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Account of meetings with

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Pauline Hannen

Written in Cairo, Egypt, March 4, 1909

Copy of the letter to Grandmother, Carl and Paul;

My Precious ones,

What shall I say, where begin. We have lived ages in a few weeks, my last letter was written on board the Prince Ludwig. (Early in the morning we arrived at Port Sa’id) Such a noise, you can’t imagine, thirty or more row boats filled with strange looking men shouting, and calling for passengers for their particular boat to land us. This awful noise and confusion was and in the only unpleasant feature of the trip. After awhile we were safely landed and with the help of a man engaged by Joseph we were taken to the home of Aḥmad Yazdí. He is (Just) a real Bahá’í and we loved him at once. Also the clerks in his store are Bahá’ís and this made it easy for to speak freely. He sent his clerk with us to a neat little hotel where we found an American Believer, Miss Holtzbecker, who has taken a great fancy to us and was a great help to us also, she is now preparing to go to Alka next week. We walked all around fort Said in and out the narrow streets and along the beautiful beach front where we gathered shells for our baby Paul “Thabet.” And for our big son Carl “Nateg,” (the first name sounds like sabet). It was such a beautiful place to pray and we did.

We had to wait until the next afternoon for the steamer, during the early afternoon, a, sand storm began to gather and by three o’clock the whole city looked pink, the air was filled with sand, and we could not see half a block away. We secured a row boat, which landed us safely on the Russian steamer about five o’clock, which was to leave that evening, Thursday but on account of the sand stork and very rough sea we had to lay in the harbor for 26 hours, leaving on Friday evening instead, the sea was so rough that all the passengers who were booked for Jaffa had to go on to Haifa. Such a lot of sea-sick people

you never saw. But it was no wonder the boat rocked every which way, trunks, and satchals were flying back and forth like crazy things. The steamer seemed like a rubber ball stossing on the waves, the front of the boat would shoot its nose into the air and then plung into the sea as it seemed. Then tip to one side then to the other on a slant like this in other words the edge of the upper deck touched the water. Once while Papa and I were sitting in the middle of the boat, on the upper deck on the floor all of a sudden we had a tobargan slide in a great hurry to the railing of the boat and while straightening ourselves up a little and laughing at our hurry we were hurried back again and poor maps had a good rap on his head, but it was so very funny that we could do nothing but look at each other and burst out laughing in the midst of the fun we were sliding again, as fast as the wind to the side of the boat again. This time we managed to scramble to our feet and by the time the boat tilted again we were holding fast to something. Strange to say we were not ill, not the least bit, and we rather enjoyed this novel experience.

When we reached Haifa, the sea was so very rough that no boats came out to reach us or to take us in from ten in the morning until five that night. We believed as the Captain said we must go on to Beirut because if the men would venture out in their row boats the landing would be very dangerous. At five we saw some row boats coming towards us, oh joy, We hastened to pack our things and Papa looked at me so longingly and said, you must show your pluck now. I was not in the least afraid but it was indeed a dangerous landing but thank God after being pulled and thrown and pushed we finally found our selves walking on firm ground once more. We were so glad to be walking on mother earth that we refused to take a carriage to the hotel, but we had some men carry our baggage.

On arriving at the hotel, the Manager sent for Mírzá Jallal, the Son in law of our Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in about an hour he arrived with Mírzá Monever. After a very little talk about the various friends we were startled speechless by the announcement, Oar Lord will receive you, after you have had supper and one of us will call for you. They saw we were unfit for further speech and left us, we hastened to our rooms, washed and dressed. I put on my silk dress ate supper though we did not wish for it. While still at the table Mírzá Monever came. I saw him come in. We put on our hats and coats for it was cold, and started for that wonderful meeting. After a ten minute; very quiet, and prayerful walk we came to the gate of Madame Jacksons house and looking ahead of us on Mt. Carmel, a great eye as it seemed, but really a light on Mt. Carmel, was shinning down on us and this we were told was the Tomb of the Báb.

The Heavens seemed to be a mass of stars shedding their light upon us and though even the stars were happy for us. But how did I feel. Like a timid little bird, expecting I knew not what, but the end was very near. We were ushered into the parlor, where we removed our things, JOL then Mírzá Monever came back saying, "come" I followed first then Joseph. I stood upon the doorsill for one instance as though it might have been the edge of a precipice, looking upon

our Lord who said something. Perhaps Welcome, but at the sound of his Voice, I flew at Him, my arms about His Blessed neck my head on his Shoulder I was breathing very hard, really panting and the uppermost thought was Father, Father, Father. I seemed like a weather beaten birdie having passed through storms and at last had reached the heaven of rest. Just as I began to feel that I was losing consciousness, this wonderful Father led me to a chair then I was quiet and more composed and saw him embrace and kiss your Papa, your son and brother, he will tell you how he felt.

