

The Dawn-Breakers (1996, Document 1)

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THE DAWN-BREAKERS

Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation

Translated and Edited by Shoghi Effendi

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This etext is based on:

"The Dawn-Breakers - NabŌl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahà'Ō Revelation"

Translated and Edited by Shoghi Effendi

Bahà'Ō Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 60091

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Reprinted 1953, 1962, 1970, 1974, 1996

1996 Reprint

ISBN 0-87743-010-1 (cloth)

ISBN 0-87743-092-6 (paper)

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To The Greatest Holy Leaf

The Last Survivor of a Glorious and Heroic Age

I Dedicate This Work in Token of a

Great Debt of Gratitude and Love

<pvii>

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[Facimile of the Bab's Autograph Tablets Addressed to the Letters of the Living omitted]

"I stand, life in hand, ready; that perchance, through God's loving-kindness and grace, this revealed and manifest Letter may lay down his life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point, the Most Exalted Word."

--Baha'u'llah.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSIAN AND EDITED BY
SHOGHI EFFENDI

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INTRODUCTION

The Baha'i Movement is now well known throughout the world, and the time has come when Nabil's unique narrative of its beginnings in darkest Persia will

interest many readers. The record which he sets down with such devoted care is in many respects extraordinary. It has its thrilling passages, and the splendour of the central theme gives to the chronicle not only great historical value but high moral power. Its lights are strong; and this effect is more intense because they seem like a sunburst at midnight. The tale is one of struggle and martyrdom; its poignant scenes, its tragic incidents are many. Corruption, fanaticisms and cruelty gather against the cause of reformation to destroy it, and the present volume closes at the point where a riot of hate seems to have accomplished its purpose and to have driven into exile or put to death every man, woman, and child in Persia who dared to profess a leaning towards the teaching of the Bab.

Nabil, himself a participant in some of the scenes which he recites, took up his lonely pen to recite the truth about men and women so mercilessly persecuted and a movement so grievously traduced.

He writes with ease, and when his emotions are strongly stirred his style becomes vigorous and trenchant. He does not present with any system the claims and teaching of Baha'u'llah and His Forerunner. His purpose is the simple one of rehearsing the beginnings of the Baha'i Revelation and of preserving the remembrance of the deeds of its early champions. He relates a series of incidents, punctiliously quoting his authority for almost every item of information. His work in consequence, if less artistic and philosophic, gains in value as a literal account of what he knew or could from credible witnesses discover about the early history of the Cause.

The main features of the narrative (the saintly heroic <pxxiv> figure of the Bab, a leader so mild and so serene, yet eager, resolute, and dominant; the devotion of his followers facing oppression with unbroken courage and often with ecstasy; the rage of a jealous priesthood inflaming for its own purpose the passions of a bloodthirsty populace--these speak a language which all may understand. But it is not easy to follow the narrative in its details, or to appreciate how stupendous was the task undertaken by Baha'u'llah and His Forerunner, without some knowledge of the condition of church and state in Persia and of the customs and mental outlook of the people and their masters Nabil took this knowledge for granted. He had himself travelled little if at all beyond the boundary of the empires of the Shah and the Sultan, and it did not occur to him to institute comparisons between his own and foreign civilisations. He was not addressing the Western reader. Though he was conscious that the material he had collected was of more than national or Islamic importance and that it would before long spread both eastward and westward until it encircled the globe, yet he was an Oriental writing in an Oriental language for those who used it, and the unique work which he so faithfully accomplished was in itself a great and laborious task.

There exists in English, however, a literature about Persia in the nineteenth century which will give the Western reader ample information on the subject. From Persian writings which have already been translated, or from books of European travellers like Lord Curzon, Sir J. Malcolm, and others not a few, he will find a lifelike and vivid if unlovely picture of the Augean conditions which the Bab had to confront when He inaugurated the Movement in the middle of

the nineteenth century.

All observers agree in representing Persia as a feeble and backward nation divided against itself by corrupt practices and ferocious bigotries.

Inefficiency and wretchedness, the fruit of moral decay, filled the land. From the highest to the lowest there appeared neither the capacity to carry out methods of reform nor even the will seriously to institute them. National conceit preached a grandiose self-content. A pall of immobility lay over all things, and a general paralysis of mind made any development impossible. <pxxv> To a student of history the degeneracy of a nation once so powerful and so illustrious seems pitiful in the extreme.

Abdu'l-Baha, who in spite of the cruelties heaped on Baha'u'llah, on the Bab, and on Himself, yet loved His country, called their degradation "the tragedy of a people"; and in that work, "The Mysterious Forces of Civilisation," in which He sought to stir the hearts of His compatriots to undertake radical reforms, He uttered a poignant lament over the present fate of a people who once had extended their conquests east and west and had led the civilisation of mankind. "In former times," he writes, "Persia was verily the heart of the world and shone among the nations like a lighted taper.

Her glory and prosperity broke from the horizon of humanity like the true dawn disseminating the light of knowledge and illumining the nations of the East and West.

The fame of her victorious kings reached the ears of the dwellers at the poles of the earth.

The majesty of her king of kings humbled the monarchs of Greece and Rome. Her governing wisdom filled the sages with awe, and the rulers of the continents fashioned their laws upon her polity.

The Persians being distinguished among the nations of the earth as a people of conquerors, and justly admired for their civilisation and learning, their country became the glorious centre of all the sciences and arts, the mine of culture and a fount of virtues. ...How is it that this excellent country now, by reason of our sloth, vanity, and indifference, from the lack of knowledge and organisation, from the poverty of the zeal and ambition of her people, has suffered the rays of her prosperity to be darkened and well-nigh extinguished?" Other writers describe fully those unhappy conditions to which Abdu'l-Baha refers.

At the time when the Bab declared His Mission, the government of the country was, in Lord Curzon's phrase, "a Church-State." Venal, cruel, and immoral as it was, it was formally religious. Muslim orthodoxy was its basis and permeated to the core both it and the social lives of the people. But otherwise there were no laws, statutes, or charters to guide the direction of public affairs. There was no House of Lords nor Privy Council, no synod, no Parliament. The Shah was despot, and his arbitrary rule was reflected <pxxvi> all down the official scale through every minister and governor to the lowliest clerk or remotest headman. No civil tribunal existed to check or modify the power of the monarch

or the authority which he might choose to delegate to his subordinates. If there was a law, it was his word. He could do as he pleased. It was his to appoint or to dismiss all ministers, officials, officers, and judges. He had power of life and death without appeal over all members of his household and of his court, whether civil or military. The right to take life was vested in him alone; and so were all the functions of government, legislative, executive, and judicial. His royal prerogative was limited by no written restraint whatever. Descendants of the Shahs were thrust into the most lucrative posts throughout the country, and as the generations went by they filled innumerable minor posts too, far and wide, till the land was burdened with this race of royal drones who owed their position to nothing better than their blood and who gave rise to the Persian saying that "camels, fleas, and princes exist everywhere." Even when a Shah wished to make a just and wise decision in any case that might be brought before him for judgment, he found it difficult to do so, because he could not rely on the information given him. Critical facts would be withheld, or the facts given would be distorted by the influence of interested witnesses or venal ministers. The system of corruption had been carried so far in Persia that it had become a recognized institution which Lord Curzon describes in the following terms:

"I come now to that which is the cardinal and differentiating feature of Iranian administration.

Government, nay, life itself, in that country may be said to consist for the most part of an interchange of presents.

Under its social aspects this practice may be supposed to illustrate the generous sentiments of an amiable people; though even here it has a grimly unemotional side, as, for instance, when, congratulating yourself upon being the recipient of a gift, you find that not only must you make a return of equivalent cost to the donor, but must also liberally remunerate the bearer of the gift (to whom your return is very likely the sole recognized means of subsistence) in a ratio proportionate <pxxvii> to its pecuniary value.

Under its political aspects, the practice of gift-making, though consecrated in the adamant traditions of the East, is synonymous with the system elsewhere described by less agreeable names.

This is the system on which the government of Persia has been conducted for centuries, and the maintenance of which opposes a solid barrier to any real reform.

From the Shah downwards, there is scarcely an official who is not open to gifts, scarcely a post which is not conferred in return for gifts, scarcely an income which has not been amassed by the receipt of gifts.

Every individual, with hardly an exception, in the official hierarchy above mentioned, has only purchased his post by a money present either to the Shah, or to a minister, or to the superior governor by whom he has been appointed.

If there are several candidates for a post, in all probability the one who

makes the best offer will win.

"...The 'madakhil' is a cherished national institution in Persia, the exaction of which, in a myriad different forms, whose ingenuity is only equalled by their multiplicity, is the crowning interest and delight of a Persian's existence.

This remarkable word, for which Mr.

Watson says there is no precise English equivalent, may be variously translated as commission, perquisite, douceur, consideration, pickings and stealings, profit, according to the immediate context in which it is employed.

Roughly speaking, it signifies that balance of personal advantage, usually expressed in money form, which can be squeezed out of any and every transaction.

A negotiation, in which two parties are involved as donor and recipient, as superior and subordinate, or even as equal contracting agents, cannot take place in Persia without the party who can be represented as the author of the favour or service claiming and receiving a definite cash return for what he has done or given.

It may of course be said that human nature is much the same all the world over; that a similar system exists under a different name in our own or other countries, and that the philosophic critic will welcome in the Persian a man and a brother.

To some extent this is true.

But in no country that I have ever seen or heard of in the world, is the system so open, so shameless, or so universal as in Persia.

So far from being limited to the sphere of <pxxviii> domestic economy or to commercial transactions, it permeates every walk and inspires most of the actions of life.

By its operation, generosity or gratuitous service may be said to have been erased in Persia from the category of social virtues, and cupidity has been elevated into the guiding principle of human conduct....

Hereby is instituted an arithmetical progression of plunder from the sovereign to the subject, each unit in the descending scale remunerating himself from the unit next in rank below his, and the hapless peasant being the ultimate victim.

It is not surprising, under these circumstances, that office is the common avenue to wealth, and that cases are frequent of men who, having started from nothing, are found residing in magnificent houses, surrounded by crowds of retainers and living in princely style. 'Make what you can while you can' is the rule that most men set before themselves in entering public life.

Nor does popular spirit resent the act; the estimation of any one who, enjoying the opportunity, has failed to line his own pockets, being the reverse of complimentary to his sense.

No one turns a thought to the sufferers from whom, in the last resort, the material for these successive 'madakhils' has been derived, and from the sweat of whose uncomplaining brow has been wrung the wealth that is dissipated in luxurious country houses, European curiosities and enormous retinues."

To read the foregoing is to perceive something of the difficulty of the Bab's mission; to read the following is to understand the dangers he faced, and to be prepared for a story of violence and heinous cruelty.

"Before I quit the subject of the Persian law and its administration, let me add a few words upon the subject of penalties and prisons. Nothing is more shocking to the European reader, in pursuing his way through the crime-stained and bloody pages of Persian history during the last and, in a happily less degree, during the present century, than the record of savage punishments and abominable tortures, testifying alternately to the callousness of the brute and the ingenuity of the fiend. The Persian character has ever been fertile in device and indifferent to suffering; and in the field of judicial executions it has found ample scope for the exercise of both attainments. Up till quite a recent <pxxix> period, well within the borders of the present reign, condemned criminals have been crucified, blown from guns, buried alive, impaled, shod like horses, torn asunder by being bound to the heads of two trees bent together and then allowed to spring back to their natural position, converted into human torches, flayed while living.

"...Under a twofold governing system, such as that of which I have now completed the description--namely, an administration in which every actor is, in different aspects, both the briber and the bribed; and a judicial procedure, without either a law or a law court--it will readily be understood that confidence in the Government is not likely to exist, that there is no personal sense of duty or pride of honour, no mutual trust or co-operation (except in the service of ill-doing), no disgrace in exposure, no credit in virtue, above all no national spirit or patriotism."

From the beginning the Bab must have divined the reception which would be accorded by His countrymen to His teachings, and the fate which awaited Him at the hands of the mullas. But He did not allow personal misgivings to affect the frank enunciation of His claims nor the open presentation of His Cause. The innovations which He proclaimed, though purely religious, were drastic; the announcement of His own identity startling and tremendous. He made Himself known as the Qa'im, the High Prophet or Messiah so long promised, so eagerly expected by the Muhammadan world. He added to this the declaration that he was also the Gate (that is, the Bab) through whom a greater Manifestation than Himself was to enter the human realm.

Putting Himself thus in line with the traditions of Islam, and appearing as the fulfilment of prophecy, He came into conflict with those who had fixed and ineradicable ideas (different from His) as to what those prophecies and traditions meant.

The two great Persian sects of Islam, the shi'ah and the sunnis, both attached vital importance to the ancient deposit of their faith but did not agree as to its contents or its import.

The shi'ah, out of whose doctrines the Babi Movement rose, held that after the ascension of the High Prophet Muhammad He was succeeded by a line of twelve Imams.

Each of these, they held, was specially endowed <pxxx> by God with spiritual gifts and powers, and was entitled to the whole-hearted obedience of the faithful.

Each owed his appointment not to the popular choice but to his nomination by his predecessor in office.

The twelfth and last of these inspired guides was Muhammad, called by the shi'ah "Imam-Mihdi, Hujjatu'llah [the Proof of God], Bagiyyatu'llah [the Remnant of God], and Qa'im-i-Ali-Muhammad [He who shall arise of the family of Muhammad]."

He assumed the functions of the Imam in the year 260 of the Hegira, but at once disappeared from view and communicated with his followers only through a certain chosen intermediary known as a Gate.

Four of these Gates followed one another in order, each appointed by his predecessor with the approval of the Imam.

But when the fourth, Abu'l-Hasan-Ali, was asked by the faithful, before he died, to name his successor, he declined to do so.

He said that God had another plan.

On his death all communication between the Imam and his church therefore ceased.

And though, surrounded by a band of followers, he still lives and waits in some mysterious retreat, he will not resume relations with his people until he comes forth in power to establish a millennium throughout the world.

The sunnis, on the other hand, take a less exalted view of the office of those who have succeeded the High Prophet. They regard the vicegerency less as a spiritual than as a practical matter. The Khalif is, in their eyes, the Defender of the Faith, and he owes his appointment to the choice and approval of the People.

Important as these differences are, both sects agree, however, in expecting a twofold Manifestation. The shi'ahs look for the Qa'im, who is to come in the fulness of time, and also for the return of the Imam Husayn. The sunnis await the appearance of the Mihdi and also "the return of Jesus Christ." When, at the beginning of his Mission, the Bab, continuing the tradition of the shi'ahs, proclaimed His function under the double title of, first, the Qa'im and, second, the Gate, or Bab, some of the Muhammadans misunderstood the latter reference. They imagined His meaning to be that He was a fifth Gate in succession to Abu'l-Hasan-'Ali. His true meaning, however, as He himself clearly announced, was very <pxxxi> different. He was the Qa'im; but the Qa'im, though a High Prophet, stood in relation to a succeeding and greater Manifestation as did John the Baptist to the Christ. He was the Forerunner of

One yet more mighty than Himself. He was to decrease; that Mighty One was to increase. And as John the Baptist had been the Herald or Gate of the Christ, so was the Bab the Herald or Gate of Baha'u'llah.

There are many authentic traditions showing that the Qa'im on His appearance would bring new laws with Him and would thus abrogate Islam. But this was not the understanding of the established hierarchy. They confidently expected that the promised Advent would not substitute a new and richer revelation for the old, but would endorse and fortify the system of which they were the functionaries. It would enhance incalculably their personal prestige, would extend their authority far and wide among the nations, and would win for them the reluctant but abject homage of mankind. When the Bab revealed His Bayan, proclaimed a new code of religious law, and by precept and example instituted a profound moral and spiritual reform, the priests immediately scented mortal danger. They saw their monopoly undermined, their ambitions threatened, their own lives and conduct put to shame. They rose against Him in sanctimonious indignation. They declared before the Shah and all the people that this upstart was an enemy of sound learning, a subverter of Islam, a traitor to Muhammad, and a peril not only to the holy church but to the social order and to the State itself.

The cause of the rejection and persecution of the Bab was in its essence the same as that of the rejection and persecution of the Christ. If Jesus had not brought a New Book, if He had not only reiterated the spiritual principles taught by Moses but had continued Moses' rules and regulations too, He might as a merely moral reformer have escaped the vengeance of the Scribes and Pharisees. But to claim that any part of the Mosaic law, even such material ordinances as those that dealt with divorce and the keeping of the Sabbath, could be altered--and altered by an unordained preacher from the village of Nazareth--this was to threaten the interests of the Scribes and Pharisees themselves, and <pxxxii> since they were the representatives of Moses and of God, it was blasphemy against the Most High. As soon as the position of Jesus was understood, His persecution began. As He refused to desist, He was put to death.

For reasons exactly parallel, the Bab was from the beginning opposed by the vested interests of the dominant Church as an uprooter of the Faith. Yet, even in that dark and fanatical country, the mullas (like the Scribes in Palestine eighteen centuries before) did not find it very easy to put forward a plausible pretext for destroying Him whom they thought their enemy.

The only known record of the Bab's having been seen by a European belongs to the period of His persecution when an English physician resident in Tabriz, Dr.

Cormick, was called in by the Persian authorities to pronounce on the Bab's mental condition.

The doctor's letter, addressed to a fellow practitioner in an American mission in Persia, is given in Professor E.

G.

Browne's "Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion." "You ask me," writes

the doctor, "for some particulars of my interview with the founder of the sect known as Babis.

Nothing of any importance transpired in this interview, as the Bab was aware of my having been sent with two other Persian doctors to see whether he was of sane mind or merely a madman, to decide the question whether he was to be put to death or not.

With this knowledge he was loth to answer any questions put to him.

To all enquiries he merely regarded us with a mild look, chanting in a low melodious voice some hymns, I suppose.

Two other siyyids, his intimate friends, were also present, who subsequently were put to death with him, besides a couple of government officials.

He only deigned to answer me, on my saying that I was not a Musulman and was willing to know something about his religion, as I might perhaps be inclined to adopt it.

He regarded me very intently on my saying this, and replied that he had no doubt of all Europeans coming over to his religion.

Our report to the Shah at that time was of a nature to spare his life.

He was put to death some time after by the order of the Amir-Nizam, Mirza Taqi Khan.

On our report he merely got the bastinado, in which operation a farrash, whether intentionally or not, struck him <pxxxiii> across the face with the stick destined for his feet, which produced a great wound and swelling of the face.

On being asked whether a Persian surgeon should be brought to treat him, he expressed a desire that I should be sent for, and I accordingly treated him for a few days, but in the interviews consequent on this I could never get him to have a confidential chat with me, as some government people were always present, he being a prisoner.

He was a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious soft voice, which struck me much.

Being a Siyyid, he was dressed in the habit of that sect, as were also his two companions.

In fact his whole look and deportment went far to dispose one in his favour.

Of his doctrine I heard nothing from his own lips, although the idea was that there existed in his religion a certain approach to Christianity.

He was seen by some Armenian carpenters, who were sent to make some repairs in his prison, reading the Bible, and he took no pains to conceal it, but on the contrary told them of it.

Most assuredly the Musulman fanaticism does not exist in his religion, as

applied to Christians, nor is there that restraint of females that now exists." Such was the impression made by the Bab upon a cultivated Englishman. And as far as the influence of His character and teaching have since spread through the West, no other record is extant of His having been observed or seen by European eyes.

His qualities were so rare in their nobility and beauty, His personality so gentle and yet so forceful, and His natural charm was combined with so much tact and judgment, that after His Declaration He quickly became in Persia a widely popular figure. He would win over almost all with whom He was brought into personal contact, often converting His gaolers to His Faith and turning the ill-disposed into admiring friends.

To silence such a man without incurring some degree of public odium was not very easy even in the Persia of the middle of last century. But with the Bab's followers it was another matter.

The mullas encountered here no cause for delay and found little need for scheming. The bigotry of the Muhammadans <pxxxiv> from the Shah downwards could be readily roused against any religious development. The Babis could be accused of disloyalty to the Shah, and dark political motives could be attributed to their activities. Moreover, the Bab's followers were already numerous; many of them were well-to-do, some were rich, and there were few but had some possessions which covetous neighbours might be instigated to desire. Appealing to the fears of the authorities and to the base national passions of fanaticism and cupidity, the mullas inaugurated a campaign of outrage and spoliation which they maintained with relentless ferocity till they considered that their purpose had been completely achieved.

Many of the incidents of this unhappy story are given by Nabil in his history, and among these the happenings at Mazindaran, Nayriz, and Zanzan stand out by reason of the character of the episodes of the heroism of the Babis when thus brought to bay. On these three occasions a number of Babis, driven to desperation, withdrew in concert from their houses to a chosen retreat and, erecting defensive works about them, defied in arms further pursuit. To any impartial witness it was evident that the mullas' allegations of a political motive were untrue. The Babis showed themselves always ready--on an assurance that they would be no longer molested for their religious beliefs--to return peacefully to their civil occupations. Nabil emphasises their care to refrain from aggression. They would fight for their lives with determined skill and strength; but they would not attack. Even in the midst of a fierce conflict they would not drive home an advantage nor strike an unnecessary blow. Abdu'l-Baha is quoted in the "Traveller's Narrative," pp. 34-35, as making the following statement on the moral aspect of their action:

"The minister (Mirza Taqi Khan), with the utmost arbitrariness, without receiving any instructions or asking permission, sent forth commands in all directions to punish and chastise the Babis.

Governors and magistrates sought a pretext for amassing wealth, and officials a means of acquiring profits; celebrated doctors from the summits of their pulpits incited men to make a general onslaught; the powers of the religious

and the civil law linked hands and strove to eradicate <pxxxv> and destroy this people.

Now this people had not yet acquired such knowledge as was right and needful of the fundamental principles and hidden doctrines of the Bab's teachings, and did not recognize their duties.

Their conceptions and ideas were after the former fashion, and their conduct and behaviour in correspondence with ancient usage.

The way of approach to the Bab was, moreover, closed, and the flame of trouble visibly blazing on every side.

At the decree of the most celebrated doctors, the government, and indeed the common people, had, with irresistible power, inaugurated rapine and plunder on all sides, and were engaged in punishing and torturing, killing and despoiling, in order that they might quench this fire and wither these poor souls.

In towns where there were but a limited number, all of them with bound hands became food for the sword, while in cities where they were numerous, they arose in self-defence in accordance with their former beliefs, since it was impossible for them to make enquiry as to their duty, and all doors were closed."

Baha'u'llah, on proclaiming some years later His Mission, left no room for uncertainty as to the law of His Dispensation in such a predicament when He affirmed: "It is better to be killed than to kill."

Whatever resistance the Babis offered, here or elsewhere, proved ineffective. They were overwhelmed by numbers. The Bab Himself was taken from His cell and executed. Of His chief disciples who avowed their belief in Him, not one soul was left alive save Baha'u'llah, who with His family and a handful of devoted followers was driven destitute into exile and prison in a foreign land.

But the fire, though smothered, was not quenched. It burned in the hearts of the exiles who carried it from country to country as they travelled. Even in the homeland of Persia it had penetrated too deeply to be extinguished by physical violence, and still smouldered in the people's hearts, needing only a breath from the spirit to be fanned into an all-consuming conflagration.

The Second and greater Manifestation of God was proclaimed in accordance with the prophecy of the Bab at the date which He had foretold. Nine years after the beginning <pxxxvi> of the Babi Dispensation--that is, in 1853--Baha'u'llah, in certain of His odes, alluded to His identity and His Mission, and ten years later, while resident in Baghdad, declared Himself as the Promised One to His companions.

Now the great Movement for which the Bab had prepared the way began to show the full range and magnificence of its power.

Though Baha'u'llah Himself lived and died an exile and a prisoner and was known to few Europeans, His epistles proclaiming the new Advent were borne to the great rulers of both hemispheres, from the Shah of Persia to the Pope and to the President of the United States.

After His passing, His son Abdu'l-Baha carried the tidings in person into Egypt and far through the Western world.

Abdu'l-Baha visited England, France, Switzerland, Germany, and America, announcing everywhere that once again the heavens had opened and that a new Dispensation had come to bless the sons of men.

He died in November, 1921; and to-day the fire that once seemed to have been put out for ever, burns again in every part of Persia, has established itself on the American continent, and has laid hold of every country in the world.

Around the sacred writings of Baha'u'llah and the authoritative exposition of Abdu'l-Baha there is growing a large volume of literature in comment or in witness.

The humanitarian and spiritual principles enunciated decades ago in the darkest East by Baha'u'llah and moulded by Him into a coherent scheme are one after the other being taken by a world unconscious of their source as the marks of progressive civilisation.

And the sense that mankind has broken with the past and that the old guidance will not carry it through the emergencies of the present has filled with uncertainty and dismay all thoughtful men save those who have learned to find in the story of Baha'u'llah the meaning of all the prodigies and portents of our time.

Nearly three generations have passed since the inception of the Movement. Any of its early adherents who escaped the sword and the stake have long since passed away in the course of nature. The door of contemporary information as to its two great leaders and their heroic disciples is closed for ever. The Chronicle of Nabil as a careful collection of facts made in the interests of truth and completed in the <pxxxvii> lifetime of Baha'u'llah has now a unique value. The author was thirteen years old when the Bab declared Himself, having been born in the village of Zarand in Persia on the eighteenth day of Safar, 1247 A.H. He was throughout his life closely associated with the leaders of the Cause. Though he was but a boy at the time, he was preparing to leave for Shaykh Tabarsi and join the party of Mulla Husayn when the news of the treacherous massacre of the Babis frustrated his design. He states in his narrative that he met, in Tihran, Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, a brother of the Bab's mother, who had just returned at the time from visiting the Bab in the fortress of Chihriq; and for many years he was a close companion of the Bab's secretary, Mirza Ahmad.

He entered the presence of Baha'u'llah in Kirmanshah and Tihran before the date of the exile to Iraq, and afterwards was in attendance upon Him in Baghdad and Adrianople as well as in the prison-city of Akka. He was sent more than once on missions to Persia to promote the Cause and to encourage the scattered and persecuted believers, and he was living in Akka when Baha'u'llah passed away in 1892 A.D. The manner of his death was pathetic and lamentable, for he became so dreadfully affected by the death of the Great Beloved that, overmastered by grief, he drowned himself in the sea, and his dead body was found washed ashore

near the city of Akka.

His chronicle was begun in 1888, when he had the personal assistance of Mirza Musa, the brother of Baha'u'llah. It was finished in about a year and a half, and parts of the manuscript were reviewed and approved, some by Baha'u'llah, and others by Abdu'l-Baha.

The complete work carries the history of the Movement up to the death of Baha'u'llah in 1892.

The first half of this narrative, closing with the expulsion of Baha'u'llah from Persia, is contained in the present volume. Its importance is evident. It will be read less for the few stirring passages of action which it contains, or even for its many pictures of heroism and unwavering faith, than for the abiding significance of those events of which it gives so unique a record.

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PERSIA'S STATE OF DECADENCE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A. THE QAJAR SOVEREIGNS

"In theory the king may do what he pleases; his word is law. The saying that 'The law of the Medes and Persians altereth not' was merely an ancient periphrasis for the absolutism of the sovereign. He appoints and he may dismiss all ministers, officers, officials, and judges. Over his own family and household, and over the civil or military functionaries in his employ, he has power of life and death without reference to any tribunal. The property of any such individual, if disgraced or executed, reverts to him. The right to take life in any case is vested in him alone, but can be delegated to governors or deputies. All property, not previously granted by the crown or purchased--all property, in fact, to which a legal title cannot be established--belongs to him, and can be disposed of at his pleasure. All rights or privileges, such as the making of public works, the working of mines, the institution of telegraphs, roads, railroads, tramways, etc., the exploitation, in fact, of any of the resources of the country, are vested in him, and must be purchased from him before they can be assumed by others. In his person are fused the threefold functions of government, legislative, executive, and judicial. No obligation is imposed upon him beyond the outward observance of the forms of the national religion. He is the pivot upon which turns the entire machinery of public life.

"Such is, in theory, and was till lately in practice, the character of the Persian monarchy. Nor has a single one of these high pretensions been overtly conceded. The language in which the Shah addresses his subjects and is addressed by them, recalls the proud tone in which an Artaxerxes or Darius spoke to his tributary millions, and which may still be read in the graven record of rock-wall and tomb. He remains the Shahinshah, or King of Kings; the Zillu'llah, or Shadow of God; the Qibliy-i-'Alam, or Centre of the Universe; 'Exalted like the planet Saturn; Well of Science; Footpath of Heaven; Sublime Sovereign, whose standard is the Sun, whose splendour is that of the Firmament; Monarch of armies numerous <pxxxix> as the stars.' Still would the Persian subject endorse the precept of Sa'di, that 'The vice approved by the king becomes a virtue; to seek opposite counsel is to imbrue one's hands in his own blood.' The march of time has imposed upon him neither religious council nor secular council, neither ulama nor senate. Elective and representative

institutions have not yet intruded their irreverent features. No written check exists upon the royal prerogative.

"...Such is the divinity that doth hedge a throne in Persia, that not merely does the Shah never attend at state dinners or eat with his subjects at table, with the exception of a single banquet to his principal male relatives at Naw-ruz, but the attitude and language employed towards him even by his confidential ministers are those of servile obeisance and adulation. 'May I be your sacrifice, Asylum of the Universe,' is the common mode of address adopted even by subjects of the highest rank. In his own surrounding there is no one to tell him the truth or to give him dispassionate counsel. The foreign Ministers are probably almost the only source from which he learns facts as they are, or receives unvarnished, even if interested, advice. With the best intentions in the world for the undertaking of great plans and for the amelioration of his country, he has little or no control over the execution of an enterprise which has once passed out of his hands and has become the sport of corrupt and self-seeking officials. Half the money voted with his consent never reaches its destination, but sticks to every intervening pocket with which a professional ingenuity can bring it into transient contact; half the schemes authorised by him are never brought any nearer to realisation, the minister or functionary in charge trusting to the oblivious caprices of the sovereign to overlook his dereliction of duty.

"...Only a century ago the abominable system prevailed of blinding possible aspirants to the throne, of savage mutilations and life-long captivities, of wanton slaughter and systematic bloodshed. Disgrace was not less sudden than promotion, and death was a frequent concomitant of disgrace.

"...Fath-'Ali Shah ... and his successors after him, have proved so extraordinarily prolific of male offspring that the continuity of the dynasty has been assured; and there is <pxl> probably not a reigning family in the world that in the space of one hundred years has swollen to such ample dimensions as the royal race of Persia....

Neither in the number of his wives nor in the extent of his progeny, can the Shah, although undeniably a family man, be compared with his great-grandfather, Fath-'Ali Shah.

To the high opinion universally held of the domestic capacities of that monarch must, I imagine, be attributed the divergent estimates that are to be found, in works about Persia, of the number of his concubines and children.

Colonel Drouville, in 1813, credits him with 700 wives, 64 sons, and 125 daughters.

Colonel Stuart, who was in Persia in the year after Fath-'Ali's death, gives him 1,000 wives and 105 children....

Madame Dieulafoy also names the 5,000 descendants, but as existing at an epoch fifty years later (which has an air of greater probability)....

The estimate which appears in the Nasikhu't Tavarikh, a great modern Persian historical work, fixes the number of Fath-'Ali's wives as over 1,000, and of

his offspring as 260, 110 of whom survived their father.

Hence the familiar Persian proverb 'Camels, fleas, and princes exist everywhere.' ...No royal family has ever afforded a more exemplary illustration of the Scriptural assurance, 'Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands'; for there was scarcely a governorship or a post of emolument in Persia that was not filled by one of this beehive of princelings; and to this day the myriad brood of Shah-zadihs, or descendants of a king, is a perfect curse to the country, although many of these luckless scions of royalty, who consume a large portion of the revenue in annual allowances and pensions, now occupy very inferior positions as telegraph clerks, secretaries, etc.

Fraser drew a vivid picture of the misery entailed upon the country fifty years ago (1842) by this 'race of royal drones,' who filled the governing posts not merely of every province, but of every buluk or district, city, and town; each of whom kept up a court, and a huge harem, and who preyed upon the country like a swarm of locusts....

Fraser, passing through Adharbayjan in 1834, and observing the calamitous results of the system under which Fath-'Ali Shah distributed his colossal male progeny in every Government post throughout the kingdom, remarked: <pxli> 'The most obvious consequence of this state of affairs is a thorough and universal detestation of the Qajar race, which is a prevalent feeling in every heart and the theme of every tongue.'

"...Just as, in the course of his [Nasiri'd-Din Shah's] European travels, he picked up a vast number of what appeared, to the Eastern mind, to be wonderful curiosities, but which have since been stacked in the various apartments of the palace, or put away and forgotten; so in the larger sphere of public policy and administration he is continually taking up and pushing some new scheme or invention which, when the caprice has been gratified, is neglected or allowed to expire. One week it is gas; another it is electric lights. Now it is a staff college; anon, a military hospital. To-day it is a Russian uniform; yesterday it was a German man-of-war for the Persian Gulf. A new army warrant is issued this year; a new code of law is promised for the next. Nothing comes of any of these brilliant schemes, and the lumber-rooms of the palace are not more full of broken mechanism and discarded bric-a-brac than are the pigeon-holes of the government bureaux of abortive reforms and dead fiascoes.

"...In an upper chamber of the same pavilion, Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Qa'im-Maqam, or Grand Vazir, of Muhammad Shah (the father of the present monarch), was strangled in 1835, by order of his royal master, who therein followed an example set him by his predecessor, and set one himself that was duly followed by his son. It must be rare in history to find three successive sovereigns who have put to death, from jealous motives only, the three ministers who have either raised them to the throne or were at the time of their fall filling the highest office in the State. Such is the triple distinction of Fath-'Ali, Muhammad, and Nasiri'd-Din Shahs."

B. THE GOVERNMENT

"In a country so backward in constitutional progress, so destitute of forms and statutes and charters, and so firmly stereotyped in the immemorial traditions of the East, the personal element, as might be expected, is largely in the ascendant; and the government of Persia is little else than the arbitrary exercise of authority by a series of units in a <pxlii> descending scale from the sovereign to the headman of a petty village. The only check that operates upon the lower official grades is the fear of their superiors, which means can usually be found to assuage; upon the higher ranks the fear of the sovereign, who is not always closed against similar methods of pacification; and upon the sovereign himself the fear, not of native, but of foreign opinion, as represented by the hostile criticism of the European Press.... The Shah, indeed, may be regarded at this moment as perhaps the best existing specimen of a moderate despot; for within the limits indicated he is practically irresponsible and omnipotent. He has absolute command over the life and property of every one of his subJects. His sons have no independent power, and can be reduced to impotence or beggary in the twinkling of an eye. The ministers are elevated and degraded at the royal pleasure. The sovereign is the sole executive, and all officials are his deputies. No civil tribunals are in existence to check or modify his prerogative.

"...Of the general character and accomplishments of the ministers of the Persian Court, Sir J.

Malcolm, in his History, wrote as follows in the early years of the century: 'The Ministers and chief officers of the Court are almost always men of polished manners, well skilled in the business of their respective departments, of pleasant conversation, subdued temper, and very acute observation; but these agreeable and useful qualities are, in general, all that they possess.

Nor is virtue or liberal knowledge to be expected in men whose lives are wasted in attending to forms; whose means of subsistence are derived from the most corrupt sources; whose occupation is in intrigues which have always the same objects: to preserve themselves or ruin others; who cannot, without danger, speak any language but that of flattery and deceit; and who are, in short, condemned by their condition to be venal, artful, and false.

There have, no doubt, been many ministers of Persia whom it would be injustice to class under this general description; but even the most distinguished for their virtues and talents have been forced in some degree to accommodate their principles to their station; and, unless where the confidence of their sovereign has placed them beyond the fear of rivals, necessity has compelled them to <pxliii> practise a subserviency and dissimulation at variance with the truth and integrity which can alone constitute a claim to the respect all are disposed to grant to good and great men.' These observations are marked by the insight and justice characteristic of their distinguished author, and it is to be feared that to a large extent they hold as good of the present as of the old generation."

C. THE PEOPLE

"...I now come to that which is the cardinal and differentiating feature of

Iranian administration.

Government, nay, life itself, in that country may be said to consist for the most part of an interchange of presents.

Under its social aspects this practice may be supposed to illustrate the generous sentiments of an amiable people; though even here it has a grimly unemotional side, as, for instance, when, congratulating yourself upon being the recipient of a gift, you find that not only must you make a return of equivalent cost to the donor, but must also liberally remunerate the bearer of the gift (to whom your return is very likely the sole recognized means of subsistence) in a ratio proportionate to its pecuniary value.

Under its political aspects, the practice of gift-making, though consecrated in the adamant traditions of the East, is synonymous with the system elsewhere described by less agreeable names.

This is the system on which the government of Persia has been conducted for centuries, and the maintenance of which opposes a solid barrier to any real reform.

From the Shah downwards, there is scarcely an official who is not open to gifts, scarcely a post which is not conferred in return for gifts, scarcely an income which has not been amassed by the receipt of gifts.

Every individual, with hardly an exception, in the official hierarchy above mentioned, has only purchased his post by a money present either to the Shah, or to a minister, or to the superior governor by whom he has been appointed.

If there are several candidates for a post, in all probability the one who makes the best offer will win.

"...The 'madakhil' is a cherished national institution in Persia, the exaction of which, in a myriad different forms, whose ingenuity is only equalled by their multiplicity, is the crowning interest and delight of a Persian's existence.

This remarkable word, for which Mr.

Watson says there is no precise English equivalent, may be variously translated as commission, perquisite, douceur, consideration, pickings and stealings, profit, according to the immediate context in which it is employed.

Roughly speaking, it signifies that balance of personal advantage, usually expressed in money form, which can be squeezed out of any and every transaction.

A negotiation, in which two parties are involved as donor and recipient, as superior and subordinate, or even as equal contracting agents, cannot take place in Persia without the party who can be represented as the author or the favour or service claiming and receiving a definite cash return for what he has done or given.

It may of course be said that human nature is much the same all the world over;

that a similar system exists under a different name in our own or other countries, and that the philosophic critic will welcome in the Persian a man and a brother.

To some extent this is true.

But in no country that I have ever seen or heard of in the world, is the system so open, so shameless, or so universal as in Persia.

So far from being limited to the sphere of domestic economy or to commercial transactions, it permeates every walk and inspires most of the actions of life.

By its operation, generosity or gratuitous service may be said to have been erased in Persia from the category of social virtues, and cupidity has been elevated into the guiding principle of human conduct....

Hereby is instituted an arithmetical progression of plunder from the sovereign to the subject, each unit in the descending scale remunerating himself from the unit next in rank below him, and the hapless peasant being the ultimate victim.

It is not surprising, under these circumstances, that office is the common avenue to wealth, and that cases are frequent of men who, having started from nothing, are found residing in magnificent houses, surrounded by crowds of retainers and living in princely style. 'Make what you can while you can' is the rule that most men set before themselves in entering public life.

Nor does popular spirit resent the act; the estimation of any one who, enjoying the opportunity, has failed to line his own pockets, being the reverse of complimentary to his sense.

No one turns a thought to <pxlv> the sufferers from whom, in the last resort, the material for these successive 'madakhils' has been derived, and from the sweat of whose uncomplaining brow has been wrung the wealth that is dissipated in luxurious country houses, European curiosities, and enormous retinues.

"...Among the features of public life in Persia that most quickly strike the stranger's eye, and that indirectly arise from the same conditions, is the enormous number of attendants and retainers that swarm round a minister, or official of any description.

In the case of a functionary of rank or position, these vary in number from 50 to 500.

Benjamin says that the Prime Minister in his time kept 3,000.

Now, the theory of social and ceremonial etiquette that prevails in Persia, and indeed throughout the East, is to some extent responsible for this phenomenon, personal importance being, to a large extent, estimated by the public show which it can make, and by the staff of servants whom on occasions it can parade.

But it is the institution of 'Madakhil' and of illicit pickings and stealings that is the root of the evil.

If the governor or minister were bound to pay salaries to the whole of this servile crew their ranks would speedily dwindle.

The bulk of them are unpaid; they attach themselves to their master because of the opportunities for extortion with which that connection presents them, and they thrive and fatten on plunder.

It may readily be conceived how great a drain is this swarm of blood-suckers upon the resources of the country.

They are true types of unproductive labourers, absorbing but never creating wealth; and their existence is little short of a national calamity....

It is a cardinal point of Persian etiquette when you go out visiting to take as many of your own establishment with you as possible, whether riding or walking on foot; the number of such retinue being accepted as an indication of the rank of the master."

D. THE ECCLESIASTICAL ORDER

"Marvellously adapted alike to the climate, character, and occupations of those countries upon which it has laid its adamant grip, Islam holds its votary in complete thrall from the cradle to the grave. To him, it is not only religion, it is government, philosophy, and science as well. The Muhammadan <pxlvi> conception is not so much that of a state church as, if the phrase may be permitted, of a church state. The undergirders with which society itself is warped round are not of civil, but of ecclesiastical, fabrication; and, wrapped in this superb, if paralysing, creed, the Musulman lives in contented surrender of all volition, deems it his highest duty to worship God and to compel, or, where impossible, to despise those who do not worship Him in the spirit, and then dies in sure and certain hope of Paradise.

"...These Siyyids, or descendants of the Prophet, are an intolerable nuisance to the country, deducing from their alleged descent and from the prerogative of the green turban, the right to an independence and insolence of bearing from which their countrymen, no less than foreigners, are made to suffer.

"...As a community, the Persian Jews are sunk in great poverty and ignorance.... Throughout the Musulman countries of the East these unhappy people have been subjected to the persecution which custom has taught themselves, as well as the world, to regard as their normal lot. Usually compelled to live apart in a Ghetto, or separate quarter of the towns, they have from time immemorial suffered from disabilities of occupation, dress, and habits, which have marked them out as social pariahs from their fellow-creatures. ...In Isfahan, where there are said to be 3,700, and where they occupy a relatively better status than elsewhere in Persia, they are not permitted to wear the 'kulah' or Persian head-dress, to have shops in the bazaar, to build the walls of their houses as high as a Muslim neighbour's, or to ride in the streets.... As soon, however, as any outburst of bigotry takes place in Persia or elsewhere, the Jews are apt to be the first victims Every man's hand is then against them; and woe betide the luckless Hebrew who is the first to encounter a Persian street mob.

"...Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of Mashhad life, before I leave the

subject of the shrine and the pilgrims, is the provision that is made for the material solace of the letter during their stay in the city.

In recognition of the long journeys which they have made, of the hardships which they have sustained, and of the distances by which they are <pxlvii> severed from family and home, they are permitted, with the connivance of the ecclesiastical law and its officers, to contract temporary marriages during their sojourn in the city.

There is a large permanent population of wives suitable for the purpose.

A mulla is found, under whose sanction a contract is drawn up and formally sealed by both parties, a fee is paid, and the union is legally accomplished.

After the lapse of a fortnight or a month, or whatever be the specified period, the contract terminates; the temporary husband returns to his own lares et penates in some distant clime, and the lady, after an enforced celibacy of fourteen days' duration, resumes her career of persevering matrimony.

In other words, a gigantic system of prostitution, under the sanction of the Church, prevails in Mashhad.

There is probably not a more immoral city in Asia; and I should be sorry to say how many of the unmurmuring pilgrims who traverse seas and lands to kiss the grating of the Imam's tomb are not also encouraged and consoled upon their march by the prospect of an agreeable holiday and what might be described in the English vernacular as 'a good spree.'

CONCLUSION

"Before I quit the subject of the Persian law and its administration, let me add a few words upon the subject of penalties and prisons. Nothing is more shocking to the European reader, in pursuing his way through the crime-stained and bloody pages of Persian history during the last and, in a happily less degree, during the present century, than the record of savage punishments and abominable tortures, testifying alternately to the callousness of the brute and the ingenuity of the fiend. The Persian character has ever been fertile in device and indifferent to suffering; and in the field of judicial executions it has found ample scope for the exercise of both attainments. Up till quite a recent period, well within the borders of the present reign, condemned criminals have been crucified, blown from guns, buried alive, impaled, shod like horses, torn asunder by being bound to the heads of two trees bent together and then allowed to spring back to their natural position, converted into human torches, flayed while living. <pxlviii>

"...Under a twofold governing system, such as that of which I have now completed the description--namely, an administration in which every actor is, in different aspects, both the briber and the bribed; and a judicial procedure, without either a law or a law court--it will readily be understood that confidence in the Government is not likely to exist, that there is no personal sense of duty or pride of honour, no mutual trust or co-operation (except in the service of ill-doing), no disgrace in exposure, no credit in virtue, above all no national spirit or patriotism.

Those philosophers are right who argue that moral must precede material, and internal exterior, reform in Persia.

It is useless to graft new shoots on to a stem whose own sap is exhausted or poisoned.

We may give Persia roads and railroads; we may work her mines and exploit her resources; we may drill her army and clothe her artisans; but we shall not have brought her within the pale of civilised nations until we have got at the core of the people, and given a new and a radical twist to the national character and institutions.

I have drawn this picture of Persian administration, which I believe to be true, in order that English readers may understand the system with which reformers, whether foreigners or natives, have to contend, and the iron wall of resistance, built up by all the most selfish instincts in human nature, that is opposed to progressive ideas.

The Shah himself, however genuine his desire for innovation, is to some extent enlisted on the side of this pernicious system, seeing that he owes to it his private fortune; while those who most loudly condemn it in private are not behind their fellows in outwardly bowing their heads in the temple of Rimmon.

In every rank below the sovereign, the initiative is utterly wanting to start a rebellion against the tyranny of immemorial custom; and if a strong man like the present king can only tentatively undertake it, where is he who shall preach the crusade?"

(Extracts from Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question.") <pxlix>

BAHA'ULLAH'S TRIBUTE TO THE BAB AND HIS CHIEF DISCIPLES EXTRACTS FROM THE KITAB-IQAN

"Though young and tender of age, and though the Cause He revealed was contrary to the desire of all the peoples of the earth, both high and low, rich and poor, exalted and abased, king and subject, yet He arose and steadfastly proclaimed it. All have known and heard this. He feared no one; He was reckless of consequences. Could such a thing be made manifest except through the power of a Divine Revelation, and the potency of God's invincible Will? By the righteousness of God! Were anyone to entertain so great a Revelation in his heart, the thought of such a declaration would alone confound him! Were the hearts of all men to be crowded into his heart, he would still hesitate to venture upon so awful an enterprise. He could achieve it only by the permission of God, only if the channel of his heart were to be linked with the Source of Divine grace, and his soul be assured of the unfailing sustenance of the Almighty. To what, We wonder, do they ascribe so great a daring? Do they accuse Him of madness as they accused the Prophets of old? Or do they maintain that His motive was none other than leadership and the acquisition of earthly riches?

"Gracious God! In His Book, which He hath entitled 'Qayyumu'l-Asma' '--the first, the greatest, and mightiest of all books--He prophesied His own martyrdom. In it is this passage: 'O Thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed

myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake; and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient Witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days!

"...Could the Revealer of such utterance be regarded as walking in any other way than the way of God, and as having yearned for aught else except His good pleasure? In this very verse there lieth concealed a breath of detachment for which, if it were breathed upon the world, all beings would renounce their life, and sacrifice their soul.

"...And now consider how this Sadrih of the Ridvan of God hath, in the prime of youth, risen to proclaim the Cause of God. Behold, what steadfastness He, the Beauty of God, hath revealed! The whole world rose to hinder Him, yet it utterly failed! The more severe the persecution they inflicted on that Sadrih of Blessedness, the more His fervour increased, and the brighter burned the flame of His love. All this is evident, and none disputeth its truth. Finally, He surrendered His soul, and winged His flight unto the realms above.

