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William Sears

April 1-11, 1954

It was our last day in Bahjí. We have written elsewhere of our first to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh of the Garden of Ridván and o of the Masra'ih Mansion. Today we were to visit all these precious places associated with Bahá'u'lláh and the Master in prison city of 'Akká.

In a large, modern station wagon, fortified by a delicious breakfast, we drove leisurely toward the city famous since the day of the Old Testament, the Crusaders, Richard the Lion-hearted, Saldin, Napoleon; a city that has to be as renowned in the future for the love of humanity city that had arisen there as it had been in the past for the hate which had encamped there.

We stopped the car along the seashore outside the gate of the old city near the spot where the sailing vessel which had carried Bahá'u'lláh from Haifa had anchored. Soon we began to resent the ease with which we travelled, the comfort, the tasty food, the fine clothes. We began to abhor everything of luxury about us. With each additional step, the longing increased to share in the sorrows and hardships that had been the lot of Bahá'u'lláh.

The eyes looked out across the blue-green bay toward Haifa. Where Bahá'u'lláh had arrived on board a steamer, had been transferred to a sailing ship which had carried Him and His family and followers to this very shore before us. To our right, the sea splashed high up against the walls of the old city in distant thunder. A few feet in front of us, the swells rose and broke with a gentle rush along the beach. An overturned row-boat was drying its healthy timbers in the wind alongside a broken skeleton of past glory – yesterday and today side by side.

The Beloved of our hearts had come to this very shore where our feet now stood. Somewhere near His own dear footsteps had passed over this same rough land,

fulfilling prophecy each step along the way. Muḥammad had said, “All of them (the companions of the Báb) shall be slain except one who shall the plain of ‘Akká, the Banquet-hall of God.”

The eye of the spirit could picture again that weary band of exiles passing through that hostile crowd of city-dwellers who had gathered here on this shore to see the “God of the Persians.” They had been warned against this _____ from a far-off land, and was through the midst of this atmosphere of prepared hatred (which one took the place of the sweet, free April air we were now breathing) that Bahá’u’lláh and His loyal friends walked to and through the gate of the city, that was to close its cold prison walls _____ him for nine years.

With closed eyes and the sound of water beating its rhythm on the shore, we said the “Remover of Difficulties”, and we could feel about us the presence of those who brought the seed of life to this barren land over eighty years ago.

Ahead of us lay the city of ‘Akká with air so putrid, according to the proverb, that a bird when, flying over it would drop dead. This was the penal colony in which the Turkish and Persian authorities felt that Bahá’u’lláh and Ma Faith would pass away forever. Before the eyes of the Pilgrims in our party was the great iron gate of the walled city, the gate which had closed upon the Blessed Beauty and had shut him up, they hoped, forever until He would waste inside this “most desolate of cities” as Bahá’u’lláh. Himself, had called it, a city “most unsightly in appearance, most detestable in climate, foulest in water” this “metropolis of the owl.”

We drove through the newer part of ‘Akká down to the great sweep of sandy beach where a stormy wind lashed the great breakers and drove them as far up on the land as possible. We turned left and would our way over the down into the hill down into the old city again and parked our car just inside the great wall. As we got out, the wind blew everyone’s coat collar up around the neck. The day was still gray, misty and chill. The cold crashing of the surf punctuated the silent spots in our conversation as we stood, our backs to the seawall, gazing across the way to the House of Abbúd.

The sea, the wind, the swirling mist, none could cool down the ardour that stirred inside the Pilgrim as we looked upon this grey shell of a house that once sheltered the Supreme Prophet of God. This was once the sanctuary of the Supreme Pen. Its walls had resounded to the words of the Most Great Book, the Mighty Acids; Here were formed the laws which would stand inviolate and unaltered for a thousand years Here were fashioned the provisions which would lay the foundation for the greatest structure in the social history of mankind. Here those ancient prophetic words had come true, “The Government shall be upon His shoulder. Here the Author of the Bahá’í Faith, protected by these blessed walls from the stinging wind of the sea, had poured out the fairest fruit of all His Revelation, the Aqdas — among all the writings which had streamed forth in never-ending river from His holy pen.

What a plain, structure. Two stories in height with a small balcony around the

second floor front, drab grey in color, bleak in appearance – beautiful to the believer!

