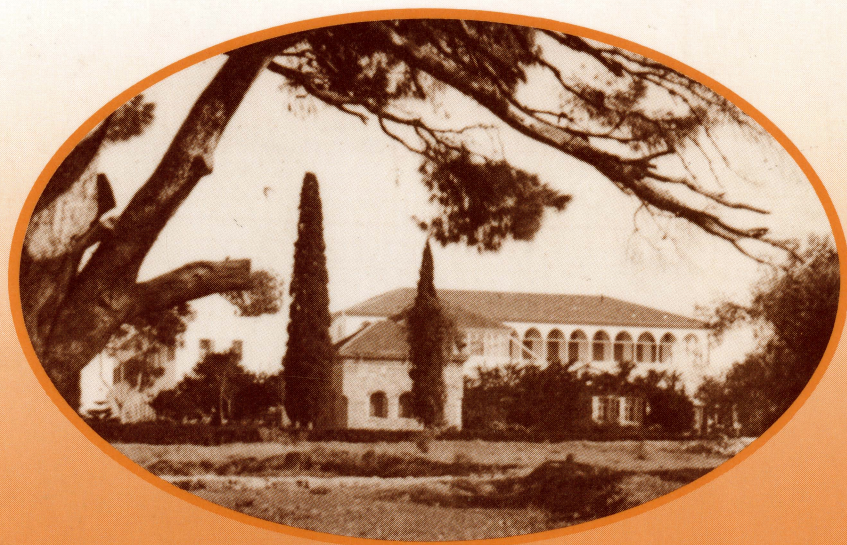


STORIES «««« OF »»»» BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



Compiled by
‘Alí-Akbar Furútan

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), the Inaugurator of the most recent of the independent world religions, the Bahá'í Faith, has been described by the Guardian of that Faith as 'One Whom posterity will acclaim, and Whom innumerable followers already recognize, . . . as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace. . . and the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization'. Few there are in the West who have known even one person who saw Him or experienced the majesty and power, the compassion, humility and humour which characterized His earthly life.

Bahá'ís of the East are more fortunate, many having known those, often their relatives, who were in His presence as companions or pilgrims. Yet, as the editor of this book remarks, 'only a few recorded their observations for posterity'. It was in 1975 that 'the thought of collecting personal accounts' occurred to the Hand of the Cause 'Alí-Akbar Furútan. Through correspondence and the examination of numerous memoirs, published and in manuscript, he selected the stories in this enthralling collection.

'The day is approaching when God will have raised up a people who will call to remembrance Our days,' wrote Bahá'u'lláh. The 144 stories in these pages make such remembrance both effortless and delightful. They come to mind whether one is far away or visiting the scenes in which they occurred. They describe Bahá'u'lláh in Iran, Baghdad, Constantinople, Adrianople, 'Akká and Bahjí, and linger in memory to uplift and gladden both heart and mind.

'**Alí-Akbar Furútan** has resided in Haifa at the World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith since 1957, having been named by his fellow Hands of the Cause of God one of the nine Custodians of the Faith after the death of Shoghi Effendi, its Guardian. He remained in this capacity until the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, continuing his services at the World Centre as Hand of the Cause and member of the International Teaching Centre to the present day.

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Stories of
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

compiled and edited by

‘Alí-Akbar Furútan

Translated by
Katayoon and Robert Crerar
with the help of friends

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Introduction

It was on the nineteenth day of the month of Qawl (Speech), BE132 (11 December 1975), that the thought of collecting personal accounts about the life of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, occurred to this servant. Fortunately, this idea was well received by the dear Bahá'í friends, and met with their whole-hearted encouragement. The next step, that of corresponding both directly and through the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Írán with those individuals and families, who were believed to be in possession of such accounts and diaries, was initiated, and a number of the friends replied and forwarded whatever pertinent material they had. Careful study and close examination of these memoirs led, in turn, to the selection of the most suitable passages, some of which appear unchanged while others have been summarized and paraphrased for this compilation. In addition, reference was made to numerous books and pamphlets, both published and in manuscript form, for the purpose of selecting and summarizing other stories and recollections dealing with the life of the Blessed Perfection.

It must be added that of those who were privileged

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to attain the presence of the Blessed Beauty – some having repeatedly received this great bounty – only a few recorded their observations for posterity. As a consequence, the preparation of this compilation has not been easy nor is it claimed to be comprehensive. The hope is expressed, however, that it will become more thorough and complete through the future endeavours of the friends. Indeed, since the original publication of these stories in 1978 under the title *Dástánehá'í Az Hayát-i-'Unşuríy-i-Jamál-i-Aqdas-i-Abhá* (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Tíhrán), the collection has been greatly enhanced by the addition of many stories generously contributed in the last two years.

Bahá'u'lláh would have been known to His contemporaries by His given name of Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alíy-i-Núrí. After His Declaration in 1863 of His station as the One heralded by His Forerunner, the Báb – the Manifestation of God for this age – He became known in history and to the Bahá'í community of the world as Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God. In these stories other titles such as the Blessed Beauty, the Ancient Beauty, the Blessed Perfection are often used by those who received the boundless privilege of being in His presence, as they were by their fellow believers. Many other titles indicating His station were delineated by the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith in *God Passes By*, his history of the first century of that Faith. Here is one paragraph from his pages: 'He Who in such dramatic circumstances was made to sustain the overpowering weight of so glorious a Mission was none other than

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the One Whom posterity will acclaim, and Whom innumerable followers already recognize, as the Judge, the Lawgiver and Redeemer of all mankind, as the Organizer of the entire planet, as the Unifier of the children of men, as the Inaugurator of the long-awaited millennium, as the Originator of a new "Universal Cycle", as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, as the Fountain of the Most Great Justice, as the Proclaimer of the coming of age of the entire human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, and as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization.' (pp. 93-4)

We witness in these stories the two stations possessed by every Prophet or Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh has described these in His Book of Certitude, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*. 'One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity . . . if thou callest them all by one name . . . thou hast not erred from the truth . . . For they one and all summon the people of the earth to acknowledge the Unity of God . . . through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world.' (pp. 152, 178) In the attitudes towards Bahá'u'lláh of His companions and pilgrims, of overwhelming reverence and submission, we can realize their awareness of this Divine station bestowed by God upon His chosen Messengers. In the several precious descriptions of Bahá'u'lláh when revealing the Word of God in prayers, verses and Tablets, we glimpse the majesty and power flowing through Him, as well as His own 'complete and absolute self-effacement . . . in which I have no

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control over mine own weal or woe nor over my life' in the presence of the 'Lord of all names and the Maker of the heavens'. (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 41, and Long Obligatory Prayer) Yet another evidence of this first station, which unites Him with all the Prophets gone before, is given in the accounts of His all-embracing knowledge, without benefit of any communication which we experience, so that He is simply aware, effortlessly and immediately, of what is thought by others or is happening elsewhere. This occurrence is explained by His Son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His book *Some Answered Questions*, from which these few lines are taken: 'Since the Sanctified Realities, the supreme Manifestations of God, surround the essence and qualities of the creatures, transcend and contain existing realities and understand all things, therefore, Their knowledge is divine knowledge and not acquired – that is to say, it is a holy bounty; it is a divine revelation.' (pp. 157–8) And finally, there are a few instances in these stories of yet another power shared by all God's chosen Ones, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá has also described: 'The Holy Manifestations are the sources of miracles and the originators of wonderful signs. For Them, any difficult and impracticable thing is possible and easy. For through a supernatural power, which is beyond nature, They influence the world of nature . . . But . . . for the Manifestations these miracles and wonderful signs have no importance . . . For if we consider miracles a great proof, they are still only proofs and arguments for those who are present when they are performed . . .' (ibid. p. 100)

The second station so vividly portrayed in these

Introduction

stories is that of the human personality, 'the station of distinction, [which] pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission . . .' (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 176) Although possessed of unimaginable majesty, authority and power, yet in the company of pilgrims and His companions Bahá'u'lláh shows forth such mercy, affection, humour and simplicity as to move and inspire us. In the manner of a kindly father, He brings up his children in a considerate and gentle fashion, counselling each according to his level of understanding, his capacity and spiritual station. By addressing each person in this way, He deprives no one of His bounty.

Such are the favours He showers
on every single soul
That each claims Him to be
his personal Lord.

Truly, the words of the Blessed Beauty in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (pp. 249–50) best describe Him in this station: 'To everyone We have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend. In the company of the poor We have sought their fellowship, and amidst the exalted and learned We have been submissive and resigned.'

Notes and Acknowledgements

The words in these pages which are attributed to Bahá'u'lláh cannot be regarded as direct quotation, but rather constitute His utterances as recalled and recorded by pilgrims and others. The historical background and the course of Bahá'u'lláh's eventful life, from His birth in Tīhrán in 1817 to His ascension in the Mansion of Bahjí near the prison-city of 'Akká in 1892 – a progress which brought Him from circumstances of wealth and ease to sudden and unjust imprisonment in the gloom and filth of the Síyáh-Chál prison of Tīhrán, then to permanent exile from His native land in 1853, first to Baghdád where He declared His Mission in the Garden of Ridván in 1863, on the eve of further exile to the remote Western fringe of the Ottoman Empire in Adrianople, followed by perpetual banishment to the 'Most Great Prison' in 1868 – the recording of such events is beyond the scope of this collection. They have been documented in a number of books, in histories – the foremost being *God Passes By* from the pen of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in the unique narrative by Nabíl-i-A'zam which was partly published in *The Dawn-Breakers* but with much of the material concerning Bahá'u'lláh still

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unpublished, and in more recent books. Several of these are noted in the Bibliography for those English readers who wish to visualize these stories in their original settings.

To those who have assisted with this compilation by submitting stories from the accounts of their kindred, I extend my heartfelt gratitude and record their names herewith, assuring them that prayers have been said for them in the Holy Shrines.

Abu'l-Qásim Afnán

Aḥmad-i-Asbaqí

Dr Amín Jadh~~h~~dháb

Dr 'Aṭá'u'lláh Nadímí Shírází

'Aṭá'u'lláh Nuṭqí

'Aṭá'u'lláh Sírús

Faraydún Raḥímí

Ḥabib Taherzadeh

'Izzat-i-Ṭabíbí Najafábádí

Jalál Nak~~h~~javání

Jalál Nuṭqí (Humáyúní)

Dr Mihdí Samandarí

My deep appreciation also goes to Katayoon and Robert Crerar for their careful translation from Persian into English.

Sources are given at the close of each story in the name of the author or contributor, with details of published sources listed in the Bibliography. It should be noted that the stories based on the unpublished writings of Nabíl-i-A'zam are designated simply as 'Nabíl'.

I

Childhood and Early Life

1817–1843

1

‘Abdu’l-Bahá related these stories of Bahá’u’lláh’s childhood and youth:

The mother of the Blessed Beauty was so enthralled with Him that she could not contain her amazement at His behaviour. ‘This child never cries,’ she would say; ‘He is so unlike other babies who cry and scream and are forever restless while in the nursing stage . . .’

2

At the age of five or six the Blessed Beauty had a dream which He described to His father. In the dream He found Himself in a garden. Huge birds were attacking Him from every side, but were unable to inflict any harm. He then went to the sea and, as He was swimming, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea attacked Him, but He was not harmed.

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His father summoned a famous seer to interpret the dream. 'This dream indicates', replied the seer, 'that the Child shall be the founder of a great Cause, and that all the leaders and learned men throughout the world will attack Him, but, like the birds and the fish, they shall do no harm. He will be victorious over all.'

3

When Bahá'u'lláh was seven years old, one day His mother was watching the elegance of His bearing as He paced to and fro, and remarked 'He is somewhat short of stature.' but His father answered: 'It is of no importance. Are you not aware of His capacity and His abilities? Such intelligence! And such perception! He is as a flame of fire. Even at this young age He surpasses mature men.'

Whenever difficult problems were discussed and no one seemed able to resolve them, the youthful Blessed Beauty would provide the solution. (*Ishráq-Khávarí*, pp. 62, 65, 67)

4

While still a child, the Blessed Beauty watched as a government tax-collector, on three separate occasions, accosted His father and demanded, in a cruel and unjust manner, the payment of taxes. Unable to bear the injustice of it all, He, though in early childhood,

Childhood and Early Life

mounted His horse and rode for two days until He arrived in Tīhrán. There, He sought the dismissal of this unjust and tyrannical tax-collector. He succeeded in obtaining the necessary papers ordering the dismissal, and returned to His parents. (Memoirs of Dr Dīyá Baghdádí, unpublished, reporting words heard from 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

5

One day the youthful Blessed Beauty was present at a gathering convened by Mírzá Nazar-'Alí, the *Ṣúfī murshid* (spiritual guide) who was more highly esteemed at the court of Muḥammad Sháh than the prime minister himself, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí. The discourse of Mírzá Nazar-'Alí had developed to the point of claiming: 'I shall be the last to hold the seat of mystical learning; the succession of great occupants will end with me, for I have attained such a degree of resignation that should Jesus Christ Himself suddenly appear in the doorway, it would cause no change in my state.'

Everyone nodded and murmured assent except Bahá'u'lláh, Who addressed the speaker: 'Jináb-i-Hakím, I shall ask you a question, and I urge you to give a truthful reply. If, without your consent, the curtain should be raised and the royal executioner enter, sword in hand and advancing towards you, would this affect your composure?'

After a moment's reflection Mírzá Nazar-'Alí replied, 'Yes, it would affect me.'

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'In that case', Bahá'u'lláh stated, 'you should not have made such a claim.' (Nabíl)

6

In Yálrúd, in the province of Mázindarán, a famous mujtahid, Shaykh Muḥammad-Taqí by name, had around him a thousand or so scholars of divinity whom he taught and sometimes presented with difficult problems. One evening, when he was with some of his students, he asked them to explain a certain *Hadíth* [Islamic tradition]. They offered various ideas which failed to satisfy him. Bahá'u'lláh, Who sometimes stopped in Yálrúd and was distantly related to the mujtahid, was present on this occasion, and Shaykh Muḥammad-Taqí invited him to give an explanation. It left the great man silent, but the following day he reproached his students: 'For no less than twenty-five years I have taught and educated you. Yet you were completely unable to unravel the meaning of the *Hadíth*, while an unturbaned youth gave such a remarkable explanation.' (Ishráq-Khávarí, pp. 65-6)

7

The Ancient Beauty owned an estate in the village of Qúch-Hiṣār near Tíhrán which was noted for its pleasant climate. One day, when the Prime Minister, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, was passing through the village, he

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was so attracted by the beauty of the estate that he asked Bahá'u'lláh to sell it to him. 'If it were mine alone,' Bahá'u'lláh replied, 'I would gladly have accepted your wish, for this evanescent world – much less this little village – is of no value in My sight, and I have no attachment to it. There are others, however, including some minors, who share it with Me. Consult them about your intention; if they agree, we shall do as you wish.' (Nabíl-i-A'zam, pp. 83–4)

8

Before the Declaration of the Báb in 1844, Bahá'u'lláh resided in Tíhrán, but during the summer months He often stayed in Murgh-Maḥallih in Shimrán, and sometimes He would go to Tákur in Núr. One year He spent the summer in Murgh-Maḥallih in a garden called 'The Garden of Hájí Bāqir'. He lived in a three-storey dwelling overlooking a small lake, in the middle of which was a large platform of bedrock encircled with vegetation. At times, a tent would be pitched in the centre of this area, and about one hundred and fifty friends would gather in the small garden surrounding it. The Blessed Beauty often spoke of this place. (Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Bashír-i-Iláhí, 16 Dhi'l-Hijjah, AH 1337)

II

Experiences as a Bábí and Exile from Írán

1844-1853

9

Soon after the Declaration of the Báb, the Blessed Beauty undertook to deliver His message to the people of Mázindarán. An influential divine in that province sent two of his most diligent students, who were also his sons-in-law, to Dárkalá to seek out Bahá'u'lláh and challenge His teaching. After listening to His exposition in their first meeting with Bahá'u'lláh, they were captivated by Him, humbly placed themselves at His service and did not return to their teacher. News of their conversion spread rapidly throughout the province and was instrumental in leading a great many others to accept the Cause of the Báb. (Nabíl-i-A'zam, p. 79)

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10

In Badasht, the eighty-one disciples who had gathered for the conference were guests of the Ancient Beauty from the day of their arrival to the day they dispersed; no one was permitted to contribute anything of his own. (Nabíl-i-A'ẓam, p. 211)

11

One night in Ámul, as Bahá'u'lláh was on His way to visit the besieged Bábís at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, accompanied by some of His friends including Mullá Báqir-i-Tabrízí, Hájí Mírzá Jání of Káshán and Mírzá Yaḥyá, His half-brother, they were arrested and held by government officials. The divines were clamouring that they be put to death, until the acting governor, much embarrassed and attempting to hold them off for the governor's return, ordered that they be bastinadoed. At this point Bahá'u'lláh intervened. 'These are only my companions,' He said, 'and they are blameless. Punish Me in their stead.' The Blessed Beauty was bastinadoed so severely that His feet bled. (Nabíl-i-A'ẓam, pp. 265-8)

12

One day in Ṭihrán the Prime Minister, Mírzá Taqí Khán, asked Bahá'u'lláh the meaning of the verse: 'There is no dry or wet which is not revealed in the

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Book of God' (reference to Qur'án: 6.59), to which Bahá'u'lláh replied: 'This means that everything is contained in the Qur'án.' The Prime Minister then asked if there were anything about himself in the Qur'án. 'Yes,' said Bahá'u'lláh, 'where it states: "I take refuge in the God of Mercy from thee! if thou art Taqí [pious] . . ."' (19.18) The implication of this verse did not leave Mírzá Taqí Khán unruffled, but, concealing his anger, he continued: 'And what about my father?' To which Bahá'u'lláh again replied: 'In the verse which states: "God has made a covenant with us, that we believe not any Messenger until He brings us a qurbán [sacrifice] which fire shall devour."' (3.179) This infuriated Mírzá Taqí Khán, inasmuch as his father, who was cook for Qá'im-Maqám, bore the name 'Qurbán' and worked with fire. (Nabíl)

13

The Blessed Beauty related: 'One day, the Amír-Nizám expressed the wish to visit Us and, upon our meeting, he cordially remarked: "I am well aware that were it not for the aid and assistance which you extended to Mullá Husayn and the other followers [of the Báb] during the siege of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsí, they would have been unable to resist the forces of the government for a period of seven months. We could not, however, discern the motive for your participation, and it is to be regretted that the Sháh and the country have not benefited from your tremendous merits. It has just occurred to me that since the Sháh

Experiences as a Bábí and Exile from Írán

has departed for Iṣfahán, it would be good if you could sojourn a while at the holy shrines in Karbilá and Najaf. When the Sháh returns, it is my intention to confer upon you a ministerial position.”

