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## **Oriental Rose or “The Shining Pathway”**

**Mary Hanford Ford**

**1907**

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### **FOREWORD.**

In the preparation of the present volume I have been deeply indebted to M. Nicolas, Secretary of the Persian Legation in Paris, who has written a biography entitled *Siyyid ‘Alí-Muhammad, dit le Báb*, which is indicative of profound research in both the Persian and Arabic tongues. It is, however, lacking in discrimination, as it uses the untruthful and partisan *Muhammadan* memorials of the Báb, as of equal authority with those written by his friends, and it is therefore necessary to cull its pages. As the book has not been translated into English, I have taken the liberty of borrowing frankly from its contents, in much that touches upon the story of the Báb and *Qurratu’l-Ayn*. I must also express my obligations to Gobineau’s famous monograph upon the Báb.

It would be impossible, however, to put into words the treasure of what I owe to my own visit to ‘Akká, and to the long line of travelling Americans returning from that prison city, each of whom perhaps has added a color, an outline or a bit of sunshine to the ensemble of the booklet here offered, may I hope it has caught some fragrance of sweet rich roses, of sandalwood and myrrh?

All the travelers have come back like pilgrims of a new hope, bubbling and overflowing with the ideas, impressions and suggestions drawn from their visit to this inspiring spiritual center, and their contact with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Each has illustrated the reply given by the Servant of God to the questioner who asked him: “Why do all the guests who visit you come away with shining countenances?”

He said with his beautiful smile; “I cannot tell you, but in all those upon whom I look, I see only my Father’s Face.”

THE AUTHOR. { .sig }

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE COMING OF THE BĀB.

Have you ever heard of ‘Abbás Effendi? He is known to his followers as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which means the Servant of God. He has been for many years a political prisoner in ‘Akká, the ancient prison city of the Turkish Sulṭán, but his name is beginning to be whispered everywhere as a symbol of the love which frees, which warms the heart and stirs the world to betterment.

‘Akká was once known as Acre, and its walls frowned upon the traveler as darkly as in the day when Richard Coeur de Lion stormed them with his tumultuous crusaders; but since the restoration of the constitution in Turkey and the abdication of ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd, openings have been cut in these strong defences, and the gates are no longer closed and barred.

In the August which followed the wonderful July day that gave the turbaned people the franchise, ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd issued a strange decree, setting free every prisoner held that day within the confines of the empire, and thus ‘Abbás Effendi was liberated.

He had been confined within the walls of ‘Akká since 1868, and had been a prisoner since he was a boy of nine, and perhaps even the promulgation of the constitution would not have broken his bonds. He said to an American guest:

“Whenever I thought of freedom I could not but remember the many sufferers languishing in prison, so I was not able to pray for my own liberation, I must pray for the freedom of all, and I was made happy because at last liberty was granted to every imprisoned one as well as to myself.”

For thirty years ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has not been confined within prison walls, but simply within the limits of the town of ‘Akká, and since 1892 he has been the center of the great Bahá’íst movement that has brought light to the Orient and the Occident.

For many decades troops of pilgrims have poured into ‘Akká from all parts of the world; western merchant and Oriental dreamer have jostled one another in the streets of the prison city seeking the great message of peace and unity, of loving service that has quickened the heart of mankind from the center of oppression.

In spite of the surveillance of the suspicious Turkish police the mansion of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has sheltered countless foreign guests, and English, German, French and American pilgrims have left its generous portals to carry back to their own rushing and progressive commonwealths a sense of the splendor of life that they had never before suspected.

The house of ‘Abbás Effendi is an Oriental structure built round a court, and its situation just beside the sea wall of ‘Akká gives its upper chambers a wonderful outlook over the Mediterranean. Upon the roof is the simple apartment, fur-

nished with the merest necessities, which the Teacher of man occupies during the greater part of the year. It frequently contains no bed, for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is continually giving away this necessity of civilized existence. It is impossible to buy a bed in ‘Akká, and so, when this lover of his kind during his morning walk finds a fever stricken sufferer tossing upon the bare ground, he straightway sends him his bed, and lies upon the hard floor himself until someone discovers his plight and provides him with a new one.

Let no one commiserate him too much in such a sacrifice, however, for ‘Abdu’l-Baba’s body is of such slight import to him, that he probably sleeps as sweetly on the uncovered boards as on his narrow cot, and nothing would drive slumber from his eyes so quickly as the consciousness that another needed his couch. To understand the mission of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and its significance to the world, we must go back to the year of his birth in 1844, and to the Persian city of Shíráz, where, in that same year Muḥammad-‘Alí first cried his message into the listening air, and received his title of the Báb or Gate. He was accepted immediately by many followers, as the eagerly expected “Mahdi.” Muḥammadan tradition had lovingly preserved the holy legend of the Twelfth Imám, who had disappeared two hundred and sixty years after the coming of Muḥammad, and whose return was promised in a thousand years. The expiration of that period brought the date 1260 of the Islámic chronology, which corresponds with 1844 of our era.

In Chicago a temple is in process of erection to which funds have been contributed by all the religions of the world, and yet its building is in the hands of Americans. It is to be called the Maszhrak el Azcar, which means the Dawning Place of Prayer, and is the result of the widespread movement which the Báb initiated in 1844. As we shall see, this is a movement of unity and brotherhood, far reaching in its consequences. For years Americans have been despatching missionaries to the Orient, and pouring forth generous floods of money to Christianize the heathen. And now suddenly they have become so Christianized that they have sent a contribution of something like five thousand dollars as their portion towards this great Place of Prayer in the Occident, where they realize that the time of fulfilment has come for all that Christ taught.

The message of the Báb was for the establishment of a world religion which would unite all creeds, and teach men to realize that God is one and the same in every faith that has brought truth to the human heart. Such a teaching must have seemed dangerously heretical to the narrow and theological Muḥammadan priesthood, and therefore the devotees of this new cult, great and simple as it is, have suffered terrible persecution. But its tenets have laid a solid foundation of unity, equality, and brotherhood throughout Persia and Turkey, which has been manifested recently in the constitutional reforms of those countries. Thirty years ago also, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote a book entitled *The Mysterious Forces of Civilization*, which has just been translated into English, but it has circulated among his Oriental disciples from its first production, giving them ideas of rational and noble human relationships such as can only be realized under a

free and constitutional government.

The western world is accustomed to regard Muḥammad as an impostor who misled his followers and taught them to persecute the Christians, but the student has discovered that Muḥammad, so far from persecuting the Christians, wrote out an oath for their protection, which he obliged his followers to sign. He revered Christ as a prophet of God, and necessarily respected the believers in the religion he founded. But Muḥammad's death was followed by the immediate degradation of his noble teaching.

Muḥammad's daughter Fatima was a remarkable woman, devoted to the preservation of her father's cult in its spiritual integrity, her husband 'Alí became his true interpreter, and was designated by the prophet as the one who should stand in his place to keep the faith pure. But because 'Alí was an apostle of peace he was set aside, and the warlike Omar interpolated a new propaganda, which the world still misnames that of Muḥammad, in which the sword usurped the place of the divine Word.

A schism arose consequently among the religionaries of Islám. The followers of 'Alí became the Shiíte sect, and those of Omar the Sunnités. The Shiítes have always been the repository of Muḥammad's mystical teaching, they have been poets and lovers of peace, ponderers of their sacred Scriptures. The Persian Muḥammadans are all Shiíte, while the Turks on the contrary are all Sunnité, and adherents of Omar. So while the Sunnités have controlled the political machinery of the later Muḥammadanism, the Shiítes have produced its sufis, its poets and soothsayers. It is remarkable that Muḥammad should have foretold the coming of the twelve Imáms or holy men, who must keep fresh his teachings in the heart of man, and not only the date of the last one but his reappearance in the year 1260. This accounts for the excitement in regard to the rising of the Mandi\* in Africa and Arabia in recent years. The Mandi is the expected Imám, whose rise would revolutionize the world and establish the kingdom of God on the earth, as his zealous converts believed. When Muḥammad-'Alí announced his identity with this Wonderful One for whom the soul of his people yearned, many accepted him immediately. The Muḥammadan Mullás demanded of him sternly: "Who are you?" He replied:

\*\*Mandi means the Inspired or well directed one.\*

"I am that One for whom you have been waiting a thousand years!"

But the Mullás refused to recognize him as the True One because they looked for a royal personage, surrounded by state and splendor, bearing many titles, and the inhabitant of purely symbolic localities. To be sure Muḥammad All fulfilled the requirements in that he was a descendant of Muḥammad wearing the green turban, and was a young man of barely twenty-five when he began to deliver his message. But the Mullás had conceived a far more worldly image of a different personage, and besides the Báb did not proclaim the doctrine they wished to hear. They demanded that he should re-enforce their authority, and strengthen their already deeply entrenched theology of degenerate Muḥammadanism.

Instead of that he announced the coming of a new day of God, when all men should become brothers, forgetting their religious differences in the kinship of one universal and loving Father. Moreover he spoke of himself as merely the herald of another who was to follow him, who was to be Bahá'u'lláh, the glory of God, or Him whom God shall manifest. This precious effulgence of the Almighty he de-scribed most lovingly as the greatest revelator of God whom the world had ever known.

He assured his followers that while he him-self would be martyred, the greater one would soon dawn upon the horizon, and that they should see him. When they asked how they might know him, the Báb replied earnestly:

“Every word of his utterance will be so thrilling that you cannot mistake him. If he recites a verse from the Qur’án you will feel in the marvel of his tone that he is the promised one. So do not yield to the conventional fear of being in the wrong, and thus sacrifice the greatest joy of human life, the joy of recognizing a Manifestation of God in his Day!”

The Shiite tradition in regard to the appearance of the Imáms or Holy men is very exact. Djaber ed ‘Abdu’lláh reports that Muḥammad himself foretold their coming, and said of the twelfth:

“This twelfth Imám is he to whom God will give the victory from the rising to the setting, and it is he who will be concealed among his sectaries and his saints. While he is hidden no one will believe in his reign, except the chosen ones to whose hearts God will give faith.”

When Djaber inquired if the Imám would be of value to his followers even in concealment, the prophet responded:

“Surely he will, I swear it by him who has made me his prophet! His faithful ones will be resplendent in his light, and his concealed reign will be as glorious to them as is the sun to other men.”

Among the traditional books of Islám the prescience of the Báb’s arrival is so constant that one wonders how anyone could have failed to recognize him, and it is plainly spoken that his falsifiers shall be found among the great Mullás or clergy. The True One is called sometimes the Gha’im, literally the One who arises. It is said of him:

“The perfection of Moses, the splendor of Jesus, and the patience of Job shall be in him, and his friends shall be abused during his time, and their heads shall be just as the heads of the Turks and Deylanites were exchanged as presents, they shall be slain and burnt, terrified with fear and appalled ; the earth shall be dyed with their blood, and lamentation and wailing shall prevail among their women; these are indeed my friends.”

Again the events of his days are definitely foretold in the prediction of the martyrdom at “Zora,” which is identified as “the city of Rey,” an ancient city

near which Tīhrán is built. Thus runs the tradition which Bahá'u'lláh repeats in the Íqán: "Nast thou entered the city of Rey?" "Yes," I replied He inquired:

"Hast thou visited the cattle market?" "Yes." "Nast thou seen the black mountain upon the right hand of the road? There is Zora, where they will slay eighty men of the children of certain ones, all of whom are free from guilt."

"Who will kill them?" I questioned. He said, "The children of Persia."

And in that very spot these eighty poor creatures were tortured to death for no crime except that they accepted the revelation of the True One!

Muḥammad said of 'Alí: "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Alí is the Gate thereto, if there were no gate the city could not be entered."

So each Imám was known as a Gate, and naturally Muḥammad-'Alí gave himself this title which was perpetuated by his followers. Another element of extreme radicalism in his teaching which was necessarily obnoxious to the established faith of the clergy, was that there should be no priesthood in the new Day, but that all should teach the truth of God in the leisure permitted by ordinary avocations. In this the wealthy and powerful Mullás saw the destruction of their caste and privilege, and they could not combat too earnestly a revelation the spread of which must reduce them to the condition of the average man. The Báb also insisted upon the equality of the sexes, and taught that the seclusion of women according to the Muḥammadan law should cease, and that men must take but one wife. His followers among the women therefore took off their veils, and went about as freely as did English women, while their teaching and speaking were marked by a peculiar eloquence and power, as advocates of the new faith.

The Báb was extremely fond of symbolism, and pondered deeply on the spiritual significance of numbers and mathematical forms. The numbers 19 and 9 were especially sacred to him, and as 19 is the series of years constituting the lunar cycle, and provides a more exact chronology for the earth than the movement of the sun, he established a new chronology for his followers according to which there shall be a year of nineteen months, each containing nine-teen days.

He spoke of the awakening of which he represented the dawning point as an ellipse, which is an oblong, larger in the middle than at the ends. He called himself the first Point or Nukta of this ellipse, while the Glory of God, or Him who God shall manifest, should constitute its mighty center.

The Báb was the precursor of Bahá'u'lláh, and yet he also was heralded in his turn, for the completion of the prophesied time was recognized by Muḥammadan students, and many were looking for the twelfth Imám, the great Imám Mandi. Muḥammad-'Alí was an orphan, and was reared by his uncle who intended that he should become a merchant like himself. He received, therefore, only the very limited education which is deemed sufficient for such a business in Persia. 'When he was about nineteen years of age he was sent by his uncle on a business

mission to Boushir, and from there went to Kerbelah, where are the tombs of the Imáms.

Though intended for the career of a merchant, Muḥammad-‘Alí was an exceedingly devout young man. He loved to ponder the Holy Scriptures, and was often sunk in meditation upon their hidden meanings. All traditions agree that he was of a peculiarly charming personality. He was beautiful to look upon, and possessed a gift of eloquent and magnetic speech which would have rendered him irresistible if he had been left free to teach his great truth.

At the time of his visit to Kerbelah one of the most distinguished Muḥammadan savants was delivering his lectures there to a crowd of students, and among his disciples were two who became the most noted among the early followers of the Báb himself, Mullá Sádiq, who later was known as Khurasání, and Ḥusayn Bushrú’í, afterwards called the Báb-el-bah, or Gate of the Báb. He was the first convert of the Báb.

Khurasání has told us of his initial meeting with his master. While at Kerbelah Muḥammad-‘Alí was accustomed to go to the mosque at the same hour every day, where he would stand lost in meditation for a long time. Khurasání felt strongly attracted towards him, and determined to address him. He did so upon his next visit to the mosque, but the young man put his finger on his lip, and turned away without response. Khurasání somewhat angered at this rebuff, left the place of devotion at the same time as the stranger, but resolved never to speak to him again. Muḥammad-‘Alí, however, hastened toward him as soon as they were outside the limits of the sacred edifice, and excused himself so engagingly for his apparent discourtesy that he could not fail of pardon.

The young devotee explained that while in the house of prayer he felt it wrong to allow even a vagrant thought to linger in his mind, and could not therefore indulge in conversation of mundane affairs. Khurasání there-upon invited him to come to his house the following evening when he would be honored by a visit from the holy teacher, Shaykh Kazem, and some of his most distinguished pupils. “What a joy to be present in an assembly where the most heavenly light of God will be spoken of!” Muḥammad-‘Alí replied with much delight.

Upon the following evening, however, the company had all gathered before the stranger appeared. The prayers had begun, and Mul-lah Ḥusayn Bushrú’í was discoursing upon the martyrdom of the Imám Ḥusayn when Muḥammad-‘Alí stood upon the threshold.

It is the Persian custom that all shall rise when a person of special distinction enters a room, but Shaykh Kazem was too independent to attend to such points of etiquette, and was never accustomed to notice in any fashion the entrance of belated guests. As the beautiful unknown paused upon the threshold, however, Shaykh Kazem rose, and naturally all followed his example, while a thrill ran through the assembly touching the heart of each one. Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú’í to whom this advent was to prove of supreme importance stopped speechless for the moment, while the stranger apparently unconscious of the excitement

he had caused sank modestly into a seat near the door. Shaykh Kazem begged him to station himself among the more honored guests, but the young stranger from Shíráz refused, and sat quietly until all had taken their departure. Then Khurasání insisted that he should be seated more worthily, and rising without further protest he possessed himself of the place which Shaykh Kazem had occupied.

Shortly afterward the gifted Shírází was no longer seen in Kerbelah, but he was not forgotten. He returned to Shíráz, where, in a few years, he made the amazing announcement of his mission, which he repeated at Mecca, where he went on the holy pilgrimage, but not as an orthodox Muḥammadan.

Before the death of old Shaykh Kazem he had told his chosen disciples that they would see the Imám Mandi. Some of these have re-peated the predictions of the old seer. Soulei-man Khán Qualihi suffered a horrible death as martyr for his acceptance of the Báb's teach-ing, and he said:

"The Shaykh promised me that I should see the reappearance of the Imám Mandi. 'You will be there,' he declared, 'and you will give him your faith.'"

Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í demanded with insistence how the Manifestation would appear, and the Shaykh replied by quoting a verse from the sacred writings:

"I cannot speak more definitely, but the sun of truth from whatever dawning point it may rise will illumine all the horizons; and the mirrors of the hearts of those who love it well, it will adjust them in such fashion that they will receive the emanations of light and knowledge."

Before the Shaykh passed away he announced his approaching departure to his followers, and reiterated his prophecy of the coming of the True One. All broke forth into lamentation, and loudest among them was Kerim Khán. The old Shaykh fixed his eyes upon him and exclaimed:

"Dog! You do not wish that I go, and that after me the Absolute Truth shall be manifested!"

The aged Seer looking into the soul of the man whose complaints massacred the air recognized the Judas of the group, for Kerim Khán became the successor of Shaykh Kazem, the greatest of the 'Ulamá, and the most terrible persecutor of the Báb and his devoted followers. In fact, with the Vizír Aghassi, he was responsible for the murderous execution of the Báb.

The remainder of the group was prominent in the early movement of the Báb, and some of its members were numbered as those "Living Letters" who spelled the new knowledge of God into the heart of the world. After the death of Shaykh Kazem they spent forty days in Kouffa praying in the mosque, and preparing themselves for the great mission they felt was before them. Then they separated to find the Imám, who they were convinced was somewhere in Persia, and to whom they believed they would be led.



Is it not a beautiful picture, this group of praying men, gathered first about the reverend figure of the seer who warned them of the approaching wonder, and then, after his serene departure, waiting together for the confirmation they were certain would come?

They scattered at length to look for the dawning place of the light. Three of them, Bouchrouyeki, Khurasání, and Mullá ‘Alí Goher were united by a friendship which never lessened. Bouchrouychi in his wanderings reached Shíráz just at the moment when the Báb gave the first announcement of his mission:

“Come to me, all ye seekers, for the gate of divine wisdom is opened through my person.”

We can imagine how Bushrú’í fell at his feet, quite vanquished by the light in his face, by the love that radiated from him, and he became his first missionary. The Báb sent him forth to Iṣfahán, to Khurasán, and at length to Ṭihrán, bearing letters to the Sháh, and his Vizír Aghassi, and also to two very different persons, Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí who should later become Bahá’u’lláh, and to Mírzá Yaḥyá, his half brother. This latter individual was known to subsequent history as Subh-y-Ezel. When Ḥusayn ‘Alí was recognized as the promised one, his half brother craving this honor for himself, claimed it, and became the founder of a schism which had no existence except on paper. Western historians have discussed his pretensions as if they had importance, and Professor Brown, of Cambridge, who wrote the *Narrative of Persian Travel*, and the volumes on Subh-y-Ezel, did not discover that the disciples of the latter never numbered more than sixty, most of whom were members of his own family. Brown spent a day with him in his imprisonment at Cyprus, and filled with sympathy at the tale of trouble he poured into the Englishman’s ears, Brown wrote a history in his defence. He did not reflect that the prisoner was the victim of his own vanity and held absolutely no place in the fulfilment of the Báb’s prophecy, as the followers of the Gate well knew.

Probably the True One perceived as he wrote the letters what was the destiny of each recipient, for all things seemed clear in his vision of the future. The Sháh and Vizír Aghassi threw carelessly aside the documents delivered to them announcing the dawn of a New Day in which the justice of God must reign, and Aghassi was inspired only to that bitter persecution of the True One which ended in his death.

It would be interesting to follow Mullá Bushrú’í in his progress through Persia, and his picturesque encounter with the fellow-students of Shaykh Kazem. It was a simple message that he delivered to these brothers in truth:

“I have found him, lie is in Shíráz, go and see for yourself!”

And they went! Bushrú’í was a militant personality, worthy of confidence, and his friends were in the habit of trusting him.

Innumerable stories are told of the charm and potency reflected in the personality of the True One, of his miraculous wisdom, and the swift and intuitive power

which enabled him to meet and overthrow his adversaries invariably with such ease that he would have conquered the world if he had been left at liberty. As one reads one is reminded of the apocryphal tales which reveal to us perhaps the personality of Jesus Christ, and the exquisite gospel stories which picture Him in the house of the publican, or in the court of Pilate, with Martha and Mary, or on the mountain with the intimate group of those he loved.

What was it that rendered him different from all others, that would have rescued him invulnerable, and irresistible had he chosen to be so? It was the breath of God upon him, the heavenly effulgence shining into his perfect mirror, and as we read these later stories, it seems that the light is again gleaming in our dark world!

The clergy of Shíráz, enraged at the persistence of the Báb in preaching his truth, and convinced that he was ignorant and unlettered, and could not withstand them in public de-bate, arranged a grand council in the mosque of the city, where they commanded him to retract his dangerous teachings, threatening him with fearful tortures if he refused. The Báb, however, mounted the pulpit and gave a discourse so eloquent, so replete with the learning of his adversaries, so convincing in its declaration of his own claims, that the antagonists who came to shame him witnessed the conversion of their own public.

Shortly afterwards the Sháh and the Vizír Aghassi moved by the fame of this episode sent, Shaykh Yahyá to Shíráz to reduce this dangerous heretic to submission, and bring back to the court an account of his unquestionable charlatanry. Shaykh Yahyá was an honorable and really devout person, by no means so conventionally conservative in his faith as his superiors supposed. His first interview with the Báb interested him tremendously, and left him, in spite of his mission, impressed with the sincerity and illumination of this unique personage.

At length he asked the True One for a commentary upon the Surat 108 of the Qur'án. The Báb was famous for the illuminated verses which he delivered extemporaneously at the request of anyone who desired an utterance or discourse upon sacred subjects.

In this case the response was immediate and surprising. The Báb gave the commentary, and Shaykh Yahyá realized that it was one that he himself had conceived after long pondering upon this very passage. But he had never committed it to writing, or spoken of it to anyone. It was preserved alone in the treasure house of his soul.

He bowed and departed, deeply troubled. What was this man? Was he a prophet of God? Could an impostor, a charlatan possess such illumination, such insight? He pondered long, and finally decided that he would cast lots with God, so to speak, on this momentous decision. He had always been conventionally received at the house of the Báb, where a serv-ant opened the door and conducted him into the presence of the True One. He decided that on his next visit he would knock softly at the door, and if contrary to custom the Báb him-self came to admit him, took his hand, and did not relinquish it until he was led into the

reception chamber, he would accept him as a Manifestation of God, as the One in fact who had been longed for a thousand years!

He prayed earnestly before he started on his momentous journey the following day. He tapped gently on the door, the Báb himself un-closed it, grasped his hand, led him into the salon, and only released his clasp when he had seated him in his chair.

Then the soul of Shaykh Yaḥyá rose within him, he embraced the True One and confessed his faith in him. The Báb rejoiced, over him with an especial happiness, for he was an enlightened man. He accepted gladly the mission the Báb laid upon him, and wrote to the Sháh and Vizír Aghassi of his conversion. As a matter of course his life in this world was completely ruined by this courageous decision, but eternity became his and he had no regrets. He suffered martyrdom soon afterward, and was not long separated from his beloved master.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE TEACHINGS OF THE TRUE ONE.

The Báb was not long left in peace, how-ever. His wanderings from place to place, his escapes from death were for some time marvelous. His enforced separation from his beautiful young wife added to the pathos of this tragic situation. His bridal day was scarcely over before imprisonment snatched him forever from her side. For a long time she refused to sleep in a bed, and flung herself upon the hard floor, declaring that if she could not share his incarceration, at least, she would weep through the dark hours of each night. At last, however, the True One wrote her a touching letter in which he said:

“Do you not know that when you lie upon the floor I feel all its hardness, and that when you weep my eyes also are drowned in tears?”