We sat to one side of the room with Armeen, his dear Father, Mírzá Monever, Mírzá Jallal, I don't remember anymore oh yes another son-in-law and in one corner sat our Lords little grandsons beloved Lord. Very well, face beaming the inexpressible love light in His Eyes. He spoke of your recent visit (Fanny) and how happy he was to have you and that you were sincere servants, then spoke of Almas work and among the other things said she was the Conqueror of Germany. And her conquest would last throughout all eternity, while Napoleon, conquered many lands and people during his day but now these lands belonged to others etc. He spoke with great joy of the Beloved in America and of the Cause, especially the Washington friends. I can't remember all that was said that night, but after a little while He arose took me by the hand and lead me across the large inner hail or court (you remember Fanny) to see the ladies, at the same time calling Monever. He seated Himself upon the divan and I next to him with my hap encircled by his warm hand. In a few minutes, the Blessed Mother came in while He slipped out other ladies and I had to tell them about the Beloved in America etc. Our Lord returned to Joseph embraced him and called him his Son, rile own Joseph, and said he (we) should come the next morning and be his guests and then said good night. Joseph talked to the men for awhile then sent for me and we started for the Hotel. Happy beyond expression, but very quiet, we said very little. And slept very little, thinking over the wonderful events of the day. Personally Our Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a great and pleasant surprise, His wonderous forehead clear skin, soft white beard and moustache the hair is thin and white but not often seen, warm soft and small firmly grasping hands and last but by no means least, His wonderful, wonderful eyes. They express as no other eyes can unspeakable love, sympathy, power and authority, submissiveness and oh the merry twinkle I never saw anything like it. As to his Spiritual power, our knowledge increased day by day and we wondered how the people could be so blind, not know Him only to see him walking with six or more pilgrims, following at a short distance. His bearing that of humility and power combined He is, He is, yes, He is

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ THE PERFECT.

The reason I say 'Abdu'l-Bahá instead of Lord or Master is because He gave us a talk on this subject to give it without the setting and in brief it is this) Lord is one title or attribute of God, Master is one attribute, 'Abbáss another and etc. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the cubmination and total of all perfections.

To go on the next morning, Sunday, we packed our things, left some cloth to

be washed and by this time Dr. Faríd came for us took us for a walk and then to the home of Rúḥá but she was in ‘Akká at this time. We took all the gifts out and had them ready but not till Monday morning did we present the gifts. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá walked in saying good morning and asked how we slept made us feel comfortable and at ease then I began and placed each gift one at a time mentioned the names of the givers and the messages where there were any to give and he thanked very sweetly for their expressions of love and asked for the many letters we had brought and then said you are a letter from the Friends in America a long expressive letter, you are their gift, they have sent you meaning both of us. When a merchant wished to sell grain he sends samples of his goods to be examined and you are the samples and it is very good. Then Joseph said we wish to say to our Lord that the goods are really much better than the sample. His eyes twinkled as He replied if the goods are equal to the samples it is very good, you are dear to me. We mentioned Ruth Fuhrman and He looks so lovingly upon her picture and smiled at the fancy positions of the children’s pictures, it gave him real pleasure, for He examined each one separately. Tell Mrs Fuhrman lie gave me no answer but bowed His head over the picture in prayer. Please tell Miss Ambrose I have secured an old handkerchief that is rough dried and been used many times by our Lord. Should you see Mrs. Eardley tell her ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to me “because you supplicate for her she may come to ‘Akká Tell Mrs. Thompson of Baltimore, that she shall stay with her husband just as long as she possibly can stand it, when it goes beyond her endurance, divorce is permissible. Tell lady Cowles that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lay her steamer rug across His lap folded his Blessed hands and prayed. The other Mrs Coles (Claudia) you say ne looked long at her daughter’s picture is the in prayer. O dear when will I be able to finish this letter always someone coming in at this very minute a lady is talking is fast as she can while I want to write. Ah dear, how glad we will be to settle down to work again, though my heart seemed nearly broken to leave our beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. To go on again with my story or at least try to It was not until Monday morning we gave the presents, but we arranged them Sunday morning, had just completed the operation when Mírzá Monever came in to us saying ‘Our Lord awaits you out front.’ quickly our hats and coats were put on and when we came to the front door, who should be standing at the gate but our Lord, with a little bunch of violets which he handed to me. He helped us into His carriage and He got in back of us with Mírzá Monever and in front was the drivel and old believer. As we were winding our way, up the steep Mountain roadway every one silent of course. Our Lord spoke, saying to me, “About two years ago you had a vision in which you were going up this steep mountain and at the top you met many strange people at the feast. Today you will see this vision literally fulfilled, in a moment he said think and there you will remember all. I did not recall this dream until I reached the top and greeted many pilgrims who had just arrived from different parts of Persia and India and Russia, believers who had traveled for three months on camels donkeys or walking as best they could, seeing these shining faces, the dream came back to me. After resting for a while and talking about America and having a friendly chat, one very old and beautiful believer read tee greetings sent by the Washington friends to