The Blessed Beauty politely declined the government post. He did, however, accept the suggestion to make the journey, and, after a few days, departed for Karbilá. (Nabíl-i-A‘ẓam, p. 434)

14

Shaykh Ḥasan-i-Zunúzí, one of the early followers of the Báb, transferred his residence to Karbilá soon after the Báb had addressed him with these words: ‘You must journey to Karbilá and remain there until you behold with your own eyes the beauty of the promised Ḥusayn. At that moment, bring Me to remembrance as well and convey to Him My loving devotion.’

In Karbilá, Shaykh Ḥasan earned his living as a scribe. One day [5 October 1851], when he was passing by the inner gate of the Shrine of the Imám Ḥusayn, he beheld the Blessed Beauty for the first time. Lovingly Bahá’u’lláh turned towards him and, taking his hand, spoke in a tone of power and beauty: ‘This very day I intend to make you known throughout Karbilá as a Bábí.’ He continued speaking to Shaykh Ḥasan as they walked together along the market-street, until suddenly He said: ‘Render thanks unto God that you have stayed in Karbilá and have seen with your own eyes the beauty of the promised Ḥusayn.’

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With a profound feeling of awe Shaykh Hasan recalled the promise given him by the Báb; so intense was his joy that he could scarcely contain himself. (Nabíl-A'zam, pp. 24-5)

15

Bahíyyih Khánum, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, recalled a day when she was six years old:

We were at our country house and my Father was away; it was the time when an attempt was made on the life of the Sháh by a half-crazed Bábí youth. Suddenly a servant came rushing in to our mother in great distress. 'The Master, the Master!' he cried. 'He has been arrested – I have seen Him. He has walked many miles and His feet are bare and bleeding. They have beaten Him. His clothes are torn, and there are chains around His neck.'

My mother's face grew more and more pale. We children were terribly frightened, and wept bitterly. (Blomfield, pp. 40-41)

16

While the Blessed Beauty was being conducted from Zargandih in Shimrán (an area of summer resorts north of Tíhrán) to the dungeon of Síyáh-Chál, He became the target of ridicule and slander, and was pelted with stones, sticks of wood, or whatever the mob lining the road could lay its hands on. Among

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them was an old woman, who, with a stone in her hand but unable to keep up with the procession, begged the escorting guards not to deprive her of attaining her spiritual reward. Seeing her, Bahá'u'lláh requested the guards to 'permit this elderly woman, also, to realize her desire'. (Nabíl-i-A'ẓam, pp. 444-5)

17

In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the incident given here in summarized form:

When the Ancient Beauty made his first journey to Baghdád in 1851, a certain youth named 'Abdu'l-Vahháb, one of the most steadfast of the Bábís, attained His presence. He requested Bahá'u'lláh to guide his father, Hájí 'Abdu'l-Majíd, who, as soon as he came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, became a believer.

When the time came for Bahá'u'lláh to return to Tíhrán, 'Abdu'l-Vahháb longed to accompany Him, but Bahá'u'lláh counselled him: 'Since you are an only son, you must stay with your father; this will be deemed the same as being with Me on My journey.'

Not long after Bahá'u'lláh had departed for Tíhrán, 'Abdu'l-Vahháb grew restless and disconsolate. His father, realizing the cause of his son's distress, told him: 'O my son! Although I cannot bear to be separated from you for even a moment, nevertheless I cannot dampen your eagerness and zeal. You are to depart immediately for Tíhrán.'

Happy and joyous was that youth when he arrived

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh

in Tíhrán, soon after the attempt on the life of the Sháh; but no sooner had he entered the city than he was arrested and shackled in the Síyáh-Chál, where he found himself in the presence of the Ancient Beauty. After a few days, when the gaoler came to lead him to his execution, that radiant youth arose, kissed the hands of the Blessed Beauty, bade the imprisoned friends farewell, and danced all the way to the scene of his martyrdom.

When news of this episode reached the father of 'Abdu'l-Vahháb, he prostrated himself and gave thanks that his son had been sacrificed in the path of the Almighty God. (*Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 407)

18

'Abbás, the servant of the influential Hájí Sulaymán Khán [he who was martyred with candles burning in holes cut in his flesh] had accepted the Báb but then betrayed his master, and would accuse people of being followers of the Báb, whether he knew them or not. He had only to say that he had seen someone in the house of his master for that person, whether or not the accusation was true, to be required either to pay over a large sum for his freedom, or be executed.

At the insistence of the government, 'Abbás was sent to the dungeon (the Síyáh-Chál) where Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned to testify that He had played a part in the attempt on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. He was assured that by doing so he would be rewarded by the mother of the Sháh with a robe of

Experiences as a Bábí and Exile from Írán

honour and appointment as her private trustee.

‘Abbás was conducted to the prison several times. Whenever he was ushered into the presence of the Blessed Beauty, however, he could only rub his eyes, gaze briefly on His countenance, and then swear that he had never laid eyes upon this personage before. (Nabíl-i-A‘zam, pp. 464-5)

19

One day, on behalf of Náṣiri’-d-Dín Sháh, a large tray of lamb kebáb was brought to the prisoners in the Síyáh-Chál, where Bahá’u’lláh was imprisoned. The companions of the Blessed Beauty awaited His permission before taking their share, but instead He returned the gift to the guards and only Mírzá Husayn-i-Qumí showed any wish to eat it. All the others accepted Bahá’u’lláh’s decision despite their own unhappy plight. (Nabíl-i-A‘zam, p. 462)

20

‘Abdu’l-Bahá told this story from His childhood:

Once during the imprisonment of the Blessed Beauty, I was very insistent to be taken to see Him. Eventually, I was sent to the prison, accompanied by a servant. After the guards had directed us to the place of His confinement, the servant lifted me to his shoulders and carried me. I could see that a steep incline led to a darkened area. We began to descend two flights of

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh

stairs which led from a small doorway, but soon our eyes could discern nothing. In the midst of the staircase the Blessed Voice suddenly reached our ears: 'Do not bring Him'. So we returned and waited for the prisoners to be led into the yard. Suddenly, they brought the Blessed Beauty, Who was chained to others. And what a terrible chain! Because of its galling weight He could scarcely move. For me it was a sad and heart-rending moment. (Zarqání, Vol. 2, p. 206)

21

From a recollection of Bahíyyih Khánum:

During His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál the Blessed Beauty had become so ill that He could not eat coarse food. My mother was deeply distressed and, during the difficult journey to Baghdád after His release, always tried to find ways of getting suitable food for Him. One day she was able to obtain a little flour and that night, in the caravanserai, she made a sweet cake for Him. But alas! In the dark, she used salt instead of sugar, and so the cake was inedible. (Blomfield, pp. 46-9)

22

In one of His talks in the month of August 1915, 'Abdu'l-Bahá related this story:

Prayer beads made of pearls – one of the most precious of the household possessions of the Blessed

Experiences as a Bábí and Exile from Írán

Beauty, and valued at 10,000 *túmáns* in the currency of those days – had been spared for us. Every bead was the size of a hazel-nut, and in the middle of each was embedded an emerald. After our possessions had been looted, we were obliged to leave this string of beads in a trust for 1,000 *túmáns*. Since interest charges were accumulating, we could not afford to reclaim it. Today, if those same prayer beads were still in our possession, they could be sold for 100,000 *túmáns* in Paris.

Another precious object which was in the possession of the Blessed Beauty was the book of Ḥáfiz in the handwriting of Mír ‘Imád. Muḥammad Sháh sent an envoy to enquire about the price of the book. The Blessed Beauty gave the reply: ‘The book contains 12,000 verses; with each verse valued at one *ashrafí* [a gold coin], the book therefore has a value of 12,000 *ashrafís*.’ Muḥammad Sháh’s answer was: ‘With 12,000 *ashrafís*, we are able to outfit two full regiments of soldiers.’

Yet another of the valuable possessions of the Blessed Beauty was the prayer of Kumayl in the handwriting of the Imám ‘Alí, son of Abú-Tálib, in the Kufic style of calligraphy. The scholars of that day, including Mír ‘Imád, had testified in writing that the handwriting was that of the Imám ‘Alí. It was truly of such value that no price could be put on it.

Vast amounts of jewellery and many precious objects were in our possession, but all of them were lost. Despite all this material wealth, we arrived in Baghdád with nothing. (Nabíl)

III

Residence in Baghdád and Sulaymáníyyih

1853–1863

Bahá'u'lláh reached Baghdád on 8 April 1853, after travelling from Írán for three months in the heart of winter, accompanied by members of His family. The following stories relate to His ten-year residence there, which included a period of seclusion, from April 1854 until March 1856, in the region of Sulaymáníyyih, Kurdistán, where He lived as a dervish.

23

On one occasion Bahíyyih Khánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, mentioned their situation while in Baghdád:

Because of hardships and duress, my mother, Ásíyih Khánum, was in delicate health but always had to work beyond her strength. My Father was greatly saddened by her condition, and sometimes He helped with the cooking, both before and after His stay in

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Sulaymáníyyih. My uncle, Áqáy-i-Kalím, was also our helper and comforter under all conditions. (Blomfield, p. 47)

24

Mírzá Muḥammad-Taquí, one of the early disciples of the Báb and a man highly esteemed in Nayríz, was so badly beaten and tortured after the second Nayríz Upheaval that he could scarcely move. Somehow he managed to drag himself to the outskirts of Nayríz before dropping to the ground like a lifeless body, where he fell asleep. This is the story which he himself has related:

While sleeping, I dreamed about the Ancient Beauty. Even though I had never seen Him, yet I was certain that this was He, and that He was in Baghdád. He addressed these words to me: 'Despite the injuries heaped upon you, We extended Our protection that you might remain alive. Be not grieved, and come to Me in Baghdád.'

'But I have no money,' I replied, 'nor am I able to stand on my feet.'

'You do rely upon God?' were His next words, to which I replied, 'I have always relied upon God.'

At this point I awoke, and to my great amazement saw that a caravan had set up camp on the banks of the very river beside which I had been sleeping. It turned out that they were pilgrims travelling to Karbilá, many of whom had come on foot from Kirmán.

Someone emerged from a tent and, to my great surprise, came straight over to me and asked me to

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh

follow him. Overcome with astonishment, I remained rooted to the spot. He repeated his words. I followed him and we entered the tent. There I saw that several people were attending a man of striking appearance who, as a sign of respect to me, arose and then seated me next to himself. 'During the night,' he told me, 'I dreamed that the Imám Ḥusayn had entrusted to my care a person with the same appearance and features which I behold in you, and he told me, "This Ḥájí is my guest. He should accompany you to Karbilá." So, you are my guest as far as Karbilá.'

And so, without the usual formalities of introduction, this distinguished gentleman took me with him, and he would often remark: 'The Imám has guided you to me, and has emphasized that you be shown the utmost hospitality.'

When we reached Baghdád I told him, 'This is where we part.' He replied that I was to accompany him as far as Karbilá, but I explained that 'the same blessed Personage Who entrusted me to your care also came to me in a dream and invited me to come to Baghdád. Therefore, I shall remain here, and will not continue the journey to Karbilá.'

My host paled as he heard these words, and in a very apologetic manner replied: 'To be truthful, the Imám Ḥusayn had directed me to take you as far as Baghdád.' And, with the utmost kindness, he bade me farewell.

When I came into the presence of the Blessed Beauty, I recognized Him as that same holy Personage Whom I had seen in my dream, and I was favoured with His limitless grace. (Nabíl)

Later, the Súrih of Ṣabr (Patience) was revealed for this

Residence in Baghdád and Sulaymáníyyih

same Hájí Muḥammad-Taqí. He passed away in Adrianople during the last days of Bahá'u'lláh's stay in that city.

25

While living on a mountain named Sar-Galú, above Sulaymáníyyih, the Blessed Beauty encountered one day a student from the school in Kháníqáh sitting by the road and weeping bitterly. When asked the reason for his sadness, the boy explained: 'Today, our school-master gave all the other boys a copy to practise their writing, but me he dismissed and I have no copy.' 'If you will bring your paper and pen,' Bahá'u'lláh suggested kindly, 'I shall set a copy for you.'

When, on returning to his school, the lad showed this specimen of Bahá'u'lláh's exquisite penmanship to the teachers and students, everyone was astonished and news of it spread throughout Sulaymáníyyih, as the copy was passed from hand to hand, arousing admiration and curiosity in all who saw it. (Nabíl)

26

In Sulaymáníyyih, for the space of one year, the Blessed Beauty confined himself almost exclusively to a stone hut with its doors closed. (Memoirs of Dr Díyá Baghdádí, unpublished, reporting words heard from 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

Referring to the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh which was revealed in Sulaymáníyyih and which began 'Create in me a pure heart, O my God, . . .', 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: 'When, for the first time, I read this Tablet, I wept openly.' (Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as recalled by Dr Díyá Baghdádí, unpublished memoir)

The Blessed Beauty's days in Baghdád were usually spent in this manner: After morning tea, which was served in an inner chamber (the *andarúní*), He repaired to the *bírúní*, the outer part of the house which served as a reception room. It was here that the believers gathered in His presence. Sometimes sitting, at other times pacing to and fro, He spent from thirty minutes to an hour with them.

Afterwards He walked, accompanied by two believers, to the coffee-house* of Siyyid Ḥabíb-i-'Aráb in the old quarter of Baghdád. His purpose was to teach the Faith of God and promote the divine Cause. A number of residents and many others who yearned to see Him hastened there to be in His presence and benefit from His words. The coffee-house was frequented by men of distinction, and its owner, Siyyid Ḥabíb, although not a believer, showed a

* In those days a meeting-place frequented by persons of rank and officials.

Residence in Baghdád and Sulaymáníyyih

humility towards the Blessed Beauty which none surpassed.

Following these discussions, often lasting over an hour, Bahá'u'lláh returned to His house where, in the afternoons, He received the friends. Later, He again visited the coffee-house, returning home at sunset. Once more the believers gathered in the outer rooms of the house, remaining in His presence until about two hours after nightfall, when they dispersed.

Besides His companions, notable religious leaders, dignitaries and officials of Baghdád would call on the Blessed Beauty, but He never went to their homes. People from every stratum of society habitually referred their most perplexing problems to Him. (Memoirs of Ustád Muḥammad-‘Alíy-i-Salmání)

29

The following incident was related to Nabíl by Áqáy-i-Kalím, the faithful brother of Bahá'u'lláh:

At the instigation of a few highly-prejudiced opponents of Bahá'u'lláh, a large group of Kurds of Shí'ih belief went to His House in Baghdád one night with the purpose of stirring up mischief. Upon entering the courtyard, and without uttering a word, they stood near the wall, ready at a moment's notice to unsheathe their swords.

