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Notes

Address delivered by Mrs. Louise R. Waite,
After her return from 'Akká before a meeting at the Bahá'I Assembly, held on Tuesday morning
in Corinthian Hall, ____, Chicago Ill.

I feel that the words of the sweet son which Madam Linne has just sang so beautifully, find an ache in my innermost heart: "I'm but a pilgrim here, Heaven is my home" – only I would change it one way, "'Akká is my home." It seems as if I had fallen asleep when I left Chicago and have only awakened, but with this difference, that what I have seen and heard is the Reality of Life, while all slow mos seems but a dream.

When I left you I said I would carry each and every one of you closely in my heart.

When Dr. Moody, Mrs. Harrison, Mr. Sprague and I arrived at the prison home, we were met by a group of men believers, and when they took Mr. Sprague into their arms I realized that the Bahá'í love really was – the light in their faces – the truth and sincerity of it all! O! they love so truly in 'Akká. While there it seemed that only the language of the heart was spoken, and so which did I hear of the heart, as: "You must keep your heart as a clear crystal." "The true teacher is one who can teach the hearts." "Yet the Word of God be ____ forth from your hearts." "'Abdu'l-Bahá carries you closely in His heart." "Music is the hearts own language." These expressions and many others of the "heart" until it seems as if the whole world were one great heart-shaped globe, and I see each one of you not as human beings but just hearts filled with the fire of the love of God. Our stay in 'Akká was but four days and one day in Haifa, making only five days spent with 'Abdu'l-Bahá – but measured by the blessings received, it seems like five years. We were, however, recompensed for the shortness of our visit by being sent home, by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wish, with Mrs. Kinney. Their

party had been in ‘Akká, previous to our arrival, fourteen days, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had requested that they share their notes with us, so on our return voyage this added blessing was ours, making our visit in reality nineteen days.

I realized deeply while in ‘Akká that my thought of you did not seem to cross to you but rather brought you there to me, and so it is that when one goes, all go. To Mr. Kinney ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Although our assembly at this table members only ten, in reality it is representative of all the beloved of God. Why? Because it pictures the Bahá’í community. The seed, no matter how small, is in the estimation of a perceptive mind a veritable tree. The mind imagines the tree and the tree is resulted from the seed. Likewise, when I see you, it is like seeing all the beloved of God. The teachings I give unto you are the teachings I would give to all.”

I found in ‘Akká that (to my mind) there were three great fundamental subjects upon which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá based His talks and they were:

1st – The power of the Word of God

2nd – Firmness

3rd – Love

And the greatest of those is love. When you come into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Presence, He does not ask: “How much do they believe in America?” but – “How much do they love?” if it meets with our pleasure, I would like to give you what I have on these three subjects separately at other times.

I went to ‘Akká as an ambassador in the name of Music, carrying with me a letter from the House of Spirituality to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, asking whether there was to be an organ in the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár or not, and of the nature of music used in our services. I gave Him this supplication with others upon the second morning of our arrival. At this time I also gave Him Madam Linne’s picture and her message to Him, and looking at the picture very lovingly, He said: “I will pray God to bless her and her work in music.” It was not until my last day in ‘Akká, when I saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá alone, that I received an answer to the question about the organ. I then asked: “Will there be an organ in the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár?” He replied: “No. Nor organ in the Temple, but one in a building nearby.” I said: “An auditorium for that purpose?” And He replied: “You.” I said: “Will not music and singing be used in anthems of praise and hymns?” He replied: “Yes, but not in the Centre of Worship.” Later, in this same talk with Him, in speaking of music, I told him of the organs in our churches in America. It was almost a hope that one might be permitted in our Temple, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “There must be no organ in a building nearby. Here festivals and services will be held; here the and anthems sung, conventions hold and spiritual gatherings; but the chanting and singing of the Word will be unaccompanied by any organ in the Centre of Worship.” Again, when Mrs. Harrison and I were with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Haifa, I asked the same question that Mrs. Harrison might also hear the answer, saying to Monever Khánum: “In a Tablet which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote

to me He said, 'that my hymns would be sung in the centre of worship forever more' – but if there is to be no organ in the Temple where will they be sang?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "There will be no organ in the Temple, but in a building nearby – there the hymns will be sung and at all other spiritual gatherings." I was very persistent in my questioning for I realized the great importance of it and I wanted it made very clear to my mind. At our last meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá I asked if the singing of the hymns, the Benediction and other music was still to be used in our meetings of worship, and He replied: "Yes, have the music as you now do, singing the hymns, etc., until the Temple is built – then have the music in the other building for that purpose."