"...No sooner had that eternal Beauty revealed Himself in Shiraz, in the year sixty, and rent asunder the veil of concealment, than the signs of the ascendancy, the might, the sovereignty, and power emanating from that Essence of Essences and Sea of Seas, were manifest in every land. So much so, that from every city there appeared the signs, the evidences, the tokens, and testimonies of that Divine Luminary. How many were those pure and kindly hearts which faithfully reflected the light of that eternal Sun! And how manifold the emanations of knowledge from that Ocean of Divine Wisdom which encompassed all beings! In every city, all the divines and nobles rose to hinder and repress them, and girded up the loins of malice, of envy, and tyranny for their suppression. How great the number of those holy souls, those essences of justice, who, accused of tyranny, were put to death! And how many embodiments of purity, who showed forth naught but true knowledge and stainless deeds, suffered an agonising death! Notwithstanding all this, each of these holy beings, up to his last moment, breathed the name of God and soared in the realm of submission and resignation. Such was the potency and transmuting influence which He exercised over them, that they ceased to cherish any desire but His Will, and wedded their souls to His remembrance.

"Reflect: Who in the world is able to manifest such transcendent power, such pervading influence? All these stainless hearts and sanctified souls have, with absolute resignation, responded to the summons of His decree. Instead of making complaint, they rendered thanks unto God, and, amidst the darkness of their anguish, they revealed naught but radiant acquiescence in His Will. It is well known how relentless was the hate, and how bitter the malice and enmity, entertained by all the peoples of the earth towards these Companions. The persecution and pain which they inflicted on these holy and spiritual beings were regarded by them as means unto salvation, prosperity, and everlasting success. Hath the world, since the days of Adam, witnessed such tumult, such violent commotion? Notwithstanding all the torture they suffered, and the manifold afflictions they endured, they became the object of universal opprobrium and execration. Methinks, patience was revealed only by virtue of their fortitude, and faithfulness itself was begotten by their deeds.

"Do thou ponder these momentous happenings in thine heart, so that thou mayest apprehend the greatness of this Revelation, and perceive its stupendous glory."

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF SHI'AH ISLAM

"The cardinal point wherein the Shi'ahs (as well as the other sects included under the more general term of Imamites) differ from the Sunnis is the doctrine of the Imamate.

According to the belief of the latter, the vicegerency of the Prophet (Khalifat) is a matter to be determined by the choice and election of his followers, and the visible head of the Musulman world is qualified for the lofty position which he holds less by any special divine grace than by a combination of orthodoxy and administrative capacity.

According to the Imamite view, on the other hand, the vicegerency is a matter altogether spiritual; an office conferred by God alone, first by His Prophet, and afterwards by those who so succeeded him, and having nothing to do with the popular choice or approval.

In a word, the Khalifah of the Sunnis is merely the outward and visible Defender of the Faith: the Imam of the Shi'ahs is the divinely ordained successor of the Prophet, one endowed with all perfections and spiritual gifts, one whom all the faithful must obey, whose decision is absolute and final, whose wisdom is superhuman, and whose words are authoritative.

The general term Imamate is applicable to all who hold this latter view without reference to the way in which they trace the succession, and therefore includes such sects as the Baqiris and Isma'ilis as well as the Shi'ah or <plii> 'Church of the Twelve' (Madhhab-i-Ithna-'Ashariyyih), as they are more specifically termed, with whom alone we are here concerned.

According to these, twelve persons successively held the office of Imam.

These twelve are as follows:

1. Ali-ibn-i-Abi-Talib, the cousin and first disciple of the Prophet, assassinated by Ibn-i-Muljam at Kufih, A.H. 40 (A.D. 661).
2. Hasan, son of Ali and Fatimih, born A.H. 2, poisoned by order of Mu'aviyah I, A.H. 50 (A.D. 670).
3. Husayn, son of Ali and Fatimih, born A.H. 4, killed at Karbila on Muharram 10, A.H. 61 (Oct. 10, A.D. 680).
4. Ali, son of Husayn and Shahribanu (daughter of Yazdigird, the last Sasanian king), generally called Imam Zaynu'l-'Abidin, poisoned by Valid.
5. Muhammad-Baqir, son of the above-mentioned Zaynu'l-'Abidin and his cousin Umm-i-'Abdu'llah, the daughter of Imam Hasan, poisoned by Ibrahim ibn-i-Valid.
6. Ja'far-i-Sadiq, son of Imam Muhammad-Baqir, poisoned by order of Mansur, the Abbaside Khalifah.
7. Musa-Kazim, son of Imam Ja'far-i-Sadiq, born A.H. 129, poisoned by order of Harunu'r-Rashid, A.H. 183.
8. Ali-ibn-i-Musa'r-Rida, generally called Imam Rida, born A.H. 153, poisoned near Tus, in Khurasan, by order of the Khalifah Ma'mun, A.H. 203, and buried at Mashhad, which derives its name and its sanctity from him.

9. Muhammad-Taqi, son of Imam Rida, born A.H. 195, poisoned by the Khalifah Mu'tasim at Baghdad, A.H. 220.
10. Ali-Naqi, son of Imam Muhammad-Taqi, born A.H. 213, poisoned at Surra-man-Ra'a, A.H. 254.
11. Hasan-i-'Askari, son of Imam Ali-Naqi, born A.H. 232, poisoned A.H. 260.
12. Muhammad, son of Imam Hasan-i-'Askari and Nargis-Khatun, called by the Shi'ahs 'Imam-Mihdi,' 'Hujjatu'llah' (the Proof of God), 'Baqiyyatu'llah' (the Remnant of God), and 'Qa'im-i-Al-i-Muhammad' (He who shall arise of the family of Muhammad). He bore not only the same name but the same kunyah--Abu'l-Qasim--as the Prophet, and according to the Shi'ahs it is not lawful for any other to bear this name and this kunyah together. He was born at Surra-man-Ra'a, A.H. 255, and succeeded his father in the Imamate, A.H. 260. "The Shi'ahs hold that he did not die, but disappeared in an underground passage in Surra-man-Ra'a, A.H.

329; that he still lives, surrounded by a chosen band of his followers, in one of those mysterious cities, Jabulqa and Jabulsa; and that when the fulness of time is come, when the earth is filled with injustice, and the faithful are plunged in despair, he will come forth, heralded by Jesus Christ, overthrow the infidels, establish universal peace and justice, and inaugurate a millennium of blessedness.

During the whole period of his Imamate, i.e. from A.H.

260 till the present day, the Imam Mihdi has been invisible and inaccessible to the mass of his followers, and this is what is signified by the term 'Occultation' (Ghaybat).

After assuming the functions of Imam and presiding at the burial of his father and predecessor, the Imam Hasan-i-'Askari, he disappeared from the sight of all save a chosen few, who, one after the other, continued to act as channels of communication between him and his followers.

These persons were known as 'Gates' (Abvab).

The first of them was Abu-'Umar-'Uthman ibn-i-Sa'id Umari; the second Abu-Ja'far Muhammad-ibn-i-'Uthman, son of the above; the third Husayn-ibn-i-Ruh Naw-bakhti; the fourth Abu'l-Hasan Ali-ibn-i-Muhammad Simari.

Of these 'Gates' the first was appointed by the Imam Hasan-i-'Askari, the others by the then acting 'Gate' with the sanction and approval of the Imam Mihdi.

This period--extending over 69 years--during which the Imam was still accessible by means of the 'Gates,' is known as the 'Lesser' or 'Minor Occultation' (Ghaybat-i-Sughra).

This was succeeded by the 'Greater' or 'Major Occultation' (Ghaybat-i-Kubra).

When Abu'l-Hasan Ali, the last of the 'Gates,' drew near to his latter end, he was urged by the faithful (who contemplated with despair the prospect of complete severance from the Imam) to nominate a successor.

This, however, he refused to do, saying, 'God hath a purpose which He will accomplish.' So on his death all <pliv> communication between the Imam and his Church ceased, and the 'Major Occultation' began and shall continue until the Return of the Imam take place in the fulness of time." (Excerpt from "A Traveller's Narrative,"

Note O, pp.

296-99.)

GENEALOGY OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Quraysh

:

Abd-i-Manaf

: :
 Hashim Abdu'l-sh-Shams

: :
 Abdu'l-Muttalib Umayyih

: :
 : Umayyad Caliphs

: : :
 Abdu'llah Abu-Talib Abbas

: :
 Muhammad :

: :
 Fatimih Ali

:

: :
 Hasan Husayn

Umayyad Caliphs, 661-749 A.D.

Abbasid Caliphs, 749-1258 A.D

Fatimite Caliphs, 1258-1517 A.D.

Ottoman Caliphs, 1517-19 A.D.

Birth of Muhammad, August 20th, 570 A.D.

Declaration of His Mission, 613-14 A.D.

His flight to Medina, 622 A.D.

Abu-Bakri's-Siddiq-ibn-i-Abi-Quhafih, 632-34 A.D.

Umar-ibn-i'l-Khattab 634-44 A.D.

Uthman-ibn-i-'Affan, 644-56 A.D.

Ali-ibn-i-Abi-Talib, 656-61 A.D.

THEORY AND ADMINISTRATION OF LAW

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"...The law in Persia, and, indeed, among Musulman peoples in general, consists of two branches: the religious, and the common law that which is based upon the Muhammadan Scriptures, and that which is based on precedent; that which is administered by ecclesiastical, and that which <plv> is administered by civil

tribunals.

In Persia, the former is known as the Shar', the latter as the Urf.

From the two is evolved a jurisprudence which, although in no sense scientific, is yet reasonably practical in application and is roughly accommodated to the needs and circumstances of those for whom it is dispensed.

The basis of authority in the case of the Shar', or Ecclesiastical Law, consists of the utterances of the Prophet in the Qur'an; of the opinions of the Twelve Holy Imams, whose voice in the judgment of the Shi'ah Muhammadans is of scarcely inferior weight; and of the commentaries of a school of pre-eminent ecclesiastical jurists.

The latter have played much the same part in adding to the volume of the national jurisprudence that the famous juris consulti did with the Common Law of Rome, or the Talmudic commentators with the Hebrew system.

The body of law so framed has been roughly codified and divided into four heads, dealing respectively with religious rites and duties, with contracts and obligations, with personal affairs, and with sumptuary rules and judicial procedure.

This law is administered by an ecclesiastical court, consisting of mullas, i.e. lay priests and mujtahids, i.e. learned doctors of the law, assisted sometimes by qadis or judges, and under the presidency of an official, known as the Shaykhu'l-Islam, one of whom is, as a rule, appointed to every large city by the sovereign.

In olden days, the chief of this ecclesiastical hierarchy was the Sadru's-Sudur, or Pontifex Maximus, a dignitary who was chosen by the king and placed over the entire priesthood and judicial bench of the kingdom.

But this office was abolished in his anti-clerical campaign by Nadir Shah, and has never been renewed.

In smaller centres of population and villages, the place of this court is taken by the local mulla or mullas, who, for a consideration, are always ready with a text from the Qur'an.

In the case of the higher courts, the decision is invariably written out, along with the citation from the Scriptures, or the commentators, upon which it is based.

Cases of extreme importance are referred to the more eminent mujtahids, of whom there is never a large number, who gain their position solely by eminent learning or abilities, ratified by the popular approval, and whose decisions are seldom impugned....

In works <plvi> upon the theory of the law in Persia, it is commonly written that criminal cases are decided by the ecclesiastical, and civil cases by the secular, courts.

In practice, however, there is no such clear distinction; the functions and the prerogative of the co-ordinate benches vary at different epochs, and appear to be a matter of accident or choice rather than of necessity; and at the present time, though criminal cases of difficulty may be submitted to the ecclesiastical court, yet it is with civil matters that they are chiefly concerned.

Questions of heresy or sacrilege are naturally referred to them; they also take cognisance of adultery and divorce; and intoxication as an offence, not against the common law (indeed, if it were a matter of precedent, insobriety could present the highest credentials in Persia), but against the Qur'an, falls within the scope of their judgment...

"From the Shar', I pass to the Urf, or Common Law.

Nominally this is based on oral tradition, on precedent, and on custom.

As such, it varies in different parts of the country.

But, there being no written or recognized code, it is found to vary still more in practice according to the character or caprice of the individual who administers it...

The administrators of the Urf are the civil magistrates throughout the kingdom, there being no secular court or bench of judges after the Western model.

In a village the case will be brought before the kad-khuda, or headman; in a town before the darughih, or police magistrate.

To their judgment are submitted all the petty offences that occupy a city police-court or a bench of country magistrates in England.

The penalty in the case of larceny, or assault, or such like offences, is, as a rule, restitution, either in kind or in money value; while, if lack of means renders this impossible, the criminal is soundly thrashed.

All ordinary criminal cases are brought before the hakim, or governor of a town; the more important before the provincial governor or governor-general.

The ultimate court of appeal in each case is the king, of whose sovereign authority these subordinate exercises of jurisdiction are merely a delegation, although it is rare that a suppliant at any distance from the capital call make his complaint heard so far...

Justice, as dispensed in this fashion by the officers of government in Persia, obeys no law and follows <plvii> no system.

Publicity is the sole guarantee for fairness; but great is the scope, especially in the lower grades, for pishkash and the bribe.

The darugis have the reputation of being both harsh and venal, and there are some who go so far as to say that there is not a sentence of an official in Persia, even of the higher ranks, that cannot be swayed by a pecuniary consideration.

(Excerpts from Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question," vol. 1, pp.

452-55.) <plviii> [Intentionally blank]

[Fold-out genealogical chart of the Bab bound between pages lviii and lix.]

<plix>

KEY TO THE GENEALOGY OF THE BAB

1. Descendant of the Imam Husayn, resident of Shiraz.
2. Wife of the Bab.
3. Surnamed "Afnan-i-Kabir."
4. Wife of Mirza Zaynu'l-Abidin.
5. Known as "Saqqa-Khani."
6. Wife of Haj Mirza Siyyid Hasan, son of Mirza Ali.
7. Died at birth.
8. Surnamed "Khal-i-Asghar," to whom the Kitab-i-Iqan was addressed.
9. Surnamed "Khal-i-A'zam," one of the Seven Martyrs of Tihiran.
10. Surnamed "Vakilu'd-Dawlih," chief builder of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in Ishqabad.
11. Surnamed "Vazir," native of Nur in Mazindaran; named Abbas.
12. Named Abbas.
13. Named Ali-Muhammad.
14. Named Husayn-'Ali.
15. Wife of Vakilu'd-Dawlih, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi.
16. Only son of Haji Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.
17. Abdu'l-Baha's son-in-law.
18. Descendant of the Imam Husayn, merchant and native of Shiraz.
19. Abdu'l-Baha's son-in-law.
20. Only child of Mirza Abu'l-Fath. <plx>

THE QAJAR DYNASTY

Fath-'Ali Shah, 1798-1834 A.D.

Muhammad Shah, 1835-48 A.D.

Nasiri'd-Din Shah, 1848-96 A.D.

Muzaffari'd-Din Shah, 1896-1907 A.D.

Muhammad-'Ali Shah, 1907-9 A.D.

Ahmad Shah, 1909-25 A.D.

Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Qa'im-Maqam.

Haji Mirza Aqasi.

Mirza Taqi Khan Amir-Nizam.

Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri.

[Fold-out chart of the "Pedigree of the Qajar Dynasty" between pages lx and

lxi.] <plxii>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Lady Blomfield for her valuable suggestions; to an English correspondent for his help in the preparation of the Introduction; to Mrs. E. Hoagg for the typing of the manuscript; to Miss Effie Baker for the photographs used in illustrating this book.

--THE TRANSLATOR. <plxii>

[Illustration: MUHAMMAD-I-ZARANDI, SURNAMED NABIL-I-A'ZAM] <plxiii>

PERFACE

IT IS my intention, by the aid and assistance of God, to devote the introductory pages of this narrative to such accounts as I have been able to obtain regarding those twin great lights, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, after which it is my hope to recount, in their chronological order, the chief events that have happened since the year '60, [1] the year that witnessed the declaration of the Faith by the Bab, until the present time, the year 1305 A.H.[2]

[1 1260 A.H. (1844 A.D.).]

[2 1887-8 A.D.]

In certain instances I shall go into some detail, in others I shall content myself with a brief summary of events. I shall place on record a description of the episodes I myself have witnessed, as well as those that have been reported to me by trustworthy and recognized informants, specifying in every case their names and standing. Those to whom I am primarily indebted are the following: Mirza Ahmad-i-Qazvini, the Bab's amanuensis; Siyyid Isma'il-i-Dhabih; Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi; Shaykh Abu-Turab-i-Qazvini; and, last but not least, Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim, brother of Baha'u'llah.

I render thanks to God for having assisted me in the writing of these preliminary pages, and for having blessed and honoured them with the approval of Baha'u'llah, who has graciously deigned to consider them and who signified, through His amanuensis Mirza Aqa Jan, who read them to Him, His pleasure and acceptance. I pray that the Almighty may sustain and guide me lest I err and falter in the task I have set myself to accomplish.

MUHAMMAD-I-ZARANDI.[1]

[1 His full title is Nabil-i-A'zam.]

Akka, Palestine,

1305 A.H. <plxiv>

[Illustration: SHAYKH AHMAD-I-AHSA'I] <p1>

THE DAWN-BREAKERS

CHAPTER I

THE MISSION OF SHAYKH AHMAD-I-AHSA'I

AT A time when the shining reality of the Faith of Muhammad had been obscured by the ignorance, the fanaticism, and perversity of the contending sects into which it had fallen, there appeared above the horizon of the East [1] that luminous Star of Divine guidance, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i.[2] He observed how those who professed the Faith of Islam had shattered its unity, sapped its force, perverted its purpose, and degraded its holy name.

His soul was filled with anguish at the sight of the corruption and strife which characterised the Shi'ah sect of Islam.

Inspired by the light that shone within him,[3] he arose with unerring vision, with fixed purpose, and sublime detachment to utter his protest against the betrayal of the Faith by that ignoble people.

Aglow with zeal and conscious of the sublimity of his calling, he vehemently

appealed not only to shi'ah Islam but to all the followers of Muhammad throughout the East, to awaken from the slumber of negligence and to prepare the way for Him who must needs be made manifest in the fulness of time, whose light alone could dissipate the mists of prejudice and ignorance which had enveloped that Faith.

Forsaking his home and kindred, on one of the islands of Bahrayn, to the south of the Persian Gulf, he set out, as bidden by an almighty Providence, to unravel the mysteries of those verses of Islamic Scriptures which foreshadowed the advent of a new Manifestation.

He was well aware of the dangers and perils that beset his path; he fully realised the crushing responsibility of his task.

There burned in his soul the conviction that no reform, however drastic, within the Faith of Islam, could achieve the regeneration of this perverse people.

He knew, and was destined by the Will of God to demonstrate, that nothing short of a new and independent Revelation, as attested and foreshadowed by the sacred Scriptures of Islam, could revive the fortunes and restore the purity of that decadent Faith.[4]

[1 His genealogy, according to his son Shaykh Abdu'llah, is the following:
"Shaykh

Ahmad-ibn-i-Zaynu'd-Din-ibn-i-Ibrahim-ibn-i-Sakhr-ibn-i-Ibrahim-ibn-i-Zahir-ibn-i-Ramadan-ibn-i-Rashid-ibn-i-Dahim-ibn-i-Shimruk- ibn-i-Sulih." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme" I, p. 1.)]

[2 Born Rajab, 1166 A.H., 24th of April-24th of May, 1753, in town of Ahsa in district of Ahsa, northeast of Arabian peninsula. (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, p. 1.) Born a shi'ah, though his ancestors were sunnis. (Ibid., p. 2.) According to E. G. Browne ("A Traveller's Narrative," Note E, p. 235), Shaykh Ahmad was born in the year 1157 A.H. and died in 1242.]

[3 Siyyid Kazim, in his book entitled "Dalilu'l-Mutahayyirin," writes as follows: "Our master, one night, saw the Imam Hasan; upon him may the blessing of God rest! His Holiness put in his mouth his blessed tongue. From the adorable saliva of His Holiness he drew forth the sciences and the assistance of God. To the taste it was sweeter even than honey, more perfumed than the musk. It was also quite warm. When he came to himself and wakened from his dream, he inwardly radiated the light of divine contemplation; his soul overflowed with the blessings of God and became entirely severed from everything save God. "His faith, his trust in God and his resignation to the Will of the Most High grew apace. Because of a great love and an ardent desire which arose in his heart, he forgot to eat or to clothe himself except barely enough to sustain life." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, p. 6.)]

[4 "He [Shaykh Ahmad] knew full well that he was chosen of God to prepare men's hearts for the reception of the more complete truth shortly to be revealed, and that through him the way of access to the hidden twelfth Imam Mihdi was reopened. But he did not set this forth in clear and unmistakable terms, lest 'the unregenerate' should turn again and rend him." (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The

Reconciliation of Races and Religions," p. 15.)]

Bereft of all earthly possessions, and detached from all save God, he, in the early days of the thirteenth century of the Hegira, when forty years of age, arose to dedicate the remaining days of his life to the task he felt impelled to shoulder.

He first proceeded to Najaf and Karbila,[1] where in a few years he acquired familiarity with the prevailing thoughts and standards current among the learned men of Islam.

There he came to be recognized as one of the authorised expounders of the Islamic Holy Writ, was declared a mujtahid, and soon obtained an ascendancy over the rest of his colleagues, who either visited or were residing in those holy cities.

These came to regard him as one initiated into the mysteries of Divine Revelation, and qualified to unravel the abstruse utterances of Muhammad and of the imams of the Faith.

As his influence increased, and the scope of his <p3> authority widened, he found himself besieged on every side by an ever-increasing number of devoted enquirers who asked to be enlightened regarding the intricacies of the Faith, all of which he ably and fully expounded.

By his knowledge and fearlessness he struck terror to the hearts of the Sufis and Neo-Platonists and other kindred schools of thought,[2] who envied his learning and feared his ruthlessness.

Thereby he acquired added favour in the eyes of those learned divines, who looked upon these sects as the disseminators of obscure and heretical doctrines.

Yet, great as was his fame and universal as was the esteem in which he was regarded, he despised all the honours which his admirers lavished upon him.

He marvelled at their servile devotion to dignity and rank, and refused resolutely to associate himself with the objects of their pursuits and desires.

[1 "Karbila is about 55 miles S.W. of Baghdad on the banks of the Euphrates....

The tomb of Husayn is in the centre of the city, and of his brother Abbas in the S.E. quarter are the chief buildings." (C. R. Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia," p. 486.) Najaf is revered by the shi'ahs, as it enshrines the tomb of Imam Ali.

[2 "The chief peculiarities of Shaykh Ahmad's views seem to have been as follows.

He declared that all knowledge and all sciences were contained in the Qur'an, and that therefore to understand the inner meanings of the latter in their entirety, a knowledge of the former must be acquired.

To develop this doctrine, he used to apply cabalistic methods of interpretation to the sacred text, And exerted himself to acquire familiarity with the various sciences known to the Muslim world.

He entertained the most exaggerated veneration for the Imams, especially the Imam Ja'far-i-Sadiq, the sixth of them in succession, whose words he would often quote....

About the future life, and the resurrection of the body also, he held views which were generally considered to be heterodox, as previously mentioned.

He declared that the body of man was composed of different portions, derived from each of the four elements and the nine heavens, and that the body wherewith he was raised in the resurrection contained only the latter components, the former returning at death to their original sources.

This subtle body, which alone escaped destruction, he called Jism-i-Huriqliya, the latter being supposed to be a Greek word.

He asserted that it existed potentially in our present bodies, 'like glass in stone.' Similarly he asserted that, in the case of the Night-ascent of the Prophet to Heaven, it was this, and not his material body, which performed the journey.

On account of these views, he was pronounced unorthodox by the majority of the ulamas, and accused of holding the

doctrines of Mulla Sadra, the greatest Persian philosopher of modern times."

(Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, article 12, pp. 890-91.) <p4>

Having achieved his purpose in those cities, and inhaling the fragrance which wafted upon him from Persia, he felt in his heart an irrepressible yearning to hasten to that country.

He concealed from his friends, however, the real motive that impelled him to direct his steps towards that land.

By way of the Persian Gulf, he hastened unto the land of his heart's desire, ostensibly for the purpose of visiting the shrine of the Imam Rida in Mashhad.[1] He was filled with eagerness to unburden his soul, and searched zealously for those to whom he could deliver the secret which to no one he had as yet divulged.

Upon his arrival at Shiraz, the city which enshrined that concealed Treasure of God, and from which the voice of the Herald of a new Manifestation was destined to be proclaimed, he repaired to the Masjid-i-Jum'ih, a mosque which in its style and shape bore a striking resemblance to the holy shrine of Mecca.

Many a time did he, whilst gazing upon that edifice, observe: "Verily, this house of God betokens such signs as only those who are endowed with understanding can perceive.

Methinks he who conceived and built it was inspired of God." [2] How often and how passionately he extolled that city!

Such was the praise he lavished upon it that his hearers, who were only too familiar with its mediocrity, were astonished at the tone of his language.

"Wonder not," he said to those who were surprised, "for ere long the secret of

my words will be made manifest to you.

Among <p5> you there shall be a number who will live to behold the glory of a Day which the prophets of old have yearned to witness."

So great was his authority in the eyes of the ulamas who met and conversed with him, that they professed themselves incapable of comprehending the meaning of his mysterious allusions and ascribed their failure to their own deficient understanding.

[1 In the ninth century the remains of the Imam Rida, son of the Imam Musa and eighth of the twelve Imams, were interred in Mashhad.]

[2 "In the country of Fars, there is a Mosque in the center of which rises a structure similar to the Ka'bih, (Masjid-i-Jum'ih). It was built only as a sign indicating the Manifestation of the Will of God through the erection of the house in that land. [Allusion to the new Mecca, i.e., the house of the Bab in Shiraz.] Blessed be he who worships God in that land; truly we, too, worshipped God there, and prayed for him who had erected that building." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. 2, p. 151.)

Having sown the seeds of Divine knowledge in the hearts of those whom he found receptive to his call, Shaykh Ahmad set out for Yazd, where he tarried awhile, engaged continually in the dissemination of such truths as he felt urged to reveal. Most of his books and epistles were written in that city.[1] Such was the fame he acquired,[2] that the ruler of Persia, Fath-'Ali Shah, was moved to address to him from Tihiran a written message,[3] calling upon him to explain certain specific questions related to the abstruse teachings of the Muslim Faith, the meaning of which the leading ulamas of his realm had been unable to unfold. To this he readily answered in the form of an epistle to which he gave the name of "Risaly-i-Sultaniyyih." The Shah was so pleased with the tone and subject matter of that epistle that he forthwith sent him a second message, this time extending to him an invitation to visit his court. Replying to this second imperial message, <p6> [Illustrations: FATH-'ALI SHAH AND SONS] <p7> he wrote the following: "As I had intended ever since my departure from Najaf and Karbila to visit and pay my homage to the shrine of the Imam Rida in Mashhad, I venture to hope that your Imperial Majesty will graciously allow me to fulfil the vow which I have made. Later on, God willing, it is my hope and purpose to avail myself of the honour which your Imperial Majesty has deigned to confer upon me.

[1 A. L. M. Nicolas, in Chapter 5 of his book, "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," gives a list of no less than ninety-six volumes as representing the entire literary output of this prolific writer. Among them, the more important are the following:

1. Commentary on the Ziyaratu'l Jami'atu'l-Kabirih of Shaykh Hadi.
2. Commentary on the verse "Qu'l Huvallah-u-Ahad."
3. Risaly-i-Khaqaniyyih, in answer to Fath-'Ali Shah's question regarding the superiority of the Qa'im over His ancestors.
4. On dreams.
5. Answer to Shaykh Musay-i-Bahrayni regarding the position and claims of the Sahibu'z-Zaman.

6. Answer to the Sufis.
7. Answer to Mulla Mihdiy-i-Astirabadi on the knowledge of the soul.
8. On the joys and pains of the future life. God.
10. On the Resurrection.

[2 "The news of his arrival caused a great stir and certain Ulamas among the most celebrated received him with reverence. They accorded him great consideration and the inhabitants of the town did likewise. All of the Ulamas came to see him. It was well known that he was the most learned among the most learned." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," p. 18.)]

[3 A. L. M. Nicolas, in his book "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," pp. 19-20, refers to a second letter addressed by the Shah to Shaykh Ahmad: "The Shah, forewarned, wrote again telling him that evidently it was his duty, his, the King's, to go out of his way to come to Yazd to see the illustrious and holy person whose feet were a blessing to the province upon whose soil they had trodden, but because of political reasons of high importance he could not, at this moment, leave the capital. Besides it was necessary, he said, in case of change of residence, to bring with him a force of at least ten thousand men, and, as the town of Yazd was too small to support such a large population, the arrival of so many troops would most certainly occasion a famine. 'You would not wish such a calamity to occur, I am quite certain, and I think therefore that, although I am of very small importance compared to you, you will consent, nevertheless to come to me.'"

Among those who, in the city of Yazd, were awakened by the message of that bearer of the light of God, was Haji Abdu'l-Vahhab, a man of great piety, upright and God-fearing.

He visited Shaykh Ahmad each day in the company of a certain Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq-i-Yazdi, who was noted for his authority and learning.

On certain occasions, however, in order to talk confidentially with Abdu'l-Vahhab, Shaykh Ahmad, to the great surprise of the learned Abdu'l-Khaliq, would ask him to retire from his presence and leave him alone with his chosen and favoured disciple.

This marked preference shown to so modest and illiterate a man as Abdu'l-Vahhab was a cause of great surprise to his companion, who was only too conscious of his own superiority and attainments.

Later, however, when Shaykh Ahmad had departed from Yazd, Abdu'l-Vahhab retired from the society of men and came to be regarded as a Sufi.

By the orthodox leaders of that community, however, such as the Ni'matu'llah and Dhahabi, he was denounced as an intruder and was suspected of a desire to rob them of their leadership.

Abdu'l-Vahhab, for whom the Sufi doctrine had no special attraction, scorned their false imputations and shunned their society.

He associated with none except Haji Hasan-i-Nayini, whom he had chosen as his intimate friend and to whom he confided the secret with which he had been

entrusted by his master.

When Abdu'l-Vahhab died, this friend, following his example, continued to pursue the path which he had directed him to tread, and announced to every receptive soul the tidings of God's fast-approaching Revelation. <p8>

Mirza Mahmud-i-Qamsari, whom I met in Kashan, and who at that time was an old man over ninety years of age and was greatly beloved and revered by all those who knew him, related to me the following story: "I recall when in my youth, at the time when I was living in Kashan, I heard of a certain man in Nayin who had arisen to announce the tidings of a new Revelation, and under whose spell fell all who heard him, whether scholars, officials of the government, or the uneducated among the people.

His influence was such that those who came in contact with him renounced the world and despised its riches.

Curious to ascertain the truth, I proceeded, unsuspected by my friends, to Nayin, where I was able to verify the statements that were current about him.

His radiant countenance bespoke the light that had been kindled in his soul.

I heard him, one day, after he had offered his morning prayer, speak words such as these: 'Ere long will the earth be turned into a paradise.

Ere long will Persia be made the shrine round which will circle the peoples of the earth.' One morning, at the hour of dawn, I found him fallen upon his face, repeating in wrapt devotion the words 'Allah-u-Akbar.' [1] To my great surprise he turned to me and said: 'That which I have been announcing to you is now revealed.

At this very hour the light of the promised One has broken and is shedding illumination upon the world.

O Mahmud, verily I say, you shall live to behold that Day of days.' The words which that holy man addressed to me kept ringing in my ears until the day when, in the year sixty, I was privileged to hear the Call that arose from Shiraz.

I was, alas, unable, because of my infirmities, to hasten to that city.

Later, when the Bab, the herald of the new Revelation, arrived in Kashan and for three nights lived as a guest in the house of Haji Mirza Jani, I was unaware of His visit and so missed the honour of attaining His presence.

Sometime afterwards, whilst conversing with the followers of the Faith, I was informed that the birthday of the Bab fell on the first day of the month of Muharram of the year 1235 A.H. [2] I realised that the day to which Haji Hasan-i-Nayini had referred did not correspond with this date, that there was actually a difference of two years between them.

This thought <p9> sorely perplexed me.

Long after, however, I met a certain Haji Mirza Kamalu'd-Din-i-Naraqi, who announced to me the Revelation of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, and who shared with

me a number of verses from the 'Qasidiy-i-Varqa'iyih' as well as certain passages of the Persian and Arabic 'Hidden Words.' I was moved to the depths of my soul as I heard him recite those sacred words.

The following I still vividly remember: 'O Son of Being!

Thy heart is my home; sanctify it for my descent.

Thy spirit is my place of revelation; cleanse it for my manifestation.

O Son of Earth!

Wouldst thou have me, seek none other than me; and wouldst thou gaze upon my beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for my will and the will of another than I, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.' I asked him the date of the birth of Baha'u'llah. 'The dawn of the second day of Muharram,' he replied, 'of the year 1233 A.H.' [3] I immediately remembered the words of Haji Hasan and recalled the day on which they were spoken.

Instinctively I fell prostrate on the ground and exclaimed: 'Glorified art Thou, O my God, for having enabled me to attain unto this promised Day.

If now I be called to Thee, I die content and assured.'"

That very year, the year 1274 A.H., [4] that venerable and radiant soul yielded his spirit to God.

[1 "God is Most Great."]

[2 October 20, 1819 A.D.]

[3 November 12, 1817 A.D.]

[4 1857-8 A.D.]

This account which I heard from the lips of Mirza Mahmud-i-Qamsari himself, and which is still current amongst the people, is assuredly a compelling evidence of the perspicacity of the late Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and bears eloquent testimony to the influence he exercised upon his immediate disciples. The promise he gave them was eventually fulfilled, and the mystery with which he fired their souls was unfolded in all its glory.

During those days when Shaykh Ahmad was preparing to depart from Yazd, Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, [1] that other luminary of Divine guidance, set out from his native province of Gilan with the object of visiting Shaykh Ahmad, ere the latter undertook his pilgrimage to Khurasan. In the course of his first interview with him, Shaykh Ahmad spoke these words: "I welcome you, O my friend! How long and how eagerly have I waited for you to come and deliver me from the arrogance of this perverse people! I am oppressed by the shamelessness of their acts and the depravity of their character. 'Verily, We proposed to the heavens, and to the earth, and to the mountains, to receive the trust of God, but they refused the burden, and they feared to receive it. Man undertook to bear it; and he, verily, hath proved unjust, ignorant.'"

[1 "His [Siyyid Kazim's] family were merchants of repute. His father was named Aqa Siyyid Qasim. When twelve years old, he was living at Ardibil near the tomb of Shaykh Safi'u'd-Din Ishaq, the descendant of the seventh Imam Musa

Kazim and the ancestor of the Safavi kings. One night in a dream it was signified to him by one of the illustrious progenitors of the buried saint that he should put himself under the spiritual guidance of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i, who was at this time residing at Yazd. He accordingly proceeded thither and enrolled himself amongst the disciples of Shaykh Ahmad, in whose doctrine he attained such eminence that on the Shaykh's death he was unanimously recognized as the leader of the Shaykhi school." ("A Traveller's Narrative," Note E, p. 238)]

This Siyyid Kazim had already, from his early boyhood, shown signs of remarkable intellectual power and spiritual insight. He was unique among those of his own rank and age. At the age of eleven, he had committed to memory the whole of the Qur'an. At the age of fourteen, he had learned by heart a prodigious number of prayers and recognized traditions of Muhammad. At the age of eighteen, he had composed a commentary on a verse of the Qur'an known as the Ayatu'l-Kursi, which had excited the wonder and the admiration of the most learned of his day. His piety, the gentleness of his character, and his humility were such that all who knew him, whether young or old, were profoundly impressed.

In the year 1231 A.H.,[1] when only twenty-two years old, he, forsaking home, kindred, and friends, departed from Gilan, intent upon attaining the presence of him who had so nobly arisen to announce the approaching dawn of a Divine Revelation. He had been in the company of Shaykh Ahmad for only a few weeks, when the latter, turning to him one day, addressed him in these words: "Remain in your house and cease attending my lectures. Such of my disciples as may feel perplexed will turn henceforth to you, and will seek to obtain from you directly whatsoever assistance they may require. You will, through the knowledge which the Lord your God has bestowed upon you, resolve their problems and tranquillise <p11> their hearts. By the power of your utterance you will help to revive the sorely neglected Faith of Muhammad, your illustrious ancestor." These words addressed to Siyyid Kazim excited the resentment and kindled the envy of the prominent disciples of Shaykh Ahmad, among whom figured Mulla Muhammad-i-Mamaqani and Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq-i-Yazdi. So compelling was the dignity of Siyyid Kazim, however, and so remarkable were the evidences of his knowledge and wisdom, that these disciples were awed and felt compelled to submit.

[1 1815-16 A.D.]

Shaykh Ahmad, having thus committed his disciples to the care of Siyyid Kazim, left for Khurasan. There he tarried awhile, in the close vicinity of the holy shrine of the Imam <p12> Rida in Mashhad. Within its precincts he pursued with undiminished zest the course of his labours. By resolving the intricacies that agitated the minds of the seekers, he continued to prepare the way for the advent of the coming Manifestation. In that city he became increasingly conscious that the Day which was to witness the birth of the promised One could not be far distant. The promised hour, he felt, was fast approaching. From the direction of Nur, in the province of Mazindaran, he was able to perceive the first glimmerings that heralded the dawn of the promised Dispensation. To him the Revelation foreshadowed in these following traditional utterances was at

hand: "Ere long shall ye behold the countenance of your Lord resplendent as the moon in its full glory. And yet, ye shall fail to unite in acknowledging His truth and embracing His Faith." And "One of the most mighty signs that shall signalise the advent of the promised Hour is this: 'A woman shall give birth to One who shall be her Lord.'"

Shaykh Ahmad therefore set his face towards Nur and, accompanied by Siyyid Kazim and a number of his distinguished disciples, proceeded to Tihran. The Shah of Persia, being informed of the approach of Shaykh Ahmad to his capital, commanded the dignitaries and officials of Tihran to go out to meet him. He directed them to extend a cordial expression of welcome on his behalf. The distinguished visitor and his companions were royally entertained by the Shah, who visited him in person and declared him to be "the glory of his nation and an ornament to his people." [1] In those days, there was born a Child in an ancient and noble family of Nur, [2] whose father was Mirza Abbas, better known as Mirza Buzurg, a favoured minister of the Crown. That Child was Baha'u'llah. [3] At the hour of dawn, on the second day <p13> of Muharram, in the year 1233 A.H. [4] the world, unaware of its significance, witnessed the birth of Him who was destined to confer upon it such incalculable blessings. Shaykh Ahmad, who recognized in its full measure the meaning of this auspicious event, yearned to spend the remaining days of his life within the precincts of the court of this Divine, this new-born King. But this was not to be. His thirst unallayed, and his yearning unsatisfied, he felt compelled to submit to God's irrevocable decree, and, turning his face away from the city of his Beloved, proceeded to Kirmanshah.

[1 "The Shah felt his good will and respect for the Shaykh grow increasingly from day to day. He felt obliged to obey him and would have considered it an act of blasphemy to oppose him. However, at this time, a succession of earthquakes occurred in Rayy and many were destroyed. "The Shah had a dream in which it was revealed to him that, if Shaykh Ahmad had not been there, the entire city would have been destroyed and all the inhabitants killed. He awakened terrified and his faith in the Shaykh grew apace." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, p. 21.)]

[2 Mirza Abu'l-Fadl asserts in his writings that the genealogy of Baha'u'llah can be traced back to the ancient Prophets of Persia as well as to its kings who ruled over the land prior to the Arab invasion.]

[3 His name was Mirza Husayn-'Ali.]

[4 November 12, 1817 A.D.]

The governor of Kirmanshah, Prince Muhammad-'Ali Mirza, the Shah's eldest son and the ablest member of his house, had already begged permission of his Imperial Majesty to enable him to entertain and serve in person Shaykh Ahmad. [1] So favoured was the Prince in the eyes of the Shah, that his request was immediately granted. Wholly resigned to his destiny, Shaykh Ahmad bade farewell to Tihran. Ere his departure from that city, he breathed a prayer that this hidden Treasure of God, now born amongst his countrymen, might be preserved and cherished by them, that they might recognize the full measure of His blessedness and glory, and might be enabled to proclaim His excellence to all nations and peoples.

[1 "Kirmanshah awaited him with great impatience. The Prince Governor Muhammad-'Ali Mirza had sent the entire town to meet him and they had erected tents in which to receive him at Chah-Qilan. The Prince went even beyond to the Taj-Abad which lies four farsakhs distant from the town." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, p. 30.)]

Upon his arrival in Kirmanshah, Shaykh Ahmad decided to select a number of the most receptive from among his shi'ah disciples, and, by devoting his special attention to their enlightenment, to enable them to become the active supporters of the Cause of the promised Revelation. In the series of books and epistles which he undertook to write, among which figures his well-known work *Sharhu'z-Ziyarih*, he extolled in clear and vivid language the virtues of the imams of the Faith, and laid special stress upon the allusions which they had made to the coming of the promised One. By his repeated references to Husayn, he meant, however, none other than the Husayn who was yet to be revealed; and by his allusions to the ever-recurrent name Ali, he intended not the <p14> Ali who had been slain, but the Ali recently born. To those who questioned him regarding the signs that must needs herald the advent of the Qa'im, he emphatically asserted the inevitableness of the promised Dispensation. In the very year the Bab was born, Shaykh Ahmad suffered the loss of his son, whose name was Shaykh Ali. To his disciples who mourned his loss he spoke these words of comfort: "Grieve not, O my friends, for I have offered up my son, my own Ali, as a sacrifice for the Ali whose advent we all await. To this end have I reared and prepared him."

The Bab, whose name was Ali-Muhammad, was born in Shiraz, on the first of Muharram, in the year 1235 A.H. He was the descendant of a house renowned for its nobility, which traced its origin to Muhammad Himself. His father, Siyyid Muhammad-Rida, as well as His mother, were descendants of the Prophet, and belonged to families of recognized standing. The date of His birth confirmed the truth of the saying attributed to the Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful: "I am two years younger than my Lord." The mystery of this utterance, however, remained unrevealed except to those who sought and recognized the truth of the new Revelation. It was He, the Bab, who, in His first, His most weighty and exalted Book, revealed this passage concerning Baha'u'llah: "O Thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed Myself wholly for Thee; I have consented to be cursed for Thy sake; and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto Me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days!"

While Shaykh Ahmad was sojourning in Kirmanshah, he received so many evidences of ardent devotion from Prince Muhammad-'Ali Mirza that on one occasion he was moved to refer to the Prince in such terms: "Muhammad-'Ali I regard as my own son, though he be a descendant of Fath-'Ali."

A considerable number of seekers and disciples thronged his house and eagerly attended his lectures.

To none, however, did he feel inclined to show the consideration and affectionate regard which characterised his attitude towards Siyyid Kazim.

He seemed to have singled him out from among the multitude that crowded to see him, and to be preparing him to carry on with undiminished vigour his work after his death.

One <p15> of his disciples, one day, questioned Shaykh Ahmad concerning the Word which the promised One is expected to utter in the fulness of time, a Word so appallingly tremendous that the three hundred and thirteen chiefs and nobles of the earth would each and all flee in consternation as if overwhelmed by its stupendous weight.

To him Shaykh Ahmad replied: "How can you presume to sustain the weight of the Word which the chieftains of the earth are incapable of bearing?"

Seek not to gratify an impossible desire.

Cease asking me this question, and beseech forgiveness from God."

That presumptuous questioner again pressed him to disclose the nature of that Word.

At last Shaykh Ahmad replied: "Were you to attain that Day, were you to be told to repudiate the guardianship of Ali and to denounce its validity, what would you say?" "God forbid!" he exclaimed. "Such things can never be.

That such words should proceed out of the mouth of the promised One is to me inconceivable."

How grievous the mistake he made, and how pitiful his plight!

His faith was weighed in the balance, and was found wanting, inasmuch as he failed to recognize that He who must needs be made manifest is endowed with that sovereign power which no man dare question.

His is the right "to command whatsoever He willeth, and to decree that which He pleaseth."

Whoever hesitates, whoever, though it be for the twinkling of an eye or less, questions His authority, is deprived of His grace and is accounted of the fallen.

And yet few, if any, among those who listened to Shaykh Ahmad in that city, and heard him unfold the mysteries of the allusions in the sacred Scriptures, were able to appreciate the significance of his utterances or to apprehend their purpose.

Siyyid Kazim, his able and distinguished lieutenant, alone, could claim to have understood his meaning.

After the death of Prince Muhammad-'Ali Mirza,[1] Shaykh Ahmad, freed from the urgent solicitations of the Prince to extend his sojourn in Kirmanshah, transferred his residence to Karbila. Though to outward seeming he was circling round the shrine of the Siyyidu'sh-Shuhada',[2] the Imam Husayn, his heart, whilst he performed those rites, was set upon that true Husayn, the only object of his devotions. A host of <p16> the most distinguished ulamas and mujtahids

thronged to see him. Many began to envy his reputation, and a number sought to undermine his authority. However much they strove, they failed to shake his position of undoubted preeminence amongst the learned men of that city. Eventually that shining light was summoned to shed its radiance upon the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Thither he journeyed, there he pursued with unstinted devotion his labours, and there he was laid to rest beneath the shadow of the Prophet's sepulchre, for the understanding of whose Cause he had so faithfully laboured.

[1 1237. A.H.]

[2 "The Prince of Martyrs."]

Ere he departed from Karbila, he confided to Siyyid Kazim, his chosen successor, the secret of his mission,[1] and instructed him to strive to kindle in every receptive heart the fire that had burned so brightly within him. However much Siyyid Kazim insisted on accompanying him as far as Najaf, Shaykh Ahmad refused to comply with his request. "You have no time to lose," were the last words which he addressed to him. "Every fleeting hour should be fully and wisely utilised. You should gird up the loin of endeavour and strive day and night to rend asunder, by the grace of God and by the hand of wisdom and loving-kindness, those veils of heedlessness that have blinded the eyes of men. For verily I say, the Hour is drawing nigh, the Hour I have besought God to spare me from witnessing, for the earthquake of the Last Hour will be tremendous. You should pray to God to be spared the overpowering trials of that Day, for neither of us is capable of withstanding its sweeping force. Others, of greater endurance and power, have been destined to bear this stupendous weight, men whose hearts are sanctified from all earthly things, and whose strength is reinforced by the potency of His power."

[1 A. L. M. Nicolas, in his preface to "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, quotes the following as having been spoken by Shaykh Ahmad regarding Siyyid Kazim: "There is only Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti who understands my objective and no one but him understands it.... Seek the science after me from Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti who has acquired it directly from me, who learned it from the Imams, who learned it from the Prophet to whom God had given it.... He is the only one who understands me!"]

Having spoken these words, Shaykh Ahmad bade him farewell, urged him to face valiantly the trials that must needs afflict him, and committed him to the care of God. <p17> In Karbila, Siyyid Kazim devoted himself to the work initiated by his master, expounded his teachings, defended his Cause, and answered whatever questions perplexed the minds of his disciples.

The vigour with which he prosecuted his task inflamed the animosity of the ignorant and envious. "For forty years," they clamoured, "we have suffered the pretentious teachings of Shaykh Ahmad to be spread with no opposition whatever on our part.

We no longer can tolerate similar pretensions on the part of his successor, who rejects the belief in the resurrection of the body, who repudiates the literal interpretation of the 'Mi'raj,'[1] who regards the signs of the coming Day as allegorical, and who preaches a doctrine heretical in character and subversive

of the best tenets of orthodox Islam."

The louder their clamour and protestations, the firmer grew the determination of Siyyid Kazim to prosecute his mission and fulfil his trust.

He addressed an epistle to Shaykh Ahmad, wherein he set forth at length the calumnies that had been uttered against him, and acquainted him with the character and extent of their opposition.