The Blessed Beauty addressed one of them, asking: 'In your estimation, were those who surrounded the Prince of Martyrs (the Imám Ḥusayn) in the desert of Karbilá, intending to slay him and his followers, believers in God and His Messenger?'

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh

‘It is evident’, came the reply, ‘that they were unbelievers, for had they been Muslims and believed in God and the Prophet, they would not have put to death the kindred of the Prophet and His follower and would not have led into captivity the family of the Prophet of God.’

Thereupon Bahá'u'lláh invited them to enter His house and be seated, had refreshments served, and undertook to explain in detail the tragic story of the Imám Husayn and his martyrdom. One by one the Kurds seated themselves, and the Ancient Beauty related to them the history of the opposition of Yazíd who had succeeded his father as the second Umayyad caliph. He recalled to them the names of those who commanded the 4,000-strong army sent against Husayn with only two hundred members of his family and devoted followers, and the startling change of heart of the cavalry commander, Hurr, who crossed over to Husayn's side.

‘And so,’ Bahá'u'lláh concluded, ‘with the utmost cruelty they martyred the Imám Husayn, and then proclaimed: “Verily, Husayn trespassed against the religion of his grandfather, and was killed by the sword of his grandfather.”’

Deeply moved, the Kurds were weeping as they arose from their seats and kissed the robe of Bahá'u'lláh. ‘We can be likened to Hurr,’ they asserted, ‘who at first was intent upon killing the Prince of Martyrs, but repented and became the first to yield up his life in his path.’ With the utmost sincerity and humility, they asked Bahá'u'lláh's permission to take their leave. (Nabíl)

An official from the Persian consulate in Baghdád came to Bahá'u'lláh one day to report that one of the Persians accused of treason against the government had claimed to be devoted to Him. Out of respect for Bahá'u'lláh they had hesitated to act, but asked His advice as to their duty towards this evil-doer.

'Tell him,' Bahá'u'lláh stated, 'no one in this world can claim any relationship to Me except those who, in all their deeds and in their conduct, follow My example, in such wise that all the peoples of the earth would be powerless to prevent them from doing and saying that which is meet and seemly.' Then, turning towards Áqáy-i-Kalím, who was present, He explained that should His own brother 'perpetrate an act contrary to the interests of either the state or religion, and his guilt be established in your sight,' it would please Him and be appreciated if he were severely punished. (As quoted in *God Passes By*, p. 133) They should not accept anyone's intercession, nor any claim to relationship to Him by someone who plans and commits a contemptible act.

The messenger from the consulate humbly took his leave. (Nabíl)

The coffee-house of 'Abdu'lláh in Jassár, located in the eastern part of Baghdád, was frequently visited by the Blessed Beauty after He had had His morning tea. And

often he would go until sunset to the Mazra'iy-i-Vash-shásh, a farm about two miles south of Baghdád which Áqáy-i-Kalím had rented. It was irrigated with water from the Tigris River, a bower had been arranged for the Blessed Beauty's comfort, and sometimes a large tent would be pitched in the middle of the farm. It was also a favourite spot for visits of the Holy Family.

Wherever Bahá'u'lláh went, believers and non-believers alike would gather to listen to Him and to benefit from His words. (Nabíl)

32

One day, while travelling from Kazimayn to Baghdád, the Blessed Beauty observed: 'How removed from good manners are the Shí'íhs! In spite of their acknowledgement of the *Hadíth*, "The believer is alive in both worlds", they enter into the holy places with stained clothing and mouths reeking of onions and garlic. The repugnancy of unpleasant odours in these places is such as We are disinclined to describe. Shujá'u'd-Dawlih [a prince and high-ranking Persian official] used to remark: "The reverence which You feel for the Imáms defies description."' "

Then Bahá'u'lláh gave this account: 'One day, upon entering the Mosque of Qamarí which was near Our residence and close to the Tigris River, I beheld a certain person divulging, without wisdom, the hidden mysteries concealed in those symbolic verses which the Almighty God has revealed in the Qur'án. I wished to intervene, but it became apparent that neither the

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reader nor the listener was aware of the matter, and that the Sealed Wine which has been entrusted to this people remains sealed, so that none save the pure in heart has tasted it, and no souls save those who enjoy nearness to God have inhaled its fragrance.

‘The imám of that mosque asked of My city and country, to which I replied: “My dwelling-place is called ‘Amá’.” “What kind of city is it?” he enquired. “Its sun is never beclouded,” I replied, “and its moon is wreathed in light; even its stars are bright. With streams flowing, the lands luxuriant, the trees fruitful and flowers always in bloom, its bounties are endless and its favours know no bounds.”

‘The imám was much amazed and said: “Never has a city bearing this name and matching this description come to our attention. O, that we could be dwellers in that city, as well.” It was evident that out of extreme simplicity he thought such a city actually existed on this earthly plane.

‘The imám often sought Our presence. He was of good character and conversant with many branches of knowledge. His name was ‘Abdu’s-Salám Effendi, and he taught at the school of Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Qádir. I arranged for him to discuss academic questions with the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] on certain mornings and afternoons. One day he remarked: “I have taught and studied for over thirty years and yet, when students question me, I am obliged to refer to my books. Your accomplished child, on the other hand, is able to give explanations which have never occurred to me.”

“The essence of the Most Great Branch is indicative

of the essence of God," I explained. "The Most Great Branch effortlessly comprehends scientific matters and perceives realities which others are incapable of fathoming; even as the Báb, Who, with only a few pages of practice, was able to produce such exquisite handwriting, and although He spent no more than a few days in school, prolific was the divine knowledge which flowed from His heart. In the same way, as soon as some aspect of knowledge comes to the attention of the Most Great Branch, He comprehends it to a degree that no scholar, however competent, can ever match." (Nabíl)

33

The Blessed Beauty was a source of great bounty and mercy for all, but particularly for the poor to whom He gave special attention. Always He bestowed gifts upon the disabled, the orphans and the needy whom He met during His walks in the city.

One of these was a woman of eighty who lived in a deprived area through which Bahá'u'lláh often passed. Each day, as He walked from His house towards the coffee-house of Sar-i-Jisr, she would wait for him in the roadway. Bahá'u'lláh was exceedingly kind to her and always asked after her health. Although He would not let her kiss His hands, whenever she wanted to kiss His cheeks, because she was bent with age and short of stature, He would bend down so that she could realize her wish. Often He remarked, 'Because I love this old woman so much, she also loves Me.' Throughout His

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time in Baghdád, He showered her with kindness, and before leaving for Constantinople, He arranged an allowance for her to the end of her days.

Whichever coffee-house the Blessed Beauty frequented would be crowded with customers, bringing good fortune to its owner. (Nabíl)

34

During Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Ṭihrání [an implacable enemy of Bahá'u'lláh who had been commissioned by the Sháh to supervise repairs to the holy shrines] incited various persons to attempt His murder. One of these was a Turk named Riḍá, who stood waiting one day for the Blessed Beauty, weapon in hand. But the instant his eyes fell upon Bahá'u'lláh, he was confounded, his pistol dropped from his hand and he was unable to move. 'Return his gun to him, and show him the way to his home,' said Bahá'u'lláh to His brother, Áqáy-i-Kalím. 'It seems he has lost his way.' (Nabíl)

35

One day at sunset the Ancient Beauty visited the house where Nabíl-i-Zarandí and some of his friends were living. It was situated across from His own house, and was devoid of furnishings. 'This home is truly pleasing,' Bahá'u'lláh was heard to say. 'It is preferable in My sight to the awe-inspiring palaces of the kings of

the earth, for here the friends of God with free hearts are engaged in mentioning the Name of God.' (Nabíl)

36

The agitation against Bahá'u'lláh, stirred up by the Persian consul and the religious leaders, was unable to alter the day-to-day habits of the Blessed Beauty, Who continued His daily walk in the city and along the banks of the Tigris River, often accompanied by His faithful half-brother, Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí. The descriptions of the disturbed state of the populace, which the believers brought, went unheeded by Him, until one day, while pacing to and fro in the outer part of His house, two ill-wishers – outwardly friendly but in reality closely allied with the intrigues of the religious leaders – together with some of the believers, came into His presence. Bahá'u'lláh addressed them, saying: 'Have you heard? The mujtahids and the consul have summoned ten to twenty thousand people of Najaf and Karbilá to wage a holy war against us.' Then, turning to the two mischief-makers, He said: 'Go and tell them that, by the one true God, I will send no more than two men to drive them as far as Kázi-mayn. If they wish, let them come!' The message was delivered and, surprisingly, His opponents dispersed. (Nabíl, from talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

37

Bahá'u'lláh once spoke to us about Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn-i-Ṭihrání, saying that 'one of his companions invited Us to meet him, and We replied: "It is a most worthy idea. Go immediately and inform the Shaykh, for, in doing good deeds there must be no hesitation. Whatever hour is selected during the next ten days, I am willing and ready to come two hours before the appointed time to converse with him, so that no pretext [for agitation against Us] remains."' (Nabíl)

38

'We informed the religious leaders of 'Atabát [a term for the shrines of the Imáms in Najaf and Karbilá]', Bahá'u'lláh related to us, 'that We were prepared to accept their request to perform any miracle they chose as evidence of the truth of My mission, but if their sole desire was to stir up mischief, I vowed We would send two men to chase them past the gates of Karbilá.' And Bahá'u'lláh continued: 'We told them that the 'ulamá must assemble, decide upon a miracle with one accord, and write that after the performance of this miracle they will cease their violent opposition against Us; if the miracle is not performed, they can testify to Our imposture. But they failed to arrive at a decision.' (Nabíl)

Incited by a few religious leaders during the month of Muḥarram, a number of men who were scourging themselves advanced on the house of Bahá'u'lláh late one evening for the sole purpose of creating a disturbance.

'Open the door and receive the guests,' were the words which Bahá'u'lláh addressed to Áqáy-i-Kalím. All entered, and the Blessed Beauty came before them. With the utmost kindness and with a smiling face, He indicated that everyone should be served tea.

Afterwards, completely subdued and evincing an attitude of heartfelt respect, they quietly departed. (Nabíl)

Ḥájí Munís, one of the believers in Baghdád, without informing anyone began an unbroken fast for several days and nights while alone in his room. No one told Bahá'u'lláh that he was close to death, but when word reached the Blessed Beauty He sent an attendant to hurry to his side with a plate of sweets and to command him to break his fast. By the time the attendant arrived, Ḥájí Munís had fainted, but he was soon revived and Bahá'u'lláh's instructions were conveyed to him. Later, Bahá'u'lláh left no doubt in the minds of the friends that such acts were explicitly forbidden. (Nabíl)

IV
*The Journey to
Constantinople
May–August 1863*

41

As our caravan was passing through a village at the foot of Mount Márdín we were joined by an Arab muleteer from Damascus. The Blessed Beauty invited him to stay with the caravan during the night, since the area was swarming with thieves, but the muleteer chose instead to sleep outside the encampment. In the night highwaymen robbed him of his mules.

Next morning the caravan had scarcely resumed its journey when the Arab rushed to Bahá'u'lláh's howdah and, seizing the hem of His robe, implored His help: 'I want my mules back,' he cried. Bahá'u'lláh directed that the howdahs be lowered, and summoned the official appointed to accompany Him. 'Tell him,' Bahá'u'lláh said to the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá], 'that the stolen mules must be recovered.'

The official sent for the Kad-khudá [headman] of the

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh

village, who, apprised of the situation, remarked: 'Although this man was advised to stay within the circle of tents with the rest of the travellers because the region is infested with thieves, he did not heed the warnings. Consequently, we are not to blame nor are we responsible. Some time ago an entire load of silk belonging to 'Umar Páshá, the governor of Baghdád, was stolen in this very spot. Since a regiment was unable to locate the stolen goods, what hope is there that we can find this man's mules?'

On hearing this, the Blessed Beauty stated: 'The words of 'Umar Páshá were limited in their influence and could not exceed those bounds, whereas the intention of My words is that they be carried out. My orders are not to remain unheeded.'

Lamenting his plight, the Kad-khudá again excused himself. 'Go with the Kad-khudá in the direction of the fortress of Márdín,' Bahá'u'lláh told the escorting official, 'and we will follow behind.' Thus the entire caravan moved towards Márdín, except for the tents and provisions of the Blessed Beauty which were sent ahead to Diyárbakr.

Just outside the gates of Márdín was a beautiful orchard surrounding a large mansion called Firdaws [Paradise]. Bahá'u'lláh chose this spot for the caravan's encampment, and in the next days the mutašarrif of Márdín, the army commander, the judge, the muftí and all the notables of the town came to call on Him.

'Our reason for coming here,' Bahá'u'lláh explained, 'is to recover three mules stolen from this muleteer; his property must be found.'

Innumerable excuses were offered by those assem-

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bled. 'This area is swarming with thieves,' they said; 'it is next to impossible to recover stolen property here, but we agree to pay for the value of the mules.'

'Even were you each to donate one hundred liras it would not be acceptable,' Bahá'u'lláh replied. 'If you cannot act, I shall telegraph the authorities in Constantinople for a solution.'

Since Bahá'u'lláh had emphasized so strongly the importance of apprehending the thieves, the dignitaries dispatched horsemen in all directions. By covering in four days distances which normally would have required eight, the horsemen were able to find and return the mules to their owner, who gratefully accepted them and went on his way.

The Blessed Beauty bestowed gifts and words of commendation on those who had engaged in the search, and on the third day departed for Diyárbakr. (Memoirs of Áqá Husayn-i-Áshchí, unpublished)

42

Nabíl has given further details of this incident of the stolen mules, as described by Bahá'u'lláh:

Several mules had been stolen, and the muleteer held fast to the hem of My robe, declaring: 'In this spot, should the vast treasures of the Sulţán be stolen, the recovery of even the smallest copper coin would prove impossible. But I am convinced that if it be your wish, you will have my mules returned to me.'

Observing his sincerity, We assured him that We would not move from there without first recovering

his mules. Without delay We established Ourselves in the Garden of Firdaws, and a message was sent to the governor explaining that We had given Our word not to depart from Márdín until the lost mules were returned to their owner.

The governor was perplexed, and said: 'We will pay more than the value of the mules and you can cease searching for them, since they have been lost at a crossroads which is a den of thieves; it is impossible to recover those exact same animals.'

'My words cannot be altered,' I said. 'Those same mules must needs be returned to their owner.'

Three days later they were found and were immediately repossessed by the muleteer. 'We do not know this Personage,' were the comments which spread near and far, 'nor are we able to fathom the force which enabled Him to recover and return those mules to their owner. It was an act beyond the power of leaders and ministers alike.' (Nabíl)

43

In Sívás, on the way from Baghdád to Constantinople, a Shaykh, who knew Persian well and was the leader of a Şúfí order, recited several poems from the *Mathnaví* [by the great Şúfí poet, Jaláli'd-Dín-i-Rúmí] in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. When the Blessed Beauty observed his interest in this poetry, He recited for his benefit an epic of more than sixty verses from the same book, and this although He had never been seen reading the *Mathnaví* nor did He have it with Him.

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Noticeably touched by the great bounty accorded him, the Shaykh departed, evincing utmost joy. (Nabíl)

44

One night as our caravan was making its way through a heavily wooded area it was realized that a mule carrying several cases of writings and other important objects had become lost. Although the official accompanying the caravan declared that in such an area nothing lost could ever be recovered and offered his own mule as a replacement, the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], with the permission of Bahá’u’lláh, set off in the dead of night with a few horsemen to begin a search. ‘These belongings must be recovered,’ He told the horsemen. ‘Relying on God, let us divide into several groups to search the paths in the forest. Whoever finds the mule should inform the others by calling out or by lighting a fire.’ By sunrise the mule had been found and, with great happiness, the searchers rejoined the caravan around noon.

Afterwards, the Blessed Beauty was heard to say: ‘This act which the Most Great Branch undertook was similar in many respects to My own reaction to the incident enacted near Márdín [when I insisted on the return of several mules stolen from an Arab muleteer.]’ (Nabíl)

V
*Constantinople and
Adrianople*
1863–1868

45

Among the places honoured with visits by Bahá'u'lláh during His brief stay in Constantinople were the Khiriy-i-Sharíf mosque, the mosque of Sultán Muḥammad, and the tomb of Ayúbb Anşarí.

It was common during those days for the Blessed Beauty to have both lunch and dinner in the *bírúní* (outer quarters) of the house which had been provided for His use, when both believers and friends would often join Him and partake of those meals.

