianship. We had the feeling that he does not think that the Americans or the peoples of the West have a true concept of the Guardianship but take it a little too lightly and taking it too lightly we have a tendency not to appreciate its true worth and the great bounty that is ours in this Day of Days. We are too close to the source to fully and rightly evaluate the tremendous dynamic power behind that personality. Just as one gazing at a spring cannot realize the power and force of the river that makes possible the running of great dynamos that send out light, heat and power to countless homes and factories and brings life giving water to vast areas. We see and love the personality of the Guardian but only vaguely sense the power at such times as these or glimpse it through the scope and compelling force of his writings. All pettiness and non-essentials fall away in the light of this understanding as shadows fall away from the sun. Only future generations and historians can rightfully place him in the scheme

of the unfolding World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Ours is a privilege that we MUST NOT TAKE LIGHTLY but pray for illumination and understanding.

He told us of the conflict within himself when he first heard that he was the appointed Successor to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Already burdened with grief over the passing of his beloved grandfather this was suddenly thrust upon him. He said that he knew himself, and it was most difficult for him to see himself in the role that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had placed upon him. Yet he had no choice but to accept. He said it was easy for the Bahá'ís — all they had to do was to obey the "Will and Testament." But he had to reconstruct the whole plan of his life and his idea of himself. He spoke with extreme humility and conviction. He had fought his battle and is now confident and assured. (Old time Bahá'ís will remember that Shoghi Effendi went into retirement after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Greatest Holy Leaf took over the reigns of guidance until he found himself). He said that the Manifestations, too, had fought the same kind of battle only their responsibility was still greater but they, too, had a human station.

All of us know how little he speaks of himself and if at all possible he gives the credit to the believers of the various countries for the victories that really belong to his unerring guidance and planning.

How well 'Abdu'l-Bahá must have realized the calumnies that would be heaped upon him and the machinations that would be devised to pierce his heart because he, too, had suffered a living martyrdom so in his effort to protect Shoghi Effendi he stated in his "Will and Testament": "to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi.... that no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature....(and) He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God." Yet as we sat at the table and listened to the accounts of viciousness of the Covenant Breakers we knew that he had been tried in the same crucible as the Master. We prayed to God as we sat there that we would never be the cause of bringing him one moment of unhappiness but rather we wanted to rush out and do something that would help relieve the burden of his heart.

When the meal was finished we all sat teary-eyed and speechless — our hearts overflowing with love and gratitude that God had given us the Institution of the Guardianship and the Guardian who was the embodiment of all those virtues we were striving for and fell so short of, he broke the tension by bringing out gifts that he wanted us to take to the friends in Johannesburg and sending messages of love to all along the way — with special love for the Banání Family and Mother Fisher. He said to assure Mother of his prayers and he considered her residence in the pioneer field again as highly meritorious.

When he had left the remaining friends again gathered around trying to make the last few hours of our pilgrimage a happy occasion. We cannot speak too highly or lovingly of the great consideration and kindness heaped upon the pilgrims by the "staff" at the World Center. They spare no effort to fill to overflowing every moment with treasured memories. Rúhíyyih Khánum, always breathless, at times full of fun and happy, at others deeply serious; Millie Collins, not at all

well, yet exerting every effort to be with us and going personally, with us to visit some of those Holy Places that through her explanations they might be more meaningful to us; the Revel Sisters, Jessie and Ethel, in their wonderfully sweet and loving ways made us so at home, looking after all our needs, going with us on shopping tours, and doing many kindnesses for us each day; Dr. Luṭṭu'lláh Ḥakím at the Shrine of the Báb was always the perfect host and regardless of the time of day when we visited the Shrine insisted on serving us tea with his own hands; Leroy Ioas who we knew sat up long hours into the nights to take care of the work that piled up because he was devoting too much time to us. But what a joy to have the privilege of looking at the Blessed Shrine through his eyes and hear the stories of their experiences during the construction and realizing the problems that could have been resolved only through the guiding influences of Unseen Powers. {{p14}} It was really wonderful seeing him again, talking over old times in California, recalling old memories, half forgotten, hearing news of mutual friends and speaking of the many changes that had come into our lives since we had last met, wondering what the next few years would bring and thrilling to the thought that regardless of whatever happened to any of us personally, the glorious Faith was marching on! We greatly marvelled at the speedy acceleration of the last few years and were deeply grateful for the unerring leadership of our beloved Guardian. Then there were those we met who were the loving keepers of the Holy Places and the Persian friends who were on pilgrimage with us. I enjoyed the afternoon teas as Rúḥíyyih Khánúms for the ladies. She was our interpreter and we had lot of fun as well as serious discussion. All in all we were so showered and saturated with LOVE that we felt as if we had left this world of darkness and tribulation and entered the happy realms of eternity.

We shall always remember how happy the Guardian was when he surprised us at the end of one of the dinners by bringing out the Roll of Honor that had just been returned that day by the artist. It was all done by hand, beautifully illustrated and complete except for those names that must be added as the still remaining Virgin Areas are filled. There was a note of sadness over those who had left their posts and we all mentioned the fact that many names not there were certainly inscribed on another and a higher roll of honor because as we all know some of the consolidation areas were far more bleak and hard to enter than some of the virgin areas. Incidentally, it is not to be hung in the entrance of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh but is to be placed beneath the floor of the entrance. But it is beautifully and artistically done although the design is simple.

These are just some of the highlights of our pilgrimage and is not a complete account by any means. The treasured relics have not even been mentioned — the famed sword of Mullá Ḥusayn, the blood stained garments, the precious hand work and first copies of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the lovely portraits and photographs of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and many other things that soon will be placed under glass for preservation when the new Archives Building is complete. It truly is urgently needed.

It was not easy to take notes and it is not encouraged except on rare occasions. We all know the confusion that arises from putting too much emphasis upon “Pilgrim’s Notes” so they encourage us to take back “Impressions” more than factual things because the Guardian sends in his direct messages those things which are the yard sticks for Bahá’í consultation and decisions. So my notes are mostly from memory written down after we had retired to our room for the night and there were many things that were not set down because we did not want to give wrong “impressions,” and it is very easy to give the wrong slant to what has been said. However, our feelings many times were that Shoghi Effendi was almost quoting from “God Passes By” so now when we want to hear him speak it has become a great incentive to read and re-read that valued and instructive book. One sees things never before noticed and the pilgrimage is relived over and over again in those pages.

But if we gained nothing else other than the welding of our hearts more firmly to the Center and Focal Point of Bahá’u’lláh’s Mighty Covenant and the deepening of our understanding of just what the Guardianship can and does mean to us and to the world with a fuller loyalty to all that it implies then our pilgrimage was rich beyond measure. And our greatest desire now is to share these convictions with all who we come in contact and it is a source of tremendous joy that the heart of the African is so understanding and receptive to those Divine Assurances.

and if our friends in America could realize how GOLDEN are their opportunities and could see the joy that any achievement or victory by the friends always brings to the beloved Guardian they would not rest for a moment nor grow discouraged but press on until the whole of America was aflame!

[end]