In it he ventured to enquire as to how long he was destined to submit to the unrelenting fanaticism of a stubborn and ignorant people, and prayed to be enlightened regarding the time when the promised One was to be made manifest.

To this Shaykh Ahmad replied: "Be assured of the grace of your God.

Be not grieved at their doings.

The mystery of this Cause must needs be made manifest, and the secret of this Message must needs be divulged.[2] I can say no more, I can appoint <p18> no time.

His Cause will be made known after Him.[3] 'Ask me not of things which, if revealed unto you, might only pain you.'"

[1 "The Ascent" of Muhammad to Heaven.]

[2 The Bab, Himself, refers to this passage and confirms it in the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih": "The words of the revered Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i are well known.

They contain numerous allusions to the subject of the Manifestation.

For example, he has written with his own hand to Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti: 'Just as it is necessary in order to build a house to have suitable ground, so also for this Manifestation must the moment be propitious.

But here one cannot give an answer clearly foretelling the moment.

Soon we shall know it with certainty.' That which you have heard so often yourself from Siyyid Kazim, is not that an explanation?

Did he not reiterate every minute--'You do not wish then that I should go away so that God may appear?'" ("The Book of the Seven Proofs," translated by A.

L.

M.

Nicolas, p.

58.) "There is also the anecdote referring to Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i on his way to Mecca.

It has been proven that this anecdote is authentic and hence there is something which is certain.

The disciples of the deceased have related the sayings which they have heard and also certain personages were mentioned such as Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq and

Murtada-Quli.

Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq relates that the Shaykh said to them one day: 'Pray that you may not be present at the beginning of the Manifestation and of the Return, as there will be many civil wars.' He added: 'If any one of you should still be living at that time, he shall see strange things between the years sixty and sixty-seven.

And what strange thing can be more strange than the very Being of the Manifestation?

You will be there and you will witness another extraordinary event; that is to say, God, in order to bring about the victory of the Manifestation, will raise up a Being who will speak his own thoughts without ever having been instructed by anyone." (Ibid., pp.

59-60.)]

[3 According to the Abjad notation, the numerical value of the word "Hin" is 68. It was in the year 1268 A.H. that Baha'u'llah, while confined in the Siyah-Chal of Tihran received the first intimations of His Divine Mission. Of this He hinted in the odes which He revealed in that year.]

How great, how very great, is His Cause, that even to so exalted a personage as Siyyid Kazim words such as these should have been addressed! This answer of Shaykh Ahmad imparted solace and strength to the heart of Siyyid Kazim, who, with redoubled determination, continued to withstand the onslaught of an envious and insidious enemy.

Shaykh Ahmad died soon after,[1] in the year 1242 A.H., at the age of eighty-one, and was laid to rest in the cemetery of Baqi',[2] in the close vicinity of the resting place of Muhammad in the holy city of Medina.

[1 He died in a place called Haddih, in the neighbourhood of Medina. (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, p. 60.)]

[2 "His body was carried to Medina where it was buried in the Cemetery Baqi, behind the walls of the cupola of the Prophet, on the south side, under the drain spout of Mihrab. They say that there also is to be found the tomb of Fatimih facing that of Baytu'l-Hazan." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, pp. 60-61.) "The death of Shaykh Ahmad put an end for a few days to the conflict, and the anger seemed appeased. Moreover it was at this time that Islam received a terrible blow and that its power was broken. The Russian Emperor defeated the Moslem nations and most of the provinces, inhabited by the Moslem peoples, fell into the hands of the Russian armies." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," II, p. 5.) "On the other hand, it was thought that Shaykh Ahmad being now dead, his doctrine would definitely disappear with him. Peace lasted for nearly two years; but the Muhammadans returned quickly to their former sentiments as soon as they saw that the light of the doctrine of the deceased still radiated over the world, thanks to Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, the best, the most faithful disciple of Shaykh Ahmad, and his successor." (Ibid., pp. 5-6.)] <p19>

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF SIYYID KAZIM-I-RASHTI

THE news of the passing of his beloved master brought unspeakable sorrow to the heart of Siyyid Kazim.

Inspired by the verse of the Qur'an, "Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths; but God only desireth to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it," he arose with unswerving purpose to consummate the task with which Shaykh Ahmad had entrusted him.

He found himself, after the removal of so distinguished a protector, a victim of the slanderous tongue and unrelenting enmity of the people around him.

They attacked his person, scorned his teachings, and reviled his name.

At the instigation of a powerful and notorious shi'ah leader, Siyyid Ibrahim-i-Qazvini, the enemies of Siyyid Kazim leagued together, and determined to destroy him.

Thereupon Siyyid Kazim conceived the plan of securing the support and good will of one of the most formidable and outstanding ecclesiastical dignitaries of Persia, the renowned Haji Siyyid Muhammad Baqir-i-Rashti, who lived in Isfahan and whose authority extended far beyond the confines of that city.

This friendship and sympathy, Siyyid Kazim thought, would enable him to pursue untrammelled the course of his activities, and would considerably enhance the influence which he exercised over his disciples. "Would that one amongst you," he was often heard to say to his followers, "could arise, and, with complete detachment, journey to Isfahan, and deliver this message from me to that learned Siyyid: 'Why is it that in the beginning you showed such marked consideration and affection for the late Shaykh Ahmad, and have now suddenly detached yourself from the body of his chosen disciples?

Why is it that you have abandoned us to the mercy of our opponents?' Would that such a messenger, putting his trust in God, might arise to unravel whatever mysteries perplex the mind of that learned Siyyid, and dispel such doubts as might have alienated <p20> his sympathy.

Would that he were able to obtain from him a solemn declaration testifying to the unquestioned authority of Shaykh Ahmad, and to the truth and soundness of his teachings.

Would that he also, after having secured such a testimony, might visit Mashhad and there obtain a similar pronouncement from Mirza Askari, the foremost ecclesiastical leader in that holy city, and then, having completed his mission, might return in triumph to this place."

Again and again did Siyyid Kazim find opportunity to reiterate his appeal.

None, however, ventured to respond to his call except a certain Mirza Muhit-i-Kirmani, who expressed readiness to undertake this mission.

To him Siyyid Kazim replied: "Beware of touching the lion's tail.

Belittle not the delicacy and difficulty of such a mission."

He then, turning his face towards his youthful disciple, Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i, the Babu'l-Bab,[1] addressed him in these words: "Arise and perform this mission, for I declare you equal to this task.

The Almighty will graciously assist you, and will crown your endeavours with success."

[1 He was the first to believe in the Bab, who gave him this title.]

Mulla Husayn joyously sprang to his feet, kissed the hem of his teacher's garment, vowed his loyalty to him, and started forthwith on his journey.

With complete severance and noble resolve, he set out to achieve his end.

Arriving in Isfahan, he sought immediately the presence of the learned Siyyid.

Clad in mean attire, and laden with the dust of travel, he appeared, amidst the vast and richly apparelled company of the disciples of that distinguished leader, an insignificant and negligible figure.

Unobserved and undaunted, he advanced to a place which faced the seat occupied by that renowned teacher.

Summoning to his aid all the courage and confidence with which the instructions of Siyyid Kazim had inspired him, he addressed Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir in these words: "Hearken, O Siyyid, to my words, for response to my plea will ensure the safety of the Faith of the Prophet of God, and refusal to consider my message will cause it grievous injury."

These bold and courageous words, uttered with directness and force, produced a surprising impression upon the Siyyid.

He suddenly interrupted his discourse, and, ignoring his audience, listened with close attention <p21> to the message which this strange visitor had brought.

His disciples, amazed at this extraordinary behaviour, rebuked this sudden intruder and denounced his presumptuous pretensions.

With extreme politeness, in firm and dignified language, Mulla Husayn hinted at their discourtesy and shallowness, and expressed surprise at their arrogance and vainglory.

The Siyyid was highly pleased with the demeanour and argument which the visitor so strikingly displayed.

He deplored and apologised for the unseemly conduct of his own disciples.

In order to compensate for their ingratitude, he extended every conceivable kindness to that youth, assured him of his support, and besought him to deliver his message.

Thereupon, Mulla Husayn acquainted him with the nature and object of the mission with which he had been entrusted.

To this the learned Siyyid replied: "As we in the beginning believed that both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim were actuated by no desire except to advance the cause of knowledge and safeguard the sacred interests of the Faith, we felt prompted to extend to them our heartiest support and to extol their teachings.

In later years, however, we have noticed so many conflicting statements and obscure and mysterious allusions in their writings, that we felt it advisable to keep silent for a time, and to refrain from either censure or applause."

To this Mulla Husayn replied: "I cannot but deplore such silence on your part, for I firmly believe that it involves the loss of a splendid opportunity to advance the cause of Truth.

It is for you to set forth specifically such passages in their writings as appear to you mysterious or inconsistent with the precepts of the Faith, and I will, with the aid of God, undertake to expound their true meaning."

The poise, the dignity and confidence, which characterised the behaviour of this unexpected messenger, greatly impressed Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir.

He begged him not to press the matter at this moment, but to wait until a later day, when, in private converse, he might acquaint him with his own doubts and misgivings.

Mulla Husayn, however, feeling that delay might prove harmful to the cause he had at heart, insisted upon an immediate conference with him about the weighty problems which he felt impelled and able to resolve.

The Siyyid was moved to tears by the youthful enthusiasm, <p22> the sincerity and serene confidence to which the countenance of Mulla Husayn so admirably testified.

He sent immediately for some of the works written by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, and began to question Mulla Husayn regarding those passages which had excited his disapproval and surprise.

To each reference the messenger replied with characteristic vigour, with masterly knowledge and befitting modesty.

He continued in this manner, in the presence of the assembled disciples, to expound the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, to vindicate their truth, and to defend their cause, until the time when the Mu'adhdhin, calling the faithful to prayer, suddenly interrupted the flow of his argument.

The next day, he similarly, in the presence of a large and representative assembly, and whilst facing the Siyyid, resumed his eloquent defence of the high mission entrusted by an almighty Providence to Shaykh Ahmad and his successor.

A deep silence fell upon his hearers.

They were seized with wonder at the cogency of his argument and the tone and manner of his speech.

The Siyyid publicly promised that on the following day he would himself issue a written declaration wherein he would testify to the eminence of the position held by both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, and would pronounce whosoever deviated from their path as one who had turned aside from the Faith of the Prophet Himself.

He would likewise bear witness to their penetrative insight, and their correct and profound understanding of the mysteries which the Faith of Muhammad enshrined.

The Siyyid redeemed his pledge, and with his own hand penned the promised declaration.

He wrote at length, and in the course of his testimony paid a tribute to the character and learning of Mulla Husayn.

He spoke in glowing terms of Siyyid Kazim, apologised for his former attitude, and expressed the hope that in the days to come he might be enabled to make amends for his past and regrettable conduct towards him.

He read, himself, to his disciples the text of this written testimony, and delivered it unsealed to Mulla Husayn, authorising him to share its contents with whomsoever he pleased, that all might know the extent of his devotion to Siyyid Kazim.

No sooner had Mulla Husayn retired than the Siyyid charged one of his trusted attendants to follow in the footsteps <p23> of the visitor and find out the place where he was residing.

The attendant followed him to a modest building, which served as a madrasah,[1] and saw him enter a room which, except for a worn-out mat which covered its floor, was devoid of furniture.

He watched him arrive, offer his prayer of thanksgiving to God, and lie down upon that mat with nothing to cover him except his aba.[2] Having reported to his master all that he had observed, the attendant was again instructed to deliver to Mulla Husayn the sum of a hundred tumans,[3] and to express the sincere apologies of his master for his inability to extend to so remarkable a messenger a hospitality that befitted his station.

To this offer Mulla Husayn sent the following reply: "Tell your master that his real gift to me is the spirit of fairness with which he received me, and the open-mindedness which prompted him, despite his exalted rank, to respond to the message which I, a lowly stranger, brought him.

Return this money to your master, for I, as a messenger, ask for neither recompense nor reward. 'We nourish your souls for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks.'[4] My prayer for your master is that earthly leadership may never hinder him from acknowledging and testifying to the Truth." [5] Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir died before the year sixty A.H., the year that witnessed the birth of the Faith proclaimed by the Bab. <p24> He remained to his last moment a staunch supporter and fervent admirer of Siyyid

Kazim.

[1 "The Madrisih or Persian colleges are entirely in the hands of the clergy and there are several in every large town. They generally consist of a court, surrounded by buildings containing chambers for students and masters, with a gate on one side; and frequently a garden and a well in the centre of the court.... Many of the madrisihs have been founded and endowed by kings or pious persons." (C. R. Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia," p. 365.)]

[2 A loose outer garment, resembling a cloak, commonly made of camel's hair.]

[3 Worth approximately one hundred dollars, a substantial sum in those days.]

[4 Qur'an, 76:9.]

[5 The Bab, in the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih," refers to Mulla Husayn in these terms:

"You, especially, know who is the first witness of that faith. You know that the majority of the doctors of the Shaykhi and the Siyyidiyyih and other sects admired his science and his talent. When he came to Isfahan the urchins of the town cried out as he passed, 'Ah! Ah! a ragged student has just arrived!' But behold! This man by his proofs and arguments convinced a Siyyid, one known for his proven scientific knowledge, Muhammad-Baqir! Truly that is one of the proofs of this Manifestation, for after the death of the Siyyid, this personage went to see most of the doctors of Islam and found Truth only with the Master of Truth. It was then that he attained the destiny which had been determined for him. In truth the people of the beginning and of the end of this Manifestation envy him and will envy him until the Day of Judgment. And who then can accuse this master-mind of mental weakness and infidelity?" ("Le Livre des Sept Preuves," translated by A. L. M. Nicolas, p. 54.)]

Having fulfilled the first part of his mission, Mulla Husayn despatched this written testimony of Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir to his master in Karbila, and directed his steps towards Mashhad, determined to deliver, to the best of his ability the message which he was charged to give to Mirza Askari.

Immediately the letter, enclosing the Siyyid's written declaration, was delivered to Siyyid Kazim, the latter was so rejoiced that he forthwith sent to Mulla Husayn his reply, expressing his grateful appreciation of the exemplary manner in which he had discharged his trust.

He was so delighted with the answer he had received that, interrupting the course of his lecture, he read out, to his disciples, both the letter of Mulla Husayn and the written testimony enclosed in that letter.

He afterwards shared with them the epistle which he himself had written to Mulla Husayn in recognition of the remarkable service he had rendered him.

In it Siyyid Kazim paid such a glowing tribute to his high attainments, to his ability and character that a few among those who heard it suspected that Mulla Husayn was that promised One to whom their master unceasingly referred, the One whom he so often declared to be living in their very midst and yet to have remained unrecognized by them all.

That communication enjoined upon Mulla Husayn the fear of God, urged him to

regard it as the most potent instrument with which to withstand the onslaught of the enemy, and the distinguishing feature of every true follower of the Faith.

It was couched in such terms of tender affection, that no one who read it could doubt that the writer was bidding farewell to his beloved disciple, and that he entertained no hope of ever meeting him again in this world.

In those days Siyyid Kazim became increasingly aware of the approach of the Hour at which the promised One was to be revealed.[1] He realised how dense were those veils that hindered the seekers from apprehending the glory of the concealed Manifestation.

He accordingly exerted his utmost endeavour to remove gradually, with caution and wisdom, whatever barriers might stand in the way of the full recognition of that Hidden Treasure of God.

He repeatedly urged his disciples to bear in mind the fact that He whose advent they were expecting would appear neither from Jabulqa nor from Jabulsa.'[2] He even hinted at His presence in their very midst. "You behold Him with your own eyes," he often observed, "and yet recognize Him not!"

To his disciples who questioned him regarding the signs of the Manifestation, he would say: "He is of noble lineage.

He is a descendant of the Prophet of God, of the family of Hashim.

He is young in age, and is possessed of innate knowledge.

His learning is derived, not from the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad, but from God.

My knowledge is but a drop compared with the immensity of His knowledge; my attainments a speck of dust in the face of the wonders of His grace and power.

Nay, immeasurable is the difference.

He is of medium height, abstains from smoking, and is of extreme devoutness and piety."[3] Certain of the Siyyid's disciples, despite the testimonies of their master, believed him to be the promised One, for in him they recognized the signs to which he was alluding.

Among them was a certain Mulla Mihdiy-i-Khu'i, who went so far as to make public this belief.

Whereupon the Siyyid was sore displeased, and would have cast him out from the company of his chosen followers had he not begged forgiveness and expressed his repentance for his action.

[1 The Bab in this connection reveals the following in the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih": "That which he was still saying at the time of his last journey, that which you, yourself, have heard, is it not being spoken of? And likewise the account of Mirza Muhammad-i-Akhbari which Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Shushtari relates? Mirza Muhammad-i-Akhbari, while at Kazimayn, one day asked of the venerable Siyyid when the Imam would manifest himself. The Siyyid looked over the assembly and said: 'You will see him.' Mulla Muhammad-Taqiy-i-Haravi also related this

incident in Isfahan." ("Le Livre des Sept Preuves," translated by A. L. M. Nicolas, p. 58.)]

[2 See note, at the beginning of the book, on "Distinguishing Features of Shi'ah Islam."]

[3 "There seems to be conclusive evidence that Siyyid Kazim adverted often near the close of life to the divine Manifestation which he believed to be at hand. He was fond of saying, 'I see him as the rising sun.'" (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's the Reconciliation of Races and Religions," p. 19.)]

Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, himself, informed me that he too entertained such doubts, that he prayed to God that if his supposition was well founded he should be confirmed in his belief, and if not that he should be delivered from such idle fancy. "I was so perturbed," he once related to me, "that for days I could neither eat nor sleep.

My days were spent in the service of Siyyid Kazim, to whom I was greatly attached.

One day, at the hour of dawn, I was suddenly <p26> awakened by Mulla Naw-ruz, one of his intimate attendants, who, in great excitement, bade me arise and follow him.

We went to the house of Siyyid Kazim, where we found him fully dressed, wearing his aba, and ready to leave his home.

He asked me to accompany him. 'A highly esteemed and distinguished Person,' he said, 'has arrived.

I feel it incumbent upon us both to visit Him.' The morning light had just broken when I found myself walking with him through the streets of Karbila.

We soon reached a house, at the door of which stood a Youth, as if expectant to receive us.

He wore a green turban, and His countenance revealed an expression of humility and kindness which I can never describe.

He quietly approached us, extended His arms towards Siyyid Kazim, and lovingly embraced him.

His affability and loving-kindness singularly contrasted with the sense of profound reverence that characterised the attitude of Siyyid Kazim towards him.

Speechless and with bowed head, he received the many expressions of affection and esteem with which that Youth greeted him.

We were soon led by Him to the upper floor of that house, and entered a chamber bedecked with flowers and redolent of the loveliest perfume.

He bade us <p27> be seated.

We knew not, however, what seats we actually occupied, so overpowering was the sense of delight which seized us.

We observed a silver cup which had been placed in the centre of the room, which

our youthful Host, soon after we were seated, filled to overflowing, and handed to Siyyid Kazim, saying: 'A drink of a pure beverage shall their Lord give them.' [1] Siyyid Kazim held the cup with both hands and quaffed it.

A feeling of reverent joy filled his being, a feeling which he could not suppress.

I too was presented with a cupful of that beverage, though no words were addressed to me.

All that was spoken at that memorable gathering was the above-mentioned verse of the Qur'an.

Soon after, the Host arose from His seat and, accompanying us to the threshold of the house, bade us farewell.

I was mute with wonder, and knew not how to express the cordiality of His welcome, the dignity of His bearing, the charm of that face, and the delicious fragrance of that beverage.

How great was my amazement when I saw my teacher quaff without the least hesitation that holy draught from a silver cup, the use of which, according to the precepts of Islam, is forbidden to the faithful.

I could not explain the motive which could have induced the Siyyid to manifest such profound reverence in the presence of that Youth--a reverence which even the sight of the shrine of the Siyyidu'sh-Shuhada' had failed to excite.

Three days later, I saw that same Youth arrive and take His seat in the midst of the company of the assembled disciples of Siyyid Kazim.

He sat close to the threshold, and with the same modesty and dignity of bearing listened to the discourse of the Siyyid.

As soon as his eyes fell upon that Youth, the Siyyid discontinued his address and held his peace.

Whereupon one of his disciples begged him to resume the argument which he had left unfinished. 'What more shall I say?' replied Siyyid Kazim, as he turned his face toward the Bab. 'Lo, the Truth is more manifest than the ray of light that has fallen upon that lap!' I immediately observed that the ray to which the Siyyid referred had fallen upon the lap of that same Youth whom we had recently visited. 'Why is it,' that questioner enquired, 'that you neither reveal His name nor identify His person?' To this the Siyyid replied by pointing with his finger to his own throat, implying that were he to divulge His name, they both would be put to death instantly.

This added still further to my perplexity.

I had already heard my teacher observe that so great is the perversity of this generation, that were he to point with his finger to the promised One and say: 'He indeed is the Beloved, the Desire of your hearts and mine,' they would still fail to recognize and acknowledge Him.

I saw the Siyyid actually point out with his finger the ray of light that had fallen on that lap, and yet none among those who were present seemed to apprehend <p29> its meaning.

I, for my part, was convinced that the Siyyid himself could never be the promised One, but that a mystery inscrutable to us all, lay concealed in that strange and attractive Youth.

Several times I ventured to approach Siyyid Kazim and seek from him an elucidation of this mystery.

Every time I approached him, I was overcome by a sense of awe which his personality so powerfully inspired.

Many a time I heard him remark: 'O Shaykh Hasan, rejoice that your name is Hasan [praiseworthy]; Hasan your beginning, and Hasan your end.

You have been privileged to attain to the day of Shaykh Ahmad, you have been closely associated <p30> with me, and in the days to come yours shall be the inestimable joy of beholding "what eye hath seen not, ear heard not, nor any heart conceived."

[1 Qur'an, 76:21.]

"I often felt the urge to seek alone the presence of that Hashimite Youth and to endeavour to fathom His mystery.

I watched Him several times as He stood in an attitude of prayer at the doorway of the shrine of the Imam Husayn.

So wrapt was He in His devotions that He seemed utterly oblivious of those around Him.

Tears rained from His eyes, and from His lips fell words of glorification and praise of such power and beauty as even the noblest passages of our Sacred Scriptures could not hope to surpass.

The words 'O God, my God, my Beloved, my heart's Desire' were uttered with a frequency and ardour that those of the visiting pilgrims who were near enough to hear Him instinctively interrupted the course of their devotions, and marvelled at the evidences of piety and veneration which that youthful countenance evinced.

Like Him they were moved to tears, and from Him they learned the lesson of true adoration.

Having completed His prayers, that Youth, without crossing the threshold of the shrine and without attempting to address any words to those around Him, would quietly return to His home.

I felt the impulse to address Him, but every time I ventured an approach, a force that I could neither explain nor resist, detained me.

My enquiries about Him elicited the information that He was a resident of Shiraz, that He was a merchant by profession, and did not belong to any of the

ecclesiastical orders.

I was, moreover, informed that He, and also His uncles and relatives, were among the lovers and admirers of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim.

Soon after, I learned that He had departed for Najaf on His way to Shiraz.

That Youth had set my heart aflame.

The memory of that vision haunted me.

My soul was wedded to His till the day when the call of a Youth from Shiraz, proclaiming Himself to be the Bab, reached my ears.

The thought instantly flashed through my mind that such a person could be none other than that selfsame Youth whom I had seen in Karbila, the Youth of my heart's desire.

"When later on I journeyed from Karbila to Shiraz, I found that He had set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca and <p31> Medina. I met Him on His return and endeavoured, despite the many obstacles in my way, to remain in close association with Him. When subsequently He was incarcerated in the fortress of Mah-Ku, in the province of Adhirbayjan, I was engaged in transcribing the verses which He dictated to His amanuensis. Every night, for a period of nine months, during which He was a prisoner in that fort, He revealed, after He had offered His evening prayer, a commentary on a juz'[1] of the Qur'an. At the end of each month a commentary on the whole of that sacred Book was thus completed. During His incarceration in Mah-Ku, nine commentaries on the whole of the Qur'an had been revealed by Him. The texts of these commentaries were entrusted, in Tabriz, to the keeping of a certain Siyyid Ibrahim-i-Khalil, who was instructed to conceal them until the time for their publication might arrive. Their fate is unknown until now.

[1 A juz' is one-thirtieth of the Qur'an.]

"In connection with one of these commentaries, the Bab one day asked me: 'Which do you prefer, this commentary which I have revealed, or the Ahsanu'l-Qisas, My previous commentary on the Surih of Joseph? Which of the two is superior, in your estimation?' 'To me,' I replied, 'the Ahsanu'l-Qisas seems to be endowed with greater power and charm.' He smiled at my observation and said: 'You are as yet unfamiliar with the tone and tenor of this later commentary. The truths enshrined in this will more speedily and effectively enable the seeker to attain the object of his quest.'

"I continued to be closely associated with Him until that great encounter of Shaykh Tabarsi. When informed of that event, the Bab directed all His companions to hasten to that spot, and extend every assistance in their power to Quddus, His heroic and distinguished disciple. Addressing me one day, He said: 'But for My incarceration in the Jabal-i-Shadid, the fortress of Chihriq, it would have been incumbent upon Me to lend My personal assistance to My beloved Quddus. Participation in that struggle is not enjoined upon you. You should proceed to Karbila and should abide in that holy city, inasmuch as you are destined to behold, with your own eyes, the beauteous countenance of the promised Husayn. As you gaze upon that radiant face, do also remember <p32> Me.

Convey to Him the expression of My loving devotion.' He again emphatically added these words: 'Verily I say, I have entrusted you with a great mission. Beware lest your heart grow faint, lest you forget the glory with which I have invested you.'

"Soon after, I journeyed to Karbila and lived, as bidden, in that holy city. Fearing that my prolonged stay in that centre of pilgrimage might excite suspicion, I decided to marry. I started to earn my livelihood as a scribe. What afflictions befell me at the hands of the Shaykhis, those who professed to be the followers of Shaykh Ahmad and yet failed to recognize the Bab! Mindful of the counsels of that beloved Youth, I patiently submitted to the indignities inflicted upon me. For two years I lived in that city. Meanwhile that holy Youth was released from His earthly prison and, through His martyrdom, was delivered from the atrocious cruelties that had beset the closing years of His life.

"Sixteen lunar months, less twenty and two days, had elapsed since the day of the martyrdom of the Bab, when, on the day of Arafih,[1] in the year 1267 A.H.,[2] while I was passing by the gate of the inner courtyard of the shrine of the Imam Husayn, my eyes, for the first time, fell upon Baha'u'llah.

What shall I recount regarding the countenance which I beheld!

The beauty of that face, those exquisite features which no pen or brush dare describe, His penetrating glance, His kindly face, the majesty of His bearing, the sweetness of His smile, the luxuriance of His jet-black flowing locks, left an indelible impression upon my soul.

I was then an old man, bowed with age.

How lovingly He advanced towards me!

He took me by the hand and, in a tone which at once betrayed power and beauty, addressed me in these words: 'This very day I have purposed to make you known as a Babi throughout Karbila.' Still holding my hand in His, He continued to converse with me.

He walked with me all along the market-street, and in the end He said: 'Praise be to God that you have remained in Karbila, and have beheld with your own eyes the countenance of the promised Husayn.' I recalled instantly the promise which had been given me by <p33> the Bab.

His words, which I had regarded as referring to a remote future, I had not shared with anyone.

These words of Baha'u'llah moved me to the depths of my being.

I felt impelled to proclaim to a heedless people, at that very moment and with all my soul and power, the advent of the promised Husayn.

He bade me, however, repress my feelings and conceal my emotions. 'Not yet,' He breathed into my ears; 'the appointed Hour is approaching.

It has not yet struck.

Rest assured and be patient.' From that moment all my sorrows vanished.

My soul was flooded with joy.

In those days I was so poor that most of the time I hungered for food.

I felt so rich, however, that all the treasures of the earth melted away into nothingness when compared with that which I already possessed. 'Such is the grace of God; to whom He will, He giveth it:

He, verily, is of immense bounty.'"

[1 The ninth day of the month of Dhi'l-Hijjih.]

[2 October 5, 1851 A.D.]

I now return, after this digression, to my theme. I had been referring to the eagerness with which Siyyid Kazim had determined to rend asunder those veils which intervened between the people of his day and the recognition of the promised Manifestation. In the introductory pages of his works, entitled Sharh-i-Qasidih and Sharh-i-Khutbih,[1] he, in veiled language, alludes to the blessed name of Baha'u'llah. In a booklet, the last he wrote, he explicitly mentions the name of the Bab by his reference to the term

"Dhikru'llah-i-A'zam." In it he writes: "Addressing this noble 'Dhikr,'[2] this mighty voice of God, I say: 'I am apprehensive of the people, lest they harm you. I am apprehensive of my own self, lest I too may hurt you. I fear you, I tremble at your authority, I dread the age in which you live. Were I to treasure you " <p34> as the apple of my eye until the Day of Resurrection, I would not sufficiently have proved my devotion to you.'"[3]

[1 Chapter 2 of A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," II, is entirely devoted to a detailed enumeration of the hundred and thirty-five works composed by Siyyid Kazim, among which the following are of outstanding interest:

1. Sharh-i-Khutbiy-i-Tutunjyiyih.
2. Sharh-i-Qasidih.
3. Tafsirih Ayatu'l-Kursi.
4. Dar Asrar-i-Shihihadat-i-Imam Husayn.
5. Cosmography.
6. Dalilu'l-Mutahayyirin.

His works are said to exceed 300 volumes. ("A Traveller's Narrative," Note E, p. 238.)]

[2 "Dhikr" means "mention," "remembrance.]

[3 A.

L.

M.

Nicolas quotes in Chapter 3 of his "Essai sur le Shaykhisme,"

II, p.

43, the following extract from the Sharh-i-Qasidih of Siyyid Kazim: "I have announced that every hundred years there are a chosen few who spread and sow the precepts which explain that which is lawful and that which is unlawful; who

tell of the things that were hidden during the hundred preceding years.

In other words, in every century a learned and perfect man is found who causes the tree of religious law to revive and bloom; who regenerates its trunk to such an extent that at last the book of Creation comes to its end in a period of twelve hundred years.

At that moment, a certain number of perfect men will appear who will reveal certain very intimate things which were hidden....

Therefore, when the twelve hundred years will have been completed, when the first cycle is ended, which depended upon the appearance of the Sun of the Prophet and of the Moon of the Vilayat, then the influence of that cycle is ended and a second cycle begins in which the intimate precepts and hidden meanings of the former cycle are explained."

He himself then adds these words: "In other words, and in order to render clearer this amazing statement which truly needs no interpretation, Siyyid Kazim tells us that the first cycle which lasts twelve hundred years is solely for the education of the bodies and of the spirits which are dependent upon them.

It is like a child in the womb of the mother.

The second cycle is for the education of the pure spirits, the souls which have no relation to the world of matter.

It is as though God wished to elevate the spirit by means of the performance of its duty in this world.

Therefore, when the first cycle is completed, the glory of which is the name of Muhammad, comes the cycle of the education of the intimates.

In this cycle the appearances obey the intimates, just as in the preceding cycle the heavenly name of the Prophet, which is Ahmad, is the place of the appearance, the Master: 'But this name must necessarily be found to be of the fruit of the best soil and of the purest air.'"

Nicolas further adds in a footnote the following words: "The name of Ahmad mentioned above would lead one to believe that it refers to Shaykh Ahmad, but one cannot say, however, in speaking of Lahca, that it is the best of lands, or of the purest air.

We know, on the contrary, that all the Persian poets sing the praises of Shiraz and of its ideal climate.

It is only necessary to see what Shaykh Ahmad himself said of his country.]"
How grievously Siyyid Kazim suffered at the hands of the people of wickedness!

What harm that villainous generation inflicted upon him!

For years he suffered silently, and endured with heroic patience all the indignities, the calumnies, the denunciations that were heaped upon him.

He was destined, however, to witness, during the last years of his life, how the avenging hand of God "destroyed with utter destruction" those that opposed, vilified, and plotted against him.

In those days the followers of Siyyid Ibrahim, that notorious enemy of Siyyid Kazim, banded themselves together for the purpose of stirring up sedition and mischief and endangering the life of their formidable adversary.

By every means at their disposal, they sought to poison the minds of his admirers and friends, to undermine his authority, and to discredit his name.

No voice was raised in protest against the agitation that was being sedulously prepared by that ungodly and treacherous people, each of whom professed to be the exponent of true learning and the repository of the mysteries of the Faith of God.

No one sought to warn or awaken them.

They gathered such force and kindled such strife that they succeeded in evicting from Karbila, in a disgraceful manner, the representative official of the Ottoman government, and appropriated for their own sordid aims whatever revenues accrued to him.

Their menacing attitude aroused the central government at Constantinople, which despatched a military official to the scene of agitation, with full instructions to quench the fires of mischief.

With the force at his command, that official besieged the city, and despatched a communication to Siyyid Kazim in which he entreated him to pacify the minds of the excited populace.

He appealed to him to counsel moderation to its inhabitants, to induce them to relax their stubbornness, and to surrender voluntarily to his rule.

Were they to heed his counsels, he promised that he would undertake to ensure their safety and protection, would proclaim a general amnesty, and would strive to promote their welfare.

If they refused, however, to submit, he warned them that their lives would be in danger, that a great calamity would surely befall them.

Upon the receipt of this formal communication, Siyyid Kazim summoned to his presence the chief instigators of the movement, and, with the utmost wisdom and affection, exhorted them to cease their agitation and surrender their arms. He spoke with such persuasive eloquence, such sincerity and detachment, that their hearts were softened and their resistance was subdued. They solemnly undertook to throw open, the next morning, the gates of the citadel and to present themselves, in the company of Siyyid Kazim, to the officer in command of the besieging forces. It was agreed that the Siyyid would intervene in their behalf, and secure for them whatever would ensure their tranquillity and welfare. No sooner had they left the presence of the Siyyid than the ulamas, the chief instigators of the rebellion, unanimously arose to frustrate this plan. Fully aware that such intervention on the part of the Siyyid, who had

already excited their envy, would serve to enhance his prestige and consolidate his authority, they determined to persuade a number among the foolish and excitable elements of the population to sally forth at night and attack the forces of the enemy. They assured <p36> them of victory on the strength of a dream in which one of their members had seen Abbas,[1] who had charged him to incite his followers to wage holy war against the besiegers and had given him the promise of ultimate success.

[1 Brother of the Imam Husayn.]

Deluded by this vain promise, they rejected the advice tendered by that wise and judicious counsellor, and arose to execute the designs of their foolish leaders. Siyyid Kazim, who was well aware of the evil influence that actuated that revolt, addressed a detailed and faithful report on the situation to the Turkish commander, who again wrote to Siyyid Kazim and reiterated his appeal for a peaceful settlement of the issue. He, moreover, declared that at a given time he would force the gates of the citadel, and would regard the home of the Siyyid as the only place of refuge for a defeated enemy. This declaration the Siyyid caused to be spread throughout the city. It served only to excite the derision and contempt of the population. When informed of the reception accorded that declaration, the Siyyid remarked: "Verily, that with which they are threatened is for the morning. Is not the morning near?"[2]

[2 Qur'an, 11:81.]

At daybreak, the appointed hour, the forces of the enemy bombarded the ramparts of the citadel, demolished its walls, entered the city, and pillaged and massacred a considerable number of its population. Many fled in consternation to the courtyard of the shrine of the Imam Husayn. Others sought refuge in the sanctuary of Abbas. Those who loved and honoured Siyyid Kazim betook themselves to his home. So great was the crowd that hastened to the shelter of his residence, that it was found necessary to appropriate a number of the adjoining houses in order to accommodate the multitude of refugees who pressed at his doors. So vast and excited was the concourse that thronged his house, that when once the tumult had subsided, it was ascertained that no less than twenty-two persons had been trampled to death.

What consternation seized the residents and visitors of the holy city! With what severity did the victors treat their terrified enemy! With what audacity they ignored those sacred rights and prerogatives with which the piety of countless Muslim pilgrims had invested the holy sites of Karbila! <p37> They refused to recognize alike the shrine of the Imam Husayn and the sacred mausoleum of Abbas as inviolable sanctuaries for the thousands who fled before the avenging wrath of an alien people. The hallowed precincts of both these shrines ran with the blood of the victims. One place, and only one, could assert its right of sanctuary to the innocent and faithful among the population. That place was the residence of Siyyid Kazim. His house, with its dependencies, was regarded as being endowed with such sanctity as even the most hallowed shrine of shi'ah Islam had failed to retain. That strange manifestation of the avenging wrath of God was an object lesson to those who were inclined to belittle the station of that holy man. That memorable event [1] happened on the eighth of Dhi'l-Hijjih in the year 1258 A.H.[2]

[1 A.

L.

M.

Nicolas, in his "Essai sur le Shaykhisme,"

II, pp.

29-30, describes the event as follows: "It was in the year 1258 (1842) that this event took place, on the day of the Feast of Qadr.

The armies of Baghdad, under the leadership of Najib Pasha, took possession of Karbila whose inhabitants they massacred and whose rich Mosques they pillaged.

About nine thousand people were killed, the majority of whom were Persians.

Muhammad Shah was seriously ill at the time of this disaster and therefore his officials had kept the news from him. "When the Shah heard later on of these events, he grew furiously angry and swore fierce vengeance, but the Russian and English representatives intervened in order to quiet things.

Finally Mirza Ja'far Khan Mushiru'd-Dawlih, on return from his ambassadorship at Constantinople, was sent to Erzeroum there to meet the English, Russian and Ottoman delegates. "Having arrived at Tabriz, the Persian plenipotentiary fell ill and Haji Mirza Aqasi appointed in his place Mirza Taqi Khan-i-Farahani, Vazir Nizam: this man appeared in Erzeroum with two hundred officers. "The Turkish delegate was Anvar Effendi who showed himself both courteous and conciliatory, but one of the men of the Amir Nizam committed an offense against the Sunnite religion; the population then attacked the camp of the Ambassador, two or three Persians were killed, everything was pillaged and the Amir Nizam was saved only through the intervention of Badri Pasha. "The Turkish Government expressed regret and paid an indemnity of 15,000 tumans. "In his Hidayatut-Talibin, Karim Khan asserts that during the sack of Karbila, the victorious troops respected the homes of the Shaykhis.

All those, he said, who sought refuge in them were saved, together with many precious objects which were gathered there.

None of the companions of Siyyid Kazim were killed, while those who had sought refuge in the holy sepulchres were massacred without mercy.

It is said that the Pasha entered on horseback within the sacred precincts."

[2 January 10, 1843 A.D.]

It is admittedly evident that in every age and dispensation those whose mission it is either to proclaim the Truth or to prepare the way for its acceptance, have invariably been opposed by a number of powerful adversaries, who challenged their authority and attempted to pervert their teachings. These have, either by fraud or pretence, calumny or oppression, succeeded for a time in beguiling the uninformed and in <p38> misleading the feeble. Desirous of maintaining their hold over the thoughts and consciences of men, they have, so long as the Faith of God remained concealed, been able to enjoy the fruits of a

fleeting and precarious ascendancy. No sooner was the Faith proclaimed, however, than they found, to their utter dismay, the effects of their dark plottings pale before the dawning light of the new Day of God. Before the fierce rays of that rising Orb all their machinations and evil deeds faded into nothingness and were soon a thing forgotten.

Around Siyyid Kazim were likewise gathered a number of vain and ignoble people who feigned devotion and attachment to his person; who professed to be devout and pious, and who claimed to be the sole repositories of the mysteries enshrined in the utterances of Shaykh Ahmad and his successor. They occupied the seats of honour in the company of the assembled disciples of Siyyid Kazim. To them he addressed his discourse, and towards them he showed marked consideration and courtesy. And yet he often, in covert and subtle phrases, I alluded to their blindness, their vainglory and utter inaptitude for the apprehension of the mysteries of Divine utterance. Among his allusions were the following: "None can comprehend my language except him who is begotten of me." Oftentimes he quoted this saying: "I am spellbound by the vision. I am mute with wonder, and behold the world bereft of the power of hearing. I am powerless to divulge the mystery, and find the people incapable of bearing its weight." On another occasion he remarked: "Many are those who claim to have attained union with the Beloved, and yet that Beloved refuses to acknowledge their claim. By the tears which he sheds for his loved One can the true lover be distinguished from the false." Many a time he observed: "He who is destined to be made manifest after me is of pure lineage, of illustrious descent, of the seed of Fatimih. He is of medium height, and is free from bodily deficiency." [1]

[1 A. L. M. Nicolas, in his "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," II, pp. 60-61, gives the following extract from the writings of Siyyid Kazim: "You have understood, I think, that the religious law and the precepts of morality are the food of the Spirit. It is then necessary that these religious laws be diverse; it is necessary that sometimes the older regulations be annulled; it is necessary that these precepts contain some things which are doubtful and some things which are certain; some things general and some things specific; some things absolute and some things finite; some of appearances and some of inner realities, so that the child may reach adolescence and may be perfect in his power and his capacity. "It is, at that time, that the Qa'im will appear and after his manifestation the length of his days will come to an end and he will be martyred, and when he is martyred, the world will have reached its eighteenth year.]" <p39>

I have heard Shaykh Abu-Turab [1] recount the following: "I, together with a number of the disciples of Siyyid Kazim, regarded the allusions to these deficiencies, from which the Siyyid declared the promised One to be free, as specifically directed toward three individuals amongst our fellow-disciples. We even designated them by such appellations as indicated their bodily defects.

One of them was Haji Mirza Karim Khan,[2] son of Ibrahim

Khan-i-Qajar-i-Kirmani, who was both one-eyed and sparsely bearded. Another was Mirza Hasan-i-Gawhar, an exceptionally corpulent man. The third was Mirza Muhit-i-Sha'ir-i-Kirmani, who was extraordinarily lean and tall. We felt

convinced that these were none other than those to whom the Siyyid constantly alluded as those vain and faithless people who would eventually reveal their real selves, and betray their ingratitude and folly. As to Haji Mirza Karim Khan, who for years sat at the feet of Siyyid Kazim and acquired from him all his so-called learning, in the end he obtained leave from his master to settle in Kirman, and there engage in the promotion of the interests of Islam and the dissemination of those traditions that clustered round the sacred memory of the Imams of the Faith.

[1 According to Samandar (p. 32), Shaykh Abu-Turab was a native of Ishtihad, and ranked among the leading disciples of Siyyid Kazim. He married the sister of Mulla Husayn. He died while in prison in Tihiran.]

[2 "The Bab wrote to Haji Muhammad-Karim Khan ... and invited him to acknowledge his authority. This the latter not only entirely refused to do, but further wrote a treatise against the Bab and his doctrines." (P. 910.)

"At least two such treatises were written by Haji Muhammad-Karim Khan. One of them was composed at a later date than this, probably after the Bab's death, at the special request of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Of these two one has been printed, and is called 'the crushing of falsehood' (Izhaqu'l-Batil)."

(Footnote 1, p. 910.) (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, article 12.)

"I was present in the library of Siyyid Kazim when, one day, an attendant of Haji Mirza Karim Khan arrived, holding a book in his hand, which he presented to the Siyyid on behalf of his master, requesting him to peruse it and to signify in his own handwriting his approval of its contents.

The Siyyid read portions of that book, and returned it to the attendant with this message: 'Tell your master that he, better than anyone else, can estimate the value of his own book.' The attendant had retired when the Siyyid, with sorrowful voice, remarked: 'Accursed be he!

For years he has been associated with me, and now that he intends to depart, his one aim, after so many years of study and companionship, <p40> is to diffuse, through his book, such heretical and atheistic doctrines as he now wishes me to endorse.

He has covenanted with a number of self-seeking hypocrites with the view of establishing himself in Kirman, and in order to assume, after my departure from this world, the reins of undisputed leadership.

How grievously he erred in his judgment!

For the breeze of divine Revelation, wafted from the Day-Spring of guidance, will assuredly quench his light and destroy his influence.

The tree of his endeavour will eventually yield naught but the fruit of bitter disillusion and gnawing remorse.

Verily I say, you shall behold this with your own eyes.

My prayer for you is that you may be protected from the mischievous influence which he, the antichrist of the promised Revelation, will in future exercise.'

He bade me conceal this prediction until the Day of Resurrection, the Day when the Hand of Omnipotence will have disclosed the secrets which are now hidden within the breasts of men. 'On that Day,' he exhorted me, 'arise with unswerving purpose and determination for the triumph of the Faith of God.

Publish far and wide all that you have heard and witnessed."

This same Shaykh Abu-Turab, who in the early days of the Dispensation proclaimed by the Bab thought it wiser and better not to identify himself with His Cause, cherished in his heart the fondest love for the revealed Manifestation, and in his faith remained firm and immovable as the rock.

Eventually that smouldering fire blazed forth in his soul and was responsible for such behaviour on his part as to cause him to suffer imprisonment in Tihiran, in the same dungeon within which Baha'u'llah was confined.

He remained steadfast to the very end, and crowned a life of loving sacrifice with the glory of martyrdom.

And as the days of Siyyid Kazim drew to a close, he, whenever he met his disciples, whether in private converse or public discourse, exhorted them, saying: "O my beloved companions!

Beware, beware, lest after me the world's fleeting vanities beguile you.

Beware lest you wax haughty and forgetful of God.

It is incumbent upon you to renounce all comfort, all earthly possessions and kindred, in your quest of Him who is the Desire of your hearts and of mine.

Scatter far and wide, detach yourselves from all earthly things, and <p41> humbly and prayerfully beseech your Lord to sustain and guide you.

Never relax in your determination to seek and find Him who is concealed behind the veils of glory.

Persevere till the time when He, who is your true Guide and Master, will graciously aid you and enable you to recognize Him.

Be firm till the day when He will choose you as the companions and the heroic supporters of the promised Qa'im.

Well is it with every one of you who will quaff the cup of martyrdom in His path.

Those of you whom God, in His wisdom, will preserve and keep to witness the setting of the Star of Divine guidance, that Harbinger of the Sun of Divine Revelation, must needs be patient, must remain assured and steadfast.

Such ones amongst you must neither falter nor feel dismayed.

For soon after the first trumpet-blast which is to smite the earth with extermination and death, there shall be sounded again yet another call, at which all things will be quickened and revived.

Then will the meaning of these sacred verses be revealed: 'And there was a

blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth expired, save those whom God permitted to live.

Then was there sounded another blast, and, lo! arising, they gazed around them.

And the earth shone with the light of her Lord, and the Book was set, and the Prophets were brought up, and the witnesses; and judgment was given between them with equity; and none was wronged.[1] Verily I say, after the Qa'im the Qayyum [2] will be made manifest.

For <p42> when the star of the Former has set, the sun of the beauty of Husayn will rise and illuminate the whole world.

Then will be unfolded in all its glory the 'mystery' and the 'secret' spoken of by Shaykh Ahmad, who has said: 'The mystery of this Cause must needs be made manifest, and the secret of this Message must needs be divulged.' To have attained unto that Day of days is to have attained unto the crowning glory of past generations, and one goodly deed performed in that age is equal to the pious worship of countless centuries.

How often has that venerable soul, Shaykh Ahmad, recited those verses of the Qur'an already referred to!

What stress he laid upon their significance as foreshadowing the advent of those twin Revelations which are to follow each other in rapid succession, and each of which is destined to suffuse the world with all its glory!

How many times did he exclaim: 'Well is it with him who will recognize their significance and behold their splendour!' How often, addressing me, did he remark: 'Neither of us shall live to gaze upon their effulgent glory.'

But many of the faithful among your disciples shall witness the Day which we, alas, can never hope to behold! O my beloved companions!

How great, how very great, is the Cause!

How exalted the station to which I summon you!

How great the mission for which I have trained and prepared you!

Gird up the loins of endeavour, and fix your gaze upon His promise.