On the very day that the Sultán's edict banishing Bahá'u'lláh to Adrianople was received, the Blessed Beauty revealed a lengthy Tablet addressed to 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, which was entrusted in a sealed envelope to Shamsí Big, His official host appointed by the government, for delivery to the Prime Minister, 'ÁlÍ Páshá, with the message that 'it was sent down by God'; it was

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not intended as a reply to the Sultán's edict.

'I know not what that letter contained,' Shamsí Big subsequently informed Áqáy-i-Kalím, 'for no sooner had the Grand Vizir perused it than he turned the color of a corpse, and remarked: "It is as if the King of Kings were issuing his behest to his humblest vassal king and regulating his conduct." So grievous was his condition that I backed out of his presence.' 'Whatever action', Bahá'u'lláh, commenting on the effect that Tablet had produced, is reported to have stated, 'the ministers of the Sultán took against Us, after having become acquainted with its contents, cannot be regarded as unjustifiable. The acts they committed before its perusal, however, can have no justification.' (Nabíl, but last paragraph quoted from Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 160)

46

During Bahá'u'lláh's residence in Adrianople [December 1863 to August 1868], Nabíl-i-A'zam returned after a lengthy journey and attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Well done! May God bless you,' Bahá'u'lláh greeted him. 'The hand of divine power has captured Nabíl and brought him here! But Nabíl has lost weight, and his eyes have sunk. Come and drink this tea so that you may gain a gram or two.'

Several days later, the Blessed Beauty was visiting the home of some of the believers when His eyes fell upon Nabíl, and He said jokingly: 'Excellent! Nabíl

has gained quite a bit of weight – far more than the few grams per day which We had stipulated.’ (Nabíl)

47

Before his acceptance of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí had a dream in which he heard a town-crier in the bazaar of Işfahán proclaim that the Prophet Muḥammad was dwelling in a certain house, and would receive anyone who chose to go and see him. Wishing to have the honour of visiting the Prophet Muḥammad, he went to the house, which was unlike any he had seen before, climbed the stairs and entered a central chamber surrounded by several rooms.

‘There’, he reported, ‘I could see His Holiness walking about, while a few people were reverently standing in His presence. I approached Him, and involuntarily fell at His blessed feet. He lifted me up, and said: “Unless you can say, ‘For God and wholly for the sake of God, I have come here and entered’, and then can face all the dwellers of the earth who, with drawn swords intent on killing you, are asking ‘Why have you entered?’ you cannot truly claim to have no other purpose except service to God.” With this, I awoke from my dream.’

With the passage of time this dream gradually faded from the memory of Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí. Fourteen years later he entered the ‘Land of Mystery’ [Adrianople], where, once or twice a day, he had the bounty of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

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'In the evening of a day when I had not attained the Blessed Beauty's presence,' Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí continued, 'but had been sitting with Áqá Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí for four or five hours in a coffee-house near the house of Bahá'u'lláh, I was suddenly overcome by an irrepressible desire to go to Him, but I did not have the courage to ask. At that moment, the door opened and 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered. He told me that I was to accompany Him.

'Upon attaining the presence of the Ancient Beauty I observed that He was walking in a central chamber, with a few of the believers standing reverently around. No sooner had I entered than I prostrated myself at His feet. Lifting me up, He stated: "Unless you can say, 'For God and wholly for the sake of God, I have come here and entered', and then can face all the dwellers of the earth who, with drawn swords intent on killing you, are asking 'Why have you entered?' . . ."

'Immediately those words, that same edifice and that same Peerless Beauty heard and seen in a dream fourteen years before were depicted here before my very eyes, as though they were a picture on a wall. Little by little, I came back to my normal state and realized that I was standing in the presence of the Blessed Beauty.' (*Bihjatu'ṣ-Ṣudúr*, pp. 80 ff.)

48

The issuance by Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz of an order banishing Bahá'u'lláh to the penal colony of 'Akká left the other exiles uncertain as to what would happen to

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them. Hájí Ja'far-i-Tabrízí, unable to face the thought of separation from Bahá'u'lláh, cut his throat with a razor.

In the midst of the commotion arising from the preparations for His departure, with His house surrounded by soldiers, news of the incident reached the Blessed Beauty. He went immediately to visit Hájí Ja'far, took his head on His lap and patted him, saying: 'I swear by the blood shed by the blessed Báb that to whatever place I am banished, I shall summon you, and be assured that My words are not said in vain. Inasmuch as travel is unsuitable for you now, permit them to treat you. The moment you become better and are able to move about, We shall send for you.'

Following this assurance, Hájí Ja'far accepted the medical treatment which had been proffered him. (Nabíl)

49

As He was about to depart from Adrianople, the Blessed Beauty insisted that 'all the believers must accompany Me'. The governor, to whom this statement was addressed, replied: 'The royal decree cannot be altered. It is the wish and command of the Sulṭán that they not accompany you.'

'The command to be acted upon is My command and not the command of the Sulṭán,' Bahá'u'lláh stated. 'Go immediately and telegraph the authorities that it is My will that all must come with Me.'

The governor sent a telegram to the Sublime Porte

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describing the incident, and the answer came: 'He is free to do as He wishes.' When it was explained to Bahá'u'lláh that the government had only provided sufficient money for four persons to make the journey, Bahá'u'lláh indicated that the governor was to keep the portion allotted for Himself. 'We have returned it to you,' He stated; 'it is yours. We shall meet our own expenses. God is sufficient unto Us – do not concern yourself further.' (Husayn-i-Áshchí, unpublished memoirs)

50

One of the believers was overcome with grief because of the death of his father. Consoling him, the Ancient Beauty stated: 'Your father has not died, but is a martyr in the path of the Almighty. I am your Father.' (ibid.)

51

Whenever any of the believers would lament their separation from Bahá'u'lláh, tears would flow down His cheeks, and if any of them, [during the four-day journey to Gallipoli], strayed away from the group, fell asleep and was left behind or became lost, the Blessed Beauty would dispatch horsemen in all directions to search for him, refusing meanwhile to proceed until he was found. (ibid.)

VI

Akka and Bahji

1868–1892

Many stories of the Ancient Beauty have been preserved of His last twenty-four years of exile spent in and around the city of 'Akká. Some relate to His incarceration in the prison itself, others to His residence in several houses including the House of 'Abbúd within the city walls, yet others to His visits to the Garden of Riḍván after He was able to leave the walled city in June 1877 for residence in the Mansion of Mazra'ih and, from September 1879, in the Mansion of Bahjī, where His Ascension occurred on 29 May 1892. Some of the following stories also relate to His visits to 'Akká and the Garden of Junaynih during the latter years of His life.

52

Aqa Mirza Ja'far-i-Yazdi embraced the Cause of the Bab while pursuing his researches into various branches of Islamic studies in Yazd. He then left Írán and continued his studies in Najaf, until hearing news

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of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád he moved there, laid aside the dress of a scholar for that of a layman, and began work as a carpenter. He accompanied the Blessed Beauty from 'Iráq to Constantinople, and then to Adrianople, serving the Cause at all times with diligence and humility. When Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to 'Akká, he too became a prisoner, ever grateful for this privilege.

During his confinement in the military barracks, he became so ill that the physician deemed his case hopeless and refused to attend him further. Surrounded by his weeping family, he took his last breath. Mírzá Áqá Ján hastened to the Blessed Beauty with news of his death. 'Go; chant the long Healing Prayer, and he will recover swiftly,' was Bahá'u'lláh's response. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived at his bedside and recited the prayer, Áqá Ja'far's body had already become cold and showed all the signs of death. But, slowly, he began to stir, then to move his limbs, and before an hour had passed he raised his head, sat up, and began to laugh and joke. 'He lived for a long time after that,' said 'Abdu'l-Bahá on one occasion, 'occupied as ever with serving the friends . . . Finally, while in the Most Great Prison, he abandoned this earthly life and winged his way to the life beyond.' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, pp. 156-8)

Áqá 'Abdu'r-Raḥím-i-Buṣhrú'í, one of the early believers, reached 'Akká after an arduous six-month trek which took him through Baghdád, Diyárbakr and Mosul on his way to the Holy Land. At that time the Ancient Beauty was imprisoned in the military barracks, which was closely guarded. 'Abdu'r-Raḥím encountered Nabíl-i-Zarandí in 'Akká and told him of his longing to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. 'I myself have been wandering within sight of this prison for no less than nine months,' Nabíl replied, 'and still the portals of meeting with the Blessed Beauty have remained closed to me.'

After hearing these words, 'Abdu'r-Raḥím left Nabíl and made his way to the seashore where he washed the clothes he had been wearing, let them dry, and put them back on. He had just begun to circumambulate the prison fortifications when he noticed someone on the upper floor of the prison beckoning him from a window. He realized at once that it was the Ancient Beauty summoning him to His presence. In great haste he reached the outer gate of the barracks, passed by the armed guards and fearlessly strode into the prison. No one tried to stop him. In a state of reverence and humility, he attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty. 'Although you underwent countless hardships,' Bahá'u'lláh addressed him, 'nevertheless you have attained the Treasure. Verily, we have closed the eyes of the guards that you might behold the Countenance of God and bear witness, with your own eyes, to His power and greatness. Relate to the Friends

of God all that you have seen.’ In a Tablet later revealed in his honour, the Blessed Beauty called on Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím to recall his arrival in ‘Akká, and how he had found the gates of the prison surrounded by soldiers. Through His power Bahá’u’lláh had shielded him from their eyes and enabled him to enter the prison, ‘which was Our abode’.

When the time came for Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím to leave His presence, the Blessed Beauty entrusted him with several Tablets to be delivered to certain persons in Persia. While passing through Baghdád, however, he aroused the suspicions of several government officials who began to follow him. Passing by a shop, he carefully removed the parcel of Tablets from beneath his arm, and relying upon God threw it into the shop and continued walking. Before long the officials overtook him and conducted him to the police superintendent, who, after a number of questions, was well pleased with him and even provided some money for his journey.

As sunset approached, ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím wandered back towards that same shop and cautiously passed in front of it. As he did so, the owner beckoned him to enter. Greeting him with the words, ‘Alláh’u’Abhá’, he returned the parcel to him.

‘Abdu’r-Raḥím spent several days in Baghdád, staying at the home of that man and meeting other believers. He then journeyed to Búshíhr and went on to Yazd, Isfahán and Mashhad, delivering the Tablets to their intended recipients. (Faraydún Raḥímí, *The Biography of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím-i-Buṣhrú’í*, unpublished pamphlet)

54

Jináb-i-Samandar has recorded that the Blessed Beauty, visiting the house of His brother, Áqáy-i-Kalím, in the Khán-i-Jurayní, addressed certain remarks to Hájí Naşír which, so far as he was able to recall, were as follows:

‘Jináb-i-Hájí! You have been the target of innumerable difficulties in the path of God, and have suffered greatly. If you yourself have forgotten about it, God has not forgotten. Know of a certainty that the worlds of God are not confined to this world, for if they were, the Manifestations of God would not for a moment have consented to bear the calamities heaped upon them by the peoples of the earth. He Whose Revelation preceded My Revelation [the Báb] would not have consented to be suspended in the air and riddled with bullets of rancour and hatred, nor would I willingly have been led, barefoot and with bared head, and in the greatest misery, from Níyávarán to Tīhrán, to bear countless sufferings.’ (Sulaymání, Vol. 7, p. 33)

55

Áqá ‘Azízu’lláh-i-Jadh^háb, who was the bearer of the Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Count Leo Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana in September 1902, has recorded a dream he had which was fulfilled when he first came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

It was announced to me in a dream that the Promised Day foretold in all the Holy Scriptures had come.

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Before me was a vast desert, with row upon row of people stretching as far as the eye could see. At the head of this vast assemblage, seated on an elevated throne and addressing the throng, was a radiant Personage of matchless dignity and grandeur. With great care I gazed upon that elegant Figure. His age I estimated at over fifty years; his beard was long and black, and a green *táj* adorned His head. His eyes fell upon me, and He beckoned me to approach Him. I passed through the rows of people and attained His presence; as soon as I began to prostrate myself at His feet, however, He lifted me up and stated: 'Praised be God, the best of Creators'. At this moment I awoke from my sleep.

When I arrived in 'Akká [in 1876] and attained the presence of the Abhá Beauty, I immediately fell at His feet; lifting me up, He said: 'Praised be God, the best of Creators'. Immediately my dream came to mind and, looking up, I saw the Ancient Beauty to be that same venerable Personage Who had been addressing the vast gathering in the desert. He was even wearing the same *táj* which I had seen in my dream! No need to describe the feelings which surged through me at that moment.

The day after this incident, I went to the market-place to purchase some meat. One of the believers accompanied me. Since I am a descendant of the race of Israel, I disliked the manner in which Muslims slaughtered animals; this secret, however, I had concealed in my heart, and had not disclosed it to anyone. On our way to the market-place, my companion said: 'The Blessed Beauty has instructed me to direct you to a Jewish butcher so that you may

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purchase meat according to your liking.' (From his son, Dr Amín Jadh^háb)

56

From the diary of Jináb-i-Ustád 'Alí-Akbar Shahíd Yazdí:

A merchant by the name of Áqá Muḥammad-Raḥím of Iṣfahán embraced the Faith and set about teaching the Cause. Shortly thereafter a number of people, predominant among them his father, by dint of animosity and cruelty, made his life unbearable. Left with no alternative, he departed from Iṣfahán and travelled to Sabzivár; later, he pioneered to 'Ishqábád. On two occasions he attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty in 'Akká.

Several times, before attaining his heart's desire, he met with the Russian consul in Astarábád, who addressed questions to him pertaining to the Faith.

One night, the consul asked him: 'In the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to the Czar of Russia it states, "We, verily, have heard the thing for which thou didst supplicate thy Lord . . ." What had the Czar requested in his prayer?'

Áqá Muḥammad-Raḥím was unsure of how he should respond, but began in this way: 'To me, the rulers of the various nations desire nothing from God except assistance in defeating the enemy and conquering new lands, and inasmuch as the army of Russia had been defeated in the war of Sebastopol, the Czar in his prayers had expressed the wish to overcome the Ottoman Empire.'

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After having given this reply, Áqá Muḥammad-Raḥím began to have doubts about the veracity of the statement he had made to the consul.

When he arrived in 'Akká, he proceeded to the guest-house. 'Abdu'l-Bahá paid him a visit and asked about his conversation with the Russian consul. Áqá Muḥammad-Raḥím reconstructed the meeting in its entirety, and confessed that his interpretation was wide of the mark.

On hearing this, the Master assured him that his conscience need not be troubled, because 'One day,' He related, 'the Blessed Beauty observed: "At this very moment the Tablet to the Czar of Russia is being read; the consul is asking one of the friends the nature of the request of the Czar, and he receives the correct answer. His name is Áqá Muḥammad-Raḥím Iṣfahání."'

The words of a bountiful Master imparted great joy to Áqá Muḥammad-Raḥím, for he was assured that he had not erred in his comments to the consul. (Adapted from Muḥammad-'Alí Fayḍí, p. 104)

57

From words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as heard in His presence by Dr Díyá Baghdádí, unpublished memoirs:

To bathe oneself is a great bounty. Near the army barracks in 'Akká there existed a public bath which was in a state of ruin. For the sake of the Blessed Beauty, I had it repaired. But after leaving the barracks, the simple matter of bathing became increasingly difficult for the Blessed Beauty until I borrowed

a sum of money and repaired the bath in the House of 'Abbúd. The water could be warmed up in half an hour, and the convenience of the bath brought great joy to the Blessed Beauty. By some means, I was able to repay the money I had borrowed within four months.

58

One of the friends in Constantinople who was living in utmost poverty sought out a certain pilgrim who was departing for 'Akká and begged him, upon attaining the presence of the Blessed Beauty, to convey the request for His blessings and assistance in resolving his financial difficulties. The pilgrim passed on the request to Bahá'u'lláh, and the Blessed Beauty responded: 'We shall pray'. And He added: 'He should engage himself in the cotton business.'

After a time, that same pilgrim – again *en route* to the Holy Land, noticed while passing through Constantinople that that very same Bahá'í who had been in such dire straits was then a thriving merchant. The pilgrim observed: 'Now that you have attained this stage of wealth, you should make regular contributions as Ḥuqúqu'lláh.' The merchant offhandedly remarked: 'My god, for the time being, is gold.'

Saddened, the pilgrim continued his journey. Once in the Holy Land, the Blessed Beauty enquired from him about the merchant and was told what he had said. The Blessed Beauty replied: 'We gave him that "god", and we are able also to take it away.'