After that the poor lady wept no more though the sorrow of her heart never lessened for the wonderful one who had been with her for so short and blissful a moment.

At one time it was planned to destroy the Báb by secret assassination. The authorities did not dare venture upon a public execution, because the True One had won a position of such dignity, through his wisdom and beauty of character, that this did not seem to be advisable, the shock to public feeling would be too great. So the arrangement was made that his house should be entered on a certain date by a band of apparent thieves who would destroy him. After his cruel death the government would decently regret the distressing event.

The date for this catastrophe was appointed, but suddenly cholera broke out with such violence that all fled from the town. The Báb also took his departure, and as a result was protected for some time by the governor of Işfahán, Meu'temed ed Dowleh, who be-came a believer, and might have kept the True

One in concealment still longer, but he died suddenly, and his nephew who succeeded him was amazed to discover whom his uncle had been harboring. He demanded of Aghassi what should be done with the Báb. The Vizír was the implacable foe of the great teacher, and knowing his eloquence and charm was determined that the Sháh should not come in contact with him, so he sent him from place to place on one excuse or another.

He appeared before various councils, was insulted and questioned, but invariably astonished his persecutors by the calm, and the perfect illumination, with which he met both cruelty and inquiry. On one occasion he was asked:

“What do you mean by the Báb?”

He replied: {.noid}

“Have you not heard the statement, ‘I am the city of knowledge, and ‘Alí is its gate’?”

As these were Muḥammad’s words in regard to ‘Alí, his successor, and the Báb’s interlocutor was one of the Muḥammadan clergy, no farther comments were necessary.

Again he had been speaking with supreme inspiration, and used the words ear, eye, in the singular. Mullá Muḥammad interrupted him with the query:

“Why do you say ‘eye’ and ‘ear’ when we have two eyes and two ears?”

“Oh, my soul, that means you must listen!” was the response. “Open the ear of thy heart, and comprehend God!”

Another asked him jeeringly:

“Who was it wished you good morning, and gave you the title of Báb?”

“I am that one for whom you have waited a thousand years,” replied the True One.

“And by what can we recognize you,” proceeded the interrogator.

“By my inspired utterance,” said the prisoner with imperturbable calm.

Thereupon his investigators demanded that he should improvise upon some subject, and when he did so, they exclaimed:

“But we do not understand anything that you say!”

Then the inspired one declared: “Whence were you able to comprehend that the Qur’án is the word of God? That which you say of the Holy Scriptures, you should repeat here!”

He was condemned at length to incarceration in the fortress of Mákú. Its governor had heard much of the Báb's teachings, and had wondered at them. Wherever the True One went, in spite of his persecution, and the difficulties thrown in his way, in spite of the public scorn and vile accusations of the clergy, conversions multiplied in constant and unexplainable fashion.

'Alí Khán Mákúí had weighed the words that had been repeated to him. He sympathized heartily with the Báb's thunderings against the corruption and abuses of the age, yet he feared to put faith in him, lest he might prove an impostor.

When the Báb arrived at the fortress, which was perched upon a mountain difficult of access, he asked immediately for permission to go to the public baths. He was always immaculate in his person, and scrupulous in bathing, and in his writings are many injunctions to his followers that they resist the filthy habits of the unregenerate man. He craved at this moment the refreshment of the bath after his tedious and dusty journey.

The governor had in his stables a young horse so vicious and dangerous that no one could ride him. It was in fact perilous to approach him, and almost impossible to put saddle and bridle upon him. The idea flashed into the mind of the governor that he should offer the Báb this charger.

"If he mounts him, and reduces him to docility," reflected Alí Khán, "I shall take it as a sign from God that I am to recognize him as the Promised One whom he claims to be. If on the contrary he is thrown and killed in his struggle with the beast, the State will be easily rid of a bad man, who is only a false prophet guilty of deluding his fellow men."

It required several men to accouter the horse, and conduct him to the entrance of the bath. The attendant explained that the governor wished to save his guest the fatigue of climbing the hill, and had sent his own steed with a little escort to do him honor.

The Báb approached the creature which was rearing and prancing in rage at the compulsion that had been put upon him. The stallion paused trembling, as the Báb caressed its quivering head, and spoke to it with extreme kindness. After a moment the Báb commanded the groom to release the bridle. He mounted the beautiful animal and rode away with the utmost ease. In fact the tradition of the event recalls that the horse sweat profusely in his effort at absolute gentleness in bearing this loving burden.

A crowd of people, who had watched the result of the experiment, knowing the horse and divining the governor's intention, rushed into the bath house and secured in various receptacles the water in which the True One had bathed, while those who were too late to obtain this, wiped up the remaining moisture with towels, and preserved them as relics.

The governor, meanwhile, what must have been his feelings when he saw his

prisoner approaching, his furious charger reduced to the submissive temper of a lady's pony? He fell at the feet of the True One, and confessed his faith to him, declaring that he was his faithful servant for all time. The Báb remained in the fortress for nine months in comparative freedom, receiving all who came. He wrote much, and conducted an enormous correspondence, and the sojourn must have offered a welcome respite to the hunted and persecuted saviour of his kind.

One great word which reappeared constantly in the teaching of the Báb, and which lends its color with even more positive decision to the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is that of unity. The degenerate followers of Muḥammad, like the degenerate Christians, had become purely partisan; each considering his own religion the only true one was eager to send missionaries with sword or book to convert the world, and each was convinced that only his particular cult could save the soul. The Báb cried aloud the truth that all the sublime prophets of God are revealers of his light. Moses and Zoroaster, Christ and Muḥammad have led mankind to God, and all have been inspired by the same divine breath of the Infinite One.

Each prophet who comes builds upon the foundation of his predecessor, and brings to a greater clearness the conception of God in the human consciousness, so the latest message is necessarily the most complete, though each possesses the same essentials, and all lead to God. Thus the Báb recognized the sacred books of the world as divinely inspired. The Bible, the Qur'án, the Rig Veda, the Zend Avesta were all a part of the golden flood of heavenly knowledge given to the world to create in the mind of man a true and reverent conception of the ethereal and loving spirit that is behind all being. So the Báb regarded his own appearance as a fulfilment of prophecies not only in the Qur'án, but in the Zend Avesta and the ancient Hindu scriptures, as well as in the Bible. He believed his mission was for the evangelization of the world, and that the coming of the wonderful day of God he heralded had been foretold by divine messengers in many languages.

His conception of God was exceedingly lofty. He revealed the Creator as pure spirit, manifested in all things, but also hidden in his unmanifested essence, which is quite beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. But to advance, man must arrive at a knowledge of God, and therefore the prophets or manifestations of God have lived as pure mirrors everywhere, reflecting the light of the mighty central sun. The minds of men in their turn receiving the radiance of these lovely mirrors become filled with the true conception of God, and having once accepted the vital imprint of truth, grow in grace and add their touch to the increasing stature of spiritual manhood.

Civilization is thus the result of the applied knowledge of God that the different prophets have brought to the universe, for whether or not one yields faith to them, they have been among all nations the enlighteners of the earth, the brilliant torches of progress so far in advance of their contemporaries that almost invariably they have been martyred for the truth they proclaimed.

In later ages it often happens that the independent thinker is more filled with the spirit of the original message than its theology building upholder, so that Voltaire was as deeply indebted to Christ as Calvin, and Galileo was nearer to the divine source of wisdom than the church which condemned him as a heretic.

The writings of the Báb were numerous, considering his short mission, and are, of course, the result of the leisure rising from his continued confinement. Among these the Bayán, or Clear Exposition is most remarkable, and together with the Seven Proofs is most generally read. None of his books have yet been translated into western languages, so that we are obliged to depend upon the slight transcripts that have been granted us by Arabic and Persian scholars for an opinion of them.

Besides these important volumes however, there is a mass of wonderful letters, prayers, and addresses, all illuminating and only less remarkable in character than the production of Bahá'u'lláh. Many of the Báb's letters are exceedingly vivid and eloquent, and attest not only his vital inspiration, but that sensitiveness and feeling which so endeared him to all with whom he came in contact. Here is one:

“Oh, thou who art sorrowful! I have read thy letter, and thy sorrow and thy tears have filled me with grief! But as I am today in Paradise, I obey the command of God and say: Glory to God who has protected me from torment! This God is sublime, and beyond all the qualities which men could attribute to him!

“Now thou also, even as I, glorify God, who has kept thee also from torment! In truth! Our God is he who pardons, he who is the provider! Now, oh, man, do not be distressed by anything, for thy distress affects me! Do not weep for anything, for thy tears cause mine to flow, and henceforth I can give thee no orders, for I love thee! Be now firm in obedience to God; In truth thou art firm in the friendship of God. Be patient in the misfortunes that assail thee, for what thou seest is the way of fortune. It is not extraordinary that such torments assail the friends of God, it is not strange that men gather to the name of him who is the cause of the creation of all, who is the Primitive Will himself, the name of Maha Viya. Fie upon fortune! Fie upon fortune!”

Another written at Makou to the father of A. Siyyid Husayn, is very touching. The latter was the secretary of the Báb, who was condemned to execution with his beloved master, but feigned a recantation of his faith at the last moment, according to the Báb's wish, in order to write an account of his last hours, for the consolation of the bereaved friends of the cause. The communication runs as follows:

“In truth I have read the letter which thou hast sent to thy son. May God recompense thee for thy great sorrow, and for thy great patience in this sorrow! May God increase thy patience! And as for me, because I love death, I say for you these four verses:

“Oh, Death, thou who permittest none to escape, come and deliver me also from

the difficulties of this world!

Thou art, O Death, the one who has taken all my friends!

Truly it is in thee that I see the safety of all those who love me!

O Death, ever thou dost turn towards one of my friends as if someone had pointed him out to thee!"

The remainder of the epistle is filled with those tender and intimate details which one addresses only to the beloved. It had been inspired by news of the death of a son and brother, in his secretary's family, and shows how clearly the Báb felt the deprivation of each one in the family circle at the loss of this cherished member.

Some of the Báb's writings, while in the fortress of Makou, were almost pathetic in their recognition of the oppression that must follow the illumination that enveloped him, and rendered his earthly pilgrimage so difficult. He says in one passage:

"The fruit of religion is to believe in the manifestation of the Báb, and they have imprisoned him at Makou!" He says again that all had much respect for him while he remained a simple gentleman, but heaped insults and scorn upon him as soon as he became a Manifestation of God!

He reproaches the Muḥammadans that they expected the coming of the Mandi with such impatience, and imprisoned him as soon as he appeared!

In another curious passage he pities the Muḥammadans who refuse to recognize him, "because," he declares, "in your eagerness to serve God you flout and distress Him!"

He goes on, speaking of God in his own person, but not in blasphemy, as one might imagine at first. He speaks thus in that recognition of the spirit of illumination upon him which led Christ to say:

"I and the Father are one." "There is no other way to the Father save through Me."

The Báb continues: "In spite of the utterances which distill from My power, and the treasure of which rests in this person, the Báb, in spite of the utterances which issue from his lips only by My permission, behold, with no shadow of right, you have immured him on the summit of a mountain the inhabitants of which are not even worthy to quote them! Near him, that is near Me, is no one, not even one of the Letters of Life of My book. Besides his two hands, which are My hands, he has not a single attendant to light his lamp for him at night, and behold, the men of the earth have been created solely for his existence it is by his generosity that they are full of joy, and they do not give him one light !"

Again his sense of exaltation drives away the consciousness of suffering, and he says:



“All that belongs to the man of Paradise is in Paradise. This solitary chamber (in which I am) and which has not even a door, is today the greatest of the gardens of Paradise, for the tree of truth is planted there, all the atoms which compose it cry: ‘In truth there is no other God than God ! In truth I am God, and there is no other God than Me, the Master of the Universe!’ “

He says in his letter to the Sháh, which he begins with his customary exalted praise of divine unity:

“And now let me tell you a secret, this man has imprisoned in my person all the prophets, all the saints, and all that the knowledge of God has embraced, and there is no sin of any degree under which I have not groaned!”

Again he says: “As for me, I am that point of God whence all that exists has found existence. I am that face of God which dies not, I am that light which is never extinguished. He who recognizes me is accompanied by all good, he who repulses me has behind him all of evil.”

“The light of God which shone upon the mountain for Moses is my light,” he declares farther. He discusses the passage of the Qur’án in which the return of the Imám is foretold. It is the fourth verse of the thirty-second chapter, and runs:

“God conducts the affairs of the world from heaven to earth, then recalls all to himself for a day, the duration of which is a thousand years of our computation.”

This closing of the gate of knowledge was in 260 of the Muḥammadan era, when the twelfth Imám disappeared, and the Báb quotes the question of Moufazzl who demanded when the Mandi would arise, and the answer of the Imám, who replied: “He will manifest in the year 60, and his name will be a great one.”

This, of course, indicates the often repeated year of 1260, corresponding to our date of 1844, which was that of the Báb’s manifestation.

One of the most touching of these utterances is that in which he speaks of his coming successor, the Glory of God; “I am only the suggestion of what he will be,” he says, “and may the followers of my Bayán not persecute him as the followers of the Qur’án have persecuted me!”

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MARTYRS AND THE BÁB’S DEATH.

While the Báb was imprisoned in the fortress of Makou his faith spread tumultuously through Persia, and the blood of the martyrs poured copious floods in demonstration of the ardor with which they accepted his teachings. It is not within the purpose of this volume to describe the horrors which took place at Mázindarán, or Zanján, or even the atrocities that were inflicted upon the Bábís in general in the effort to turn them from their faith.

Bushrú'í had been sent to the province of Mázinarán, and prosecuted his missionary work there so vigorously that presently the entire community was aflame. The people took arms in defence of their faith and for a long time resisted the soldiers of the Sháh that were marched against them. Civil war raged, indeed, until at length Bushrú'í, the Bábu'l-Báb fell, and the slaughter had reached such an enormous figure that peace reigned from pure inability to struggle longer. Meanwhile it is said that no Bábí ever recanted, and the "Friends" as the followers of the Báb called themselves, sought death so fearlessly that the troopers of the Sháh could scarcely be induced to combat them. They came to be regarded as invincible, and whenever they were executed, even with the most horrible tortures, their joy and exaltation were so manifest that all who had witnessed their destruction demanded knowledge of the faith which eliminated the fear of death, and rendered so evident the presence of God.

Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí, a remarkable man in Zanján, was a leading member of the clergy there who took the title of Hujját ul Islám. He had become a paramount influence in the city, and when so much was repeated of the Báb's strange teachings, he despatched one of his followers to the True One, to discover the meaning of his existence. The messenger returned one day as Hujját was surrounded by his pupils, and bowing low delivered a letter from the Báb which he had carried in his breast. His master took it, perused it with greatest attention, then rising cried, "Alláh ou Akbar!" and seating himself again, resumed his lesson. Presently, however, his feeling became irrepressible. Starting to his feet he declared once more, "Alláh u Akbar !" and turning to his pupils exclaimed:

"It would be a shameful thing to continue to seek a proof after one has arrived at the end! To search for knowledge when one is in possession of his object is a waste of time! Close your books for the master is risen! Hear the news of it! The sun which makes our path clear has appeared! The night of ignorance and error is annihilated!"

He then cast aside his turban, called for a fresh Koulah, and when this was brought him proceeded to adjust it upon his head, while he recited in a loud voice the prayer for Friday, which must replace that of all other days when the Mandi has revealed himself.

He next expatiated upon the Báb calling himself the most humble of his slaves.

"My knowledge beside his is like a candle extinguished in the light of day," he exclaimed, "Know God by God, and the sun by his rays, for today the Sahab ez Zeman has appeared, the Sulṭán of possibilities is living!"

One can imagine that after so enthusiastic a conversion Houd jet lost no time in sharing his truth with his townspeople, and they accepted it with the same eagerness their teacher had displayed. Shortly afterwards the Báb passed near Zanján on his way to Makou, and Hujját wrote him begging for an interview, and also for permission to rescue him from his guards. The True One refused

both requests, but comforted his follower with the assurance that very soon they would both meet in the other world.

The very day after the receipt of this letter Hujjât ul Islâm was seized by the Shâh's guards, and transported to Tîhrân, which, for him, was the beginning of the end. He had previously attracted the attention of the Shâh, for the clergy of Zanjân had complained of his radicalism, and he had been obliged to explain his views to his royal master. At that time he had charmed the Shâh by the frank expression of his illuminated criticism upon the shortcomings of the Muḥammadan clergy, and their grasping love of money. The Shâh had sent him home on that occasion with a full pardon, but now affairs were sadly different. He had stirred a dangerous hubbub in his city over this strange heresy of the Bâb, and in order to avoid absolute confinement in prison he was obliged to give the Shâh his promise that he would not escape.

This situation was relieved for Hujjât by the death of the Shâh, and by the appointment of a new governor for Zanjân. Feeling that his parole did not hold with the new government, Mullâ Muḥammad-‘Alî departed for Zanjân, where he was received with a tumultuous ovation. The insurrection of Mázindarân had roused all hearts, and the Bábís everywhere were ready to join their besieged companions and fight with them for freedom of faith.

Hujjât would not permit this, and did his utmost to preserve peace, but in the tense atmosphere of the moment, it seemed impossible. An accidental brawl resulting in the serious wounding of a Muḥammadan precipitated the conflict, and the streets of Zanjân, like those of the villages in Mázindarân, ran with blood. The Shâh sent his troops against the fated city, under the leadership of Ferrouk Khân, one of his favorite princes. This brilliant young man was slain by a half insane old woman after he had been taken prisoner, and the Shâh's anger at the sacrifice gave countenance to every imaginable cruelty.

Hujjât was taken by surprise by a platoon of soldiers and killed in the house where he was sheltered with a handful of followers. Those who remained buried his body with the utmost care, that no trace of its existence might reveal the place of sepulture, but the Muḥammadans were determined to discover it, and shame the believers by its mutilation.

In the pursuit of this purpose they subjected the survivors to horrible tortures, for instance, one martyr had boiling oil poured upon his head, but his silence remained inviolate. At length a child of seven years was secured, who knew the secret, and it was drawn from him by cajolment and deceit. Then the body of Hujjât was dragged from its place of repose, paraded through the blighted city, until every abuse and ignominy had been inflicted upon it. Finally its shattered remnants were thrown to the dogs, but the courageous "friends" who had watched it all with tortured eyes, gathered them together, and preserved them as sacred relics. In the orgy of blood which resulted from this sacrifice the devoted Bábís were shot down, or bayoneted by hundreds, and it became a familiar sight to see a company of these innocent people slaughtered one by one

or in mass, as the commander of the Muḥammadan troop saw fit to decide.

Meanwhile the people who looked on, and frequently took no part in the massacre, said to one another:

“But why should they murder these poor Bábís? They believe that the Imám has come. Well, we believe it is time for him to arrive, and perhaps it is true that he is here!”

So the very means taken to hinder the growth of the movement hastened its spread, and the on-lookers who did not become drunken with blood caught the ecstasy of the martyred ones, and adopted their faith.

One remarkable part of the Báb’s teaching was that death did not separate the souls of the believers from their previous scene of action, but only increased their power.

“All those who work for this great cause,” he declared, “will continue to do so whether they are in the body or out of it. If they are martyred they will attach themselves to those who can best receive their influence, and the power of these will be doubled or quadrupled by this dynamic assistance of those who have already left the scene of outward action.”

The followers of the Báb therefore watched their companions and themselves after a terrible martyrdom, convinced that their mighty struggle would receive a fresh impetus from the souls of the departed. Naturally death lost all terrors for them. They knew that in reality there is no such thing as death, and in the ecstasy of martyrdom clairvoyance and prophecy became frequent phenomena. To them the mysterious change to another plane of existence merely enhanced the intensity of life.

Meanwhile Houdj et and Bushrú’í, the Báb-el-bab, had given up their lives for the cause, and the Báb himself was executed at Tabriz, on the morning of July 8, 1850. Thus the inspired leader of the movement, and his most important disciples were gone, and it must have looked to the Persian authorities as if the strange excitement over him who claimed to be the Mandi, would come to an end. They forgot, however, how completely the True One had rested his teaching on the fact that he was merely the Herald of Him whom God shall Manifest, Bahá’u’lláh, the Glory of God.

Again and again he said, “I am a letter out of that most mighty book; a dew-drop from that limitless ocean, and when He shall appear my true nature, my mysteries, riddles, and intimations will become evident, and the embryo of this religion will develop through all the grades of its being, and ascent, attain the most comely of forms, and become endowed with the robe of Blessed be God, the Best of Creators !” The entire Bayán revolves around the prediction of “Him whom God shall Manifest” and “The Bayán and such as are believers yearn more after Him than the yearning of any lover after his beloved!”

In spite of dire persecutions visited upon the “friends” the teaching of the Báb

continued to spread with miraculous swiftness in the period before his death, and the Sháh querulously called the attention of his Vizír to this fact, saying:

“It is all the fault of Aghassi. He sent the Báb to Makou instead of bringing him here, before a tribunal, as my father wished. If that had been done, his foolishness would have been demonstrated long ago.”

The Vizír responded: “The words of kings are the kings of words!” and from that moment the execution of the Báb was decided upon, though it has been said that here as on the previous occasion the Vizír acted without the authority of his master. The Sháh wished to see the Báb, the Vizír feared his magnetic contact with the head of the state, so he was removed to the fortress of Chirik, and then, instead of being brought to Tíhrán, he was carried to Tabríz and executed.

Before this dolorous event transpired, however, the True One was paraded about the town, led shamefully in procession through the principal streets, in an endeavor to render the holiest and most illuminated being in the world an abject and criminal spectacle.

The night before his martyrdom the Báb had spent in prayer with the two devoted friends who were to be executed with him, A. Siyyid Ḥusayn, and Mullá Muḥammad Yezdi. In order that the afflicted remnant of followers might be comforted in his loss, the True One arranged with Siyyid Ḥusayn that he should appear to retract on the way to the place of punishment, and thus being reprieved, could write for the world the commands of the Beloved One, and the story of his last hours.

The Báb, six months before, had transmitted to a faithful follower a letter marked “To be opened when you have suffered a great affliction.” When the execution was made known the seal was broken and the contents revealed a prediction of the author’s execution at Tabríz on the day of the fatality.

The melancholy journey to the hill of execution was varied by attempts to win the denial of their faith by the Báb’s two companions, and Siyyid Ḥusayn apparently yielded. But he sought martyrdom later in Tíhrán, and thus proved his courage and his abiding love for the True One.

Nothing shook the determination of Mullá Muḥammad Yezdi, however. When the little party arrived at the fatal hill, his wife and children were brought to him, but he refused to listen to them, asking only that he might be shot before his beloved leader. This request, of course, was not granted, but though his executioners were not clement, a higher power was more so, as will be seen.

It may be recalled that one of the titles which the glorious re-incarnated Imám must traditionally bear was that of Sahab-ez Zeman, the Master of Time, and this had never been given the Báb. Strange to say, it became his at the moment of execution, for the mount upon which he was shot to death was called the Place of the Sahab-ez-Zeman. The unbelievers had constantly reverted to the

fact that he did not claim this name, yet it must always be associated with him through the dramatic events of his passing. It is a symbol of the Twelfth Imám.

The Báb and Mullá Muḥammad were suspended to the wall by ropes, and a regiment of Christian soldiers was drawn up to fire upon them, so that a thousand bullets assailed them at once. The body of Mullá Muḥammad was riddled with shot, but he turned his head toward the True One, and asked, to the amazement of all, in a perfectly audible voice:

“Master, are you content with me?”

The True One, however, had not been touched by one of the thousand bullets. The cords that bound him to the wall were cut, but he did not receive a wound. He fell upon his feet, and stood smiling at the soldiers whose firearms had been leveled at him in vain. He made no attempt to fly, though he could easily have escaped in the shock and consternation of this miraculous moment. He seemed to say to his executioners:

“You may extinguish the Light, but not until it wishes to give place to darkness!”

At the command of the officers he was seized and bound again, but the soldiers absolutely refused to fire upon him.

“This is a divine man!” they cried. “We will do him no harm!”

The officers were obliged to march the men away, and call up a regiment of barbarians, who knew nothing of what had taken place. So at length the tragedy was accomplished, and again the True One, the Liberator, the Herald of Truth, gave his body as a sacrifice for the hearts of men!