We were staring silently up at the balcony which surrounds the bedroom of Bahá'u'lláh. Many long hours He placed this balcony, looking out over the sea and down upon the very earth where we were standing. This small balcony which can be crossed in less than ten places, furnished almost the only outside exercise for Bahá'u'lláh in seven long years of imprisonment within the walls of this house.

There was a long quiet pause as the Pilgrims looked up in thanksgiving to the Almighty for this humble house, this simple setting for the Most Precious Jewel of God.

No doubt every mind was filled with different memories, stories recalled from various books. Once these stories had been but words caught between two covers, but now during the Pilgrimage they were all coming alive with reality.

Finally one of the Pilgrims coughed. The spell was broken. Cameras appeared on all sides. We had come back from that other sweet real to this plane to laugh and talk and walk. This experience is repeated time after time throughout the Pilgrimage, as the poor pilgrim with his weak human body flies back and forth between these two worlds so unlike, one of God and one of man. The transfer is shattering, and by the end of one's stay it has completely exhausted these untrained spirits. To be alone, solitary and uninterrupted, becomes an overpowering need. The being too is saturated. Tiny incidents, small happenings, perhaps a glimpse a view, a smile, a comment later – you will recall these surprising even yourself. You had lost them in the Olympian presence of these momentous; sights and Memories. These are the ocean, the others happy little rivulets. But later you will find a beauty and a joy in them, too, that will cheer and comfort you. This account is being recorded more than a month after the pilgrimage, and forgotten corners are constantly being illuminated. Everyone will tell you that it takes some time for your pilgrimage to have its full realization. Believe them!

Before entering the House, we walked to the small public square in the rear. Our gracious host, Leroy Ioas, holding his hat and coat-collar against a wind that whirled cyclones of 'Akká dust across the courtyard, shoved us the exact spot Master had stood and distributed alms and food to the poor.

Whenever the Master would be mentioned, a blanket of warming love would fall about our shoulders. We hoped in our hearts that our feet were Walking where ate had Walked. Never could we follow in His match-less footsteps, but if only we could walk in fits shadow. We knew we must try. Then, as if by telepathy, Leroy said, "You are walking in the footsteps of the Master.

"No one can ever fill those heaven-sent shoes again."

No, but we must do our best. "Look at Me" 'Abdu'l-Bahá, told us. 'Be as I am."

Just then an entirely out of place 1953 vey Chevrolet brought us rudely back to this era as it made its way around a hat-brim curve lead ins off the square. With .gratitude we saw a tiny cart drawn by an adorable little-donkey lumber into view. We captured many of these scenes permanently on color-film.

Sala led is back between the houses and into the aide door of the House of Abbúd. We crossed an inner court and started up a flight of stairs turning to, the right twice and continuing to climb until we reached the living quarters of the Holy Family. We saw the small room that held thirteen believers the first night spent in this house. We saw the upper shelf which one of the friends had slept upon that first night, and, following over too far to one side, had toppled down upon the Master. . We removed our shoes and walked across another room of soft carpets, through a small hallway and then turned left into Bahá'u'lláh's bedroom. Against the wall on the sea-side of the room was a long cushioned bench. Upon the South end, toward Haifa, rested the taj of Bahá'u'llah marking the place where He would often sit. A few feet away, along the South wall, was a rocking chair which He used. Upon the floor, a precious carpet brought with them all the way from Adrianople.

As I write this now in Johannesburg, I am back there again. I can feel my pulse accelerate and my heart beat strong. The atmosphere of these holy places never leaves you. It comes rushing back whenever you turn to 'Akká and Haifa.

Hour after hour, month after month, year upon year, Bahá'u'lláh had moved back and forth in this room. At times He would turn left in the doorway and go ode onto the balcony while runs across the front of the house. After Sala chanted a prayer, we followed Bahá'u'lláh's path to the balcony and looked out upon the turbulat sea. The wind, it seemed to us, was still whipping up the indifferent Mediterranean and driving to us it toward the shore, where in mighty rollers it bowed and prostrated itself before the throne of Majesty.

We stood on the balcony and as mentioned in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, we counted forty waves while repeating each time "God is Most Great!". If the heart is pure, we are told, God will forgive ones sins, both past, and futures.

We knew that these blessings were beyond the heart that we had brought to this shore. It felt, as heavy as the big fragments of broken sea wail lying off to the left, lifeless and useless beside the great opening from which they had been torn. Like those huge lumps, the heart felt as though it too, were failing to be part of the great wall of protect ion that guards the shores of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith. Too many times had it been covered over and soaked in the sea of materialism and rolled away from its place in the Great Wall. Separated thus there could be but one end; soon it would crumble and be washed away into the sea forever.

