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A simple Story

William H. Hoar

May 1900

I have been asked to write about my visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In compliance with this request, I submit a simple story of scenes and incidents as they occurred during my journey and while a member of the Household of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for two never to forgotten weeks in the month of May, 1900.

Having received the Message of the Bahá’í Revelation in October of 1893, and having shortly thereafter accepted it, I became desirous of visiting the place where Bha’u’llah had spent the latter days of his exile, and to receive confirmation from Him who is the Center of His Covenant, the Servant of God ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The opportunity to make this visit came to me in 1901. I sailed from New York on the 19th day of April, and after a short visit to the friends in London and Paris, proceeded on my way to ‘Akká by way of Alexandria, Port Sa’íd and Bayreuth, in all of which places I was cordially received and delightfully entertained by our Bahá’í Brethren living in these places.

The first Oriental Bahá’í I met was Muḥammad Yazdí of Alexandria. Proceeding on my way, the next stop was at Port Sa’íd, where I met that noble, gentle spirit, who seemed to me to be the servant and friend of all believers, Aḥmad Yazdí, the Persian Vice-Consul and the brother of Muḥammad Yazdí of Alexandria. By Aḥmad Yazdí I was instructed how to proceed, and provided with a fez, which I wore from the time of my arrival in ‘Akká until departure. He also entrusted me with many messages and letters for the household and friends in ‘Akká.

The next pause in my journey was Bayreuth where I met Mitstapha Baghdádí, to whom I was directed by the brethren in Port Sa’íd. Being an utter stranger in Beyreuth, and not knowing the address of Mustapha Baghdádí I asked the dragoman whom I secured immediately upon my arrival, if he knew a merchant bearing such a name in the city. He told me that he did and that on the following morning he would come to my hotel and conduct me to Baghdádí’s place of business.

The next morning, as I approached the bazar of Baghdádí it occurred to me that I did not know the language, that I could not speak either Persian, Turkish or Arabic, and I was somewhat at a loss to know how I should make myself known,

not caring to tell my interpreter who or what I was, or what was my object in visiting Baghdádí. However, I trusted to fate, and as I approached the shop, I observed two young men sitting behind a counter, and not knowing what else to say I approached them with the Bahá'í salutation, "Alláh-u-Abhá", which I afterwards found to be an open sesame to the hearts and possessions of my brother Bahá'ís in the East. Instantly upon hearing this salutation, the faces of the two young men brightened, and they looked the welcome which it seemed to me they could not express. Not knowing what else to do or say, I said, "I am from America and can only speak English." One of the young men responded immediately, "I speak English", and instantly the situation was relieved.

We entered into conversation, and I learned that the young man who informed me he could speak English was Eunis Kahn, who was then on his way from Tíhrán, Persia, to 'Akká Syria, where he was to take the place as English interpreter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, previously occupied by 'Alí Kuli Kahn, whom I had met in Port Sa'íd on his way to America.

I was then taken by the other young man, who proved to be the son of Mustapha Baghdádí to his father and introduced to him as a brother Bahá'í from America.

Mustapha Baghdádí received me sweetly, cordially and lovingly and in that new spirit so characteristic of the Bahá'ís of the East. I spent a delightful hour with him and found him to be exceedingly interesting, ready and willing to give me all the information I sought and to aid me in every way in his power. Mustapha Baghdádí is one of the early believers and a Persian exile, contemporary with Bahá'u'lláh. He was able to tell me much that was that was entertaining and instructive.

After an hour spent in most enjoyable conversation, he took me about the city. We visited and observed places of interest, and finally we went to one of those places of refreshment where delicious Oriental drinks and sweetmeats are served, of which we partook.

I then returned to my hotel to meet my dragoman who was to come for me after luncheon to take me for a ride through the Mount Lebanon District, which lasted all the afternoon. It was a most charming drive, in the spring of the year; the country was green, attractive and beautiful, and the air laden with the perfume of fruit and flowers.

I returned in time to take the steamer that night for Haifa. All our friends came to the steamer to see Eunis Kahn and myself off.

I shall never forget dear Mustapha Baghdádí; he seemed to me to be the very personification of goodness and kindness and both his sons are like him in that respect. One of them is now in America, acquiring an education, with the intention of becoming a medical doctor.