I pray to God graciously to assist you to weather the storms of tests and trials which must needs beset you, to enable you to emerge, unscathed and triumphant, from their midst, and to lead you to your high destiny."

[1 Qur'an, 39:68.]

[2 References to the Bab and to Baha'u'llah, respectively.]

Every year, in the month of Dhi'l-Qa'dih, the Siyyid would proceed from Karbila to Kazimayn [1] in order to visit the shrines of the imams.

He would return to Karbila in time to visit, on the day of Arafih, the shrine of the Imam Husayn.

In that year, the last year of his life, he, faithful to his custom, departed

from Karbila in the first days of the month of Dhi'l-Qa'dih, in the year 1259 A.H.,[2] accompanied by a number of his companions and friends.

On the fourth day of that month he arrived at the Masjid-i-Baratha, situated <p43> on the highway between Baghdad and Kazimayn, in time to offer up his noonday prayer.

He bade the Muadhhdhin summon the faithful to gather and pray.

Standing beneath the shade of a palm which faced the masjid, he joined the congregation, and had just concluded his devotions when an Arab suddenly appeared, approached the Siyyid, and embraced him. "Three days ago," he said, "I was shepherding my flock in this adjoining pasture, when sleep suddenly fell upon me.

In my dream I saw Muhammad, the Apostle of God, who addressed me in these words: 'Give ear, O shepherd, to My words, and treasure them within your heart.

For these words of Mine are the trust of God which I commit to your keeping.

If you be faithful to them, great will be your reward.

If you neglect them, grievous retribution will befall you.

Hear Me; this is the trust with which I charge you:

Stay within the precincts of the Masjid-i-Baratha.

On the third day after this dream, a scion of My house, Siyyid Kazim by name, will, accompanied by his friends and companions, <p44> alight, at the hour of noon, beneath the shadow of the palm in the vicinity of the masjid.

There he will offer his prayer.

As soon as your eyes fall upon him, seek his presence and convey to him My loving greetings.

Tell him, from Me: "Rejoice, for the hour of your departure is at hand.

When you shall have performed your visits in Kazimayn and shall have returned to Karbila, there, three days after your return, on the day of Arafih, [3] you will wing your flight to Me.

Soon after shall He who is the Truth be made manifest.

Then <p45> shall the world be illuminated by the light of His face.""

A smile wreathed the countenance of Siyyid Kazim upon the completion of the description of the dream related by that shepherd.

He said: "Of the truth of the dream which you have dreamt there is no doubt."

His companions were sorely grieved.

Turning to them, he said: "Is not your love for me for the sake of that true One whose advent we all await?"

Would you not wish me to die, that the promised One may be revealed?"

This episode, in its entirety, has been related to me by no less than ten persons, all of whom were present on that occasion, and who testified to its accuracy.

And yet many of those who witnessed with their own eyes such marvellous signs have rejected the Truth and repudiated His Message!

[1 The tombs of "the two Kazims," the seventh Imam Musa Kazim and the ninth Imam Muhammad-Taqi, about three miles north of Baghdad. Around them has grown up a considerable town, inhabited chiefly by Persians, known as "Kazimayn."]

[2 November 23--December 23, 1843 A.D.

[3 December 31, 1843 A.D.

This strange event was noised abroad.

It brought sadness to the heart of the true lovers of Siyyid Kazim.

To these he, with infinite tenderness and joy, addressed words of cheer and comfort.

He calmed their troubled hearts, fortified their faith, and inflamed their zeal.

With dignity and calm he completed his pilgrimage and returned to Karbila.

The very day of his arrival he fell ill, and was confined to bed.

His enemies spread the rumour that he had been poisoned by the Governor of Baghdad.

This was sheer calumny and downright falsehood, inasmuch as the Governor himself had placed his unqualified confidence in Siyyid Kazim, and had always regarded him as a highly talented leader endowed with keen perception and possessed of irreproachable character.[1] On the day of Arafih, in the year 1259 A.H., at the ripe age of sixty, Siyyid Kazim, in accordance with the vision of that lowly shepherd, bade farewell to this world, leaving behind him a band of earnest and devoted disciples who, purged of all worldly desire, set out in quest of their promised Beloved.

His sacred remains were interred within the precincts of the shrine of the Imam Husayn.[2] His passing raised <p46> a tumult in Karbila similar to the agitation that seized its people the preceding year,[3] on the eve of the day of Arafih, when the victorious enemy forced the gates of the citadel and massacred a considerable number of its besieged inhabitants.

A year before, on that day, his house had been the one haven of peace and security for the bereaved and homeless, whereas now it had become a house of sorrow where those whom he had befriended and succoured bewailed his passing and mourned his loss.[4]

[1 "Karim Khan, regarding the taking of Karbila, speaks emphatically of the respect which the attacking troops showed to the Shaykhis and to Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti. He declares, without the least hesitation, that it is very

likely that Siyyid Kazim was poisoned in Baghdad by this infamous Najib Pasha who, he says, gave him a potion to drink which caused such intense thirst that it brought about the death of Siyyid Kazim. It is thus that the Persians record history!" (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," II, pp. 30-31.)]

[2 "He was buried behind the window in the corridor of the tomb of the Lord of the Confessors. This tomb was built on an incline toward the interior of the forbidden precincts." (Ibid., p. 31.)]

[3 "During the lifetime of Siyyid Kazim, the doctrine of the Shaykhis spread over all Persia so well that in the Province of Iraq alone there were more than a hundred thousand murids." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p. 463.)]

[4 "Here ends the history of the establishment of Shaykhism, or at least of its unity, for, after the death of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, it became divided into two branches. One branch, under the name of Babism, flowered as foreshadowed by the strength of the movement created by Shaykh Ahmad, thus fulfilling the expectations of the two masters, if one may believe their predictions. The other, under the leadership of Karim Khan-i-Qajar-i-Kirmani, will continue its struggles against the Shiite sect, but will always seek security in affecting the outer appearance Ithna-'Asharisme. If, according to Karim Khan, the Bab and his followers are infamous and impious, for the Babis, Karim Khan is the Anti-Christ or Dajjal foretold by Muhammad." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," II, p. 31.)]<p47>

CHAPTER III

THE DECLARATION OF THE BAB'S MISSION

THE death of Siyyid Kazim was the signal for renewed activity on the part of his enemies. Athirst for leadership, and emboldened by his removal and the consequent dismay of his followers, they reasserted their claims and prepared to realise their ambitions. For a time, fear and anxiety filled the hearts of Siyyid Kazim's faithful disciples, but with the return of Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i from the highly successful mission with which he had been entrusted by his teacher, their gloom was dispelled. [1]

[1 "Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i was a man whose great learning and strength of character were acknowledged even by his enemies. He had devoted himself to study from early childhood and his progress in theology and jurisprudence had won him no little consideration." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 128.)]

It was on the first day of Muharram, in the year 1260 A.H.,[1] that Mulla Husayn came back to Karbila.

He cheered and strengthened the disconsolate disciples of his beloved chief, reminded them of his unflinching promise, and pleaded for unrelaxing vigilance and unremitting effort in their search for the concealed Beloved.

Living in the close neighbourhood of the house the Siyyid had occupied, he, for three days, was engaged continually in receiving visits from a considerable number of mourners who hastened to convey to him, as the leading representative of the Siyyid's disciples, the expression of their distress and sorrow.

He afterwards summoned a group of his most distinguished and trusted fellow-disciples and enquired about the expressed wishes and the last exhortations of their departed leader.

They told him that, repeatedly and emphatically, Siyyid Kazim had bidden them quit their homes, scatter far and wide, purge their hearts from every idle desire, and dedicate themselves to the quest of Him to whose advent he had so often alluded. "He told us," they said, "that the Object of our quest was now <p48> revealed.

The veils that intervened between you and Him are such as only you can remove by your devoted search.

Nothing short of prayerful endeavour, of purity of motive, of singleness of mind, will enable you to tear them asunder.

Has not God revealed in His Book: 'Whoso maketh efforts for Us, in Our ways will We guide them?'"[2] "Why, then,"

Mulla Husayn observed, "have you chosen to tarry in Karbila?"

Why is it that you have not dispersed, and arisen to carry out his earnest plea?" "We acknowledge our failure," was their reply; "to your greatness we all bear witness.

Such is our confidence in you, that if you claim to be the promised One, we shall all readily and unquestionably submit.

We herein pledge our loyalty and obedience to whatever you bid us perform." "God forbid!" exclaimed Mulla Husayn. "Far be it from His glory that I, who am but dust, should be compared to Him who is the Lord of Lords!

Had you been conversant with the tone and language of Siyyid Kazim, you never would have uttered such words.

Your first obligation, as well as mine, is to arise and carry out, both in the spirit and in the letter, the dying message of our beloved chief."

He arose instantly from his seat, and went directly to Mirza Hasan-i-Gawhar, Mirza Muhit, and other well-known figures among the disciples of Siyyid Kazim.

To each and all he fearlessly delivered the parting message of his chief, emphasised the pressing character of their duty, and urged them to arise and fulfil it.

To his plea they returned evasive and unworthy answers. "Our enemies," one of them remarked, "are many and powerful.

We must remain in this city and guard the vacant seat of our departed chief."

Another observed: "It is incumbent upon me to stay and care for the children whom the Siyyid has left behind."

Mulla Husayn immediately recognized the futility of his efforts.

Realising the degree of their folly, their blindness and ingratitude, he spoke to them no more.

He retired, leaving them to their idle pursuits.

[1 January, 22, 1844 A.D.]

[2 Qur'an, 29:69.]

As the year sixty, the year that witnessed the birth of the promised Revelation, had just dawned upon the world, it would not seem inappropriate, at this juncture, to digress from our theme, and to mention certain traditions of Muhammad <p49> and of the imams of the Faith which bear specific reference to that year.

Imam Ja'far, son of Muhammad, when questioned concerning the year in which the Qa'im was to be made manifest, replied as follows: "Verily, in the year sixty His Cause shall be revealed, and His name shall be noised abroad."

In the works of the learned and far-famed Muhyi'd-Din-i-'Arabi, many references are to be found regarding both the year of the advent and the name of the promised Manifestation.

Among them are the following: "The ministers and upholders of His Faith shall be of the people of Persia." "In His name, the name of the Guardian [Ali] precedeth that of the Prophet [Muhammad]." "The year of His Revelation is identical with half of that number which is divisible by nine [2520]."

Mirza Muhammad-i-Akhbari, in his poems relating to the year of the Manifestation, <p50> makes the following prediction: "In the year Ghars [the numerical value of the letters of which is 1260] the earth shall be illumined by His light, and in Gharasih [1265] the world shall be suffused with its glory.

If thou livest until the year Gharasi [1270], thou shalt witness how the nations, the rulers, the peoples, and the Faith of God shall all have been renewed."

In a tradition ascribed to the Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, it is likewise recorded: "In Ghars the Tree of Divine guidance shall be planted." Mulla Husayn, having acquitted himself of the obligation he felt to urge and awaken his fellow-disciples, set out from Karbila for Najaf. With him were Muhammad-Hasan, his brother, and Muhammad-Baqir, his nephew, both of whom had accompanied him ever since his visit to his native town of Bushruiyih, in the province of Khurasan. Arriving at the Masjid-i-Kufih, Mulla Husayn decided to spend forty days in that place, where he led a life of retirement and prayer. By his fasts and vigils he prepared himself for the holy adventure upon which he was soon to embark. In the exercise of these acts of worship, his brother alone was associated with him, while his nephew, who attended to their daily needs, observed the fasts, and in his hours of leisure joined them in their devotions.

This cloistered calm with which they were surrounded was, after a few days, unexpectedly interrupted by the arrival of Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, one of the

foremost disciples of Siyyid Kazim. He, together with twelve other companions, arrived at the Masjid-i-Kufih, where he found his fellow-disciple Mulla Husayn immersed in contemplation and prayer. Mulla Ali was endowed with such vast learning, and was so deeply conversant with the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad, that many regarded him as even superior to Mulla Husayn. On several occasions he attempted to enquire from Mulla Husayn as to his destination after the termination of the period of his retirement. Every time he approached him, he found him so wrapt in his devotions that he felt it impossible to venture a question. He soon decided to retire, like him, for forty days from the society of men. All his companions followed his example with the exception of three who acted as their personal attendants. <p51>

Immediately after the completion of his forty days' retirement, Mulla Husayn, together with his two companions, departed for Najaf. He left Karbila by night, visited on his way the shrine of Najaf, and proceeded directly to Bushihr, on the Persian Gulf. There he started on his holy quest after the Beloved of his heart's desire. There, for the first time, he inhaled the fragrance of Him who, for years, had led in that city the life of a merchant and humble citizen.

<p52> There he perceived the sweet savours of holiness with which that Beloved's countless invocations had so richly impregnated the atmosphere of that city.

He could not, however, tarry longer in Bushihr. Drawn as if by a magnet which seemed to attract him irresistibly towards the north, he proceeded to Shiraz. Arriving at the gate of that city, he instructed his brother and his nephew to proceed directly to the Masjid-i-Ilkhani, and there to remain until his arrival. He expressed the hope that, God willing, he would arrive in time to join them in their evening prayer.

On that very day, a few hours before sunset, whilst walking outside the gate of the city, his eyes fell suddenly upon a Youth of radiant countenance, who wore a green turban and who, advancing towards him, greeted him with a smile of loving welcome. He embraced Mulla Husayn with tender affection as though he had been his intimate and lifelong friend. Mulla Husayn thought Him at first to be a disciple of Siyyid Kazim who, on being informed of his approach to Shiraz, had come out to welcome him.

Mirza Ahmad-i-Qazvini, the martyr, who on several occasions had heard Mulla Husayn recount to the early believers the story of his moving and historic interview with the Bab, related to me the following: "I have heard Mulla Husayn repeatedly and graphically describe the circumstances of that remarkable interview: 'The Youth who met me outside the gate of Shiraz overwhelmed me with expressions of affection and loving-kindness. He extended to me a warm invitation to visit His home, and there refresh myself after the fatigues of my journey. I prayed to be excused, pleading that my <p53> two companions had already arranged for my stay in that city, and were now awaiting my return. "Commit them to the care of God," was His reply; "He will surely protect and watch over them." Having spoken these words, He bade me follow Him. I was profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange Youth spoke to me. As I followed Him, His gait, the charm of His voice, the dignity of His bearing, served to enhance my first impressions of this

unexpected meeting.

"We soon found ourselves standing at the gate of a house of modest appearance. He knocked at the door, which was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant. "Enter therein in peace, secure," [1] were His words as He crossed the threshold <p54> and motioned me to follow Him. His invitation, uttered with power and majesty, penetrated my soul. I thought it a good augury to be addressed in such words, standing as I did on the threshold of the first house I was entering in Shiraz, a city the very atmosphere of which had produced already an indescribable impression upon me. Might not my visit to this house, I thought to myself, enable me to draw nearer to the Object of my quest? Might it not hasten the termination of a period of intense longing, of strenuous search, of increasing anxiety, which such a quest involves? As I entered the house and followed my Host to His chamber, a feeling of unutterable joy invaded my being. Immediately <p55> we were seated, He ordered a ewer of water to be brought, and bade me wash away from my hands and feet the stains of travel. I pleaded permission to retire from His presence and perform my ablutions in an adjoining room. He refused to grant my request, and proceeded to pour the water over my hands. He then gave me to drink of a refreshing beverage, after which He asked for the samovar [2] and Himself prepared the tea which He offered me.

[1 Qur'an, 15:46.]

[2 Tea-urn.]

"Overwhelmed with His acts of extreme kindness, I arose to depart. "The time for evening prayer is approaching," I ventured to observe. "I have promised my friends to join them at that hour in the Masjid-i-Ilkhani." With extreme courtesy and calm He replied: "You must surely have made the hour of your return conditional upon the will and pleasure of God. It seems that His will has decreed otherwise. You need have no fear of having broken your pledge." His dignity and self-assurance silenced me I renewed my ablutions and prepared for prayer. He, too, stood beside me and prayed. Whilst praying, I unburdened my soul, which <p56> was much oppressed, both by the mystery of this interview and the strain and stress of my search. I breathed this prayer: "I have striven with all my soul, O my God, and until now have failed to find Thy promised Messenger. I testify that Thy word faileth not, and that Thy promise is sure."

"That night, that memorable night, was the eve preceding the fifth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H.[1] <p57> It was about an hour after sunset when my youthful Host began to converse with me. "Whom, after Siyyid Kazim,"

He asked me, "do you regard as his successor and your leader?" "At the hour of his death,"

I replied, "our departed teacher insistently exhorted us to forsake our homes, to scatter far and wide, in quest of the promised Beloved.

I have, accordingly, journeyed to Persia, have arisen to accomplish his will, and am still engaged in my quest." "Has your teacher,"

He further enquired, "given you any detailed indications as to the distinguishing features of the promised One?" "Yes,"

I replied, "He is of a pure lineage, is of illustrious descent, and of the seed of Fatimih.

As to His age, He is more than twenty and less than thirty.

He is endowed with innate knowledge.

He is of medium height, abstains from smoking, and is free from bodily deficiency."

He paused for a while and then with vibrant voice declared: "Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!"

He then considered each of the above-mentioned signs separately, and conclusively demonstrated that each and all were applicable to His person.

I was greatly surprised, and politely observed: "He whose advent we await is a Man of unsurpassed holiness, and the Cause He is to reveal, a Cause of tremendous power.

Many and diverse are the requirements which He who claims to be its visible embodiment must needs fulfil.

How often has Siyyid Kazim referred to the vastness of the knowledge of the promised One!

How often did he say: 'My own knowledge is but a drop compared with that with which He has been endowed.

All my attainments are but a speck of dust in the face of the immensity of His knowledge.

Nay, immeasurable is the difference!"

No sooner had those words dropped from my lips than I found myself seized with fear and remorse, such as I could neither conceal nor explain.

I bitterly reproved myself, and resolved at that very moment to alter my attitude and to soften my tone.

I vowed to God that should my Host again refer to the subject, I would, with the utmost humility, answer and say: "If you be willing to substantiate your claim, you will most assuredly deliver me from the anxiety and suspense which so heavily oppress my soul.

I shall truly be indebted to you for such deliverance."

When I first started upon my quest, I determined to regard <p58>

[Illustrations:

VIEWS OF THE UPPER ROOM OF THE BAB'S HOUSE IN SHIRAZ WHERE HE DECLARED HIS MISSION.] <p59> the two following standards as those whereby I could ascertain the truth of whosoever might claim to be the promised Qa'im.

The first was a treatise which I had myself composed, bearing upon the abstruse and hidden teachings propounded by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim.

Whoever seemed to me capable of unravelling the mysterious allusions made in that treatise, to him I would next submit my second request, and would ask him to reveal, without the least hesitation or reflection, a commentary on the Surih of Joseph, in a style and language entirely different from the prevailing standards of the time.

I had previously requested Siyyid Kazim, in private, to write a commentary on that same Surih, which he refused, saying: "This is, verily, beyond me.

He, that great One, who comes after me will, unasked, reveal it for you.

That commentary will constitute one of the weightiest testimonies of His truth, and one of the clearest evidences of the loftiness of His position." [2]

[1 Corresponding with the evening of May 22, 1844 A.D. The 23rd of May fell on a Thursday.]

[2 "Mulla Husayn is reported to have said the following: "One day, when I was alone with the late Siyyid [Kazim] in his library, I enquired the reason why the Suriy-i-Yusuf was entitled in the Qur'an 'the Best of Stories,' to which he replied that it was not then the proper occasion for explaining the reason. This incident remained concealed in my mind, neither had I mentioned it to anyone." ("The Tarikh-i-Jadid," p. 39.)]

"I was revolving these things in my mind, when my distinguished Host again remarked: "Observe attentively.

Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Kazim be none other than I?"

I thereupon felt impelled to present to Him a copy of the treatise which I had with me. "Will you,"

I asked Him, "read this book of mine and look at its pages with indulgent eyes?"

I pray you to overlook my weaknesses and failings."

He graciously complied with my wish.

He opened the book, glanced at certain passages, closed it, and began to address me.

Within a few minutes He had, with characteristic vigour and charm, unravelled all its mysteries and resolved all its problems.

Having to my entire satisfaction accomplished, within so short a time, the task I had expected Him to perform, He further expounded to me certain truths which could be found neither in the reported sayings of the imams of the Faith nor in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim.

These truths, which I had never heard before, seemed to be endowed with refreshing vividness and power. "Had you not been My guest,"

He afterwards <p60> [Illustrations:

HIS BEDCHAMBER.

HIS MOTHER'S ROOM.

HIS SITTING ROOM.

VIEWS OF THE BAB'S HOUSE IN SHIRAZ.] <p61> observed, "your position would indeed have been a grievous one.

The all-encompassing grace of God has saved you.

It is for God to test His servants, and not for His servants to judge Him in accordance with their deficient standards.

Were I to fail to resolve your perplexities, could the Reality that shines within Me be regarded as powerless, or My knowledge be accused as faulty?

Nay, by the righteousness of God! it behoves, in this day, the peoples and nations of both the East and the West to hasten to this threshold, and here seek to obtain the reviving grace of the Merciful.

Whoso hesitates will indeed be in grievous loss.

Do not the peoples of the earth testify that the fundamental purpose of their creation is the knowledge and adoration of God?

It behoves them to arise, as earnestly and spontaneously as you have arisen, and to seek with determination and constancy their promised Beloved."

He then proceeded to say: "Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Surih of Joseph."

He took up His pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire Surih of Mulk, the first chapter of His commentary on the Surih of Joseph.

The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing.

Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen.

Not once did He pause till the Surih of Mulk was finished.

I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation.

At last I reluctantly arose from my seat and begged leave to depart.

He smilingly bade me be seated, and said: "If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: "This poor youth has lost his mind.'"

At that moment the clock registered two hours and eleven minutes after sunset.[1] That night, the eve of the fifth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H., corresponded with the eve preceding the sixty-fifth day after Naw-ruz, which was also the eve of the sixth day of Khurdad, of the year Nahang. "This night,"

He declared, "this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals.

Render thanks <p62> to God for having graciously assisted you to attain your heart's desire, and for having quaffed from the sealed wine of His utterance.

'Well is it with them that attain thereunto.'"[2]

[1 The date of the Manifestation is fixed by the following passage in the Persian Bayan [Vahid 2, Bab 7): "The beginning thereof was when two hours and eleven minutes [had passed] from the evening preceding the fifth of Jamadiyu'l-Ula, 1260 [A.H.], which is the year 1270 of the mission [of Muhammad]." (From manuscript copy of Bayan written by the hand of Siyyid Husayn, amanuensis and companion of the Bab.)]

[2 A. L. M. Nicolas quotes the following from the Kitabu'l-Haramayn: "In truth, the first day that the Spirit descended in the heart of this Slave was the fifteenth of the month of Rabi'u'l-Avval." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 206.)]

"At the third hour after sunset, my Host ordered the dinner to be served. That same Ethiopian servant appeared again and spread before us the choicest food. That holy repast refreshed alike my body and soul. In the presence of my Host, at that hour, I felt as though I were feeding upon the fruits of Paradise. I could not but marvel at the manners and the devoted attentions of that Ethiopian servant whose very life seemed to have been transformed by the regenerating influence of his Master. I then, for the first time, recognized the significance of this well-known traditional utterance ascribed to Muhammad: "I have prepared for the godly and righteous among My servants what eye hath seen not, ear heard not, nor human heart conceived." Had my youthful Host no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient---that He received me with that quality of hospitality and loving-kindness which I was convinced no other human being could possibly reveal.

"I sat spellbound by His utterance, oblivious of time and of those who awaited me. Suddenly the call of the muadhhdhin, summoning the faithful to their morning prayer, awakened me from the state of ecstasy into which I seemed to have fallen. All the delights, all the ineffable glories, which the Almighty has recounted in His Book as the priceless possessions of the people of Paradise--these I seemed to be experiencing that night. Methinks I was in a place of which it could be truly said: "Therein no toil shall reach us, and therein no weariness shall touch us"; "No vain discourse shall they hear therein, nor any falsehood, but only the cry, 'Peace! Peace!"; "Their cry therein shall be, 'Glory be to Thee, O God!' and their salutation therein, 'Peace!' And the close of their cry, 'Praise be to God, Lord of all creatures!'"[1]

[1 Quotations from the Qur'an.]

"Sleep had departed from me that night. I was enthralled by the music of that voice which rose and fell as He <p63> chanted; now swelling forth as He revealed verses of the Qayyumu'l-Asma',[1] again acquiring ethereal, subtle harmonies as He uttered the prayers He was revealing.[2] At the end of each invocation, He would repeat this verse: "Far from the glory of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, be that which His creatures affirm of Him! And peace be upon His Messengers! And praise be to God, the Lord of all beings!"[3]

[1 The Bab's commentary on the Surih of Joseph.]

[2 "In the first of his books he was, above all, pious and mystical; in the second, polemics and dialectics held an important place, and his listeners noticed that he unfolded, from a chapter in the Book of God which he had chosen, a new meaning which no one had heretofore perceived and especially that he drew from it doctrines and information wholly unexpected. That which one never tired of admiring was the elegance and beauty of the Arabic style used in those writings. They soon had enthusiastic admirers who did not fear to prefer them to the finest passages in the Qur'an." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 120.)]

[3 Qur'an, 37:180.]

"He then addressed me in these words: "O thou who art the first to believe in Me!

Verily I say, I am the Bab, the Gate of God, and thou art the Babu'l-Bab, the gate of that Gate.

Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognize the truth of My Revelation.

Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to find Me.

And when their number is complete, one of them must needs be chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

There I shall deliver the Message of God to the Sharif of Mecca.

I then shall return to Kufih, where again, in the Masjid of that holy city, I shall manifest His Cause.

It is incumbent upon you not to divulge, either to your companions or to any other soul, that which you have seen and heard.

Be engaged in the Masjid-i-Ilkhani in prayer and in teaching.

I, too, will there join you in congregational prayer.

Beware lest your attitude towards Me betray the secret of your faith.

You should continue in this occupation and maintain this attitude until our departure for Hijaz.

Ere we depart, we shall appoint unto each of the eighteen souls his special mission, and shall send them forth to accomplish their task.

We shall instruct them to teach the Word of God and to quicken the souls of men."

Having spoken these words to me, He dismissed me from His presence.

Accompanying <p64> [Illustrations:

ORIGINAL WINDOW SASH AND DOOR.

STEPS LEADING TO THE DECLARATION CHAMBER.

ENTRANCE.

VIEWS OF THE BAB'S HOUSE IN SHIRAZ WHERE HE DECLARED HIS MISSION.] <p65> me to the door of the house, He committed me to the care of God.

"This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties.[1] I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force. Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul. Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and strength which seemed to have transfigured me. How feeble and impotent, how dejected and timid, I had felt previously! Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet. Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being. I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp. I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: "Awake, for lo! the morning Light has broken. Arise, for His Cause is made manifest. The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein, O peoples of the world! For He who is your promised One is come!"

[1 "It is related in the 'Biharu'l-Anvar,' the 'Avalim,' and the 'Yanbu' of Sadiq, son of Muhammad, that he spoke these words: 'Knowledge is seven and twenty letters. All that the Prophets have revealed are two letters thereof. None thus far hath known any besides these two letters. But when the Qa'im shall arise, He will cause the remaining five and twenty letters to be made manifest.' Consider: he hath declared Knowledge to consist of seven and twenty letters, and regarded all the Prophets, from Adam even unto the 'Seal,' as Expounders of only two letters thereof, and as having been sent down with these two letters. He also saith that the Qa'im will reveal all the remaining five and twenty letters. Behold from this utterance how great and lofty is His station. His rank excelleth that of all the Prophets, and His Revelation transcendeth the comprehension and understanding of all their chosen ones." ("The Kitab-i-Iqan," p. 205.)]

"In such a state I left His house and joined my brother and nephew. A large number of the followers of Shaykh Ahmad, who had heard of my arrival, had gathered in the Masjid-i-Ilkhani to meet me. Faithful to the directions of my newly found Beloved, I immediately set myself to carry out His wishes. As I began to organise my classes and perform my devotions, a vast concourse of people gathered gradually about me. Ecclesiastical dignitaries and officials of the city also came to visit me. They marvelled at the spirit which my lectures revealed, unaware that the Source <p66> whence my knowledge flowed was none other than He whose advent they, for the most part, were eagerly awaiting.

"During those days I was, on several occasions, summoned by the Bab to visit Him. He would send at night-time that same Ethiopian servant to the masjid, bearing to me His most loving message of welcome. Every time I visited Him, I spent the entire night in His presence. Wakeful until the dawn, I sat at His feet fascinated by the charm of His utterance and oblivious of the world and its cares and pursuits. How rapidly those precious hours flew by! At daybreak I reluctantly withdrew from His presence. How eagerly in those days I looked forward to the approach of the evening hour! With what feelings of sadness and

regret I beheld the dawning of day! In the course of one of these nightly visits, my Host addressed me in these words: "To-morrow thirteen of your companions will arrive. To each of them extend the utmost loving-kindness. Leave them not to themselves, for they have dedicated their lives to the quest of their Beloved. Pray to God that He may graciously enable them to walk securely in that path which is finer than a hair and keener than a sword. Certain ones among them will be accounted, in the sight of God, as His chosen and favoured disciples. As to others, they will tread the middle way. The fate of the rest will remain undeclared until the hour when all that is hidden shall be made manifest." [1]

[1 "Understand in the same way the beginning of the manifestation of the Bayan during forty days no one but the letter Sin believed in B. It was only, little by little, that the Bismi'llahu'l-Amna'u'l-Aqdas clothed themselves with the garment of faith until finally the Primal Unity was completed. Witness then how it has increased until our day." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. 4, p. 119.)]

"That same morning, at sunrise, soon after my return from the home of the Bab, Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, accompanied by the same number of companions as indicated to me, arrived at the Masjid-i-Ilkhani.

I immediately set about to provide the means for their comfort.

One night, a few days after their arrival, Mulla Ali, as the spokesman of his companions, gave vent to feelings which he could no longer repress. "You know well," he said, "how great is our confidence in you.

We bear you such loyalty that if you should claim to be the promised Qa'im we would all unhesitatingly submit.

Obedient to your summons, we have forsaken our <p67> homes and have gone forth in search of our promised Beloved.

You were the first to set us all this noble example.

We have followed in your footsteps.

We have determined not to relax in our efforts until we find the Object of our quest.

We have followed you to this place, ready to acknowledge whomsoever you accept, in the hope of seeking the shelter of His protection and of passing successfully through the tumult and agitation that must needs signalise the last Hour.

How is it that we now see you teaching the people and conducting their prayers and devotions with the utmost tranquillity?

Those evidences of agitation and expectancy seem to have vanished from your countenance.

Tell us, we beseech you, the reason, that we too may be delivered from our present state of suspense and doubt." "Your companions,"

I gently observed, "may naturally attribute my peace and composure to the

ascendancy which I seem to have acquired in this city.

The truth is far from that.

The world, I assure you, with all its pomp and seductions, can never lure away this Husayn of Bushruiyih from his Beloved.

Ever since the beginning of this holy enterprise upon which I have embarked, I have vowed to seal, with my life-blood, my own destiny.

For His sake I have welcomed immersion in an ocean of tribulation.

I yearn not for the things of this world.

I crave only the good pleasure of my Beloved.

Not until I shed my blood for His name will the fire that glows within me be quenched.

Please God you may live to witness that day.

Might not your companions have thought that, because of the intensity of his longing and the constancy of his endeavours, God has, in His infinite mercy, graciously deigned to unlock before the face of Mulla Husayn the Gate of His grace, and, wishing, according to His inscrutable wisdom, to conceal this fact, has bidden him engage in such pursuits?"

These words stirred the soul of Mulla Ali.

He at once perceived their meaning.

With tearful eyes he entreated me to disclose the identity of Him who had turned my agitation into peace and converted my anxiety into certitude. "I adjure you," he pleaded, "to bestow upon me a portion of that holy draught which the Hand of mercy has given you to drink, for it will assuredly allay my thirst, and ease the pain of longing in my heart." "Beseech me not," <p68> I replied, "to grant you this favour.

Let your trust be in Him, for He will surely guide your steps, and appease the tumult of your heart."""

Mulla Ali hastened to his companions and acquainted them with the nature of his conversation with Mulla Husayn. Ablaze with the fire which the account of that conversation had kindled in their hearts, they immediately dispersed, and, seeking the seclusion of their cells, besought, through fasting and prayer, the early removal of the veil that intervened between them and the recognition of their Beloved. They prayed while keeping their vigils: "O God, our God! Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help. Guide us, we beseech Thee, on the straight Path, O Lord our God! Fulfil what Thou hast promised unto us by Thine Apostles, and put us not to shame on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Thou wilt not break Thy promise."

On the third night of his retirement, whilst wrapt in prayer, Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami had a vision. There appeared before his eyes a light, and, lo! that light moved off before him. Allured by its splendour, he followed it, till

at last it led him to his promised Beloved. At that very hour, in the mid-watches of the night, he arose and, exultant with joy and radiant with gladness, opened the door of his chamber and hastened to Mulla Husayn. He threw himself into the arms of his revered companion. Mulla Husayn most lovingly embraced him and said: "Praise be to God who hath guided us hither! We had not been guided had not God guided us!"

That very morning, at break of day, Mulla Husayn, followed by Mulla Ali, hastened to the residence of the Bab. At the entrance of His house they met the faithful Ethiopian servant, who immediately recognized them and greeted them in these words: "Ere break of day, I was summoned to the presence of my Master, who instructed me to open the door of the house and to stand expectant at its threshold. 'Two guests,' He said, 'are to arrive early this morning. Extend to them in My name a warm welcome. Say to them from Me: "Enter therein in the name of God.'""

The first meeting of Mulla Ali with the Bab, which was analogous to the meeting with Mulla Husayn, differed only in this respect, that whereas at the previous meeting the <p69> proofs and testimonies of the Bab's mission had been critically scrutinised and expounded, at this one all argument had been set aside and nothing but the spirit of intense adoration and of close and ardent fellowship prevailed. The entire chamber seemed to have been vitalised by that celestial potency which emanated from His inspired utterance. Everything in that room seemed to be vibrating with this testimony: "Verily, verily, the dawn of a new Day has broken. The promised One is enthroned in the hearts of men. In His hand He holds the mystic cup, the chalice of immortality. Blessed are they who drink therefrom!"

Each of the twelve companions of Mulla Ali, in his turn and by his own unaided efforts, sought and found his Beloved. Some in sleep, others in waking, a few whilst in prayer, and still others in their moments of contemplation, experienced the light of this Divine Revelation and were led to recognize the power of its glory. After the manner of Mulla Ali, these, and a few others, accompanied by Mulla Husayn, attained the presence of the Bab and were declared "Letters of the Living." Seventeen Letters were gradually enrolled in the preserved Tablet of God, and were appointed as the chosen Apostles of the Bab, the ministers of His Faith, and the diffusers of His light.

One night, in the course of His conversation with Mulla Husayn; the Bab spoke these words: "Seventeen Letters have thus far enlisted under the standard of the Faith of God.

There remains one more to complete the number.

These Letters of the Living shall arise to proclaim My Cause and to establish My Faith.

To-morrow night the remaining Letter will arrive and will complete the number of My chosen disciples."

The next day, in the evening hour, as the Bab, followed by Mulla Husayn, was returning to His home, there appeared a youth dishevelled and travel-stained.

He approached Mulla Husayn, embraced him, and asked him whether he had attained his goal.

Mulla Husayn tried at first to calm his agitation and advised him to rest for the moment, promising that he would subsequently enlighten him.

That youth, however, refused to heed his advice.

Fixing his gaze upon the Bab, he said to Mulla Husayn: "Why seek you to hide Him from me?"

I can recognize Him by His <p70> gait.

I confidently testify that none besides Him, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth.

None other can manifest the power and majesty that radiate from His holy person."

Mulla Husayn marvelled at his words.

He pleaded to be excused, however, and induced him to restrain his feelings until such time as he would be able to acquaint him with the truth.

Leaving him, he hastened to join the Bab, and informed Him of his conversation with that youth. "Marvel not," observed the Bab, "at his strange behaviour.

We have in the world of the spirit been communing with that youth.

We know him already.

We indeed awaited his coming.

Go to him and summon him forthwith to Our presence."

Mulla Husayn was instantly reminded by these words of the Bab of the following traditional utterance: "On the last Day, the Men of the Unseen shall, on the wings of the spirit, traverse the immensity of the earth, shall attain the presence of the promised Qa'im, and shall seek from Him the secret that will resolve their problems and remove their perplexities."

Though distant in body, these heroic souls are engaged in daily communion with their Beloved, partake of the bounty of His utterance, and share the supreme privilege of His companionship. Otherwise how could Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim have known of the Bab? How could they have perceived the significance of the secret which lay hidden in Him? How could the Bab Himself, how could Quddus, His beloved disciple, have written in such terms, had not the mystic bond of the spirit linked their souls together? Did not the Bab, in the earliest days of His Mission, allude, in the opening passages of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', His commentary on the Surih of Joseph, to the glory and significance of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah? Was it not His purpose, by dwelling upon the ingratitude and malice which characterised the treatment of Joseph by his brethren, to predict what Baha'u'llah was destined to suffer at the hands of His brother and kindred? Was not Quddus, although besieged within the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi by the battalions and fire of a relentless enemy,

engaged, both in the daytime and in the night-season, in the completion of his eulogy of Baha'u'llah --that immortal commentary on the Sad of Samad which <p71> had already assumed the dimensions of five hundred thousand verses? Every verse of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', every word of the aforementioned commentary of Quddus, will, if dispassionately examined, bear eloquent testimony to this truth.

The acceptance by Quddus of the truth of the Bab's Revelation completed the assigned number of His chose disciples.

Quddus, whose name was Muhammad-'Ali, was, through his mother, a direct descendant of the Imam Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.[1] He was born in Barfurush, in the province of Mazindaran.

It has been reported by those who attended the lectures of Siyyid Kazim that in the last years of the latter' life, Quddus enrolled himself <p72> as one of the Siyyid's disciples.

He was the last to arrive, and invariably occupied the lowliest seat in the assembly.

He was the first to depart upon the conclusion of every meeting.

The silence he observed and the modesty of his behaviour distinguished him from the rest of his companions.

Siyyid Kazim was often heard to remark that certain ones among his disciples, though they occupied the lowliest of seats, and observed the strictest silence, were none the less so exalted in the sight of God that he himself felt unworthy to rank among their servants.

His disciples, although they observed the humility of Quddus and acknowledged the exemplary character of his behaviour, remained unaware of the purpose of Siyyid Kazim.

When Quddus arrived in Shiraz and embraced the Faith declared by the Bab, he was only twenty-two years of age.

Though young in years, he showed that indomitable courage and faith which none among the disciples of his master could exceed.

He exemplified by his life and glorious martyrdom the truth of this tradition:
"Whoso seeketh Me, shall find Me.

Whoso findeth Me, shall be drawn towards Me.

Whoso draweth nigh unto Me, shall love Me.

Whoso loveth Me, him shall I also love.

He who is beloved of Me, him shall I slay.

He who is slain by Me, I Myself shall be his ransom."

[1 The father of Quddus, according to the "Kashfu'l-Ghita'," died several years before the Manifestation of the Bab. At the time of the death of his father,

Quddus was still a boy studying in Mashhad in the school of Mirza Ja'far. (P. 227, note 1.)]

The Bab, whose name was Siyyid Ali-Muhammad,[1] was born in the city of Shiraz, on the first day of Muharram, in the year 1235 A.H.[2] He belonged to a house which was renowned for its nobility and which traced its origin to Muhammad Himself. The date of His birth confirmed the truth of the prophecy traditionally attributed to the Imam Ali: "I am two years younger than my Lord." Twenty-five years, four months, and four days had elapsed since the day of His birth, when he declared His Mission. In His early childhood He lost His father, Siyyid Muhammad-Rida,[3] a man who was known throughout the province of Fars for his piety <p73> <p75> and virtue, and was held in high esteem and honour. Both His father and His mother were descendants of the Prophet, both were loved and respected by the people. He was reared by His maternal uncle, Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, a martyr to the Faith, who placed Him, while still a child, under the care of a tutor named Shaykh Abid.[4] The Bab, though not inclined to study, submitted to His uncle's will and directions.

[1 He is also known by the following designations:

Siyyid-i-Dhikr

Abdu'dh-Dhikr

Babu'llah

Nuqtiy-i-Ula

Tal'at-i-A'la

Hadrat-i-A'la

Rabb-i-A'la

Nuqity-i-Bayan

Siyyid-i-Bab

[2 October 20, 1819 A.D.]

[3 According to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl (manuscript on history of the Cause, p. 3), the Bab was still an infant, and had not yet been weaned, when His father passed away.]

[4 According to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl (manuscript, p. 41,) the Bab was six or seven years of age when He entered the school of Shaykh Abid. The school was known by the name of "Qahviyih-Awliya." The Bab remained five years at that school where He was taught the rudiments of Persian. On the first day of the month of Rabi'u'l-Avval, in the year 1257 A.H., He left for Najaf and Karbila, returning seven months after to His native province of Fars.]

Shaykh Abid, known by his pupils as Shaykhuna, was a man of piety and learning.

He had been a disciple of both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. "One day," he related, "I asked the Bab to recite the opening words of the Qur'an: 'Bismi'llahi'r-Rahmani'r-Rahim.' [1] He hesitated, pleading that unless He were told what these words signified, He would in no wise attempt to pronounce them.

I pretended not to know their meaning. 'I know what these words signify,' observed my pupil; 'by your leave, I will explain them.' He spoke with such knowledge and fluency that I was struck with amazement.

He expounded the meaning of 'Allah,' of 'Rahman,' and 'Rahim,' in terms such as

I had neither read nor heard.

The sweetness of His utterance still lingers in my memory.

I felt impelled to take Him back to His uncle and to deliver into his hands the Trust he had committed to my care.

I determined to tell him how unworthy I felt to teach so remarkable a child.

I found His uncle alone in his office. 'I have brought Him back to you,' I said, 'and commit Him to your vigilant protection.

He is not to be treated as a mere child, for in Him I can already discern evidences of that mysterious power which the Revelation of the Sahibu'z-Zaman [2] alone can reveal.

It is incumbent upon you to surround Him with your most loving care.

Keep Him in your house, for He, verily, stands in no need of teachers such as I.' Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali sternly rebuked the Bab. 'Have You forgotten my instructions?' he said. 'Have I not already admonished You to follow the example of Your <p76> fellow-pupils, to observe silence, and to listen attentively to every word spoken by Your teacher?' Having obtained His promise to abide faithfully by his instructions, he bade the Bab return to His school.

The soul of that child could not, however, be restrained by the stern admonitions of His uncle.

No discipline could repress the flow of His intuitive knowledge.

Day after day He continued to manifest such remarkable evidences of superhuman wisdom as I am powerless to recount."

At last His uncle was induced to take Him away from the school of Shaykh Abid, and to associate Him with himself in his own profession.[3] There, too, He revealed signs of a power and greatness that few could approach and none could rival.

[1 In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.]

[2 "The Lord of the Age," one of the titles of the promised Qa'im.]

[3 According to Haji Mu'inu's-Saltanih's narrative (p. 37), the Bab assumed, at the age of twenty, the independent direction of His business affairs.

"Orphaned at an early age, he was placed under the tutelage of his maternal uncle, Aqa Siyyid Ali, under whose direction he entered the same trade in which his father had been engaged (that is to say, the mercantile business)." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 189.)]

Some years later [1] the Bab was united in wedlock with the sister of Mirza Siyyid Hasan and Mirza Abu'l-Qasim.[2] The child which resulted from this union, He named Ahmad.[3] He died in the year 1259 A.D.,[4] the year preceding the declaration of the Faith by the Bab.

The Father did not lament his loss.

He consecrated his death by words such as these: <p77> "O God, my God!

Would that a thousand Ishmaels were given Me, this Abraham of Thine, that I might have offered them, each and all, as a loving sacrifice unto Thee.

O my Beloved, my heart's Desire!

The sacrifice of this Ahmad whom Thy servant Ali-Muhammad hath offered up on the altar of Thy love can never suffice to quench the flame of longing in His heart.

Not until He immolates His own heart at Thy feet, not until His whole body falls a victim to the cruelest tyranny in Thy path, not until His breast is made a target for countless darts for Thy sake, will the tumult of His soul be stilled.

O my God, my only Desire!

Grant that the sacrifice of My son, My only son, may be acceptable unto Thee.

Grant that it be a prelude to the sacrifice of My own, My entire self, in the path of Thy good pleasure.

Endue with Thy grace My life-blood which I yearn to shed in Thy path.

Cause it to water and nourish the seed of Thy Faith.

Endow it with Thy celestial potency, that this infant seed of God may soon germinate in the hearts of men, that it may thrive and prosper, that it may grow to become a mighty tree, beneath the shadow of which all the peoples and kindreds of the earth may gather.

Answer Thou My prayer, O God, and fulfil My most cherished desire.

Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful."^[5]

[1 According to Haji Mu'inu's-Saltanih's narrative (p. 37), the Bab's marriage took place when He was twenty-two years of age.]

[2 The Bab refers to her in his commentary on the Surih of Joseph (Surih of Qarabat). The following is A. L. M. Nicolas' translation of the passage in question: "In truth I have become betrothed before the throne of God with Sara, that is to say, the dearly beloved, because 'dearly beloved' is derived from Dearly Beloved (the Dearly Beloved is Muhammad which signifies that Sara was a Siyyid). In truth I have taken the angels of heaven and those who dwell in Paradise as witnesses of our betrothal. "Know that the benevolence of the Dhikr Sublime is great, O dearly beloved! Because it is the benevolence which comes from God, the Beloved. Thou art not like other women if thou obeyest God with regard to the Dhikr Sublime. Know the great truth of the Holy Word and glory within thyself that thou art seated with the friend who is the Favorite of the Most High God. Truly the glory comes to thee from God, the Wise. Be patient in the command which comes from God concerning the Bab and his family. Verily, thy son Ahmad has a refuge in the blessed heaven close to the great Fatimih!" (Preface to A. L. M. Nicolas' "Le Bayan Persan," vol. 2, pp. 10-11.)]

[3 The Bab refers to his son in his commentary on the Surih of Joseph. The

following is A. L. M. Nicolas' translation: "In truth, thy son Ahmad has a refuge in the Blessed Paradise near to the Great Fatimih." (Surih of Qarabat.)

"Glory be to God Who in truth has given to the 'Delight of the Eyes,' in her youth, a son who is named Ahmad. Verily, we have reared this child toward God!" (Surih of Abd.) (Preface A. L. M. Nicolas' "Le Bayan Persan," vol. 2, p. II.)]

[4 1843 A.D.]

[5 "He left Shiraz for Bushihr at the age of 17, and remained there for five years engaged in commercial pursuits. During this time he won the esteem of all the merchants with whom he was brought in contact, by his integrity and piety. He was extremely attentive to his religious duties, and gave away large sums to charity. On one occasion he gave 70 tumans [about 22] to a poor neighbour." (Appendix 2 of Tarikh-i-Jadid: Haji Mirza Jani's History, pp. 343-4.)]