When you first arrive in the Holy Land you think, "What a banquet I have been invited to enjoy soon you realize that this is mi special banquet for your presence. This nourishing soul-rebuilding food you are receiving is the daily bread of the Faith. This is the power that makes for accomplishment. You understand clearly that you have had only partial success because you have

been a partial, or part-time channel for this spirit that works the miracle. Now you fully realize that nothing less than a complete reordering of your life, your methods and especially your motives can be acceptable to God and to yourself. The Pilgrimage is not an eye-opener. It is an eye-lid remover. Never again will you be able to close that curtain of comfort upon your shortcomings. There is no escape! They are exposed and, you cannot shut your eyes upon them. The structure of this personality you so much admired has been levelled to the ground. Frantically you scurry through the ruins, searching for some worthwhile and useful fragment to help you to rebuild at once upon than old. It is a pitiful, sad spectacle to behold the helpless little places that are left to you and that are worthy of going into the new structure. Thoughts such as these fill your moments between places of pilgrim-age: in the darkness of your bedroom at Bahjí, in the car as it whizzes to Masra'ih, in the moments you sit alone in the Pilgrim House gazing out of the window up at the Shrine of the Báb, or now as you stand here on this balcony with the wind burning the tears to your eyes, tears that your heart has-been longing to shed. What are the other Pilgrims thinking? You do not know, but your love for them increases a hundred-fold. You are certain that somehow, you are all undergoing the tumult of this reformation. They send for you. It is time to visit the room where Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Aqdas. The room of revelation is quite different from the others. It was also 'Abdu'l-Bahá's bedroom. It is panelled in wood, which is to be found in other places associated with the Master. This bedroom is in the back corner of the House. We could look down' into the back courtyard. The donkey and the cart were still there. We saw many of the books of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His writing equipment, the simple iron bed, many things that were much loved by Him and are revered by all who look upon them. Above all else, the mind tried to take in the staggering truth that here in this room, a room that is simplicity itself, was revealed the Body of Laws, the Most Great Book, the Mightiest written testimony since the beginning of our recorded time. Its Author could cast His Shadow of guidance for five hundred thousand years'. It is too much to understand. The mind willingly surrenders and turns to name the surroundings, the little things it can comprehend.

'Abdu'l-Bahá sat here, He knelt here He looked out this window. But irresistibly your thought keeps coming back to what inescapable fact: It was here that Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Aqdas.

Emptying yourself of every single thing that the mind can cling to, you ask Almighty God into your heart a true appreciation of this experience you are undergoing. The body is incapable. There has been too short a time. The presence and significance of these holy places are like hammer-blows to those of us who have lived in a world so remote from the spirit. The spirit is a living breathing overpowering reality.

Those veritable spiritual thunderbolts: the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh of the Báb, and, of Abdu'l-Bahá, the room at Bahjí where Bahá'u'lláh passed away, the mansion of Masra'ih, the Garden of Ridván all had numbed the senses until the

cup could not contain the flood. Not cup, but thimble, one should say, with no thought of false modesty or humility. These vanish at Haifa end Alas. Assumed virtues cannot live in this pure air and one acutely feels that no receptacle is tiny enough to describe the amount of this atmosphere⁴ which he is capable of holding. You have removed your shoes, bared your head, and pressed your forehead to the floor. These feeble expressions are helpless even in an outward way to convey the inner wanker of your heart. The air seems to throb with the lingering presence of the Holy Spirit which pervades all the Manifestations of God. The book that is the unerring balance for a thousand years flowed out in ink upon immortal pages here. This Book, Bahá'u, Himself, has said, is "The breath of life to all created things." In gush manner hath the Kitáb-i-Aqdas been revealed that it attracted and embraced all the divinely appointed Dispensations. Blessed those who peruse it! Blessed those who apprehend it! Blessed those who meditate upon it! Blessed those who ponder its meaning "So vast", He says, is its range that it hath encompassed all men and their recognition of it. Ere long will its sovereign power, its pervasive influence and the greatness of its might be manifest on earth.

