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Diary of my journey to and from 'Akká

Frances J Phelps

June 8th, 1907

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The steamer Necker left the dock at 11:25 A.M. and steamed slowly down the river to Sandy Hook where the pilot was taken off. The weather is fine and agreeable today, the places of interest we passed were beautiful but not knowing what they I cannot mention anything but the Goddess of Liberty. I wrote a postal intending to mail it when the Pilot got off. I was at dinner at the time and did not notice or realize, other things taking my attention that the boat was slowing up. And when informed I went out on deck at once only to see the Pilot going down the ladder Mr. Remey was a little more fortunate, however, for he got there in time to hand his mail to him as he was climbing over the rail. Mr. Remey mailed about 50 poste cards on this occasion which the pilot put in his pocket. I may be able to mail mine at Gibraltar. I am informed that the boat stops there six hours and allows the passengers to go ashore, if they arrive there in the daytime. The sea is smooth as glass, the boat has a gentle motion up and down, but not enough to make one sick. I am getting acquainted with some of the passengers. In the cabin with me are three Italians of the better sort and who are very agreeable. They have a parrot with them and fortunately he is keeping very quiet. In the steerage there are 750 Italians. They eat in groups of six, I may get a snap shot later.

June 9th,

This is Sunday and a very quiet one the sea is smooth and everything, in general, very pleasant. I took a snap shot of the found a place on the stern for that night. Mírzá Aḥmad Yazd gave Mr. Remey a fine silk Umbrella to give to one of the believers at 'Akká and this with mine and Mr. Welle were all tied together and placed in the back of the carpenters room and being a little off our guard that night, they were stolen, Mr. Remey bought a new one while in Beirut.

There is another incident which I forgot to tell that happened at Port Sa'íd. The boatmen who were to take us to the ship got into a fight and we sat there in the boat for about ten minutes for them to get through, it certainly was amusing, after they got through punching one another they got into the boat and rowed us to the ship. Our ship left the Port at 8 o'clock that evening.

July 6th, Sat.

Our journey to Beirut was without incident with the exception of the loss of our umbrellas. As we passed 'Akká We were all lined up amidships to show our tickets, I looked wistfully to 'Akká and said the Greatest name Ninety five times while passing. The only thing I could see to single out was the dome of a Mosque. We were in sight of the shore of Syria from Jaffa to Beirut. We arrived at Beirut at four in the evening. It is a very beautiful city from the Sea. I took a picture of it as we were nearing the anchorage place. This ship is sailing the yellow flag which that we are in quarantine and the quarantine officers would not let us land that night so we had to sleep all night on the ship as I stated above but the quarantine of two days is going on just the same. The first and second class passengers were taken off that evening, that is those who wished to go ashore. In the quarantine these passengers have a little better accommodations than third and fourth class.

July 6th, Sunday:

About six o'clock in the morning they began to take us off the ship in the ship's boats to the place where we are to be quarantined. We got off in the second boat, The place is on high ground about a quarter of a mile from the ship. Well, we got ashore with our baggage and climbed up the hill to the fumigation plant This was a great experience, we had to take off all our clothes and our under clothes were wrapped up in old bags and, put into a large cylinder to be steamed for half an hour. We were given gowns to wear while this was being done. We were all huddled there together, arabs and all classes of people and you can imagine what our clothes looked like when they came out, with the dirty smell and then the scramble to find our own. I was pulling and hauling at an arab's clothes thinking they were my own, but he was stronger than me so he picked them up and took them elsewhere and then I looked a little further and found mine in a mess. I put my other clothes, on without them and after we secured a room Mr. Remey and I washed then all out. This was very fortunate that they had running water. I thought sure that the clothes I was claiming were mine, but it was hard for anyone to tell from the looks of them. The only way that I could tell was by the belt that I wore. They all smelled and looked alike. Well we got through after a fashion and were let loose to find rooms in the pest house. While all this was being done to us, Rúhí who came on the next boat with his family found Mr. Wells who we left outside to guard our baggage while we were being fumigated and he being able, to talk to them in their own language got through by giving them a tip without being fumigated.

We found Mr. Wells and Rúhí and family with the baggage waiting for us. This was the greatest joke yet to think that we had been fumigated while they escaped with a few piasters. But it was a good thing for me for reasons which are better told than put upon paper. Our quarters which I have called the pest house proved to be very clean and roomy, they were a palace compared with the ship. I think we all would have been sick if we had to stay on it very long. I have a

snap shot of Mr. Remey and myself in front of the room. Dinner and supper were served in courses and everything was clean and nice, in fact we all said it was the best we had had since we left home, to our great surprise. At ten o'clock we turned in for the night. While it is very hot here in the day time it is cool at night. The atmosphere is so clear that myriads of stars can be seen every night, no clear night in winter in our country can be compared with it.