The days which the Bab devoted to commercial pursuits were mostly spent in Bushihr.[1] The oppressive heat of the summer did not deter Him from devoting, each Friday, several hours to continuous worship upon the roof of His house. Though exposed to the fierce rays of the noontide sun, He, turning His heart to His Beloved, continued to commune with Him, unmindful of the intensity of the heat <p78> and oblivious of the world around Him. From early dawn till sunrise, and from midday till late in the afternoon, He dedicated His time to meditation and pious worship. Turning His gaze towards the north, in the direction of Tihiran, He, at every break of day, greeted, with a heart overflowing with love and joy, the rising, sun, which to Him was a sign and symbol of that Day-Star of Truth that was soon to dawn upon the world. As a lover who beholds the face of his beloved, He gazed upon the rising orb with steadfastness and longing. He seemed to be addressing, in mystic language, that shining luminary, and to be entrusting it with His, message of yearning and love to His concealed Beloved. With such transports of delight He greeted its beaming rays, that the heedless and <p79> ignorant around Him thought Him to be enamoured with the sun itself.[2]

[1 "He was already predisposed to meditation and inclined to be silent, while his fine face, the radiance of his glance as well as his modest and contemplative mien drew, even at that early date, the attention of his fellow-citizens. Though very young, he felt an invincible attraction to matters of religion, for he was barely nineteen when he wrote his first work, the 'risaliy-i-Fiqhiyyih' in which he reveals a true piety and an Islamic effusion, which seemed to predict a brilliant future within the law of Shiite orthodoxy. It is probable that this work was written at Bushihr, for he was sent there by his uncle at the age of eighteen or nineteen to look after his business interests." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 188-189.)]

[2 "In society he held converse preferably with the learned or listened to the tales of travelers who congregated in this commercial city. This is why he was generally considered to be one of the followers of Tariqat who were held in high esteem by the people." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p. 335.)]

I have heard Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i [1] recount the following: "Whilst

journeying to India, I passed through Bushihr. As I was already acquainted with Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, I was enabled to meet the Bab on several occasions. Every time I met Him, I found Him in such a state of humility and lowliness as words fail me to describe. His downcast eyes, His extreme courtesy, and the serene expression of His face made an indelible impression upon my soul.[2] I often heard those who were closely associated with Him testify to the purity of His character, to the charm of His manners, to His self-effacement, to His high integrity, and to His extreme devotion to God.[3] A certain man confided to His care a trust, requesting Him to dispose of it at a fixed price. When the Bab sent him the value of that article, the man found that the sum which he had been offered considerably exceeded the limit which he had fixed. He immediately wrote to the Bab, requesting Him to explain the reason. The Bab replied: 'What I have sent you is entirely your due. There is not a single farthing in excess of <p80> what is your right. there was a time when the trust you had delivered to Me had attained this value. Failing to sell it at that price, I now feel it My duty to offer you the whole of that sum.' However much the Bab's client entreated Him to receive back the sum in excess, the Bab persisted in refusing. [1 "The Kashfu'l-Ghiti" gives the following particulars regarding this remarkable person: "Haji Siyyid Javad himself informed me that he was a resident of Karbila, that his cousins were well known among the recognized ulamas and doctors of the law in that city and belonged to the Ithna-'Ashari sect of Shi'ah Islam. In his youth he met Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i, but was never regarded as his disciple. He was, however, an avowed follower and supporter of Siyyid Kazim, and ranked among his foremost adherents. He met the Bab in Shiraz, long before the date of the latter's Manifestation. He saw Him on several occasions which the Bab was only eight or nine years old, in the house of His maternal uncle. He subsequently met Him in Bushihr and stayed for about six months in the same khan in which the Bab and His maternal uncle were residing. Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, one of the Letters of the Living, acquainted him with the Message of the Bab, while in Karbila, from which city he proceeded to Shiraz in order to inform himself more fully of the nature of His Revelation." (Pp- 55-7.)

[2 "[The] Bab possessed a mild and benignant countenance, his manners were composed and dignified, his eloquence was impressive, and he wrote rapidly and well." (Lady Sheil's "Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia," p. 178.)]

[3 "Withdrawn within himself, always absorbed in pious practices, of extreme simplicity of manner, of a fascinating gentleness, those gifts further heightened by his great youth and his marvellous charm, he drew about himself a number of persons who were deeply edified. People then began to speak of his science and of the penetrating eloquence of his discourses. He could not open his lips (we are assured by those who knew him) without stirring the hearts to their very depths. "Speaking, moreover, with a profound reverence regarding the Prophet, the Imams and their holy companions, he fascinated the severely orthodox while, at the same time, in more intimate addresses, the more ardent and eager minds were happy to find that there was no rigidity in his profession of traditional opinions which they would have found boring. His conversations, on the contrary, opened before them unlimited horizons, varied, colored,

mysterious, with shadows broken here and there by patches of blinding light which transported those imaginative people of Persia into a state of ecstasy." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 118.)]

"With what assiduous care He attended those gatherings at which the virtues of the Siyyidu'sh-Shuhada', the Imam Husayn, were being extolled! With what attention He listened to the chanting of the eulogies! What tenderness and devotion He showed at those scenes of lamentation and prayer! Tears rained from His eyes as His trembling lips murmured words of prayer and praise. How compelling was His dignity, how tender the sentiments which His countenance inspired!"

As to those whose supreme privilege it was to be enrolled by the Bab in the Book of His Revelation as His chosen Letters of the Living, their names are as follows:

Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i,
Muhammad-Hasan, his brother,
Muhammad-Baqir, his nephew,
Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami,
Mulla Khuda-Bakhsh-i-Quchani, later named Mulla Ali
Mulla Hasan-i-Bajistani,
Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi,
Mirza Muhammad Rawdih-Khan-i-Yazdi,
Sa'id-i-Hindi,
Mulla Mahmud-i-Khu'i,
Mulla Jalil-i-Urumi,
Mulla Ahmad-i-Ibdal-i-Maraghi'i,
Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi,
Mulla Yusif-i-Ardibili,
Mirza Hadi, son of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Qazvini, <p81>
Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qazvini.[1]
Tahirih,[2]
Quddus.

These all, with the single exception of Tahirih, attained the presence of the Bab, and were personally invested by Him with the distinction of this rank. It was she who, having learned of the intended departure of her sister's husband, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, from Qazvin, entrusted him with a sealed letter, requesting that he deliver it to that promised One whom she said he was sure to meet in the course of his journey. "Say to Him, from me," she added, "'The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth, and the rays of Thy visage arose on high. Then speak the word, "Am I not your <p82> Lord?" and "Thou art, Thou art!" we will all reply.'"[3]

[1 According to Samandar, who was one of the early believers of Qazvin (manuscript, p. 15), Tahirih's sister, Mardiyiyih, was the wife of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, who was one of the Letters of the Living, and who suffered martyrdom at Shaykh Tabarsi. Mardiyiyih appears to have recognized and embraced the Message of the Bab (p. 5). Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was the son of Haji Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab, to whom the Bab addressed a Tablet while in the neighbourhood of

Qazvin.]

[2 According to the "Memorials of the Faithful" (pp.

291-8), Tahirih had two sons and one daughter, none of whom recognized the truth of the Cause.

Such was the degree of her knowledge and attainment, that her father, Haji Mulla Salih often expressed his regret in the following terms: "Would that she had been a boy for he would have shed illumination upon my household, and would have succeeded me!"

She became acquainted with the writings of Shaykh Ahmad while staying in the home of her cousin, Mulla Javad, from whose library she borrowed these books, and took them over to her home.

Her father raised violent objections to her action and, in his heated discussions with her, denounced and criticised the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad.

Tahirih refused to heed the counsels of her father, and engaged in secret correspondence with Siyyid Kazim, who conferred upon her the name of "Qurratu'l-'Ayn."

The title of "Tahirih" was first associated with her name while she was staying in Badasht, and was subsequently approved by the Bab.

From Qazvin she left for Karbila, hoping to meet Siyyid Kazim, but arrived too late, the Siyyid having passed away ten days before her arrival.

She joined the companions of the departed leader, and spent her time in prayer and meditation, eagerly expecting the appearance of Him whose advent Siyyid Kazim had foretold.

While in that city, she dreamed a dream.

A youth, a Siyyid, wearing a black cloak and a green turban, appeared to her in the heavens, who with upraised hands was reciting certain verses, one of which she noted down in her book.

She awoke from her dream greatly impressed by her strange experience.

When, later on, a copy of the "Ahsanu'l-Qisas," the Bab's commentary on the Surih of Joseph, reached her, she, to her intense delight, discovered that same verse which she had heard in her dream in that book.

That discovery assured her of the truth of the Message which the Author of that work had proclaimed.

She herself undertook the translation of the "Ahsanu'l-Qisas" into Persian, and exerted the utmost effort for its spread and interpretation.

For three months her house in Karbila was besieged by the guards whom the Governor had appointed to watch and prevent her from associating with the people.

From Karbila she proceeded to Baghdad, and lived for a time the house of Shaykh

Muhammad-i-Shibl, from which place she transferred her residence to another quarter, and was eventually taken to the home of the Mufti, where she stayed for about three months.]

[3 According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghiti" (p. 93), Tahirih was informed of the Message of the Bab by Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, who visited Karbila in the year 1260 A.H., after his return from Shiraz.]

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali eventually met and recognized the Bab and conveyed to Him both the letter and the message of Tahirih.

The Bab forthwith declared her one of the Letters of the Living.

Her father, Haji Mulla Salih-i-Qazvini, and his brother, Mulla Taqi, were both mujtahids of great renown,[1] were skilled in the traditions of Muslim law, and were universally respected by the people of Tihran, Qazvin, and other leading cities of Persia.

She was married to Mulla Muhammad, son of Mulla Taqi, her uncle, whom <p83> the shi'ahs styled Shahid-i-Thalith.[2] Although her family belonged to the Bala-Sari, Tahirih alone showed, from the very beginning, a marked sympathy and devotion to Siyyid Kazim.

As an evidence of her personal admiration for him, she wrote an apology in defence and justification of the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad and presented it to him.

To this she soon received a reply, couched in the most affectionate terms, in the opening passages of which the Siyyid thus addressed her: "O thou who art the solace of mine eyes (Ya Qurrat-i-'Ayni!), and the joy of my heart!"

Ever since that time she has been known as Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

After the historic <p84> gathering of Badasht, a number of those who attended were so amazed at the fearlessness and outspoken language of that heroine, that they felt it their duty to acquaint the Bab with the character of her startling and unprecedented behaviour.

They strove to tarnish the purity of her name.

To their accusations the Bab replied: "What am I to say regarding her whom the Tongue of Power and Glory has named Tahirih [the Pure One]?"

These words proved sufficient to silence those who had endeavoured to undermine her position.

From that time onwards she was designated by the believers as Tahirih.[3]

[1 "One of the most distinguished families of Qazvin--and by this I mean most distinguished by the number of high offices which their various members held in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as well as by their reputation for science--was, without doubt, the family of Haji Mulla Salih-i-Baraqani who received after his death the title of 'Shahid-i-Thalith', that is to say, 'the third martyr.' We shall review their early history in order to make clear the role which they played in the religious dissensions of Persia, as well as in the catastrophe

which was fatally to develop the arrogant character of the brother of Mulla Salih.

When the great Mujtahid Aqa Siyyid Muhammad arrived at Qazvin, someone asked him if Haji Mulla Salih-i-Baraqani was a Mujtahid. 'Assuredly,' replied the Siyyid, and that all the more so since Salih was one of his former students who towards the last had followed the teachings of Aqa Siyyid Ali. 'Very well,' replied his questioner, 'but his brother Muhammad-Taqi, is he also worthy of the sacred title?' Aqa Siyyid Muhammad replied by praising the qualities and the science of Taqi but avoiding a precise answer to the direct question put to him.

However, this did not prevent the questioner from spreading abroad in the city the news that Siyyid Muhammad himself acknowledged Taqi as a Master whom he had declared Mujtahid in his presence. "Now Siyyid Muhammad had gone to live with one of his colleagues, Haji Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab.

The latter learned quickly of the news which was thus noised abroad and he immediately summoned before him the questioner of the Siyyid whom he reproached severely in the presence of witnesses.

Naturally, the rumor spread from tongue to tongue until it reached Taqi, who became furious and declared each time he heard the name of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab,--'I only respect him because he is the son of my blessed Master.'"Siyyid Muhammad, having been informed of all these incidents and of all the rumors, and realizing that he had saddened the heart of Taqi, came one day to invite him to luncheon; he treated him with great respect, wrote for him his brevet of Mujtahid and, this same day, accompanied him to the Mosque.

The prayer over, he sat down on the steps of the pulpit where he spoke the praises of Taqi and confirmed him in his new dignity, in the presence of the entire assembly.

It happened that, a little later, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i passed through Qazvin.

This personage, said to be the very pious author of 'Qisasul-'Ulama,' was declared impious because he had endeavored to reconcile philosophy and religious law, 'and everyone knows that in most cases to try to blend religious law with intelligence is an impossibility.' Be that as it may, Shaykh Ahmad rose high above his contemporaries, many men sharing his opinions.

He had followers in all the cities of Persia and the Shah Fath-'Ali treated him with great deference, while Akhund Mulla Ali said of him, 'He is an ignorant man with a pure heart.' "While in Qazvin, he sojourned in the house of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab who was henceforth to be the enemy of the Baraqani family.

He went to worship in the Mosque of the parish and the ulamas of Qazvin came to pray under his guidance.

He naturally returned all the visits and courtesies extended to him by these holy men, was on good terms with them and soon it became known that his host was one of his disciples.

One day he went to call upon Haji Mulla Taqi-i-Baraqani who received him apparently with profound respect, but took advantage of the opportunity to ask him some insidious questions. 'Regarding the resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgment,' he asked, 'do you share the opinion of Mulla Sadra?' 'No,' replied Shaykh Ahmad.

Then Taqi, calling his youngest brother Haji Mulla Ali, said: 'Go to my library and bring me the Shavahid-i-Rububiyyih of Mulla Sadra.' Then, as Haji Mulla was slow to return, he said to Shaykh Ahmad: 'Although I do not agree with you on this subject, I am nevertheless curious to know your opinion on the matter.' The Shaykh replied, 'Nothing would be easier.'

My conviction is that the resurrection will not take place with our material bodies but with their essence, and by essence I mean, for example, the glass which is potentially in the stone.' 'Excuse me,' Taqi replied maliciously, 'but this essence is different from the material body and you know that it is a dogma in our holy religion to believe in the resurrection of the material body.' The Shaykh remained silent and it was in vain that one of his pupils, a native of Turkistan, endeavored to divert the conversation by starting a discussion which was likely to be a lengthy one, but the blow was dealt and Shaykh Ahmad withdrew, convinced that he had been compromised.

It was not long before he realized that his conversation had been carefully related by Taqi for, that very day, when he went to the Mosque to pray he was followed only by Abdu'l-Vahhab.

A misunderstanding was broiling and threatened to break, but Abdu'l-Vahhab, thinking he had found a way to smooth things over and remove all the difficulties, entreated his Master to write and publish a book in which he would affirm the resurrection of the material body.

But he had not taken into account the hatred of Taqi.

In fact, Shaykh Ahmad did write the treatise, which still may be found in his book entitled 'Ajvibatu'l-Masa'il' but no one cared to read it and his impiety was noised abroad increasingly from day to day.

It came to the point where the Governor of the city, Prince Ali-Naqi Mirza Ruknu'd-Dawlih, considering the importance of the personages involved in the controversy and afraid being blamed for allowing this dissension to grow, resolved to bring about an agreement. "One night, he invited all the celebrated Ulamas of the city to a great banquet.

Shaykh Ahmad was given the seat of honor and close to him, only separated by one person, was Taqi.

Platters were brought, prepared for three people, so that the two enemies found that they were obliged to eat together, but the irreconcilable Taqi turned toward the platter of his neighbors on his right hand and to the great consternation of the Prince, he placed his left hand over the left side of his face in such a manner that he could not possibly see Shaykh Ahmad.

After the banquet which proved rather dull, the Prince, still determined to reconcile the two adversaries, bestowed great praise on Shaykh Ahmad, acknowledging him as the great Arabian and Persian Doctor and saying that Taqi should show him the greatest respect; that it was not proper for him to give ear to the gossip of men eager to create conflict between two exceptional minds. Taqi interrupted him violently and declared with great contempt, 'There can be no peace between impiety and faith!

Concerning the resurrection the Shaykh holds a doctrine opposed to the religion of Islam, (Islamic law) therefore, whoever holds such a doctrine is an impious one and what can such a rebel and I have in common?' "The Prince insisted and entreated in vain, but Taqi refused to yield and they all adjourned." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

263-267.)]

[2 Third Martyr.]

[3 "Mulla Salih had among his children a daughter, Zarrin-Taj (Crown of Gold), who had attracted attention from early childhood.

Instead of taking part in games and amusements like her companions, she passed hours at a time listening to her parents discuss religious matters.

Her keen intelligence quickly perceived the fallacies of Islamic science without succumbing to it and soon she was able to discuss points which were most obscure and confusing.

The Hadiths (traditions) held no secrets for her.

Her reputation soon became widely known in the city and her fellow-citizens considered her a prodigy, and justly so.

A prodigy in science, also a prodigy of beauty, for the child, as she grew to girlhood, possessed a face which shone with such radiant beauty that they named her 'Qurratu'l-'Ayn', which M. de Gobineau translates as 'The Consolation of the Eyes.' Her brother Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Qazvini who inherited the learning and reputation of his father, himself relates, in spite of the fact that he remained, at least in appearance, a Muhammadan: 'None of us, her brothers or her cousins dared to speak in her presence, her learning so intimidated us, and if we ventured to express some hypothesis upon a disputed point of doctrine, she demonstrated in such a clear, precise and conclusive manner that we were going astray, that we instantly withdrew confused.' "She was present at her father's and uncle's classes, in the same room with two or three hundred students, but always concealed behind a curtain, and more than once she refuted the explanation that these two elderly men offered upon such and such a question.

Her reputation became universal throughout all Persia, and the most haughty

Ulamas consented to adopt some of her hypotheses and opinions.

This fact is all the more extraordinary because the Shiite Muhammadan religion relegates the woman almost to the level of the animal.

They consider that she has no soul and exists merely for reproduction.

"Qurratu'l-'Ayn married, when still quite young, the son of her uncle, Muhammad-i-Qazvini who was the Imam-Jum'ih of the city and later she went to Karbila where she attended the classes of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti.

She shared with enthusiasm the ideas of her Master, ideas with which she was already familiar, the city of Qazvin having become a center for the Shaykhi doctrine. "She was, as we shall see later, of an ardent temperament, of a precise and clear intelligence, of a marvellous presence of mind and indomitable courage.

All of these qualities combined were to bring her to take interest in the Bab whom she heard speak immediately after his return to Qazvin.

That which she learned interested her so vitally that she began corresponding with the Reformer and soon, convinced by him, she made known her conversion *urbi et orbi*.

The scandal was very great and the clergy were shocked.

In vain, her husband, her father and her brothers pleaded with her to renounce this dangerous madness, but she remained inflexible and proclaimed resolutely her faith." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

273-274.)]

A word should now be said in explanation of the term Bala-Sari. Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, as well as their followers, when visiting the shrine of the Imam Husayn in Karbila, invariably occupied, as a mark of reverence, the lower end of the sepulchre. They never advanced beyond it, whereas other worshippers, the Bala-Sari, recited their prayers in the upper section of that shrine. The Shaykhis, believing, as they did, that "every true believer lives both in this world and in the next," felt it unseemly and improper to step beyond the limits of the lower sections of the shrine <p85> of the Imam Husayn, who in their eyes was the very incarnation of the most perfect believer.[1]

[1 "This name comes to them," said Haji Karim Khan in his *Hidayatu't-Talibin*, 'from the fact that the late Shaykh Ahmad, being at Karbila during his pilgrimages to the holy tombs, and out of respect for the Imams, recited his prayers standing behind the Imam, that is to say, at his feet. In fact, for him there was no difference between the respect to be tendered to a dead Imam or a living Imam. The Persians, on the contrary, when entering into the tomb, placed themselves at the head of the Imam and consequently turned their backs

to him when they prayed because the dead saints are buried with their heads towards the Qiblah. This is a disgrace and a lie! The apostles of Jesus pretending to have come to the assistance of God, were called 'Nasara,' a name which was given to all those who followed in their footsteps. It is thus that the name of Bala-Sari extended to all that follow the doctrine of those who pray standing at the head of the Imam." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, preface, pp. 5-6.)]

Mulla Husayn, who anticipated being the chosen companion of the Bab during His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, was, as soon as the latter decided to depart from Shiraz, summoned to the presence of his Master, who gave him the following instructions: "The days of our companionship are approaching their end.

My Covenant with you is now accomplished.

Gird up the loins of endeavour, and arise to diffuse My Cause.

Be not dismayed at the sight of the degeneracy and perversity of this generation, for the Lord of the Covenant shall assuredly assist you.

Verily, He shall surround you with His loving protection, and shall lead you from victory to victory.

Even as the cloud that rains its bounty upon the earth, traverse the land from end to end, and shower upon its people the blessings which the Almighty, in His mercy, has deigned to confer upon you.

Forbear with the ulamas, and resign yourself to the will of God.

Raise the cry: 'Awake, awake, for, lo! the Gate of God is open, and the morning Light is shedding its radiance upon all mankind!

The promised One is made manifest; prepare the way for Him, O people of the earth!

Deprive not yourselves of its redeeming grace, nor close your eyes to its effulgent glory.' Those whom you find receptive to your call, share with them the epistles and tablets We have revealed for you, that, perchance, these wondrous words may cause them to turn away from the slough of heedlessness, and soar into the realm <p86> of the Divine presence.

In this pilgrimage upon which We are soon to embark, We have chosen Quddus as Our companion.

We have left you behind to face the onslaught of a fierce and relentless enemy.

Rest assured, however, that a bounty unspeakably glorious shall be conferred upon you.

Follow the course of your journey towards the north, and visit on your way Isfahan, Kashan, Qum, and Tihiran.

Beseech almighty Providence that He may graciously enable you to attain, in that capital, the seat of true sovereignty, and to enter the mansion of the Beloved.

A secret lies hidden in that city.

When made manifest, it shall turn the earth into paradise.

My hope is that you may partake of its grace and recognize its splendour.

From Tihran proceed to Khurasan, and there proclaim anew the Call.

From thence return to Najaf and Karbila, and there await the summons <p87> of your Lord.

Be assured that the high mission for which you have been created will, in its entirety, be accomplished by you.

Until you have consummated your work, if all the darts of an unbelieving world be directed against you, they will be powerless to hurt a single hair of your head.

All things are imprisoned within His mighty grasp.

He, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Subduing."

The Bab then summoned to His presence Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, and addressed to him words of cheer and loving-kindness. He instructed him to proceed directly to Najaf and Karbila, alluded to the severe trials and afflictions that would befall him, and enjoined him to be steadfast till the end. "Your faith," He told him, "must be immovable as the rock, must weather every storm and survive every calamity. Suffer not the denunciations of the foolish and the calumnies of the clergy to afflict you, or to turn you from your purpose. For you are called to partake of the celestial banquet prepared for you in the immortal Realm. You are the first to leave the House of God, and to suffer for His sake. If you be slain in His path, remember that great will be your reward, and goodly the gift which will be bestowed upon you."

No sooner were these words uttered than Mulla Ali arose from his seat and set out to prosecute his mission.

At about a farsang's distance from Shiraz he was overtaken by a youth who, flushed with excitement, impatiently asked to speak to him.

His name was Abdu'l-Vahhab. "I beseech you," he tearfully entreated Mulla Ali, "to allow me to accompany you on your journey.

Perplexities oppress my heart; I pray you to guide my steps in the way of Truth.

Last night, in my dream, I heard the crier announce in the market-street of Shiraz the appearance of the Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful.

He called to the multitude: 'Arise and seek him.

Behold, he plucks out of the burning fire charters of liberty and is distributing them to the people.

Hasten to him, for whoever receives them from his hands will be secure from penal suffering, and whoever fails to obtain them from him, will be bereft of

the blessings of Paradise.' Immediately I heard the voice of the crier, I arose and, abandoning my shop, ran across the market-street of Vakil to a place where my eyes beheld you standing and distributing <p88> those same charters to the people.

To everyone who approached to receive them from your hands, you would whisper in his ear a few words which instantly caused him to flee in consternation and exclaim: 'Woe betide me, for I am deprived of the blessings of Ali and his kindred!

Ah, miserable me, that I am accounted among the outcast and fallen !' I awoke from my dream and, immersed in an ocean of thought, regained my shop.

Suddenly I saw you pass, accompanied by a man who wore a turban, and who was conversing with you.

I sprang from my seat and, impelled by a power which I could not repress, ran to overtake you.

To my utter amazement, I found you standing upon the very site which I had witnessed in my dream, engaged in the recital of traditions and verses.

Standing aside, at a distance, I kept watching you, wholly unobserved by you and your friend.

I heard the man whom you were addressing, impetuously protest: 'Easier is it for me to be devoured by the flames of hell than to acknowledge the truth of your words, the weight of which mountains are unable to sustain!' To his contemptuous rejection you returned this answer: 'Were all the universe to repudiate His truth, it could never tarnish the unsullied purity of His robe of grandeur.' Departing from him, you directed your steps towards the gate of Kaziran.

I continued to follow you until I reached this place."

Mulla Ali tried to appease his troubled heart and to persuade him to return to his shop and resume his daily work. "Your association with me," he urged, "would involve me in difficulties.

Return to Shiraz and rest assured, for you are accounted of the people of salvation.

Far be it from the justice of God to withhold from so ardent and devoted a seeker the cup of His grace, or to deprive a soul so athirst from the billowing ocean of His Revelation."

The words of Mulla Ali proved of no avail.

The more he insisted upon the return of Abdu'l-Vahhab, the louder grew his lamentation and weeping.

Mulla Ali finally felt compelled to comply with his wish, resigning himself to the will of God.

Haji Abdu'l-Majid, the father of Abdu'l-Vahhab, has often been heard to

recount, with eyes filled with tears, this story: "How deeply," he said, "I regret the deed I committed.

Pray that God may grant me the remission of my sin.

I <p89> was one among the favoured in the court of the sons of the Farman-Farma, the governor of the province of Fars.

Such was my position that none dared to oppose or harm me.

No one questioned my authority or ventured to interfere with my freedom.

Immediately I heard that my son Abdu'l-Vahhab had forsaken his shop and left the city, I ran out in the direction of the Kaziran gate to overtake him.

Armed with a club with which I intended to beat him, I enquired as to the road he had taken.

I was told that a man wearing a turban had just crossed the street and that my son was seen following him.

They seemed to have agreed to leave the city together.

This excited my anger and indignation.

How could I tolerate, I thought to myself, such unseemly behaviour on the part of my son, I, who already hold so privileged a position in the court of the sons of the Farman-Farma?

Nothing but the severest chastisement, I felt, could wipe away the effect of my son's disgraceful conduct.

"I continued my search until I reached them.

Seized with a savage fury, I inflicted upon Mulla Ali unspeakable injuries.

To the strokes that fell heavily upon him, he, with extraordinary serenity, returned this answer: 'Stay your hand, O Abdu'l-Majid, for the eye of God is observing you.

I take Him as my witness, that I am in no wise responsible for the conduct of your son.

I mind not the tortures you inflict upon me, for I stand prepared for the most grievous afflictions in the path I have chosen to follow.

Your injuries, compared to what is destined to befall me in future, are as a drop compared to the ocean.

Verily, I say, you shall survive me, and will come to recognize my innocence.

Great will then be your remorse, and deep your sorrow.' Scorning his remarks, and heedless of his appeal, I continued to beat him until I was exhausted.

Silently and heroically he endured this most undeserved chastisement at my hands.

Finally, I ordered my son to follow me, and left Mulla Ali to himself. "On our

way back to Shiraz, my son related to me the dream he had dreamt.

A feeling of profound regret gradually seized me.

The blamelessness of Mulla Ali was vindicated in my eyes, and the memory of my cruelty to him continued long to oppress my soul.

Its bitterness lingered in my heart until the time when I felt obliged to transfer my residence <p90> from Shiraz to Baghdad.

From Baghdad I moved to Kazimayn, where Abdu'l-Vahhab established his business.

A strange mystery brooded over his youthful face.

He seemed to be concealing from me a secret which appeared to have transformed his life.

And when, in the year 1267 A.H.,[1] Baha'u'llah journeyed to Iraq and visited Kazimayn, Abdu'l-Vahhab fell immediately under the spell of His charm and pledged his undying devotion to Him.

A few years later, when my son had suffered martyrdom in Tihiran and Baha'u'llah had been exiled to Baghdad, He, with infinite loving-kindness and mercy, awakened me from the sleep of heedlessness, and Himself taught me the message of the New Day, washing away with the waters of Divine forgiveness the stains of that cruel act."

[1 1850-51 A.D.]

This episode marks the first affliction which befell a disciple of the Bab after the declaration of His mission.

Mulla Ali realised from this experience how steep and thorny was the path leading to his eventual attainment of the promise given him by his Master.

Wholly resigned to His will, and prepared to shed his life-blood for His Cause, he resumed his journey until he arrived at Najaf.

In the presence of Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan, one of the most celebrated ecclesiastics of shi'ah Islam, and in the face of a distinguished company of his disciples, Mulla Ali announced fearlessly the manifestation of the Bab, the Gate whose advent they were eagerly awaiting. "His proof," he declared, "is His Word; His testimony, none other than the testimony with which Islam seeks to vindicate its truth.

From the pen of this unschooled Hashimite Youth of Persia there have streamed, within the space of forty-eight hours, as great a number of verses, of prayers, of homilies, and scientific treatises, as would equal in volume the whole of the Qur'an, which it took Muhammad, the Prophet of God, twenty-three years to reveal!"

That proud and fanatic leader, instead of welcoming, in an age of darkness and prejudice, these life-giving evidences of a new-born Revelation, forthwith pronounced Mulla Ali a heretic and expelled him from the assembly.

His disciples and followers, even the Shaykhis, who already testified to Mulla

Ali's piety, sincerity, and learning, endorsed, unhesitatingly, <p91> the judgment against him.

The disciples of Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan, joining hands with their adversaries, heaped upon him untold indignities.

They eventually delivered him, his hands bound in chains, to an official of the Ottoman government, arraigning him as a wrecker of Islam, a calumniator of the Prophet, an instigator of mischief, a disgrace to the Faith, and worthy of the penalty of death.

He was taken to Baghdad under the escort of government officials, and was cast into prison by the governor of that city.

Haji Hashim, surnamed Attar, a prominent merchant, who was well versed in the Scriptures of Islam, recounted the following: "I was present at Government House on one occasion when Mulla Ali was summoned to the presence of the assembled notables and government officials of that city.

He was publicly accused of being an infidel, an abrogator of the laws of Islam, and a repudiator of its rituals and accepted standards.

When his alleged offences and misdeeds had been enumerated, the Mufti, the chief exponent of the law of Islam in that city, turned to him and said: 'O enemy of God!' As I was occupying a seat beside the Mufti, I whispered in his ear: 'You are as yet unacquainted with this unfortunate stranger.

Why address him in such terms?

Do you not realise that such words as you have addressed to him will excite the anger of the populace against him?

It behoves you to disregard the unsupported charges these busybodies have brought against him, to question him yourself, and to judge him according to the accepted standards of justice inculcated by the Faith of Islam.' The Mufti was sore displeased, arose from his seat, and left the gathering.

Mulla Ali was again thrown into prison.

A few days later, I enquired about him, hoping to achieve his deliverance.

I was informed that, on the night of that same day, he had been deported to Constantinople.

I made further enquiries and endeavoured to find out what eventually befell him.

I could not, however, ascertain the truth.

A few believed that on his way to Constantinople he had fallen ill and died.

Others maintained that he had suffered martyrdom." [1] Whatever <p92> his end, Mulla Ali had by his life and death earned the immortal distinction of having been the first sufferer in the path of this new Faith of God, the first to have laid down his life as an offering on the Altar of Sacrifice.

[1 According to Muhammad Mustafa (p. 106), Mulla Ali suffered six months' imprisonment in Baghdad by order of Najib Pasha, the governor of the city. He was thence ordered to leave for Constantinople, according to instructions received from the Ottoman government. He passed through Mosul, where he was able to awaken interest in the new Revelation. His friends were, however, unable to discover whether he eventually reached his destination.]

Having sent forth Mulla Ali on his mission, the Bab summoned to His presence the remaining Letters of the Living, and to each severally He gave a special command and appointed a special task.

He addressed to them these parting words: "O My beloved friends!

You are the bearers of the name of God in this Day.

You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery.

It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness, His power and glory.

The very members of your body must bear witness to the loftiness of your purpose, the integrity of your life, the reality of your faith, and the exalted character of your devotion.

For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book:[1] 'On that day will We set a seal upon their mouths yet shall their hands speak unto Us, and their feet shall bear witness to that which they shall have done.' Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God.

In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission: 'Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain-top.

Let your light shine before the eyes of men.

Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognize and be drawn closer to the heavenly Father who is the Source of purity and grace.

For none has seen the Father who is in heaven.

You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify His virtues, and witness to His glory.

You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Such must be the degree of your detachment, that into whatever city you enter to proclaim and teach the Cause of God, you should in no wise expect either meat or reward from its people.

Nay, when you depart out of that city, you should shake the dust from off your feet.

As you have entered it pure and <p93> undefiled, so must you depart from that city.

For verily I say, the heavenly Father is ever with you and keeps watch over you.

If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world.' O My Letters!

Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old.

Nay, immeasurable is the difference!

You are the witnesses of the Dawn of the promised Day of God.

You are the partakers of the mystic chalice of His Revelation.

Gird up the loins of endeavour, and be mindful of the words of God as revealed in His Book:[2] 'Lo, the Lord thy God is come, and with Him is the company of His angels arrayed before Him!' Purge your hearts of worldly desires, and let angelic virtues be your adorning.

Strive that by your deeds you may bear witness to the truth of these words of God, and beware lest, by 'turning back,' He may 'change you for another people,' who 'shall not be your like,' and who shall take from you the Kingdom of God.

The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended.

The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him. 'The good word riseth up unto Him, and the righteous deed will cause it to be exalted before Him.' You are the lowly, of whom God has thus spoken in His Book:[3] "And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make them Our heirs.' You have been called to this station; you will attain to it, only if you arise to trample beneath your feet every earthly desire, and endeavour to become those 'honoured servants of His who speak not till He hath spoken, and who do His bidding.' You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point,[4] the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation.

Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you.

I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day.

Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I, who am now instructing you, may, before the mercy-seat of <p94> God, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements.

The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed.

It can neither be divulged nor estimated.

The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age.

Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming.

Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty.

Has He not, in past days, caused Abraham, in spite of His seeming helplessness, to triumph over the forces of Nimrod?

Has He not enabled Moses, whose staff was His only companion, to vanquish Pharaoh and his hosts?

Has He not established the ascendancy of Jesus, poor and lowly as He was in the eyes of men, over the combined forces of the Jewish people?

Has He not subjected the barbarous and militant tribes of Arabia to the holy and transforming discipline of Muhammad, His Prophet?

Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.'^[5]

[1 The Qur'an.]

[2 The Qur'an.]

[3 The Qur'an.]

[4 One of the Bab's titles.]

[5 The Bab refers to the Letters of the Living in the Persian Bayan (Vahid I, Bab 2) in the following terms: "All of these formed the name of the Living One, for these are the names that are the nearest to God; the others are guided by their clear and significant actions, for God began the creation of the Bayan through them, and it is to them that the creation of the Bayan will again return. They are the lights which in the past have eternally prostrated themselves and will prostrate themselves eternally in the future, before the celestial throne." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. 1, pp. 24-25.)]

With such words the Bab quickened the faith of His disciples and launched them upon their mission. To each He assigned his own native province as the field of his labours. He directed them each and all to refrain from specific references to His own name and person.^[1] He instructed them to raise the call that the Gate to the Promised One has been opened, that His proof is irrefutable, and that His testimony is complete. He bade them declare that whoever believes in Him has believed in all the prophets of God, and that whoever denies Him has denied all His saints and His chosen <p95> [Illustration: THE MADRISH OF NIM-AVARD, ISFAHAN] <p96> ones. With these instructions He dismissed them from His presence and committed them to the care of God. Of these Letters of the Living, whom He thus addressed, there remained with Him in Shiraz Mulla Husayn,

the first of these Letters, and Quddus, the last. The rest, fourteen in number, set out, at the hour of dawn, from Shiraz, each resolved to carry out, in its entirety, the task with which he had been entrusted.

[1 A. L. M. Nicolas, in his introduction to volume I of "Le Bayan Persan" (pp. 3-5), writes as follows: "Everyone agrees in acknowledging that it would be absolutely impossible for him to proclaim loudly his doctrine or to spread it among men. He had to act as does a physician to children, who must disguise a bitter medicine in a sweet coating in order to win over his young patients. The people in the midst of whom he appeared were, and still are, alas, more fanatical than the Jews were at the time of Jesus, when the majesty of Roman peace was no longer there to put a stop to the furious excesses of religious madness of an over-excited people. Therefore, if Christ, in spite of the relative calm of the surroundings in which He preached, thought it necessary to employ the parable, Siyyid Ali-Muhammad, a fortiori, was obliged to disguise his thought in numerous circuitous ways and only pour out, one drop at a time, the filter of his divine truths. He brings up his child, Humanity; he guides it, endeavoring always not to frighten it and directs its first steps on a path which leads it slowly but surely, so that, as soon as it can proceed alone, it reaches the goal pre-ordained for it from all eternity."]

To Mulla Husayn, as the hour of his departure approached, the Bab addressed these words: "Grieve not that you have not been chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Hijaz.

I shall, instead, direct your steps to that city which enshrines a Mystery of such transcendent holiness as neither Hijaz nor Shiraz can hope to rival.

My hope is that you may, by the aid of God, be enabled to remove the veils from the eyes of the wayward and to cleanse the minds of the malevolent.

Visit, on your way, Isfahan, Kashan, Tihran, and Khurasan.

Proceed thence to Iraq, and there await the summons of your Lord, who will keep watch over you and will direct you to whatsoever is His will and desire.

As to Myself, I shall, accompanied by Quddus and My Ethiopian servant, proceed on My pilgrimage to Hijaz.

I shall join the company of the pilgrims of Fars, who will shortly be sailing for that land.

I shall visit Mecca and Medina, and there fulfil the mission with which God has entrusted Me.

God willing, I shall return hither by the way of Kufih, in which place I hope to meet you.

If it be decreed otherwise, I shall ask you to join Me in Shiraz.

The hosts of the invisible Kingdom, be assured, will sustain and reinforce your efforts.

The essence of power is now dwelling in you, and the company of His chosen

angels revolves around you.

His almighty arms will surround you, and His unfailing Spirit will ever continue to guide your steps.

He that loves you, loves God; and whoever opposes you, has opposed God.

Whoso befriends you, him will God befriend; and whoso rejects you, him will God reject." <p97>

CHAPTER IV

MULLA HUSAYN'S JOURNEY TO TIHRAN

WITH these noble words ringing in his ears, Mulla Husayn embarked upon his perilous enterprise.

Wherever he went, to whatever class of people he addressed himself, he delivered fearlessly and without reserve the Message with which his beloved Master had entrusted him.

Arriving in Isfahan, he established himself in the madrasah of Nim-Avard.

Around him gathered those who on his previous visit to that city had known him as the favoured messenger of Siyyid Kazim to the eminent mujtahid, Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir.[1] He, being now dead, had been succeeded by his son, who had just returned from Najaf and was now established upon the seat of his father.

Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Kalbasi had also fallen seriously ill, and was on the verge of death.

The disciples of the late Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir, now freed from the restraining influence of their departed teacher, and alarmed at the strange doctrines which Mulla Husayn was propounding, vehemently denounced him to Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah, the son of the late Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir. "Mulla Husayn," they complained, "was able, in the course of his last visit, to win the support of your illustrious father to the cause of Shaykh Ahmad.

No one among the Siyyid's helpless disciples dared to oppose him.

He now comes as the upholder of a still more formidable opponent and is pleading His Cause with still greater vehemence and vigour.

He is persistently claiming that He whose Cause he now champions is the Revealer of a Book which is divinely inspired, and which bears a striking resemblance to the tone <p98> and language of the Qur'an.

In the face of the people of this city, he has flung these challenging words: 'Produce one like it, if you are men of truth.' The day is fast approaching when the whole of Isfahan will have embraced his Cause!"

Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah returned evasive answers to their complaints. "What am I to say?" he was at last forced to reply.

Do you not yourselves admit that Mulla Husayn has, by his eloquence and the cogency of his argument, silenced a man no less great than my illustrious

father?

How can I, then, who am so inferior to him in merit and knowledge, presume to challenge what he has already approved?

Let each man dispassionately examine these claims.

If he be satisfied, well and good; if not, let him observe silence, and not incur the risk of discrediting the fair name of our Faith."

[1 "In crowds they gathered to hear the teacher. He occupied in turn all the pulpits of Isfahan where he was free to speak publicly and to announce that Mirza Ali-Muhammad was the twelfth Imam, the Imam Mihdi. He displayed and read his Master's books and would reveal their eloquence and their depth, emphasizing the extreme youthfulness of the seer and telling of his miracles." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 130.)]

Finding that their efforts had failed to influence Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah, his disciples referred the matter to Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Kalbasi. "Woe betide us," they loudly protested, "for the enemy has risen to disrupt the holy Faith of Islam. In lurid and exaggerated language, they stressed the challenging character of the ideas propounded by Mulla Husayn. "Hold your peace," replied Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim. "Mulla Husayn is not the person to be duped by anyone, nor can he fall a victim to dangerous heresies. If your contention be true, if Mulla Husayn has indeed espoused a new Faith, it is unquestionably your first obligation to enquire dispassionately into the character of his teachings, and to refrain from denouncing him without previous and careful scrutiny. If my health and strength be restored, it is my intention, God willing, to investigate the matter myself, and to ascertain the truth."

This severe rebuke, pronounced by Haji Kalbasi, greatly disconcerted the disciples of Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah. In their dismay they appealed to Manuchihr Khan, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, the governor of the city. That wise and judicious ruler refused to interfere in these matters, which he said fell exclusively within the jurisdiction of the ulamas. He warned them to abstain from mischief and to cease disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the messenger. His trenchant words shattered the hopes of the mischief-makers. Mulla Husayn was thereby relieved from the machinations <p99> of his enemies, and, for a time, pursued untrammelled the course of his labours.

The first to embrace the Cause of the Bab in that city was a man, a sifter of wheat, who, as soon as the Call reached his ears, unreservedly accepted the Message.

With marvellous devotion he served Mulla Husayn, and through his close association with him became a zealous advocate of the new Revelation.

A few years later, when the soul-stirring details of the siege of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi were being recounted to him, he felt an irresistible impulse to throw in his lot with those heroic companions of the Bab who had risen for the defence of their Faith.

Carrying his sieve in his hand, he immediately arose and set out to reach the

scene of that memorable encounter. "Why leave so hurriedly?" his friends asked him, as they saw him running in a state of intense excitement through the bazaars of Isfahan. "I have risen," he replied, "to join the glorious company of the defenders of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi!"

With this sieve which I carry with me, I intend to sift the people in every city through which I pass.

Whomsoever I find ready to espouse the Cause I have embraced, I will ask to join me and hasten forthwith to the field of martyrdom."

Such was the devotion of this youth, that the Bab, in the Persian Bayan, refers to him in such terms: "Isfahan, that outstanding city, is distinguished by the religious fervour of its shi'ah inhabitants, by the learning of its divines, and by the keen expectation, shared by high and low alike, of the imminent coming of the Sahibu'z-Zaman.

In every quarter of that city, religious institutions have been established.

And yet, when the Messenger of God had been made manifest, they who claimed to be the repositories of learning and the expounders of the mysteries of the Faith of God rejected His Message.

Of all the inhabitants of that seat of learning, only one person, a sifter of wheat, was found to recognize the Truth, and was invested with the robe of Divine virtue!"[1]

[1 'Behold the land of Sad (Isfahan) which in this world of appearances is the greatest of lands. In every one of its schools, numerous slaves are found who bear the name of savants and contestants. At the time of the election of members, even a sifter of grain may put on the garb of primacy (above the others). It is here that the secret of the word of the Imams, regarding the Manifestation, shines forth: "The lowliest of the creatures shall become the most exalted, and the most exalted shall become the most debased.'" ("The Bayan Persian," vol. 4, p. 113.)] <p100>

Among the siyyids of Isfahan, a few, such as Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, whose daughter was subsequently joined in wedlock with the Most Great Branch,[1] Mirza Hadi, the brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, and Mirza Muhammad-Riday-i-Pa-Qal'iyi, recognized the truth of the Cause.

Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani, formerly known as Muqaddas, and surnamed by Baha'u'llah, Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq, who, according to the instructions of Siyyid Kazim, had during the last five years been residing in Isfahan and had been preparing the way for the advent of the new Revelation, was also among the first believers who identified themselves with the Message proclaimed by the Bab.[2] As Soon as he learned of the arrival of Mulla Husayn in Isfahan, he hastened to meet him.

He gives the following account of his first interview, which took place at night in the home of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri: "I asked Mulla Husayn to divulge the name of Him who claimed to be the promised Manifestation.

He replied: 'To enquire about that name and to divulge it are alike forbidden.' 'Would it, then, be possible,' I asked, 'for me, even as the Letters of the Living, to seek independently the grace of the All-Merciful and, through prayer, to discover His identity?' 'The door of His grace,' he replied, 'is never closed before the face of him who seeks to find Him.' I immediately retired from his presence, and requested his host to allow me the privacy of a room in his house where, alone and undisturbed, I could commune with God.

In the midst of my contemplation, I suddenly remembered the face of a Youth whom I had often observed while in Karbila, standing in an attitude of prayer, with His face bathed in tears at the entrance of the shrine of the Imam Husayn.

That same countenance now reappeared before my eyes.

In my vision I seemed to behold that same face, those same features, expressive of such joy as I could never describe.

He smiled as He gazed at me.

I went towards Him, ready to throw myself at His feet.

I was bending towards the ground, when, lo! that radiant figure vanished from before me.

Overpowered with joy and gladness, I ran out to meet Mulla <p101> Husayn, who with transport received me and assured me that I had, at last, attained the object of my desire.

He bade me, however, repress my feelings. 'Declare not your vision to anyone,' he urged me; 'the time for it has not yet arrived.'

You have reaped the fruit of your patient waiting in Isfahan.

You should now proceed to Kirman, and there acquaint Haji Mirza Karim Khan with this Message.

From that place you should travel to Shiraz and endeavour to rouse the people of that city from their heedlessness.

I hope to join you in Shiraz and share with you the blessings of a joyous reunion with our Beloved."^[3]

[1 Reference to Abdu'l-Baha's marriage with Munirih Khanum.]

[2 Gobineau (p. 129) mentions Mulla Muhammad-Taqi-i-Harati, a well-known juris-consult, as one of the earliest converts to the Faith.]

[3 "The sojourn of Bushru'i in Isfahan proved a triumph for the Bab. The conversions that he performed were numerous and brilliant; but, such are the ways of the world, that they drew down upon him the fierce hatred of the official clergy to which he was obliged to yield and he withdrew from that city. In fact, the conversion of Mulla Muhammad Taqi-i-Harati, a jurist of the first rank, brought their fury to a climax, because over-flowing with zeal as he was, he would go every day to the mambar where he talked to men openly of the greatness of the Bab to whom he gave the rank of Na'ib-i-khass of the twelfth Imam." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 255.)]

From Isfahan, Mulla Husayn proceeded to Kashan. The first to be enrolled in that city among the company of the faithful was a certain Haji Mirza Jani, surnamed Par-Pa, who was a merchant of note.[1] Among the friends of Mulla Husayn was a well-known divine, Siyyid Abdu'l-Baqi, a resident of Kashan and a member of the shaykhi community. Although intimately associated with Mulla Husayn during his stay in Najaf and Karbila, the Siyyid felt unable to sacrifice rank and leadership for the Message which his friend had brought him. [1 According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghiti" (pp. 42-5), Haji Mirza Jani was known by the people of Kashan as Haji Mirza Janiy-i-Buzurg in order to distinguish him from his namesake, who was also a merchant of Kashan, known by the name of Haji Mirza Janiy-i-Turk, or Kuchiq. The former had three brothers the eldest was named Haji Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Dhabih, the second Haji Mirza Ahmad, the third Haji Ali-Akbar.]