Each of us said a prayer before departing from this area of future civilization. Then we made our way downstairs. There was additional conversation, but none of it registers. The hearing was working, but the comprehension and recording Instruments were unable to function. This was a mercy from God. The body must be much like an electrical system. It can successfully carry its normal load of power, but when subjected suddenly to an incredibly strong current, it "blows out" the fuse at its point of protection. A similar phenomenon happens to the pilgrim, several times, in fact. Loathing breaks the connection and permits no more impulses to register. The system cannot bear them. Bahá'u'lláh has written of this writ, saying of the wine of revelation that it is so inebriating to the Prophet, Himself, that the pen is stilled and can move no more.

If the Creative Channel cannot *attain its impact, pity the poor created clay.

The stet came out gaily for a brief moment, for the first time, as we strolled through the picturesque struts of "Old 'Akká". It splashed against the drab earth-colored walls and transformed them into a happy tan. We traced our way along many of the favorite walks of the Master. We paused and took photographs in the doorway of the house of the former Mufti of 'Akká. He had been a bitter enemy of Bahá'u'lláh. Sala, the caretaker of Bahjí, told us the Story of the two attempts on the life of Bahá'u'lláh made by this Mufti while Bahá'u'lláh was in prison. Once with a hidden dagger, but Bahá'u'lláh before admitting Him to His presence, said, "Let him first cleanse his hands." A second time, the Mufti planned to strangle the Blessed Beauty and Bahá'u'lláh said before admitting him, "First, let him cleanse his heart." The Mufti became an ardent believer and collected all the "Traditions" to be found in his Faith about 'Akká.

We twined our way through the streets, under the archways, through the gateways, past the fragrant smell of baking bread. The fires of the ovens looked

inviting on this bitingly chill Sunday morning. We entered the courtyard of the, caravanserai called Khan-i-Avamid. This was Where the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, who were unable to accompany Him when He was transferred from the prison barracks, were lodged. We stopped to rest at a little, out-door tea shop by the sea. The inhospitable weather drove us inside. There Leroy was our host for steaming cups of Turkish coffee. What a delightful city "Old 'Akká" Is to visit. Sala, who was born within its wall", greeted almost everyone. He told us many intriguing stories about the non-Bahá'í history as well. We entered a small door built in one of the lower walls of the prison, walked to the center of a cellar-like cavern. Below us excavation had been started. How strange to know that beneath the prison lies this famous church built by Richard the Lion-hearted. The peaked earth on which we stood was high up toward the top of the Gothic arches. The pillars were buried many, many feet in the solid earth below us. We visited the Mosque where 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to pray every Friday. We had seen its delicate minaret against the sky from far-off Bahjí the day before. Now, following in the way of the hater we removed our shoes and went up to the spot where 'Abdu'l-Bahá would kneel. We prayed that the day might hasten when these people would recognize the One for whose coming they offered their supplications in this Mosque.

The Mullá took us into the administrative office. He showed us the huge oil painting of a vial; Moslem scholar and writer who had collected so many prophecies about the city of 'Akká. They told us about his life and they were very proud of great things promised by God for their city of 'Akká for the future, little knowing that as they await their future, they are in reality living in the past while the others waited at the Mosque, Sala and this pilgrim returned to the House of Abbúd to bring back the station wagon. Sala showed me the house where the Guardian had been born, where the very first Pilgrims to 'Akká had come before this century began. Sala stopped. He pointed out the house to which Bahá'u'lláh had been taken in custody when some of His followers had disobeyed His commands, quarrelled with three enemies of the Faith and slew them. Bahá'u'lláh was dictating Tablets to His secretary when troops surrounded His house. Crowds gathered quickly. They allotted to Bahá'u'lláh as the Governor, sword in hand, led him away for questioning. His innocence was established and Bahá'u'lláh was freed, and the Governor apologized for his own bad behaviour.

"That is the house, there on the left, where it all happened", said Sala.

Of this event, Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "hot captivity cannot harm Me. That which can harm me is the conduct of those who love Me, who claim to be related to Me, and yet perpetrate that causeth My heart and My pen to groan."

We drove back to the Mosque and while Sala went in to collect the others, there was time to, cross the street and examine the Mosque from afar. The entrance is but a short distance from the beak of the prison fortress. This is the Mosque where the imperial farman of Sultán 'Abdu'l 'Azíz had been read, proclaiming Balla' u'llah and His family and followers to be the object of the

hatred of everyone. It decreed that none should associate with them and that they should not be allowed to associate with each other.