In my precious moments alone with 'Abdu'l-Bahá I asked if He approved of our Choral Society and their past work. There was real joy in His face as He replied: "Yes. Music has a great place; it is one of the highest forms of expression of spiritual ideas; it is a great art and should be cultivated. All who have talent should study and develop it, and the work of the Choral Society was most acceptable – it was 'Very good,'" I said: "I wish you could have heard them sing at the convention on the 21st of March; they sang as if inspired" and He replied: "'Abdu'l-Bahá did hear them and saw them too and He will hear them." He told me that I was to continue to compose music for the Cause, as it was most acceptable to God, and when I asked Him if He approved of the songs I had composed of a sentimental order, He replied: "You must continue to compose such music also, for using one's talents as a means for wealth is most praiseworthy." I said: "I can best express my feelings in music and verse and can give the Message better in a hymn than the word of mouth." He replied: "Music is the heart's own language; its vibrations uplift the spirit; it is very beautiful." He then looked away off out of the window, His face became illumined and He repeated softly in English: "Music! Music!" – as if the word brought forth divine melodies to His ear; as if He were indeed listening to the "choir invisible." In speaking to Mr. Kinney of music and its divine importance, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "Mr. Kinney asked me concerning music and I promised I would answer him. Music is of the important arts. It has a great effect upon the human spirit. Musical melodies are a certain something which prove to be an accidental upon otherwise vibrations, for voice is nothing but the expressions of vibrations which reach the tympanum and affect the nerves of hearing. Musical melodies are, therefore, those peculiar affects produced by or from vibrations. However, they have the keenest effect on spirits. In sooth, although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual and its greatest attachment is to the realm of the spirit. If a person deliver a discourse, it will prove more effective after musical melodies. The ancient Grecian as well as Persian philosophers were in the habit of delivering their discourses in the following manner: First play a few musical melodies and when their audience attained a certain receptivity thereby, they would leave their instruments at once and begin their discourse. Among the most renowned musicians of ancient Persia there was one named Barbed who, whenever a great question had been pleaded for at the court of the king, and the ministry had failed to persuade the king, they would at once refer

the matter to Barbed, whereupon he would go with his musical instruments to the court and play the most appropriate and touching music, the end being at once attained, because the king was immediately affected by the touching musical melodies; certain feelings of generosity would swell up in his heart and he would give way. You may try this: if you have a great desire and wish to attain your end, try to do so on a large audience after a great solo has been rendered – but must be upon an audience on which music is effective for there are some people who are like stones and music cannot affect stones. Now let us go back to the original subject: Music is an important means for the education and development of humanity, but the only true way is through the teachings of God. Music is like this glass which is perfectly pure and polished – it is precisely like this pure chalice before us – and the teachings and utterances of God are like the water. When the glass or chalice is absolutely pure and clean and the water is perfectly limpid and fresh, then it will center life. Wherefore, the teachings of God, whether they be in the form of homilies or communes or prayers, when they are melodiously chanted are most expressive. It was for this reason his holiness David sang the psalms in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem with sweet melodies. In this Cause the art of music is of paramount importance. The Blessed Perfection, when He first came to the barracks (‘Akká), repeated this statement: “If, among His immediate followers there were those who could play some musical instrument i.e. the flute or harp, or could sing, it would have charmed everyone.” In short, musical melodies form an important role in the associations or outward and inward characteristics or qualities of man, for they are the inspirer and active power of both the material and spiritual susceptibilities. What a motive power it is in all feelings of love! When man is attracted to the Love of God, music has a great effect upon him”

(Taken from Mr. Kinney’s notes.)

Surely we can need no greater incentive to work in the musical aspartment of the Kingdom than these ____ of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His assurance that our efforts are “most acceptable to God.”

There is one thing which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to Mrs. Kinney which most beautiful expresses the attitude which all who sing or speak should take. (I give the especially for our Choral Society.) it was this: “Before you talk you must turn your heart to the Kingdom, ask the assistance of God – then assistance will be given you. You must look upon the audience like birds who are awaiting a beautiful melody, and then you must consider yourself as a beautiful organ played upon by invisible hands. Be sure and take this attitude and you will always be assisted by God.”

(Taken from Mrs. Kinney’s notes.)

Herein lies the true art of singing – utter forgetfulness of self – and being a perfect instrument for the spirit of Song to play upon.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said much to us and to Mr. Kinney and his party of the affects of a visit to ‘Akká upon each individually. Let me read you His words on this subject:

“Some souls come here and return unaltered. It is precisely like one who comes to a fountain and not being thirsty, returns exactly as he came, or like a blind man who goes into a rose-garden; he perceives not, and being questioned as to what he has seen in the rose garden, replies: ‘Nothing.’ But some souls who come here are resuscitated. They come dead; they return alive. They come frail in body; they return healed. They come athirst; they return satisfied. They come sorrowing; they return joyous. They come deprived; they return having partaken of a share. These souls have in reality done justice to their visit. Praise be to God, you are of those souls and you must be exceedingly happy. If a cow should go to a beautiful town, a city full of bounties and blessings, and should be questioned as to what bounties and blessings he had found in this town, he would reply: ‘Nothing cucumber peels and melon rinds.’ But if a nightingale should fly to a rose-garden, when it returned the reply would be: ‘Verily, I have scented lovely fragrances, have seen most beautiful flowers and most delightful verdure, have drunk most refreshing waters and I have found new life.’ Now a beetle would reply: ‘All you have heard concerning the rose-garden is false. There is neither a delightful fragrance nor beauty of verdure, nor is it joyous. In fact, when I entered it was displeased. All you have heard is false. Had I not escaped I should have died.’”