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On his return trip, the pilgrim enquired about the merchant in Constantinople and was informed that his trade had evaporated, all his possessions were lost, and unyielding money-lenders were hounding him.

In this state, the merchant sent a letter to the Holy Presence begging pardon and forgiveness. In His reply, Bahá'u'lláh instructed him to 'proceed to Báku' from Constantinople and to 'busy yourself in transcribing the Holy Tablets in the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds of that city.'

He obeyed Bahá'u'lláh, and ended his days in Báku.

59

One day the Blessed Beauty remarked: The Traditions (*ḥadīth*) which are passed down in Islám have been the cause of ruin for many homes, sources of disunity and division, and of suffering and calamities.

60

The Blessed Beauty often remarked: 'There are four qualities which I love to see manifested in people: first, enthusiasm and courage; second, a face wreathed in smiles and a radiant countenance; third, that they see all things with their own eyes and not through the eyes of others; fourth, the ability to carry a task, once begun, through to its end.'

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The following stories have been adapted from memoirs of Hájí Muḥammad-Ṭáhir-i-Málmírí, who attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká in 1878 and remained there for nine months. They have come from his son, Habib Taherzadeh.

61

Whenever I was in the presence of the Ancient Beauty, He would answer whatever questions I had in mind at the time, [without my actually voicing them]. One question I had long wanted to ask Him concerned the stations of the Imáms [of Islám], whether they were equal or differed. But whenever I was honoured with attaining His presence, I invariably forgot the matter entirely. This went on for about six months, until finally I was so determined not to forget that all the way from 'Akká to Bahjí, even while ascending the staircase of His mansion, my thoughts were centred upon this one item.

'Greetings,' I suddenly heard a voice exclaim, and, looking up, I could see the Ancient Beauty standing at the head of the stairs in front of the passage leading to the main hall. He welcomed me, and went in. Soon afterwards He bade me be seated. Once again, my question had escaped my mind.

Then the Ancient Beauty began to reveal a Tablet in Persian in my honour, pacing back and forth as He did so. Halfway through the Tablet he suddenly stopped and said: 'The Imáms came from God, they made mention of God, and returned unto God.'

In this manner, after the passage of so many months, I received my answer.

62

During one of my visits Bahá'u'lláh bade me be seated and instructed the attendant to 'bring some tea for Áqá Táhír'. This he did, but after accepting it, my gaze fell upon the countenance of Bahá'u'lláh. I became oblivious of everything except His voice which addressed me: 'Áqá Táhír, you have spilt your tea and stained your 'abá [cloak]. Since this is to serve as your only apparel all the way to Persia, see that it is taken care of. We, for Our part, possessed but one shirt during Our sojourn in Sulaymáníyyih.'

When the Blessed Beauty finished speaking I discovered that I was holding only a saucer in my hand, and the glass had fallen onto the rug, making my 'abá and clothing wet in the process.

During my return to Persia, thieves robbed me of all my possessions with the single exception of that 'abá, which was all that remained for my use.

63

In winter the Blessed Beauty would wear a long woollen upper garment and a finely-woven cloak; in summer, thin cotton garments. He possessed several *tájhá* [tall felt head-dresses] of different colours, including grey and light-green.

64

One evening while the Blessed Beauty was pacing in the courtyard of the house of Áqáy-i-Kalím and I was busy watering the plants and other vegetation, He approached me and, taking hold of the sash which was tied around my waist, smilingly remarked: 'You have fastened your waist-belt loosely. A Bábí must gird up his loins!'

65

Nabíl's house and mine were situated in the area known as Khán Súk Abyaḍ; the living quarters of Áqáy-i-Kalím were nearby. One day Nabíl took my string of beads and hung it from his ceiling in such a way that I was unable to retrieve it. I had acquired the habit of using these beads in contemplation.

On one occasion, when Nabíl had invited me to his house, it happened that the Blessed Beauty went there as well. Noticing the beads, He asked Nabíl: 'Whose beads are those, that you have imprisoned them there?' Nabíl replied: 'They belong to Áqá Táhir.'

Among the statements which Bahá'u'lláh addressed to me on that occasion was this: 'Whenever you teach in Yazd you should first speak to those interested about the lives and history of the prophets of the past, and then, little by little, discuss this Revelation with them.'

Once when Nabíl and I were in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh He was seated on a chair, while we remained standing. Turning towards me, the Blessed Beauty said: 'I shall recite a poem for you which was penned by Hakím-i-Saná'í:

Aught else save God
That thine eyes might behold
Is naught save an idol –
Smash it to bits
Like those of old

But that which is unsired
By worldly desires
Clearly it is Faith!
Barter it not away
But plant it in thine heart.'

The following accounts have been adapted from the recollections of Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Káshání, who attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh on numerous occasions.

The very first time I was privileged to attain the presence of the Blessed Beauty, He was residing in 'Akká. I was overcome by excitement and timidity when an attendant directed me to enter. At that

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moment I heard the voice of Bahá'u'lláh bidding me to come. With a profound sense of humility, I went into His presence; after expressing my utter servitude at His threshold, I seated myself. At His request I was served tea. He then recited some of the sacred writings, after which He stated: 'Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, that from your behaviour and conduct they may be enabled to recognize the signs and commandments of God.'

68

I was present at the blessed House in 'Akká one morning and heard Bahá'u'lláh explaining that 'man is not infallible', but that 'God is the All-Forgiving'. 'In the same way that God is the "Concealer"', He added, 'so should the believers be forgiving if they find faults in one another. Tell them not to be concerned only with themselves, but to centre their attention on the Cause of God. That which is pleasing unto God is unity among the believers.' Later, He offered us some *nabát* (rock candy). When I opened my hand to receive it, the Blessed Beauty smilingly inquired: 'Did you not bring a handkerchief?'

69

One morning I was in the presence of the Blessed Beauty at His residence in Mazra'ih. He was holding a letter in His hand when He turned and asked the

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attendant if we had been served tea. 'Give tea to this guest of ours,' He said. 'The water in 'Akká is a cause of digestive problems, and tea is better.' Afterwards, He told us to take a walk.

70

While I was living in Mosul (in 'Iráq) I had been afflicted with indigestion and vowed at that time that I would never touch watermelon again unless Bahá'u'lláh Himself told me to. One afternoon I was in Mazra'ih. The Blessed Beauty, seated near the small pool, had just mentioned that 'Muḥammad Sháh issued Our death warrant, but instead his own life came to an end'. Then, turning towards me, He said: 'Go; have some watermelon.'

71

It was two hours before noon when I arrived at the Garden of Ridván. The Ancient Beauty, seated on a bench, suggested that a prayer be chanted, and this was done by a believer who had a remarkably melodious voice. 'May God bless you,' Bahá'u'lláh addressed him. 'It is through praiseworthy conduct that people will be guided to this Cause. The Imam 'Alí has declared: "If, O my God, the son of Abú-Ṭálib [referring to himself] should enter Your House and realize Your displeasure with him, what would he do?"'

72

On a different occasion in the Garden of Riḍván, the Blessed Beauty, as He was walking, mentioned that 'in the Book of God it is recorded that should a person embrace this Faith, his father and mother shall also receive forgiveness.'

73

Several of us had the bounty of being in the presence of the Blessed Beauty in the Garden of Riḍván one autumn evening. It was cold and Bahá'u'lláh instructed us: 'The visitors should sleep inside the room provided to prevent having colds, since they are without overcoats.'

74

About three hours after sunrise one morning I was walking in the Garden of Riḍván when the thought suddenly occurred to me that I had not as yet received the blessing of being addressed by Bahá'u'lláh. At that moment His voice reached my ears, calling me to where He was standing, immediately in front of the living quarters. 'You are Our guest today,' He said as I approached. 'God willing, you will not be forgetful of the Signs and Words of God.'

75

One night in the Garden of Riḍván, Bahá'u'lláh, seated on a bench, cast His gaze towards the great array of candles which had been lit that evening, and remarked: 'The Exalted One, the Báb, has not considered the use of light as an extravagance.'

76

At noon one day while we were in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in the Garden of Riḍván, an attendant offered tea to 'Abdu'l-Karím, one of the Bahá'ís. With a smile the Ancient Beauty observed: "Abdu'l-Karím is a vendor of tea himself, and you are offering him tea!"

77

The Ancient Beauty was sitting on a bench and I, out of respect, was standing. 'Do not stay in the sun,' He advised me; 'go for a walk in the garden. Relax and enjoy yourself.'

78

On another occasion in the Garden of Riḍván, the Blessed Beauty asked us to pull some of the weeds

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growing there. We set to work, but after only a quarter of an hour, He said, 'That is enough. Do not work anymore.'

79

One day all the believers gathered in the Garden of Ridván. The Blessed Beauty was present and seated on a bench, when an attendant came with bread and tea which he offered me. Holding the bread in one hand and the glass of tea in the other, I felt too overcome with shyness to eat in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The attendant, however, told me to eat, and I obeyed. The meeting lasted quite a time, and the address of the Blessed Beauty was of considerable length.

80

During lunch one day the Blessed Beauty asked me to summon Ghulám-Husayn to eat with us. This surprised me, for my companion's name was Hájí Ghulám-'Alí. I went to the end of the garden, found Ghulám-Husayn there and not Hájí Ghulám-'Alí, and told him that the Blessed Beauty had sent for him.

81

One day in the Garden of Ridván the Blessed Beauty asked me to be seated, but, when I knelt on the ground

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near the bench where He was sitting, He said, "Alí-Akbar! Do not sit like that; come, sit here on the bench."

82

Two hours after sunrise one morning I was in the presence of the Blessed Perfection in Junaynih [a garden north of 'Akká]. He offered me a cup of milk which I wanted very much to drink but was too timid to do so in His presence. I went into a different room, drank the milk, and returned. His talks that day dealt with the clamour raised by the divines in Káshán, and the indignities and punishments inflicted upon the believers in that land.

83

Several of us pilgrims were gathered in a room in the lower part of the Mansion of Bahjí one day and were discussing business concerns, when the Blessed Beauty suddenly appeared and remarked: 'Such topics as these are unworthy of attention, how much more so for man to busy himself with their mention.' He then spoke to us about the illustrious Badí' [who carried Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to the Sháh and was martyred], Siyyid Ashraf-i-Zanjání, and several other believers who had attained martyrdom. Afterwards, with His permission, we departed.

84

Bahá'u'lláh had summoned me to the Mansion of Bahjí one day and upon arriving I saw that He was holding some Tablets. While standing, He recited one of them, then stated: 'These Tablets are for the believers in Khalaj-Ábád and there is one for you, also.'

85

On the day which marks the Muslim 'Festival of Sacrifice' Jináb-i-Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín and I attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty. On that occasion He chanted the entire Tablet which had been revealed in honour of Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí and which begins with the words: 'The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.' (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, CXXXII)

86

One evening when we had gathered at the house of Áqáy-i-Kalím the Blessed Beauty honoured us with a visit. 'We did not associate with officials and the people while dwelling in the Most Great Prison,' He mentioned on that occasion, 'but left this difficult task for the Master. In Baghdád We would often sit and converse with visitors until six hours after nightfall.'

One evening while I was in the presence of the Blessed Beauty in the Mansion of Bahjí, His talk touched on several topics. At one point He mentioned that during His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál 'an executioner arrived and took with him one of the believers who was to be put to death. But soon the executioner reappeared, returning the victim he had selected as being too thin. Observing Mullá Zaynu'l-Ábidín of Yazd, who was hefty and stout, he declared: "Come. You are more suitable to be slain." At once Mullá Zaynu'l-Ábidín rose to his feet, shook hands and bade Us farewell. In this manner did he attain martyrdom.' Bahá'u'lláh then added that 'other incidents which occurred in the prison in Tíhrán were similar to this.'

One morning when I had the honour of being in attendance at the Mansion of Bahjí the room was full of pilgrims, and I seated myself near the door. I clearly heard the Blessed Beauty say the words, 'You have journeyed to Port Sa'íd and have now returned. You are most welcome!' But even though my eyes were fixed upon His countenance, I did not realize that He was addressing me. Only when one of the believers from Kirmánsháh, who was sitting next to me, quietly informed me of this did I realize that Bahá'u'lláh had favoured me with His kind comment.

89

Once when I was alone in the presence of the Ancient Beauty at the Mansion of Bahjí He said to me: 'All things have been made new with the tip of Our Pen.'

90

I was visiting the Mansion of Bahjí one afternoon during the month of Ramaḍán. The Ancient Beauty was pacing to and fro, His jet-black hair flowing down upon His shoulders. "Alí-Akbar," He addressed me, distinctly but with a laugh, 'what are the people of Persia saying about Us?'

Then he said, 'Have you a handkerchief? Come, I wish to give you some *nabát*.'

I opened my handkerchief. He filled both His hands with *nabát*, gave it to me and added, 'I shall give you more so you can give some to the Afnán.'

91

We went to the Mansion one day to have the bounty of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. When I was within a few steps of His room, the Ancient Beauty spoke to me from His window, saying, 'Have you had tea?' I nodded assent, then went into His presence.

One day when I went to Bahjí I found Nabíl standing near the entrance to the Mansion and I stood there with him. Soon the Blessed Beauty emerged, with many of the believers following Him. The attendant brought a tray of sweet cakes to us in the garden, and the Blessed Beauty gave two slices to each of us. Afterwards, He arose and began to walk in the garden. We were all walking behind Him when He turned and remarked: 'You are still regarded as prisoners. Return! When ten of you are seen together, it is the equivalent of one hundred in the sight of the people.'

And so, we went back.

It was nearly sunset one day when I was at the Mansion of Bahjí and the Blessed Beauty told me: "Alí-Akbar! I have read your letter.' I bowed down and kissed His blessed robe. (The accounts by Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar have come from Jalál Nuṭqí [Humáyúní] and 'Aṭá'u'lláh Nuṭqí)

Four stories taken from the recollections of Jináb-i-Hakím Rajab 'Alí Háfizu's-Siḥa:

Travelling from Najafábád to the Holy Land using the rudimentary means of transportation of those days

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh

(at times mounted, and at other times on foot) gave rise to great hardships, but the staggering ordeals of the journey were entirely effaced from my mind when I entered the presence of the Blessed Beauty.

Each time I was in His presence, Bahá'u'lláh would unravel perplexing problems for me – problems which had hitherto seemed to be devoid of solution. In His holy presence, I saw myself as a weak and impotent servant, even though I had been an experienced and competent physician.

95

Whenever the Blessed Beauty was engaged in revealing the holy verses in the House of 'Abbúd, we, the pilgrims, would continuously circumambulate that house – an act from which we derived indescribable joy and delight.

96

The Blessed Beauty went one day to the Garden of Ridván, and the attendants brought Him some sweet water, carrying it in an earthen jug. On the way, water began seeping out through a small hole in the jug, and this saddened the attendants greatly. I got hold of the jug, cut and trimmed a piece of wood, inserted it in the hole, and wrapped a strand of leather around it. This brought great joy to the hearts of the attendants who later recounted the event to the Blessed Beauty.

'Bravo! Ḥakím. You are able even to patch up a jug!' said Bahá'u'lláh, as He smiled His biggest smile.

97

One day, when I was in His presence, Bahá'u'lláh turned to me and stated: 'Jináb-i-Ḥakím! Last night, I could hear the wailing and lamentations of your children in Írán. They stand in dire need of your presence. You and the entire company of pilgrims may now depart. Return to Írán. I am hopeful that once more you shall be assisted to make the pilgrimage. Ten days remain for your stay, during which time you will, once more, attain Our presence. Fí Amán'u'lláh [May God protect you].'

With our eyes filled with tears – such was the intensity of our sadness, we departed from the holy presence. In my notebook, I wrote down the date of the evening in which Bahá'u'lláh made mention of the sorrow afflicting my children.

On the tenth day, at the prescribed time, I began circling around the Mansion. Some of the pilgrims had requested to prolong their stay. The Blessed Beauty came to the balcony of the Mansion and said: 'Bravo, Ḥakím! Faith denotes obedience to the Cause of God. You are the first among the pilgrims who, without the slightest hesitation, and without requesting the prolongation of his visit, has obeyed Our commandments and is prepared to depart.'

As the time of departure drew near, the Blessed Beauty gave us certain instructions and, from the

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terrace, offered each pilgrim some dried bread and baklava. When my turn came, I held my aba in such a way that not a single crumb from the dried bread would fall to the ground. The Blessed Beauty smilingly remarked: 'Bravo! Ḥakím. The Baha'is should be clever and discerning. Fí Amán'u'lláh!'

No sooner had we left the Mansion than an aged pilgrim who was in my company said: 'Ḥakím! I am an old man. Take my dry bread and give me your baklava, since I will be able to eat it.' Accepting his request, I gave him a portion of my baklava and kept the rest in a safe place together with the dried bread so that they would arrive intact in Írán.