Arriving in Qum, Mulla Husayn found its people utterly unprepared to heed his call. The seeds he sowed among them did not germinate until the time when Baha'u'llah was exiled to Baghdad. In those days Haji Mirza Musa, a native of Qum, embraced the Faith, journeyed to Baghdad, and there met Baha'u'llah. He eventually quaffed the cup of martyrdom in His path.

From Qum, Mulla Husayn proceeded directly to Tihran. He lived, during his stay in the capital, in one of the rooms <p102> which belonged to the madrisih of Mirza Salih, better known as the madrisih of Pay-i-Minar. Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Khurasani, the leader of the shaykhi community of Tihran, who acted as an instructor in that institution, was approached by Mulla Husayn but failed to respond to his motivation to accept the Message. "We had cherished the hope he said to Mulla Husayn, "that after the death of Siyyid Kazim you would strive to promote the best interests of the shaykhi community and would deliver it from the <p103> obscurity into which it has sunk. You seem, however, to have betrayed its cause. You have shattered our fondest expectations. If you persist in disseminating these subversive doctrines, you will eventually extinguish the remnants of the shaykhis in this city." Mulla Husayn assured him that he had no intention of prolonging his stay in Tihran, that his aim was in no wise to abase or suppress the teachings inculcated by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim.[1]

[1 "He passed several days in that capital but he did not appear in public. He limited himself to confidential conversations with those who visited him. He thus received many and won over to his doctrine a fairly large number of enquirers. Each one wished to see him, or to have seen him, and the King, Muhammad Shah and his Minister, Haji Mirza Aqasi, true Persians as they were, did not fail to have him brought before them. He laid before them his doctrine and gave to them the Books of the Master." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 131.)]

During his stay in Tihran, Mulla Husayn each day would leave his room early in the morning and would return to it only an hour after sunset.

Upon his return he would quietly and alone re-enter his room, close the door behind him, and <p104> remain in the privacy of his cell until the next day.[1] Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim, the brother of Baha'u'llah, recounted to me the following: "I have heard Mulla Muhammad-i-Mu'allim, a native of Nur, in the

province of Mazindaran, who was a fervent admirer of both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, relate this story: 'I was in those days recognized as one of the favoured disciples of Haji Mirza Muhammad, and lived in the same school in which he taught.

My room adjoined his room, and we were closely associated together.

On the day that he was engaged in discussion with Mulla Husayn, I overheard their conversation from beginning to end, and was deeply affected by the ardour, the fluency, and learning of that youthful stranger.

I was surprised at the evasive answers, the arrogance, and contemptuous behaviour of Haji Mirza Muhammad.

That day I felt strongly attracted by the charm of that youth, and deeply resented the unseemly conduct of my teacher towards him.

I concealed my feelings, however, and pretended to ignore his discussions with Mulla Husayn.

I was seized with a passionate desire to meet the latter, and ventured, at the hour of midnight, to visit him.

He did not expect me, but I knocked at his door, and found him awake seated beside his lamp.

He received me affectionately, and spoke to me with extreme courtesy and tenderness.

I unburdened my heart to him, and as I was addressing him, tears, which I could not repress, flowed from my eyes. "I can now see," he said, "the reason why I have chosen to dwell in this place.

Your teacher has contemptuously rejected this Message and despised its Author.

My hope is that his pupil may, unlike his master, recognize its truth.

What is your name, and which city is your home?" "My name,"

I replied, "is Mulla Muhammad, and my surname Mu'allim.

My home is Nur, in the province of Mazindaran." "Tell me," further enquired Mulla Husayn, "is there to-day among the family of the late Mirza Buzurg-i-Nuri, who was so renowned for his character, his charm, and artistic and intellectual attainments, anyone who has proved himself capable of maintaining the high traditions of that illustrious house?" "Yea,"

I replied, "among his sons now living, one has distinguished Himself by the very traits which characterised His father.

By His virtuous life, His high attainments, His loving-kindness and liberality, He has proved Himself a noble descendant of a noble father." "What is His occupation?" he asked me. "He cheers the disconsolate and feeds the hungry,"

I replied. "What of His rank and position?" "He has none,"

I said, "apart from befriending the poor and the stranger." "What is His name?" "Husayn-'Ali." "In which of the scripts of His father does He excel?" "His favourite script is shikastih-nasta'liq." "How does He spend His time?" "He roams the woods and delights in the beauties of the countryside." [2] "What is His age?" "Eight and twenty."

The eagerness with which Mulla Husayn questioned me, and the sense of delight with which he welcomed every particular I gave him, greatly surprised me.

Turning to me, with his face beaming with satisfaction and joy, he once more enquired: "I presume you often meet Him?" "I frequently visit His home,"

I replied. "Will you," he said, "deliver into His hands a trust from me?" "Most assuredly," was my reply.

He then gave me a scroll wrapped in a piece of cloth, and requested me to hand it to Him the next day at the hour of dawn. "Should He deign to answer me," he added, "will you be kind enough to acquaint me with His reply."

I received the scroll from him and, at break of day, arose to carry out his desire.

[1 According to Samandar (manuscript, p. 2), Mulla Husayn, on his way from Shiraz to Tihran in the year 1260 A.H., was the bearer of a Tablet revealed by the Bab for Muhammad Shah.]

[2 "On one occasion," writes Dr. J. E. Esslemont, "Abdu'l-Baha, the eldest son of Baha'u'llah, related to the writer the following particulars about +His Father's early days: 'From childhood He was extremely kind and generous. He was a great lover of outdoor life, most of His time being spent in the garden or the fields. He had an extraordinary power of attraction, which was felt by all. People always crowded around Him. Ministers and people of the Court would surround Him, and the children also were devoted to Him. When He was only thirteen or fourteen years old He became renowned for His learning.... When Baha'u'llah was twenty-two years old, His father died, and the Government wished Him to succeed to His father's position in the Ministry as was customary in Persia, but Baha'u'llah did not accept the offer. Then the Prime Minister said: "Leave him to himself. Such a position is unworthy of him. He has some higher aim in view. I cannot understand him, but I am convinced that he is destined for some lofty career. His thoughts are not like ours. Let him alone.'" ("Baha'u'llah and the New Era," pp. 29-30.)]

"As I approached the house of Baha'u'llah, I recognized His brother Mirza Musa, who was standing at the gate, and to whom I communicated the object of my visit. He went into the house and soon reappeared bearing a message of welcome. I was ushered into His presence, and presented the scroll to Mirza Musa, who laid it before Baha'u'llah. He bade us both be seated. Unfolding the scroll, He glanced at its contents and began to read aloud to us certain of its passages. I sat enraptured as I listened to the sound of His <p107> voice and the sweetness of its melody. He had read a page of the scroll when, turning to His brother, He said: "Musa, what have you to say? Verily I say, whoso believes in

the Qur'an and recognizes its Divine origin, and yet hesitates, though it be for a moment, to admit that these soul-stirring words are endowed with the same regenerating power, has most assuredly erred in his judgment and has strayed far from the path of justice." He spoke no more. Dismissing me from His presence, He charged me to take to Mulla Husayn, as a gift from Him, a loaf of Russian sugar and a package of tea,[1] and to convey to him the expression of His appreciation and love.

[1 Tea and that variety of sugar being extremely rare in Persia at that time, both were used as gifts among the higher classes of the population.]

"I arose and, filled with joy, hastened back to Mulla Husayn, and delivered to him the gift and message of Baha'u'llah. With what joy and exultation he received them from me! Words fail me to describe the intensity of his emotion. He started to his feet, received with bowed head the gift from my hand, and fervently kissed it. He then took me in his arms, kissed my eyes, and said: "My dearly beloved friend! I pray that even as you have rejoiced my heart, God may grant you eternal felicity and fill your heart with imperishable gladness." I was amazed at the behaviour of Mulla Husayn. What could be, I thought to myself, the nature of the bond that unites these two souls? What could have kindled so fervid a fellowship in their hearts? Why should Mulla Husayn, in whose sight the pomp and circumstance of royalty were the merest trifle, have evinced such gladness at the sight of so inconsiderable a gift from the hands of Baha'u'llah? I was puzzled by this thought and could not unravel its mystery.

"A few days later, Mulla Husayn left for Khurasan. As he bade me farewell, he said: "Breathe not to anyone what you have heard and witnessed. Let this be a secret hidden within your breast. Divulge not His name, for they who envy His position will arise to harm Him. In your moments of meditation, pray that the Almighty may protect Him, that, through Him, He may exalt the downtrodden, enrich the poor, <p108> and redeem the fallen. The secret of things is concealed from our eyes. Ours is the duty to raise the call of the New Day and to proclaim this Divine Message unto all people. Many a soul will, in this city, shed his blood in this path. That blood will water the Tree of God, will cause it to flourish, and to overshadow all mankind.""" <p109>

CHAPTER V

BAHA'U'LLAH'S JOURNEY TO MAZINDARAN

THE first journey Baha'u'llah undertook for the purpose of promoting the Revelation announced by the Bab was to His ancestral home in Nur, in the province of Mazindaran.

He set out for the village of Takur, the personal estate of His father, where He owned a vast mansion, royally furnished and superbly situated.

It was my privilege to hear Baha'u'llah Himself, one day, recount the following: "The late Vazir, My father, enjoyed a most enviable position among his countrymen.

His vast wealth, his noble ancestry, his artistic attainments, his unrivalled

prestige and exalted rank made him the object of the admiration of all who knew him.

For a period of over twenty years, no one among the wide circle of his family and kindred, which extended over Nur and Tihran, suffered distress, injury, or illness.

They enjoyed, during a long and uninterrupted period, rich and manifold blessings.

Quite suddenly, however, this prosperity and glory gave way to a series of calamities which severely shook the foundations of his material prosperity.

The first loss he suffered was occasioned by a great flood which, rising in the mountains of Mazindaran, swept with great violence over the village of Takur, and utterly destroyed half the mansion of the Vazir, situated above the fortress of that village.

The best part of that house, which had been known for the solidity of its foundations, was utterly wiped away by the fury of the roaring torrent.

Its precious articles of furniture were destroyed, and its elaborate ornamentation irretrievably ruined.

This was shortly followed by the loss of various State positions which the Vazir occupied, and by the repeated assaults directed against him by his envious adversaries.

Despite this sudden change of fortune, the Vazir maintained his dignity and calm, and continued, within the restricted limits of his means, his acts of benevolence and charity.

He continued to exercise towards his faithless associates <p110> <p111> that same courtesy and kindness that had characterised his dealings with his fellow-men.

With splendid fortitude he grappled, until the last hour of his life, with the adversities that weighed so heavily upon him."

Baha'u'llah had already, prior to the declaration of the Bab, visited the district of Nur, at a time when the celebrated mujtahid Mirza Muhammad Taqiy-i-Nuri was at the height of his authority and influence. Such was the eminence of his position, that they who sat at his feet regarded themselves each as the authorised exponent of the Faith and Law of Islam. The mujtahid was addressing a company of over two hundred of such disciples, and was expatiating upon a dark passage of the reported utterances of the imams, when Baha'u'llah, followed by a number of His companions, passed by that place, and paused for a while to listen to his discourse. The mujtahid asked his disciples to elucidate an abstruse theory relating to the metaphysical aspects of the Islamic teachings. As they all confessed their inability to explain it, Baha'u'llah was moved to give, in brief but convincing language, a lucid exposition of that theory. The mujtahid was greatly annoyed at the incompetence of his disciples. "For years I have been instructing you," he angrily exclaimed, "and have

patiently striven to instil into your minds the profoundest truths and the noblest principles of the Faith. And yet you allow, after all these years of persistent study, this youth, a wearer of the kulah,[1] who has had no share in scholarly training, and who is entirely unfamiliar with your academic learning, to demonstrate his superiority over you!

[1 The kulah, a lambskin hat, differentiated the clergy from the laity, and was worn invariably by State officials.]

Later on, when Baha'u'llah had departed, the mujtahid related to his disciples two of his recent dreams, the circumstances of which he believed were of the utmost significance. "In my first dream," he said, "I was standing in the midst of a vast concourse of people, all of whom seemed to be pointing to a certain house in which they said the Sahibu'z-Zaman dwelt. Frantic with joy, I hastened in my dream to attain His presence. When I reached the house, I was, to my great surprise, refused admittance. 'The promised <p112> Qa'im,' I was informed, 'is engaged in private conversation with another Person. Access to them is strictly forbidden.' From the guards who were standing beside the door, I gathered that that Person was none other than Baha'u'llah.

"In my second dream," the mujtahid continued, "I found myself in a place where I beheld around me a number of coffers, each of which, it was stated, belonged to Baha'u'llah. As I opened them, I found them to be filled with books. Every word and letter recorded in these books was set with the most exquisite jewels. Their radiance dazzled me. I was so overpowered by their brilliance that I awoke suddenly from my dream."

When, in the year '60, Baha'u'llah arrived in Nur, He discovered that the celebrated mujtahid who on His previous visit had wielded such immense power had passed away.

The vast number of his devotees had shrunk into a mere handful of dejected disciples who, under the leadership of his successor, Mulla Muhammad, were striving to uphold the traditions of their departed leader.

The enthusiasm which greeted Baha'u'llah's arrival sharply contrasted with the <p113> gloom that had settled upon the remnants of that once flourishing community.

A large number of the officials and notables in that neighbourhood called upon Him and, with every mark of affection and respect, accorded Him a befitting welcome.

They were eager, in view of the social position He occupied, to learn from Him all the news regarding the life of the Shah, the activities of his ministers, and the affairs of his government.

To their enquiries Baha'u'llah replied with extreme indifference, and seemed to reveal very little interest or concern.

With persuasive eloquence He pleaded the cause of the new Revelation, and directed their attention to the immeasurable benefits which it was destined to confer upon their country.[1] Those who heard Him marvelled at the keen interest which a man of His position and age evinced for truths which primarily

concerned the divines and theologians of Islam.

They felt powerless to challenge the soundness of His arguments or to belittle the Cause which He so ably expounded.

They admired the loftiness of His enthusiasm and the profundity of His thoughts, and were deeply impressed by His detachment and self-effacement.

[1 "His [Baha'u'llah's] speech was like a 'rushing torrent' and his clearness in exposition brought the most learned divines to his feet." (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions," p. 120.)]

None dared to contend with His views except His uncle Aziz, who ventured to oppose Him, challenging His statements and aspersing their truth.

When those who heard him sought to silence this opponent and to injure him, Baha'u'llah intervened in his behalf, and advised them to leave him in the hands of God.

Alarmed, he sought the aid of the mujtahid of Nur, Mulla Muhammad, and appealed to him to lend him immediate assistance. "O vicegerent of the Prophet of God!" he said. "Behold what has befallen the Faith.

A youth, a layman, attired in the garb of nobility, has come to Nur, has invaded the strongholds of orthodoxy, and disrupted the holy Faith of Islam.

Arise, and resist his onslaught.

Whoever attains his presence falls immediately under his spell, and is enthralled by the power of his utterance.

I know not whether he is a sorcerer, or whether he mixes with his tea some mysterious substance that makes every man who drinks the tea fall a victim to its charm."

The <p114> mujtahid, notwithstanding his own lack of comprehension, was able to realise the folly of such remarks.

Jestingly he observed: "Have you not partaken of his tea, or heard him address his companions?" "I have," he replied, "but, thanks to your loving protection, I have remained immune from the effect of his mysterious power."

The mujtahid, finding himself unequal to the task of arousing the populace against Baha'u'llah, and of combating directly the ideas which so powerful an opponent was fearlessly spreading, contented himself with a written statement in which he declared: "O Aziz, be not afraid, no one will dare molest you."

In writing this, the mujtahid had, through a grammatical error, so perverted the purport of his statement, that those who read it among the notables of the village of Takur were scandalised by its meaning, and vilified both the bearer and the author of that statement.

Those who attained the presence of Baha'u'llah and heard Him expound the Message proclaimed by the Bab were so much impressed by the earnestness of His appeal that they forthwith arose to disseminate that same Message among the people of Nur and to extol the virtues of its distinguished Promoter. The

disciples of Mulla Muhammad meanwhile endeavoured to persuade their teacher to proceed to Takur, to visit Baha'u'llah in person, to ascertain from Him the nature of this new Revelation, and to enlighten his followers regarding its character and purpose. To their earnest entreaty the mujtahid returned an evasive answer. His disciples, however, refused to admit the validity of the objections he raised. They urged that the first obligation imposed upon a man of his position, whose function was to preserve the integrity of shi'ah Islam, was to enquire into the nature of every movement that tended to affect the interests of their Faith. Mulla Muhammad eventually decided to delegate two of his eminent lieutenants, Mulla Abbas and Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, both sons-in-law and trusted disciples of the late mujtahid, Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, to visit Baha'u'llah and to determine the true character of the Message He had brought. He pledged himself to endorse unreservedly whatever conclusions they might arrive at, and to recognize their decision in such matters as final. <p115>
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On being informed, upon their arrival in Takur, that Baha'u'llah had departed for His winter resort, the representatives of Mulla Muhammad decided to leave for that place.

When they arrived, they found Baha'u'llah engaged in revealing a commentary on the opening Surih of the Qur'an, entitled "The Seven Verses of Repetition."

As they sat and listened to His discourse, the loftiness of the theme, the persuasive eloquence which characterised its presentation, as well as the extraordinary manner of its delivery, profoundly impressed them.

Mulla Abbas, unable to contain himself, arose from his seat and, urged by an impulse he could not resist, walked back and stood still beside the door in an attitude of reverent submissiveness.

The charm of the discourse to which he was listening had fascinated him. "You behold my condition," he told his companion as he stood trembling with emotion and with eyes full of tears. "I am powerless to question Baha'u'llah.

The questions I had planned to ask Him have vanished suddenly from my memory.

You are free either to proceed with your enquiry or to return alone to our teacher and inform him of the state in which I find myself.

Tell him from me that Abbas can never again return to him.

He can no longer forsake this threshold."

Mirza Abu'l-Qasim was likewise moved to follow the example of his companion. "I have ceased to recognize my teacher," was his reply. "This very moment, I have vowed to God to dedicate the remaining days of my life to the service of Baha'u'llah, my true and only Master."

The news of the sudden conversion of the chosen envoys of the mujtahid of Nur spread with bewildering rapidity throughout the district. It roused the people from their lethargy. Ecclesiastical dignitaries, State officials, traders, and peasants all flocked to the residence of Baha'u'llah. A considerable number

among them willingly espoused His Cause. In their admiration for Him, a number of the most distinguished among them remarked: "We see how the people of Nur have risen and rallied round you. We witness on every side evidences of their exultation. If Mulla Muhammad were also to join them, the triumph of this Faith would be completely assured." "I am come to Nur," Baha'u'llah replied, "solely for the purpose of proclaiming the Cause of God. I cherish no other intention. If I were told that at a distance of a hundred leagues a seeker yearned for the Truth and was unable to meet Me, I would, gladly and unhesitatingly, hasten to his abode, and would Myself satisfy his hunger. Mulla Muhammad, I am told, lives in Sa'adat-Abad, a village not far distant from this place. It is My purpose to visit him and deliver to him the Message of God." Desirous of giving effect to His words, Baha'u'llah, accompanied by a number of His companions, proceeded immediately to that village.

Mulla Muhammad most ceremoniously received Him. "I have not come to this place,"

Baha'u'llah observed, "to pay you an official or formal visit.

My purpose is to enlighten you regarding a new and wondrous Message, divinely inspired and fulfilling the promise given to Islam.

Whosoever has inclined his ear to this Message has felt its irresistible power, and has been transformed by the potency of its grace.

Tell Me whatsoever perplexes your mind, or hinders you from recognising the Truth."

Mulla Muhammad disparagingly remarked: "I undertake no action unless I first consult the Qur'an.

I have invariably, on such occasions, followed the practice of invoking the aid of God and His blessings; of opening at random His sacred Book, and of consulting the first verse of the particular page upon which my eyes chance to fall.

From the nature of that verse I can judge the wisdom and the advisability of my contemplated course of action."

Finding that Baha'u'llah was not inclined to refuse him his request, the mujtahid called for a copy of the Qur'an, opened and closed it again, refusing to reveal the nature of the verse to those who were present.

All he said was this: "I have consulted the Book of God, and deem it inadvisable to proceed further with this matter."

A few agreed with him; the rest, for the most part, did not fail to recognize the fear which those words implied.

Baha'u'llah, disinclined to cause him further embarrassment, arose and, asking to be excused, bade him a cordial farewell.

One day, in the course of one of His riding excursions into the country, Baha'u'llah, accompanied by His companions, saw, seated by Me roadside, a

lonely youth.

His hair was dishevelled, and he wore the dress of a dervish.

By the side of a brook he had kindled a fire, and was cooking his food <p118> and eating it.

Approaching him, Baha'u'llah most lovingly enquired: "Tell Me, dervish, what is it that you are doing?" "I am engaged in eating God," he bluntly replied. "I am cooking God and am burning Him."

The unaffected simplicity of his manners and the candour of his reply pleased Baha'u'llah extremely.

He smiled at his remark and began to converse with him with unrestrained tenderness and freedom.

Within a short space of time, Baha'u'llah had changed him completely.

Enlightened as to the true nature of God, and with a mind purged from the idle fancy of his own people, he immediately recognized the Light which that loving Stranger had so unexpectedly brought him.

That dervish, whose name was Mustafa, became so enamoured with the teachings which had been instilled into his mind that, leaving his cooking utensils behind, he straightway arose and followed Baha'u'llah.

On foot, behind His horse, and inflamed with the fire of His love, he chanted merrily verses of a love-song which he had composed on the spur of the moment and had dedicated to his Beloved. "Thou art the Day-Star of guidance," ran its glad refrain. "Thou art the Light of Truth.

Unveil Thyself to men, O Revealer of the Truth."

Although, in later years, that poem obtained wide circulation among his people, and it became known that a certain dervish, surnamed Majdhub, and whose name was Mustafa Big-i-Sanandaji, had, without premeditation, composed it in praise of his Beloved, none seemed to be aware to whom it actually referred, nor did anyone suspect, at a time when Baha'u'llah was still veiled from the eyes of men, that this dervish alone had recognized His station and discovered His glory.

Baha'u'llah's visit to Nur had produced the most far-reaching results, and had lent a remarkable impetus to the spread of the new-born Revelation.

By His magnetic eloquence, by the purity of His life, by the dignity of His bearing, by the unanswerable logic of His argument, and by the many evidences of His loving-kindness, Baha'u'llah had won the hearts of the people of Nur, had stirred their souls, and had enrolled them under the standard of the Faith.

Such was the effect of words and deeds, as He went about preaching the Cause and revealing its glory to His countrymen in Nur, that the very stones and trees of that district seemed to have <p119> been quickened by the waves of spiritual power which emanated from His person.

All things seemed to be endowed with a new and more abundant life, all things seemed to be proclaiming aloud: "Behold, the Beauty of God has been made manifest!

Arise, for He has come in all His glory."

The people of Nur, when Baha'u'llah had departed from out their midst, continued to propagate the Cause and to consolidate its foundations.

A number of them endured the severest afflictions for His sake; others quaffed with gladness the cup of martyrdom in His path.

Mazindaran in general, and Nur in particular, were thus distinguished from the other provinces and districts of Persia, as being the first to have eagerly embraced the Divine Message.

The district of Nur, literally meaning "light," which lay embedded within the mountains of Mazindaran, was the first to catch the rays of the Sun that had arisen in Shiraz, the first to proclaim to the rest of Persia, which still lay enveloped in the shadow of the vale of heedlessness, that the Day-Star of heavenly guidance had at length arisen to warm and illuminate the whole land. When Baha'u'llah was still a child, the Vazir, His father, dreamed a dream. Baha'u'llah appeared to him swimming in a vast, limitless ocean. His body shone upon the waters with a radiance that illumined the sea. Around His head, which could distinctly be seen above the waters, there radiated, in all directions, His long, jet-black locks, floating in great profusion above the waves. As he dreamed, a multitude of fishes gathered round Him, each holding fast to the extremity of one hair. Fascinated by the effulgence of His face, they followed Him in whatever direction He swam. Great as was their number, and however firmly they clung to His locks, not one single hair seemed to have been detached from His head, nor did the least injury affect His person. Free and unrestrained, He moved above the waters and they all followed Him.

The Vazir, greatly impressed by this dream, summoned a soothsayer, who had achieved fame in that region, and asked him to interpret it for him. This man, as if inspired by a premonition of the future glory of Baha'u'llah, declared: "The limitless ocean that you have seen in your dream, O <p120> Vazir, is none other than the world of being. Single-handed and alone, your son will achieve supreme ascendancy over it. Wherever He may please, He will proceed unhindered. No one will resist His march, no one will hinder His progress. The multitude of fishes signifies the turmoil which He will arouse amidst the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Around Him will they gather, and to Him will they cling. Assured of the unfailing protection of the Almighty, this tumult will never harm His person, nor will His loneliness upon the sea of life endanger His safety."

That soothsayer was subsequently taken to see Baha'u'llah. He looked intently upon His face, and examined carefully His features. He was charmed by His appearance, and extolled every trait of His countenance. Every expression in that face revealed to his eyes a sign of His concealed glory. So great was his admiration, and so profuse his praise of Baha'u'llah, that the Vazir, from that

day, became even more passionately devoted to his son. The words spoken by that soothsayer served to fortify his hopes and confidence in Him. Like Jacob, he desired only to ensure the welfare of his beloved Joseph, and to surround Him with his loving protection.

Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Grand Vazir of Muhammad Shah, though completely alienated from Baha'u'llah's father, showed his son every mark of consideration and favour. So great was the esteem which the Haji professed for Him, that Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, the I'timadu'd-Dawlih, who afterwards succeeded Haji Mirza Aqasi, felt envious. He resented the superiority which Baha'u'llah, as a mere youth, was accorded over him. The seeds of jealousy were, from that time, implanted in his breast. Though still a youth, and while his father is yet alive, he thought, he is given precedence in the presence of the Grand Vazir. What will, I wonder, happen to me when this young man shall have succeeded his father?

After the death of the Vazir, Haji Mirza Aqasi continued to show the utmost consideration to Baha'u'llah.

He would visit Him in His home, and would address Him as though He were his own son.

The sincerity of his devotion, however, was very soon put to the test.

One day, as he was passing through the village of Quch-Hisar, which belonged to Baha'u'llah, <p121> he was so impressed by the charm and beauty of that place and the abundance of its water that he conceived the idea of becoming its owner.

Baha'u'llah, whom he had summoned to effect the immediate purchase of that village, observed: "Had this property been exclusively mine own, I would willingly have complied with your desire.

This transitory life, with all its sordid possessions, is worthy of no attachment in my eyes, how much less this small and insignificant estate.

As a number of other people, both rich and poor, some of full age and some still minors, share with me the ownership of this property, I would request you to refer this matter to them, and to seek their consent."

Unsatisfied with this reply, Haji Mirza Aqasi sought, through fraudulent means, to achieve his purpose.

So soon as Baha'u'llah was informed of his evil designs, He, with the consent of all concerned, immediately transferred the title of the property to the name of the sister of Muhammad Shah, who had already repeatedly expressed her desire to become its owner.

The Haji, furious at this transaction, ordered that the estate should be forcibly seized, claiming that he already had purchased it from its original possessor.

The representatives of Haji Mirza Aqasi were severely rebuked by the agents of the sister of the Shah, and were requested to inform their master of the

determination of that lady to assert her rights.

The Haji referred the case to Muhammad Shah, and complained of the unjust treatment to which he had been subjected.

That very night, the Shah's sister had acquainted him with the nature of the transaction. "Many a time," she said to her brother, "your Imperial Majesty has graciously signified your desire that I should dispose of the jewels with which I am wont to adorn myself in your presence, and with the proceeds purchase some property.

I have at last succeeded in fulfilling your desire.

Haji Mirza Aqasi, however, is now fully determined to seize it forcibly from me."

The Shah reassured his sister, and commanded the Haji to forgo his claim.

The latter, in his despair, summoned Baha'u'llah to his presence and, by every artifice, strove to discredit His name.

To the charges he brought against Him, Baha'u'llah vigorously replied, and succeeded in establishing His innocence.

In his impotent rage, the Grand Vazir exclaimed: <p122> "What is the purpose of all this feasting and banqueting in which you seem to delight?

I, who am the Prime Minister of the Shahinshah of Persia, never receive the number and variety of guests that crowd around your table every night.

Why all this extravagance and vanity?

You surely must be meditating a plot against me." "Gracious God!"

Baha'u'llah replied. "Is the man who, out of the abundance of his heart, shares his bread with his fellow-men, to be accused of harbouring criminal intentions?"

Haji Mirza Aqasi was utterly confounded.

He dared no reply.

Though supported by the combined ecclesiastical and civil powers of Persia, he eventually found himself, in every contest he ventured against Baha'u'llah, completely defeated.

On a number of other occasions, Baha'u'llah's ascendancy over His opponents was likewise vindicated and recognized. These personal triumphs achieved by Him served to enhance His position, and spread abroad His fame. All classes of men marvelled at His miraculous success in emerging unscathed from the most perilous encounters. Nothing short of Divine protection, they thought, could have ensured His safety on such occasions. Not once did Baha'u'llah, beset though He was by the gravest perils, submit to the arrogance, the greed, and the treachery of those around Him. In His constant association, during those days, with the highest dignitaries of the realm, whether ecclesiastical or

State officials, He was never content simply to accede to the views they expressed or the claims they advanced. He would, at their gatherings, fearlessly champion the cause of truth, would assert the rights of the downtrodden, defending the weak and protecting the innocent. <p123>

CHAPTER VI

MULLA HUSAYN'S JOURNEY TO KHURASAN

AS THE Bab bade farewell to the Letters of the Living, He instructed them, each and all, to record separately the name of every believer who embraced the Faith and identified himself with its teachings. The list of these believers He bade them enclose in sealed letters, and address them to His maternal uncle, Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, in Shiraz, who would in turn deliver them to Him. "I shall classify these lists," He told them, "into eighteen sets of nineteen names each. Each set will constitute one vahid.[1] All these names, in these eighteen sets, will, together with the first vahid, consisting of My own name and those of the eighteen Letters of the Living, constitute the number of Kull-i-Shay'.[2] Of all these believers I shall make mention in the Tablet of God, so that upon each one of them the Beloved of our hearts may, in the Day when He shall have ascended the throne of glory, confer His inestimable blessings, and declare them the dwellers of His Paradise."

[1 The numerical value of the word "vahid," which means "unity," is 19.]

[2 The numerical value of "Kull-i-Shay'," which means "all things," is 361, or 19 X 19.]

To Mulla Husayn, more particularly, the Bab gave definite injunctions to send Him a written report on the nature and progress of his activities in Isfahan, in Tihiran, and in Khurasan. He urged him to inform Him of those who accepted and submitted to the Faith, as well as of those who rejected and repudiated its truth. "Not until I receive your letter from Khurasan," He said, "shall I be ready to set out from this city on My pilgrimage to Hijaz."

Mulla Husayn, refreshed and fortified by the experience of his intercourse with Baha'u'llah, set out on his journey to Khurasan. During his visit to that province, he exhibited in an astonishing manner the effects of that regenerating power with which the parting words of the Bab had invested <p124>

<p125> him.[1] The first to embrace the Faith in Khurasan was Mirza Ahmad-i-Azghandi, the most learned, the wisest, and the most eminent among the ulamas of that province. In whatever gathering he appeared, no matter how great the number or representative the character of the divines who were present, he alone was invariably the chief speaker. The high traits of his character, as well as his extreme devoutness, had ennobled the reputation which he had already acquired through his erudition, his ability and wisdom. The next to embrace the Faith among the shaykhis of Khurasan was Mulla Ahmad-i-Mu'allim, who, while in Karbila, had been the instructor of the children of Siyyid Kazim. Next to him came Mulla Shaykh Ali, whom the Bab surnamed Azim, and then Mulla Mirza Muhammad-i-Furughi, whose learning was unsurpassed except by that of Mirza Ahmad. No one apart from these outstanding figures among the ecclesiastical leaders of Khurasan exercised sufficient authority or possessed the necessary knowledge to challenge the arguments of Mulla Husayn.

[1 "The pilgrim, as was customary with him, would make the most of his stay which he would prolong if need be, in the villages, towns and cities on his way, in order to hold conferences, to speak against the Mullas, to make known the Books of the Bab and to preach his doctrines.

He was summoned everywhere and waited for impatiently; he was sought after with curiosity, listened to eagerly and believed with little difficulty. "It was at Nishapur above all, that he made two important conversions in the persons of Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq of Yazd, and of Mulla Ali the Young.

The first of these Doctors had been the pupil of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i.

He was a person celebrated for his science, for his eloquence and for his standing among the people.

The other, a Shaykh like the first, a man of strict ethics and high understanding, held the important position of the principal mujtahid of the city.

Both became ardent Babis.

They made the pulpits of the Mosques resound with violent denunciations of Islam. "During several weeks, it seemed as though the old religion had been completely defeated.

The clergy, demoralized by the defection of their chief and frightened by the public addresses which did not spare them, either dared not show themselves or had taken flight.

When Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i came to Mashhad he found, on the one hand, the population stirred up and divided about him, on the other hand, the clergy forewarned and very anxious, but exasperated and determined to oppose a vigorous resistance to the attacks about to be launched against them." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp.

139-140.)]

Mirza Muhammad Baqir-i-Qa'ini, who, for the remaining years of his life, had established his residence in Mashhad, was the next to embrace the Message. The love of the Bab inflamed his soul with such a consuming passion, that no one could resist its force or could belittle its influence. His fearlessness, his unsparing energy, his unswerving loyalty, and the integrity of his life, all combined to make him the terror of his enemies and a source of inspiration to his friends. <p126> He placed his home at the disposal of Mulla Husayn, arranged for separate interviews between him and the ulamas of Mashhad, and continued to endeavour, to the utmost of his power, to remove every obstacle that might impede the progress of the Faith. He was untiring in his efforts, undeviating in his purpose, and inexhaustible in his energy. He continued to labour indefatigably for his beloved Cause until the last hour of his life, when he fell a martyr at the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi. In his last days he was bidden by Quddus, after the tragic death of Mulla Husayn, to assume the leadership of the heroic defenders of that fort. He acquitted himself

gloriously of his task. His home, situated in Bala-Khiyaban, in the city of Mashhad, is up to the present time known by the name of Babiyyih. Whoever enters it can never escape the accusation of being a Babi. May his soul rest in peace!

Mulla Husayn, as soon as he had won to the Cause such able and devoted supporters, decided to address a written report concerning his activities to the Bab. In his communication he referred at length to his sojourn in Isfahan and Kashan, described the account of his experience with Baha'u'llah, referred to the departure of the latter for Mazindaran, related the events of Nur, and informed Him of the success which had attended his own efforts in Khurasan. In it he enclosed a list of the names of those who had responded to his call, and of whose steadfastness and sincerity he was assured. He sent his letter by way of Yazd, through the trustworthy partners of the Bab's maternal uncle who were at that time residing in Tabas. That letter reached the Bab on the night preceding the twenty-seventh day of Ramadan,[1] a night held in great reverence by all the sects of Islam and regarded by many as rivalling in sacredness the Laylatu'l-Qadr itself, the night which, in the words of the Qur'an, "excelleth a thousand months." [2] The only companion of the Bab, when that letter reached Him that night, was Quddus, with whom He shared a number of its passages.

[1 Corresponding with the night preceding the 10th of October, 1844 A.D.]

[2 The Laylatu'l-Qadr, meaning literally "Night of Power," is one of the last ten nights of Ramadan, and, as is commonly believed, the seventh of those nights reckoning backward.]

I have heard Mirza Ahmad relate the following: "The Bab's maternal uncle himself described to me the circumstances <p127> attending the receipt of Mulla Husayn's letter by the Bab: 'That night I saw such evidences of joy and gladness on the faces of the Bab and of Quddus as I am unable to describe. I often heard the Bab, in those days, exultingly repeat the words, "How marvellous, how exceedingly marvellous, is that which has occurred between the months of Jamadi and Rajab!" As He was reading the communication addressed to Him by Mulla Husayn, He turned to Quddus and, showing him certain passages of that letter, explained the reason for His joyous expressions of surprise. I, for my part, remained completely unaware of the nature of that explanation.'" Mirza Ahmad, upon whom the account of this incident had produced a profound impression, was determined to fathom its mystery. "Not until I met Mulla Husayn in Shiraz," he told me, "was I able to satisfy my curiosity. When I repeated to him the account described to me by the Bab's uncle, he smiled and said how well he remembered that <p128> between the months of Jamadi and Rajab he chanced to be in Tihiran. He gave no further explanation, and contented himself with this brief remark. This was sufficient, however, to convince me that in the city of Tihiran there lay hidden a Mystery which, when revealed to the world, would bring unspeakable joy to the hearts of both the Bab and Quddus."

The references in Mulla Husayn's letter to Baha'u'llah's immediate response to the Divine Message, to the vigorous campaign which He had boldly initiated in Nur, and to the marvellous success which had attended His efforts, cheered and gladdened the Bab, and reinforced His confidence in the ultimate victory of His Cause. He felt assured that if now He were to fall suddenly a victim to the

tyranny of His foes and depart from this world, the Cause which He had revealed would live; would, under the direction of Baha'u'llah, continue to develop and flourish, and would yield eventually its choicest fruit. The master-hand of Baha'u'llah would steer its course, and the pervading influence of His love would establish it in the hearts of men. Such a conviction fortified His spirit and filled Him with hope. From that moment His fears of the imminence of peril or danger entirely forsook Him. Phoenix-like He welcomed with joy the fire of adversity, and gloried in the glow and heat of its flame. <p129>

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CHAPTER VII

THE BAB'S PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA AND MEDINA

THE letter of Mulla Husayn decided the Bab to undertake His contemplated pilgrimage to Hijaz. Entrusting His wife to His mother, and committing them both to the care and protection of His maternal uncle, He joined the company of the pilgrims of Fars who were preparing to leave Shiraz for Mecca and Medina.[1] Quddus was His only companion, and the Ethiopian servant His personal attendant. He first proceeded to Bushihr, the seat of His uncle's business, where in former days He, in close association with him, had lived the life of a humble merchant. Having there completed the preliminary arrangements for His long and arduous voyage, He embarked on a sailing vessel, which, after two months of slow, stormy, and unsteady sailing, landed Him upon the shores of that sacred land.[2] High seas and the complete absence of comfort could <p130> neither interfere with the regularity of His devotions nor perturb the peacefulness of His meditations and prayers. Oblivious of the storm that raged about Him, and undeterred by the sickness which had seized His fellow-pilgrims, He continued to occupy His time in dictating to Quddus such prayers and epistles as He felt inspired to reveal.

[1 According to Haji Mu'inu's-Saltanih's narrative (p. 72), the Bab set out on His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina in the month of Shavval, 1260 A.H. (Oct., 1844 A.D.).]

[2 "He retained the most disagreeable impression of his voyage. 'Know that the sea voyages are hard.

We do not favor them for the faithful; travel by land,' he wrote in the Kitab-i-Baynu'l-Haramayn in addressing himself to his uncle, as we shall soon see.

He elaborates upon this subject also in the Bayan.

Do not consider this childish, the feelings which moved the Bab in his horror of the sea are far more noble. "Struck by the selfishness of the pilgrims which was heightened by the discomforts of a long and dangerous sea voyage, equally shocked by the unclean conditions that the pilgrims were obliged to endure on board, he wished to prevent men from yielding to their lower instincts and treating one another harshly.

We know that the Bab especially commended politeness and the most refined courtesy in all social relations. 'Never sadden anyone, no matter whom, for no

matter what,' he enjoined, and during this voyage he experienced the meanness of man and his brutality when in the presence of difficulties. 'The saddest thing that I saw on my pilgrimage to Mecca was the constant disputes of the pilgrims between themselves, disputes which took away the moral benefit of the pilgrimage.' (Bayan, z:16.) "In time he arrived at Mascate where he rested for several days during which he sought to convert the people of that country but without success.

He spoke to one among them, a religious man probably, one of high rank, whose conversion might also have been followed by that of his fellow citizens, at least so I believe, though he gives us no details upon this subject.

Evidently he did not attempt to convert the first comer who would have had no influence on the other inhabitants of the city.

That he attempted a conversion and did not succeed is an indisputable fact because he himself affirms it: 'The mention of God, in truth, descended upon the earth of Mascate and made the way of God come to one of the inhabitants of the country.

It may be possible that he understood our verses and became one of those who are guided.

Say:

This man obeyed his passions after having read our verses and in truth this man is by the rules of the Book, among the transgressors.

Say:

We have not seen in Mascate men of the Book willing to help him, because they are lost in ignorance.

And the same was true of all these voyagers on the boat with the exception of one who believed in our verses and became one of those who fear God.'" (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

207-208.)]

I have heard Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Shirazi, who was travelling in the same vessel as the Bab, describe the circumstances of that memorable voyage: "During the entire period of approximately two months," he asserted, "from the day we embarked at Bushihr to the day when we landed at Jaddih, the port of Hijaz, whenever by day or night I chanced to meet either the Bab or Quddus, I invariably found them together, both absorbed in their work. The Bab seemed to be dictating, and Quddus was busily engaged in taking down whatever fell from His lips. Even at a time when panic seemed to have seized the passengers of that storm-tossed vessel, they would be seen pursuing their labours with unperturbed confidence and calm. Neither the violence of the elements nor the

tumult of the people around them could either ruffle the serenity of their countenance or turn them from their purpose."

The Bab Himself, in the Persian Bayan,[1] refers to the <p131> hardships of that voyage. "For days," He wrote, "we suffered from the scarcity of water. I had to content myself with the juice of the sweet lemon." Because of this experience, He supplicated the Almighty to grant that the means of ocean travel might soon be speedily improved, that its hardships might be reduced, and its perils be entirely eliminated. Within a short space of time, since that prayer was offered, the evidences of a remarkable improvement in all forms of maritime transport have greatly multiplied, and the Persian Gulf, which in those days hardly possessed a single steam-driven vessel, now boasts a fleet of ocean liners that can, within the range of a few days and in the utmost comfort, carry the people of Fars on their annual pilgrimage to Hijaz.

[1 "It is thus that I myself saw, on the voyage to Mecca, a notable who was spending considerable sums of money but who hesitated to spend the price of a glass of water for his fellow-traveler. This happened on the boat where the water was scarce, so scarce in fact, during the voyage from Bushihr to Mascate, which lasted twelve days with no opportunity to get water, that I had to content myself with sweet lemons." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. 2, p. 154.) "One cannot imagine on the sea anything but discomfort. One cannot have all the necessities as in land travel. The mariners are obliged to live thus but by their services they come nearer to God, and God rewards actions performed on the land and on the sea but He grants a two-fold recompense for those services accomplished by one of the servants on the sea, because their work is more arduous." (Ibid., pp. 155-156.) "I have seen (on the way to Mecca) acts of the vilest kind, in the eyes of God, which were sufficient to undo the good resulting from the pilgrimage. These were the quarrels among the pilgrims! Verily, the House of God has no need of such people!" (Ibid., p. 155.)]

The peoples of the West, among whom the first evidences of this great Industrial Revolution have appeared, are, alas, as yet wholly unaware of the Source whence this mighty stream, this great motive power, proceeds--a force that has revolutionised every aspect of their material life. Their own history testifies to the fact that in the year which witnessed the dawn of this glorious Revelation, there suddenly appeared evidences of an industrial and economic revolution that the people themselves declare to have been unprecedented in the history of mankind. In their concern for the details of the working and adjustments of this newly conceived machinery, they have gradually lost sight of the Source and object of this tremendous power which the Almighty has committed to their charge. They seem to have sorely misused this power and misunderstood its function. Designed to confer upon the people of the West the blessings of peace and of happiness, it has been utilised by them to promote the interests of destruction and war. <p132>

Upon His arrival in Jaddih, the Bab donned the pilgrim's garb, mounted a camel, and set out on His journey to Mecca. Quddus, however, notwithstanding the repeatedly expressed desire of his Master, preferred to accompany Him on foot all the way from Jaddih to that holy city. Holding in his hand the bridle of the camel upon which the Bab was riding, he walked along joyously and

prayerfully, ministering to his Master's needs, wholly indifferent to the fatigues of his arduous march. Every night, from eventide until the break of day, Quddus, sacrificing comfort and sleep, would continue with unrelaxing vigilance to watch beside his Beloved, ready to provide for His wants and to ensure the means of His protection and safety.

One day, when the Bab had dismounted close to a well in order to offer His morning prayer, a roving Bedouin suddenly appeared on the horizon, drew near to Him, and, snatching the saddlebag that had been lying on the ground beside Him, and which contained His writings and papers, vanished into the unknown desert. His Ethiopian servant set out to pursue him, but was prevented by his Master, who, as He was praying, motioned to him with His hand to give up his pursuit. "Had I allowed you," the Bab later on affectionately assured him, "you would surely have overtaken and punished him. But this was not to be. The papers and writings which that bag contained are destined to reach, through the instrumentality of this Arab, such places as we could never have succeeded in attaining. Grieve not, therefore, at his action, for this was decreed by God, the Ordainer, the Almighty." Many a time afterwards did the Bab on similar occasions seek to comfort His friends by such reflections. By words such as these He turned the bitterness of regret and of resentment into radiant acquiescence in the Divine purpose and into joyous submission to God's will. On the day of Arafat,[1] the Bab, seeking the quiet seclusion of His cell, devoted His whole time to meditation and worship. On the following day, the day of Nahr, after He had offered the feast-day prayer, He proceeded to Muna, where, according to ancient custom, He purchased nineteen lambs of the choicest breed, of which He sacrificed nine in <p133> His own name, seven in the name of Quddus, and three in the name of His Ethiopian servant. He refused to partake of the meat of this consecrated sacrifice, preferring instead to distribute it freely among the poor and needy of that neighbourhood.

[1 The day preceding the festival.]

Although the month of Dhi'l-Hijjih,[1] the month of pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, coincided in that year with the first month of the winter season, yet so intense was the heat in that region that the pilgrims who made the circuit of <p134> the sacred shrine were unable to perform that rite in their usual garments. Draped in a light, loose-fitting tunic, they joined in the celebration of the festival. The Bab, however, refused, as a mark of deference, to discard either His turban or cloak. Dressed in His usual attire, He, with the utmost dignity and calm, and with extreme simplicity and reverence, compassed the Ka'bih and performed all the prescribed rites of worship.

[1 December, 1844 A.D.]

On the last day of His pilgrimage to Mecca, the Bab met Mirza Muhit-i-Kirmani.

He stood facing the Black Stone, when the Bab approached him and, taking his hand in His, addressed him in these words: "O Muhit!

You regard yourself as one of the most outstanding figures of the shaykhi community and a distinguished exponent of its teachings.

In your heart you even claim to be one of the direct successors and rightful

inheritors of those twin great Lights, those Stars that have heralded the morn of Divine guidance.

Behold, we are both now standing within this most sacred shrine.

Within its hallowed precincts, He whose Spirit dwells in this place can cause Truth immediately to be known and distinguished from falsehood, and righteousness from error.

Verily I declare, none besides Me in this day, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Gate that leads men to the knowledge of God.

My proof is none other than that proof whereby the truth of the Prophet Muhammad was established.

Ask Me whatsoever you please; now, at this very moment, I pledge Myself to reveal such verses as can demonstrate the truth of My mission.

You must choose either to submit yourself unreservedly to My Cause or to repudiate it entirely.

You have no other alternative.

If you choose to reject My message, I will not let go your hand until you pledge your word to declare publicly your repudiation <p135> of the Truth which I have proclaimed.

Thus shall He who speaks the Truth be made known, and he that speaks falsely shall be condemned to eternal misery and shame.

Then shall the way of Truth be revealed and made manifest to all men."