The physical relics of the Báb were thrown into the ditch to be devoured by the dogs, but they were rescued by his faithful followers. Muḥammad Yezdi’s remnant was buried, and that of the Báb preserved in the house of Souleiman Khán in Tabríz, until a communication had been sent to Ḥusayn ‘Alí at Ṭihrán, he who later became Bahá’u’lláh. According to the latter’s directions, the case containing the body of the True One was forwarded to Ṭihrán, and was finally placed in the favorite cemetery of the Bábís, where it remained for a number of years, then Bahá’u’lláh, who was at that time a prisoner at Adrianople, sent word that the precious relic must be removed, and soon afterward the building in which it had been secreted was destroyed, so that the earthly tenement of the Báb would have been lost if it had not been safeguarded in this clairvoyant fashion. The body lies now in the simple and noble tomb on Mount Carmel, which has been erected by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and the feet of many pilgrims turn thither from distant lands into which the light of the True One’s message has penetrated.

There is a glory of youth about the tragic mission of the Báb, which, from the human standpoint, is irresistible and compelling. He was but twenty-five years old when he gave his announcement that a new Day of God had dawned, a day of brotherhood and unity, when all men shall begin to love one another, a day of

Manifestation, when men shall again learn to know God, “and I am the Herald of this Day!”

Courageous and loving to a supreme degree, the spirit of God upon him seemed to enhance the splendor of his youth, to intensify the accent of his consecration. He was two years younger than Jesus when he gave his life in the same sacrifice for the salvation of the world, declaring himself the precursor of that wonderful second coming so long expected. The theologians have destroyed the beauty of youth in Jesus, but its radiance will always linger upon the Báb, who will be remembered as a wonderful illumined boy going to martyrdom with a smile upon his lips!

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## CHAPTER IV.

### **Qurratu'l-'Ayn**

Among the many women who accepted the new teaching with eager hearts none has won such distinction as Zarrine Tad j, Crown of Gold, known to the world as Qurratu'l-'Ayn. This title, which means Consolation of the Eyes, she was given on account of the extreme beauty and charm which were her portion. She was the daughter of Mullá Saleh Barra-kani of Casvine, a man illustrious in learning and wealth, and born of a family distinguished for the same fortunate possessions.

From her infancy Qurratu'l-'Ayn was notable for the qualities which rendered her remarkable in later years. She received such an education as only her social position rendered possible in those days, and became famous, not only for her poems, which were popularly repeated, but for her unusual learning and judgment.

Thus, though obliged to submit to the seclusion of a Muḥammadan woman she was accustomed to take part in the lessons and lectures of her learned father and uncle, and would sit in a hall with two or three hundred students, protected by a curtain. From the shelter of this veil she did not hesitate to dispute the conclusions of her accomplished relatives, and she became famous throughout Persia for her differences with the mullahs, who frequently yielded precedence to her, and adopted her opinions.

She was unique among her conservative connections for her ardent independence, and her radical views, and yet she was so loved by them all that they never dreamed of disputing her right to think as she pleased. Marriage did not alter her position, which remained supreme, and it was natural that she should early have become interested in the Proclamation of the True One. She entered into correspondence with him, and in 1848 frankly confessed her faith in him.

With her spirit and courage no half way measures were possible, and she was soon one of the most inspired and eloquent teachers of the new truth. She

naturally was delighted with the declaration of the True One that the sexes are equal, and that the seclusion of women according to the Muḥammadan custom is wrong. She took off her veil therefore, and went about freely teaching the new truth, out-raging thereby all the traditions of her very honorable family.

When a woman like Qurratu'l-'Ayn became convinced of the injustice endured by the women of the faith in which she had been reared, she would stop at nothing to rouse them, and ameliorate their condition. Naturally courageous the Báb's teaching in regard to death and the other world made her long for martyrdom, and only the position of her family prevented her obtaining this crown before the execution of the Báb. She was with Bushrú'í in Mázinarán, and was closely associated with him and with Khurasání in all their work.

She became famous for her predictions in regard to the fate of various eminent public men who persecuted the Bábís, and so many of these were almost immediately fulfilled that she was looked upon as infallible in such clear seeing. Significant in this way was her prophecy of her uncle's death. Mullá Taghi Barrakani was distinguished for his literal interpretation of the sacred writings, and his adherence to the mere written word of all Muḥammadan tradition. He was especially irritated at the new freedom of his niece, and her adoption of the dangerous heresy of the Báb.

The prominent position of the Mullá rendered him at once a protection and a menace to Qurratu'l-'Ayn. After one of her teaching tours in which she had roused much comment by her independent speech and action, he brought her to her father's house, and gave her to understand that he would confine her there until he had reason to believe that she would be more prudent in her conduct. He issued his orders to the servants therefore that she should not be permitted to leave the mansion.

He sought her presence meanwhile, hoping by argument and persuasion to recall her from her dangerous course. He was doubly irritated by the calm with which she listened to his angry words, and the sweet wisdom with which she answered his objections. At length unable to restrain his fury he turned upon her, and cursed the True One, showering insult upon his name. Gazing fixedly upon the enraged man Qurratu'l-'Ayn exclaimed:

"How unfortunate you are! For I see your mouth fill with blood!"

Mullá Taghi was accustomed to rise very early, and repeat his devotions at the mosque at an hour when as a rule there was but one priest in attendance. The following morning he wended his way as usual to the place of prayer, and in the instant of crossing the threshold he was struck upon the mouth by the lance of a hidden assailant. The attack was followed up by five or six other assassins who sprang at him furiously, and did not pause until the life was beaten from the mangled body of the famous Mullá. No doubt his own injustice and tyranny were responsible for this tragic death, but as usual the strange insight of Qurratu'l-'Ayn had foreseen its coming. 'Ehe assassination removed a



serious obstacle from her pathway, though she would have been the last to wish such a catastrophe.

For some years longer Qurratu'l-'Ayn pursued her own course with such brilliant results that it was said when she addressed an audience upon the Revelation of the Báb, all were immediately converted to her faith. Her eloquence and magnetic force were so pronounced that sometimes women were carried out fainting from the assemblage where she spoke, and men broke down and sobbed.

The story of her martyrdom is very touching. She was an exceedingly feminine person in spite of her power, extremely gentle, and possessed of an alluring charm that rendered her irresistible. It was at length decided to confine her in the house of Mahmond Khán, Kalanter of Casvine. Here she remained a long time, receiving numerous visits from both men and women. The latter she pleased invariably, and left upon them an indelible impression of the dignity and freedom the new religion imparted to women. In her discussions with the husbands also she talked much of the improved position of women, and al-ways found a way to refute their conservative arguments.

She maintained a certain reserve during her stay in the household, where her station was nominally that of an honored guest. She rose very early, usually before dawn, and sang her prayers in a low tone while she bathed. She was very particular as to her ablutions, often performing them at night in the fountain of the woman's court, after every one but herself had retired. She dressed as carefully as if for a reception, preferably in white, but usually saw no one until evening, unless there was a special request for her presence, and this was certain to be made if guests appeared, for no one was considered so fascinating as Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

In the course of her confinement one of the daughters of the family was married, and the wedding was a splendid affair, for which no expense was spared. Musicians and dancers had been provided for the entertainment of the company, but presently all demanded Qurratu'l-'Ayn, and as soon as she appeared the dancers were sent away as all were immediately absorbed in the conversation of this wonderful woman. The guests even forgot the sweets provided for their refreshment, of which oriental women are extremely fond. No one wished to do anything but listen to Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

Various councils were arranged for her, attended by the learned Mullás, in the hope that contact with trained masculine minds might lead her away from the religious fallacies into which she had fallen. But invariably she met logic with a better reasoning, and plead her cause so admirably that her would-be instructors were discomfited.

One day, however, she lost patience. She encountered always the same arguments of a theological school, which seemed to her awakened mind but shallow emptiness. The Báb could not be the expected Mandi because he did not bear this title or that, and finally because he did not spring from the cities of Djab ul Ka, and Dj ab ul Sa.

She responded violently that these places never existed, and were invented by traditional theology as symbols, that the ideas in regard to them were the product of morbid minds. This was undoubtedly true, and perhaps was as well known to her adversaries as to herself. Still they persisted.

At length worn out by their obstinacy she exclaimed:

“The reasonings you advance are those of an ignorant and stupid child! When will you cease these insanities and lies? When will you lift your eyes to the Sun of Truth?”

The Mullás outraged at what they considered her blasphemy withdrew immediately, and then and there decided upon her death. They could never recall her from her heresies, they could not lessen her constantly growing influence over their women, and their only safety lay in putting her out of the way. They said nothing of their decision, however, for they well knew that if the Bábís suspected for a moment that danger threatened Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, they would rescue her at any cost.

One night she left her chamber as she was accustomed to do, and bathed in the fountain of the enclosed court, which is always part of the woman’s house in an oriental residence. She was singing softly during this little ceremony and seemed very happy.

She returned to her chamber, perfumed herself, and dressed entirely in white. Then she made the tour of the house, visiting all the ladies, saying farewell to each as if she were going on a long journey. She begged them to excuse every inconvenience her stay in the mansion might have caused, and to forgive any wrong she had done while there.

They asked her in surprise, “What does this mean? Are you going to leave us?” And she replied:

“I am going on a very long journey tonight.”

She spoke with such joy, she appeared so strangely exulted that all wept at her words, for they loved her exceedingly.

While they were talking there came a knock at the street door.

“Go quickly and open!” she cried, “they are looking for me!”

It was the Kalanter himself who entered. He went directly to her chamber and said to her:

“Come Madam, they are asking for you!”

“Yes,” she responded, “I know, I know where you will take me, and what you will do to me, but beware! The day will come when your master will cause you to be slain in your turn!”

This prediction was verified shortly afterward, and is the more remarkable as the Sháh himself had ordered the execution of Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, at the instigation

of the Mullás, but all had been kept a profound secret.

She went out with the Kalanter dressed as she was. Her friends did not guess where she was going, and only learned of her execution the following day.

The utmost precautions had been taken to prevent the rescue of Qurratu'l-'Ayn. The nephew of the Kalanter had been ordered to draw a cordon of police about the house of the Kalanter, and the garden of Ilkhani, though the reason for this was not explained. The inhabitants were forbidden to be upon the streets later than three hours after sundown. At four hours from this time Qurratu'l-'Ayn was removed from the house. The Kalanter put her in charge of his nephew, to whom he gave a folded paper, saying:

“You will take this woman to the garden of Ilkhani, and place her in the hands of the Serdar ‘Azíz Khán. Then bring me a receipt for her delivery.”

A horse was led forward and the victim mounted upon it was convoyed silently through the deserted streets, which would have been a scene of wild uproar if the town had dreamed the villainy that was plotting. The young escort was in constant dread of rescue, and breathed a sigh of relief when the garden was at last reached. The Serdar was awaiting him, and leaving his prisoner carefully guarded in a lower chamber, he demanded his receipt.

“You are sure that no one has seen you?” asked the Serdar.

“No one,” was the response, “Give me the receipt.”

Upon this he was informed that he was to assist in the execution of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, and could not have his receipt until this was accomplished. We are not told that the young man objected to this brutal office, and the ceremony proceeded somewhat as it had been planned.

The Serdar called a Turkish valet who had been in his service for some time. He was a fine looking fellow with a handsome face. The Serdar spoke flatteringly to him, told him he had recognized his merit, and wished to reward him. Then he gave him twenty pieces of gold, telling him to spend them as he pleased, and handed him a silk handkerchief.

“Go with this officer,” he added, “to the lower chamber. There you will find a young woman who is an infidel, and is turning the women away from the pathway that Muḥammad has marked out for them. Strangle her with this handkerchief. You will thus render a great service to God, and I will reward you generously.”

The two men descended to the room where Qurratu'l-'Ayn had been left, and found her in prayer. The valet approached her to execute the order he had received, when she turned, fixed her eyes upon him, and exclaimed:

> “Oh, young man! It would be unmanly of you to soil your hand with this murder!”

It would be impossible to explain what revolution these simple words caused in

the soul of the youth, but he fled as if insane. The officer followed him, and he rushed into the presence of the Serdar, crying:

“You may do with me what you will, but I cannot carry out your orders. I will not touch this woman!”

The Serdar sent him away, and after thinking a moment, ordered up a trooper who had been put to work in the kitchen as a punishment for disorderly conduct. He poured him a stiff glass of brandy, knowing he had drunk no liquor for some weeks, assured him that he now had an opportunity to regain the good will of his master, handed him another handkerchief, and commanded him to execute Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

This time the murder was quickly accomplished, for the brutal fellow fell upon his victim without an instant's hesitation, and she made no resistance. Before the deed was fully complete, however, there was a disturbance. Fearing the ever dreaded rescue the assassins dragged the fainting but still living woman to an abandoned well in the garden. They hurled her into its depths, and hastily flung stones upon her until the place was filled up sufficiently to conceal all evidences of the vile deed that had been perpetrated.

So died one of the most charming women of the world, a martyr to her religion, but more especially to the enfranchisement of her sex. Wherever the cause of the liberation of women is championed the name of Qurratu'l-'Ayn should be recalled as the brave woman who shed her blood for the True One, but who never failed to remind her hearers that the enlightened hearts of the future must ensure the freedom of women.

What splendor of life is in the record of these exalted men and women who so easily forgot comfort and every joy the body craves for the sake of a shining ideal? The Báb remembered nothing but the message he was to give, a message that must soften the hearts of men, turn them toward God and fill them with love for their brothers. The love of God shone through him so powerfully that wherever he went, and whenever his divine word was repeated men, women, and little children trembled and listened, and then began to love so ardently that God was in their hearts, and they forgot themselves completely in their eagerness to serve the heavenly cause that meant peace on earth, and brotherhood to all mankind!

The Muḥammadans feared the Bábís. They could not conquer them, could not understand the light in their faces, the exaltation in their voices, the heavenly presence that surrounded them when they met death. We read the identical story in the history of the early Christian martyrs. They encountered death with the same joy, they were surrounded by the same Presence, they prophesied as did the Bábís the swift retribution that would over-take their persecutors.

This was to be expected, for while the Báb was the Mandi to his Muḥammadan followers, he was the Angel of the resurrection to the Christian world, the Herald of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Precursor of the Wonderful One, whose return must

usher in the dawn of peace, the millennium of progress.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE RISE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

The movement of the new faith by no means stagnated after the execution of the True One. He had warned his followers that they must look for the coming of the Glory of God, Him whom God shall manifest, within nineteen years after his own passing, and when this sad event was accomplished the hearts of the devoted ones turned more and more toward the figure of Ḥusayn 'Alí, Prince of Núr, who had been one of the first to accept the message of the Báb. The wealth and position of Ḥusayn 'Alí's family would have rendered him a note-worthy figure in any case, but his beautiful character necessitated his true prominence.

He was two years older than the Báb, being born in November, 1817, and from his infancy he had been the counsellor and the dearly beloved of his immediate environment. At the moment of the Báb's proclamation he was married, and had become the head of his family. His wife, the mother of 'Abdu'l Balm, was a very remarkable woman, to whom the orientals gave a title expressive of her supreme excellence. They called her the Lady of the Ladies of the Ladies. Three years after the execution of the Báb Ḥusayn 'Alí was imprisoned with his entire family, as a follower of the Báb, and all of his great property was confiscated. This sacrifice was demanded of the one upon whom the Glory of God was to rest, for the Saviour of his kind must always be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Ḥusayn 'Alí was an individual of splendid appearance. He was more than six feet in height, of magnificent figure, with wonderful blue eyes, and the fair skin and dark hair of the ancient Persian race. He would have been remarked anywhere for the simple beauty of his manhood. When added to this, the supreme gift of illumination that had been promised came upon him, surely it would have been very difficult not to believe that he was a divine messenger, bringing a new revelation to mankind.

The teaching of Bahá'u'lláh was in every case an amplification of that which the Báb had uttered, though by no means limited to the text already eloquently expressed. In fact the True One came so little in contact with his followers that they comprehended scarcely more than the bare outline of what he had actually taught.

It was in this way that they took up arms and fought for their faith and their liberty. The Báb would never have counseled such action, for his principle was that of love, and like all the great prophets, his predecessors, he was a non-resistant. Bahá'u'lláh corrected this misunderstanding among his followers, and

one of his first commands was that the persecuted Bábís should lay down their arms.

“We can only conquer by love,” he insisted, “and if you cease fighting the persecution will die out.”

This promise was literally fulfilled, so that for many years before the death of Bahá’u’lláh in 1892, there was no persecution of the “friends.” The reverence of the people for the expressed wish of the Blessed Perfection as he is often lovingly termed, rendered them immediately obedient to his desire, and the following anecdote illustrates how powerful was his influence.

There was one leader among the oppressed people who had been so successful in his generalship of the outlawed religionaries, that again and again he had enabled them to evade or overcome the Sháh’s troopers. These last were constantly on the watch for him. At length a regiment of cavalry discovered the little band of persecuted outcasts in their fastness, and a hot skirmish was imminent, though the soldiers hoped to capture their prey in the end.

Meanwhile a tablet or letter from Bahá’u’lláh had just been given to the Bábí leader, in which the Holy One counselled peace and submission as the only way to bring repose to the tortured country, and success to the cause of God. The writings of Bahá’u’lláh are full of power, so that it is impossible to read them even in cold print without a profound consciousness of their inspiration. It is easy to imagine, therefore, how deeply touched an individual may have been at receiving one of these eloquent epistles, the thought of which was addressed directly to himself.

The leader in question was so stirred at the perusal of the communication sent him by his spiritual Lord that after reflecting a moment he suddenly stuck it in his sleeve, and turning, left his companions and walked toward the watching enemy. He approached the commanding officer of the hostile force, and tendered him his sword, with the request that as he gave himself up, his companions might be allowed to go free.

The captain of the troop took the sword, delighted at his easy conquest, and exclaimed:

“How is this? You are the man I most dreaded to meet, and it seems you have turned coward!”

“It is not fear of you that has made me relinquish my sword,” replied the persecuted man, “but the word of one mightier than you has conquered me!” Then drawing the letter of Bahá’u’lláh from his sleeve he extended it to the officer.

The latter read it in his turn, found it difficult to see clearly for a moment, and returning it to his prisoner, he remarked, “I cannot arrest a man so protected!”

Then springing upon his horse he led his troop away, and the little company of outcasts was safe for the moment. But the recipient of Bahá’u’lláh’s letter

sought martyrdom shortly afterward as if determined to prove that he had not shrunk from that glorious destiny.

The words unity and equality were even more constantly upon the lips of Bahá'u'lláh than upon those of the Báb. Always a prisoner, he was taken first to Baghdád, then to Adrianople and Constantinople, and finally, in 1868, to the prison town of 'Akká in Syria, where he passed away in 1892. But the panorama of the world seemed ever unfolding before his eyes, and the streets of Paris, London, St. Petersburg and New York appeared more familiar to him than the walls of his prison.

The sufferings of man were constantly in his thoughts, and he taught that these sufferings must be obliterated by the establishment of justice, and the attainment of that "most great Peace" of which he dreamed. He told Professor Brown, of Cambridge, who visited him in 'Akká in 1891, that the essence of his teachings was contained in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and in the literal interpretation of his words to his disciples. The world must put in practice every element of those divine commands, he insisted, yet two thousand years after they were spoken, the social system of the universe is planned on such opposite lines that a man is considered a crank and a fanatic who endeavors to live the life that Christ demanded of his followers!

Bahá'u'lláh is regarded by his people as bringing the fulfilment of Christ's promise to come again and establish his kingdom. They realize that the kingdom is a spiritual one, though one which must dynamically alter human conditions, and their interpretation of the "Coming" is somewhat different from that of the Christian church.

When the spirit of God rests upon a man, say the Bahá'íst Teachers, he receives the prophetic gift, he becomes a divine Messenger, and these divine Messengers appearing again and again have lifted men from barbarism, and given them a constantly more illumined conception of God. The prophet may be one who speaks only to a group of men, like Moses for instance, or a Manifestation of God, whose message is for the world, like that of Christ or Bahá'u'lláh. But it is the Breath of God upon him which renders him different from other men, and not any peculiarity of human birth.

Thus the Báb was a descendant of Muḥammad, but there had been many of the prophet's kindred before him, and not one had been illuminated until the Báb came to fulfill the prophecy of the returning Imám, and this prophecy rose not from the flesh of the Imám who spoke it, nor of Muḥammad who first voiced it, but from the spirit that rested upon both, and upon the Báb as well.

So Christ's promise to come again was uttered through the lips of Jesus, but it did not mean that the man Jesus was to walk the earth once more as the Christian world has believed. Christ was the spirit of God resting upon Jesus, which rendered him the Saviour of man. He became a Manifestation of God in the moment of that great Illumination and because of it, not because he was the son of Mary, the virgin. So the spirit of God breathing through the lips of Jesus

made a definite promise to appear again as the Comforter, the Prince of this World, as an individual who once more should be the light bearer. Christian theology has familiarized us with the idea that there has never been but one Saviour of the world, whose coming was planned with the “Fall of man” and the eating of that terrible apple which caused such an acute case of indigestion not only to Adam but to all his descendants.

“Oh, Thou who man of baser Earth didst make,

And ev’n with Paradise divine the snake; For all the sin wherewith the face of man Is blackened, man’s forgiveness give—and take!”

We must always remember that this scheme of salvation is not in the least that of Christ, but that of Paul essentially, and of the early Christian theologians. It sprang from the brain of man, not from the illumination of God.

Christ came to save the world surely. He was the divine Word made flesh, but he was one of the heavenly chain that will never be complete as long as man yearns for God, and the human mind is capable of a constantly fuller and deeper conception of his divinity.

While this yearning endures the Messenger of God must appear to satisfy it, and lift us to still higher comprehension of that ethereal and infinite Deity who is our Envioner!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says the growth of the soul is like the return of the seasons to the earth. As Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter follow one another, the seeds are planted, the soft breezes of the south woo them to blossom, the heats of Summer ripen them, the Autumn brings the harvest, and in the snows of Winter the earth is wrapped beneath the cold repose that is in reality the precursor of blossoming Spring, forever it must dawn again with bloom and fragrance.

So the soul of man does not retain the freshness and glory of inspiration which rises when the great Messenger of God proclaims his message. Then the human heart is softened. It receives the heavenly imprint, coldness and selfishness disappear for the time being, and earth offers a transient picture of heaven.

When Christ was in Judea, everyone who approached him and lingered to know him was transformed, and after his Departure the delight of his memory rendered the journeys of the disciples and the establishment of the early church a story of Paradise.

So with Muḥammad. The wisdom of his presence lifted the cloud of barbarism from his followers, and the memory of it founded that magnificent civilization of the Moors that is the marvel of history.

But the hearts of the Christians grew cold, theology replaced the words of the great Teacher, and the conduct of the Christian world today is far from that inculcated by the precept and example of the exalted Mentor.

So the heavy tyranny of succeeding rulers offered the blackest contrast to the



lesson of peace and justice Muḥammad taught to his delighted listeners. It seems as one looks at the disturbance and suffering of the world as if no prophet had ever whispered love into eager ears. But the fields must always lie blanketed in snow before the brown earth is ready once more to receive the winged seeds, and only the fragrance of the breath of God, the thunder of his utterance through the lips of his prophets can melt the frost from the heart of the world, and rouse our human nature so that it casts aside once more the enshrouding folds of its cold invented theologies, and determines to live as God wills, as his message directs.

Dieu le veut, Dieu le veut! God wills it! is the ancient crusaders' cry, and it seems to thrill the world again when a Manifestation of God appears. At such a time a new law must be spoken for mankind. Its essentials are like the old one, because all religions inculcate the same principles as to love of God and man, and the relation of this life to its eternal succession. But there are differences in details, as for instance, the Jewish law permitted divorce, and Christ declared it wrong, while Bahá'u'lláh upholds it. The Old Testament prophets allowed a man to have several wives, so did Muḥammad, while Christ taught monogamy, as does Bahá'u'lláh.

In such a period of transition between the old day and the new, profound distress must always be experienced, because established truth has lost its hold upon the heart. The few have learned the new law and rejoice in it with fervor; others who are discontented with traditions of right and wrong feel at liberty to hew a pathway of their own, while the many arrogate to themselves a license in all things which is shocking to the conservative and painful to all sensitive and spiritual minds.