The dome of the Mosque to not quite visible from the opposite side of the street, but the tall, slender minaret to the right, the dome points like a finger to the sky. Just at this moment, the muezzin began to circumnambulate the outer wall high aloft on the minaret. His voice called the faithful to prayer. It would alternately swell and fade as it was favored or neglected by the breeze from the sea.

“Alláh’ulAkbat”

Bahá’u’lláh from his prison-cell must have heard this summons many, many times. As we watched the muezzin circle the minaret, we thought, “He was calling men to prayer, while he one who was calling them to God lay imprisoned within the sound of his voice.” Muḥammad, Himself, had foretold, these days. He had called ‘Akká a “city in Syria to which God hath shown His special may.” “Blessed is the man that hath visited the visitor of ‘Akká.” There arose inside the pilgrim a great, surging desire to mount the many steps of the minaret and to change the call from .Alláh’u’akbat” to “Alláh’u’Abhát The Promised One has come The Sun of God has risen again’. Alas, that it is shining upon this city of the blind. Open your eyes before it is too late. This is ‘Akká, the city that David in his psalms called the ‘strong city’. Hosea offered it to mankind as a ‘door of hope’.” By the time the tumult inside the bread had subsided, the muezzin had descended. The others rejoined us, and we began our approach to the prison itself. The steps up which Bahá’u’lláh had walked do enter the fortress that first time have been taken down. They have left their soar across the body of the prison wall. We all stopped and gazed up at the marks of that old stairway. This was as far as we could retrace the steps of banishment. In order to enter the prison, we had to drive around the city to the front by the sea wall. This was to be the last stop of the day before we returned to Bahjí for lunch with Rúḥíyyih Khánum and Mason Remey.

We parked by the gate, passed the guards, and walked about three hundred yards up to the prison entrance. As you cross the small bridge over the moat, you can see the cannon-balls of Napoleon embedded in the walls. They are splashed with red paint to make them easily visible. Passing through a small arched entrance, we approached the courtyard. The prison is now a hospital for the insane and feeble-minded. You can see them exercising in the very Courtyard where the believers were herded together that first day. The pilgrims turned sharply to the right and were up a long flight of outside stairs, then up a short flight to the left. This brought us to the outer entrance to the cell-block. Out beyond the roofs lay the timeless blue bay of Haifa.

There was a sound of heavy keys rattling in a meal door, the door swung open, and you entered the prison barracks. Passing through an ante-rod of poor, unfortunate sick ones, you enter the cell-block. In the far left-hand corner is a plaque, which reads: Bahá’í Holy Place. This is the cell of Bahá’u’lláh. The

plaque is written in both English and Hebrew.

We removed our shoes outside the great door, and then entered the prison-cell where over two years Bahá'u'lláh had been shut away from the world. This was the heart of the “most Great Prison.” Even the Black Pit in Tīhrán, the Siyyih-chal, a place foul beyond comparison, a dungeon wrapped in thick darkness so dreadful that no tongue could describe its loathsome smell, had not been called by such a name.

Upon coming to this penal colony in ‘Akká, Baba’ u’llah had said, “Know thou that upon our arrival at this spot. We chose to designate it as Most Great Prison. Though previously subjected in another land to chains and fetters. We yet refused to call it by that name. Say: Ponder thereon, O ye endued with understanding.

It was of this spot that Bahá'u'lláh had breathed the prayer, “we pray that, out of His bounty. — exalted be He — He may release, through this imprisonment, the necks of men from chains and fetters..!!

The cell was barren and desolated in Bahá'u'lláh's day. Now there is a Persian carpet in the corner where He used to sit. There are five straight-backed chairs upon which the Pilgrims sit. One window looks out upon old ‘Akká. The other two windows look out upon the sea. These are the windows shown in most of the photographs. From here Bahá'u'lláh would look out toward that spot beyond the moat where His followers would stand hoping for a glimpse of His hand waving from the window. We all stood and peered out at that same spot and to the white-capped sea beyond it. Later we walked out to that place of bliss and sorrow and looked back up at these two forlorn windows. The face of the prison is bruised and scarred from shell-fire. Slowly the conversation hushed. Memories came back of the eager Pilgrim from Mosul who had stood here so long ago. As he had done we too gazed in wrapt adoration at the window of the Beloved. We shared again his heartbreak when we reached the long hours he had stood here waiting to see the face of the Blessed Beauty, only to turn away disconsolate and go back to the talle in which he lived on Mount Carmel. We could see the place from which the Holy Family of Bahá'u'lláh, from afar, had watched the frustration of his hopes. They were unable to reach the pilgrim to tell him that his Beloved was at the window and had waved, and that it was only his own feeble eyesight that had kept him from seeing Bahá'u'lláh. The Face Is no longer at the window and there is no Hand to wave to the pilgrim of today, but the pulse still throbs with wonder and feels those powerful radiations of love that flew back and forth across this desolate barrier.