Our trip to Haifa was uneventful. Leaving Bayreuth about eight o'clock in the evening, we arrived in the Bay of 'Akká about three o'clock the following morning. Our coming had been heralded, for we found upon our arrival a band

of Bahá'í brethren on the lookout for us, and among them was that dear soul and devoted servant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and of all Bahá'ís, now gone to his rest and reward, Taqí Manshdi. Taqí Manshádí seemed to know me instantly, and approaching gave me the Bahá'í salutation, telling me that he was to conduct me to the house at which I was to stay while in Haifa. It seemed as if the greatest pleasure that the dear brothers had in life while I was with them was in ministering to my wants and comfort. They were constantly with me, ready and willing to take me anywhere I wanted to go to give me any information I desired. It seemed as though nothing was closed to me neither their hearts, their homes nor their possessions. I was taken first to a little house provided for the entertainment of visiting pilgrims, and a breakfast was provided for me after which Ameen, then a boy of sixteen years of age the son of Asadu'lláh, came to me with the information that he was to act as my interprets and personal attendant.

I wish here to pay a loving tribute to the devotion of my little friend while I was in 'Akká. He was my constant companion, I could not think without him that is, in Persian or Arabic – and being unable to speak the language of the country, I felt utterly lost when he was not at my side. Frequently when addressed by a Syrian or a Persian, I would turn, and not finding my little dragoman at my side, would call, "Ameen, Ameen, where is Ameen"; he was never far away even at night frequently sharing my room. He contributed more than any other single individual to the pleasure of my stay in 'Akká, and I shall always hold in grateful remembrance his kindness and service to me while in 'Akká, and I am glad to say that our friendship has been renewed in America.

We spent the first day strolling about 'Akká, going up the mountain, visiting the tomb of the Báb, and calling upon the brethren living in Haifa.

Late in the afternoon information time brought to me that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent word that we were to come to 'Akká in the morning. So, about 8:30 o'clock the following morning, with Taqí Manshádí, Eunis Kahn and Nourilla, one of the Port Sa'id believers we started for 'Akká, in a carriage, by the way, made in America, of that type known in England as the "carry-all" made for rough roads and mountain climbing.

'Akká is situated on one side of the Bay of 'Akká, opposite the city of Haifa, on a point of land jutting out into the sea, commanding completely the coast north and south, a place capable according to the methods of ancient warfare, of being made almost impregnable.

There is no roadway between 'Akká and Haifa, the journey being made over the hard sand of the Mediterranean shore. It is a delightful drive, cool and pleasant. We arrived at about eleven o'clock A. M. and I was immediately ushered into the room that I was to occupy. It was a long, high ceilinged room, facing the Mediterranean Sea and overlooking the ramparts of the fortress. Along the side of the room facing the Mediterranean Sea was a low divan at the end was a book case containing books – a room nicely furnished and comfortable.

After baggage had been deposited in the room, a brother came to visit me, after which for a short time I was left alone, wondering when I was to see the object of my long journey, and gaze for the first time into the face of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. I had not long to wait, for suddenly the double doors were thrown open, and a group of Persians entered. Foremost among them is a venerable, white robed figure with a long flowing white beard, and a most benign and beautiful countenance and him I at once took to be ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. However, I was mistaken, for he was not ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but an uncle of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the brother of the Manifestation.

Suddenly the group parted, and a figure strode forward, who I immediately knew by his very presence to be none other than ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He is not a tall man, but is nevertheless, a man of commanding presence, with a noble head splendidly set on regal shoulders, a man who would command attention and respect in any assemblage.

To me, his was a personality of ineffable sweetness and charm, a reposeful dignity impossible to describe. In his face was the light of a divine love, and his smile a glimpse of the heavenly radiance. I shall never forget that smile; it came but rarely, but in it did come, lighting up a countenance habitually sad it was beautiful to behold.