Such a condition accompanied the preaching of Christ's wonderful Word, a similar situation followed Muḥammad's death and the setting aside of his successor 'Alí, and a sadly exaggerated replica of the identical condition exists today.

In religion we have various new cults like that of Christian Science and the notable departure of Dr. Worcester, the separation of church and state in France, and the threat of its repetition in Spain. In governmental up-rising there are the revolutions of Turkey and Persia, the rumblings of suffering Russia, the distress of England, the threat of increasing armament in Germany, the growing struggle between capital and labor in the United States — these are only a few indications of the deep spirit of change that seems pervading all our institutions.

Most curiously in evidence perhaps are the increase of divorce, and the mad thirst for gold, for the possession of more money, both tendencies in marked contrast with the teaching of Jesus Christ, who inculcated above all things the law of brotherhood, and of unselfish, faithful love.

As creed has so largely replaced practical Christianity, so the development of pure intellectualism has generally set aside that use of spiritual intuition which holds so large a place in religious experience, and renders it vital. The thirst for money meanwhile has upset all customs of sweet and rational living. The

de-sire to be very rich in the goods of this world, or to follow the example of the extremely rich has invaded all walks of life, transforming hospitality into a mere giving and receiving of entertainment, and introducing into business methods a cold indifference to the cost of human life in the output of a product which is shocking in the extreme. The gentle admonition of the Saviour:

“If a man ask thee for thy coat, give him thy cloak also,” has been so far forgotten that the maker of coats compels his employee to labor long hours in conditions inimical to life, and when we remonstrate with him, shrugs his shoulders and responds:

“Business can not consider life, it deals only with profits!”

This period of transition between the messages of two great prophets or Manifestations of God, when one is fading from the spiritual consciousness of the world, and the other has not yet pervaded it with controlling potency, has been termed by Bahá'u'lláh the day of Judgment. Christ's words to his disciples did not indicate an end of the physical universe, a destruction of the planet, but the close of a spiritual dispensation with the throes and disturbances that must necessarily attend such an epoch. It is a time of horror because it is lawless, but it is one of enormous advancement because new truth is manifesting itself in every direction.

The shocking occurrences, the pain, suffering, disdain and indifference of human life were never so noticeable as to-day, the spiritual development is beyond all parallel, and the new revelation must necessarily be one of enormous power and significance to meet a demand which has fruited from all religions. Bahá'u'lláh declared that the disturbances of this period would be manifested in the physical as well as in the mental and spiritual worlds and certainly the record of calamity in the preceding ten years is without precedent in history. There have been single catastrophes as stupendous as some of these. So the burning of plague stricken London in the seventeenth century could be mentioned in the same breath with the earthquake of San Francisco, and the destruction of Pompeii with that of Messina, but pause a moment and realize that sixteen centuries intervened between the horrors of Pompeii and London, and but three years between those of San Francisco and Messina.

We read passages in Isaiah, in Revelations and St. Matthew which seem to picture the present day in its heaping up of disastrous events, yet there are certain potential forces at work in its upheavals that would indicate a divine force working beneath the surface to attain certain permanent results. For instance, Bahá'u'lláh in many significant prophetic utterances which he gave in regard to this remarkable Day of God, called it a day of publicity, when all things must be made clear because its law is that of manifestation. No hypocrisy can therefore be successfully maintained. All dishonesty must be laid bare, all scoundrels and dishonest public servants must be tried at the bar of enlightened public opinion.

Moreover, as the new ideal is working in the world consciousness a new sensitive-

ness will be manifested as to the rights of the commonwealth and the individual, a new democracy will be established on a solid foundation. In many countries a republic will replace the ancient monarchy, and where the monarchy remains it must become distinctively constitutional.

“The day of the rich man is passed,” declared Bahá’u’lláh, “he does not belong to the new time.”

So two small commonwealths, those of Switzerland and New Zealand, have already rendered the accumulation of excessive wealth by the individual an impossibility. This has been accomplished by the simple imposition of a graduated tax, and with other laws of similar tenor has gone far to make these two communities ideal places of residence for human beings of all classes. Already the pensioning of old age and the income tax are being suggested every-where, showing that the tendency of advancement is altogether toward the betterment of the masses.

Perhaps the reader is reflecting “these changes are not spiritual” but in fact the message of every great prophet has produced enormous economic progress. That of Christ and of Muḥammad destroyed and founded empires, the Mosaic law created a new state, and the Word of the Báb has already manifested itself in the constitutions of Persia and Turkey.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE UNITY OF MAN.

People ask, why should a prophet come to us from the Orient, surely a new teacher of truth should spring from the advanced races that are creating the civilization of the future, and from the centres of progressive thought? But in the Spring time of the soul, when again the spirit rather than the intellect alone is to control the destiny of man if a prophet or Manifestation of God came to us from Paris, London, Berlin, or New York, or from St. Petersburg maybe, we would find every explanation of his illumination in the ripened culture of the nation that produced him, and we would smile at the assertion that he might be a Sun reflecting the Splendor of God.

When, however, we perceive a great light in the darkness of the oppressed Orient, when we read in the utterances of this far away Mandi, Báb, or Manifestation of God, the very sentences that are inciting new movements of our planet elsewhere, and appearing under different phraseologies as the foundation for novel cults and philanthropies among communities which bear aloft the torch of culture, we are compelled to search more deeply for conclusions that satisfy.

We remember that the world has not always remained content with purely scientific reasonings, but as even Zola admitted, the rationalist must, in his turn, yield the middle of the road to the idealist and the illuminant. We love our

Charles Darwin, but we do not forget our Buddha and our Christ. We look for our Mandi, as we repeat the hymns of the Rig-Veda, or the Psalms of David, and the divine longing within us will not be stilled.

So when we read as the utterance of the Sulṭán's prisoner, certain wonderful words, the essence of which is thrilling in many hearts of those who never heard his name, we ponder deeply, and remember the profound conviction voiced in all ancient tradition that God shines upon his chosen ones with a glory that cannot be hidden. Bahá'u'lláh says, for instance:

“We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations, yet they deem us a stirrer of strife and sedition, worthy of bondage and banishment; we desire that all nations should become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled. What harm is there in this?—Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the Most Great Peace shall come, is not this that which Christ foretold? Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind. These strifes and bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family. Let not a man glory in this that he loves his country, let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”

Again he says: “Oh, children of men, do ye know why we have created ye from one clay? That no one should glorify himself over the other. Be ye ever mindful of how ye were created. Since we created ye all from the same substance, ye must be as one soul, walking with the same feet, eating with one mouth, and living in one land, that ye may manifest with your being, and by your deeds and actions the signs of unity, and the spirit of oneness. This is my counsel to ye, Oh, people of Light! Therefore follow it, that ye may attain the fruits of holiness from the tree of Might and Power!”

The illumination of Bahá'u'lláh to those who came in contact with him seems to have been always unquestionable. He was not like other men, as Christ was not, and all loved him without pausing to question why it was so. Thus in his imprisonment the most brutal guards were selected for his custodians that they might be immune from his charm, but invariably after they had held him in silent custody for some weeks or days, they slipped away to those who believed his message, and asked:

“Tell us what this Wonderful One teaches, for he is not like other men, and we would believe whatever he said was true.”

A very lovely story illustrates this beautiful compelling force in the Revelator, and is repeated as authentic. During one of his encampments a Muḥammadan holy man or fakir had conceived the idea that it was his duty to assassinate this sacrilegious innovator who declared that God spoke through him as he had once spoken through Muḥammad, his prophet. So he armed himself with a javelin

which he could use with skill, and creeping under the side of the tent, entered the presence of the Blessed Perfection, who sat alone in meditation.

The fakir rose and poised his weapon, and just then Bahá'u'lláh lifted his head and glanced at him. The man's arm dropped and a quiver of feeling shuddered through his nerves. But he thought to himself:

“What! Am I to be stirred by the sight of a base impostor? It is my duty to slay this blasphemer, and I must do it!”

Again he lifted his arm to strike, and once more the eyes of Bahá'u'lláh rested upon him benignantly. His weapon rang upon the ground, and a deeper thrill transfixed him, but presently recalling all the power of his conviction, he stooped and regained his javelin, then taking accurate aim, he was about to launch it, when the Blessed Perfection smiled upon him!

It was too much for the poor half-crazed fakir! He fell at the feet of the Illuminated one and confessed his murderous intention, begging the prophet to slay him for his sin. Bahá'u'lláh, however, comforted him, and from that moment the poor man became an ardent believer, and never left the circle of the one who had shown him so potently the wonder and beauty of love.

The time has not yet come to write the life of Bahá'u'lláh. Perhaps it may never be written, for his work in the world had to do with the significant principle of his illumination, and not with his personality. The intention of the present sketch is merely to paint a picture which will enable the citizen of the western countries to gain some idea of the remarkable individual whose presence on our planet has already shaken so deeply the current of our contemporary history.

The effect of his contact was evidently so tonic and uplifting that all who were with him for any length of time left him in a mood of harmony and courage which rendered all things possible to them. There is a pretty story of a remarkable visit which was made to him by a group of twenty Muḥammadan Mullás, who had quarrelled over points in their theology, and could not agree. They came to lay their case before Bahá'u'lláh, knowing that all their theological learning would be as child's play to him. They remained to forget their differences in the reality of greater truth, and before they crossed his threshold loved one another.

Professor Brown, of Cambridge, describes eloquently this surpassing power in the man-hood of Bahá'u'lláh, and his words leave upon the imagination a vivid image of both the human and divine in this remarkable Messenger. Perhaps it was better, as he intimated to his guest, that his message should not spread in the western world until he had passed away, for few would have been able to remember the significant principle that the personality of the prophet is of no importance, it is the light shining through him which lifts the world. Men would have been tempted to worship Bahá'u'lláh, and forget the wonder of the Light in the charm of the mere man. In spite of this strong personality, however, everything goes to show that after Ḥusayn 'Alí was enveloped in the illumination, the material part of him disappeared. He was hence-forth the

Glory of God, garmented by those noble qualities that had always been his, but visible through the beautiful body that was only human.

The story of Abdel Kerim's connection with the Blessed Perfection makes the Manifestation very real to us. It may not be strictly authentic in minor particulars, but is essentially true, and enables us to picture the life of Bahá'u'lláh, and to some extent the character of his influence. Abdel Kerim was an Egyptian merchant of considerable wealth, who had heard the story of the new Revelation, and accepted it with the ardor of his eager temperament.

After some time he felt that he could not be content without seeing the Messenger of God whose presence in the world had stirred his heart. So he wrote a letter to 'Akká, where the Manifestation then was, and begged permission to visit him. He received a strange letter in response. He was told that he might come to 'Akká, but first he must put himself in a position where he owed no man anything.

Abdel Kerim had carried on his business for many years in the customary Oriental fashion, sending his caravans across the desert laden with a precious freight of riches. He had long credits everywhere, and probably never dreamed of doing business on a cash basis. His traffic was constantly expanding, perhaps he was not too scrupulous in his dealings. We may be certain it had not occurred to him that his interest in the new Day of God would transform his methods of trafficking with his fellow man.

A successful merchant is apt to fall into the habit of considering his own advantage first. Naturally Abdel Kerim was absorbed in the conduct of his rapidly broadening trade connections, for he was a man of fifty years when this momentous influence came into his life. As the story develops we can see that it resembles in some respects the problem which Christ presented to the rich young man, but Abdel Kerim accepted without hesitation the ultimatum offered him. Before all else he wanted to see the Manifestation of God, and everything became of secondary importance in comparison with this event.

He began, therefore, to arrange his affairs with this point in view. Previously he had thought only of expansion, of increase. Now his one desire was to reach the condition where he would owe no man anything. So he began to pay off. As money came in, instead of investing it again, he paid a debt with it, until at length after five years he had attained his goal, and he did not owe a penny!

But in this careful accounting of outlay and income his business had dwindled away to nothing. His longing to see the Blessed Perfection had completely absorbed him, so that the love of wealth had died out of his heart, and at the moment of realization he had just money enough left to pay a deck passage on the steamer to Haifa, and leave in his wife's hands a sum sufficient to provide for the family expenses during his absence.

But he did not hesitate. The luxurious merchant had never before travelled except as a first-class passenger, and as he stepped across the gang plank a

shawl upon his arm, which was his only protection from the weather, dropped into the water, and at that season the nights were chill! Nevertheless he went on with a light heart. Was he not near the consummation of all his hopes? His soul was alive with prayer, and he did not know the wind was chill!

Meanwhile Bahá'u'lláh warned his family that he was about to receive a most honored guest, greater than any that had yet crossed his threshold. He sent an emissary with a carriage to the dock at Haifa, which is the sea-port of 'Akká, with strict orders to bring this noble guest to him without delay. But characteristically he told the attendant nothing as to the real character of the man he was to meet. Here was such a test of faith and also discrimination as he was quite apt to impose upon those about him. It is not an easy matter to live in the household of a Blessed Perfection whose mind necessarily dwells in a world of stars!

The attendant watched carefully the disembarkation of passengers at the landing of the steamer. He was looking eagerly for an ambassador with a noble retinue, for a prince with many orders upon his breast, for a personage resplendent in broadcloth and jewels. But no such individual stepped upon the quay. In fact the passengers seemed an especially polyglot assemblage, and the emissary paid no attention to the shabby looking middle aged man, who glanced about in disappointment, as if expecting some one, and then seated himself quietly upon a bench.

Abdel Kerim had been assured that someone from the household of the Manifestation would come in search of him, though he had not written warning of his expected arrival. He had no money to pay the necessary carriage hire to 'Akká. His faith had carried him so far, but now it suddenly failed him, and he sat forlornly upon the bench, while clouds of black despair settled over him.

The emissary returned alone to 'Akká, and reported that the guest had not appeared. He thought it strange, for he knew that Bahá'u'lláh's vision was never mistaken, and he was familiar with all that transpired about him. The Blessed Perfection looked keenly at his factotum as the message was delivered, and replied:

"Ah, your eyes were not far seeing enough to recognize my princely guest. I will send 'Abbás Effendi to find him. He has clearer vision."

So 'Abbás Effendi took his way to the dock, and though the quick twilight of the Orient had fallen before he reached the spot, he knew immediately the disappointed figure huddled upon the bench. This was the royal guest his father expected!

He quickly introduced himself, explaining that the individual sent to meet the stranger, had failed to find him. Then he added:

"Do you wish to go on to 'Akká tonight, or will you wait until morning?"

It was customary for pilgrims to spend some hours in prayer and purification

before entering the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and Abdel Kerim had faithfully accomplished his duty in this regard. But sitting alone and neglected during the long afternoon, bitter thoughts had invaded his consciousness. He looked back regretfully to the fortune he had lost in preparation for what? For this day of waiting alone and penniless for a possible interview with a fictitious prophet! So events had painted themselves in his anguished soul, but in the presence of the gentle messenger who had sought him at last, suspicion vanished, and he longed for hours of prayer to wash the stain of doubt from his tormented inward self.

‘Abbás Effendi knew instinctively that his new friend would not wish to seek a hotel at his expense, so finding that he preferred to wait until morning for the journey to ‘Akká, he unbuttoned the long cloak that enveloped him, seated himself beside the pilgrim, and wrapped both in its ample folds. So they passed the night praying together, lost in that ecstasy of prayer that brings realization.

Then in the morning they turned toward ‘Akká, and Abdel Kerim going to the Blessed Perfection with a radiant heart found full reward in his lovely presence for the five lonely years of seeking that had prefaced his pilgrim-age. We may be certain also that his inward wealth became so great he quite forgot the flatness of his pocketbook!

After he had been in the household some days, Bahá'u'lláh said to his guest:

“You have suffered greatly before coming here, and I see that your heart is pure. I love you very much, tell me what you desire most, for I will grant you three wishes.”

The story here begins to partake somewhat of the fairy tale, and may contain an element of allegory, though no one who realizes the power of Bahá'u'lláh could doubt his ability to fulfill wishes. There is deep truth in the little drama.

Abdel Kerim had learned his lesson well, and could not ask for material things. He had but one desire in his soul. He wished to remain by the side of Bahá'u'lláh forever, so that even death itself should not separate him from his Beloved.

The Blessed Perfection hesitated a moment over the second half of the request, as the legend runs, for, indeed, the ardent one had asked a difficult thing. But at length he granted it all. He promised that even death should not remove this eager lover from the shining circle to which he had attained.

So Abdel Kerim removed his family to Cairo, where he carried on a business, though he spent most of his time in the household of Bahá'u'lláh at ‘Akká. In the succeeding years he made two fortunes and lost them, dying a poor man. But he lived to be nearly ninety years old, with no diminution of youth or vigor, and he was exactly the same man, whether he had just made or lost a fortune, for the possession of money was no longer of any importance of him. He would walk miles to talk with someone who was in love with God, and was seeking truth, and he was always a most loving person.



The Egyptian was naturally a man of material instincts, yet the grace of God was in him, and tradition says that his consuming desire was fulfilled. Bahá'u'lláh passed from earth some years before his ardent lover, but the veil between them did not conceal the radiance of the Departed.

Among the writings of Bahá'u'lláh the book entitled the *Íqán* holds a peculiar place. In it the enlightened author has explained for the student the theory of the succession of God's Prophets and their illumination which has been lightly sketched in the preceding pages. But the *Íqán* glitters with eloquent passages, not especially limited to the exposition of its leading motif, and the two which follow illustrate that feeling in regard to wealth in the Blessed Perfection which no doubt made him appreciate profoundly the conquest Abdel Kerim achieved over the acquisitive man in his own breast.

The first one paints a little picture of Jesus which enables one to realize what his disappointment must have been when the rich young man turned from him, and the second is a story of the Sixth Imám, such as a poet de-lights to recall.

"Thus one day Jesus the son of Mary seated himself upon a chair, and voiced his feeling through the melodies of the Holy Spirit, in such words as these:

"Oh, people! My food is from the herbs of the earth, by which I satisfy my hunger. My bed is the bare ground; during the night my lamp is the light of the moon, and I have no steed but my feet. Who upon earth is richer than I?"

"I swear by God that a hundred thousand wealths revolve around this poverty, and a hundred thousand kingdoms of glory seek after this lowliness. Should'st thou attain to a sprinkling of the ocean of these significances, thou wilt abandon the world of phenomena and existence, and sacrifice thy life around the burning lamp as does the 'bird of fire.' "A similar instance is related of His Holiness Sadik. On a certain day one of his followers complained of poverty before His Holiness. That Eternal Beauty said:

"'Thou art rich, and hast drunk from the wine of wealth.'

"The indigent one astonished at the words of that brilliant countenance, said: "

'How am I rich, when I am in need of a single coin?'

"His Holiness replied:

"'Hast thou not love for us?'

"He said: 'Yes, oh, Thou Son of the Messenger of God!'

"'Wilt thou sell it for one thousand dinars of gold?' inquired Sadik.

"He answered: 'I would not give it for the world and all that is therein!'

"His Holiness said: 'How can one be poor who possesses something which he will not exchange for the world?'"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE IMPRISONMENT AT ‘AKKÁ.

One remarkable fact in the life of Bahá'u'lláh is found in his announcement of his own mission to the rulers of the world. The Báb had sent letters to the Sháh and the Sultán, proclaiming his appearance as the long expected Mandi, and Bahá'u'lláh wrote to the crowned heads of Europe and the President of the United States, saying in most dignified and stately phrase that he had come to inaugurate the “Most Great Peace,” and that he was the reappearance in the world of the Spirit of God which had been promised for this time.

Napoleon 3rd received the message with scorn, and ground it under his heel. Victoria of England laid it away respectfully, saying: “If it is true, history will reveal it.” President Grant naturally looked upon it as something quite beyond his ken, but Alexander 2d, of Russia, was so impressed by the dignity and power of the epistle that he sent an ambassador in search of its originator. He remained always afterward in communication with Bahá'u'lláh, and the books of the Manifestation were always forwarded to him upon their completion. If he had been strong enough to follow the counsels of the Blessed Perfection he would have carried to a more glorious conclusion the noble plans of his early reign. But at least he founded the policy of international peace, the recognition of which has continued to be a part of the foreign attitude of his successors. No one who has followed the recent history of this pain-racked land can fail to wish that its rulers had learned more complete lessons from the great light of Bahá'u'lláh. In the Book of Aqdas, the Spirit breathing through him cries:

“Blessed are the ignorant who seek the spring of my knowledge, and the lowly who grasp the robe of my grandeur! Blessed are the heedless who maintain my commemoration! Blessed is the spirit resurrected in my Breath, and thereby entering My Kingdom! Blessed is the soul who is shaken by my nearness, and attracted by the kingdom of my command! Blessed is the eye which has seen, and the ear which has heard, and the heart which has known the Lord the Possessor of Glory, and the kingdom of Grandeur and Might! Blessed are they who have attained! Blessed is he who is brightened by the sun of my Word! Blessed is he whose head is adorned by the crown of my Love!”

Bahá'u'lláh and his family had been placed under the suzerainty of the Sultán, and were transferred by him to his prison city of ‘Akká in 1868. The Sultán dared not execute Bahá'u'lláh, and as no prisoner had ever survived confinement in ‘Akká longer than three months, it seemed as if his detainment there would solve many difficulties.

Once immured within these dread walls the devoted people were treated with the utmost severity. Bahá'u'lláh himself was bound to the floor in a cell so small that he could neither stand erect nor stretch at length within its limits. His family, with their attendants, were herded like cattle in an open pen, and as it was the rainy season when they arrived in ‘Akká their sufferings could only

be termed intolerable. Mr. Myron Phelps, in his volume entitled *The Life of ‘Abbás Effendi*, has written a vivid description of this painful ordeal, as it was related by the older sister of ‘Abbás Effendi.

Such gentle people could only have been subjected to these cruelties with the intention of shortening their lives, and presently all fell ill, except ‘Abbás Effendi and Bahá’u’lláh himself. ‘Abbás Effendi seems to have been always the intermediary between his family and its jailors or the public. Moved by pity for his companions he went to his father and asked what could be done to relieve the sufferings of those so dear to both, and how their anguish could be assuaged. Perhaps in that sad hour his faith failed him and he wondered if all were, indeed, to die victims of the Sultán’s vile and wicked policy. Martyrdom he would have welcomed with joy, but this process of slow and shameful extinction was hard to endure.

Bahá’u’lláh listened to his son’s impassioned words, and it would have seemed to an onlooker as if he were indeed powerless to do aught for the unfortunate victims of a dark tyranny. But the Breath of God that could have broken all bonds was upon him, the Comforter, the Sustainer!

So he wrote a wonderful little prayer and gave it to ‘Abbás Effendi, telling him to read it aloud to all who were ill, and be sure that they learned it by heart. No other steps need be taken, all would recover, and conditions would presently change.

Strangely enough health returned even as the Blessed Perfection had promised, and meanwhile the Governor of ‘Akká had not remained unaware of the sublime patience with which his unusual prisoners had borne their sufferings. He sent for ‘Abbás Effendi and after a talk with him removed the family to the military barracks of the fortress city, where, though they were by no means what we would term comfortable, they were at least assured decency and privacy.

After several years of this seclusion they were assigned a residence and allowed to live within the walls on parole, a liberty which later on was much extended by the Sultán. He was so impressed by the elevation of character manifested by Bahá’u’lláh, that, though he could not grant him freedom, as the Sultán was the spiritual head of Islám, and Bahá’u’lláh a great heretic, he established him in the royal palace outside the walls of ‘Akká, and appointed him a pension commensurate with his rank. The Blessed Perfection went freely to Haifa whenever he chose, and received everyone who came to him, so that the last ten years of his life were passed in comparative freedom.

It was at this time that Abdel Kerim entered the household of Bahá’u’lláh, and lived in close connection with him until the close of his life.

He spoke of the Blessed Perfection as exercising a singularly exhilarating effect upon all who approached him.

“I never could remain in the room with him more than twenty minutes at a time,” he confessed, “then I would be obliged to go outside and walk up and down the

corridor, for awhile, until I regained by poise. The feeling I experienced was that of a happiness so extreme that it became excitement, and was unbearable.”

He described one occasion when he was in the garden with the Manifestation, and made tea for him. Then they walked up and down the garden paths together. The subject of conversation was always the same, but handled with infinite variety. They talked of the love of God, and the condition of mankind, the suffering of the world which could so easily be relieved by an increase of God’s love in men’s hearts.