our Lord, their faces expressed perfect joy and Joseph and I were very happy I chanted the Commune and the Arabic chant, and they were delighted and this servant was most happy to be able to do something to please these wonderful people. in a few minutes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeared at the door and said come, we all followed him, Joseph and I were mixed with the others but in a second our Lord stopped and motioned for me to come and then to Joseph to come near Him and quietly we followed Him into the holy Tomb of the Báb on Mt. Carmel. It was very solemn and I felt utterly unworthy to be there. All stood while Our Lord chanted the Visiting Tablet in a clear ringing voice. Then He knelt on the floor and all of us did likewise then we retreated slowly out into the garden we went into the same room where we had assembled in the first place, where the feast was prepared for us. with the exception of Joseph and I all were seated about the feast spread on the floor in real oriental fashion and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá walking back and forth to serve us and to see that we were happy, pushing some cheese in front of Joseph or patting him on the back and saying “eat” and now and then let me take his hand in mine and look at me with such unspeakable love and tenderness, he spoke to us but Joseph has it all written out, I will not attempt to give his teachings here, but never the less it seems to me the greatest lesson was that of love. He embraced Joseph several times and kissed him too, once on the crown of his head as he was kneeling at his feet. Once he called us both to sit beside him on the divan. Being a woman I was denied the privilege of being kissed by Him, but His Hand grasp, I felt many times and to hear his Voice, as he entered one end of the house to come to us at the other end, “my daughter”, “my daughter. “ “My daughter” until He reached us and I was at his feet. He has shown us so much love that we can never do anything now but show love to the creatures of God.

When Joseph asked how he might serve more and differently he smiled sweetly, go on just as you have been doing your services are acceptable I begged that my tongue might be loosened to glorify the cause. He said, “You have great love, the utmost love for the Cause. That same love is service to the Cause. You serve the Beloved of God and this also is a service. Because you remember God this also is a service. You shall be confirmed to render great services. Be Confident. When we think of the great love God has showered upon us, our hearts must melt with love for everyone. Oh I can hear him now saying “my son, my daughter” in English too. First he said “My son” two or three times in English and my daughter had to be translated, then this humble servant wished with all her heart that he might call her something in English, a very few minutes afterwards he stepped into the room and said “My daughter” I could have cried for joy but I didn’t.

When we were about to leave the Tomb for to carriage, we had been sitting about in groups on the grass, talking when all became silent and all stood recently watching our Lord coming towards us from the gardeners house, he stopped, picked a rose and while doing this Mírzá Monever said” I prophecy. He is going to pick it for you.” (talking to me) Sure enough, walking slowly towards the road leading to the carriage not seeming to see anyone or anything

until He came to where I stood, handed me the rose smiled and walked on until He came to the edge of the parapet or wall, here all Haifer lay at his Feet and at ours in that moment it seemed to me all the world was His to do with as He chose, yet like Christ He chose the humblest yet most mighty position non-resistance. He stood like a statue for quite a while as it seemed the bearing of one who has conquered the world. Like the gentle Christ, when He was being crowned with thorns and persecuted with only one to stand by him, John, yet he said, "I have overcome the world." As Our Lord stood there the unbodiment of humility and power, that saying of Christ became clear to me. As He turned He motioned to us to precede him to the carriage which was about a block away, higher up the Mt. As we seated ourselves we looked back to view another wonderful sight, Haifer at the foot of Mt. Carmel, the Tomb bathed in sun-light. Our Lord walking firmly up the steep mountain path towards the carriage at a little distance came about 25 pilgrims, heads bowed, hands across over their breasts, Jews Zoroastrians, Moh., Greeks etc. When he reached the carriage he stopped and faced them, motioning them to come nearer and then He spoke. This we did not understand of course nor was it interpreted for us. But it made a wonderful picture. Then he got in the carriage and we went home, not a word was spoken.

On several occasions we saw him walking on the rough Mt. roads with ten or twelve men following Him and now and then he would stop and speak to them. On one of these trips He said to them, when I arrived at this place forty years ago there were only a very few little huts about and now see the many houses, to this side, the German colony over there awaiting the coming of the Lord. After He passed through this land they came to settle. This was news to us because we had been taught that they came in 1868 – guess that was the Monastery.

Another time Dr. Farid, Joseph and I went for a walk and on our return we saw our Lord crossing the road a block away we were coming this way and He had crossed like this I saw that he had a bunch of flowers in his hands as he waved His other hand. Joseph began to go at a lively trot to overtake him but foolish me, I said to Ameen "No I won't run for then he will give me the flowers and I would rather the other Pilgrims should have this pleasure." That you think, when we reached the gate, he stood near the house smiling, and Joseph was coming toward us with the most beautiful flower in the bunch, a perfect iris. Every one marveled at its beauty and wondered where 'Abdu'l-Bahá had gotten it. Joseph had a beautiful rose (for himself.) The point