He approached me, to both my hands in his gave me affectionate salutation and welcome, seated me on the divan and took a place beside me. I turned and looked into his face, and for some moments not a word was spoken. Then he turned to me and asked about my health and my journey, about the friends in America, and told me how glad he was to see me, and bade me be comfortable and happy. I assured him it was happiness merely to be with him. He smiled and arose and left the room. Such was my first meeting with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

In about an hour we were summoned to the mid-day meal, which is the chief meal of the day. It consisted of a vegetable soup cucumbers and roast lamb, with sweetmeats and bread. I have said many times since visit to the East that I think the Orientals are the only people in the world who know how to live, so far as the culinary art is concerned.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá always has a guest at the noon-day meal, and I of course, was the guest of the day, and to meet me were invited two Persian believers, one of them a man of majestic presence, who had been with the Manifestation almost from his boyhood, who had suffered with Him in exile, and who was the faithful friend of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – Hájí Níáz Kermani. Kermani is an old man, six feet tall, with a long white beard – a splendid type of the Oriental man, sweet, gentle but withal, commanding, and strong – such a man as an artist seeking a model for an Isaiah would choose. I spent very many happy hours with Kermani, hours that I shall always remember with pleasure. I loved him and shall always love him.

Thus passed the first day of my visit to ‘Akká.

During the noon-day meal ‘Abdu’l-Bahá discoursed upon the Message of Bahá

instructing me as I had come to be instructed and, altogether, it was a delightful hour. We saw nothing more of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá until evening, When He again met with the family and friends at the evening meal.

Thus we met from time to time for twelve days. The conversation at these meals was varied. Sometimes we talked about the friends in America, and the progress of the Cause all over the world and at other times the conversation Of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was on the instructions of the Kingdom.

On the afternoon of the first day my little dragoman Ameen, told me that the brothers had gathered in the Garden of the Riḍván to meet me, and that I was to be taken there for a reception. After an hour’s rest, we sat out for the Garden, which is located midway between the City of ‘Akká and the Holy Tomb. The Riḍván is the Garden planted in the desert by Bahá’u’lláh, and is a delightfully green and verdant spot, with a stream of clear, pure water running through it such a spot a one on a hot summer’s day would seek for repose and meditation. There the Bahá’í pilgrims and the exiles of ‘Akká were gathered – a splendid group of men, cleanly dressed, intelligent and apparently prosperous. One can never tell, by looking at the Bahá’ís in the East, whether they are rich or poor. There is no pretence or show about them, nevertheless there is that in their appearance which one sees only in the well groomed man. One could not tell the merchant, from the barber, or the scholar from the shoemaker – brothers all.

I was taken by the arm and introduced to each one of them individually, and as I was introduced, I was told what the occupation and calling was of the one to whom I was presented. A nice, cleanly dressed young man was introduced to me as the barber; another as the shoemaker; another as a merchant, and so on through the entire group. There seemed to be no distinctions among them. It was a community of perfect equality, and they were loving and gentle and perfectly free in their intercourse with each other, and particularly attentive and kindly toward the stranger, myself. We passed a most pleasant hour or two together, during which tea was served with sweetmeats. After bidding them farewell, we returned to ‘Akká.

The following day, in company with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we visited the Holy Tomb, and I was permitted a few moments of meditation and prayer alone in the crypt that holds the remains of Bahá’u’lláh.

Thus the time passed, in visits of the brethren, wandering about the fortifications and along the shores of the Mediterranean and visiting the Garden of the Riḍván.

The day after my visit to the Garden of Riḍván, returning from a stroll through the city, upon entering my room I saw bending over a table, inspect in some photographs which I had spread out there, a Turkish soldier. He looked up as I came in, with the photographs of Mrs. Hoar and our children in his hand, bowing, he interrogated me by signs if the originals of those pictures belonged to me; in the same manner, I indicated that they did. Just then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came

into the room and I was introduced to Liva Páshá. Liva Páshá was the general second in command in 'Akká and he had come to pay a visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whose friend he was and also to call upon the guest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

After a few moments spent in conversation, dinner was announced. We repaired to the dining room, to partake of the noonday meal I was getting experience on every step of my way. I had never been among Oriental people before, and I had gone there with the prejudices of an Occidental concerning the people of the East, and the Turks in particular, but I must here bear witness that my pre-conceived notions concerning these people received a destructive shock, for I found such people as Liva Páshá and others of high and low degree, to be just as human, just as sweet, just as gentle, and yet a manly men among men, as any I have ever met.