This peremptory challenge, thrust so unexpectedly by the Bab upon Mirza Muhit-i-Kirmani, profoundly distressed him. He was overpowered by its directness, its compelling <p136> majesty and force. In the presence of that Youth, he, notwithstanding his age, his authority and learning, felt as a helpless bird prisoned in the grasp of a mighty eagle. Confused and full of fear, he replied: "My Lord, my Master! Ever since the day on which my eyes beheld You in Karbila, I seemed at last to have found and recognized Him who had been the object of my quest. I renounce whosoever has failed to recognize You, and despise him in whose heart may yet linger the faintest misgivings as to Your purity and holiness. I pray You to overlook my weakness, and entreat You to answer me in my perplexity. Please God I may, at this very place, within the precincts of this hallowed shrine, swear my fealty to You, and arise for the triumph of Your Cause. If I be insincere in what I declare, if in my heart I should disbelieve what my lips proclaim, I would deem myself utterly unworthy of the grace of the Prophet of God, and regard my action as an act of manifest disloyalty to Ali, His chosen successor."

The Bab, who listened attentively to his words, and who was well aware of his helplessness and poverty of soul, answered and said: "Verily I say, the Truth is even now known and distinguished from falsehood. O shrine of the Prophet of God, and you, O Qudus, who have believed in Me! I take you both, in this hour, as My witnesses. You have seen and heard that which has come to pass between Me

and him. I call upon you to testify thereunto, and God, verily, is, beyond and above you, My sure and ultimate Witness. He is the All-Seeing, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. O Muhit! Set forth whatsoever perplexes your mind, and I will, by the aid of God, unloose My tongue and undertake to resolve your problems, so that you may testify to the excellence of My utterance and realise that no one besides Me is able to manifest My wisdom."

Mirza Muhit responded to the invitation of the Bab and submitted to Him his questions. Pleading the necessity of his immediate departure for Medina, he expressed the hope of receiving, ere his departure from that city, the text of the promised reply. "I will grant your request," the Bab assured him. On My way to Medina I shall, with the assistance of God, reveal My answer to your questions. If I meet you <p137> not in that city, My reply will surely reach you immediately after your arrival at Karbila. Whatever justice and fairness may dictate, the same shall I expect you to fulfil. 'If ye do well, to your own behoof will ye do well: and if ye do evil, against yourselves will ye do it.' 'God is verily independent of all His creatures.'"[1]

[1 Verses of the Qur'an.]

Mirza Muhit, ere his departure, again expressed his firm resolve to redeem his solemn pledge. "I shall never depart from Medina," he assured the Bab, "whatever may betide, until I have fulfilled my covenant with You." As the mote which is driven before the gale, he, unable to withstand the sweeping majesty of the Revelation proclaimed by the Bab, fled in terror from before His face. He tarried awhile in Medina and, faithless to his pledge and disregardful of the admonitions of his conscience, left for Karbila.

The Bab, faithful to His promise, revealed, on His way from Mecca to Medina, His written reply to the questions that had perplexed the mind of Mirza Muhit, and gave it the name of Sahifiyi-i-Baynu'l-Haramayn.[1] Mirza Muhit, who received it in the early days of his arrival in Karbila, remained unmoved by its tone and refused to recognize the precepts which it inculcated.

His attitude towards the Faith was one of concealed and persistent opposition.

At times he professed to be a follower and supporter of that notorious adversary of the Bab, Haji Mirza Karim Khan, and occasionally claimed for himself the station of an independent leader.

Nearing the end of his days, whilst residing in Iraq, he, feigning submission to Baha'u'llah, expressed, through one of the Persian princes who dwelt in Baghdad, a desire to meet Him.

He requested that his proposed interview be regarded as strictly confidential. "Tell him," was Baha'u'llah's reply, "that in the days of My retirement in the mountains of Sulaymaniyyih, I, in a certain ode which I composed, set forth the essential requirements from every wayfarer who treads the path of search in his quest of Truth.

Share with him this verse from that ode: 'If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our court; but if sacrifice be thy heart's desire, come and let others come with thee.

For such is the way of Faith, if in <p138> thy heart thou seekest reunion with Baha; shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us?

Begone! If he be willing, he will openly and unreservedly hasten to meet Me; if not, I refuse to see him."

Baha'u'llah's unequivocal answer disconcerted Mirza Muhit.

Unable to resist and unwilling to comply, he departed for his home in Karbila the very day he received that message.

As soon as he arrived, he sickened, and, three days later, he died.

[1 "The Epistle between the Two Shrines."]

No sooner had the Bab performed the last of the observances in connection with His pilgrimage to Mecca than he addressed an epistle to the Sherif of that holy city, wherein He set forth, in clear and unmistakable terms, the distinguishing features of His mission, and called upon him to arise and embrace His Cause.

This epistle, together with selections from His other writings, He delivered to Quddus, and instructed him to present them to the Sherif.

The latter, however, too absorbed in his own material pursuits to incline his ear to the words which had been addressed to him by the Bab, failed to respond to the call of the Divine Message.

Haji Niyaz-i-Baghdadi has been heard to relate the following: "In the year 1267 A.H.,[1] I undertook a pilgrimage to that holy city, where I was privileged to meet the Sherif.

In the course of his conversation with me, he said: 'I recollect that in the year '60, during the season of pilgrimage, a youth came to visit me.

He presented to me a sealed book which I readily accepted but was too much occupied at that time to read.

A few days later I met again that same youth, who asked me whether I had any reply to make to his offer.

Pressure of work had again detained me from considering the contents of that book.

I was therefore unable to give him a satisfactory reply.

When the season of pilgrimage was over, one day, as I was sorting out my letters, my eyes fell accidentally upon that book.

I opened it and found, in its introductory pages, a moving and exquisitely written homily which was followed by verses the tone and language of which bore a striking resemblance to the Qur'an.

All that I gathered from the perusal of the book was that among the people of Persia a man of the seed of Fatimih and descendant of the family of Hashim, had raised a new call, and was announcing <p139> to all people the appearance of the promised Qa'im.

I remained, however, ignorant of the name of the author of that book, nor was I informed of the circumstances attending that call. 'A great commotion,' I remarked, 'has indeed seized that land during the last few years.'

A Youth, a descendant of the Prophet and a merchant by profession, has claimed that His utterance was the Voice of Divine inspiration.

He has publicly asserted that, within the space of a few days, there could stream from His tongue verses of such number and excellence as would surpass in volume and beauty the Qur'an itself--a work which it took Muhammad no less than twenty-three years to reveal.

A multitude of people, both high and low, civil and ecclesiastical, among the inhabitants of Persia, have rallied round His standard and have willingly sacrificed themselves in His path.

That Youth has, during the past year, in the last days of the month of Sha'ban,[2] suffered martyrdom in Tabriz, in the province of Adhirbayjan.

They who persecuted Him sought by this means to extinguish the light which He kindled in that land.

Since His martyrdom, however, His influence has pervaded all classes of people.' The Sherif, who was listening attentively, expressed his indignation at the behaviour of those <p140> who had persecuted the Bab. 'The malediction of God be upon these evil people,' he exclaimed, 'a people who, in days past, treated in the same manner our holy and illustrious ancestors!' With these words the Sherif concluded his conversation with me."

[1 1850-51 A.D.]

[2 July, 1850 A.D.]

From Mecca the Bab proceeded to Medina.

It was the first day of the month of Muharram, in the year 1261 A.H.,[1] when He found Himself on the way to that holy city.

As He approached it, He called to mind the stirring events that had immortalised the name of Him who had lived and died within its walls.

Those scenes which bore eloquent testimony to the creative power of that immortal Genius seemed to be re-enacted, with undiminished splendour, before His eyes.

He prayed as He drew nigh unto that holy sepulchre which enshrined the mortal remains of the Prophet of God.

He also remembered, as He trod that holy ground, that shining Herald of His own Dispensation.

He knew that in the cemetery of Baqi', in a place not far distant from the shrine of Muhammad, there had been laid to rest Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i, the harbinger of His own Revelation, who, after a life of onerous service, had decided to spend the evening of his days within the precincts of that hallowed shrine.

There came to Him also the vision of those holy men, those pioneers and martyrs of the Faith, who had fallen gloriously on the field of battle, and who, with their life-blood, had sealed the triumph of the Cause of God.

Their sacred dust seemed as if reanimated by the gentle tread of His feet.

Their shades seemed to have been stirred by the reviving breath of His presence.

They looked to Him as if they had arisen at His approach, were hastening towards Him, and were voicing their welcome.

They seemed to be addressing to Him this fervent plea: 'Repair not unto Thy native land, we beseech Thee, O Thou Beloved of our hearts!

Abide Thou in our midst, for here, far from the tumult of Thine enemies who are lying in wait for Thee, Thou shalt be safe and secure.

We are fearful for Thee.

We dread the plottings and machinations of Thy foes.

We tremble at the thought that their deeds might bring eternal damnation to their souls." "Fear not," the Bab's indomitable Spirit replied: "I am come into this <p141> world to bear witness to the glory of sacrifice.

You are aware of the intensity of My longing; you realise the degree of My renunciation.

Nay, beseech the Lord your God to hasten the hour of My martyrdom and to accept My sacrifice.

Rejoice, for both I and Quddus will be slain on the altar of our devotion to the King of Glory.

The blood which we are destined to shed in His path will water and revive the garden of our immortal felicity.

The drops of this consecrated blood will be the seed out of which will arise the mighty Tree of God, the Tree that will gather beneath its all-embracing shadow the peoples and kindreds of the earth.

Grieve not, therefore, if I depart from this land, for I am hastening to fulfil My destiny." <p142>

[1 Friday, January 30, 1845 A.D.]

CHAPTER VIII

THE BAB'S STAY IN SHIRAZ AFTER THE PILGRIMAGE

THE visit of the Bab to Medina marked the concluding stage of His pilgrimage to Hijaz.

From thence He returned to Jaddih, and by way of the sea regained His native land.

He landed at Bushihr nine lunar months after He had embarked on His pilgrimage

from that port.

In the same khan [1] which He had previously occupied, He received His friends and relatives, who had come to greet and welcome Him.

While still in Bushihr, He summoned Quddus to His presence and with the utmost kindness bade him depart for Shiraz. "The days of your companionship with Me,"

He told him, "are drawing to a close.

The hour of separation has struck, a separation which no reunion will follow except in the Kingdom of God, in the presence of the King of Glory.

In this world of dust, no more than nine fleeting months of association with Me have been allotted to you.

On the shores of the Great Beyond, however, in the realm of immortality, joy of eternal reunion awaits us.

The hand of destiny will ere long plunge you into an ocean of tribulation for His sake.

I, too, will follow you; I, too, will be immersed beneath its depths.

Rejoice with exceeding gladness, for you have been chosen as the standard-bearer of the host of affliction, and are standing in the vanguard of the noble army that will suffer martyrdom in His name.

In the streets of Shiraz, indignities will be heaped upon you, and the severest injuries will afflict your body.

You will survive the ignominious behaviour of your foes, and will attain the presence of Him who is the one object of our adoration and love.

In His presence you will forget all the harm and disgrace that shall have befallen you.

The hosts of the Unseen will hasten forth to assist you, and will <p143>proclaim to all the world your heroism and glory.

Yours will be the ineffable joy of quaffing the cup of martyrdom for His sake.

I, too, shall tread the path of sacrifice, and will join you in the realm of eternity."

The Bab then delivered into his hands a letter He had written to Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, His maternal uncle, in which He had informed him of His safe return to Bushihr.

He also entrusted him with a copy of the Khasa'il-i-Sab'ih,[2] a treatise in which He had set forth the essential requirements from those who had attained to the knowledge of the new Revelation and had recognized its claim.

As He bade Quddus His last farewell, He asked him to convey His greetings to each of His loved ones in Shiraz.

[1 Similar to a caravanserai.]

[2 Literally meaning "The Seven Qualifications.]

Quddus, with feelings of unshakable determination to carry out the expressed wishes of his Master, set out from Bushihr.

Arriving at Shiraz, he was affectionately welcomed by Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, who received him in his own home and eagerly enquired after the health and doings of his beloved Kinsman.

Finding him receptive to the call of the new Message, Quddus acquainted him with the nature of the Revelation with which that Youth had already fired his soul.

The Bab's maternal uncle, as a result of the endeavours exerted by Quddus, was the first, after the Letters of the Living, to embrace the Cause in Shiraz.

As the full significance of the new-born Faith had remained as yet undivulged, he was unaware of the full extent of its implications and glory.

His conversation with Quddus, however, removed the veil from his eyes.

So steadfast became his faith, and so profound grew his love for the Bab, that he consecrated his whole life to His service.

With unrelaxing vigilance he arose to defend His Cause and to shield His person.

In his sustained endeavours, he scorned fatigue and was disdainful of death.

Though recognized as an outstanding figure among the business men of that city, he never allowed material considerations to interfere with his spiritual responsibility of safeguarding the person, and advancing the Cause, of his beloved Kinsman.

He persevered in his task until the hour when, joining the company of the Seven Martyrs of Tihiran, he, in circumstances of exceptional heroism, laid down his life for Him. <p144>

The next person whom Quddus met in Shiraz was Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq, Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani, to whom he entrusted the copy of the Khasa'il-i-Sab'ih, and stressed the necessity of putting into effect immediately all its provisions.

Among its precepts was the emphatic injunction of the Bab to every loyal believer to add the following words to the traditional formula of the adhan:[1] "I bear witness that He whose name is Ali-Qabl-i-Muhammad [2] is the servant of the Baqiyyatu'llah." [3] Mulla Sadiq, who in those days had been extolling from the pulpit-top to large audiences the virtues of the imams of the Faith, was so enraptured by the theme and language of that treatise that he unhesitatingly resolved to carry out all the observances it ordained.

Driven by the impelling force inherent in that Tablet, he, one day as he was leading his congregation in prayer in the Masjid-i-Naw, suddenly proclaimed, as he was sounding the adhan, the additional words prescribed by the Bab.

The multitude that <p145> heard him was astounded by his cry.

Dismay and consternation seized the entire congregation.

The distinguished divines, who occupied the front seats and who were greatly revered for their pious orthodoxy, raised a clamour, loudly protesting: "Woe betide us, the guardians and protectors of the Faith of God!

Behold, this man has hoisted the standard of heresy.

Down with this infamous traitor!

He has spoken blasphemy.

Arrest him, for he is a disgrace to our Faith." "Who," they angrily exclaimed, "dared authorised such grave departure from the established precepts of Islam?

Who has presumed to arrogate to himself this supreme prerogative?"

[1 Refer to Glossary.]

[2 Reference to the name of the Bab.]

[3 Reference to Baha'u'llah. Refer to Glossary.]

The populace re-echoed the protestations of these divines, and arose to reinforce their clamour. The whole city had been aroused, and public order was, as a result, seriously threatened. The governor of the province of Fars, Husayn Khan-i-Iravani, surnamed Ajudan-Bashi, and generally designated in those days as Sahib-Ikhtiyar,[1] found it necessary to intervene and to enquire into the cause of this sudden commotion. He was informed that a disciple of a young man named Siyyid-i-Bab, who had just returned from His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and was now living in Bushihr, had arrived in Shiraz and was propagating the teachings of his Master. "This disciple," Husayn Khan was further informed, "claims that his teacher is the author of a new revelation and is the revealer of a book which he asserts is divinely inspired. Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani has embraced that faith, and is fearlessly summoning the multitude to the acceptance of that message. He declares its recognition to be the first obligation of every loyal and pious follower of shi'ah Islam."

[1 According to the "Tarikh-i-Jadid" (p. 204), he was also styled "Nizamu'd-Dawlih."]

Husayn Khan ordered the arrest of both Quddus and Mulla Sadiq.

The police authorities, to whom they were delivered, were instructed to bring them handcuffed into the presence of the governor.

The police also delivered into the hands of Husayn Khan the copy of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', which they had seized from Mulla Sadiq while he was reading aloud its passages to an excited congregation.

Quddus, owing to his youthful appearance and unconventional dress, was at first ignored by Husayn Khan, who preferred to direct <p146> his remarks to his more dignified and elderly companion. "Tell me," angrily asked the governor, as he turned to Mulla Sadiq, "if you are aware of the opening passage of the Qayyumu'l-Asma' wherein the Siyyid-i-Bab addresses the rulers and kings of the earth in these terms: 'Divest yourselves of the robe of sovereignty, for He who is the King in truth, hath been made manifest!

The Kingdom is God's, the Most Exalted.

Thus hath the Pen of the Most High decreed! If this be true, it must necessarily apply to my sovereign, Muhammad Shah, of the Qajar dynasty,[1] whom I represent as the chief magistrate of this province.

Must Muhammad Shah, according to this behest, lay down his crown and abandon his sovereignty?

Must I, too, abdicate my power and relinquish my position?"

Mulla Sadiq unhesitatingly replied: "When once the truth of the Revelation announced by the Author of these words shall have been definitely established, the truth of whatsoever has fallen from His lips will likewise be vindicated.

If these words be the Word of God, the abdication of Muhammad Shah and his like can matter but little.

It can in no wise turn aside the Divine purpose, nor alter the sovereignty of the almighty and eternal King." [2]

[1 "One of the tribes of Turan, a Turkish family, called the Qajar, which first appeared in Persia in the invading army of Changiz Khan." (C. R. Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia," p. 339.)]

[2 According to A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab" (footnote 175, p. 225), this meeting took place on August 6, 1845 A.D.]

That cruel and impious ruler was sorely displeased with such an answer.

He reviled and cursed him, ordered his attendants to strip him of his garments and to scourge him with a thousand lashes.

He then commanded that the beards of both Quddus and Mulla Sadiq should be burned, their noses be pierced, that through this incision a cord should be passed, and with this halter they should be led through the streets of the city.[1] "It will be an object lesson to the people of Shiraz,"

Husayn Khan declared, "who will know what the penalty of heresy will be."

Mulla Sadiq, calm and self-possessed and with eyes upraised to heaven, was heard reciting this prayer: "O Lord, our God!

We have indeed heard the voice of One that called.

He called us to the <p147> Faith--'Believe ye on the Lord your God!'--and we have believed.

O God, our God!

Forgive us, then, our sins, and hide away from us our evil deeds, and cause us to die with the righteous." [2] With magnificent fortitude both resigned themselves to their fate.

Those who had been instructed to inflict this savage punishment performed their task with alacrity and vigour.

None intervened in behalf of these sufferers, none was inclined to plead their

cause.

Soon after this, they were both expelled from Shiraz.

Before their expulsion, they were warned that if they ever attempted to return to this city, they would both be crucified.

By their sufferings they earned the immortal distinction of having been the first to be persecuted on Persian soil for the sake of their Faith.

Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, though the first to fall a victim to the relentless hate of the enemy, underwent his persecution in Iraq, which lay beyond the confines of Persia.

Nor did his sufferings, intense as they were, compare with the hideousness and the barbaric cruelty which characterised the torture inflicted upon Quddus and Mulla Sadiq.

[1 According to the "Traveller's Narrative" (p. 5), a certain Mulla Ali-Akbar-i-Ardistani was, together with them, subjected to the same persecution.]

[2 Qur'an, 3:193.]

An eye-witness of this revolting episode, an unbeliever residing in Shiraz, related to me the following: "I was present when Mulla Sadiq was being scourged.

I watched his persecutors each in turn apply the lash to his bleeding shoulders, and continue the strokes until he became exhausted.

No one believed that Mulla Sadiq, so advanced in age and so frail in body, could possibly survive fifty such savage strokes.

We marvelled at his fortitude when we found that, although the number of the strokes of the scourge he had received had already exceeded nine hundred, his face still retained its original serenity and calm.

A smile was upon his face, as he held his hand before his mouth.

He seemed utterly indifferent to the blows that were being showered upon him.

When he was being expelled from the city, I succeeded in approaching him, and asked him why he held his hand before his mouth.

I expressed surprise at the smile upon his countenance.

He emphatically replied: 'The first seven strokes were severely painful; to the rest I seemed to have grown indifferent.

I was wondering whether the strokes that followed were being actually applied to my own body.

A feeling <p148> of joyous exultation had invaded my soul.

I was trying to repress my feelings and to restrain my laughter.

I can now realise how the almighty Deliverer is able, in the twinkling of an

eye, to turn pain into ease, and sorrow into gladness.

Immensely exalted is His power above and beyond the idle fancy of His mortal creatures."

Mulla Sadiq, whom I met years after, confirmed every detail of this moving episode.

Husayn Khan's anger was not appeased by this atrocious and most undeserved chastisement.

His wanton and capricious cruelty found further vent in the assault which he now directed against the person of the Bab.[1] He despatched to Bushihr a mounted escort of his own trusted guard, with emphatic instructions to arrest the Bab and to bring Him in chains to Shiraz.

The leader of that escort, a member of the Nusayri community, better known as the sect of Aliyu'llahi, related the following: "Having completed the third stage of our journey to Bushihr, we encountered, in the midst of the wilderness a youth who wore a green sash and a small turban after the manner of the siyyids who are in the trading profession.

He was on horseback, and was followed by an Ethiopian servant who was in charge of his belongings.

As we approached him, he saluted us and enquired as to our destination.

I thought it best to conceal from him the truth, and replied that in this vicinity we had been commanded by the governor of Fars to conduct a certain enquiry.

He smilingly observed: 'The governor has sent you to arrest Me.

Here am I; do with Me as you please.

By <p149> coming out to meet you, I have curtailed the length of your march, and have made it easier for you to find Me.' I was startled by his remarks and marvelled at his candour and straightforwardness.

I could not explain, however, his readiness to subject himself, of his own accord, to the severe discipline of government officials, and to risk thereby his own life and safety.

I tried to ignore him, and was preparing to leave, when he approached me and said: 'I swear by the righteousness of Him who created man, distinguished him from among the rest of His creatures, and caused his heart to be made the seat of His sovereignty and knowledge, that all My life I have uttered no word but the truth, and had no other desire except the welfare and advancement of My fellow-men.

I have disdained My own ease and have avoided being the cause of pain or sorrow to anyone.

I know that you are seeking Me.

I prefer to deliver Myself into your hands, rather than subject you and your companions to unnecessary annoyance for My sake.' These words moved me profoundly.

I instinctively dismounted from my horse, and, kissing his stirrups, addressed him in these words: 'O light of the eyes of the Prophet of God!

I adjure you, by Him who has created you and endowed you with such loftiness and power, to grant my request and to answer my prayer.

I beseech you to escape from this place and to flee from before the face of Husayn Khan, the ruthless and despicable governor of this province.

I dread his machinations against you; I rebel at the idea of being made the instrument of his malignant designs against so innocent and noble a descendant of the Prophet of God.

My companions are all honourable men.

Their word is their bond.

They will pledge themselves not to betray your flight.

I pray you, betake yourself to the city of Mashhad in Khurasan, and avoid falling a victim to the brutality of this remorseless wolf.' To my earnest entreaty he gave this answer: 'May the Lord your God requite you for your magnanimity and noble intention.

No one knows the mystery of My Cause; no one can fathom its secrets.

Never will I turn My face away from the decree of God.

He alone is My sure Stronghold, My Stay and My Refuge.

Until My last hour is at hand, none dare assail Me, none can frustrate the plan of the Almighty.

And when <p150> My hour is come, how great will be My joy to quaff the cup of martyrdom in His name!

Here am I; deliver Me into the hands of your master.

Be not afraid, for no one will blame you.' I bowed my consent and carried out his desire."

[1 "This city became the arena for passionate discussions which profoundly troubled the general peace.

The curious, the pilgrims, the scandal-mongers met there commenting upon the news, approving or blaming, exalting the young Siyyid, or, on the contrary, heaping upon him maledictions and insults.

Everyone was excited and enervated.

The Mullas saw with bitter anxiety the growing number of adherents to the new doctrine and their resources diminished correspondingly.

It became necessary to act, as prolonged tolerance would empty the Mosques of their believers who were convinced that since Islam did not defend itself, it acknowledged defeat.

On the other hand, Husayn Khan, governor of Shiraz, Nizamu'd-Dawlih, feared that, in letting things drift, the scandal would become such that later it would be impossible to suppress it; that would be to court disgrace.

Besides, the Bab did not content himself with preaching, he called to himself men of good-will. 'He who knows the Word of God and does not come to His assistance in the days of violence is exactly like those who turned away from the testimony of his holiness Husayn, son of Ali, at Karbila.

Those are the impious ones!' (Kitab-i-Baynu'l-Haramayn.) The civil interests concurring with the interests of heaven, Nizamu'd-Dawlih and Shaykh Abu-Turab, the Imam-Jum'ih agreed that humiliation should be inflicted upon the innovator such as would discredit him in the eyes of the populace; perhaps thus they might succeed in quieting things." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

229-230.)]

The Bab straightway resumed His journey to Shiraz.

Free and unfettered, He went before His escort, which followed Him in an attitude of respectful devotion.

By the magic of His words, He had disarmed the hostility of His guards and transmuted their proud arrogance into humility and love.

Reaching the city, they proceeded directly to the seat of the government.

Whosoever observed the cavalcade marching through the streets could not help but marvel at this most unusual spectacle.

Immediately Husayn Khan was informed of the arrival of the Bab, he summoned Him to his presence.

He received Him with the utmost insolence and bade Him occupy a seat facing him in the centre of the room.

He publicly rebuked Him, and in abusive language denounced His conduct. "Do you realise," he angrily protested, "what a great mischief you have kindled?

Are you aware what a disgrace you have become to the holy Faith of Islam and to the august person of our sovereign?

Are you not the man who claims to be the author of a new revelation which annuls the sacred precepts of the Qur'an?"

The Bab calmly replied: "If any bad man come unto you with news, clear up the

matter at once, lest through ignorance ye harm others, and be speedily constrained to repent of what ye have done." [1] These words inflamed the wrath of Husayn Khan. "What!" he exclaimed. "Dare you ascribe to us evil, ignorance, and folly?"

Turning to his attendant, he bade him strike the Bab in the face.

So violent was the blow, that the Bab's turban fell to the ground.

Shaykh Abu-Turab, the Imam-Jum'ih of Shiraz, who was present at that meeting and who strongly disapproved of the conduct of Husayn Khan, ordered that the Bab's turban be replaced upon His head, and invited Him to be seated by his side.

Turning to the governor, the Imam-Jum'ih explained to him the circumstances connected with the revelation of the verse of the Qur'an which the Bab had quoted, and sought by this means to calm his fury. "This verse which this youth has <p151> quoted," he told him, "has made a profound impression upon me.

The wise course, I feel, is to enquire into this matter with great care, and to judge him according to the precepts of the holy Book."

Husayn Khan readily consented; whereupon Shaykh Abu-Turab questioned the Bab regarding the nature and character of His Revelation.

The Bab denied the claim of being either the representative of the promised Qa'im or the intermediary between Him and the faithful. "We are completely satisfied," replied the Imam-Jum'ih; "we shall request you to present yourself on Friday in the Masjid-i-Vakil, and to proclaim publicly your denial."

As Shaykh Abu-Turab arose to depart in the hope of terminating the proceedings, Husayn Khan intervened and said: "We shall require a person of recognized standing to give bail and surety for him, and to pledge his word in writing that if ever in future this youth should attempt by word or deed to prejudice the interests either of the Faith of Islam or of the government of this land, he would straightway deliver him into our hands, and regard himself under all circumstances responsible for his behaviour."

Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, the Bab's maternal uncle, who was present at that meeting, consented to act as the sponsor of his Nephew.

In his own handwriting he wrote the pledge, affixed to it his seal, confirmed it by the signature of a number of witnesses, and delivered it to the governor; whereupon Husayn Khan ordered that the Bab be entrusted to the care of His uncle, with the condition that at whatever time the governor should deem it advisable, Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali would at once deliver the Bab into his hands. [1 Qur'an, 49:6.]

Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, his heart filled with gratitude to God, conducted the Bab to His home and committed Him to the loving care of His revered mother.

He rejoiced at this family reunion and was greatly relieved by the deliverance of his dear and precious Kinsman from the grasp of that malignant tyrant.

In the quiet of His own home, the Bab led for a time a life of undisturbed retirement.

No one except His wife, His mother, and His uncles had any intercourse with Him.

Meanwhile the mischief-makers were busily pressing Shaykh Abu-Turab to summon the Bab to the Masjid-i-Vakil and to call upon Him to fulfil His pledge. <p152>
<p153> Shaykh Abu-Turab was known to be a man of kindly disposition, and of a temperament and nature which bore a striking resemblance to the character of the late Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Imam-Jum'ih of Tihran.

He was extremely reluctant to treat with contumely persons of recognized standing, particularly if these were residents of Shiraz.

Instinctively he felt this to be his duty, observed it conscientiously, and was as a result universally esteemed by the people of that city.

He therefore sought, through evasive answers and repeated postponements, to appease the indignation of the multitude.

He found, however, that the stirrers-up of mischief and sedition were bending every effort further to inflame the feelings of general resentment which had seized the masses.

He at length felt compelled to address a confidential message to Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, requesting him to bring the Bab with him on Friday to the Masjid-i-Vakil, that He might fulfil the pledge He had given. "My hope," he added, "is that by the aid of God the statements of your nephew may ease the tenseness of the situation and may lead to your tranquillity as well as to our own."

The Bab, accompanied by Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, arrived at the Masjid at a time when the Imam-Jum'ih had just ascended the pulpit and was preparing to deliver his sermon.

As soon as his eyes fell upon the Bab, he publicly welcomed Him, requested Him to ascend the pulpit, and called upon Him to address the congregation.

The Bab, responding to his invitation, advanced towards him and, standing on the first step of the staircase, prepared to address the people. "Come up higher," interjected the Imam-Jum'ih.

Complying with his wish, the Bab ascended two more steps.

As He was standing, His head hid the breast of Shaykh Abu-Turab, who was occupying the pulpit-top.

He began by prefacing His public declaration with an introductory discourse.

No sooner had He uttered the opening words of "Praise be to God, who hath in truth created the heavens and the earth," than a certain siyyid known as Siyyidi-Shish-Pari, whose function was to carry the mace before the Imam-Jum'ih, insolently shouted: "Enough of this idle chatter!"

Declare, now and immediately, the thing you intend to say."

The Imam-Jum'ih greatly resented the rudeness of the siyyid's <p154> remark. "Hold your peace," he rebuked him, "and be ashamed of your impertinence."

He then, turning to the Bab, asked Him to be brief, as this, he said, would allay the excitement of the people.

The Bab, as He faced the congregation, declared: "The condemnation of God be upon him who regards me either as a representative of the Imam or the gate thereof.

The condemnation of God be also upon whosoever imputes to me the charge of having denied the unity of God, of having repudiated the prophethood of Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, of having rejected the truth of any of the messengers of old, or of having refused to recognize the guardianship of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, or of any of the imams who have succeeded him."

He then ascended to the top of the staircase, embraced the Imam-Jum'ih, and, descending to the floor of the Masjid, joined the congregation for the observance of the Friday prayer.

The Imam-Jum'ih intervened and requested Him to retire. "Your family," he said, "is anxiously awaiting your return.

All are apprehensive lest any harm befall you.

Repair to your house and there offer your prayer; of greater merit shall this deed be in the sight of God."

Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali also was, at the request of the Imam-Jum'ih, asked to accompany his nephew to his home.

This precautionary measure which Shaykh Abu-Turab thought it wise to observe was actuated by the fear lest, after the dispersion of the congregation, a few of the evil-minded among the crowd might still attempt to injure the person of the Bab or endanger His life.

But for the sagacity, the sympathy, and the careful attention which the Imam-Jum'ih so strikingly displayed on a number of such occasions, the infuriated mob would doubtless have been led to gratify its savage desire, and would have committed the most abominable of excesses.

He seemed to have been the instrument of the invisible Hand appointed to protect both the person and the Mission of that Youth.[1]

[1 "Following this public seance provoked by the folly of the Mullahs and which won for him numerous partisans, the trouble became serious in all the provinces of Persia; the dispute grew into such a grave situation that Muhammad Shah sent to Shiraz a man in whom he had complete confidence, instructing him to make a report of everything he saw and understood. This envoy was Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi." (A. L. M. Nicolas' Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 232-233.)]

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The Bab regained His home and for some time was able to lead, in the privacy of His house, and in close association with His family and kinsmen, a life of comparative tranquillity. In those days He celebrated the advent of the first Naw-Ruz since He had declared His Mission. That festival fell, in that year, on the tenth day of the month of Rabi'u'l-Avval, 1261 A.H.[1]

[1 March, 1845 A.D.]

A few among those who were present on that memorable occasion in the Masjid-i-Vakil, and had listened to the statements of the Bab, were greatly impressed by the masterly manner in which that Youth had, by His unaided efforts, succeeded in silencing His formidable opponents.

Soon after this event, they were each led to apprehend the reality of His Mission and to recognize its glory.

Among them was Shaykh Ali Mirza, the nephew of this same Imam-Jum'ih, a young man who had just attained the age of maturity.

The seed implanted in his heart grew and developed, until in the year 1267 A.H.[1] he was privileged to meet Baha'u'llah in Iraq.

That visit filled him with enthusiasm and joy.

Returning greatly refreshed to his native land, he resumed with redoubled energy his labours for the Cause.

From that year until the present time, he has persevered in his task, and has achieved distinction by the uprightness of his character and whole-hearted devotion to his government and country.

Recently a letter addressed by him to Baha'u'llah has reached the Holy Land, in which he expresses his keen satisfaction at the progress of the Cause in Persia. "I am mute with wonder," he writes, "when I behold the evidences of God's unconquerable power manifested among the people of my country.

In a land which has for years so savagely persecuted the Faith, a man who for forty years has been known throughout Persia as a Babi, has been made the sole arbitrator in a case of dispute which involves, on the one hand, the Zillu's-Sultan, the tyrannical son of the Shah and a sworn enemy of the Cause, and, on the other, Mirza Fath-'Ali Khan, the Sahib-i-Divan.

It has been publicly announced that whatsoever be the verdict of this Babi, the same should be unreservedly accepted by both parties and should be unhesitatingly enforced."

[1 1850-51 A.D.] <p156>

A certain Muhammad-Karim who was among the congregation that Friday was likewise attracted by the Bab's remarkable behaviour on that occasion. What he saw and heard on that day brought about his immediate conversion. Persecution drove him out of Persia to Iraq, where, in the presence of Baha'u'llah, he continually deepened his understanding and faith. Later on he was bidden by Him to return to Shiraz and to endeavour to the best of his ability to propagate the Cause. There he remained and laboured to the end of his life.

Still another was Mirza Aqay-i-Rikab-Saz. He became so enamoured of the Bab on that day that no persecution, however severe and prolonged, was able either to shake his convictions or to obscure the radiance of his love. He, too, attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Iraq. In answer to the questions which he asked regarding the interpretation of the Disconnected Letters of the Qur'an and the meaning of the Verse of Nur, he was favoured with an expressly written Tablet revealed by the pen of Baha'u'llah. In His path he eventually suffered martyrdom.

Among them also was Mirza Rahim-i-Khabbaz, who distinguished himself by his fearlessness and fiery ardour. He relaxed not in his efforts until the hour of his death.

Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Bazzaz, who, as a fellow-traveller of the Bab during His pilgrimage to Hijaz, had but dimly recognized the overpowering majesty of His Mission, was, on that memorable Friday, profoundly shaken and completely transformed. He bore the Bab such love that tears of an overpowering devotion continually flowed from his eyes. All who knew him admired the uprightness of his conduct and praised his benevolence and candour. He, as well as his two sons, has proved by his deeds the tenacity of his faith, and has won the esteem of his fellow-believers.

And yet another of those who felt the fascination of the Bab on that day was the late Haji Muhammad-Bisat, a man well-versed in the metaphysical teachings of Islam and a great admirer of both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. He was of a kindly disposition and was gifted with a keen sense of humour. He had won the friendship of the Imam-Jum'ih, <p157> was intimately associated with him, and was a faithful attendant at the Friday congregational prayer.

The Naw-Ruz of that year, which heralded the advent of a new springtime, was also symbolic of that spiritual rebirth, the first stirring of which could already be discerned throughout the length and breadth of the land. A number of the most eminent and learned among the people of that country emerged from the wintry desolation of heedlessness, and were quickened by the reviving breath of the new-born Revelation. The seeds which the Hand of Omnipotence had implanted in their hearts germinated into blossoms of the purest and loveliest fragrance.[1] As the breeze of His loving-kindness and tender mercy wafted over these blossoms, the penetrating power of their perfume spread far and wide over the face of all that land. It diffused itself even beyond the confines of Persia. It reached Karbila and reanimated the souls of those who were waiting in expectation for the return <p158> of the Bab to their city. Soon after Naw-Ruz, an epistle reached them by way of Basrih, in which the Bab, who had intended to return from Hijaz to Persia by way of Karbila, informed them of the change in His plan and of His consequent inability to fulfil His promise. He directed them to proceed to Isfahan and remain there until the receipt of further instructions. "Should it be deemed advisable," He added, "We shall request you to proceed to Shiraz; if not, tarry in Isfahan until such time as God may make known to you His will and guidance."

[1 "Be that as it may, the resultant impression was immense in Shiraz and all the learned and religious gathered around Ali-Muhammad.

As soon as he appeared in the Mosque, they surrounded him and, as soon as he was seated in the pulpit, everyone was silent in order to listen to him.

His public talks never attacked the essentials of the Faith of Islam, they respected most of its ritual; in fact, the Kitman dominated.

Nevertheless, they were daring discourses.

The clergy was not spared; its vices were cruelly lashed.

The sad and painful destiny of humanity was generally the theme.

Here and there, certain allusions, the obscurity of which irritated the passions of some while it flattered the pride of others already initiated as a whole or only in part, gave to his prophecies such a bitter truth that the crowd was growing day by day and so, in all Persia, they were beginning to talk of Ali-Muhammad. "The Mullas of Shiraz had not waited for all this agitation to unite against this young detractor.

From his first public appearances, they sent to him their most able Mullas to argue with him and confuse him, and these public debates were held either in the Mosques or in the colleges in the presence of the Governor, the military chiefs, the clergy, the people, in fact before everyone.

But, instead of benefiting the clergy, they contributed quite a little to spread and exalt, at their own expense, the renown of this enthusiastic teacher.

It is a fact that he defeated his adversaries, he condemned them--which was not very difficult--with the Qur'an in hand.

It was an easy matter for him to show before all these crowds who knew the Mullas well, at which point their conduct, their precepts, and to what extent their beliefs, even their theology, were in flagrant contradiction with the Book, which they could not deny. "Possessed of extraordinary daring and exaltation, he flayed unsparingly the vices of his antagonists, disregarding all ordinary conventions.

After having proven their infidelity to their own doctrine, he shamed them in their lives and threw them at pitch and toss to the indignation or the contempt of the auditors. "At Shiraz, his first appearances, when he preached, were so profoundly moving that even the orthodox Muhammadans who were present have retained an indelible memory of them and never recall them without a sort of terror.

They agreed unanimously that the eloquence of Ali-Muhammad was of an incomparable kind, such that, without having been an eye-witness, one could not possibly imagine.

Soon the young theologian no longer appeared in public without being surrounded with many partisans.

His house was always filled with them and he not only taught in the Mosques and

in the colleges, but it was principally at his house and in the evenings that, withdrawn in a room with the elite of his admirers, he lifted for them the veils of a doctrine which even for himself he had not yet fully established. "It seemed in these early days that he was occupied with polemics rather than with dogmatic statements and nothing is more natural.

In these secret talks, his bold declarations which were much more frequent than in the public addresses, grew each day and tended so clearly to a complete overthrow of Islam that they were a prelude to a new profession of Faith.

The little congregation was ardent, brave, carried away, ready for anything; they were fanatical in the true and noble sense of the word, that is to say, that every one of its members thought himself of no importance and burned with a desire to sacrifice his life-blood and his belongings for the cause of Truth." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp.

120, 122.) "These ethics taught by a young man at an age when passions were intense, deeply impressed an audience, religious to the point of fanaticism, above all when the words of the preacher were in perfect harmony with his conduct.

No one doubted the continence and the firmness of Karbila'i Siyyid Ali-Muhammad; he spoke little, meditated constantly and most of the time fled from the presence of men, which all the more aroused their curiosity.

He was sought after everywhere." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p.

341.) "By the uprightness of his life the young Siyyid served as an example to those about him.

He was willingly listened to when, in his ambiguous and interrupted talks, he condemned the abuses evident in all classes of society.

His words were repeated and elaborated upon and they spoke of him as the true Master and gave themselves to him unreservedly." (Ibid.)]

The receipt of this unexpected intelligence created a considerable stir among those who had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Bab at Karbila.

It agitated their minds and tested their loyalty. "What of His promise to us?" whispered a few of the discontented among them. "Does He regard the breaking of His pledge as the interposition of the will of God?"

The others, unlike those waverers, became more steadfast in their faith and clung with added determination to the Cause.

Faithful to their Master, they joyously responded to His invitation, ignoring entirely the criticisms and protestations of those who had faltered in their faith. <p159> They set out for Isfahan, determined to abide by whatsoever might be the will and desire of their Beloved.

They were joined by a few of their companions, who, though gravely shaken in their belief, concealed their feelings.

Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, whose daughter was subsequently joined in wedlock with the Most Great Branch, and Mirza Hadi, the brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, both residents of Isfahan, were among those companions whose vision of the glory and sublimity of the Faith the expressed misgivings of the evil whisperers had failed to obscure.

Among them, too, was a certain Muhammad-i-Hana-Sab, also a resident of Isfahan, who is now serving in the home of Baha'u'llah.

A number of these staunch companions of the Bab participated in the great struggle of Shaykh Tabarsi and miraculously escaped the tragic fate of their fallen brethren.

On their way to Isfahan they met, in the city of Kangavar, Mulla Husayn with his brother and nephew, who were his companions on his previous visit to Shiraz, and who were proceeding to Karbila. They were greatly delighted by this unexpected encounter, and requested Mulla Husayn to prolong his stay in Kangavar, with which request he readily complied. Mulla Husayn, who, while in that city, led the companions of the Bab in the Friday congregational prayer, was held in such esteem and reverence by his fellow-disciples that a number of those present, who later on, in Shiraz, revealed their disloyalty to the Faith, were moved with envy. Among them were Mulla Javad-i-Baraghani and Mulla Abdu'l-'Aliy-i-Harati, both of whom feigned submission to the Revelation of the Bab in the hope of satisfying their ambition for leadership. They both strove secretly to undermine the enviable position achieved by Mulla Husayn. Through their hints and insinuations, they persistently endeavoured to challenge his authority and disgrace his name.

I have heard Mirza Ahmad-i-Katib, better known in those days as Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, who had been the travelling companion of Mulla Javad from Qazvin, relate the following: "Mulla Javad often alluded in his conversation with me to Mulla Husayn. His repeated and disparaging remarks, couched in artful language, impelled me to cease my association with him. Every time I determined to sever my <p160> intercourse with Mulla Javad, I was prevented by Mulla Husayn, who, discovering my intention, counselled me to exercise forbearance towards him. Mulla Husayn's association with the loyal companions of the Bab greatly added to their zeal and enthusiasm. They were edified by his example and were lost in admiration for the brilliant qualities of mind and heart which distinguished so eminent a fellow-disciple."

Mulla Husayn decided to join the company of his friends and to proceed with them to Isfahan. Travelling alone, at about a farsakh's [1] distance in advance of his companions, he, as soon as he paused at nightfall to offer his prayer, would be overtaken by them and would, in their company, complete his devotions. He would be the first to resume the journey, and would again be joined by that devoted band at the hour of dawn, when he once more would break his march to offer his prayer. Only when pressed by his friends would he consent to observe the congregational form of worship. On such occasions he would sometimes follow the lead of one of his companions. Such was the devotion which he had kindled in those hearts that a number of his fellow-travellers would dismount from their steeds and, offering them to those who were journeying on foot, would

themselves follow him, utterly indifferent to the strain and fatigues of the march.

[1 Refer to Glossary.]

As they approached the outskirts of Isfahan, Mulla Husayn, fearing that the sudden entry of so large a group of people might excite the curiosity and suspicion of its inhabitants, advised those who were travelling with him to disperse and to enter the gates in small and inconspicuous numbers.

A few days after their arrival, there reached them the news that Shiraz was in a state of violent agitation, that all manner of intercourse with the Bab had been forbidden, and that their projected visit to that city would be fraught with the gravest danger.

Mulla Husayn, quite undaunted by this sudden intelligence, decided to proceed to Shiraz.

He acquainted only a few of his trusted companions with his intention.

Discarding his robes and turban, and wearing the jubbih [1] and kulah of the people of Khurasan, he, disguising himself as a horseman of Hizarih and Quchan and accompanied by his brother and nephew, set out at an unexpected hour for the city of his Beloved.

As he approached its gate, he instructed his brother to proceed in the dead of night to the house of the Bab's maternal uncle and to request him to inform the Bab of his arrival.

Mulla Husayn received, the next day, the welcome news that Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali was expecting him an hour after sunset outside the gate of the city.

Mulla Husayn met him at the appointed hour and was conducted to his home.

Several times at night did the Bab honour that house with His presence, and continue in close association with Mulla Husayn until the break of day.

Soon after this, He gave permission to His companions who had gathered in Isfahan, to leave gradually for Shiraz, and there to wait until it should be feasible for Him to meet them.

He cautioned them to exercise the utmost vigilance, instructed them to enter, a few at a time, the gate of the city, and bade them disperse, immediately upon their arrival, into such quarters as were reserved for travellers, and accept whatever employment they could find.

[1 Refer to Glossary.]

The first group to reach the city and meet the Bab, a few days after the arrival of Mulla Husayn, consisted of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, Mirza Hadi, his brother; Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini, Mulla Javad-i-Baraghani, Mulla Abdu'l-'Aliy-i-Harati, and Mirza Ibrahim-i-Shirazi.

In the course of their association with Him, the last three of the group gradually betrayed their blindness of heart and demonstrated the baseness of their character.

The manifold evidences of the Bab's increasing favour towards Mulla Husayn aroused their anger and excited the smouldering fire of their jealousy.

In their impotent rage, they resorted to the abject weapons of fraud and of calumny.

Unable at first to manifest openly their hostility to Mulla Husayn, they sought by every crafty device to beguile the minds and damp the affections of his devoted admirers.

Their unseemly behaviour alienated the sympathy of the believers and precipitated their separation from the company of the faithful.

Expelled by their very acts from the bosom of the Faith, they leagued themselves with its avowed enemies and proclaimed their utter rejection of its claims and principles.

So great was the mischief which they stirred up among the people of that city that they were eventually expelled by the civil authorities, <p162> who alike despised and feared their plottings.

The Bab has in a Tablet, in which He expatiates upon their machinations and misdeeds, compared them to the calf of the Samiri, the calf that had neither voice nor soul, which was both the abject handiwork and the object of the adoration of a wayward people. "May Thy condemnation, O God!"

He wrote, with reference to Mulla Javad and Mulla Abdu'l-'Ali, "rest upon the Jibt and Taghut,[1] the twin idols of this perverse people."

All three subsequently proceeded to Kirman and joined forces with Haji Mirza Muhammad Karim Khan, whose designs they furthered and the vehemence of whose denunciations they strove to reinforce.

[1 Qur'an, 4:50.]

One night after their expulsion from Shiraz, the Bab, who was visiting the home of Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, where He had summoned to meet Him Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, Mirza Hadi, and Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini, turned suddenly to the last-named and said: "Abdu'l-Karim, are you seeking the Manifestation?" These words, uttered with calm and extreme gentleness, had a startling effect upon him. He paled at this sudden interrogation and burst into tears. He threw himself at the feet of the Bab in a state of profound agitation. The Bab took him lovingly in His arms, kissed his forehead, and invited him to be seated by His side. In a tone of tender affection, He succeeded in appeasing the tumult of his heart.