(Taken from Mr. Kinney’s notes.)

The song that I bring back to you is that of the nightingale. I have been the rode-garden of ‘Akká, have scented lovely fragrances, have seen most beautiful flowers and most delightful verdure, have drunk most refreshing waters and have found new life.

We were told, while in ‘Akká, by dear, saintly Mírzá Asadu’lláh that we had come there at a most wonderful time, for it was the greatest month in the Muḥammadan year, and the position of the planets were such that they produced great power. Seldom had there been so many of the great teachers there at one time as then.

At our second dinner at ‘Akká, and dear Mr. Moody’s last, we could feel the great force which seemed to be emanated from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as He talked. He closed this beautiful talk by saying: “Therefore you must thank God greatly, for He has opened your eyes. You have heard the Divine Call – you have been ushered into the Kingdom. What a great meeting and what a great blessing this gathering is – right here and now, in such love, such sincerity. He paused impressively between these two last sentences and all remains silent for some moments, and it seemed as if every heart at the table was blended into one – and that one ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s. he arose and left us. We adjourned to Mr. Sprague’s room and here met a large number of old Eastern believers, among them being Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí, Mírzá Mahram and Mírzá Paeza. There were sixteen men and three American women, making nineteen in all. Of the wonderful words uttered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during our dinner, Mírzá Asadu’lláh said: “The words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tonight were very wonderful and had an inner significance which will gradually dawn upon you. The more you ponder over them, the more

their meaning will be revealed to you. Many people have made long pilgrimages just to see the Manifestation's face, or to hear one word. See how blessed you are, for you have received many words, and each word is a seed and will bear much fruit. The constitution of which 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke refers not only to that of the State, but also to each individual. Our faith is our constitution and 'Abdu'l-Bahá has planted the seed of faith in your hearts. You may not understand the meaning of His words now, nor consider their great worth. The ground does not realize it is being plowed and planted with seeds, but the needs grow just the same. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the wise gardener and the seeds He has planted in your hearts tonight later bear much fruit and affect the whole world. He has unfurled before you the carpet. He has taken you into the Kingdom. He has filled your caskets to overflowing with priceless jewels. Tonight you are rich indeed." And one of the jewels in the casket of my heart, which I bring back to you, is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love."

We had our last dinner with Him in Haifa just a few hours before sailing. It was in Madam Jackson's house, and it being the Feast day of Ramaḍán, all of the family were gathered there. Just before dinner I had had the great privilege of being with the family in the holy mother's room. The Greatest Holy Leaf, the mother, the three daughters and the nine grandchildren were all there and I had the comforting joy of the holding each little one close to my heart. The dining room commands a magnificent view of the sea, and the table was decorated profusely with white jessamine blossoms – the air was laden with their fragrance. Only Monever Khánum, of the family, dined with us and interpreted for her father. He began His talk by saying: "Were you are sitting at this table, one from England, one from Syria, others from Persia and you two from America. This could only be accomplished through the love of God in your hearts. This love unites you all and soon will unite the whole world. You must go back to America as sign of Love and love the people very much – more and more each day. All the believers must reach that station where they will be willing to die for each other. Their meetings must be held in great love, just like the gathering together of doves which are so loving to each other. In the Past the love of the believers is very great, but America has not yet reached this station. It is much better, but they must grow in love for each other. Tell them that love is the one great thing. It is life – the only life of the spirit." And upon bidding us goodbye, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "I send my love to all in America. Tell them that 'Abdu'l-Bahá loves them very much"

To Mr. Kinney we are indebted for these beautiful words copied from his

And at another time 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "My love for you is like an ocean and your love is like a drop. The distress and calamities which I have endured for your sake for many years, you could not endure for one day, and now should any offer me the entire existent world in exchange for one for you, I would not accept it. This means that one of you is dearer to me than the whole world. If a thousand swords be used on my neck, or against me, I accept it, but would not be content that one hair of your head should be taken away. You must realize

by this expression to what a degree I love the believers.”

To be loved by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – what a blessing is this! And this divine love I bring to you in full measure. Today you are rich indeed.

Alláho ABHÁ!

Louise R. Waite.