The courts of all nations seemed to be revealed to the eyes of the Glory of God, and he discussed their policies with remarkable acumen, foreseeing the results of their selfish and short-sighted action. Thus he warned the pope that he would lose his temporal power, before the invasion of Victor Emanuel, who conquered Rome, and he warned Napoleon Third that the Franco-German war would result in disaster for France.

The delight of association with Bahá’u’lláh seems to have been felt by everyone who came in contact with him. There is a wonderful old man in ‘Akká who expresses this. His name is Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí, he is eighty years old, and seems to possess the youth of a boy of twenty, yet he languished for years in the prison of the Khedive of Egypt. When General Gordon entered the country, and opened the prison doors, he asked Ḥaydar-‘Alí, “What was your crime?” And the victim of fanatic intolerance replied:

“I taught religious tolerance and freedom, and unity!”

It certainly was written upon him that such had been the cause of his incarceration, and big hearted General Gordon set him free instantly. Whereupon he went straight to Persia, and began again to teach the truth, the advocacy of which had deprived him of so many years of sunlight. But having full sunlight in his heart, he was able to bear the trial without bitterness.

He is a remarkable personality endowed with the joy of a child, and the philosophic mind of a great man. When he described to the writer his single meeting with Bahá’u’lláh, his eyes filled with tears, and for the moment his voice failed him.

“It was upon the street that I saw him,” he said at length. “I was only in ‘Akká for a day, and I feared that I would not have the privilege of resting my eyes upon him. I followed him for some time trying to find courage to address him. At length I passed him, but still my courage failed me. Suddenly I paused and went toward him determined to fall at his feet. I felt as if I wanted to do nothing but kiss his blessed feet! Then he hurried to me, took me in his arms, and embraced me, speaking tender words, and repeating:

“You had to do it! You had to do it!”

Ḥaydar-‘Alí is a scholar, a thinker, what we call a gentleman, yet after more than twenty-five years of eager and progressive existence, after years of cruel

imprisonment, after vivid experiences which develop manhood, and render sentimentalism impossible, words die upon his lips when he endeavors to describe the supreme moment in which the arms of the Blessed Perfection encircled him and he lay upon his breast. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl is another unique and splendid personality who came into personal contact with Bahá'u'lláh. He had been tutor in the Sháh's family, was a man of great learning and inspiration, but had been thrown into prison for his adherence to the new faith. His sufferings were so severe that his health was permanently broken, and when he was at last set free, it was only to hear the decree of banishment pronounced upon him.

Bahá'u'lláh spoke to him with great tenderness of the trials that were before him, of the lonely years he should spend in poverty and exile, where nevertheless he would still labor for the cause of God. Then he concluded:

"I want you to remember that wherever you are, no matter how poor and how lonely you may appear to be, if you but think of me, I shall be with you instantly. In reality, you will never be alone you will never be helpless!"

Then he gave the traveler a little prayer which he had written for him, to be repeated in the moment of danger or deep distress, when he must know that God was near.

"And I never pronounced the lovely words without the sense of his presence, and immediate relief from the pressure that bound me!" declared Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl.

It is difficult for the modern man hurried, jostled, smothered in material conditions, to realize at first the significance of such stories, but surely we have all experienced the exaltation or depression which assails us in our contact with different persons. Sometimes it is a mere question of nerves and passion, but there is a tonic effect that is different. So Trelawney and Williams relate that after spending some time with the poet Shelley, they felt as if walking on air, and our own American painter, Wyatt Eaton, has described a similar result from his interview with the great artist Francois Millet, the year before the latter's death.

Eaton had dined with the family at their own simple table, and lingered until ten o'clock, unable to tear himself away from the charm of Millet's eager disquisition on subjects of art, of inspiration, of God and man. It was in 1874, Millet was at the end of his long life in which he had sought earnestly for the expression of the lofty impulse he felt within him. He was very near to God, and was irradiated by the splendor of his high relationship. He himself, in his poverty, at his frugal table, dressed in his "blue jeans," was experiencing the splendor of life, and transmitted so much of it to the young American student who had been wise enough to seek him, that after the interview was closed Eaton walked miles across the country to relieve his nervous tension. He was inexpressibly happy, but felt as if he should never sleep again, as if in fact his body had disappeared and he "walked on air."

The circle which gathered around the hearthstone of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in

Chelsea experienced the same thing. They talked until morning, not knowing that the night had passed and felt no fatigue, because of the noble ideas which possessed them.

Such experiences enable us to understand in a measure the delightfully inspiring influence which Bahá'u'lláh exercised upon all who entered his environment. If an ordinary human being who has sincerely endeavored to live according to the higher law of God can rouse the spirit of others, surely one upon whom the Breath of God rests must become a potential tonic to all whom he encounters.

This tonic effect of nearness to God has, of course, been manifest in all the great religious reformers. So Savonarola won the hearts of Botticelli and Michel Angelo as a permanent possession. Even in that wealth-worshipping day of the late renaissance Angelo never forgot for a moment that the splendor of life lies in our expression of the ideal, not in any wealth of material things.

So there is a splendor of life in that moment when Savonarola refused to keep the gold that Lorenzo di Medici had laid upon the contribution plate of San Marco. It looked like a bribe, and the faithful prior knew that the poor convent was richer without it.

We can imagine the feeling of the publican when Christ sat at his table, of John, the be-loved disciple, when his head rested upon the Master's shoulder, of Mary Magdalene when she poured her precious ointment over his travel worn feet! These last are the surpassing experiences, because the great Messenger of God, the Saviour, the Manifestation is like no other. The Glory about him touches all who come near, and the contact can never be effaced nor forgotten.

One very substantial result of this divine tonic has been experienced by the people of 'Akká. Bahá'u'lláh and his family were sent there to die, but instead of that they have transformed 'Akká into a city of health and refreshment, and the dangerous, depressing elements of the climate and locality have entirely disappeared. In former days the currents of the ocean threw upon the seashore masses of unsightly and ill smelling debris; dead fish, seaweed and all the mal-odorous contents of the tidal ebb seemed to be flung there, and no flood was ever full enough to carry them off. So they lay rotting in the hot sun of the tropics, breeding fevers for the destruction of the inhabitants. The Sulṭán would permit no measures for the purification of the harbor and shore. He wished his prison city to remain as unwholesome as possible because it was intended to be a place of death. After the Glory of God had dwelt within the walls for some time there came a change. An alteration in the ocean currents became evident, the unsightly accumulation upon the shore was washed away, the offal of the region was carried far out into the purifying ocean, and the silvery strand of 'Akká was played upon only by glittering blue waters and fragrant breezes. Meanwhile a very wealthy convert one day came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. He was an Arabian Shaykh of enormous possessions, and he had planned to place an immense sum in the hands of the Manifestation as a symbol of his devotion. The Blessed Perfection, however, would not accept money from his followers.

One significant point in this remarkable movement has always been that its beautiful teachings are never given for money. They are regarded as the gift of God, which must be freely imparted, not sold.

Again and again the old Shaykh proffered his gift and it was refused. At length Bahá'u'lláh saw how deeply disappointed was his follower. The Shaykh was an old man, and had felt that he would die more happily if he had bestowed this money. So, as his friend was turning away in sadness, the Blessed Perfection recalled him and said:

“Do you really want to give me this money?” and when his noble guest positively fell upon his knees in affirmation, he went on:

“I cannot take money, but if you wish to make me very happy you can do this for me. The people of ‘Akká suffer for water. All the water of the valley is brackish and unwholesome, but yonder beyond the mountains,” pointing to the distant hills, “is a bottomless lake of pure mountain water. Pipe it down to the city, and bring it up in a fountain, where it will be free to all. But that will cost a great deal of money!”

Do you think any human being could have considered money in such a moment? The splendor of life surrounded the old Shaykh, and his happiness was supreme as he hurried away to perform the behest of the Messenger of God. To-day the people of ‘Akká have this delicious water piped into their houses, and the spectre of fever is still farther banished from their hearthstones.

From the moment that Bahá'u'lláh became accessible to his followers, so that even a glimpse of his radiant face would reward a toilsome journey to ‘Akká, throngs of pilgrims turned toward the prison city, eager to carry away a memory of the Glory of God, and eager also to do something to show the ardor of their faith. They soon discovered that Bahá'u'lláh would not accept gifts of value, but that he loved flowers and rare plants. So they began to carry with them seeds, slips and roots, from the flora of their own locality, especially such as were fragrant, unusual and beautiful. Tradition has it that no frail atom of a delicate shrub, wrapped in moss, and borne across the desert ever failed to live and thrive when planted at length in the grateful soil of much blessed ‘Akká.

The result has been the charming garden of the Ridván, surely one of the loveliest spots in the universe. Here are plants and flowers from Egypt, Arabia, and India, fragrant violets, crimson passion flowers, red anemones, tea roses, flowers so delicate and white they are like frost in the tropics, and blossoms that seem to weigh down the plant that bears them with their rich fragrance. Oranges ripen here, and rich deep colored roses like those of our American Beauty variety, but more sweetly odorous. The Blessed Perfection was especially fond of these magnificent blooms, and was accustomed to water their roots with his own hand.

The old gardener who tended the Ridván is still living, and has many wonderful stories to tell of his beloved master whom he served so faithfully. One of these which he is particularly fond of relating reminds us of a day when he had planned

to serve tea for Bahá'u'lláh, and though a terrific storm of wind and rain arose, the Manifestation came to the garden just the same, because he would not disappoint his devoted attendant.

Another of his narrations will be less easily believed by the western reader, but it is vouched for, not only by the gardener who is an exceedingly intelligent man, but by others as well. To followers of modern cults who are accustomed to regard the outward world as "phenomenal," it will not appear in the least unreasonable.

A pest of locusts had invaded the country, and was devouring everything in its pathway. Nothing escaped the rapacious insects, and the gardener of the Riḍván marked with horror the advance of the swarm, and knew exactly on what day the creatures would strip his Paradise of verdure and fragrance. On that day Bahá'u'lláh was in the garden, and its guardian threw himself at the feet of the Blessed Perfection, begging him to save the precious bit of loveliness.

"Why should I preserve my garden when all else is destroyed?" demanded the Manifestation, "Would that be just?"

"But it is not for your sake that I ask it," implored the gardener, well knowing how to appeal to the generous heart to which he spoke. "Think of all the care I have taken, and all the labor I have spent to make it beautiful, and think of all the people who love it, and whose gifts are a part of it! Its destruction will bring pain to all these souls, and it may never be so perfect again!"

At last Bahá'u'lláh, convinced that it was right to use his power for such an end, rose and approached that side of the garden wall from which the swarm of locusts in a black cloud was already plainly visible. On they came, nearer and nearer. The Manifestation stood quietly by the wall, and presently began to address them. What wonderful loving potency vibrated in his words, his thought, his intention we do not know, but it is a fact that the mass of insects settled gently to the ground, remained as if benumbed for awhile, and not one flew over the wall. Then they began to eat voraciously, and left not a blade nor a leaf of green anywhere outside of the blooming and fragrant verdure of the Riḍván.

There is a tiny shelter in the garden where Bahá'u'lláh was accustomed to retire at times when he desired especial privacy. The chair in which he habitually sat is preserved, and visitors adorn it with flowers in memory of the Beloved One who once occupied it.

For a considerable period the inhabitants of 'Akká were not interested in the religious principles of the famous prisoners domiciled among them. They had been informed by the authorities that the confined saints were exceedingly wicked persons, that they had committed murder and other heinous crimes, and had only escaped death by the tolerance of the Sultán. The government hoped by such nefarious methods to ensure the ill treatment and cruel persecutions of the unfortunate victims in its power, and for a time the spell worked. But it is



impossible for human beings to come in contact with veritable saints and not discover that they are such, and so it happened in this case.

One family was converted to the faith of Bahá'u'lláh, in rather remarkable fashion, shortly after the Blessed Perfection was released from the military barracks. The grandfather of the household had been an unusually devout and studious man, much given to poring over the holy books of his faith. As a result of long pondering he had decided that it was full time for the Manifestation of God to appear, whose coming was presaged as he believed by the tradition of the Imám's return. But he doubted whether he himself would be privileged to see him.

He spent much time with his youngest grandson who was then a lad of eight or ten years old, and told him with great solemnity that his eyes would rest upon the Manifestation of God, and that he must not miss this rare opportunity, nor fail to recognize this divinely gifted personage whom he would be so blessed as to encounter. Meanwhile the good old man passed away, the youth grew to young manhood, the family of Bahá'u'lláh came to 'Akká under its cloud of criminal accusation, and naturally the Muḥammadan did not connect the group of dangerous heretics—so called—with the holy one of his grandfather's warning.

One night he dreamed that the old man came to him and told him the Manifestation of God was in 'Akká, and he must seek him. The young gentleman was interested, and recalled his deceased relative's repeated prophecy, but he did not attach any special importance to the dream.

Presently, however, it was repeated with increased vividness. The grandfather said to him:

"You think this is only a dream, but I have come to tell you the truth, and you must believe what I say, and obey me!"

The youth was more deeply impressed this time, because the recurrence of the dream, with its added insistence, was significant. Still it did not occur to him that he should act upon it. Finally he dreamed again, this time with such detail that he could not resist the conviction of his grandfather's actual presence. The old gentleman expressed his impatience at his grandson's indifference, reminded him of the prophecy he had made before his death, assured him the Manifestation of God was none other than the famous prisoner so long confined in 'Akká and accused of impossible deeds. He described the house in which he lived, commanded the young man to go there, and added:

"They might not admit you, but I will give you the password. When you go to the door say 'Alláh o' Abhá,' and immediately it will be opened wide. You will see a man sitting at a table reading. He is the Manifestation of God."

The young man was peculiarly situated. He did not dare disobey this direct mandate of his dream, yet he felt himself a fool in consenting to its requisition. He could not venture to speak of it to any one, and he decided it would be

best to test the adventure. He therefore went to the house indicated, which he knew was the house of Bahá'u'lláh, the dreaded heretic. He walked up the steps hesitatingly, and knocked with a beating heart, for he had little faith that the password given him was valid, and he had every reason to distrust the people within.

The door was opened suspiciously, and he was asked his business. In trembling tones he pronounced the words, "Alláh o' Abhá!" Instantly the door was thrown wide open, he was encircled by the arms of his questioner, and within the apartment he saw a noble looking man seated at a table, with his eyes upon a book.

He had uttered the customary greeting of the Bahá'ís, "Alláh o' Abhá," which translated from the Arabic tongue means "God the Glorious." It has been their means of identification and communication as was the sign of the fish to the Christians of an earlier Day of God, day of persecution, alas! It is called their Greatest Name, as was that of Christ to his followers, that of Jehovah to the Jews, of Om to the Hindus of an ancient period. It, of course, expresses that intimate consciousness of God's Glory which the devotees of Bahá'u'lláh claim as the added knowledge of the Deity in this new Day.

The guest so strangely admitted to the home of Bahá'u'lláh, could not leave it until he had realized the truth in his grandfather's exhortation. He and all his family became faithful believers in the wonder of the Blessed Perfection's presence in the world, and have formed a devoted nucleus of friends in the prison city.

When the time came for Bahá'u'lláh to pass away he warned those about him of his departure, and he had already made known his will in the Kitáb el Ad, or Book of the Covenant, where he designates his son 'Abdu'l-Bahá as his successor, and the Center of the Covenant, the one who shall stand as the Interpreter of his mighty Word after he has crossed the threshold.

The end of mortal life for Bahá'u'lláh was peaceful as the passing of such a soul must be when not hastened by the throes of martyrdom, and after a brief attack of fever in the Spring of 1892 he disappeared from earthly view.

The following are some portions of a very remarkable letter sent by Bahá'u'lláh to a "Friend" in Persia shortly after his great Illumination had come upon him. It may be added that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, or Bahá'ís and Bábís are called simply "Friends" in Persia. This communication, however, was written to a personal friend of the Manifestation, who was evidently an individual of unusual enlightenment. The original Persian, which is said to possess particular beauty, has been translated by Mírzá Aḥmad Sohrab. The epistle is so long that only extracts can be quoted. It begins:

"In the Name of God the Peerless!"

"Glory befits the Discoverer, who, through one shower of the ocean of his generosity, expanded the firmament of existence, begemmed it with the stars of

knowledge, and summoned the people to the most high court of perception and understanding!

“This shower, which is the first Word of the Almighty, is sometimes called the Water of Life, for it quickens the dead souls in the desert of ignorance with the Spring of Intelligence. Sometimes it is called the first Emanation which appears from the Sun of Wisdom, and when it began to shine, the first movement became manifest, and known, and then phenomena stepped into the arena of existence; and these appearances were through the generosity of the In-comparable, the Wise One. He is the Knower, the Giver : He is sanctified and Holy above every statement and attribute! The seen and the unseen fail to attain the measure of His understanding. The world of being and what-ever has issued from it bears witness to this Utterance.

“Therefore it has become known that the First Bestowal of the Almighty is the Word. The receiver and acceptor of it is the understanding.

“The Word is the first instructor in the university of existence, and is the Primal Emanation of God. Whatever has appeared is through the reflection of its Light, and whatever is manifested is the appearance of its Wisdom.

“All the names originate in His Name, and the beginnings and endings of all affairs are in His Hand.

“. . . . The pulse of the world is in the hand of the Skilful Physician. He diagnoses the illness, and wisely prescribes the remedy. Every day has its own secret, and every tongue a melody. The illness of today has one cure, and that of to-morrow another. Look ye upon this day, and consider and discuss its needs. One sees that existence is afflicted with innumerable ailments compelling it to lie upon the bed of suffering. Men who are intoxicated with the wine of self-contemplation prevent the Wise Physician from reaching the patient. Thus have they caused themselves and the world to suffer. They know not the ailment, nor recognize the remedy. They take the wrong for the right, the crooked for the straight, the enemy for the friend.

“. . . . O Friends, when the Primal Word appeared in these latter days, a number of the heavenly souls heard the Melody of the Beloved and hastened toward it, while others finding that the deeds of some did not correspond with their words were prevented from the Splendors of the Sun of Knowledge.

“. . . . O ye sons of intelligence! The thin eye-lid prevents the eye from seeing the world and what is contained therein. Then think of the result when the curtain of greed covers the sight of the heart. Say, O ye people! The darkness of greed and envy obscures the light of the soul, as the cloud prevents the penetration of the sun's rays. Should one listen with the ear of intelligence to this Utterance he shall spread the wings of freedom, and soar with great joy to the Heaven of understanding.

“. . . . O people! The word must be demonstrated by the deed, for the righteous witness of the word is action. The former without the latter shall not allay the

thirst of the needy, nor open the doors of sight to the blind.

“The Heavenly Wise One proclaimeth: A harsh word is like unto a sword, but gentle speech is like unto milk. The children of the world attain unto knowledge and better themselves through this. The Tongue of Wisdom says: Whosoever possesses Me not has nothing. Pass by whatever exists in this world, and find Me. I am the Sun of Perception, and the Ocean of Science. I revive the withered ones, and quicken the dead. I am that Light which illumines the Path of Insight. I am the Falcon of the land of the Almighty! I bear healing in my wings, and teach the knowledge of soaring to the Heaven of Truth.

“The Peerless Beloved says: The Way of Freedom is opened! Hasten ye! The Fountain of Knowledge is gushing! Drink ye!

Say, O Friends! The Tabernacle of Oneness is raised! Look not upon each other with the eye of strangeness! Ye are all the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Truly, I say: Whatever lessens ignorance, and increases knowledge that has been, is, and shall be accepted by the Creator. “Say, O people! Walk ye under the shade of the Tree of Righteousness; enter ye under the protection of the Tent of Unity. Say, O thou possessor of Sight! The past is the mirror of the future: look and perceive. Perchance after the acquirement of knowledge ye may know the Friend, and attain to His good Pleasure. Today the best fruit of the Tree of Science and Knowledge is that which benefits mankind and improves his condition.

“Say! The tongue is the witness of my Faith, do not pollute it with untruthfulness. The Spirit is the treasury of my Mystery, do not deliver it into the hand of greed. It is hoped that in this Dawn the universe shall become illumined with the Sun of understanding and knowledge, so that we may attain to the good pleasure of the Beloved, and drink from the Ocean of Divine Recognition.

“. . . O Friend! We have seen the pure ground, and cast the seed of knowledge. Now it depends on the rays of the Sun whether it burns up or is caused to grow. Say, today through the greatness of the Peerless Wise One, the Sun of Knowledge has appeared from behind the covering of the Spirit, and all the birds of the meadow of Oneness are intoxicated with the wine of Understanding, and are commemorating the name of the Beloved. Happy is the one who finds this and becomes Immortal.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PROPHECIES IN REGARD TO THE GREAT DAY.

The Muḥammadan prophecies as to the Appearance of the Báb have already been mentioned, but it will surprise many Christian readers to know that these forewarnings are even more startling in the Old and New Testament than in the Qur’án and the traditions of the Imáms. The dates of this great arrival are

as definitely given in Isaiah, in Daniel, Ezekiel and the Book of Revelations as in the Muḥammadan scriptures. Christians have believed that these prophecies refer to the destruction of the world, that this destruction shall be followed by the horror of the day of judgment, and the establishment of the Wonderful thousand of years of peace, called the Millennium. But the interpretation of these promises by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is more reasonable, and is already justified by fulfilment.

It may be that the reader is not interested in prophecy. As a rule the Anglo-Saxon and American child hears too much of it in youth, and when the rational life begins with more mature years, the adult individual casts the entire question aside as part of the superstition that must be outgrown.

However, as we return to the wonderful poetic trance of Isaiah, the direct psychic interpretations of Daniel, and the marvellous vision in the Book of Revelations, which has never been comprehended until our day, we are impressed by the fact that all of these sensitive seers, as well as nearly all of the ancient Hebrew prophets have had a glimpse of a lovely Play Day which was to come to the world some time. Moreover, when we see what is evidently the same vision in the words of Christ to his disciples before his departure, and also in those of Zoroaster, who came and left his golden message in the world's heart so many years before him, the question may assume a deeper interest for us, especially if we realize that Muḥammad at a later day, was clearly possessed of the same conviction that a wonderful Day was to dawn for mankind when the divine message would be so powerfully uttered, so fully explained that men would not only listen to it, but live it.

For the sad fact remains to stare us in the face that up to the present period the world has not dreamed of living according to the Word of the divine mentors who have successively honored us with their radiant Presence, who have ravished us with the joy of their short stay, and almost invariably shed their blood as a sacrifice to our hardness of heart!

The world has listened merely, but it has hardly been less rapacious, less cruel, less passionate in the presence of the divine Word spoken successively by Abraham, Moses, Brahm, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ and Muḥammad. We enshrine the memory of each who has brought the Light, build temples to his name, and then again go roaring on after the delusions of our own glory as if the Word had never been spoken.

Nevertheless the few who attend sufficiently to bring a reflection from the splendor of life into their own existence, we enshrine also in lesser temples, or in niches where the brilliance is so evident that it might easily recall us from the darkness of our own lives.

We never forget Florence Nightingale, for instance, if we know nothing else about her, we are aware that she gave herself gladly for others. We con over the lovely life of Sir Thomas Moore, and his devotion to his ideal, in a circle where the ideal was singularly deficient. We drop happy tears upon the chronicle of St. Francis of

Assisi, and sing with him his joyous song through Italian byways. We thrill at the noble ender of John Ruskin, great enough to sacrifice his inherited wealth that he might walk independently beside his unendowed brother, the common man! We love the complete unselfishness of Camille Corot, who refused to accumulate wealth because it made him so happy to share it with others. We rejoice in the beautiful comradeship of Donatello, to whom every moment of life was sweet because he lived in the world of ideas created by himself and his companions of the young Renaissance—and kept his money in a basket suspended from the ceiling from which everyone in need was free to help himself!

As we read such records, we realize that some people have lived, and have done more than listen and perhaps dream! Existence has been no grey monotonous current to them. They have loved, enjoyed, created. They have been so penetrated by divine ideals that the physical side of life has been always secondary to them.

Was it not significant that when Donatello first saw the great Christ that his friend Brunelleschi had carved, he dropped the corners of his sculptor's apron, in which he was carrying the breakfast materials gathered in the market, and walked away, saying to his companions:

“You can get your own breakfast, I have had enough!”

Can you not imagine that during the remainder of that morning Donatello was fed by celestial food? The whole creative man within, him was roused and nourished by the magnificent work of his friend, and the impulse of his genius hung before his astonished eyes the full production of his later life!