We spent a delightful hour, and I was told later in the day that I was invited to be the guest of Tiva Páshá at his Headquarters on the following Thursday night.

In the forenoon of the day following, Liva Páshá came again to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and I being sent for was conducted into the courtyard where Liva Páshá and 'Abdu'l-Bahá were seated. We engaged in conversation. I was asked many questions about my country by Liva Páshá, to all of which I answered modestly, restraining whatever impulse I may have felt to flaunt the stars and stripes. In my turn, among other questions, I asked him if he knew Osman Páshá, who fought the battle of Plevna in opposition of Skobeloff, the Russian general, telling him that our soldiers in the West had profound respect for Osman and regarded him as a great soldier, and as a strategist, superior to his renowned opponent. His face broke into a pleased smile, as he opened his tunic and baring his breast showed me two ugly wounds, one on either side. These he told me, he received at the battle of Plevna, in which he took part as a young lieutenant, one from a rifle ball and the other a sabre thrust and that Osman was his friend.

The following day, Thursday, I was sent for by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and upon coming into the room where he sat was introduced to General Kerif Páshá, a grizzled Turkish soldier, Chief in command of the forces in 'Akká. I am told that aka is the headquarters of the second largest military department in the Turkish Empire, and general in command of an eminent Páshá. Kerif Páshá was a different type of man from Liva Páshá but with the same kindly, sweet, gentle Oriental courtesy. He conversed with me about things Occidental, chiefly, that subject seeming to interest him more than anything else, asking me many questions about my country, all of which I answered him to the best of my ability, telling him of the wonderful material conditions there, of our means of transportation, through the air, on the surface and under the round. This visit, I might say, was a visit of courtesy to me as the friend of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I was impressed more than by anything else that I saw, with relation to 'Abdu'l-Bahá while I was in 'Akká, with the deference, amounting to reverence and friendship shown to him by all rich and poor, high and low. The Governor was his friend; the military men, from the humblest lieutenant to the General in command, seemed

to revere him and he seemed to me to be more a personage of distinction and honor than a prisoner and exile, as he was.

Among other dignitaries who came to see me as the friend of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was the Judge of the District, a splendid looking man, tall, full bearded, with a magnificent, dome-like head and a countenance of great intelligence and sweetness, a veritable Moses.

We conversed a long time. As I had found in interviews with others he seemed extremely interested in conditions in the West. He asked me many questions about my country, as had the generals. This was not the last visit that I received from the Judge. He came again and again, and the last day of my stay in ‘Akká, he came for a short talk in the Garden and to bid me farewell. As he was leaving, he turned to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and said to him, and to me in turn through my interpreter, “Tell our friend I have a brother whom I have not seen for twenty-five years; but since I have seen our friend, I have seen my brother.” A delightful compliment, and which one can appreciate more by know-the, the people among whom I then was. They are past masters in the art of compliment, and their courtesy is exquisite and beautiful.

Thursday evening, and the hour of my dinner engagement with Liva Páshá came, and I was told to be ready at seven o’clock. I was ready. I dressed myself with care in a black suit, wearing my Turkish fez, and awaited the coming of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Seven o’clock came, eight o’clock came, but no ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. I, with my Occidental notions of punctuality in such matters, was somewhat disturbed and wondered if I would not offend my host by being late – an unnecessary apprehension as I found afterwards. Word was finally brought to us that we were to go to the headquarters of Liva Páshá without ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. So we went, myself, Ameen and Kermani to the headquarters of the general, where we expected to find ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had not arrived and did not arrive until nearly nine o’clock. I, of course, was nervous and fidgety, as became an Occidental, under the circumstances. However, I did not notice any nervousness or apprehension on the part of my host, and I learned afterwards that such was the esteem in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was held by all the people in that city, that were they to have an engagement with him to dine at eight o’clock and he did not come until eleven, he would find his hosts awaiting him unruffled and apparently unconcerned.

Finally ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeared, and as he was the only one for whom they were waiting, we proceeded immediately to the dining hall, which was an immense stone chamber of solid masonry without pillar or column. The table from which we ate was of stone also.