Inside the prison-cell itself, the heart is touched and saddened by the sight of that bleak, unfragrant room. True, it has been cleaned and restored, but here and there upon the floor are small fragments of paint and plaster which have fallen from the ceiling and walls. These are a grim reminder of the chilling dampness of this dismal place.

Here in this cell, where but a few places carries you from and to end, Bahá'u'lláh

spent over two years of His precious life. Here it was that Bahá'u'lláh, Himself, said that His sufferings had reached their culmination.

Our eyes bestowed loving prayers upon each of these places of anguish. After all these years, and even with the reformatory, it is still unsanitary and foul in three barracks. The mind refuses to try and picture the misery and abomination that must have surrounded Bahá'u'lláh upon His arrival here. We know that they were herded together, deprived of food and drink, that malaria, dysentery and the sickening heat added to their sorrows. All were ill but two. It was here that the two brothers had died the same night locked in each other's arms. Bahá'u'lláh sold His carpet to provide for their winding sheets and burial, but the guards had kept the money and cast them in a pit unwashed and enshrouded.

"None", Bahá'u'lláh has written, "knoweth what befall Us except Gods the Almighty, the all knowing... from the foundation of the world until the present day cruelty such as this hath neither been seen nor heard of.

The heart of the pilgrim is unbearably heavy. Not only at the contemplation of the agonies borne by Bahá'u'lláh, but even more so be of the shameful emptiness of the cup of service he has brought here to the Faith to repay these hours, of grief.

This is where Bahá'u'lláh's young son, Mírzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch, was killed. He was pacing the roof at twilight reciting his prayers. He fell through an unguarded skylight onto a wooden grate below which pierced his ribs and took his life in less than a day. It was here that this sweet son pleaded with his Father, Bahá'u'lláh, that his life be not saved, but that it be offered as a ransom so that the pilgrims, who so longed for His healing presence, might be permitted to attain their heart's desire. Now, we stood here in this prison at 'Akká, the latest of an endless flow of pilgrims admitted to this blessing by his sacrifice, with what pangs of tender sorrow we had stood among the archives at Haifa and looked down upon his robe stained with that final flow from the red river of his sonorous heart. We cried quietly inside at the sight of the small stone pebbles found in his pocket. He was so close to us then. A boy, yet a man, a ransom of God. At his tomb in the Monument gardens, we repeated the words, of Balla'u'llah written about him.

"Thou art the trust of God and His treasure in this Land. Ere long will God reveal through thee that which He hath desired."

"I have, O My Lord," Bahá'u'lláh said in a prayer revealed in memory of Mírzá Mihdí, "offered up that which Thou hast given me, that Thy servants may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united." Inside that wondrous prison-cell, one felt not only the privations and hardships of Bahá'u'lláh, but one felt also the overpowering sense of greatness that charged the air, the majesty, the potency, the authority that had poured forth from here unto all the world. Within a few feet of where the pilgrims eat, perhaps on the very spot where we rented, Bahá'u'lláh had revealed some of His most weighty tablets. This was the scene of which the Guardian has written, "His writings), during the years.

of His confinement in the Most Great Prison, surpassed the outpourings of His pen in either Adrianople or Baghdád... this unprecedented extension in the range of His writings, during His exile in that Prison, must rank as one of the most vitalizing and fruitful stages in the evolution of His Faith."

From here Bahá'u'lláh wrote many of His tablets to the kings of the earth, proclaiming that the only remedy for the ills of the world was the union of all its peoples in one common faith and that only a Divine, inspired physician could bring this to Pass.

Many were the wholesome truths that flowed from that Sum' Ale Pen within this prison cell. Each of these tablets and writings took on a near force since we had come to the scene of their origin.

We bowed to the cold stone to offer thanks to. Almighty God for bestowing upon us the eyes that see His glory and the ears that hear His music for granting us the inner sight that makes us cherish this simple, barren cell as a Throne of Majesty, ma. I beautiful and enduring than the most priceless palace outside.

