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The Words of our Lord and Master

George Winterburn

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Alláh-u-Abhá!

To the friends in the Cause of El-Abhá at Chicago, our greeting and salutations.

“As you pass on your journey see as many as possible of the Believers in this Cause, and convey to all and each of them My message of greeting and of love, say to them they are in My heart and always I am with them.”

These were the words of our Lord and Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to us – Mrs. Winterburn and myself – the last day of our visit to ‘Akká last February. The delays of our journey previous to arriving at New York and an arrangement for a certain date in California, made our visit in Chicago extremely short, and we were able to meet but few of the friends there. It is at the request of Mr. Thornton Chase, that this short account of our visit to the Holy City and the presence of our Master is written. It would have been our great pleasure could we have greeted personally at the friends in Chicago with the above message and could we have spoken with all about our visit to ‘Akká.

As I call to mind all that the visit means to me, all the impression I received, truly I know not just how or where to begin. Perhaps somewhat chronological account of our arrival and stay will be good to commence with.

We arrived, then, at the entrance to the house of the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, nearly at noon on February 8th 1904, driving over from the port at Haifa. As the carriage drew up at the door we were greeted by I know not how many friends; eager hands took our baggage and Mírzá Younass Khán – the Master’s interpreter – conducted us through the Court and up the long plight of stone steps leading up to the room in the second story where the Master receives the European and American visitors. This room is a long one, with a divan round the walls, in which we seated ourselves after a few words of welcome, Mírzá Younass Khán absented himself from the room and returned in a few minutes with two Persian gentlemen, and it was not until a young man who was with us, and who had been in ‘Akká before, knelt at the feet of the elder that we knew we were in the Presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the servant of God, the Master.

He greeted us warily, with kindly inquiries to our health, to the comfort of

our journey, and expressed the hope that our journey was at an end we would find rest. He offered to us an apology that all He was able to give us was the hospitality of the prison, and again, expressing the hope that we would rest and refresh ourselves after the long journey. He left me.

Many times since I have been asked about my first impressions of the Master. Some have expressed surprise that in that Presence I was not utterly overcome, me, I know, others have been on first seeing Him. Perhaps it was my own condition; perhaps with their needs; perhaps not knowing that the Master was coming to us at that moment had something to do with it, but of these things I know not.

I felt myself in the Presence of a man of great power, great character; strong in every way as regards character, mentality, intellectuality. I felt more strongly, perhaps, then anything else that with all this strength, this dignity, there was insatiable kindness, a great underlying of love. The kind of man that kings would bow to, and that little children would cling to in perfect trust, and in a perfect sense of perfection.

After this first meeting, we saw the Master everyday at lunch and at dinner, frequently also for a few minutes in either the morning or the afternoon, and ones for about two hours after dinner in the evening.

It was at the dining table, or seated with us at the other odd times that He taught us; giving us in simple, plain language, some of the proofs of this Cause, or some of the Teachings of the Truth. Of all these talks we have [??], that are not here in Berkeley with me now. I hope before very long to go them and have them typewritten, when a copy of them shall be set to you. So I will not go into the matter of them here, [??] confine myself more clearly to an account of the visit, of the impressions that I gathered.

Every day I was there convinced me more and more of the truth of this great revelation, and in many ways. [??] of Master and His followers is some great, sustaining power. We earthly thing - the greatest of human love - the finest system of philosophy, has produced or can produced the pervading atmosphere of that household. Absolutely no the thought of self in any shape can be found there. In each and everyone of the Bahá'ís there, from him who waits at table, or who ___ the garden, to the Great Example Himself, is the great desire of self-sacrifice, the [??] longing to [??] anymore. Back of it all is the love of GOD - the divin in man, and there love of GOD finds its expression on the human plane in love to one's follows.

No words of mine can possibly convey to you the spirit of calm, the absolute trust, the perfect sence of security that pervades the entire household. All the rest of the worlds seems to have been left miles and centuries away. Absolute peace and perfect content takes possession of one's heart. Such, at least, was my experience. There, in that Prison City, the Divine rules, the attributes of GOD are manifested - [??] kindness, goodness, love reign, the human shows forth the divine, the divine is clothed in humanity.

I have been asked since; How do I know, what proofs have I seen of the Master's divine commission in the world? The answer seems to me to be; The proof of the light, the power of the word. In everyday's life filled with unselfishness, with anxiety for others, with services towards all; easy words to write, but only perfectly fulfilled in a heart where reigns the perfect love of GOD, the absolute power of GOD, unadulterated by human desire. Another proof: "Never man spoke as this man." To hear is to obey. Strong men bow their heads in humility as the words of grace fall from His lips; strong hands stand ready, may anxious, to sacrifice everything for the love of His service, counting as honor, as great glory, suffering, and the ills of this world when attained in His service.

It is difficult to convey in written words the great power of love by which we were surrounded by our visit there. On every hand, from everyone, we received nothing – but the greatest love and affection. Everone of these dear souls there had but one thought of us – to render to us all possible service.

On the fifth day of our visit in the Master's house, Mírzá Younass Khán come to me in the morning and said that when the Master gave us permission to make the visit we had expected that we could remain but for three days, but that our entry into 'Akká had been achieved so quietly that He had hoped we could remain for quite a time; but that now the officials had began to comment on our stay there and to wonder at the length of it. So it would be wiser for us to leave and the Master begged of us not to be and of sorrowful because of our departure and He asked of us to leave with the same kindness with which we had come to Him. Herein, again, was the power of the Master shown, for he ask us at lunchwere we sorrowful that He has asked us to go and I am very thankful that from Himself He gave us the strength to say "No." that from His had come the gracious permission to come to Him, from Him also had come the word for us to leave, and that from Him could come to us nothing but what was for our good, and but what was ordered though His great love and wisdom.

This we deeply felt at the time, and have felt it ever since.

The last morning of our stay there, our leave taking with the Master will always remain deeply fixed in our hearts and minds. It was then that He told us we were to return to California, that as were to serve in the great Cause of this Truth. Ever since then, now, as I write, these words of His "To serve" ring again in my ears. I beg of all of you to whom these words may come, to pray for us that we may be enabled by the [??] power and mercy of GOD to render "service" as He would have it rendered; that we may always be faithful to the charge committed to us and this by His great mercy, in spite of our unworthiness.

He – The Master – charged us to be filled with the spirit of this Truth that it would shine in our countenances and so attract people to it fully over us since leaving His Presence. In Port Sa'id, in Alexandria, in Persia, in New York, in Chicago – as some of you will know – and here in California the believers, the dear friends in this Cause have met us with the spirit of love, of unity that [??] from the White City on the [??] of the [??] Mediterranean, where

[??] intolerance and ignorance once have tried to imprison the Lord of the Worlds, and from where.. notwithstanding has commanded a spirit of unity, of brotherhood, that has already encircled the earth, that is bringing mankind even to the Most Great Peace.

May the peace of El-Abhá be upon everyone who my read or hear these words.

My regret is that I have so poorly set forth what the attainment of the visit to the Presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – The Master – means to us, what His Presence in it means to the world.

May our seals be a sacrifice to Him!

In His service,

Most unworthily your servant,

(signed) George T. Winterburn.