Gathered around the table were Liva Páshá, our host, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the Judge of whom I have before spoken, the Surgeon-General of the Department, several other Turkish officers and civilians, Ameen, Kermani and myself. It proved a most delightful company. I found my companions humorous, capable of telling delightful stories, which were interpreted to me as they were told.

The dinner itself is indescribable. It was served in courses as we serve them knives, forks and spoons being provided for me the rest eating in true Oriental fashion with their fingers. As one dish was served, Liva Páshá turned me and said, "This dish was prepared by an artist." I replied, "I can very well believe it", for an anything more delicious I had never eaten. It was a chick prepared I know not how, but as I have said, delicious. Some sweetmeats were passed to and as the plate was put before me, I was told that these were called, "Judges mouths". I ate one and turning to the Judge said, "These are indeed sweet, and I can only say that I hope justice is always as sweet in the mouth of our friend as those condiments." This pleased the Judge very much for being an artist himself, he was able to appreciate art in another, for, as I have said before, they themselves are adepts in the art of compliment.

So the dinner preceded, one course following another and each one a surprise and a delight to the palate, until the end.

During our conversation at the table I sat at the right of Liva Páshá and engaged him in conversation most of the time, with frequent references to 'Abdu'l-Bahá when, suddenly, he turned to me and striking the table with his hand with great vehemence he said "We believe 'Abbás Effendi to be the greatest man living in the world today." I replied that many others held him in like esteem; that there were some in faraway lands, and that as of them had come from over the seas from a country where there were many who belived as he did,

That "He was the greatest man living in the world." This seemed to pleasure him, for I found afterwards that Liva Páshá was the devoted, loving friend of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and I believe a devotee. Liva, Páshá is now a member of the Turkish Parliament.

The dinner over we repaired to an anteroom where we sat and smoked and talked, the soldiers telling the stories of their adventures and experiences, and all seemed happy. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat alone and solitary figure, apparently not interested in the conversation, nobody taking offense or seeming to notice it; but the instant that 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicated a desire to speak every voice was hushed and every head was bowed while He discourse. He told them that He, too, as a soldier, but that his warfare was not carnal; that he did not fight with the sword and with guns, but that His weapon was the Sword of the spirit, and His armor the Breastplate of Rightousness.

I was impressed, too, in my intercourse with these men, with the reverence manifested by them whenever the Deity was mentioned; and if a hope was expressed concerning anything, to Liva Páshá, his reply generally was, "Inshallah" which being interpreted means, "God willing." They seemed to me to be God-fearing man.

Nowhere in my life or in all my experiences with men of other nations have I come in contact with a nobler, a sweeter or a gentler manhood than I found in these Turkish soldiers and gentlemen. They were exquisite in their attentions to the stranger, careful to see that I was being supplied with whatever was being

served. If my cigarette was burned out, another was instantly tendered, and altogether it was a most delightful and pleasant evening. Toward midnight I signified to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá my desire to retire, and my wish being indicated to my host, he immediately arose and putting on our shoes, he escorted me to the roadway, then taking me in his arms and giving me the Turkish salute, he said to our interpreter, “Tell my friend that I love him as a brother,” and bade me goodbye.

The story of my journey to ‘Akká would be incomplete, if I did not say a word about the manner in which the Anniversary of the Ascension of the Manifestation is observed. During this day no Bahá’í eats from morning until evening. An early breakfast is taken and the fast is not broken until after sundown. In the afternoon of this day we went to the little rest house erected by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá located near the Holy Tomb. Shortly after our arrival we saw coming down the road a cavalcade of soldiers and others, and in their midst rode ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reined in his little white ass at the gate of the house, a young Turkish officer, dismounting quickly from his horse went to the side of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and falling to his knee, assisted him to alight, after which he kissed his hand and remounted his horse. This devotion and attention to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was general. Everyone seemed to love him. A Turkish gendarme is sent with him wherever he goes for his protection, not as a guard. He was at that time allowed absolute freedom, and so careful were the authorities of his welfare, that wherever he went this guard accompanied Him.

