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When in 1910 I went to Haifa on my first visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, there were rumors that He might come to America now that the way was open for him to travel. Many of the friends whom I met said they could not picture 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a western setting, but from the moment I heard the subject mentioned I thought He would come. One day when He was giving instruction I said; "When you come to America will you stay with us?" He smiled at my confident, "when" and answered: "Yes."

Two years later He came to our country, reaching New York the night of April 10th. I sent to Him a word of greeting with a reminder of the promise made at Haifa but a note from one of His translators said that. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had decided to stay at a hotel while in Washington. It can readily be imagined how perplexing was this news and how disappointing was this reply. My husband, to whom on my return from Haifa I had mentioned the promise, had been reading in the New York papers of addresses which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was making in churches and before peace societies and asked me when He was coming to visit us. I had to say He was going to a hotel. "Did He not say He would come to us?" was the next question, and to my answer in the affirmative time followed the further question: "How do you account for this?" I was obliged to say I could not explain it. Then there flashed into my mind a thought and I said: "This has just come to me: Although we regard 'Abdu'l-Bahá as belonging to the entire world, yet he is from the East and probably an Oriental would not accept an invitation to stay in the house of a married woman whose husband had not joined in asking him." He answered: "I am glad to ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá," and the response to a little note written immediately was the following wire

received the next morning. "Letter received. Grateful. For your sake, myself a translator come your house." signed, "'Abbás."

On Saturday afternoon at a little after one o'clock His train reached Washington. He had been told that 'Abdu'l-Bahá desired to arrive quietly so the Bahá'í friends with the exception of a very few who brought Him to our house, restrained their longing to greet Him at the station. The day before His arrival the floor of the hall of the new house, in which we were not quite settled, was strewn with innumerable pictures preparatory to finding their places. This hall, large and square, led to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's room and when He reached it He stopped, looked at the floor, then at the walls and turning to me said: "You have labored much,"

The meeting that evening took place at the Carnegie Library. Every seat and all standing room were filled and a path had to be made along the stairs and hall of entrance for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to pace through, so dense was the crowd standing with bared heads. Upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá's entrance into the large assembly hall, the audience rose at once and remained standing until He bade them be seated. He spoke mainly of peace and arbitration and the talk was followed with close attention.

When we reached home 'Abdu'l-Bahá's late dinner was served to in the morning room and we talked for some time. I asked about a friend of ours, a victim in the Titanic disaster. I said he had been much beloved and that his work had been appreciated in both Europe and America. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "hen one has been devoted to his work in life, art or whatever it may be, it is regarded as worship, and he is undoubtedly surrounded by the mercy of God." He also said: "If one does you a service and at some other time a wrong, overlook the one for the other and think only of the good."

During the early morning of the next day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had many interviews. Between half after nine and ten He was with Jeffrey Boy looking at his toys, books and pictures, and then they went to the roof together. 'Abdu'l-Bahá never required an interpreter when with a child.

There was a meeting at Studio Hall at 11:15, an interview in the early afternoon and at four 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Universalist church. We found the minister, Dr. John Van Schaick, standing on the pavement waiting to receive Him. He conducted Him through a side door to the chancel. In his introduction Dr. Van Schaick said in part as follows: "In behalf of the officers and members of this church I have the honor of welcoming you to Washington. We feel that we are honored by the presence of one who has so faithfully served God and humanity. What you have done as a great leader and as a servant of God, for Universal Peace, Universal Knowledge, Universal Brotherhood calls forth our deepest gratitude and we gather here today because we believe that you are one of those who do not count their lives dear unto themselves, but, seek only to serve God." Dr. Van Schaick said that because of the many engagements of this Great Teacher of the East, the order of the service would be changed and that

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would first address the audience and then leave.

The address was mainly upon the theme of Unity. So inspiring were the thoughts expressed in this address that the people begged to shake the hand of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which request was granted. So large was the audience that it was long before he was released.

On arriving home we found a group awaiting him. We all had tea together and after the guests had one ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was read to for a half hour. An interview with a member of the British Embassy and another person followed.