July 8th, Monday:

I arose in the morning at 4, and as I looked to the East, day was breaking over the Lebanon mountains and the first thing which met my eyes was the star and crescent. This was pleasant to the eyes. It was interesting to see the Arabs preparing their food. They were going to Mecca and they had their tents and cooking utensils with them, they gathered a few stones and placed them in a circle and made a fire with wood and charcoal, prepared potatoes and onions and meat and other things and when it was done it looked very good. The Arabs did not have rooms but slept in their tents. And at the time of prayer they would gather, together and facing Mecca would all pray in dead earnest. There was one thing that I admired in these people and that there is no one declared a fragrant because he is poor. {{p31}} One or more of these poor Arabs went up to the man in charge and he gave to the food, The poorest of the poor manifest their loyalty to the Muhammadan faith by making these pilgrimages to Mecca.

When we were released from quarantine we had all kinds of trouble our board of course was a legitimate tax, then the custom house official was to be paid, then they charged for carrying our baggage several times, then our passports were taken by the police, but such a jam and confusion at the gate, it was difficult to get through without being crushed, finally we reached the outer gate and then the men who carried our baggage from one gate to the other had the audacity to say that they would not let us leave the gate until we had paid them one-half crown apiece. Rúhí did the talking for us and finally with some delay we got away by paying what is equivalent to \$1.25 a piece. Then we hired a hack and with Baghdádí one of the believers who met us, we went to the American Hotel. We secured rooms and cleaned ourselves up and then took a walk around the city. Beirut is very beautiful from the sea. Zia Baghdád treated us to ice-cream of assorted colors and tastes, there were at least six different kinds of cream in spoonfuls on the dish. This was very pleasant for it was quite warm. While eating our cream many beggars came by and some of them looked pitiful indeed, but it would not do to encourage them too much for the whole town would be after us.

July 9th, Tuesday:

This morning Mr. Wells and I took a walk through the streets and bazaars and to see about getting our transports back from the police. We first went to Cook's agency to get information about steamers leaving for Haifa and Jaffa. It was

there that we learned how to get the transports. On our way back I purchased a string of beautiful ambre beads. I did not know which to choose, the pure ambre of the natural, i decided to take the later at last. We went back to the hotel and then all three went to Baghdádí's shop and met the young believers. The most of them are students at the Missionary College on the hill. Among them was Badí'u'lláh. I did not think to have my camera with me so lost an opportunity to take a picture of them. I may get it later for some of them are going with us to Haifa tomorrow, with Rúhí and his family. In the evening we were taken to Baghdádí's home to see his father who is blind or nearly so. They have a very beautiful home with a beautiful garden on one side of it They treated us to watermelon fruit tea and other dainties, and Hájí Mustafi Baghdádí, the father was very much interested in our journey to 'Akká and in the progress of the Cause in America in general. His father before him was a believer in the Bá'b. Before this we went to the wharf to see Brother Wells off for Jaffa, he left most of his baggage at Beruit and made a pack for himself and intended to travel overland to see the sights about Jerusalem, and other cities of interest to Bible students and then return to Beruit and from was to accompany Mr. Remey to Constantinople, on his return from 'Akká. That evening Mr. Remey and I took a long walk through the town about three miles I should think. Another incident I must record here before forget it, when Mr. Wells left us the Lady at the Hotel gave us another room on the upper floor, No. 19, and we had this for the rest of the time.

July 10th, Wednesday:

Nothing transpired today except to get ready to take the boat for Haifa. We have lots of company with us on our way down to Haifa. Rúhí and family, nine persons four boys from the college, all believers and ourselves. We all took third class tickets and slept on deck all night. The people here think nothing of that. It was a Russian steamer that brought us to Haifa, passing 'Akká again on the way, so near yet so far, arriving at six o'clock in the morning. The sun was just rising when the ship dropped anchor. At 6:30 I took a picture of Haifa from the ship I took a group picture of these young men in Beruit which I had hoped would be a good but It was slightly underexposed. Baghdádí took us to see the Protestant College before we left there which I should have mentioned before. I have a picture of the main building, and their catalogue and several postcards of Beruit. We engaged Cook's agent to take us of here, it cost us \$1.25 a piece, we think this is the best way here for it saves the trouble and confusion you would otherwise have with the natives and then it is better in another way for we get through the custom house without having our baggage examined. Then we were taken to hotel Carmel, I have a picture of this hotel. Rúhí and family and the boys found other places to stop for they are at home here.

July 11th, Thursday;

Word was sent over to 'Akká this morning asking when we should come over and the answer came in the evening that we should come early in the morning. In the mean time I went to the Tomb of the Báb, which about half way up the mountain, and took pictures of it, these proved to be good ones here I met Núri'd-Dín, one of the interpreters, who can speak English fluently. He was at that time preparing a Tablet to be sent to the Assembly at Washington, and asked me to look over the list of names to see if they were spelled correctly.