No Bahá’í sleeps during the night following this day. At sundown a feast is prepared consisting of bread, fruit, tea and a freshly killed sheep. This meal is served by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own hands. His guests are seated about the table, and He Himself goes about serving first one and then another, not neglecting even the humble Turkish soldier to was his guard and who loved Him. After his followers had eaten, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, himself sat down and, received food from their hands. After this tea is served, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá retires to the little upper room in the rest house before mentioned, and spends the time in meditation and prayer, frequently sending for one follower and then another for an interview.

Toward midnight he sent for me and the experiences and emotions of the few moments spent with him in the little upper room at midnight, I can never describe or forget. After my interview I returned to the others and sharply at midnight, a procession was formed and with slow reverential step marched to the Holy Tomb. Each one was provided with two candles which he carried in either hand. The uncle of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, of whom I have already spoken, the brother of Bahá’u’lláh, and myself, were requested to head the procession. At the word from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was started, and as we went up the little slope and came to the foot of the hill on which the tomb is located and then arrived at the top of the hill, I looked back and the scene in the soft moonlight and at that four of that band of devoted men each possessed in me a profound impression, such as I can never forget.

Arriving at the tomb, some of the brothers melting some of the wax from the

candles, stood them on the railing surrounding the Garden, while others thrust their candles in the earth, after which they gathered around the little garden seated on the ground in Oriental fashion,, to await the coming of the dawn. The thoughtfulness of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed itself in my case, for known that I was an Occidental and unused to sitting as our Oriental brothers do I was provided with a chair placed on a platform raised just above the ground and next to the Tomb. Then began the reading, and chanting of the tablets, first by one and then another, and then by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself, until the dawn. The celebration of this day of the Ascension lasts from dawn to dawn, and ends with this ceremony at the tomb.

After the chanting of v, tablet by one of the brothers, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent word to me that he would like to have me sing one of our Christian hymns. He had heard me, I presume, in my room humming a tune now and then, and thinking I could sing, asked me to sing a hymn. You can refuse ‘Abdu’l-Bahá nothing, and whether I could sing or not, I would certainly have made the effort in deference to his request. I sang for him that familiar old Episcopal hymn:

“Wearied of life, and burdened with my sin,
I looked at Heaven and long to enter in;
But there no evil thing can find a home –
And yet I hear a voice that bids me come.”

I sang several verses of this hymn, and whether it was the influence of the scene or the cadence of my voice, different from what they were accustomed to, it affected them in such a way that many were sobbing, and when I had finished my hymn it seemed that all were weeping.

Thus the night wore away, until finally the dawn was announced, and with a benediction and blessing from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we were dismissed.

I had not been told what this occasion was, but noticing that something unusual was transpiring, I had asked Ameen about it, and he had told me that it was the Anniversary of the Ascension of the Manifestation, and how it was observed. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, doubtless thinking that the ceremonies of the day would be irksome to me, had not told me about it’ but I, thus learning from Ameen what was transpiring, asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá if I might not participate in the proceedings of the day. He kindly assented; but fearing that I would not be able to last the night out, he had provided a place to which I might retire and sleep. But I disappoint them, much endurance as any without apparent effort. While we were sitting in the Garden along towards midnight, Kermani who is an exceedingly humorous character, was chaffing me about my ability to sit the night out. I assured him that I could. Once, after a lull in our conversation, I chanced to look at Kermani, and I noticed that his noble head was bowing and falling, and that finally it sunk upon his breast in sleep. I watched him for a moment or so and then touched him upon the knee. Upon his awakening, I said to him, through Ameen, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” I shall never forget

the benign look that he bent upon me as he said “O, my brother, I have been watching these

seventy years.” My heart was touched, and for a moment I could say nothing. When I had received myself, I raised a prayer to heaven, that after seventy years I might be able to say as devotedly and as truly , that I had been watching all the years.

After the vigil at the tomb, we returned as we choose into the little rest house, where tea was served, and I was taken to the house of one of the friends, where I was privileged to go to bed for a few hours, after which we returned to ‘Akká.