While at dinner my husband said: “Some evening, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, let us go to the Library of Congress to see it lighted.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “We will go now.” My husband urged that after a full day He must be too tired to do anything more, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not dissuaded and late as It was we drove to the Library.

First we went to the gallery to look down on the reading room. Two of the bronze figures of heroic size were examined. Then Mr. Parsons turned to the entrance of the gallery. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was told that my husband would like to show Him another part of the Library, He said’ “When one undertakes to see a thing He should see it.” There are bronze figures placed at intervals around the gallery and all of these ‘Abdu’l-Bahá examined most carefully asking the name of each and finding, occasionally, anachronisms in the costumes.

We then went to the Division of Prints of which my husband had charge. It was growing late, so to avoid the inconvenience of having the lights turned out, it seemed best to go quickly through the immense corridors filled with the cases of interviewing prints. Again ‘Abdu’l-Bahá preferred to see thoroughly and went in and out among the cases showing interest in the rare and attractive pictures. My husband said to me: “The lights will go out.” I responded with a smile of utmost confidence and we proceeded slowly through the Division. Then Mr. Green, the custodian of the building, appeared, was introduced to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and when told by Mr. Parsons of his concern regarding the lights, he said: “The lights shall be kept on as long as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wishes to stay.” He set an order to this effect, adding that the doors were to continue unlocked for the present. Thus there was time to show ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the stacks for the books, the machinery for moving them and some interesting Turkish books. Upon our return home ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had his usual late dinner and soon went to His room. But who knows the hour this night when He ceased to pray for his children and allowed Himself the so much needed rest!

I have given as full an account as possible regarding one day of to Washington visit but I know there will not be pace in the Year Book for many further details. On the following day there many interviews. Early in the morning the housekeeper, the governess and servants were called together, exhorted to be fitful and given presents.

The first of the meetings which were held in the large room of the house from

Monday to Friday inclusive, took place that afternoon and many interviews followed. At eight o'clock a Persian dinner was arranged for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretaries and a number of American men. 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Host and personally served the guests.

On Tuesday there was a large luncheon at the house of Mírzá 'Alí Kuli Khán, followed by a reception to which many people came to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Among the guests was the Turkish Ambassador. After that meeting the latter said: "I want to go to the house where He is to speak next so he came to our house. On Thursday, he gave a dinner for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Friday, lunched with 'Abdu'l-Bahá at our house. Where among the guests was His nephew Mírzá Zia, a delightful.

A few years later at Green Acre, I again met the Ambassador's nephew to whom I said: "When did you become a Bahá'í?" He answered: "That night when 'Abdu'l-Bahá talked to us after dinner at my uncle's house."

On Tuesday also, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed two large audiences of colored people, one in the morning at Howard University and the other at the evening at a church.

Among the many impressive meetings in Washington was the one on Wednesday afternoon at Studio Hall to which the children were brought to receive the blessing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They were gathered in His arms or patted on head or shoulders. One little boy returning to his mother after receiving the blessing said: "It is like Jesus and the little children!"

On Saturday at the reception given in the name of the power possessed 'Abdu'l-Bahá to penetrate the reality of minds and hearts. I was told that when General Creely of Arctic fame was presented, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to him: "I have often sympathized with you in the experiences of hardships in your earlier years." Upon meeting Admiral Wainwright He said: "You are a good Admiral because you stand for peace." The Admiral answered: "My wife makes me do so!"

At this reception there was a young woman to whom I had been drawn from the time she was a small child. Late in the evening, I was able to leave my post near the stairway and enter the library where there had been gathered about 'Abdu'l-Bahá throughout the evening many groups of people. Coming to the center of the room I saw my young friend to whom I said: "Of course you have been presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?" She answered: "No, there have been so many people surrounding Him that I have not been able to reach Him." Just then 'Abdu'l-Bahá having the intention of leaving the room, came near us and I said: "'Abdu'l-Bahá, I want to present to you Mrs. Miles." Looking from one of us to the other He said: "Mother: daughter." I replied: "She was a very mother of her own." Then He turned to her and said: "You are very fortunate to have two mothers."