Alone, imprisoned, persecuted, outwardly powerless, Bahá'u'lláh had hurled His challenge into the World. This message of Justice now had conquered the meadows and hearts of men in over two hundred countries. His Power, His Majesty, His Dominion increase with each sunrise while the names and memories of those Who Him here and who opposed Him recede farther into oblivion each day. Truly "from out of prison He has come to reign."

This illustrious Being," 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, uplifted his Case in the Most Great Prison." "His light at first had been a star; now it became a mighty sun." "Until our time," He added, "no such thing has ever occurred." "The Almighty...hath transformed this Prison-house into the Most Exalted Paradise, the Heaven of Heavens."

The pilgrim feels this transcendental greatness each step along the Oath of pilgrimage. When the time comes to leave this prison-cell, the heart rebels. It is reluctant to depart from this scene of the culmination of Bahá'u'lláh's sufferings. There are so many prayers still left unsaid, such a deep yearning to share in these tribulations still left unfulfilled. The door, that did not open for Bahá'u'lláh for two years, swings wide for you, then grinds closed upon its hinges. We put our shoes, everyone stint, lost in the weight of their thoughts which hold words down, unformed. This was the last stop today in 'Akká. we were grateful. We wanted no conversation; no invasion of that peace the mind had set aside for reflecting upon this unequalled experience.

There was no receptiveness to truly appreciate the stories told as we descended the stairs; the room below where the rest of the pilgrims had been gartered the Place where the Master had made broth for all — made broth with little more than air for ingredients. His words spoken in London sent another sliver of pain into the body. He had made so much broth in those days, He said, that He could make a very good broth with very little. How the Master loved

His wonderful Father. He told of this loathsome prison: how Bah'u'llah would call the pilgrims together, would make them laugh at their troubles, until they forgot their stone beds, the leak of food and water. He banished the pain of their illness and the ravages of their fever. He would tell them stories and lift their hearts. He would start them to laughing so loudly that they must be cautioned for tier the sentinels would believe they were mad, that they could laugh and enjoy themselves in these conditions of utter dreadfulness. What tenderness must have been in the Master's eyes as He placed His graceful hand upon the luxurious furniture of the western world and said, "We had no chairs such as this in the prison of 'Akká; no soft beds to lie upon; no delicious foods to nourish us. But I would not exchange all of these days for one moment of the sweetness of those hours in the presence of the Blessed Beauty."

Dear God: The pilgrim's heart must break beneath this weight He searches every corner of his life for the slightest ray of explanation why he in all this world of created beings should be one of those so enriched as to recognize and accept the Manifestation of God for this great day of the Lord, to be blessed thus beyond any dream of wealth. The pilgrim knows in this hour, as he has never known before, that where Bahá'u'lláh is, there is life. Where His Faith is there is hope. Without Him life is an empty, sightless thing; with Him it is ever green and beautiful whether in a prison or a mansion.

Seeing these poor, misfortunate inmates of the asylum for the last time, one thinks, How like the entire world is this prison barracks. These pitiful wretches, unbalanced, living in another dead world (like all humanity) are within: but a few paces of the Holy Place of Bahá'u'lláh, Healer of all ills.

There had been too much to receive in one day for so weak an instrument. The pilgrim felt a desperate need to depart at once from the Prison. There was actual pain. It was like looking directly into the high noon sun with the naked eye. It blinded, it hurt, it could not be accepted, even though the one who gazed knew that this was the source of all life. One could hear nothing that was said for some time. The senses were numb from this spiritual anaesthesia. One was physically sick inside, a fragile glass into which had been poured, and was still being poured, the Most Great Ocean. We knew that this Faith we had embraced could never be understood or contained by this feeble frame called man. We crossed the moat and walked out into the open air. Leroy loas put a comforting arm around my shoulder. He said Now you know why we came here last."

The clouds were gone . The sun was out ruling the blue sky all by itself. How happy a thing. The sea, a deeper-blue, was still charging up to the old seawall and plunging against its rocks.

As we entered the station wagon to return to Bahjí, there was a queer, mingled feeling in possession of me. It was half of joy and half of sadness, gladness and heavy-heartedness, happiness and sorrow. Perhaps it was the accumulation of the day's emotions, unsettled and unabsorbed within me. Each experience taking charge of my being at alternate, intervals, just as the sea sent alternate

breakers against the wall.

I did not look back. It was all locked forever in my heart. Oh, these sweet-scented shores. Will I ever return?

William Sears