These things are life, not the piling up of millions, the selection of intricate and dazzling costumes, the serving of lunches and dinners, the speeding of automobiles. It is not that each one of us is a genius, but each one of us possesses an individuality and a capacity to live through that love and endeavor that is penetrated by the thought of God, and each in his own way comes at that manner of living when he listens to the great and simple message that has been voiced again and again by the Messengers of God.

An artist friend said recently:

“Most people are so anxious to make a living that they forget how to live, but I have always lived, and yet I have made a living.”

Another said, “It is a great privilege to earn a living by doing the thing that one loves, and I would rather earn a meagre living in that way than a princely one by the sacrifice of the ideal.”

It was this feeling that prompted in Tolstoi the impulse to sacrifice his entire fortune and live the simple life of the common man. Having the responsibilities of a large family whom he had reared in the environment of wealth and ease, he could not do so, but he would unquestionably have found happiness in the

sacrifice, for the eternal life opens as we become independent of merely physical things.

“I must find immortality before death, or I may experience much difficulty in attaining it. Because to be immortal is to be absorbed in love, and in the endeavor that is not concerned in merely physical things. If I am flooded with great ideas, I am immortal, and death has disappeared.” So the physician absorbed in the life of his patients, in the processes of healing which renew life, has found immortality. The representative of the people seeking unselfishly the good of his constituents, has found it, the mother who loves and considers other children as well as her own, has found it. The agriculturist deeply engaged in the best processes for the development of his land, and also for the well-being of man and beast upon it, has found it, and to all such persons mere questions of personal comfort and aggrandizement are of slight import. They have learned to live in the larger circle, where self is not preeminent, and it is only in that circle that one begins to feel the splendor of life.

This splendor is eternal, and is not confined to the radius of our little planet, it is electric, and stings into vivid consciousness every atom of the individual being. Each truth speaker who has lived in the ages of the past has felt this, each Messenger of God has sung it, and is it not natural to suppose that looking forward into the future aeons many may have glimpsed suddenly the moment of fulfilment, the instant in the earth’s history when the ideal began at last to enter the common life, the moment when it was no longer centered in individuals, gifted and erratic, but softened all hearts, and established justice in our social system?

Ruskin was so convinced of this possibility that for years he refused to become a socialist because he insisted that human beings cannot be reformed by a system of laws. The separate man must begin to live the ideal life from his conviction of its excellence, or because he is so filled with its essence that he cannot help it. Only in later years he came to realize that perhaps those who first perceive the ideal relationships should make laws to control the individuals in whom the true vision dawns more slowly.

We know enough now-a-days of the temperament and peculiarities of those who possess the gift of clairvoyance to realize that they see what is not revealed to ordinary eyes, and we can imagine if we have not witnessed its evidence that this power is enormously enhanced from a very different source, in one upon whom the Spirit of God rests. So it would not be strange if these True Ones in all ages had looked forward, and had painted for us portions of that wonderful Day in which at last the power of God is so fully poured out upon the world that all men must begin to realize it, and live according to its law.

We find our own old Testament rich in these pre-glimpses of what seems the very day in which we are living now, with its horrors, its splendors, and its marvellous inspirations. For instance verses 3 and 4 of the second chapter of the tiny book of Nahum, paint as vivid a picture of the present day automobile

as could easily be granted to a truth seer living seven hundred years before Christ.

“ . . . the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.

“The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways, they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.”

Many of these old prophetic writers in ancient Hebrew are not great message givers, but they were holy men devoted to the service of their God, and possessed by the psychic vision so that their images are sometimes broken and distorted. For instance the prophet is carried away upon the mighty current of the distant future, and paints a clear picture of what results from the concurrence of celestial powers, and then without warning there comes a break in the flow of inspiration. Suddenly the seer is talking of mere tribal matters, and apparently is not conscious that both scene and time of his picture have undergone a momentous trans-formation.

Anyone who has become interested in the psychologic analysis of those possessing the psychic gift can understand this irregularity, this flaw in the plate, and the separate portions of the picture remain separately interesting and true.

So it is not a matter of indifference, nor one for gentle scoffing, when we discover that the same date for the appearance of the Mandi which the Muḥammadan tradition preserved appears repeatedly in our own scriptures. That date is the year 1260, it will be remembered, which corresponds with the year 1841 of our era, the date when the Báb first began to preach, and when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was born.

In the 7th verse of the remarkable 12th chapter of Daniel, we have the date clearly given. Daniel asks how long shall it be until the end of these wonders, and the man clothed in linen replies: a time, time, and a half. Now biblical criticism tells us that a “time” is 360 years, “times” is always recognized as two times, or 720 years, and adding the half time of 180, we have again this persistent number of 1260 years.

Biblical criticism recognizes that in this chapter Daniel is dealing with the Muḥammadan overthrow of Jerusalem, because it was at that time, and because of the conquest that the Jewish daily sacrifice in the temple was rendered impossible, and the “Abomination of desolation” was begun which shall end in this wonderful year of 1844, or 1260. Daniel is dealing with the dispensation of Muḥammad, and naturally gives the date which includes it, for necessarily the proclamation of the Báb that a new Manifestation of God had risen, brings to a close the preceding one.

Later in the chapter we find the verse to which Christ refers when his disciples asked him for the “time of the end,” or the great day of his “second coming.” In the 24th chapter of Matthew he points them to the 11th verse of the same wonderful 12th chapter of Daniel:



“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

This gives us the date of 1863, the year when Bahá'u'lláh announced his mission to the world, in fulfilment of the Báb's prophecy, but in this instance we compute not according to the conventional chronology of Islám from the hegira, but from the moment ten years before that day, when Muḥammad first told his followers of his illumination and his mission. It is significant that Christ should have referred to this verse, and that its computation should contain this additional ten years which is not recognized in the date of the Hegira. The latter marks the moment of Muḥammad's outward recognition, the former that of his own inward light. The announcement of Bahá'u'lláh in 1863 is also one of inward light, because the world has not yet accepted and established his chronology.

In the 12th chapter of Revelations we find the same date of 1260 repeated in a fashion which our biblical critics have never understood, because they have not regarded Muḥammad as a prophet of God, and have not expected to find his figure in the vision of St. John. This chapter has puzzled many critics, and has received numerous interpretations. The Christian Scientists have believed that it refers to Mrs. Eddy and her beautiful teaching, but the explanation of it offered by the Báb is the only satisfactory one.

If John the seer looked into the future, and the clearing of the spiritual vision had removed the veils from his eyes, he must surely have perceived the great interruptions and variations which the Christian dispensation would experience. As he had been close to its lovely Light, he would be especially sensitive to all connected with its long span. So the upheaval of Islám, whether we regard Muḥammad as a true prophet or not would necessarily have attracted his spiritual gaze.

The woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars undoubtedly refers to the movement of Muḥammad. It has been the great dominating force in the kingdom of Persia, whose symbol is the sun, and in Turkey, whose symbol is the moon, and its twelve Imáms are certainly worthy of the denomination of stars in a crown. In the progress of the chapter the irruption and dynasty of the Ommyad Turks are plainly indicated, as well as the long struggle between the followers of Christ and those of Muḥammad. The number of 1260 years is given as the length of time the woman is preserved, and this is again a reference to the dispensation of Muḥammad from the Hegira to the proclamation of the Báb in 1260 of the Islámic chronology and 1844 of our own.

In the 11th chapter of Revelations the number of 1260 is repeated in such fashion that its reference to the Muḥammadan domination of the Holy Land is unquestionable. The first and second verses are as follows:

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod, and the angel stood, saying, ‘rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.’

“ ‘But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not, for it is given unto the gentiles, and the Holy City shall they tread under foot forty and two months.’ “

It must be remembered that in all the mystical and prophetic numbering of the Bible and other holy books, a day stands for a year, and forty two months of thirty days each produces once more this number of 1260. When we have once begun to connect it with the dispensation of Islám we feel certain that John had in mind in these verses those long years in which the Sultáns have ruled the outer courts of Jerusalem. They have always respected the services in the Christian temples and have carefully compelled peace between the warring priests of the Greek and Catholic sects, and their spiritual domination ended with the proclamation of the Báb, which sounded the note of a new day.

During these twelve hundred and sixty years from the Hegira of Muḥammad until the great message of the Báb there was no fresh claim of illumination. They represent the unbroken rule of a prophet whose followers were hostile to the immense body of believers in Christ, and who were conquerors of the Jews as well, it seems natural therefore that such a block of time should have touched the imagination of seers in different ages, beginning with the illumination which introduced it to the world, and ending likewise with the illumination which quenched it as a dominating objective force.

Another point about the prophecies of the Bible is of special interest with regard to the Hebrew race, and the great movement of Christianity. There are two distinct lines of prophecy in the old Testament, one referring to the overthrow and scattering of the Jews, and their refusal to listen to the voice of God, and many others which recount in organ tones of glorious rejoicing the victory of the oppressed, the triumph of the humiliated ones, and the glorification of God in the Holy places.

Now the Jews in the time of Christ were looking for the Messiah as the Muḥammadan students were expecting the return of the Imám in the Day of the Báb. But they did not truly understand their own scriptures. For instance, the 53d chapter of Isaiah should have given them pause. It so clearly records the suffering, persecution and death of Jesus Christ that it seems as if it must have been intercalated after the tragic story of his illumination and agony had been completed. Yet we know it is an integral portion of the ancient book of Isaiah.

Surely if the Jewish High Priests had known this chapter they would have sat reverently at the feet of the Saviour, recognizing him as the first who came in fulfilment of the great prophecy. But their minds were occupied only with visions of triumph, with the advent of a king crowned in his glory, for so they interpreted the wonderful chapters in Ezekiel, Isaiah and the other old Hebrew prophets, who fall into an ecstasy when picturing this marvellous Play Day of man which is to come, and on the verge of which we seem to stand even now.

In this day the Jews shall be restored to their former glory, and the “Abomination of desolation” shall end. As has been said it is illuminating that Christ

should have referred to the verse in Daniel marking the beginning and end of this suffering. It is evident that he saw perfectly his own place in the great scheme, and knew that the story would complete itself only when the glory descended the second time, and more fully. The Jews have ignored the two distinct lines of prophecy, and the Christians as well.

The Jews declared that Christ did not fulfil all the ancient predictions, and truly he did not, for it was only his function to carry out what belonged to himself. The Jews therefore still expect the Messiah, whose coming will complete the traditional imageries of their race. They know that the time is here, and they recognize its fulfilment in the advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh with delightful quickness.

Meanwhile the Christian critics have applied both lines of prophecy to Christ, assuming, according to the theology they have created, that he is the only Saviour, misunderstanding his own frank statement of his return, and of its meaning. The theologians forget always that Jesus was the man, that Christ was the Glory, the Breath of God resting upon him, and that when he spoke of return it was the Glory that promised to visit mankind again. No one can ponder the ancient Hebrew scriptures with the clue of the two distinct currents referring to events evidently wide apart, without feeling that if there was an actual vision of the future in these strange picturings, we are in the moment of the second great dispensation which brings the fulfilment of the first.

One needs only to compare the 53d chapter of Isaiah with the 65th to feel certain that the latter reveals to us the consequences of the events foretold in the former. The first verses of the 65th chapter paint the condition of the Jews after they refused to accept their prophet. Then in the 8th verse begins the prophecy of the succeeding Manifestation which shall create "a new heaven and a new earth," but the promise is that the scattered and sorrowing people shall rejoice in this second kingdom, though it is not of their making. The allusion to the "valley of Achor" is only one of a number among the old Testament prophecies which paint very clearly this positive location where the Manifestation was confined for so many years, and where 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his turn has received all the nations of the world. Achor is necessarily Acre or 'Akká, the ancient city at the foot of Mt. Carmel, which has a long history among the generations of men.

Thousands of the Jews have recognized the relation of the two lines of foretelling in their sacred writings, and in knowing Bahá'u'lláh as the Messiah promised so gloriously, they see immediately the mistake their people made in denying Christ, and hasten to give their adherence to him also, and thus they realize at last the joy of comprehending the great mission of Christ to the world.

Another point of unquestionable import in regard to these strange prophecies of the Hebrew seers is the place given to the Branch in the dawning of the Day of Peace, of which Isaiah always sings the song.

For instance in Zechariah 6:12, the verse runs:

“. . . Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord.”

Again in Isaiah 4:2, “In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful, and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely, for them that are escaped out of Israel.”

These citations might be multiplied, but they are all of the same character, and it is unnecessary. They have been referred to Christ by biblical critics but this reference has never seemed correct. Christ was not called “the Branch” and he did not inaugurate a day of peace. The passages of the Old Testament where the Branch is alluded to always describe him as presiding in that wonderful Play Day when wars have ceased, when men have learned the lesson of love and mutual service, and when joy reigns because selfishness has died out of the world’s heart. The 8th chapter of Zechariah is one of those which speaks very definitely of the wonders of this day as fulfilling Jewish prophecy so clearly that everyone will recognize it.

Christ of course died in shameful obscurity, and his beautiful teaching has lived in our consciousness as an ideal which some time we must carry out. Bahá’u’lláh said, “I am the Realizer!” and he went on to explain that in spite of the heavenly monition which Christ gave, men could not live according to its law until another Manifestation of God had come and brought the power to do so.

The word “realization” seems constantly on the lips of the world today, applied in every direction, and will presently bid our armaments exchange their Dread-noughts for air ships, and command the inciting of Krupp guns into statues for the peace makers. Even in the United States we are growing weary of the rich man and are comprehending that laws preventing the excessive accumulation of wealth are necessary for the preservation of the commonwealth. The rapidly increasing feeling of brotherhood everywhere will soon render war impossible, and the ruler of aggressive spirit can no longer compel the courage and faith of the common man.

Bahá’u’lláh spoke of himself always as the “Tree of Life.” He gave this explanation of the symbol of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. The Manifestation of God is the Tree of Life, he declared, for it is he whose mission it is to give the bread of life to mankind, and explain the wonder of the world’s creation, and man’s relation to God. When he selected his oldest son as his interpreter, he called him the greatest Branch from the Tree of Life, using the term unquestionably in its spiritual significance, and always spoke of him as “the Branch.”

The Day of God when the prophet voices his message is always illumined by three figures, the precursor, or herald, the Messenger, or Manifestation, and the interpreter, or we might say, the Illuminator, the Illumination, and the Illuminated One.

Thus John the Baptist foretold the coming of Christ, Christ spoke the Message, and Peter was his interpreter. In the day of Moses the coming of the Liberator

was foretold by various wise men. Moses led the people out of bondage, and Joshua completed their emancipation. Muḥammad's appearance was announced successively by four wise men. Rouz-bih, surnamed Salman, had the honor of serving them. When death came to one he sent Rouz-bih to the other, until the turn of the fourth arrived. When death claimed this one, he said to the attendant:

"Oh Rouz-bih, after preparing me for the tomb, and burying me, go thou to Hijaz where the Muḥammadic Sun will rise. To thee be glad tidings of the meeting of his Holiness!"

Muḥammad delivered the law, and appointed 'Alí to have charge of it after his passing. In our day the Báb cried aloud the reappearance of the Word in Bahá'u'lláh, and spoke with such power that no precursor ever so prepared the way for the luminous Advent. Bahá'u'lláh gave the message with a fullness and glory that has never been previously attained. He appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá "the Branch" as his interpreter, and the one who should bring peace to the world.

There is a very significant point in Christ's warning to his disciples of that wonderful time when the spirit should descend again and bring the fulfilment of the law which the gentle teacher had so lovingly propounded. He said, in that day many will come saying, "I am Christ," but do not listen to them, beware of them all, for I am not in them!

One of the peculiar features of the last half century has been the number of cults which have risen about a figure who has sincerely believed himself to be the reincarnated Christ, and our insane asylums are filled with the unfortunate lunatics who cherish the same delusion. These characters have appeared everywhere, and apparently have spoken every language.

But the great Revelator of this day has never made this claim. On the contrary the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and Abdu'l-Bahá explain for the first time in fullness what Christ was, what the manifestation of God always must be, what constitutes the Day of God, and why the Day must always dawn again and again, because man's heart is human, and the divine lesson grows cold within it.

No one can read the words of Christ to his disciples, and the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John without realizing that the illumination upon Jesus spoke of the time when it should descend again to revive the world through the lips of another divine one. Christ said as he sat at the table with his consecrated ones:

"I shall not break bread again until I eat it at my Father's table," and now we know that his prophetic vision painted before him the marvellous Day when the two illuminated ones should descend to verify Christ's own loving symbol of the Sonship of man, and the Fatherhood of God.

He says again, "Many things I would say unto you, but ye cannot bear them, but he that comes after me, he will say them." No one knew better than Christ how much he left unsaid in his short, unwritten, oral message, yet he gave

the people all they could comprehend, and the fruit of his message, lying in their hearts has prepared them for much more. So today the prophets of the fulfilment in their imprisonment have written wonderful volumes of explanation and interpretation upon that great law of God his Messengers have revealed and we must apply. Bahá'u'lláh says in the *Íqán*, if the wisdom of God made known by his prophets were estimated according to the letters in the alphabet all that has been previously revealed would not represent more than the first two letters, while the present day in its fullness has given all of the remainder!

In the *Kitáb-el Aqdas* Bahá'u'lláh has laid down the outline on which our future social democracy shall be reared. They are the lines of advancement upon which the world is working everywhere now. In the *Íqán*, as has been previously said, he explains that wonder of the successive Manifestations of God which have enlightened the world. In the *Hidden Words* he speaks in inspired paragraphs uttered by the spirit which possessed him. In the *Seven Valleys* which, like the *Igham*, was written in one night in answer to a question propounded to him, he tells how the soul finds God, through what different states man passes in his search for the divine elixir. But these words are but a bald statement of this exquisite little book with its heavenly contents.

Bahá'u'lláh has written many volumes, of which comparatively few have yet been translated. Those which have already reached the western world are astonishing not only in their literary beauty, but in the power they possess to rouse the soul and fill the student with power to live. They are like a reincarnation and amplification of the words of Christ and Muḥammad, and of course that is exactly what they are. Besides these numerous volumes of Bahá'u'lláh we have the productions from the inspired pen of the Báb, and the remarkable letters or "tablets" of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which already would fill many pages of print, and the volume *Some Answered Questions*, which was written by Miss Barney after a year's residence in 'Akká, during which time she asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá in regard to those spiritual points which had troubled the minds of western believers. The book is full of light, and may be only one of many we may have from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Christ alluded to the future Manifestation under different names. He called him the Comforter, and the Christian critics have interpreted this as indicating the breathing of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men, which surely is a beautiful idea. But Christ speaks of the Comforter definitely as an individual. He says:

"But when the Comforter shall come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, he shall testify of me."

This has been particularly illustrated in Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l Baba, who though born under the Dispensation of Muḥammad have so testified of Christ that they have won his recognition from the Muḥammadan and Jewish worlds which previously either ignored him entirely, or refused to place him in the lofty station which was his.

Again Christ mentions the coming of one as the "Prince of this World." In the

30th verse of the 14th chapter of John, he says:

“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.”

In this passage ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says Christ’s reference is distinctly to Bahá’u’lláh, who came as a Manifestation of God, with no reflection of the personality of Jesus Christ. That is why Christ says “he has nothing in me.” It is a new personality upon whom the Divine Glory rests.

In the 11th verse of the 12th chapter of Matthew in response to his disciples’ inquiries, he says:

“ . . . . Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.”

He adds that Elias is already come “and they knew him not,” but it is evident that in his first remark he is not thinking of John, but of the Báb, that second Elias, for he truly did “restore all things,” winning an acceptance, and breaking the power of tradition as John the Baptist had not done. The Báb opened the minds of his generation to the truth so that the recognition of Bahá’u’lláh was a comparatively easy matter to thousands.

In the 27th verse of the 16th chapter of Matthew Christ says:

“For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his work.”

Does this not seem again like a curiously definite allusion to the wonderful Manifestation of to-day, when after “Elias” or the Báb has made his proclamation the Glory of God has rested upon these two illuminated ones who were literally father and son? The Son of man saw all things, the veils had disappeared from before his eyes, and clear outlines of the great events in distant ages were revealed to him.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE INSPIRING PRESENCE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ.

To many persons in the world the name of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or ‘Abbás Effendi is like a delightful volume open for perusal. The number of believers in his faith is very great and includes devotees from all the religions of the world, who in recognizing this wonderful Revelation of today have for the first time comprehended fully the meaning of the cult in which they were born and bred. So in the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá one meets Muḥammadan and Braham, Buddhist and Zoroastrian, Shintoist, Christian and Jew, Theosophist and Christian Scientist, all rejoicing in one another, and in the fresh and living understanding of questions human and divine which has come to them through the illumination of their union in the great Revelation that unites all worshippers and seekers for Truth.

In the Oriental countries and Russia there are at least twelve million who acclaim ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as their spiritual centre, and in the western world there are growing organizations of the movement in most of the principal cities. In Berlin, Paris, London, New York, Chicago, Kansas City, Denver, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles one finds vigorous centres of agitation. Washington, D. C., has a large Assembly, and in New York, Chicago, and Washington there are Bahá’í publishing houses, devoted to the translation and publication of the writings of the Revelators, and of everything connected with the propagation of the cult. The literature is issued in cheap though always attractive form, and sold at a cost which merely covers the expense of paper and printing, with the idea of bringing it within the reach of the thinnest pocketbook. No commercial feeling has touched the movement as yet, all its teachings are given with absolute freedom, there are no lessons to be paid for, and no college of teachers can demand a high price for services rendered.

Many travellers have visited ‘Akká, and have been entertained in the delightfully simple household of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but the record is yet to be made of one who has paid his board while there, or left a sum of money in the hand of his host or the “butler” at his departure. Yet each carries away with him a gift of inspiration, an impetus toward nobler living which it seems impossible to duplicate elsewhere in the visible world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is a man of medium height and slender figure, with an independent carriage, which gives an impression of greater stature than he actually possesses. He has a large and fine head, his brow is broad and high, his eyes wide apart, and of unusual size. They are unusual in other respects also, for they have a white line around the iris, from which the light seems to pour forth in his moments of excitement and happiness, rendering his face fairly luminous. The color of the eyes alters in singular fashion, being sometimes brown, again blue or gray, but always beautiful. The nose is aquiline, strong and intellectual, the mouth of good size, but delicate and exceedingly mobile, the chin oval, but full of power.

The countenance is that of an inspired idealist, but one who can compass also true practical knowledge. It is at once powerful and benignant, and one feels always an electric force about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which is both irresistible and loving. It is quite unlike that of magnetism, and has in it nothing of a hypnotic character. In fact, association with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has the effect of rousing the will and intelligence to a marked degree.

Like Bahá’u’lláh he is deeply interested in the progress of the world, and seems perfectly familiar with all that occurs outside of ‘Akká, though he has not left that city of his long confinement. His conversation, whether dealing with great questions or with individuals is always singularly luminous, and marked by brilliancy and eloquence of expression. In all his speech there is never a word that savors of “cant,” and he speaks of the “love of God” with such earnestness and fervor, that one realizes he is talking life, and that this is religion. One little utterance of this sort the author has never forgotten because it was spoken to



herself on the occasion of her visit to ‘Akká. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had been alluding to the restrictions of the life in ‘Akká, and went on to say:

“But we are all happy because we have the love of God in our hearts. When the heart is full of the love of God it loses consciousness of the body. Then pain is as pleasure, then darkness is as light! If such a one is shut in a prison there are no walls for him, no solitude, he knows not a prison!

“So the martyrs who have suffered for their faith, their hearts are so full of the love of God, their ears so penetrated by his songs of gladness, that they scarcely feel the blows inflicted upon them. It is as if the blow did not reach them, as if the sword could not cut them!

“That is what has preserved us here,” he added after a moment. “It is as if all the world is here in us—there is no world outside of our prison!”