Before 'Abdu'l-Bahá left for Chicago on Sunday we asked Him to stay with us on His return, but He felt it would be best for all His party to be together. After

visiting Chicago, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to Cleveland and Pittsburgh returning to Washington on May 8th. During the visit He had many interviews and group meetings, large and small. I shall write about His third visit to Washington after giving a brief account of His stay at Dublin.

On the evening of July 23rd, five of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s party arrived in Dublin from Boston and after dining at our house went with us to the house down to the hill which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had chosen as a place to live, rather than with us in the larger house. The following afternoon Mírzá Valliola Khán and I drove to the station to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, taking Him and His translator to His house. My husband was at the house to greet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to whom he showed the view from the second story veranda. During the next few days ‘Abdu’l-Bahá drove, walked, saw a few people and undoubtedly wrote much. I wanted Him to have a little quiet before seeing people generally, but on Saturday, July 26th, after several inquiries had been made as to when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá could be greeted, I telephoned Him for permission to ask the people to come on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of the coming week, which request was granted. Anticipating this permission many people arrived on Sunday afternoon and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to them in the large room of our house. How difficult it is to refrain from mentioning the subjects upon which he spoke and describing at length the happiness which He radiated! People came from great distances to stay with him. There were visitors from Portland, Maine, Portland, Oregon, Washington, San Francisco, Boston and New York.

At one of the afternoon meetings, the Lector of the Unitarian church asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to speak on Sunday, August 11th, and a large number gathered to hear Him, he spoke for fifty minutes, which was unusual as His talks were generally short. The people sat motionless, so great was the power He manifested. Never have I known Him to look as He looked during the address. I asked the translator if he had ever seen ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as He appeared this day. He said: “Yes, once before in Chicago when He was speaking in a church.” I asked what it was and he replied: “Ecstasy!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has attracted many hearts at Dublin. Members of the summer colony asked Him to lunch and to motor, and they came time after time to hear Him speak.

When at Haifa, two years before, I asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá what I should say to a certain distinguished artist on my return to Dublin, He said: “Give him the message. He will not accept now, but he will later.” This I did with the result which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had foretold. Very obviously he did not care for the message and with an unchanged point of view he came one day to a meeting at our house. His expression was a study of conflicting emotions. There was a battle between his objection to the Bahá’í message and the artist’s utter capitulation to the rare and beautiful picture before him, of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in black robe and white turban sitting in the bay window, silhouetted against a red curtain! How, after many years, the message is attracting him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá accepted an invitation to spend an evening at the house of a well known scientist. After the host had told story ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked to do so. I should have known that He would make a better choice than I, but forgetful of this, I urged Him to tell the story of Iosk a pretty Persian tale with a moral. This He did and it was received with mild applause. Then, alert with eyes flashing, He turned to the host saying: “NOW I will tell you a story and it isn’t going to be a sermon!” Picture ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the long robe and white turban of the East surrounded by men and women of the East in full evening dress, the only link with His usual environment being the group of Persian sitting with bowed heads are folded arms on a sofa in the distance. He told with brilliance an Arabian story having climax after climax. It seemed each moment that nothing more humorous could develop, but it did and listeners were shouting and swaying from side to side with amusement. In the midst of the applause he rose, bade goodbye to the Assemblage, and left the room with the children of the family grasping His hands and coat as they followed Him to the car. While we were driving home, speechless with happiness, He said with the simplicity of a child: “Now are you pleased with me?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Washington for his third visit on November 6th. Again He thought it best to live with the members of His party, but he resumed the meetings in our house. There were small group meetings in the library at 4:70 and at 5:30, large numbers of people were addressed in the lower room. The house which was taken for Him and party was constantly filled with visitors. One day when there was a group of believers there He said to us that we must not be concerned later when the Cause is violently condemned, that it is this way that knowledge of it will spread. He said we must regard all antagonistic expressions as, “the little songs of the sparrows.”