Núri'd-Dín took me into one of the rooms of the Tomb Building there was a very handsome rug on the floor, as he approached it he took off his shoes before stepping upon it. I hesitated as to whether I should do the same but he invited me to proceed. So we sat down and talked for some time about our journey and the Cause in America and the conditions at 'Akká and most of all the Master. As I was sitting there one of the little children, a beautiful child, came in to greet me, she came in as with joy and then as she got nearer she drew back in a shy and hesitating way. Núri'd-Dín encouraged her to come nearer and put out my hands to greet her she was really very cute, took her then and kissed her, then she ran out. Her name is Húrí, the Master named her. Húrí means spirit. I was shown next into the tomb chamber Here Núri'd-Dín manifested the greatest reverence, tiptoeing quietly and slowly across the floor to the arch opposite and kissed it then turning came out. I remained at the Threshold. After I came out I took a picture of this door. Then he gathered some roses from the garden in front of the Tomb and gave them to me and as we were coming away he gave me a fine bunch of grapes. There is a vineyard, all around the Tomb. But before coming down I went up to the top of the mountain directly above the Tomb alone and took a birds eye view of Haifa showing the Tomb and the German colony, and 'Akká in the distance. I had thought that this view was spoiled, the film upon which it was taken did not roll upon the spool properly and I had to take it out while in the Master's house and I thought it had become lightstruck. When I developed it however it proved to be alright. Mr. Remey and I in the evening took a long walk and on coming back we went down by the sea and looking toward 'Akká said the Greatest Name 19 times. {{p35}}

July 12th, Friday;

At eight o'clock we started on the long [?] to 'Akká passing through the narrow, rough, irregular and [?] paved streets of Haifa, through the market place where [?] the grain which remains in the open treet, or court, day and [?] the wharf and out in the open, that is by the sea shore. [?] fair and beautiful and a little warm. During the [?] I for the most part were silent wondering what we would see or hear or say. After two hours [?] approached the grove of trees which lead to the gate of the city. On our left by the sea there were several men washing their [?] in the surf, on the other side of the grove there were about 150 camels with their owners resting or waiting to make a Journey into the interior. We entered the gate and were driven through the winding and narrow streets, and every now

and then there would be an open place which was probably a market. Finally we stopped and by some of the believers coming out to receive us we knew that this was part of our journey was at an end. We went through part of the building into a court which is the garden of the Master. There was several people sitting around to the right of his court who looked at us with some curiosity. We turned to the left and went to the end where was a long flight of stone stairs. I wanted to take a picture of these stairs but was afraid to expose my camera, for I did not know whether all those people were believers or not, the light on them was just right at the time, between ten and eleven in the morning. We ascended the steps and were shown a room to the left overlooking the sea, where were two beds a bench, {{p36}} a divan, the whole length of that side of the room. I have a picture of this and the spot where the Master sat after he greeted us, a small table was in the center. We were requested by the interpreters to be seated and to make ourselves comfortable. Several believers came in and talked to us about various matters about the conditions of 'Akká and we asked about the Master's health. In about 15 minutes the Master came in and Mr. Remey nearest to the door advanced to meet Him and kneeling, the Master embraced and kissed him saying something in Persian. Then he advanced toward me and embraced and kissed me likewise, saying the same things. Then he sat down on the divan and began to talk to us through the interpreters, first saying how glad he was glad to see and inquired about the believers in America and especially in Washington? He stayed only a few minutes on this occasion and going out saying that he was very busy that day. The letters which I had from the believers in America I gave to one of the interpreters to be given to the Master later. An aged believer came in and gave us some of the teachings and explanations concerning the Cause, during this conversation I was very sleepy from the long drive so I lay down on the divan a short time to rest while this conversation was going on. In the mean time, dinner was being prepared and made ready, then when everything was ready, the Master came in and invited us to dinner. Think of me sitting at the Master's Table and sitting beside Him, a very great and rare privilege and one which I can never realize truly, it's true significance and importance. Mr. Remey sat at the head of the table, I sat next to him and the Master sat next to me, the Master's brother sat next to Mr. Remey then the interpreters and others, about twelve in all. {{p37}}

We had soup, meat, potatoes, pilau and watermelon for dinner. This dinner was the best that I had eaten anywhere since I left home, everything was seasoned so nicely and I ate heartily. The Master did not serve as was His custom but a Japanese and a little boy who are in the Master's household served instead. One of the first things the Master said was "Afflictions were bad for the body but good for the soul". In a little while I lost all my sense of strangeness and backwardness and not knowing how long our time would be I began to make my petitions. I first spoke to Him about Marian and Mrs. Barnitz. He said He would pray for them. I presented Mrs. Dixions request to visit Him with her two daughters and sons-in-law, this we granted: that is she and her daughters were given permission to come, but no men, He said. I told Him all the believers

had asked us to be remembered in His presence but it would be too tedious to mention them individually. He said He would pray for them all. The table was strewn with jasmine flowers, very fragrant and a bouquet in the middle. From the piece of watermelon which the Master ate I collected 9 seeds to bring home. After dinner we lay down for a short space of time to rest, this the custom here to rest a while in the middle of the day. After this the Master came into our room and spent two hours talking to us. Mr. Remey presented all the requests of the different ones at home, the Master relying to each, it was a long list and took much of our time. Mr. Hannen had asked for string or bonds and the Master immediately gave the ones He had been using himself for him. Mr. Remey and I both received, a string each. Then the presents of each one of the believers who sent presents were presented to Him, among them was a pneumatic matter[?].