It would be impossible to reproduce the tone of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s voice when he said: “He knows not a prison!” It rang with such sweetness and happiness that it seemed as if all the violins and flutes of earth, in the hands of the most perfect masters had combined to produce that sound. Yet the speaker had been a prisoner since he was nine years old, and was still a prisoner when he uttered the words.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá speaks Persian as a rule, though he converses freely in all the Oriental languages and is beginning to use those of the western world now that police restriction is lightened. He has half-a-dozen interpreters and translators in the household usually, and his youngest daughter, who speaks English exceedingly well, frequently acts as his intermediary with western women.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is married and has four daughters, three of whom are married, but all live in the house with him, and have preferred to share his confinement. The sons-in-law do business in Haifa, coming back and forth at will. The wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is a particularly sweet and motherly woman of very noble character. Another remarkable member of the circle is Behiah Khánun, who is called the Greatest Holy Leaf, an oriental title hardly comprehensible to western ears. She is the elder sister of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and has refused marriage because she could enjoy more complete freedom in the home of her brother than in an outside environment governed by Muḥammadan law. There is a deeper reason of course, for no one who has been privileged to live in the radius of a Messenger of God could ever prefer to leave it, and the Greatest Holy Leaf is an exceedingly gifted and sensitive person. She is tall and slender with wonderful blue eyes, in which all the sorrows and joys of the world seem to be mirrored, and a countenance which is fairly electric in its quick changes.

The ladies of the family are admirable housewives. They make all their own simple wearing apparel, by the aid of a sewing machine from the western world. They oversee the production of the kitchen for their many guests and are thoroughly hygienic in the cleanliness of their environment. They typify the modern saint, the conception of whom obliges us to revolutionize our entire spiritual cos-

mogony. A fashionable woman of the western world, as helpless as are some of these artificial dames, and as eager for spiritual culture, was caught in the gentle household without a trunk, and so handsomely garbed that she felt disgraced in the presence of the lovely simplicity that reigns there. The Greatest Holy Leaf thereupon made her a print dress with her own beautiful hands, which was a model for grace and adjustment. The western woman is still puzzling perhaps over the problem of how such profound spirituality can be associated with such excellent practical skill and sense, but in reality they are always found side by side.

This principle is one we see constantly illustrated in this household. It helps us to realize that we must no longer look for a man of God in seclusion, and as a recluse. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declares that the seeker finds God most truly if he seeks him as a citizen of the world, working with his brothers for the betterment of mankind.

We have learned that a Messenger of God must be a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” otherwise how could he know so well the sorrows of the world? But this man of sorrows must have learned the law of happiness, so that he radiates it upon all who approach him, and this is certainly true of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Melancholy could not reside under the same roof with him, and all who go to him find that they are learning lessons in regard to the necessity and the meaning of happiness which they never previously dreamed of, and it is a happiness not dependent at all upon the things of this world.

Although ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is a poor man his charities are manifold. He provides for many widows of the martyrs who have given their lives for the faith in recent years, and educates their children. Every Friday morning also he spends with the poor of ‘Akká, who gather in the large courtyard of the house and tell him their troubles, sure of a sympathetic hearing. ‘Akká has been simply a prison city so many years that there are no means of livelihood there for the very poor, so that much helpless poverty exists. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is not content to give merely money, however. He is well acquainted with all upon whom he bestows his gifts, and never fails to add the cheering and illuminating word, so that it is a suggestive spectacle to see his providing for his poor. It may be added that the poverty-stricken unfortunates who come thus to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are all Muḥammadans. They are of the people who have persecuted him during his entire life. No follower of Bahá’u’lláh is allowed to accept or demand charity. The Blessed Perfection said to his devotees:

“If you are in need call upon the bounty of God, and you will be relieved immediately, for God is rich, He is the Provider!”

Neither ‘Abdu’l-Bahá nor his family ever spend a penny upon luxury, because they are so deeply aware of the suffering they would like to relieve. The dress of the Center of the Covenant is always of the simplest, and a story is familiar which relates how the dear Holy Mother, as the wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is termed, schemed subtly to provide a more expensive coat for the man of God than the

one he usually wore. She felt that when he entertained the Governor of ‘Akká he should be garbed in a handsomer coat, and trusting to that unconsciousness of himself which is one of his characteristics, she planned to order a more costly garment from the tailor, and substitute it on the important morning for the one habitually worn. She believed that he would never know the difference. He is punctilious in cleanliness but that is all.

However, upon the morning in question ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went searching through the house in great excitement. “Where is my coat?

Where is my coat?” he cried, “someone has left me a coat which is not mine!”

The Holy Mother appeared and tried in vain to explain away the presence of the expensive coat. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was completely unreason-able upon the question of clothes.

“But think of this !” he exclaimed, “For the price of this coat you can buy five such as I ordinarily use, and do you think I would spend so much money upon a coat which only I shall wear? If you think I need a new one, very well, but send this back and have the tailor make me for this price five such as I usually have. Then you see, I shall not only have a new one, but I shall also have four to give to others!”

A little story of a friend’s experience reveals somewhat of the influence which contact with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá exercises upon character. She was a woman of fashionable rearing, full of noble theories, but a trifle inexperienced in their application because she had seen little of the world outside of her own particularly gentle circle. She had a beautiful little boy not quite a year old, to whom she gave all the devotion of a young mother. It happened one day she stood in the court of the house with the infant in her arms, when a Muḥammadan beggar woman wandered in. She was an unusually wretched specimen of her filthy class, and she approached the pretty American lady, sure of a generous “douceur” and attempted to caress the beautiful child.

Poor Mrs. A. had a sudden vision of all the most contagious and dreadful diseases which the unfortunate creature might transmit to her sweet baby, and fled swiftly to an inner room. She watched her assailant, however, fearing she might be followed, and meanwhile ‘Abdu’l-Bahá passed through the court. He paused to speak to the distressing woman, gave her some money and rested his hand caressingly upon her shoulder while he spoke to her. There are lepers among the waiting throng who come to him on Fridays, but he never seems to make any difference in his loving contact with them.

The woman was evidently grateful for the kindness of the “heretic” and said as she turned away, “I will pray for you!” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá bowed his head in thanks and went on evidently unconscious that he had done anything remark-able, but Mrs. A. stood looking, her eyes full of tears.

“He is the nearest to God of any man in the world!” she said to herself, “yet he thanked that rag of humanity for her prayers, and I would not even let her

touch my baby!"

Then all at once, as she stood there the class feeling fell away from her, she knew suddenly the meaning of brotherhood, and it has not left her since. She ran after the woman to try and catch her, but she had disappeared swiftly. Since then, however, she has found many others.

There are certain virtues which 'Abdu'l-Bahá is always insisting upon in his talks with others, and they are the same as those that Jesus counselled. We must not criticise, we must forgive, we must serve others. As an illustration of the humility he inculcates, and the nobility of service 'Abdu'l-Bahá always insists upon serving those who sit at his table, upon all occasions of any formality. He seems to say:

"If you would be stately, be above all things humble."

He has said so much upon this theme of service and "living the life" that his followers have gathered some of these precious words into a little leaflet which has gone far and wide. It is headed:

"By these things shall ye know the faithful servant of God."

"To live the life. To be no cause of grief to anyone.

"To love each other very much.

"To be kind to all people, and to love them with a pure spirit.

"Should opposition or injury be done to us, we must bear it, and be as kind as ever we can be, and through it all we must love the people. Should calamity exist in the greatest degree, we must rejoice, for these things are the gifts and favors of God.

"To be silent concerning the faults of others, to pray for them, and help them, through kind-ness, to correct their faults.

"To look always at the good and not at the bad. If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, we must look at the ten and forget the one. And if a man has ten bad qualities, and one good one, we must look at the one and forget the ten.

"To never allow ourselves to speak one unkind word about another, even though that other be our enemy.

"To rebuke those who speak to us about the faults of others.

"All of our deeds must be done in kindness.

"To be occupied in spreading the Teachings for only thorough obedience to this command 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said will we receive the power and confirmation of the Spirit; and that whosoever is granted this power and confirmation of the Spirit is under the Favor of God, but otherwise he is as a lamp without light. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also said that, "every seed cast in this great and magnificent period

will be cultivated by God, and produce plants, through the abundance of the clouds of his mercy.”

“To cut our hearts from ourselves and from the world.

“To be humble.

“To be servants of each other, and to know that we are less than anyone else.

“To be as one soul in many bodies; for the more we love each other the nearer we are to God ; but our love, our unity, our obedience must be not by confession but of reality.

“To act with cautiousness and wisdom.

“To be truthful.

“To be hospitable.

“To be reverent.

“To be a cause of healing for every sick one ; a comforter for every sorrowing one; a pleasant water for every thirsty one ; a heavenly table for every hungry one; a guide for every seeker ; a light for every lamp; rain for cultivation ; a star to every Horizon; a Herald to every yearning one for the Kingdom of God.”

In illustration of the admonition against criticism ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is very fond of telling an apocryphal story of Jesus Christ. It runs something like this:

One day as the Saviour was walking in the country with his disciples, they passed the car-case of a dead dog, in an advanced state of decay. Each one expressed in different fashion his disgust at the spectacle. One commented upon the dreadful odor, another upon the swollen and disgusting flesh, etc., etc. Jesus said nothing of all these things, but approaching the creature took a stick and poked out its jaw from the mass of decaying substance.

“See,” He remarked suddenly, “how white and brilliant are the dog’s teeth!”

This shows us, comments ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that we can always find some good point to enlarge upon, even among the most distressing and wicked people. We can call attention to the dog’s teeth!

In illustration of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s long patience under injuries, a patience which must always be loving and cheerful as he insists, the persecution of an old Muḥammadan fakir is recalled. He was fanatically religious and also exceedingly poor. He stood always at the door of the Mosque, and never lost an opportunity to abuse and curse ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whom he regarded as a dangerous and pestiferous heretic. The Servant of God pitied his misery, and every morning sent him a basket of food, which was sufficient to last him for the day. Every morning when the tempting basket was presented to him, the fakir virtuously kicked it into the ditch, and cursed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá anew. This went on for twenty-three years, until at last one morning when the attendant brought the basket of food and placed it gently beside him, the contumacy of the old

fakir disappeared. He burst into tears, he seized the basket of food, ran with it to the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and would have prostrated himself if he had been permitted, exclaiming:

“Oh forgive me for all my wickedness, and let me serve you, for I know that God is in you! Only God could show such kindness!”

One of the peculiarities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is his dislike for forms and ceremonies, and his distaste of all that savors of officialism. The love and reverence of those about him is so extreme that if it were not for this pronounced determination of the opposite character they would long since have constituted him a high priest in his own world at least. Not long since an unusually large and dignified company of pilgrims had arrived at ‘Akká, and it was planned to receive them in the beautiful garden of the Riḍván. It is the custom of the country to wash, the hands always before any important ceremony, before prayers, before eating, etc. It is a Muḥammadan custom, and these little formalities of the people ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is always careful not to disdain.

Upon this occasion, however, the friends had arranged a very charming and, as they thought, effective ceremony at the reception of the pilgrims. They sent a beautiful boy in advance of the company, bearing a highly polished pewter bowl, a handsome bronze pitcher, and a clean damask towel, scented with attar of rose. The intention was that the Servant of God should make a noble function of the simple ablution of his hands, and all would enjoy it, and reverence him the more. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá saw the procession coming, however, and divined immediately what was in the air. There was a trough with a pipe for watering the flowers at the end of the garden, and a much soiled towel hung there for the convenience of anyone who needed to wash the hands. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ran hastily to the trough, performed a most informal cleansing and then rushed back to love the dusty pilgrims, and pass them most hospitably the beautiful pewter bowl, and the rose scented towel. So there was no function except the spiritual meeting which he always delights in, and he had the pleasure of seeing others enjoy the pretty bowl, the clear water, and the fragrant towel.

The tenor of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life is broken by many wonderful occurrences which the world calls “miracles,” but their producer himself declares that miracles do not exist. There are laws of which we have hardly begun to understand the application and use, like the law of the 4th dimension, and things previously unheard of and impossible may be accomplished by new knowledge or illumination in such directions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is not a “healer” and declares that his own mission is to the soul of man, and not to the body, yet many who have suffered illness in his house have been healed, sometimes in dramatic and astonishing fashion. One instance in particular illustrates this: An American lady was on her way to ‘Akká, and while waiting at Haifa with her little family, was taken violently ill with typhoid fever. Everything was done for her that nurses and physicians could compass, but nothing touched the disease, which appeared in its most virulent phase, and

seemingly must “run its course.”

One day during the afternoon the daughters of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to see the American lady, and distressed at her suffering, they said as they left:

“Have no fear. We will tell our Lord (for so they spoke of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) and at twelve o’clock tonight you will be relieved.”

During the afternoon and evening there was no alteration in the invalid’s condition, and anxiety constantly deepened, but suddenly at midnight the patient turned to her husband and exclaimed, “I feel better ! So much better!”

“What time is it?” he cried instantly, and it was five minutes after twelve.

She fell asleep almost immediately, and rose the next morning as well as she had ever been.

Meanwhile all who have gone to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in illness have received instructions which have resulted sometimes in physical healing, always in spiritual restoration. There are numberless instances of his clear seeing, but he uses such power only when it is necessary to save a soul, or help another, never in phenomenal fashion. Not long since, a woman believer in the Orient was in great trouble. Her husband did not accept the truth to which she had given her heart, and moreover opposed it violently, and dilemmas and tribulations thickened upon her until she felt that if she did not go to ‘Akká and see the center of the mighty movement in which her faith rested, she could not live. So she begged her husband’s permission for the journey, and wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This modern iconoclast laughed at her, and said:

“I will let you go to this man by whom you are deluded if he will perform a miracle, but he can not do it! I am perfectly safe in my promise! I will write a series of questions and lay the envelope containing them in my safe. Then I will put a blank sheet of paper in your letter. You will say nothing in explanation of its presence, and anyway you would not know what I ask! If he answers my questions, you can go to ‘Akká!”

The poor lady was helpless to oppose the trick, which she would never have countenanced, so her letter came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá containing a blank sheet of paper. The mail at ‘Akká is so voluminous that it is always opened and arranged by one of the young secretaries and on the morning when this missive arrived the gentleman in attendance called ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s attention to it.

“How strange!” he cried. “Here is a letter containing a blank sheet of paper!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá took it and laughed. “This is a test imposed upon me!” he explained. “Let us attend to the matter without delay!”

So he dictated a response to the unfortunate lady and then one to her husband. In the letter he spoke most lovingly to the scoffing querist, answered categorically the puzzles propounded, and opened his soul to light, so that as soon as possible

he accompanied his wife to 'Akká, and became a devout and earnest believer, ensuring happiness to his wife as well as himself.

The experience of Miss Sarah Farmer, of Greenacre fame, is a similar one and well known to many persons. Miss Farmer, like the Oriental questioner, perhaps needed the revelation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's illumination to ensure her certainty in his great mission. She had many problems to submit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and fearing she might forget something of importance in the excitement of her important interview, she spent the preceding night in pouring out her soul in a written review of her life to lay before this illuminated adviser. She then carefully wrote out fifteen questions to ask him, and laid the paper containing them in her Bible.

At five in the morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent for her, and I quote the words of Mírzá Raffi, the young Persian interpreter, who Englished this famous interview. Mírzá Raffi accompanied Miss Farmer to 'Akká and thus first came in contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, though he had accepted his teaching some time previously. She had encountered him in Cairo, and he had been delegated to attend her by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, the famous teacher who had instructed her in the faith.

In her perturbation caused by this early summons, Miss Farmer had left all her documents so anxiously tabulated, on the table of the chamber she vacated to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When she was seated in his presence he turned to Mírzá Raffi and said:

"Tell Miss Farmer that this is the answer to her first question," and went on with an explanation.

Mírzá Raffi had not heard any question, and hesitated in his translation, whereupon 'Abbás Effendi repeated with an insistence which could not be set aside, his previous statement, adding, "she will understand!" Then the interpreter translated the words addressed to him. The succeeding question was next discussed, and so on to the end of the list which was reposing quietly in the Bible of the deserted upper apartment. The written order was adhered to, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to his questioner with such exaltation that she was amazed. He went on to allude to many subjects confided to her paper, but not placed in his hands. It was not merely that he knew the words inscribed, but that he lifted their burden from her soul, and all her being was stirred. She burst into tears at length, strange tears of ecstatic happiness, and went to her room to recover the composure which had been shaken by these surprising and illuminating events.

Such instances might be multiplied, for this heavenly gift of breaking the bonds of the flesh in those who come to him is experienced by many guests of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is the wakening which for the first time gives true life, so that after it has been felt the previous existence seems like death, and this awakening is the most precious result of contact with the Servant of God. Necessarily one does not need the journey to 'Akká to experience it, for the gift and the contact are spiritual. As a result of transformation of tendencies, an enlightenment of temperament must follow, which will be evidenced in the life of the individual.



Perhaps the character of this is illustrated by the blessing which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote for a musician who was recently in ‘Akká:

“O God!

“Make this servant melodious, attuned with the airs of the Supreme Concourse, and confer upon him a thrilling and resounding voice, like the nightingale of hidden meanings in the Divine Rose Garden.”

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ.

It is rather a remarkable thing that the three great leaders of the Bahá’ist movement with their pure spiritual principles should all have been married men. The ascetic celibacy of Jesus Christ, the open resignation of the married state by Gotama Buddha, together with the attitude of the early church in regard to woman, and the celibate tendency of most spiritual societies has created a feeling more or less freely expressed that the single state is better for holy living than that of sex union. The result has been a somewhat morbid condition of the human mind upon this absorbing question of sex. It was evident that men and women needed to do more thinking as to its true status, and familiarity with this wide-spread religious upheaval begun by the True One in 1844 must certainly have such an effect.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says no one need fear marriage for the law of sex is a part of the divine arrangement in this phenomenal outer world, and its rational and righteous use fits every human being better for the sphere to which he or she belongs. The abused law brings dire consequences which he must suffer who has become subject to them, but the abuse proves nothing against the value of the law itself.

Our traditional image of a Messenger of God is created largely by the asceticism of the early church, which in its eagerness to be detached from the world fled from it into the wilderness. So the holy men like beloved Saint Francis of Assisi feared the charm of women, feared all the beauty and loveliness of the universe, so that they flew from it as from an enchantress. St. Francis was happy, however, he was too near his Saviour not to have learned that lesson, and if he had walked the pathways of Judea with Christ in his short and painful pilgrimage he would no doubt have seen him laugh with his disciples many times, and he would have caught the same wonderful light in his eyes as that which now and then illuminates the countenance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When we realize what it means to be near to God, we understand that an individual so blessed cannot always have tears in the eyes!

For many years ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has carried on an enormous correspondence, touching all portions of the globe, and nothing is more wonderful than to see him

dictating his letters to a corps of stenographers. Perhaps the guest who witnesses this strange spectacle has visited the ancient French city of Tours, where, on the edge of the town, the eternal hills preserve a series of cells hollowed out of the rocks by human hands. In these cells dwelt St. Martin with his little band of faithful followers. He came from Rome in the fourth century of our era, and it was by his scholarly hand that the rock was dug out to afford him a most cheer-less habitation. But he deserted ease and culture to convert the barbarians to Christianity, and we can be certain he was happy in his work. We see here the holes which the Saint had scooped from the stone to hold his rosary, and prayer book, we see the stone slab where he slept, and all the lonely seclusion in which he labored for the salvation of the "heathen" in that primitive day.

Utterly selfless he was, and forgetful of all but the glorious message entrusted to him. His miracles were always those of love. Once when he had given away even the garments he wore, and his nakedness was only covered by a cloak, a beggar asked him for that, and he instantly tore it in two portions, presenting the beggar, we may be sure, with the larger half! Is it strange after such examples of courage and deprivation that we should think of a divine man ever as a lonely celibate?

But the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá offers a brilliant example of the same virtues, and has been spent constantly in a crowded center, so that he has no hours of solitude except those he snatches from an almost necessary slumber, after he has sought the little chamber at the top of his house.

His correspondence is carried on in a large room in the lower story where five or six stenographers await him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá seldom dictates one letter at a time. As a rule his stenographers sit in a line. He begins at one end with the paragraph of a letter destined perhaps for America, pauses at the next, and begins one for Persia, pauses again with some words for a believer in Turkey, and so on down the succession of busy paragraphers. More surprising than all he frequently carries on a lively conversation while in the act of dictating. He addresses a guest who is watching the performance, and discusses the Cause in America, maybe, while he is writing to the survivor of Persian massacres. The dictation is always in the oriental languages of the individuals to whom the tablets are addressed, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá will spring from Turkish to Aramaic, then into Persian or Arabic without an instant's hesitation, but if he is sending to a western country, he speaks in swift Persian and the stenographer translates the epistle which reaches its consignee in both languages.

Meanwhile the missives are despatched, and each one is so psychologically attuned to the person to whom it is written that it would seem as if it could only be indited by someone familiar with every detail of the recipient's life and soul. Yet in all probability 'Abdu'l-Bahá has received merely a formal expression of faith from his correspondent. The letter has been filed away in a cabinet with thousands of others, and on the morning it was answered, 'Abdu'l-Bahá took it out from the mass of papers, and despatched his reply because he felt that the

psychologic moment had arrived when the stranger so far away needed the vital touch of his dynamic spirit.

The writer has read countless letters of this sort, so wonderful in their tenderness, penetration and insight, that it would seem as if they could only be dictated after profound meditation upon the subject or individual involved. Yet all are written in the swift, apparently careless, fashion described, but when the happy recipient peruses his own, he knows that there was no carelessness in its composition. Each missive is a shred of illumination from the great Messenger, and could not fail of its fine intent.

A proof of this illumination is seen in the enormous spread of this remarkable movement in spite of the persecution and imprisonment of all its leaders. The cause has grown from the simple power of the Divine Word from their lips. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says this is the final test of the reality of the True One. Healing and miracles of various sorts are always connected with the appearance of a Manifestation of God, but none except such a Manifestation speaks the Divine Word, and once spoken it is whispered from lip to lip in spite of all the obstacles which blind humanity heaps against its progress.

So the Word of Christ, not a syllable of it written, dropped into the ears of the ignorant fishermen about him, and after centuries it has transformed civilization. Likewise the Word of Muḥammad preserved in the eloquent sentences of the Qur’án reappeared in the splendid efflorescence of Moorish culture which was blighted and slain by the iron hand of Spanish theology.

No barriers could have been reared higher than those which have been piled against the extension of the Báb’s message, and that of Bahá’u’lláh. In the beginning the martyrdom of the Báb’s followers must have distanced the sufferings of the early Christians. Then for a time persecution ceased, and did not break forth afresh until after the death of Bahá’u’lláh. Once more it appeared however, incited by the narrowness and jealousy of the Muḥammadan clergy, and the agonies of the believers were frightful almost up to the moment when the adoption of the Persian constitution seemed to promise hope to the tortured ones.

Even then the plotting against the “friends” went on. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with that clear sight which apparently nothing escapes warned his devoted adherents that the Mullás were planning to gain the ear of the Sháh, and they realized too late the truth of his prediction. Meanwhile the direful calamity of the new Sháh’s reactionary policy proved in the end a blessing for the Bahá’ís, because the thorough shaking up of the nation laid bare the secret scheming of the Mullás, and put the people on their guard.

This same reactionary Sháh, while in the height of his quarrel with the people, wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asking him what he saw as the result of the trouble, and what course of action he would recommend. Whereupon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent the Sháh a remarkable letter in which he assured him that in this day of the Manifestation of God, tyranny can no longer be tolerated, that if he would

preserve the liberties of his people and restore the constitution he might look forward to a long and glorious reign, but if he persisted in his reactionary policy, disaster must overtake him, and he would be forced to abdicate. This advice, of course, the Sháh refused to follow, and the prognostication of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was speedily fulfilled.

Among the many martyrs who have been tortured to death in Persia because they believed in the new day, the name of the youth Badi‘ will always be remembered. At the time that Bahá’u’lláh sent his letters of announcement to the crowned heads of Europe, he prepared such a paper for the Sháh of Persia, and asked who would carry it. He frankly said that the mission was one of death, for the bearer of this great message would not be allowed to escape with his life. A number of young men clamored eagerly for the honor, but Badi‘ was permitted to go. He had seemed rather dull and unresponsive, though he had given his faith to the resplendent cause. Now he begged so ardently for the privilege of the perilous adventure that it was granted him.

He delivered the packet into the hand of the Sháh as he had been commissioned to do, was promptly seized and thrown into prison, whence he was led forth only to his death. He was tortured by the laying of white hot bricks on his palpitating body, but instead of shrieking with the pain, he gave every evidence of joy in the progress of the execution, seized the bricks himself and applied them to his burning and smoking flesh while he sang songs and laughed aloud as if he were experiencing the most exquisite pleasure. The ecstasy of his death was such that his name is mentioned with tears of mystical joy by those who chronicle his history, and many were led to embrace the faith for which he died by his endurance of the tortures heaped upon him.