This was Thursday. The following Monday I was to take ship from. Haifa on my return journey. Before my return, and in this interval. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá graciously accorded me an interview, in which I received his blessing, and instructions to go back to my people and tell them of the things that I had seen and heard in that land, and above all else, to tell the people to love one another. This I have tried to do ever since when the opportunity offered and the occasion permitted.

Upon my arrival in Paris I learned that many of our brethren in Persia had been martyred by the opposers and fanatics, I thereupon sent a telegram to the Sháh of Persia beseeching him to protect the Bahá’ís from the assaults of their enemies, and to permit them to worship God with freedom.

Upon my return to America I wrote the Sháh following letter:

TO
HIS
MAJESTY
THE
SHÁH
OF
PERSIA:

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all
men
should
be
made

Knew
thou,
O king,
that
Persia
is
blessed
above
all the
na-
tions
of the
earth
by the
ap-
pear-
ance
within
her
bor-
ders of
this
Sun of
Light,
and as
Cyrus
of old
thy
Prede-
cessor
on
Persia
a
throne
won
the
favor
of
Almighty
God,
be-
cause
of his
protec-
tion of
the Is-
raelites,
so will
this
same
God
bless
thee
and
perpet-

We do
not
ask or
wish
for
vengeance,
for,
“Vengeance
is mine
and I
will
repay,
saith
the
Lord.”
To ask
only
that
thy
mighty
arm be
stretched
forth
in pro-
tection
over
our
brethren
in far
away
Persia,
and
that
they
may
be per-
mitted
to
dwell
in
peace
and to
prac-
tice
love
and
charity
toward¹⁵
all
men,
as
taught
by
Bahá’u’lláh
and

Thou
wast
so
good
as to
re-
spond
in the
spirit
of gen-
tleness
and
loves
through
thy
most
noble
and
august
Minis-
ter to
our
Gov-
ern-
ment
at
Wash-
ington,
to our
tele-
gram
and
letter
of a
year
ago,
telling
thee of
similar
mur-
ders in
this
same
town,
that
our
hearts
were
re-
joiced
and
made
glad
by
thine

(Signed)
THE
BAHÁ'ÍS
OF
AMERICA.

As I reflect, after a lapse of nine years, upon the loving-kindness of God in permitting me to enter the light of his Glorious Kingdom in this wonderful Age, my mind reverts lovingly to that community of men and women surrounding 'Abdu'l Baba in that White City by the Tideless Sea dwelling together in peace and love and unity.

They know that their "Redeemer liveth, for have not their eyes beheld the Glory of the Coming of the Lord, the Manifestation of God, the Blessed Perfection?

They were his contemporaries his intimate associates; they walked with him, they talked with him and they ate at his table.

They are indeed a sanctified people, but it is not the sanctity of gloom, it is the sanctity of joy and gladness. They stood with him at the portals of the morn and beheld the approach and dawn of this new and glorious age, and have therefore a reason for the faith that is in them.

One never hears among them discussion of dogmatic theology or of doctrine, or of any questions that admit of doubt. The subject of reincarnation or of psychic phenomena never troubles them. They are of those who know, and the impression of fidelity and devotion to God and His Manifestation made upon those that visit them, is deep and indelible.

There is no doubt in their faces, and the story of their regeneration is shown in the love they bear one another and all mankind.

Love – love – all pervading love is the quality most apparent to all that go among them. They do indeed exemplify and live according to the new commandment that Christ gave to his disciples, "that ye love one another," and more, they love their enemies; and this indeed is the grand consummation of God's plan. As Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword and Muḥammad came with the sword, so our Lord, the Blessed Manifestation, came to establish a Day of Peace, and from henceforth the spirit of conciliation and concession will more and more control men and nations in their dealings with each other, until the time shall come when a resort to war for the settlement of national disputes will be unthought-of and unknown. Then will have come in truth the day when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Dearly beloved of God this Era has already begun, the Sun is mounting into the zenith of the heavens of this perfect Day, and soon it shall shine upon all

men, and all shall know that Lord is in his Holy Temple, and all the nations shall bow before Him, acknowledge Him and love Him, and in loving Him, they will love their kind. That is all there is – that ye love one another, and if we truly love one another we will forbear; thus fulfilling God’s greatest command, after first seeking his Kingdom and His Righteousness.