Our journey was begun in tears and sadness. Then, a courier on horseback reached us with the message that the Ancient Beauty had summoned us to return.

With immense joy, we returned. When we arrived, the Blessed Beauty was in the upper part of the Mansion and we bowed down and showed our respect. He smiled and said: 'Dear old man! I have given sufficient bread to Ḥakím to sustain seven generations of his descendants. And you also have given him bread.' Following these courteous remarks, he offered yet more bread to the aged man and said to him, 'This bread is not for eating – it is to bring blessings. Take it with you to Írán. All of you may rest today, and you will begin the journey tomorrow.' After having attained our hearts' desire by being in the presence both of the Ancient Beauty and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and after having listened to the advice and instructions of the Master, we departed for Írán.

When I arrived in Najafábád and was reunited with

my family, I learned that the night when Bahá'u'lláh had felt the bitter wailing of my children was the same night they had been struck with smallpox and had been in danger (particularly my only son) of dying. On that very night, my wife, Khadíjih, had tearfully beseeched God in her prayers, saying: 'O God! Is it just that my children die through loneliness and lack of medicine and that their father be away from them? O God! I implore your mercy!'

It happened that the condition of the children began to improve that very night, and, through the bounty of Bahá'u'lláh, they were spared from death. (From recollections of his grandson, 'Izzat-i-Ṭabíbí Najafábádí)

98

Áqá Muḥammad-i-Tabrízí has recounted how, as a child of four or five, he would go with his family to the Mansion of Bahjí each Friday, as was customary among the believers at that time, to attain the presence of the Blessed Beauty. They would stay all day, using the rooms on the lower floor of the Mansion.

During one of these visits the grown-ups were resting in their rooms at noontime; as it was a warm day, he left his room and wandered to the upper floor of the Mansion where he entered the large hall. Ambling about he eventually came to the room where food was stored, and here he noticed a bag filled with sugar. Instinctively he took a handful, put it in his mouth, then filled both hands before leaving the store-

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room. Back in the hall, he froze in his tracks upon seeing the Blessed Beauty pacing to and fro there. Slowly and in a gentle manner, Bahá'u'lláh came towards him, cast a loving glance at his hands and then led the little boy towards a large table in the middle of the hall. Picking up a plate of candies, He offered one to the child who, with closed fist, accepted it. 'It seems you like sweets,' Bahá'u'lláh said. 'Eat well! Goodbye. And may God protect you.'

Years later, Áqá Muḥammad would explain to his fellow believers how no one at that time could appreciate his childish sentiments and the love he felt in his heart for the Blessed Beauty – a love which, from that moment, had never left him. (From Jalál Nakhjavání)

99

We are told that when Varqá [Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad, eloquent poet and martyr] was first ushered into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and his eyes were illumined by the brightness of His countenance, he was aware of being vaguely familiar with that matchless Beauty, of having beheld Him already, and yet he could not recall where and when he had had this bounty.

On several occasions Varqá was privileged to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and his puzzlement continued until, during one of his visits, the Blessed Beauty addressed him, saying: 'Varqá! Set afire the idols of vain imaginings'. No sooner had these words been spoken than Varqá recalled that, as a child, he had

been blessed with seeing the countenance of Bahá'u'lláh in a dream. In his dream he was playing with his toys in a small garden of his family's property when, in the midst of his game, God came and took away his toys, throwing them onto a fire. Upon awakening, Varqá told his parents that he had dreamed about God that night, but his parents scolded him, saying, 'What sort of nonsense is this?' and 'How is it possible for one to see God?' Gradually, the dream became a thing forgotten until that moment when the Blessed Beauty bade him 'set afire the idols of vain imaginings'. Instantly, Varqá recollected his childhood dream and, in doing so, realized its interpretation in the visible world. (Sulaymání, Vol. 1, p. 253)

100

Rúḥu'lláh, the son of Varqá and himself a martyr, was but seven years old when, accompanied by his father and brother, 'Azízu'lláh, he had the honour of visiting the Ancient Beauty. Jokingly, Bahá'u'lláh asked him what he would do if the promised Qá'im awaited by the Shí'íhs [the Báb] were suddenly to appear and come face to face with him. Rúḥu'lláh unhesitatingly replied: 'With the assistance of the Blessed Beauty, I would inform him of the teachings, and he would become a Bahá'í.' (Fáḍil-i-Mázindarání, Vol. 8, part 1, p. 10)

*A description of the pilgrimage of Jináb-i-Háj Muḥammad-
'Alí-i-Aḥmaduf-i-Milání:*

Even though I was a prejudiced Muslim, a tangible change occurred within me when I undertook a study of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly when I read the Tablet revealed in honour of the late Hájí Şaḫír. I became convinced that this Cause was from God, such was its effect on me. One question, however, remained in my mind: In what fashion were the holy verses revealed, gradually, or continuously? And I wished to obtain the answer first-hand, through my own eyes. None of the friends knew of this matter; I had kept the question to myself.

One day, praised be God, I was able to make a pilgrimage; in the company of my brother, I set out for the Holy Land. We reached the Land of Desire, and after we had recuperated from the strenuous journey, the Master summoned us to the presence of the Blessed Beauty. We followed 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a certain chamber; He rolled up the curtain, and we entered.

The Blessed Beauty was seated on a cushion, and Mírzá Áqá Ján, His amanuensis, was sitting opposite Him. Like a torrent, the words were streaming from His blessed lips. He bade me be seated. Thrice during the revelation of the verses He requested water. On several occasions, Mírzá Áqá Ján was unable to keep up. Bahá'u'lláh would pause and ask him what point he had reached; He would then repeat the phrase, and, in exactly the same manner as before, He would continue until the Tablet was ended. During this time,

the Blessed countenance was flushed, and His forehead was wet with perspiration.

The Tablet came to an end, and Bahá'u'lláh turned to us and said, 'You are most welcome! It gives Us joy to see you!' He then commented: 'What pronouncements are the leaders of religion in Írán making? They continue to look upon themselves as the true believers, yet number us amongst the infidels — even though they be incapable of responding to the questions of a child, a simple child. At all times, diabolical 'ulamá have veiled the people.' He continued speaking in this vein, but regrettably His statements have not remained in my memory. Finally, He bade us prolong our stay a few more days, and to return to Írán via Mecca.

A few days later, we were given permission to leave, and our pilgrimage ended. (Recorded by his son, Aḥmad-i-Asbaqí)

102

Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Sháhábádí Arákí stated that he had encountered great difficulties while travelling from Írán to the Holy Land. A number of well-to-do Egyptian believers also made a pilgrimage at that time. They wore well-tailored suits, and did not associate with Ḥájí, who was dressed in a type of inexpensive clothing commonly worn by people from villages.

After the Blessed Beauty summoned the pilgrims to His presence, Ḥájí, out of respect, stood near the door. 'Come,' Bahá'u'lláh addressed him, 'sit next to Me.' This time Ḥájí did not hesitate, but went to sit beside

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Bahá'u'lláh as He had directed.

Later, when the pilgrims had returned to the Pilgrim House in 'Akká, the Egyptian believers surrounded Hájí and showered him with kindness and respect, and they continued doing so until the very end of their pilgrimage. (From his grandson, 'Aṭá'u'lláh Sírús)

103

This description by Áqá Siyyid Mihdí Gulpáygání has been heard by the compiler on several occasions in 'Ishqábád:

An influential resident of the city of Iṣfahán embraced the Cause of God, but as soon as he began associating with the believers it became apparent that he had long been addicted to alcohol. Using wisdom, the friends would urge him to abandon this habit, but he would reply that he had suffered this addiction for years, and to give it up would be extremely difficult. Whenever his fellow believers explained that if others were to learn about it, they would think that Bahá'ís were unconcerned about obeying Bahá'í laws, he would say that no one except the believers could possibly know about it. And when reminded that the Blessed Beauty was aware of the situation, he would answer that Bahá'u'lláh was not concerned with his private life.

Little by little the friends gave up discussing this matter with him. Eventually, he had the opportunity of travelling to the Holy Land and attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. He made his pilgrimage and,

on his return, some of the friends went to visit him. He addressed them in these words:

'Friends, I am now certain that the Blessed Beauty is aware of hidden mysteries, and whether a matter is concealed or not makes no difference whatsoever. For this reason I no longer touch alcohol, for I always perceive Him as omnipresent and watchful.

'During the pilgrims' very first visit,' he continued, 'we stood while the Ancient Beauty paced to and fro as He addressed us. I was entranced by His graceful bearing, and thought to myself: 'It is readily acknowledged that He is the Manifestation of God and the Promised One of all nations, but what does it mean when He describes His station in some of His Tablets as "The Sender of the Messengers and the Revealer of the Books"? [*Mursil-i-Rusul va Munzil-i-Kutub*]

'No sooner had this thought occurred to me than the Blessed Beauty, in the midst of His pacing, came towards me, placed His blessed hands on my shoulders and majestically stated: "It is so! The Sender of the Messengers and the Revealer of the Books is Our station."

'My state of mind at this point I was unable to comprehend, and afterwards I became convinced that the Sacred Being Who could read my inner thoughts could also see my outer deeds and actions.'

104

The hypocritical Hájí Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar secretly harboured the intention of inflicting harm on Bahá'u'lláh, though he kept his motive concealed. One day, when in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, he was given a sealed letter and was directed by Bahá'u'lláh to read it to nineteen of the believers. On opening the letter as instructed, he found it to read: 'If 'Abdu'r-Rahmán Ibn-i-Muljam [who assassinated Imám 'Alí] benefited from his cruelty, you also will benefit therefrom.'

105

The following four recollections were recorded by Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí:

The Ancient Beauty spoke on various occasions of the services and station of the Most Great Branch, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'During Our stay in Baghdád we often encountered friends and strangers from near and far while visiting the coffee-houses. The Most Great Branch had taken upon His shoulders the responsibilities and difficulties of those days, and later, He shouldered the far greater hardships which We encountered in Adrianople. Now He endures these manifold tribulations in 'Akká. We were not outwardly captives in Baghdád and the Cause of God was not nearly as well known as it is now, nor were its opponents a fraction as strong. In the "Land of Mystery" [Adrianople] We conversed with some outsiders, but in the Most Great Prison ['Akká] We

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have closed all portals of association with others. For this reason the Master has accepted great hardships for Our comfort and welfare. He has become the fortified fortress and the strong shield confronting all inimical nations and peoples, and has brought relief to Us. He secured for Our use the Mansion of Mazra'ih, and We betook Ourselves there. Afterwards, He acquired the Mansion of Bahjí. He has succeeded in rising to serve the Cause to such an extent that week after week He does not have the opportunity to come to the Mansion of Bahjí. While We consort with the believers and are engaged in revealing sacred verses and Tablets, He is immersed in difficulties and hardships, for associating with such individuals is a greater torment than anything else.'

On a different occasion the Blessed Beauty said: 'The power and potency of the Most Great Branch are concealed now, but soon will they be made manifest. Alone and unaided, evincing great power and spirituality, He will hold aloft the banner of the Most Great Name in the ends of the earth, and through His influence all will gather beneath the tabernacle of peace and tranquillity. If it were possible for one entering the city of 'Akká to meet first with the Most Great Branch and then, prior to his departure, to consort with a few of the true believers, it would be of immeasurable benefit to his spiritual development, for he would not have been subject to base thoughts and worldly deeds. If the people had eyes to see, the signs of God would be unmistakably manifest and clear.'

106

Once, when Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí was in the presence of the Ancient Beauty, verses from the *Lawḥ-i-Ra’ís* and the *Lawḥ-i-Sultán* [the Epistle to Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh] were being recited.

Another time, Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí was summoned to the Mansion. Upon entering, the Blessed Beauty approached him and quietly said: ‘I have commended you to the care of the Most Great Branch.’

107

The Blessed Beauty was occupied for several minutes revealing sacred verses when He suddenly paused and addressed Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí: ‘You have often been present while the holy verses were being revealed. Should all the people of the world desire to be present on these occasions, they would not be denied My permission.’

108

The well-known Tablet which begins ‘The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves . . .’ (*Gleanings*, CXXXII) was chanted by the Blessed

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Beauty while Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí was in His presence. This Tablet was revealed in his honour. (*Bihjatu'-ş-Şudúr*, pp. 251-4, 256-7, 248, 243)

109

On many occasions the Ancient Beauty stated to the Persian visitors and pilgrims that they should always inform others about the true meaning of 'Divine Unity', lest they content themselves with vain imaginations. 'They should establish beyond a shadow of doubt', He explained, 'that by "Unity of God" is meant that the Manifestations of God Who inaugurate each Dispensation are to be regarded as one soul, unique and peerless, and all others, whether high or low, are, without exception, to be regarded as servants, utterly submissive before the Dawning-Place of God's Revelation. Even as the Commander of the Faithful, the Imám 'Alí, has stated: "I am but a servant of the servants of Muḥammad."'" (Nabíl)

110

Áqá Riḍá Sa'ádatí, one of the early believers, has recalled the following incident:

I resided in Yazd in the days when I was a Muslim and was in attendance one day when two divines, speaking from the pulpit, were depicting the sufferings endured by the Imám Husayn. My weeping was such that everyone was saddened. From the bottom of my

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heart I yearned to behold the beauty of the countenance of Husayn.

The commemoration came to an end and the gathering dispersed. Outside, one of the speakers approached me and asked: 'What was the cause of your weeping and lamenting? Whatever you wish to have, tell me, and I shall provide it for you.'

'I wish to visit the Imám Husayn,' I replied.

'Certainly,' he said. 'I will cover all the expenses of your journey so that, with honour and dignity, you can visit Karbilá.'

'May my life be a sacrifice to you,' I replied, 'but I wish to see the Imám Husayn in person, not just visit his holy sepulchre.'

'In that case, good-bye,' the man said. 'I shall have nothing more to do with you.'

After walking a short distance I met the other divine, and a similar conversation ensued.

Some time after this, I left Yazd and went to live in 'Ishqábád. It was there that I embraced the Faith. Buoyed up by intense eagerness and love, I hastened to the Holy Land — solely to behold the countenance of the Ancient Beauty.

'Welcome! Welcome!' Bahá'u'lláh addressed me the moment I attained His presence. 'Come and be seated.' Then He continued: 'Praise be to God that you have been accorded the honour of beholding Husayn.'

The instant recollection of that incident in Yazd — the commemoration for the Imám Husayn, my talks with the two divines, and my burning desire to gaze upon the blessed countenance of Husayn — left me astonished and dumbfounded, as I gazed upon the

countenance of Bahá'u'lláh.

On a different occasion, I had been requested to mention the names of six believers while in His presence, but had not yet done so when He mentioned all six by name and confirmed: 'Their pilgrimages are accepted.' And when I was about to mention several others, He said: 'As for the others, theirs also are accepted.' (As told to the compiler in '*Ishqábád* by Áqá Ridá)

111

Áqá Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir-i-Tabíb-i-Shírází has recorded that one day, when the daily visit of the pilgrims and resident believers had ended, the Blessed Beauty granted them permission to leave, but asked him to remain.

'Your family is concerned about your well-being,' He said. 'Return to your home and engage in teaching the Cause of God.'

Bahá'u'lláh then gave him a small coin and told him to make the journey to Shíráz by land. Since Mírzá Báqir had requested the honour of receiving a Tablet, the Ancient Beauty took a penholder from an overhead shelf, removed a pen, trimmed the tip of the reed, and then revealed a Tablet and offered it to him.

Áqá Mírzá Báqir was a physician; whatever town or village he passed through, people sought him out. In this way, through the blessing bestowed by Bahá'u'lláh on that small coin, he was able not only to meet his travel expenses but even accumulated some savings.

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After he had reached Shíráz and spoken with his family, he realized that on the very day the Blessed Beauty had summoned Him to His presence, his wife had supplicated God that her husband return home. (From his grandson, Dr 'Aṭá'u'lláh Nadímí Shírází)

112

Khátún Ján has recalled that one day during her pilgrimage the Blessed Beauty approached the table to take a pitcher of sherbet. Noticing that the pitcher was surrounded by wasps, she caught the eye of the attendant and indicated that he should try to protect Bahá'u'lláh from them.

'We were unafraid of the rulers of the earth,' Bahá'u'lláh commented with a smile, 'and now Khátún Ján thinks that we are disturbed by a few flies!' (Jináb-i-Nátiq, *The History of Káshán*, unpublished)

The following stories relate to the nine-month pilgrimage in 1891–2 of Áqá Mírzá Áqá Afnán and members of his family, undertaken at the invitation of Bahá'u'lláh. They were accompanied by the grandmother of Shoghi Effendi and a servant.