In fact this has been the constant result of the martyrdoms, the Friends of God have suffered and the Muḥammadans acknowledge that they live up to their title. The only fault of a martyr lies in the fact that he is a “friend.” Ḥaydar-‘Alí has witnessed the execution of many martyrs and declares that the Presence of God is so manifest in the joy of their departure that numbers of the attending crowd disperse but to seek out the Bahá’ís and learn the meaning of a faith that can so eliminate the horror of death!

He tells of a young man, who, when his valuables were taken from him secreted five pounds in gold, or twenty-five dollars, sewing the coins into his coat so that they could be easily extracted. It is customary in Persia to present such a gift to the man who gives away the bride in the marriage ceremony. As he stepped upon the place of death, he turned to the executioner, and proffered him the gold, saying, in clear and happy tones:

“Accept this gift, because you are taking me to my bride!”

Another youth as he went up the stairs to the gallows, remarked to the headsman: “I will give you something before I die!”

The functionary made a jeering response, for it is the rule to strip the victim

of all money and jewels before leading him to execution. When the young man's turn came the executioner struck him with the axe but did not entirely decapitate him. Instantly he caught two handfuls of blood and extended them to his death dealer, crying in a perfectly audible voice which all could distinguish:

"I said I would make you a gift! Here it is!"

Ḥaydar-ʿAlí has written a touching history of the recent martyrdoms in Persia which were suffered in 1903. These have been instigated by the greed of provincial officials, and the bigotry of the Muḥammadan clergy. The Mullás are powerful and wealthy men enraged at the rapid spread of the faith which will wipe out their official existence. They are eager, therefore, to continue the persecution of the Friends of God, and whenever they can find the governor of a province whose cupidity can be roused, they paint before his cruel and greedy eyes a flaming picture of the wealth that may be his through confiscation alone, if he will persecute the Bahá'ís. The latter are often found among the wealthy class, and it is these who are the first victims as a rule.

Then when the thirst for blood has been roused the lowest elements of the population rush into loot and riot, and before order can be restored numbers have been slain. Frequently the governor is in secret alliance with the rioters, because after the men have been murdered, and sometimes women and children also, he appropriates to himself the property that should have provided for their defenseless families.

The household of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá is the refuge of these afflicted people, and the Servant of God always sees that the children are educated and the mourning wives comforted. The Friends of God have learned very positively the habit of sharing with one another, and they never seem to prize money except for what it will do to increase the well being of the world.

The following extract from a beautiful chant written by ʿAbdu'l-Bahá in honor of a recent martyr reveals the feeling with which these agonies are regarded.

"Blessed is the pure blood which was shed on the perfumed soil, and which was poured out in the path of the forgiving Lord! Blessed is thy body which was burned by the hand of every transgressor! Blessed is thy throat which was cut by the poniard of every traitor! Blessed is thy breast which was stricken by the oppressors' darts! Blessed is thy heart which was wounded by a sharp sword! Blessed art thou, for thou hast showed forth all happiness and joy when thou wast being paraded in the streets of the people of arrogance, and the wicked ones were clapping their hands and oppressing thee with innumerable blows and wounds, while thou wert clapping thy hands with them. O, thou manifest of light! And wert warbling melodies, whereby the people of the Kingdom of El-Abhá were moved and breasts were dilated with joy."

During the life of Bahá'u'lláh he gave the name of Zeal) or 'Wolf to one of the prominent Muḥammadan Mullás, and that of Ebn Zeab or 'Wolf's Son to his descendant, though this man had not then displayed the qualities of his

father. It was the latter who inaugurated the atrocities of Iṣfahán. Though he is popularly called Ebn Zeab, his name is Shaykh Taqí. He forged a telegram from the prime minister of Persia, of which he had four hundred flaming copies posted on the walls of Iṣfahán, one night. It read:

“Shaykh Taqí must protect the religion of Islám!” and as he well knew it acted as an incitement to the persecution of the Friends of God, especially as the town was filled with rumors of rioting against the Bahá’ís in the neighboring city of Rasht.

The first victim was one of the most honored citizens of the locality. He was a refuge to the poor and suffering and beloved by everyone. He was literally chopped to pieces by the mob. With his last breath he cried out: “You have done me no harm!

You are only transmitting me to my Lord!”

The devoted people took refuge in the Russian consulate, which was the only place open to them, and there they remained until a letter from the governor was read to them, begging them to return to their homes and assuring them of protection. Thereupon they ventured forth, but the mob was awaiting them, fell upon them with merciless rage, and seventy people were killed outright, besides hundreds who were wounded and maltreated.

In Yezd the rioting was incited again by a Mullá, who recited as an urge to massacre the bloody tale of what had been done in Rasht and Iṣfahán.

It is a strange and rather distressing psycho-logical fact that the non-resistance of the Bahá’ís which at first acted as a deterrent from persecution, has seemed in later years to appeal only to the basest motives of the commonwealth, and serve as an incentive to abuse. The persecutor seems to say:

“I may as well get what I can out of the Friends of God, as they will not resist I can take my fill of slaughter and spoil!”

The first victim at Yezd was a little child of eleven years, whose father was a tin smith and kept a shop of that description. He was frankly a “friend.” The teacher of the school where the child was instructed secretly suggested to the pupils that they attack the innocent boy, and when he ran to his superior for protection, the latter commanded him to curse his religion and deny it. This the child refused to do, showing remarkable courage and self control. He said:

“I am only a school boy, knowing nothing of the reality of things! How can I stain my lips with a curse?”

Whereupon the inhuman monster who was his instructor set upon the child with the swarm of pupils. They beat him with sticks, slashed him with their pen knives, bored into his tender flesh with awls, pierced him with needles until he died. During the frightful ordeal of this slow anguish, which, as may be seen was quite unofficial, the boy kept repeating: “Oh, Most Glorious God! Oh, My Supreme Beloved!” and not a complaint escaped his childish lips. After the

orgy of sacrifice was over, the teacher himself, and the pupils who assisted in the massacre expressed their amazement at the superhuman fortitude of the little one.

While the teacher had been taking his pleasure with the son, the rioting crowd invaded the shop of the tin smith, destroyed his property, beat his wife, tormented his babies, and carried away the unfortunate man himself, amused with the tortures they inflicted upon him.

Arrived at a butcher shop they seized the meat axes, and proceeded to chop him with these, until just before life was extinct he was rescued by a trooper of the governor who came along, and carried him bleeding and senseless to the governor's court. Meanwhile the crowd had beaten to death in the same way the uncle of the tin smith, and discovering that three members of one family had thus been slaughtered, these cruel men tied the helpless bodies together, and dragged them about the town as honorable trophies of victory. They seemed to feel a morbid and rabid delight in thus prolonging the sensations of blood-shed which had been roused by the murders.

It would be easy to multiply such examples, for about a hundred and seventy people were massacred in this horror of Yezd, but western readers cannot endure even the recapitulation of such agonies, though they sit quietly through commercial tragedies which are but another phase of power in ecstasy.

The courage of the victims who died had been nourished by such food as that given in Bahá'u'lláh's letter to Zeab, the Wolf, father of Shaykh Taqí:

"Hast thou imagined we are afraid of thy cruelty? Know ye, and be assured, from the first day that the sound of the Supreme Pen arose, we gave up our lives, our souls, our children in the Path of God, the Supreme, the Great! And ever this fact we boast in glory among all creatures, and the Supreme Concourse, and to this, what bath befallen us in this straight Path beareth witness. In truth, hearts are melted, bodies are crucified, blood is shed, while the eyes are gazing toward the horizon of the bounty of their Lord, the Seer and the Omniscient! With the increase of calamity, the people of Bahá grow in love. And to their sincerity bears witness that which the Merciful one has revealed in the Qur'án, saying: 'If ye be sincere, seek death!'

"Which one is better, he who conceals himself to preserve his life, or he who sacrifices his life in the Path of God? Be just, and not of those who are lost in the wilderness of falsehood. Verily they are intoxicated with the wine of His Divine Love to such an extent that the guns of the world cannot prevent them, nor the swords of the nations hinder them from turning to the ocean of the gifts of their Lord, the Tender, the Generous. By the Truth of God! Calamity has not weakened me, nor have the objections of the ulemas enfeebled me. I declared, and am declaring in the face of all the world: Verily the gates of Bounty are opened, the Sun of Justice has appeared with evident signs and clear proofs from the Pen of God, the Omnipotent, the Self Existent!"

Again he says:

“Blessed is he who has suffered hardships for my name’s sake, and was not prevented by the world from entering my Court! Blessed is he who enters my Kingdom, perceiving the dominion of my power and Might, drinking from the sea of my Utterances, being informed of my Command, and what is concealed in the Treasury of my Words, and who has shown forth from the Horizon of Significances my Commemoration, and my Praise! Verily he is from me, and upon him be my mercy, my bounty, my favor and my benediction!”

As the devoted ones were slaughtered some cried out:

“Is there no one to witness how I offer up my life?” and others said: “We have found the Glory, for whose Glory we pay the price of our blood!”

One greeted his assassin with “Good Bye! May God preserve you!” and received his death blow upon the mouth while the sentence was half uttered.

A tall handsome youth exclaimed as he saw himself surrounded by fiercest enemies:

“Oh, tonight is my wedding, and I am to obtain the beloved of my heart! And the desire of my soul!”

We cannot but be reminded of Christ’s words:

“Blessed are they who are persecuted for Righteousness’ sake, for their’s is the Kingdom of Heaven.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name’s sake.”

“Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you!”

These bloody persecutions are more incomprehensible, more inexcusable when one realizes how well known is the beautiful life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá throughout Persia and the Orient, and how wide is his reputation for noble character and illumination. The letter of the deposed Sháh illustrates this, for though he is a narrow Muḥammadan he could not resist calling for the help of this one to whom every one appeals in his most dire straits.

So much has been written as to the teaching and inculcation of ideas by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, his own expression has already become so manifold in many directions through his beautiful and illuminating letters or “tablets,” as they are called by the believers, that one is almost over-whelmed by the wealth of detail and the difficulty of selection in this direction. The book of Miss Barney, *Some Answered Questions* is exceedingly satisfactory. Miss Barney lived a year in ‘Akká, in order to have constant access to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and receive the answers to such



questions as western inquirers generally ask as to modern phases of religious truth.

The volume covers a wide field, and is full of suggestive and inspiring nuggets of wisdom. No one can ever read the chapter in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains the nature of God, and afterwards cherish the notion that the Bahá’íst conception of God is that of a personality. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes it very clear that God is the divine spirit penetrating, permeating and controlling everything. He is both manifest and unmanifest, in his essence far removed from human comprehension, but revealed always through that lovely and luminous succession of Messengers or Manifestations who have lifted the mind of man to the gradually refining and broadening apprehension of the Divine which it is capable of today.

Many readers might completely misunderstand the expression of Bahá’u’lláh and of the Báb who frequently speak of themselves as God. For instance Bahá’u’lláh often utters ecstatic phrases like:

“Blessed is the eye which is enlightened by my Beauty! Blessed is the ear which hears my melodies! Blessed is the affrighted one who hastens to the shelter of My Name! Blessed is the thirsty one who seeks the nectar of My Benedictions!”

Or he says in the Hidden Words:

“Oh, Son of Man!

“Let thy satisfaction be in Myself, and not in those who are inferior to Me, and seek not help from any beside me, for nothing beside Me will ever satisfy thee.”

“Oh, Son of Existence

“My Bowl thou art, and My Light is in thee ; Therefore be enlightened by it, and seek not any beside Me, for I have created thee rich, and bestowed abundantly Grace upon thee.”

We forget that John said “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

Christ himself said, John, 3, 34, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

It is thus the language of God which comes to us through his Messenger, but that does not mean that the Messenger is a personal God. He is the Wonderful One upon whom the Spirit rests, and the Spirit using his lips utters the Truth of God.

In his reality God is the Environer, we cannot escape him, says ‘Abdu’l Baba, because He is in all, the manifest, and supremely the unmanifest, the invisible, the marvellous!

In speaking of immortality, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses the beautiful symbol of a bird in the cage. It is accustomed to its confinement, where food and drink are always provided, perhaps it does not know its limitation. But suddenly the door is

opened, it is outside! It is free! It can spread its wings, and fly where it will. What joy in comparison with its former state!

Such is the soul with regard to this life and the next, he declares, and in the beauty of the illustration we perceive also its significance, for if the bird has been lamed by the life of the cage, if it can no longer fly nor seek its food, it will suffer in the first hours of the freedom it has attained. It behooves us therefore to keep our wings in order, that we may be ready to fly when the door is opened.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has been asked innumerable questions in regard to spiritual things, and some of his answers are very beautiful. For instance a lady once demanded of him:

“Are the gifts of clairvoyance, and clairaudience true, and can we attain them?”

He said thoughtfully:

“I think we should learn to live in the body as if it were a glass case, through which we can look clearly on all sides. But we must remember that we cannot see through glass unless it is clean, and no one can dust his own case but himself.”

At another time he was confronted with an inquiry as to the reality of spiritual healing, and gave a most illuminating analysis of the different modes of restoration; physical healing, which we must seek through the physician, mental and spiritual healing. He said we must not despise the physician, for he is often ‘the messenger of God for our restoration. Moreover the wisdom of God has distributed healing agencies through the physical world in mineral and plant life, which it is the gift of the wise physician to discover. He said that the remarkable discoveries in the physical conquest of disease in recent years were a part of the world’s advancement under its new law, also that we are learning so much of the restorative and upbuilding elements in food, that in the future we shall know how to keep the body in its natural condition of health merely through the use of proper food.

Mental healing, he went on to explain, is excellent, and illustrates the influence of one mind upon another, though the suggestion is not necessarily audible. This inaudible suggestion, he declared, is often confounded with spiritual healing, but it is very different. In spiritual healing the soul attains to union with God, and the healing is perfect. This may be an individual experience, or one person may lift another, through the power of exaltation and prayer, into the divine atmosphere. Then as the body is filled with light through the elevation of the spirit, every imperfection disappears. This is the only perfect and permanent healing, he added, all else is a means of cure, but in the spiritual healing, the soul is purified, and through that purification the body is completely restored.

A beautiful extract from one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letters intensifies his interpretation of spiritual and mental healing. He speaks very strongly in this communication of the gifts of the spirit, of the difference between the outward and inward voice, etc. Then he says:

“Then know thou that the power of the Word of God is effective, both in the spirit and the body, and the influence of the Spirit of God is predominant over the material as well as the essential and spiritual. And that verily God is powerful in all things, and that the utterances have exoteric and esoteric meaning, and neither their outward prevents their inward, nor their inward their outward meaning.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has been asked many times in regard to the existence of evil, and his reply seems to have brought consternation to those who prefer to see power resting in the material rather than the spiritual universe. Here is a portion of one little discussion of this very broad subject:

“The darkness spoken of in the Bible as being created by God, signifies that verily God has not caused light to shine there! inasmuch as when there is no light there is darkness ; when there is no sight there will be blindness ; when there is no life there will be death ; when there is no riches there will be poverty ; when there is no knowledge there will be ignorance.

“Consequently it is proven by indisputable argument and clear explanation that verily evils are non-existent, but people have not understood the meaning of the verses of the Bible.”

Another letter is evidently written in response to some queries as to the study of psychic phenomena, and is illuminating in various directions. He says:

“As to him whom thou hast mentioned in thy letter: It behooveth him to seek only the divine bounties, and subjects which lead to the real knowledge of the invisible world of God, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. Then he will perceive the reality of the triune powers in man, through his innate perception. For verily the signs of these triune powers which exist in mankind are spirit, mind and soul. The spirit is the power of life; the mind is the power which apprehends the reality of things ; and the soul is an intermediary between the Supreme Concourse (the spiritual world) and the lower concourse (material world). The soul has two phases—the higher aspires to the kingdom of El Bella, and the lights of the mind shine forth from that kingdom into its higher sphere. The other phase inclines to the lower concourse of the material world, and its lowest, sphere is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance ; but when light is poured upon this phase, and if this phase of the soul is capable of receiving it, then “truth hath come and falsehood vanishes, for falsehood is of short duration.” Otherwise darkness will surround it from all directions, and it will be deprived of association with the Supreme Concourse, and will remain in the lowest depths.

“As to the ‘voice.’ There are two kinds of voices, one is the physical voice, and it is expressed by atmospheric vibrations which affect the nerves of the ear. The other is the Breath of the Merciful, and this is a call which is continually heard from the Supreme Concourse, and cheers the pure and holy souls. May it be beneficial to those who have heard the Call!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá teaches that what he terms the Supreme Concourse is that mighty

galaxy of intelligences which we have crudely named Heaven. It is the union of angels or powers which are the agents of the Divine One for the ruling of the universe, and is the center of illumined spirits. To that center we may all be united, for its “call” is ringing ever within us, ringing with an especial clearness in the Day of the Manifestation of God. The soul may choose its own guides, as the passage indicates, which has just been quoted, and happy is the one who has clarified into that higher phase where the divine signals are both visible and audible.

A very remarkable tablet or letter was received several years ago by Mrs. and Mr. Dealy, of Alabama, and was addressed especially to the little congregation of the faith which they had founded. It is an admirable illustration of that eloquence which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sometimes makes use of, and is full of significant allusions. It is as follows:

“When the darkness of ignorance and the heedlessness concerning the Realm of Eternity and bereavement from the True One had encircled the universe, then the resplendent Luminary dawned, and the Brilliant Light illumined the horizon of the East. Hence the Sun of Reality shone forth, scattering the sparkling Lights of the Kingdom to the East and to the West. Those who had the seeing eyes, found the Most Great Glad Tidings, began to cry the Call, ‘Oh, Blessed are we!’ ‘Oh, Blessed are we!’ and have beheld the reality of things themselves, have discovered the Mysteries of the Kingdom, were released from superstition and doubts, perceived the lights of Truth, and became so intoxicated with the Cup of the Love of God, that wholly forgetting the world and themselves while dancing, they ran with utmost joy and ecstasy to the city of martyrdom, sacrificing their minds and their lives upon the Altar of Love.

“But those who were blinded became astonished, and on account of these joyous acclamations were bewildered and began to cry, ‘Where is the Light?’ and said, ‘We do not behold any light, we do not see any Rising Sun! It is void of any truth! This is pure imagination!’

“However they have hastened bat-like to the darkness below the ground, and according to their own thoughts they have found a little comfort and tranquillity. Nevertheless it is yet the early dawn, and the strength of the heats, and the rays of the Sun of Truth have not yet made their torrid and complete impression. When it reaches the midst of Heaven, the heat will interpenetrate with such great intensity that it will move and spur to the greatest velocity even the insects below the earth. Although they are not able to behold the light, yet the penetration of the heat will move and agitate all of them.

“Consequently, Oh ye Friends of God, be ye thankful that in the Day of the Effulgence ye have turned your faces to the Orb of the regions and beheld the Lights. Ye have received a portion from the rays of Truth, and are endowed with a share from the everlasting outpouring. Therefore ye must not rest one minute, but thank Him for this Bestowal.

“Be not seated and silent! Diffuse the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom far and wide

to the ears, promulgate the Word of God, and put into practice the Advices and Covenants of God. That is, arise ye with such qualities and attributes that ye may continually bestow life to the body of the world, and nurse the infants of the universe, up to the station of maturity and perfection. Enkindle with all your might, in every meeting the Light of the Love of God, gladden and cheer every heart with the utmost loving kindness, show forth your love to the strangers just as you show it forth to your relatives. If a soul is seeking to quarrel, ask ye for reconciliation; if he blame ye, praise ; if he give you a deadly poison, bestow ye an all-healing antidote; if he create death, administer ye eternal Life ; if he becomes a thorn, change ye into roses and hyacinths. Perchance through such deeds and words this darkened world will become illuminated, this terrestrial universe will become transformed into a Heavenly Realm, and this Satanic prison a Divine Court ; warfare and bloodshed be annihilated, and love and faithfulness hoist the Tent of Unity upon the apex of the world.

“These are the results of the Divine Advices and Exhortations, and the epitome of the teachings of the Bahá’í Cycle.”

This beautiful letter has also been translated by Aḥmad Sohrab, of Washington, and is both lovely and wonderful in its expression and contents. We must always miss the peculiar beauty of the Persian tongue, but a trace of it has crept into the Englishing of this splendid message.

Naturally there is something in the spoken word of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in the radiance of his face, and the richness of his voice, which is beyond any written utterance, no matter how noble that may be. The people to whom his words are spoken never forget them, and repeated and repeated again, they always seem to carry a trace of the original fragrance that surrounded them when first dropped into the listening ear.

Mrs. C. was a believer who went to ‘Akká some years ago. She was one of a fashionable and wealthy circle in New York, and had learned of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá while travelling abroad. She had lived a conventional, and rather unsatisfied life. She had been a sincere Episcopalian, but never was able to gain much comfort from her religion, though she earnestly sought this joy. She had lost health from inanition more than any real illness, and had become accustomed to a half melancholy state from which she hardly sought to rouse herself.

She grasped the message of Truth from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with an eagerness that carried her almost immediately to the prison city. Once there, she was interested in everything, but especially in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

She had formed a habit of spiritual concentration or devotion which caused her some distress. She spent half an hour after she rose each morning, in thinking of her duties during the day, and how she should fulfil them, and another half hour before retiring at night, in mourning because she had not consistently carried out her morning’s plans. She believed this was worship, and was over conscientious as to her duties, which were always spelled in capitals. If anyone

had assured her it was her duty to be happy, she would probably have been stricken with horror.

In the household of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the family meets in the Holy Mother’s large living room at a very early hour every morning, and tea is served in delicate cups and saucers of glass. While the company is quietly disposing of this simple refreshment, the youngest members of the family chant the holy words in low musical tones. It is a very inspiring commencement of the day, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá frequently talks with such fervor and gladness that all are rejoiced as they separate for their various tasks.

Mrs. C. observed that the Servant of God always greeted her with the same words, “Be Happy!” She watched the other members of the party, and assured herself that he addressed them all differently, but never failed to say to her, “Be Happy!”

She was troubled about it, and at length she begged Monever Khánum the daughter of the household to ask her father for the reason of this exclusive admonition. When the question was propounded to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he turned to Mrs. C. with his peculiarly illuminating smile, and replied:

“I tell you to be happy because we cannot know the spiritual life unless we are happy!”

Then Mrs. C.’s dismay was complete, and her diffidence vanished with the fullness of her despair.

“But tell me, what is the spiritual life?” she cried, “I have heard ever since I was born about the spiritual life, and no one could ever explain to me what it is !”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá looked at his questioner again with that wonderful smile of his, and said gently

“Characterize thyself with the characteristics of God, and thou shalt know the spiritual life!”

That was all, but it was enough. Mrs. C. began to query, “What did he mean? What are the characteristics of God? They must be the great attributes, of course, Love, Beauty, Generosity, Justice,” and so on in beautiful succession.

All day long her mind was flooded with the divine puzzle, and all day long she was happy. She did not give a thought to her duties, and yet when she arrived at the moment of her evening’s reckoning, she could not remember that she had left them undone.

At last she began to understand. If she was absorbed in Heavenly ideals, they would translate themselves into deeds necessarily, and her days and nights would be full of light. From that moment she never quite forgot the divine admonition that had been granted her:

“Characterize thyself with the characteristics of God!”

And she learned to know the spiritual life.

Mrs. C. had another beautiful moment with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which meant much to her. Just before she left the household he came into her room to say farewell, and seating himself by the window looked off upon the sea in silence for so long a time that his guest began to wonder if he had forgotten her presence.

Then at length he turned to her and said, with that eager speech that is one of his peculiarities:

“Mrs. C. when you go back to New York talk to people about the love of God. People in the world do not talk enough about God. Their conversation is filled with trivialities, and they forget the most momentous subjects. Yet if you speak to them of God they are happy, and presently they open their hearts to you. Often you can not mention this glorious Revelation, for their prejudice would interfere, and they would not listen. But you will find that you can always talk to them about the love of God.”

Then he went away, and Mrs. C. sat a long time in the gathering darkness, while the glory of the sun descended upon the glittering waters of the Mediterranean. The fragrant shadows seemed to echo softly with the last words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“You will find that you can always talk to them about the love of God.”

[END]