After lunching with us on Friday, November 8th, and speaking at 4:30 and 5:30, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá drove to the Jewish synagogue where after music and a talk by the Rabbi, He made a remarkable address on the oneness of the foundation of spiritual truth as taught by all the prophets and of the wonderful achievements of Abraham and of Moses. He gave an extraordinary survey of Jewish history leading up to the coming of another great prophet of God. He said: “During the time that the people of Israel were being tossed and afflicted by the conditions I have named, His Holiness Jesus Christ appeared among them. Jesus of Nazareth was Jew. He was single and unaided, alone and unique. He had no assistant. The Jews at once pronounced him to be an enemy of Moses. They declared that he was the destroyer of the Mosaic laws and ordinances. ***** This personage Jesus Christ declared His Holiness Moses to have been the prophet of God and pronounced all the prophets of Israel as sent from God, he proclaimed the torah the very Book of God, summoned all to conform to its precepts and follow its teachings. It is a historical fact that during a period of fifteen hundred years the kings of Israel were unable to promulgate broadcast the religion of Judaism. In fact during that period the name and history of Moses were confined to the boundaries of Palestine and the torah was a book well known only in that country. But through His Holiness Christ, through the blessing of the

new testament of Jesus Christ, the testament, the torah was translated into six hundred different tongues and spread throughout the world.”

This produced a stir in the audience. An effort was made to stop the address but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued to speak, asking for just a few moments more of closest attention. He said: “And now it is time for the Jews to declare that Christ was the Word of God and then this enmity between two great religions will pass away. For two thousand years this enmity and religious prejudice have continued. Blood has been shed, or deals have been suffered. These few words will remedy the difficulty and unite two treat religions. What harm could follow this, - that just as the Christians glorify and praise the name of Moses likewise the Jews should commemorate the name of Christ, declare Him to be the Word of God and consider Him as one of the chosen messengers of God?”

As He vanished from the pulpit and as the translator rendered the last Persian sentence into English, the Rabbi came forward and said: “We are not accustomed here to the mention of other prophets than our own, *(note) but people of culture all over the world listen with politeness to others with ideas different from their own. They may be right any we may be wrong,”

During the evening many people left the synagogue and many of those who remained were restless and disturbed. The atmosphere was electrical. That ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was able to complete His message to this conservative congregation was the greatest demonstration of spiritual Power that I have ever witnessed.

*Note: It has been pointed out in this connection, that Jesus is frequently mentioned today in Jewish synagogues. The fact is, however, that while He may be mentioned as a prophet He is not spoken of in the terms used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

Knowing the administration of Dr. Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, I recently asked him if he would tell me of the outstanding impression produced upon him at his meeting with this great Spiritual Teacher. So discriminating and appreciative is his response, that I am, with his permission, including it, just as it came to me, in this brief and inadequate account of the visit of the Greatest Visitor who had ever come to our country and with it I end the writing of my unfinished story.

Washington, D.C. December 24, 1931.

Dear Agnes:

In connection with some account of the visits - to Washington and to Dublin - of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, you have asked me to note the impression his personality made upon me. I wish I might do so adequately; but at the moment must content myself with a reference to the dominant impression that survives in my memory.

It is of an EXTRAORDINARY NOBILITY: physically, in the head so massive yet so finely poised, and the modeling of the features; but spiritually, in the

serenity of expression, and the suggestion of grave and responsible meditation in the deeper lines of the face. But there was also in his complexion, carriage, and expression, an assurance of the complete health which is a requisite of a sane judgment. And when, as in a lighter mood, his features relaxed into the playful, the assistance was added of a sense of humor without which there is no true sense of proportion. I have never met anyone concerned with the philosophies of life whose judgement might seem so reliable in matters of practical conduct.

My regret is that my meetings with him were so few and that could not benefit by a lengthier contact with a personality combining a dignity so impressive with human traits so engaging.

I wish that he could be multiplied!

Ever sincerely,

(signed) Herbert Putnam

Mrs. Arthur J. Parsons

1819, K. St. N.W.

Washington, D.C.