It was on the tenth day of Dhí'l-Hijjáh in the year 1308 [18 July 1891] that our ship arrived in the Bay of Haifa, dropping anchor just before dawn. Jináb-i-Manshádí, at the behest of Bahá'u'lláh, came to welcome us, and after passing through customs he led us to the tent of the Ancient Beauty, which had been pitched at the foot of Mount Carmel.

The sun had not yet risen, and the weather was pleasant, even exhilarating. One of the attendants entered and led us to the house and the presence of the Ancient Beauty. He drew aside the curtain and we beheld His blessed Figure and luminous Face. What a balm for the eyes He was as He stood in the centre of the room. He seated Himself on a divan and bade us be seated also. My three brothers and I knelt on the floor. Mírzá Áqá Ján, the 'Servant of God', was sitting near the samovar with the tea things arranged before him. The Blessed Beauty asked him to serve us tea, and then addressed us with these words: 'Flowers of the rose-garden of the honourable Afnán! Welcome! Welcome! Your departure from Shíráz was indeed difficult. By the grace of God and through the endeavours of Jináb-i-Afnán, you were able to make the journey to the Holy Land. While at sea you came face to face with danger, but the Almighty extended His protection to you. Reflect! On this very day [in Mecca] several thousands of people are busying themselves with *Harvalah* [a ritual during pilgrimage of hopping between Şafá and Marwih], while the Beloved of the world resides in this land. All are negligent; all

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heedless; all remain unaware. You are the true pilgrims!

As He spoke these words, a few lines written by Mawlaví [Jaláli'd-Dín-i-Rúmí] came to my mind:

O ye pilgrims who have made the pilgrimage,
Where, oh where are ye?
The Beloved is here,
Come ye, come!

Immediately Bahá'u'lláh turned to me and said: 'The mystics have also made mention of this.'

Again He asked the attendant to serve us tea, and following this, we took our leave.

A house in Haifa, next to that of the Blessed Beauty, had been rented for our use.

114

At three o'clock in the afternoon, on a day when I was suffering with a severe fever, we were summoned to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. 'You are feverish,' Bahá'u'lláh observed. 'Fever is a fruit of this land. Whoever comes here is bound to have it.' Then He ordered tea for us. Almost at once I began to perspire, until my clothes were drenched. 'Go and change your garments,' Bahá'u'lláh instructed me. 'You will not experience fever again.' During the nine months we resided in the Holy Land, never again did I feel ill.

It was about this time [in the spring of 1891] that seven believers were put to death in a single day in the

city of Yazd — an occurrence which so vexed and saddened the Blessed Beauty that during nine days permission to attain His presence was granted to none.

On the ninth day He summoned the believers to His presence and explained in detail the deeds of the Qájár dynasty, the incident in Yazd, and the cruelties inflicted by Zillu's-Sultán and his son, Jalálu'd-Dawlih. Then, still addressing us, He urged us not to be sad and despondent, nor heavy-hearted. 'The tree of the Cause of God', he affirmed, 'is watered by the blood of martyrs, and unless a tree be watered, it will not grow, nor will it yield its choicest fruits. Soon will the last traces of this dynasty disappear from the pages of history, and the land of Persia will be cleansed of it. Jalálu'd-Dawlih has committed an act which has caused the eyes of the Concourse on high to weep tears of blood.'

115

On the first day of Muḥarram, 1309 [7 August 1891], the Blessed Beauty invited the believers to celebrate with Him the anniversary of the birth of the Báb. Since my father was severely afflicted with rheumatism and could not sit comfortably on the floor, Bahá'u'lláh asked one of the attendants to bring him a chair, after which He had chairs brought for his sons as well, and so all our family were seated on chairs.

On that day the pilgrims and the entire company of believers were gathered together in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. In His address He spoke of the causes of

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schism and differences which had arisen in past dispensations. Then, while serving baklava with His own hands to all present, He said: 'This is the day on which His Holiness the Báb was born and shed illumination upon the world. Hence let there be joy and gladness a thousandfold.'

When His talk came to an end, the believers departed from His presence.

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The following day, the second of Muḥarram, marked the anniversary of the birth of the Ancient Beauty, and again the pilgrims and believers were called to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. That morning he spoke of the sublime greatness of this Revelation and the power of the Exalted Pen; the nature of His banishment; His arrival at the Most Great Prison; and extensively of the oppressions inflicted by the tyrants of the earth and the leaders of religion. He mentioned also that both Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh and Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz were sources of injustice, oppression and harm to the body of the Cause of God, the cruelty of 'Abdu'l-'Azíz being of greater severity because he banished, without reason, the Wronged One of the worlds to this Most Great Prison. Concerning Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh, however, because of the foolish act perpetrated by a few of the believers in the early days of the Cause [the attempt on his life], whenever he felt the small shot beneath his skin he would be angered and incited [to commit harsh deeds against the believers].

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Bahá'u'lláh then recited two lines [by Ḥáfiz]:

These days are bitter poison
which soon shall disappear,
And sweet-as-sugar days
shall once again appear.

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Autumn had set in, and the Blessed Beauty transferred His residence from Haifa to the Mansion of Bahjí. A small house next to the Mansion was rented for our family. Because of its location we were able to see the room of Bahá'u'lláh. Often, when we arose for prayers at dawn, we could see light shining from His room, and the Blessed Beauty pacing back and forth, dictating the sacred verses to His amanuensis.

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At the bidding of the Ancient Beauty, my two brothers, Mírzá Buzurg and Mírzá Dīyá', and I received lessons each day from Mírzá Yúsuf Khán and Áqá Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí, in a room on the lower floor of the Mansion. Míshkín-Qalam also taught us calligraphy.

To have been in the presence of the Ancient Beauty on several occasions at the hour of dawn, while the holy verses were being revealed and dictated to Mírzá Áqá Ján, was an honour greatly cherished by me. Khádimu'lláh [the Servant of God] would sharpen the reed pens himself, and he always had on hand a supply of paper and ink. The Tablets were revealed with such rapidity that it was not uncommon for him to lose his grip on the pen, which would fly from his hand. Whenever this happened, he would quickly take up another pen and continue writing. At times he could not keep up and would say, 'I am incapable of recording it all.' The Blessed Beauty would then repeat the revealed verses for him.

The Ancient Beauty once asked my brother, Hájí Mírzá Buzurg, to make a copy of His poem entitled *Qaṣídiy-i-'Izz-i-Varqá'íyyih* [composed in Sulaymáníyyih]. When my brother had finished and brought the copy for His acceptance, Bahá'u'lláh praised him and gave him a pen-case made in Iṣfahán, together with a silver ink-stand.

Next day, the bounty of being summoned alone to the presence of the Blessed Beauty was bestowed upon me. During my visit He said: 'Mírzá Yúsuf Khán and Siyyid Asadu'lláh have been asked to supervise carefully your lessons and writing.' Then with His blessed hands He gave me a bottle of rose-water. 'It is from Qamṣár of Káshán; it has taken forty days for it to reach this land,' He stated, and then added: 'This rose-water has been created by God for a day such as this, which is the King of Days.'

[Until quite recently, that same container of rose-water was used by pilgrims to perfume themselves when visiting the House of the Báb in Shíráz.]

One evening we were informed that the Blessed Beauty intended to visit the garden of Junaynih next day, and had bidden the pilgrims and believers to accompany Him.

Before sunrise all had assembled near the Mansion, and before long we were joined by the Blessed Beauty. Two of the believers from Káshán, Áqá Muḥammad Hášhim and Áqá Ghulám-'Alí, had offered Bahá'u'lláh a white donkey, gentle in nature, on which He rode. When we set off on foot, one of the resident believers, Hájí Khávar, being tall in stature, held a parasol to protect the Blessed Beauty. The weather was pleasant

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and invigorating, and at this moment I recalled lines from a poem by Háfiz:

Redolent wafts the dawn breeze today,
My Beloved has gone to the fields today.

Soon we arrived at Junaynih where we were entertained. The garden was especially pleasant and beautiful. Flowers perfumed the air and birds were singing melodiously. The Blessed Beauty was extremely happy that day, and His favours and bounties were showered upon the believers. Following lunch, He addressed this 'divine assemblage'. It was about this time that the Most Great Branch ['Abdu'l-Bahá] arrived at the garden.

'The Master is coming,' Bahá'u'lláh announced. 'Let us welcome Him.' With a humility which cannot be described, 'Abdu'l-Bahá came and sat in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. We also were given permission to be seated.

Addressing 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Blessed Beauty said: 'From morning until this moment, the garden did not seem beautiful enough, but now, with your arrival, it has become more pleasant.' Then He added: 'It would have been preferable if you could have come this morning.'

'The Mutaṣarrif [Governor] and other residents of 'Akká were coming,' was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's reply, 'and I received them and offered hospitality.'

Smiling, the Ancient Beauty remarked: 'It is the Master who is able to endure all these demands and still see to the comfort of the believers. May God safeguard

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Him from the envious and the obstinate.'

Then He told us about a day in Baghdád when a beggar asked for alms. When Bahá'u'lláh gave him a coin he remarked: 'May His Holiness 'Abbás [the stepbrother of the Imám Husayn] assist you at all times.' 'It was a good blessing,' Bahá'u'lláh said [referring to 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás].

In brief, the believers were the recipients of extraordinary kindness on that day, for Bahá'u'lláh's happiness knew no bounds.

An hour before sunset, the Blessed Beauty rode back to the Mansion and we escorted Him. At the outer gate we took our leave.

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It is about five kilometres from the prison-city of 'Akká to the Mansion of Bahjí, and the Mansion is visible on reaching the garden of Jamál which is quite close by. Whenever 'Abdu'l-Bahá would approach the Mansion, if riding He would dismount at this point and, with the utmost humility, proceed on foot. One day all the believers in the Holy Land had assembled in the presence of the Blessed Beauty in the Mansion. They included His branches [sons], such well-known believers as Nabíl-i-A'zam, Afnán-i-Kabír, Áqá Ridáy-i-Shírází, Ustád Muḥammad-'Alíy-i-Salmání, Mishkín-Qalam, my father, and Áqá Muḥammad-Ḥasan of the Pilgrim House. Suddenly Bahá'u'lláh turned towards the plain of 'Akká and said, 'The Master is coming; go and welcome Him.' We all

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hastened to greet the Master, and returned with Him to the room of the Blessed Beauty.

As the end of the Ancient Beauty's earthly life was drawing near, His talks often made reference to the importance of the Covenant. On that particular day, the Blessed Beauty issued stern warnings about Covenant-breaking. Midway through His address, He pointed towards the Greater Branch [His son, Mírzá Muḥammad-‘Alí, the future archbreaker of His Covenant] and emphatically stated: ‘Should one of our branches for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught.’ (*God Passes By*, p. 251) These statements were delivered with such power that everyone present was overwhelmed with awe.

The following day, while we were in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Dīyá'u'lláh [one of His sons] came in to say: ‘Áqá [the Master] wishes to know if You will permit us and some of the believers to visit Junaynih.’ Bahá'u'lláh asked him who had sent the request, and upon hearing that it was the Greater Branch, in strong and clear tones he said: ‘There is only one Master — the others have names. The Master is none other than the Most Great Branch, He around Whom all names revolve.’

One afternoon we had gathered in the Garden of Ridván. It was raining lightly, and the air was pleasant and refreshing. The Blessed Beauty was recalling the days they had spent in Baghdád, and the harm inflicted upon the Cause by Mírzá Yaḥyá [His half-brother] and his associates.

During His talks Bahá'u'lláh mentioned that 'several divines came to visit Us' during those days, and 'one of them inquired, "Where do You come from?", to which We replied, "We are from 'Amá'" [an allegorical reference to Heaven]. He asked what kind of place it was and where it was. We answered that 'Amá' has weather so pleasant as to be considered divine, trees laden with fruit, is green and verdant, has flowing rivers, and is a gathering-place for spiritual people. "Can we go there also?" asked one of the men, but I replied, "No, it is not possible; such a place is not suitable for you."

Later that same day Bahá'u'lláh gave this account: 'Prior to Our departure from Baghdád, We entered the Najíbíyyih Garden and tarried there for twelve days. Each day people would come from Baghdád to bid Us farewell. Among them were several 'ulamá [religiously learned], one of whom declared: "We were awaiting the Mihdí, and a Siyyid from Shíráz laid claim to this station and some followed Him [a reference to the Báb]; then we were expecting the Manifestation of Ḥusayn, and now You are claiming to be this Person. What, therefore, is our duty from now on?" On that very day we assigned them their

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task: "Your duty is to study to excess such books as *Sharḥ-i-Lum'ih* [a basic textbook on Imámí law] and *Síbavayh* [the author of a famous book on Arabic grammar], so that you may advance directly to your abode."

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On a different occasion, the Blessed Beauty again referred to their days in Baghdád. Concerning the tyranny and injustice practised by Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn-i-Ṭihrání [see p. 27], Bahá'u'lláh stated: 'However much the Shaykh, with the support of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh and Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, tried to extinguish the light of this Cause, he was unable to do so. The Cause of God spread itself to the easts of the earth and the wests thereof. Soon you will witness the old order rolled up, and the nations of the world gathered together under the tabernacle of the Cause of God.'

He then told us of a visit from a leader of religion who was tall, stout, wore a massive turban and had an unusually long beard. 'After greeting Us,' Bahá'u'lláh said, 'he sat down and began to read aloud some abstruse writings in the Arabic language. "Won't you introduce yourself, that We might come to know you?" I suggested.

'The visitor replied, "I am Khátamu'l-Mujtahidín (Last of the Ecclesiastics)", giving his title and not his name.

"Inshá'alláh [God willing]," We mentioned several

times; "Inshá'alláh, Inshá'alláh."

The Blessed Beauty was extremely happy that day, and was always smiling.

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The Blessed Beauty once described for us the way in which Mullá 'Alí-i-Sabzivári attained martyrdom. 'As he was being readied for death, he told the executioner to open one of his veins. The executioner complied and made a superficial cut on his neck. Then, dyeing his white beard with his own blood, he addressed the onlookers: "O people! Husayn, the son of 'Alí, awaiting His martyrdom on the plain of Karbilá, lamented: 'Is there any helper for me?' But I say: 'Are there any eyes capable of seeing my sacrifice?'"

'What a great thing this man said!' repeated the Blessed Beauty several times. 'With his own pure blood he testified to the truth of this Revelation. The people saw, but were heedless. Such are the signs testifying to the greatness of this Dispensation. These incidents will be recorded for posterity, and shall become a source of great pride.'

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One afternoon we were summoned to the Mansion of Bahjí. The Blessed Beauty was standing in the middle of His room. 'Let nothing sadden you or cause you

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grief,' He addressed us, for we were all weeping grievously while standing in His presence. 'Know of a certainty that I am with you always. Why are you so downcast? Port Sa'íd is very near, and you will hear Us when We call you. Grieve not! That which was possible for the Afnán has happened for no other pilgrim. Be happy! Be joyous! The grace of God surrounds you.' He then seated Himself and bade us be seated also. Then, with His own hands, He gave each of us a Tablet specially revealed. With this, our nine-month pilgrimage came to an end.

Later, the Blessed Beauty summoned my mother and sister to His presence, and they received His overflowing bounty. As they were about to depart, the thought occurred to my mother that if, as a blessing, Bahá'u'lláh would bestow His ring upon her, she could wish for nothing else. Afterwards, while she was with the Greatest Holy Leaf [the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh], an attendant came in, carrying the ring which Bahá'u'lláh had worn. Giving it to my mother she said: 'The Blessed Beauty directed me to give this ring to you.'

Together, we bade farewell to the Most Great Branch, and left 'Akká for Haifa, where, soon afterwards, we boarded a ship and set off for Egypt . . . (The stories of Áqá Mírzá Áqá and his party are adapted from the memoirs of his son, Hájí Mírzá Ḥabíbú'lláh, and have come from his grandson, Abu'l-Qásim Afnán)

‘Alíyyih Khánum, the daughter of Hájí Siyyid Ja‘far-i-Afnán, was sixteen years old when she accompanied her mother and the Afnáns for their pilgrimage in 1891–2. She was fortunate to have been often in the presence of the Blessed Beauty during the revelation of sacred verses. One day she mentioned to the ladies of the Holy Family that she disliked her given name of Şuġhrá. When Bahá’u’lláh was told of this, He gave her the name ‘Alíyyih. On a different occasion with the ladies of the Holy Family, she expressed the wish that a Tablet in the handwriting of the Blessed Beauty might be revealed for her. Soon afterwards, this great bounty was bestowed upon her, and a Tablet was revealed in her new name. (From Abu’l-Qásim Afnán)

Summarized extracts from the recollections of the Hand of the Cause, Ṭarāẓ’u’lláh Samandarí, who, at the age of sixteen, attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. He was in ‘Akká for six months before the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh (29 May 1892) and for one month after.

It was in the House of ‘Abbúd that Mr Samandarí first entered the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. This is his description of that visit.

[When I entered His room], the Blessed Beauty was seated on a divan. As I bowed before Him, the fez I was

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wearing tumbled from my head. With His blessed hands, Bahá'u'lláh placed it back on my head, and said, 'Marhabá!' [Welcome!]. My trembling and shaking were uncontrollable. He bade me be seated, and an attendant, at the request of Bahá'u'lláh, offered me some tea. But I was shaking so much that I could scarcely hold on to the cup.

'Bismilláh! Bismilláh!' [Please!] Bahá'u'lláh repeated several times, inviting me to drink my tea, but I was still unable to do so. He enquired about the health of my father, and following this, I was granted permission to leave.

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One day at sunset when I entered the blessed presence of Bahá'u'lláh, He was occupied in replying to questions addressed to Him by another person present in the Mansion. Afterwards, I became the recipient of His overflowing bounty, and He addressed me as 'Taráz Effendi'.

Earlier that day, a box of dates from Baṣrah had been delivered to Bahá'u'lláh. He took but one, ate it, and offered me a handful. When, for a second time, He put His blessed hands in the box of dates, I held up the skirt of my 'abá (so as to be able to hold them) but He said, 'Do not eat much. It may cause you harm; this place is the Most Great Prison.' He then offered whatever dates He had in His blessed hands to the other person who was present. Finally, He entrusted us to God and gave us permission to take our leave.

On two separate occasions I had the supreme bounty of being in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in the Mansion of Bahjí at the time the holy verses were being revealed. The amanuensis and I were the only ones present. Once, it was Mírzá Áqá Ján who was penning the verses, and the other time it was a member of the Holy Family (one of the branches).

While the Blessed Beauty paced to and fro during the revelation of the holy verses, I was able to witness fully the majesty, the grandeur, the divinely-bestowed power and authority reflected on that majestic countenance. As the verses were being revealed, His face was radiant and luminous. Often, He would gesture with his hands, and, from time to time, His penetrating gaze would be directed towards the sea. Whenever signs of dryness appeared on His blessed lips, He would pause to sip some water.

The verses which streamed from His lips were, at times, chanted, while at other times they were delivered with immense authority. Prayers, for instance, would be uttered in a melodious voice, whereas Tablets were revealed with majesty and power.

Mírzá Áqá Ján wrote with extraordinary rapidity, and the floor of the room was strewn with papers.

I recall that the Blessed Beauty was once dressed in a cashmere *sardári* lined with a kind of fine fur. Its sleeves were slightly shorter than those of His *qabá*, the garment it covered. Only once during the winter months did I see the Blessed Beauty wearing this apparel.

His flowing hair and beard were jet-black, as it was the custom of that time to dye one's hair with henna.

Not once did I see Him without His *táj*. It was green and of unusual height, while around its base was wrapped some fine-quality material, white in colour.

Thrice, towards evening, I had the honour of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in His tent, pitched north of the Mansion in the midst of a patch of huge red corn-poppies. During one of these visits, the pilgrims were offered lunch. The Ancient Beauty was occupying the seat of honour, and since there were not enough seats to go around, he repeatedly bid them to 'Be seated, be seated!' Some of those present sat down on the floor.

Mírzá Áqá Ján was seated in the middle of the gathering, facing the Blessed Beauty. As bidden by Bahá'u'lláh, he was reciting prayers and holy verses. From time to time, the Blessed Beauty would address the gathering.

On another of those three days, I was standing in Bahá'u'lláh's tent, facing towards Him. As I was unable to hear His voice clearly, I went to the innermost portion of the tent which was the storage area and which was not far from the place where Bahá'u'lláh was seated. I stood all alone, and not only could I see the Blessed Countenance perfectly well, but I could hear His utterances clearly and precisely.

The meeting ended, and oranges were distributed among those present. The Blessed Beauty then arose from His seat. Very quickly, I left my spot and positioned myself, statue-like, with arms crossed, in front of the door from which Bahá'u'lláh was about to emerge. The moment His eyes fell upon me, He offered me an orange which He had in His blessed hands, and with the word, 'Marḥabá!', He bade me take my leave, and started towards the Mansion. As soon as the youths who were in the area learned that I had received an orange from the hands of Bahá'u'lláh, they rushed to rob me of it. But I consumed it in its entirety as I was running away from them. I did not give the tiniest morsel of it to anyone!

On the day of the celebration of Naw-Rúz, the Blessed Beauty visited Junaynih, and permission was granted to some resident Bahá'ís and pilgrims to enter His presence.

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On the previous day I had gone to Haifa, in the company of some friends, for an excursion, when suddenly word reached us that we were to return immediately and proceed to Junaynih so as to visit the Blessed Beauty. We left Haifa by carriage in the morning, arrived in Bahjí, and went to Junaynih.

That day was indeed the most blessed of days. Jináb-i-Nabíl-i-A'zam and Jináb-i-Andalíb, both renowned Bahá'í poets, were present in that gathering, and they had composed poems for that majestic occasion.

I enjoyed Bahá'u'lláh's bounty on that day, as He bestowed upon me, through one of His attendants, a robe of honour, which consisted of one silk 'abá, one shirt, one set of underclothing, a cotton shawl and a pair of socks.

The weather was exceedingly pleasant. Ever-so-brief showers occurred during the day, followed immediately by sunshine. And the trees in Junaynih were heavily laden with fruits.

We had our lunch in that redolent garden, while the Blessed Beauty was in a nearby room. Towards sunset, with a light rain falling, and the roadway a touch muddy, the Blessed Beauty, mounted on a white donkey, and with some of the friends, myself amongst them, following on foot, proceeded to Bahjí.

On the morning of the first day of Riḍván, in the company of three of the friends, I entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in His room in the Mansion of Bahjí. Immediately prior to this, we had had some baklava on the lower floor of the Mansion.

The Blessed Beauty was seated on the divan, and we seated ourselves on the floor. After we had consumed some tea, the Blessed Perfection began to recite the Tablet of Sulṭán [to the Sháh]. He did so with majesty and grandeur, the recital lasting half an hour. While reciting this Tablet, at times He would move His hands, and at other times His feet. I am incapable of describing the state of the Blessed Beauty at that moment.

'Taráz Effendi! Rise up, and offer each of those present one of these flowers,' He addressed me. Earlier that same day, bunches of roses had been brought from Junaynih and had been spread out on a sheet on the floor. I got up and offered each person a rose. 'And give Us Our share as well,' said the Blessed Beauty. I offered Him a flower. 'Have one for yourself,' He bade me. After I had taken a rose, He said 'Fí Amán'u'lláh' [May God protect you], and granted us permission to leave.

One day, during the period of the Most Great Festival of Riḍván, the Blessed Beauty visited the Garden of Riḍván. Together with a group of believers and friends, I had the great bounty of beholding the countenance of the Lord of all the worlds in that supreme and eternal paradise. Jináb-i-'Andalíb, the renowned Bahá'í poet, recited an ode which he had composed.

The Blessed Beauty was standing on the balcony of the building in the garden and was gazing upon that enthusiastic gathering, arranged in lines and beholding the Blessed Countenance. Afterwards, the Blessed Perfection gave everyone present portions of rose-water, sweets and oranges, while, mindful of the recital of his poetry, He bestowed upon Jináb-i-'Andalíb a bottle of perfume of Qamṣar and two oranges.

During those days, I was accorded the bounty of paying many visits to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Most Great Branch, and I was the recipient of His limitless courtesy and generosity. At His behest I would practise calligraphy and copy from examples.

One day, when the weather was very warm, I was dressed in light clothing and was hatless. In this state I was sitting and writing when suddenly the Most Great Branch entered the room. I stood up, donned my cloak

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and hat, and greeted Him. The believers and the friends who were residing in that same guest house, the Khán-i-'Avámíd, were gathered together in that room. 'Abdu'l-Bahá examined my handwriting and showered me with words of praise.

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One day, when it was raining lightly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to me: 'Let us go to the Mansion of Bahjí and attain the presence of the Blessed Beauty.' He then added, 'But it is raining. Do you have an umbrella?' I replied that the umbrella was in the guest-house. 'We shall wait at the gate,' continued 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'You go and bring it.'

I quickly went to the guest-house, located the umbrella, and returned to the spot near the gate where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was waiting. The beloved Master set off, walking gracefully; we reached the Mansion, and attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

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Since two weeks had passed during which time I had not been in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, I decided one day to go to the Mansion of Bahjí. I asked a young girl, the daughter of a resident who happened to be there, whether or not anyone was in the presence of the Blessed Beauty at that moment. She replied that He was alone, and that He was walking and pacing to and

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fro. I said to her, 'Go and say to Bahá'u'lláh, "It has been two weeks since Ṭaráz has attained your holy presence and he seeks permission to visit."' The young girl delivered my message and returned with the reply that Bahá'u'lláh says, 'Bismilláh! Bifarma'id!' [Enter!]

In a state of mind that I cannot easily describe, I entered His presence. 'Marḥabá! Ṭaráz Effendi' was the greeting of the Blessed Beauty. He then approached me, and, patting my head and face, enquired about my health. After a few moments, He added: 'Behold! You have made complaint that you have not entered Our presence. Do you not visit Ghuṣn-i-A'zam [the Most Great Branch] in the city?'

I replied that day and night I attained His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] presence. Bahá'u'lláh then stated: 'For what reason, then, did you utter this complaint?' He then remarked, 'Your first place of residence is here! Permission to come is yours whensoever you desire, and for your comfort, we have prepared the guest-home.'

Afterwards, He offered me some sweets and granted me permission to leave.

(These recollections of the Hand of the Cause Mr Samandarí were received from his son, Dr Mihdí Samandarí.)

To see His Father, the Blessed Beauty, after so many years of hardship and suffering, resting under the mulberry tree by the little stream in the beautiful Riḍván Garden would rejoice the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The fragrant, profuse and multi-coloured flowers and shrubs, the splashing fountain, the freshness of the air, and especially the presence of Bahá'u'lláh uplifted the souls of all who were privileged to accompany Him.

The greatest joy of the children of the Holy Family was to go with Bahá'u'lláh for occasional picnics in the Garden. For them He was like another loving Father, and to Him they carried their small difficulties.

The Blessed Beauty was interested in everything concerning the children, particularly their cleanliness, order and discipline. All their treats and happiness came from Him during those often monotonous days. When boxes of sweets were brought to Bahá'u'lláh, He would humorously say, 'Set aside some for the children, otherwise the Master will give them away', and sometimes He would send for them and distribute the sweets.

Often at bedtime, despite their parents' wish not to disturb Bahá'u'lláh, He would always welcome them with loving words. And when He would tell them, 'Tomorrow, children, you shall come with Me to the Garden of Riḍván,' they were so filled with joy they could scarcely sleep. (Blomfield, pp. 97-8)

Describing His confinement in the Síyáh-Chál, the Blessed Beauty recalled: 'The weight of the chain placed about Our neck was difficult to bear [the heaviest chain used weighed over fifty kilos], but having the thumbs of both hands bound together behind the back was even more aggravating. The royal guards were unyielding, but the executioners would show us kindness. One even offered Me tea and some grapes, but as I was freighted with chains and My hands were bound, I was unable to accept them.'

Continuing His recollections Bahá'u'lláh said: 'To whatever place We were banished, difficulties ensued similar to those experienced after Our arrival in 'Akká. Now, however, the situation is reversed so that people here are inclined towards meekness. It has been like this wherever We have dwelt. At first the Cause of God was unknown and We were engulfed in tribulations. But now, praise be to God, the people of these regions are manifesting their humility and respect towards Us.' (Nabíl)

The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith has given this touching description of the last interview of the Blessed Beauty with His followers:

'Six days before He passed away He summoned to His presence, as He lay in bed leaning against one of His sons, the entire company of believers, including

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several pilgrims, who had assembled in the Mansion, for what proved to be their last audience with Him. "I am well pleased with you all," He gently and affectionately addressed the weeping crowd that gathered about Him. "Ye have rendered many services, and been very assiduous in your labors. Ye have come here every morning and every evening. May God assist you to remain united. May He aid you to exalt the Cause of the Lord of Being." (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 222)

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Jináb-i-Mírzá Ismá'íl, a believer present in that last audience with Bahá'u'lláh, has recorded: 'Tears flowed from my eyes and I was overcome with feelings of grief and sorrow after hearing these words. At this moment the Blessed Perfection bade me come close to Him, and I obeyed. Using a handkerchief which was in His hand, Bahá'u'lláh wiped the tears from my cheeks. As He did so, the words of Isaiah [25.8], ". . . and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces . . .", involuntarily came to my mind.'

Glossary

'Abá Outer cloak or mantle.

'Amá' Allegorical reference to Heaven.

Amír-Nizám One of the titles of the Prime Minister, Mírzá Taqí Khán.

Andarúni Inner or ladies' quarters.

'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921) 'The Servant of Bahá'. The name adopted by 'Abbás Effendi, eldest Son of Bahá'u'lláh and His appointed Successor.

Áqáy-i-Kalím Mírzá Músá, the faithful younger brother of Bahá'u'lláh.

Báb (1819-1850) 'Gate'. Title assumed by Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, after the Declaration of His Mission in Shíráz in May 1844.

Bábí A follower of the Báb.

Badasht A conference of Bábís in a village on the borders of Mázinarán in 1848, convened and guided by Bahá'u'lláh, which established the independent nature of the Faith of the Báb.

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892) 'The Glory of God'. Title of Mírzá Husayn-'Alí, Who declared His Mission in Baghdád in April 1863. (See Introduction.)

Bahá'í A follower of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bifarmá'id Persian version of Bismilláh.

Bírúni Outer or men's quarters.

Bismilláh (Arabic). Used as 'Please'.

Glossary

Fí Amán'u'lláh 'May God protect you.' Used in dismissing a visitor.

Ghuṣn-i-A'ẓam 'The Most Great Branch'. A title of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith See *Shoghi Effendi*.

Ḥadīth 'Tradition'. A sacred tradition of Islām.

Ḥazíratu'l-Quds 'The Sacred Fold'. Official title designating headquarters of Bahá'í administrative activity.

Ḥuqúqu'lláh 'Right of God'. A payment by Bahá'ís instituted in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Laws.

Inshá'alláh 'God willing'.

Marḥabá 'Bravo', 'Well done', also 'Welcome'.

Most Great Branch A title of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Mujtahid A Muslim Doctor of Law.

Mutaṣarrif Governor.

Muḥarram First month of the Muslim year, the first ten days of which are observed by Shí'íhs to commemorate the martyrdom of the Imám Ḥusayn in Karbilá.

Nabát A Persian rock candy.

Nayríz Two episodes occurring in Nayríz in the province of Fárs in 1850 and 1853, in which a number of Bábís were forced to take up defensive positions against much superior Government forces. In both cases they were defeated by betrayal, followed by torture and massacres and cruel treatment of their women and children.

Qabá An ankle-length gown or caftan, open in front, and worn only by men.

Qá'im 'He Who shall arise'; the Promised One of Shí'ih Islām.

Sardári A kind of redingote or long coat, pleated around the waist, closely buttoned up and having a straight collar.

Shaykh Tabarsí An episode in which 313 Bábís defended themselves for some seven months in a hastily-

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constructed fortress near a shrine about fourteen miles south-east of Bárfurúsh, October 1848 — May 1849. Vastly superior Government forces were unable to defeat them except by betrayal. Nine of the nineteen Letters of the Living (the first disciples of the Báb) were among the defenders; most lost their lives, including Mullá Husayn and Quddús, foremost of the Letters. The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith has characterized the episode as a 'rare phenomenon in the history of modern times'. (*God Passes By*, p. 42)

Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957) Great-grandson of Bahá'u'lláh, appointed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and His successor.

Síyáh-Chál The underground prison in Tíhrán where Bahá'u'lláh was chained and incarcerated for four months in 1852, together with fellow Bábís and 150 criminals. Here, in indescribable conditions, He received the first intimation of His Mission.

Táj 'Crown'. A tall felt head-dress. Plural: *Tájhá*.

Túmán Unit of Iranian currency.

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For background to these stories, and the history of the life of Bahá'u'lláh, the reader may wish to consult the following books: H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory* and *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*; Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* (four volumes); and David Ruhe, *Door of Hope*. (All are published by George Ronald Publisher Ltd.)