As soon as they had regained their home, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his brother enquired of Mulla Abdu'l-Karim the reason for the violent perturbation which had suddenly seized him. "Hear me," he answered; "I will relate to you the tale of a strange experience, a tale which I have shared with no one until now.

When I attained the age of maturity, I felt, while I lived in Qazvin, a profound yearning to unravel the mystery of God and to apprehend the nature of His saints and prophets.

Nothing short of the acquisition of learning, I realised, could enable me to achieve my goal.

I succeeded in obtaining the consent of my father and uncles to the abandonment of my business, and plunged immediately into study and research.

I occupied a room in one of the madrisihs of Qazvin, and concentrated my efforts on the acquisition of every available branch of human learning.

I often discussed the knowledge which I acquired with my fellow-disciples, and sought by this means to enrich my experience.

At night, I would retire to my home, and, in the seclusion of my library, would devote many an hour to undisturbed study.

I was so immersed in my labours that I grew indifferent to both sleep and hunger.

Within two years I had resolved to master the intricacies of Muslim jurisprudence and theology.

I was a faithful attendant at the lectures given by Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Iravani, who, in those days, ranked as the most outstanding divine of Qazvin.

I greatly admired his vast erudition, his piety and virtue.

Every night during the period that I was his disciple, I devoted my time to the writing of a treatise which I submitted to him and which he revised with care and interest.

He seemed to be greatly pleased with my progress, and often extolled my high attainments.

One day, in the presence of his assembled disciples, he declared: 'The learned and sagacious Mulla Abdu'l-Karim has qualified himself to expound authoritatively the sacred Scriptures of Islam.

He no longer needs to attend either my classes or those of my equals.

I shall, please God, celebrate his elevation to the rank of a mujtahid on the morning of the coming Friday, and will deliver his certificate to him after the congregational prayer.'

"No sooner had Mulla Abdu'l-Karim spoken these words and departed than his disciples came forward and heartily congratulated me on my accomplishments.

I returned, greatly elated, to my home.

Upon my arrival I discovered that both my father and my elder uncle, Haji Husayn-'Ali, both of whom were greatly esteemed throughout Qazvin, were preparing a feast in my honour, with which they intended to celebrate the completion of my studies.

I requested them to postpone the invitation they had extended to the notables of Qazvin until further notice from me.

They gladly consented, believing that in my eagerness for such a festival I would not unduly postpone it.

That night I repaired to my library and, in the privacy of my cell, pondered the following thoughts in my heart:

Had you not fondly imagined, I said to myself, that only the sanctified in spirit could ever hope to attain the station of an authoritative expounder of the <p164> sacred Scriptures of Islam?

Was it not your belief that whoso attained this station would be immune from error?

Are you not already accounted among those who enjoy that rank?

Has not Qazvin's most distinguished divine recognized and declared you to be such?

Be fair.

Do you in your own heart regard yourself as having attained that state of purity and sublime detachment which you, in days past, considered the requisites for one who aspires to reach that exalted position?

Think you yourself to be free from every taint of selfish desire?

As I sat musing, a feeling of my own unworthiness gradually overpowered me.

I recognized myself as still a victim of cares and perplexities, of temptations and doubts.

I was oppressed by such thoughts as to how I should conduct my classes, how to lead my congregation in prayer, how to enforce the laws and precepts of the Faith.

I felt continually anxious as to how I should discharge my duties, how to ensure the superiority of my achievements over those who had preceded me.

I was overcome with such a sense of humiliation that I felt impelled to seek forgiveness from God.

Your aim in acquiring all this learning, I thought to myself, has been to unravel the mystery of God and to attain the state of certitude.

Be fair.

Are you sure of your own interpretation of the Qur'an?

Are you certain that the laws which you promulgate reflect the will of God?

The consciousness of error suddenly dawned upon me.

I realised for the first time how the rust of learning had corroded my soul and had obscured my vision.

I lamented my past, and deplored the futility of my endeavours.

I knew that the people of my own rank were subject to the same afflictions.

As soon as they had acquired this so-called learning, they would claim to be the exponents of the law of Islam and would arrogate to themselves the exclusive privilege of pronouncing upon its doctrine.

"I remained absorbed in my thoughts until dawn. That night I neither ate nor slept. At times I would commune with God: 'Thou seest me, O my Lord, and Thou beholdest my plight. Thou knowest that I cherish no other desire except Thy holy will and pleasure. I am lost in bewilderment at the thought of the multitude of sects into which Thy holy Faith hath fallen. I am deeply perplexed when I behold the schisms that have torn the religions of the past. Wilt Thou guide me in my perplexities, and relieve me of my doubts? Whither am I to turn for consolation and guidance?' I wept so bitterly that night that I seemed to have lost consciousness. There suddenly came to me the vision of a great gathering of people, the expression of whose shining faces greatly impressed me. A noble figure, attired in the garb of a siyyid, occupied a seat on the pulpit facing the congregation. He was expounding the meaning of this sacred verse of the Qur'an: 'Whoso maketh efforts for Us, in Our ways will We guide them.' I was fascinated by his face. I arose, advanced towards him, and was on the point of throwing myself at his feet when that vision suddenly vanished. My heart was flooded with light. My joy was indescribable.

"I immediately decided to consult Haji Allah-Vardi, father of Muhammad-Javad-i-Farhadi, a man known throughout Qazvin for his deep spiritual insight. When I related to him my vision, he smiled and with extraordinary precision described to me the distinguishing features of the siyyid who had appeared to me. 'That noble figure,' he added, 'was none other than Haji Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, who is now in Karbila and who may be seen expounding every day to his disciples the sacred teachings of Islam. Those who listen to his discourse are refreshed and edified by his utterance. I can never describe the impression which his words exert upon his hearers.' I joyously arose and, expressing to him my feelings of profound appreciation, retired to my home and started forthwith on my journey to Karbila. My old fellow-disciples came and entreated me either to call in person on the learned Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, who had expressed a desire to meet me, or to allow him to come to my house. 'I feel the impulse,' I replied, 'to visit the shrine of the Imam Husayn at Karbila. I have vowed to start immediately on that pilgrimage. I cannot postpone my departure. I will, if possible, visit him for a few moments when I start to leave the city. If I cannot, I would beg him to excuse me and to pray in my behalf that I may be guided on the straight path.'

"I confidentially acquainted my relatives with the nature of my vision and its interpretation. I informed them of my projected visit to Karbila. My words to them that very day instilled the love of Siyyid Kazim in their hearts. They felt greatly drawn to Haji Allah-Vardi, freely associated with him, and became his fervent admirers.

"My brother, Abdu'l-Hamid [who later quaffed the cup of martyrdom in Tihiran], accompanied me on my journey to Karbila. There I met Siyyid Kazim and was amazed to hear him discourse to his assembled disciples under exactly the same

circumstances as he had appeared to me in my vision. I was astounded when I discovered, upon my arrival, that he was expounding the meaning of the same verse which he, when he appeared to me, was explaining to his disciples. As I sat and listened to him, I was greatly impressed by the force of his argument and the profundity of his thoughts. He graciously received me and showed me the utmost kindness. My brother and I both felt an inner joy we had never before experienced. At the hour of dawn we would hasten to his home, and would accompany him on his visit to the shrine of the Imam Husayn.

"I spent the entire winter in close companionship with him. During the whole of that period, I faithfully attended his classes. Every time I listened to his speech, I heard him describe a particular aspect of the manifestation of the promised Qa'im. This theme constituted the sole subject of his discourses.

Whichever verse or tradition he happened to be expounding, he would invariably conclude his commentary on it with a particular reference to the advent of the promised Revelation. 'The promised One,' he would openly and repeatedly declare, lives in the midst of this people. The appointed time for His appearance is fast approaching. Prepare the way for Him, and purify yourselves so that you may recognize His beauty. Not until I depart from this world will the day-star of His countenance be revealed. It behoves you after my departure to arise and seek Him. You should not rest for one moment until you find Him.'

"After the celebration of Naw-Ruz, Siyyid Kazim bade me depart from Karbila. 'Rest assured, O Abdu'l-Karim,' he told me as he bade me farewell, 'you are of those who, in the Day of His Revelation, will arise for the triumph of His Cause. You will, I hope, remember me on that blessed Day.' I besought him to allow me to remain in Karbila, pleading <p167> that my return to Qazvin would arouse the enmity of the mullas of that city. 'Let your trust be wholly in God,' was his reply. 'Ignore entirely their machinations. Engage in trade, and rest assured that their protestations will never succeed in harming you.' I followed his advice, and together with my brother set out for Qazvin.

"Immediately upon my arrival, I undertook to carry out the counsel of Siyyid Kazim. With the instructions he had given me, I was able to silence every malicious opposer. I devoted my days to the transaction of my business; at night I would regain my home and, in the quiet of my chamber, would consecrate my time to meditation and prayer. With tearful eyes I would commune with God and would beseech Him, saying: 'Thou hast, by the mouth of Thine inspired servant, promised that I shall attain unto Thy Day, and shall behold Thy Revelation. Thou hast, through him, assured me that I shall be among those who will arise for the triumph of Thy Cause. How long wilt Thou withhold from me Thy promise? When will the hand of Thy loving-kindness unlock to me the door of Thy grace, and confer upon me Thy everlasting bounty?' Every night I would renew this prayer and would continue in my supplications until the break of day.

"One night, on the eve of the day of Arafih, in the year 1255 A.H.,[1] I was so wrapt in prayer that I seemed to have fallen into a trance. There appeared before me a bird, white as the snow, which hovered above my head and alighted upon the twig of a tree beside me. In accents of indescribable sweetness, that bird voiced these words: 'Are you seeking the Manifestation, O Abdu'l-Karim?'

Lo, the year '60.' Immediately after, the bird flew away and vanished. The mystery of those words greatly agitated me. The memory of the beauty of that vision lingered long in my mind. I seemed to have tasted all the delights of Paradise. My joy was irrepressible.

[1 The night preceding February 13, 1840 A.D.]

"The mystic message of that bird had penetrated my soul and was continually on my lips. I revolved it constantly in my mind. I shared it with no one, fearing lest its sweetness forsake me. A few years later, the Call from Shiraz reached my ears. The day I heard it, I hastened to that city. On <p168> my way I met, in Tihiran, Mulla Muhammad-i-Mu'allim, who acquainted me with the nature of this Call, and informed me that those who had acknowledged it had gathered in Karbila and were awaiting the return of their Leader from Hijaz. I immediately departed for that city. From Hamadan, Mulla Javad-i-Baraghani, to my great distress, accompanied me to Karbila, where I was privileged to meet you as well as the rest of the believers. I continued to treasure within my heart the strange message conveyed to me by that bird. When I subsequently attained the presence of the Bab and heard from His lips those same words, spoken in the same tone and language as I had heard them, I realised their significance. I was so overwhelmed by their power and glory that I instinctively fell at His feet and magnified His name."

In the early days of the year 1265 A.H.,[1] I set out, at the age of eighteen, from my native village of Zarand for Qum, where I chanced to meet Siyyid Isma'il-i-Zavari'i, surnamed Dhabih, who later on, while in Baghdad, offered up his life as a sacrifice in the path of Baha'u'llah.

Through him I was led to recognize the new Revelation.

He was then preparing to leave for Mazindaran and had determined to join the heroic defenders of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi.

He had intended to take me with him, together with Mirza Fathu'llah-i-Hakkak, a lad of my age, who was a resident of Qum.

As circumstances interfered with his plan, he promised before his departure that he would communicate with us from Tihiran and would ask us to join him.

In the course of his conversation with Mirza Fathu'llah and me, he related to us the account of Mulla Abdu'l-Karim's marvellous experience.

I was seized with an ardent desire to meet him.

When I subsequently arrived at Tihiran and met Siyyid Isma'il in the Madrisiy-i-Daru'sh-Shafay-i-Masjid-i-Shah, I was introduced by him to this same Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, who was then living in that same madrasah.

In those days we were informed that the struggle of Shaykh Tabarsi had come to an end, and that those companions of the Bab who had gathered in Tihiran and were contemplating joining their brethren had each returned to his own province unable to achieve his goal.

Mulla Abdu'l-Karim remained in the <p169> capital, where he devoted his time to

transcribing the Persian Bayan.

My close association with him at that time served to deepen my love and admiration for him.

I still feel, after the lapse of eight and thirty years since our first interview in Tihran, the warmth of his friendship and the fervour of his faith.

My feelings of affectionate regard for him prompted me to dwell at length upon the circumstances of his early life, culminating in what may be regarded as the turning point of his whole career.

May it in turn serve to awaken the reader to the glory of this momentous Revelation. <p170>

[1 1848 A.D.]

CHAPTER IX

THE BAB'S STAY IN SHIRAZ AFTER THE PILGRIMAGE

(Continued)

SOON after the arrival of Mulla Husayn at Shiraz, the voice of the people rose again in protest against him. The fear and indignation of the multitude were excited by the knowledge of his continued and intimate intercourse with the Bab. "He again has come to our city," they clamoured; "he again has raised the standard of revolt and is, together with his chief, contemplating a still fiercer onslaught upon our time-honoured institutions." So grave and menacing became the situation that the Bab instructed Mulla Husayn to regain, by way of Yazd, his native province of Khurasan. He likewise dismissed the rest of His companions who had gathered in Shiraz, and bade them return to Isfahan. He retained Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, to whom He assigned the duty of transcribing His writings.

These precautionary measures which the Bab deemed wise to undertake, relieved Him from the immediate danger of violence from the infuriated people of Shiraz, and served to lend a fresh impetus to the propagation of His Faith beyond the limits of that city. His disciples, who had spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, fearlessly proclaimed to the multitude of their countrymen the regenerating power of the new-born Revelation. The fame of the Bab had been noised abroad and had reached the ears of those who held the highest seats of authority, both in the capital and throughout the provinces.[1] A wave of passionate enquiry swayed the minds and hearts of both the leaders and the <p171> masses of the people. Amazement and wonder had seized those who had heard from the lips of the immediate messengers of the Bab the tales of those signs and testimonies which had heralded the birth of His Manifestation. The dignitaries of State and Church either attended in person or delegated their ablest representatives to enquire into the truth and character of this remarkable Movement.

[1 "Babism had many adepts in all classes of society, and many among them were of important standing; great lords, members of the clergy, military men and merchants had accepted this doctrine." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 8, p. 251.)]

Muhammad Shah [1] himself was moved to ascertain the veracity of these reports and to enquire into their nature. He delegated Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi,[2] the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most influential of his subjects, to interview the Bab and to report to him the results of his investigations. The Shah had implicit confidence in his impartiality, in his competence and profound spiritual insight. He occupied a position of such pre-eminence among the leading figures in Persia that at whatever meeting he happened to be present, no matter how great the number of the ecclesiastical leaders who attended it, he was invariably its chief speaker. None would dare to assert his views in his presence. They all reverently observed silence before him; all testified to his sagacity, his unsurpassed knowledge and mature wisdom.

[1 Refer to "Pedigree of the Qajar Dynasty" at the beginning of the book.]

[2 Concerning him, Abdu'l-Baha has written the following: "This remarkable man, this precious soul, had committed to memory no less than thirty thousand traditions, and was highly esteemed and admired by all classes of people.

He had achieved universal renown in Persia, and his authority and erudition were widely and fully recognized." (From manuscript relating to martyrdoms in Persia.) "This personage was, as his name indicates, born at Darab near Shiraz; his father, Siyyid Ja'far, surnamed Kashfi, was one of the greatest and most celebrated Ulamas of that period.

His high moral character, his righteous ways had attracted to him universal esteem and consideration.

His science had won for him the glorious name of Kashfi, that is to say, one who discovers and explains the divine secrets.

Brought up by him, his son was not slow to equal him in every way and he enjoyed the public favor bestowed on his father.

When he went to Tihran, he was preceded by his fame and popularity.

He became the regular guest of Prince Tahmasp Mirza, Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah by his father Muhammad-'Ali Mirza.

The government itself paid homage to his science and to his merit and he was consulted more than once in trying circumstances.

It was of him that Muhammad Shahet Haji Mirza Aqasi thought when they wished to find an honest emissary whose faithfulness could not be questioned." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p.

233.) "While these events were taking place in the north of Persia, the central and southern provinces were deeply roused by the fiery eloquence of the missionaries of the new doctrine.

The people, light, credulous, ignorant, superstitious in the extreme, were

struck dumb by the incessant miracles which they heard related every moment; the anxious priests, feeling their flock quivering with impatience and ready to escape their control, redoubled their slanders and infamous imputations; the grossest lies, the most bloody fictions were spread among the bewildered populace, torn between horror and admiration....

Siyyid Ja'far was unacquainted with the doctrine of the Shaykhis as he was with those of Mulla Sadra.

Nevertheless, his burning zeal and his ardent imagination had carried him, towards the end of his life, out of the ways of the orthodox Shiite.

He interpreted the 'hadiths' differently from his colleagues and claimed even, so they said, to have fathomed the seventy inner meanings of the Qur'an.

His son, who was to outdo these oddities, was at that time about thirty-five years of age.

After the completion of his studies, he came to Tihran where he became intimately associated with all that the court counted of great personages and distinguished men.

It was upon him that the choice of His Majesty fell.

He was, therefore, commissioned to go to Shiraz to make contact with the Bab and to inform the central authority, as exactly as possible, of the political consequences which would result from a reform which seemed likely unsettle heart of the country." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

387-388.)] <p172>

In those days Siyyid Yahya was residing in Tihran in the house of Mirza Lutf-'Ali, the Master of Ceremonies to the Shah, as the honoured guest of his Imperial Majesty. The Shah confidentially signified through Mirza Lutf-'Ali his desire and pleasure that Siyyid Yahya should proceed to Shiraz and investigate the matter in person. "Tell him from us, commanded the sovereign, "that inasmuch as we repose the utmost confidence in his integrity, and admire his moral and intellectual standards, and regard him as the most suitable among the divines of our realm, we expect him to proceed to Shiraz, to enquire thoroughly into the episode of the Siyyid-i-Bab, and to inform us of the results of his investigations; We shall then know what measures it behoves us to take."

Siyyid Yahya had been himself desirous of obtaining first-hand knowledge of the claims of the Bab, but had been unable, owing to adverse circumstances, to undertake the journey to Fars. The message of Muhammad Shah decided him to carry out his long-cherished intention. Assuring his sovereign of his readiness to comply with his wish, he immediately set out for Shiraz.

On his way, he conceived the various questions which he thought he would submit

to the Bab. Upon the replies which the latter gave to these questions would, in his view, depend the truth and validity of His mission. Upon his arrival at Shiraz, he met Mulla Shaykh Ali, surnamed Azim, with whom he had been intimately associated while in Khurasan. He asked him whether he was satisfied with his interview with the Bab. "You should meet Him," Azim replied, "and seek independently to acquaint yourself with His Mission. As a friend, I would advise you to exercise the utmost consideration <p173> in your conversations with Him, lest you, too, in the end should be obliged to deplore any act of discourtesy towards Him."

Siyyid Yahya met the Bab at the home of Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, and exercised in his attitude towards Him the courtesy which Azim had counselled him to observe. For about two hours he directed the attention of the Bab to the most abstruse and bewildering themes in the metaphysical teachings of Islam, to the obscurest passages of the Qur'an, and to the mysterious traditions and prophecies of the imams of the Faith. The Bab at first listened to his learned references to the law and prophecies of Islam, noted all his questions, and began to give to each a brief but persuasive reply. The conciseness and lucidity of His answers excited the wonder and admiration of Siyyid Yahya. He was overpowered by a sense of humiliation at his own presumptuousness and pride. His sense of superiority completely vanished. As he arose to depart, he addressed the Bab in these words: "Please God, I shall, in the course of my next audience with You, submit the rest of my questions and with them shall conclude my enquiry." As soon as he retired, he joined Azim, to whom he related the account of his interview. "I have in His presence," he told him, "expatiated unduly upon my own learning. He was able in a few words to answer my questions and to resolve my perplexities. I felt so abased before Him that I hurriedly begged leave to retire." Azim reminded him of his counsel, and begged him not to forget this time the advice he had given him.

In the course of his second interview, Siyyid Yahya, to his amazement, discovered that all the questions which he had intended to submit to the Bab had vanished from his memory. He contented himself with matters that seemed irrelevant to the object of his enquiry. He soon found, to his still greater surprise, that the Bab was answering, with the same lucidity and conciseness that had characterised His previous replies, those same questions which he had momentarily forgotten. "I seemed to have fallen fast asleep," he later observed. "His words, His answers to questions which I had forgotten to ask, reawakened me. A voice still kept whispering in my ear: 'Might not this, after all, have <p174> been an accidental coincidence?' I was too agitated to collect my thoughts. I again begged leave to retire. Azim, whom I subsequently met, received me with cold indifference, and sternly remarked: 'Would that schools had been utterly abolished, and that neither of us had entered one! Through our little-mindedness and conceit, we are withholding from ourselves the redeeming grace of God, and are causing pain to Him who is the Fountain thereof. Will you not this time beseech God to grant that you may be enabled to attain His presence with becoming humility and detachment, that perchance He may graciously relieve you from the oppression of uncertainty and doubt?' "I resolved that in my third interview with the Bab I would in my inmost heart

request Him to reveal for me a commentary on the Surih of Kawthar.[1] I determined not to breathe that request in His presence.

Should he, unasked by me, reveal this commentary in a manner that would immediately distinguish it in my eyes from the prevailing standards current among the commentators on the Qur'an, I then would be convinced of the Divine character of His Mission, and would readily embrace His Cause.

If not, I would refuse to acknowledge Him.

As soon as I was ushered into His presence, a sense of fear, for which I could not account, suddenly seized me.

My limbs quivered as I beheld His face.

I, who on repeated occasions had been introduced into the presence of the Shah and had never discovered the slightest trace of timidity in myself, was now so awed and shaken that I could not remain standing on my feet.

The Bab, beholding my plight, arose from His seat, advanced towards me, and, taking hold of my hand, seated me beside Him. 'Seek from Me,' He said, 'whatever is your heart's desire.

I will readily reveal it to you.' I was speechless with wonder.

Like a babe that can neither understand nor speak, I felt powerless to respond.

He smiled as He gazed at me and said: 'Were I to reveal for you the commentary on the Surih of Kawthar, would you acknowledge that My words are born of the Spirit of God?

Would you recognize that My utterance can in no wise be associated with sorcery or magic?' Tears flowed from my eyes as I heard Him speak these words. <p175> All I was able to utter was this verse of the Qur'an: 'O our Lord, with ourselves have we dealt unjustly: if Thou forgive us not and have not pity on us, we shall surely be of those who perish.'

[1 Qur'an, 108.]

"It was still early in the afternoon when the Bab requested Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali to bring His pen-case and some paper. He then started to reveal His commentary on the Surih of Kawthar. How am I to describe this scene of inexpressible majesty? Verses streamed from His pen with a rapidity that was truly astounding. The incredible swiftness of His writing,[1] the soft and gentle murmur of His voice, and the stupendous force of His style, amazed and bewildered me. He continued in this manner until the approach of sunset. He did not pause until the entire commentary of the Surih was completed. He then laid down His pen and asked for tea. Soon after, He began to read it aloud in my presence. My heart leaped madly as I heard Him pour out, in accents of unutterable sweetness, those treasures enshrined in that sublime commentary.[2] I was so entranced by its beauty that three times over I was on the verge of fainting. He sought to revive my failing strength with a few drops of rose-water which He caused to be sprinkled on my face. This <p176> restored my vigour and enabled me to follow His reading to the end.

[1 According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghita" (p. 81), no less than two thousand verses were revealed on that occasion by the Bab. The bewildering rapidity of this revelation was no less remarkable in the eyes of Siyyid Yahya than the matchless beauty and profound meaning of the verses in that commentary. "Within five hours' time he revealed two thousand verses, that is, he spoke as fast as the scribe could write. One can judge thereby that, if he had been left free, how many of his works from the beginning of his manifestation until today would have been spread abroad among men." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. I, p. 43.) "God had given him such power and such fluency of expression that, if a scribe wrote with the most extreme rapidity during two days and two nights without interruption, he would reveal, out of this mine of eloquence, the equivalent of the Qur'an." (Ibid., vol. 2, p. 132.)]

[2 "Certainly the fact of writing, *currente calamo*, a new commentary on a surih whose meaning is so obscure, should deeply astonish the Siyyid Yahya, but that which surprised him even more was to find, in this commentary, the explanation that he, himself, had found in his meditation on these three verses. Thus he found himself in agreement with the Reformer in the interpretation that he had believed himself to be the only one to have reached and that he had not made known to anyone." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 234.)]

"When He had completed His recital, the Bab arose to depart. He entrusted me, as He left, to the care of His maternal uncle. 'He is to be your guest,' He told him, 'until the time when he, in collaboration with Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, shall have finished transcribing this newly revealed commentary, and shall have verified the correctness of the transcribed copy.' Mulla Abdu'l-Karim and I devoted three days and three nights to this work. We would in turn read aloud to each other a portion of the commentary until the whole of it had been transcribed. We verified all the traditions in the text and found them to be entirely accurate. Such was the state of certitude to which I had attained that if all the powers of the earth were to be leagued against me they would be powerless to shake my confidence in the greatness of His Cause.[1]

"As I had, since my arrival at Shiraz, been living in the home of Husayn Khan, the governor of Fars, I felt that my prolonged absence from his house might excite his suspicion and inflame his anger. I therefore determined to take leave of Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali and Mulla Abdu'l-Karim and to regain the residence of the governor. On my arrival I found that Husayn Khan, who in the meantime had been searching for me, was eager to know whether I had fallen a victim to the Bab's magic influence. 'No one but God,' I replied, 'who alone can change the hearts of men, is able to captivate the heart of Siyyid Yahya. Whoso can ensnare his heart is of God, and His word unquestionably the voice of Truth.' My answer silenced the governor. In his conversation with others, I subsequently learned, he had expressed the view that I too had fallen a hopeless victim to the charm of that Youth. He had even written to Muhammad Shah and complained that during my stay in Shiraz I had refused all manner of intercourse with the ulamas of the city. 'Though nominally my guest,' he wrote to his sovereign, 'he frequently <p177> absents himself for a number of consecutive days and nights from my house. That he has become a Babi, that he

has been heart and soul enslaved by the will of the Siyyid-i-Bab, I have ceased to entertain any doubt.'

[1 "It was a strange circumstance," writes Lady Sheil, "that among those who adopted [the] Bab's doctrine there should have been a large number of mullas, and even mujtahids, who hold a high rank as expounders of the law in the Muhammadan church. Many of these men sealed their faith with their blood." ("Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia," pp. 178-9.)]

"Muhammad Shah himself, at one of the state functions in his capital, was reported to have addressed these words to Haji Mirza Aqasi: 'We have been lately informed [1] that Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi has become a Babi. If this be true, it behoves us to cease belittling the cause of that siyyid.' Husayn Khan, on his part, received the following imperial command: 'It is strictly forbidden to any one of our subjects to utter such words as would tend to detract from the exalted rank of Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi. He is of noble lineage, a man of great learning, of perfect and consummate virtue. He will under no circumstances incline his ear to any cause unless he believes it to be conducive to the advancement of the best interests of our realm and to the well-being of the Faith of Islam.'

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 8), Siyyid Yahya "wrote without fear or care a detailed account of his observations to Mirza Lutf-'Ali, the chamberlain, in order that the latter might submit it to the notice of the late king, while he himself journeyed to all parts of Persia, and in every town and station summoned the people from the pulpit-tops in such wise that other learned doctors decided that he must be mad, accounting it a sure case of bewitchment."]

"Upon the receipt of this imperial injunction, Husayn Khan, unable to resist me openly, strove privily to undermine my authority. His face betrayed an implacable enmity and hate. He failed, however, in view of the marked favours bestowed upon me by the Shah, either to harm my person or to discredit my name. "I was subsequently commanded by the Bab to journey to Burujird, and there acquaint my father [1] with the new Message. He urged me to exercise towards him the utmost forbearance and consideration. From my confidential conversations with him I gathered that he was unwilling to repudiate the truth of the Message I had brought him. He preferred, however, to be left alone and to be allowed to pursue his own way."

[1 His name was Siyyid Ja'far, known as Kashfi "the Discloser," because of his skill in the interpretation of the Qur'an and the visions which he claimed to have.]

Another dignitary of the realm who dispassionately investigated and ultimately embraced the Message of the Bab <p178> was Mulla Muhammad-'Ali,[1] a native of Zanzan, whom the Bab surnamed Hujjat-i-Zanzani.

He was a man of independent mind, noted for extreme originality and freedom from all forms of traditional restraint.

He denounced the whole hierarchy of the ecclesiastical leaders of his country, from the Abvab-i-Arba'ih [2] down to the humblest mulla among his contemporaries.

He despised their character, deplored their degeneracy, and expatiated upon their vices.

He even, prior to his conversion, betrayed an attitude of careless contempt for Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti.[3] He was so filled with horror at the misdeeds that had stained the history of shi'ah Islam that whoever belonged to that sect, no matter how high his personal attainments, was regarded by him as unworthy of his consideration.

Not infrequently did cases of fierce controversy arise between him and the divines of Zanzan which, but for the personal intervention of the Shah, would have led to grave disorder and bloodshed.

He was eventually summoned to the capital and, in the presence of his opponents, representatives of the ecclesiastical heads of Tihran and other cities, was called upon to vindicate his claim.

Single-handed and alone he would establish his superiority over his adversaries and would silence their clamour.

Although in their hearts they dissented from his views and condemned his conduct, they were compelled to acknowledge outwardly his authority and to confirm his opinion.

[1 He was styled Hujjatu'l-Islam.]

[2 Literally meaning "The Four Gates," each of whom claimed to be an intermediary between the absent Imam and his followers.]

[3 He was an Akhbari. For an account of the Akhbaris, see Gobineau's "Les Religions et Les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 23 et seq.]

As soon as the Call from Shiraz reached his ears, Hujjat deputed one of his disciples, Mulla Iskandar, in whom he reposed the fullest confidence, to enquire into the whole matter and to report to him the result of his investigations. Utterly indifferent to the praise and censure of his countrymen, whose integrity he suspected and whose judgment he disdained, he sent his delegate to Shiraz with explicit instructions to conduct a minute and independent enquiry. Mulla Iskandar attained the presence of the Bab and felt immediately the regenerating power of His influence. He tarried <p179> forty days in Shiraz, during which time he imbibed the principles of the Faith and acquired, according to his capacity, a knowledge of the measure of its glory. With the approval of the Bab, he returned to Zanzan.

He arrived at a time when all the leading ulamas of the city had assembled in the presence of Hujjat.

As soon as he appeared, Hujjat enquired whether he believed in, or rejected, the new Revelation.

Mulla Iskandar submitted the writings of the Bab which he had brought with him, and asserted that whatever should be the verdict of his master, the same would he deem it his obligation to follow. "What!" angrily exclaimed Hujjat. "But for the presence of this distinguished company; I would have chastised you severely.

How dare you consider matters of belief to be dependent upon the approbation or rejection of others?"

Receiving from the hand of his messenger the copy of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', he, as soon as he had perused a page of that book, fell prostrate upon the ground and exclaimed "I bear witness that these words which I have read proceed from the same Source as that of the Qur'an.

Whoso has recognized the truth of that sacred Book must needs testify to the Divine origin of these words, and must needs submit to the precepts inculcated by their Author.

I take you, members of this assembly, as my witnesses:

I pledge such allegiance to the Author of this Revelation that should He ever pronounce the night to be the day, and declare the sun to be a shadow, I would unreservedly submit to His judgment, and would regard His verdict as the voice of Truth.

Whoso denies Him, him will I regard as the repudiator of God Himself."

With these words he terminated the proceedings of that gathering.[1]

[1 "I met him [Mulla Muhammad-'Ali],' says Mirza Jani, 'in Tihran, in the house of Mahmud Khan, the kalantar, where he was confined because of his devotion to His Holiness. He said: 'I was a mulla, so proud and masterful that I would abase myself to no one, not even the late Haji Siyyid Baqir Rasht, who was regarded as the 'Proof of Islam' and the most learned of doctors. My doctrines being after the Akhbari school, I differed in certain questions with the mass of the clergy. People complained of me, and Muhammad Shah summoned me to Tihran. I came, and he perused my books and informed himself of their purport. I asked him to summon the siyyid [i.e. Siyyid Baqir of Rasht] also, that we might dispute. At first he intended to do so, but afterwards, having considered the mischief which might result, suspended the proposed discussion. To be brief, notwithstanding all this self-sufficiency, as soon as news of the Manifestation of His Holiness reached me, and I had perused a small page of the verses of that Point of the Furqan, I became as one beside himself, and involuntarily, yet with full option, confessed the truth of His claim, and became His devoted slave; for I beheld in Him the most noble of the Prophet's miracles, and, had I rejected it, I should have rejected the truth of the religion of Islam.'"" (Haji Mirza Jani's History: Appendix 2 of "Tarikh-i-Jadid," pp. 349-50.)]

We have, in the preceding pages, referred to the expulsion of Quddus and of Mulla Sadiq from Shiraz, and have attempted to describe, however inadequately, the chastisement inflicted upon them by the tyrannical and rapacious Husayn <p180> Khan.

A word should now be said regarding the nature of their activities after their expulsion from that city.

For a few days they continued to journey together, after which they separated, Quddus departing for Kirman in order to interview Haji Mirza Karim Khan, and

Mulla Sadiq directing his steps towards Yazd with the intention of pursuing among the ulamas of that province the work which he had been so cruelly forced to abandon in Fars.

Quddus was received, upon his arrival, at the home of Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Kirmani, whom he had known in Karbila and whose scholarship, skill, and competence were universally recognized by the people of Kirman.

At all the gatherings held in his home, he invariably assigned to his youthful guest the seat of honour and treated him with extreme deference and courtesy.

So marked a preference for so young and seemingly mediocre a person kindled the envy of the disciples of Haji Mirza Karim Khan, who, describing in vivid and exaggerated language the honours which were being lavished upon Quddus, sought to excite the dormant hostility of their chief. "Behold," they whispered in his ears, "he who is the best beloved, the trusted and most intimate companion of the Siyyid-i-Bab, is now the honoured guest of one who is admittedly the most powerful inhabitant of Kirman.

If he be allowed to live in close companionship with Haji Siyyid Javad, he will no doubt instil his poison into his soul, and will fashion him as the instrument whereby he will succeed in disrupting your authority and in extinguishing your fame."

Alarmed by these evil whisperings, the cowardly Haji Mirza Karim Khan appealed to the governor and induced him to call in person upon Haji Siyyid Javad and demand that he terminate that dangerous association.

The representations of the governor inflamed the wrath of the intemperate Haji Siyyid Javad. "How often," he violently protested, "have I advised you <p181> to ignore the whisperings of this evil plotter!

My forbearance has emboldened him.

Let him beware lest he overstep his bounds.

Does he desire to usurp my position?

Is he not the man who receives into his home thousands of abject and ignoble people and overwhelms them with servile flattery?

Has he not, again and again, striven to exalt the ungodly and to silence the innocent?

Has he not, year after year, by reinforcing the hand of the evil-doer, sought to ally himself with him and gratify his carnal desires?

Does he not until this day persist in uttering his blasphemies against all that is pure and holy in Islam?

My silence seems to have added to his temerity and insolence.

He gives himself the liberty of committing the foulest deeds, and refuses to allow me to receive and honour in my own home a man of such integrity, such

learning and nobleness.

Should he refuse to desist from his practice, let him be warned that the worst elements of the city will, at my instigation, expel him from Kirman."

Disconcerted by such vehement denunciations, the governor apologised for his action.

Ere he retired, he assured Haji Siyyid Javad that he need entertain no fear, that he himself would endeavour to awaken Haji Mirza Karim Khan to the folly of his behaviour, and would induce him to repent.

The siyyid's message stung Haji Mirza Karim Khan. Convulsed by a feeling of intense resentment which he could neither suppress nor gratify, he relinquished all hopes of acquiring the undisputed leadership of the people of Kirman. That open challenge sounded the death-knell of his cherished ambitions.

In the privacy of his home, Haji Siyyid Javad heard Quddus recount all the details of his activities from the day of his departure from Karbila until his arrival at Kirman. The circumstances of his conversion and his subsequent pilgrimage with the Bab stirred the imagination and kindled the flame of faith in the heart of his host, who preferred, however, to conceal his belief, in the hope of being able to guard more effectively the interests of the newly established community. "Your noble resolve," Quddus lovingly assured him, "will in itself be regarded as a notable service rendered to the Cause of God. The Almighty will reinforce your efforts and will establish for all time your ascendancy over your opponents."

The incident was related to me by a certain Mirza Abdu'llah-i-Ghawgka, who, while in Kirman, had heard it from the lips of Haji Siyyid Javad himself. The sincerity of the expressed intentions of the siyyid has been fully vindicated by the splendid manner in which, as a result of his endeavours, he succeeded in resisting the encroachments of the insidious Haji Mirza Karim Khan, who, had he remained unchallenged, would have caused incalculable harm to the Faith.

From Kirman, Quddus decided to leave for Yazd, and from thence to proceed to Ardikan, Nayin, Ardistan, Isfahan, Kashan, Qum, and Tihiran. In each of these cities, notwithstanding the obstacles that beset his path, he succeeded in instilling into the understanding of his hearers the principles which he had so bravely risen to advocate. I have heard Aqay-i-Kalim, the brother of Baha'u'llah, describe in the following terms his meeting with Quddus in Tihiran: "The charm of his person, his extreme affability, combined with a dignity of bearing, appealed to even the most careless observer. Whoever was intimately associated with him was seized with an insatiable admiration for the charm of that youth. We watched him one day perform his ablutions, and were struck by the gracefulness which distinguished him from the rest of the worshippers in the performance of so ordinary a rite. He seemed, in our eyes, to be the very incarnation of purity and grace."

In Tihiran, Quddus was admitted into the presence of Baha'u'llah after which he proceeded to Mazindaran, where, in his native town of Barfurush, in the home of his father, he lived for about two years, during which time he was surrounded by the loving devotion of his family and kindred. His father had married, on

the death of his first wife, a lady who treated Quddus with a kindness and care that no mother could have hoped to surpass. She longed to witness his wedding, and was often heard to express her fears lest she should have to carry with her to the grave the "supreme joy of her heart." "The day of my wedding," Quddus observed, "is not yet come. That day will be unspeakably glorious. Not within the confines of this house, but out in the open air, under the vault of heaven, in the midst of the Sabzih-Maydan, before the gaze of the multitude, there shall I celebrate my nuptials and witness the consummation of my hopes." Three years later, when that lady learned of the circumstances attending the martyrdom of Quddus in the Sabzih-Maydan, she recalled his prophetic words and understood their meaning.[1] Quddus remained in Barfurush until the time when he was joined by Mulla Husayn after the latter's return from his visit to the Bab in the castle of Mah-Ku. From Barfurush they set out for Khurasan, a journey rendered memorable by deeds so heroic that none of their countrymen could hope to rival them.

[1 A similar statement is reported in the "Kashfu'l-Ghita" (p. 227). Such a statement, the author declares, was made to him by several residents of the province of Mazindaran.]

As to Mulla Sadiq, as soon as he arrived at Yazd, he enquired of a trusted friend, a native of Khurasan, about the <p184> latest developments connected with the progress of the Cause in that province. He was particularly anxious to be enlightened concerning the activities of Mirza Ahmad-i-Azghandi, and expressed his surprise at the seeming inactivity of one who, at a time when the mystery of the Faith was still undivulged, had displayed such conspicuous zeal in preparing the people for the acceptance of the expected Manifestation. "Mirza Ahmad," he was told, "secluded himself for a considerable period of time in his own home, and there concentrated his energies upon the preparation of a learned and voluminous compilation of Islamic traditions and prophecies relating to the time and the character of the promised Dispensation. He collected more than twelve thousand traditions of the most explicit character, the authenticity of which was universally recognized; and resolved to take whatever steps were required for the copying and the dissemination of that book. By encouraging his fellow-disciples to quote publicly from its contents, in all congregations and gatherings, he hoped he would be able to remove such hindrances as might impede the progress of the Cause he had at heart.

"When he arrived at Yazd, he was warmly welcomed by his maternal uncle, Siyyid Husayn-i-Azghandi, the foremost mujtahid of that city, who, a few days before the arrival of his nephew, had sent him a written request to hasten to Yazd and deliver him from the machinations of Haji Mirza Karim Khan, whom he regarded as a dangerous though unavowed enemy of Islam. The mujtahid called upon Mirza Ahmad to combat by every means in his power Haji Mirza Khan's pernicious influence; and wished him to establish permanently his residence in that city, that he might, through incessant exhortations and appeals, succeed in enlightening the minds of the people as to the true aims and intentions cherished by that malignant enemy.

"Mirza Ahmad, concealing from his uncle his original intention to leave for Shiraz, decided to prolong his stay in Yazd. He showed him the book which he

had compiled, and shared its contents with the ulamas who thronged from every quarter of the city to meet him. All were greatly impressed <p185> by the industry, the erudition, and the zeal which the compiler of that celebrated work had demonstrated.

"Among those who came to visit Mirza Ahmad was a certain Mirza Taqi, a man who was wicked, ambitious, and haughty, who had recently returned from Najaf, where he had completed his studies and had been elevated to the rank of mujtahid. In the course of his conversation with Mirza Ahmad, he expressed a desire to peruse that book, and to be allowed to retain it for a few days, that he might acquire a fuller understanding of its contents. Siyyid Husayn and his nephew both acceded to his wish. Mirza Taqi, who was to have returned the book, failed to redeem his promise. Mirza Ahmad, who had already suspected the insincerity of Mirza Taqi's intentions, urged his uncle to remind the borrower of the pledge he had given. 'Tell your master,' was the insolent reply to the messenger sent to claim the book, 'that after having satisfied myself as to the mischievous character of that compilation, I decided to destroy it. Last night I threw it into the pond, thereby obliterating its pages.'

"Moved by deep and determined indignation at such deceitfulness and impertinence, Siyyid Husayn resolved to wreak his vengeance upon him. Mirza Ahmad succeeded, however, by his wise counsels, in pacifying the anger of his infuriated uncle and in dissuading him from carrying out the measures which he proposed to take. 'This punishment,' he urged, 'which you contemplate will excite the agitation of the people, and will stir up mischief and sedition. It will gravely interfere with the efforts which you wish me to exert in order to extinguish the influence of Haji Mirza Karim Khan. He will undoubtedly seize the occasion to denounce you as a Babi, and will hold me responsible for having been the cause of your conversion. By this means he will both undermine your authority and earn the esteem and gratitude of the people. Leave him in the hands of God.'"

Mulla Sadiq was greatly pleased to learn from the account of this incident that Mirza Ahmad was actually residing in Yazd, and that no obstacles stood in the way of his meeting with him. He went immediately to the masjid in which Siyyid Husayn was leading the congregational prayer and in which <p186> Mirza Ahmad delivered the sermon. Taking his seat in the first row among the worshippers, he joined them in prayer, after which he went straight to Siyyid Husayn and publicly embraced him. Uninvited, he immediately afterwards ascended the pulpit and prepared to address the faithful Siyyid Husayn, though at first startled, preferred to raise no objection, being curious to discover the motive, and ascertain the degree of the learning, of this sudden intruder. He motioned to his nephew to refrain from opposing him.

Mulla Sadiq prefaced his discourse with one of the best-known and most exquisitely written homilies of the Bab, after which he addressed the congregation in these terms: "Render thanks to God, O people of learning, for, behold, the Gate of Divine Knowledge, which you deem to have been closed, is now wide open. The River of everlasting life has streamed forth from the city of Shiraz, and is conferring untold blessings upon the people of this land. Whoever has partaken of one drop from this Ocean of heavenly grace, no matter

how humble and unlettered, has discovered in himself the power to unravel the profoundest mysteries, and has felt capable of expounding the most abstruse themes of ancient wisdom. And whoever, though he be the most learned expounder of the Faith of Islam, has chosen to rely upon his own competence and power and has disdained the Message of God, has condemned himself to irretrievable degradation and loss."

A wave of indignation and dismay swept over the entire congregation as these words of Mulla Sadiq pealed out this momentous announcement. The masjid rang with cries of "Blasphemy!" which an infuriated congregation shouted in horror against the speaker. "Descend from the pulpit," rose the voice of Siyyid Husayn amid the clamour and tumult of the people, as he motioned to Mulla Sadiq to hold his peace and to retire. No sooner had he regained the floor of the masjid than the whole company of the assembled worshippers rushed upon him and overwhelmed him with blows. Siyyid Husayn immediately intervened, vigorously dispersed the crowd, and, seizing the hand of Mulla Sadiq, forcibly drew him to his side. "Withhold your hands," he appealed to the multitude; "leave him in my custody. I will take him to my home, and will closely investigate the matter. A sudden fit of madness may have caused him to utter these words. I will myself examine him. If I find that his utterances are premeditated and that he himself firmly believes in the things which he has declared, I will, with my own hands, inflict upon him the punishment imposed by the law of Islam."

By this solemn assurance, Mulla Sadiq was delivered from the savage attacks of his assailants. Divested of his aba [1] and turban, deprived of his sandals and staff, bruised and shaken by the injuries he had received, he was entrusted to the care of Siyyid Husayn's attendants, who, as they forced their passage among the crowd, succeeded eventually in conducting him to the home of their master. [1 Refer to Glossary.]

Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili, likewise, was subjected in those days to a persecution fiercer and more determined than the savage onslaught which the people of Yazd had directed against Mulla Sadiq. But for the intervention of Mirza Ahmad and the assistance of his uncle, he would have fallen a victim to the wrath of a ferocious enemy.

When Mulla Sadiq and Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili arrived at Kirman, they again had to submit to similar indignities and to suffer similar afflictions at the hands of Haji Mirza Karim Khan and his associates.[1] Haji Siyyid Javad's persistent exertions freed them eventually from the grasp of their persecutors, and enabled them to proceed to Khurasan.

[1 "A bitter struggle broke out between the Muqaddas and Karim Khan who, as it is known, had taken the rank of chief of the Shaykhi sect, after the death of Kazim. The discussion took place in the presence of many people and Karim challenged his opponent to prove the truth of the mission of the Bab. 'If you succeed,' he said to him, 'I will be converted and my pupils with me; but if you fail, I shall have it proclaimed in the bazaars: "Behold the one who tramples under foot the Holy Law of Islam!"' 'I know who you are, Karim,' replied Muqaddas to him. 'Do you not remember your Master Siyyid Kazim and that which he told you: "Dog, do you not wish that I should die that, after me, may

appear the absolute truth?" Witness how today, urged on by your passion for riches and for glory, you lie to yourself!" "Begun in this vein, the discussion was bound to be brief. Instantly, the pupils of Karim drew their knives and threw themselves upon him who was insulting their chief. Fortunately, the governor of the city interposed; Muqaddas arrested and brought to his house where he kept him for a while and, when the excitement had subsided, he sent him away by night, escorted for several miles by ten mounted men." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 228-229.)]

Though hunted and harassed by their foes, the Bab's immediate disciples, together with their companions in different parts of Persia, were undeterred by such criminal acts <p188> from the accomplishment of their task. Unswerving in their purpose and immovable in their convictions, they continued to battle with the dark forces that assailed them every step of their path. By their unstinted devotion and unexampled fortitude, they were able to demonstrate to many of their countrymen the ennobling influence of the Faith they had arisen to champion.

While Vahid [1] was still in Shiraz, Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i [2] arrived and was introduced by Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali into the presence of the Bab. In a Tablet which He addressed to Vahid and Haji Siyyid Javad, the Bab extolled the firmness of their faith and stressed the unalterable character of their devotion. The latter had met and known the Bab before the declaration of His Mission, and had been a fervent admirer of those extraordinary traits of character which had distinguished Him ever since His childhood. At a later time, he met Baha'u'llah in Baghdad and became the recipient of His special favour. When, a few years afterwards, Baha'u'llah was exiled to Adrianople, he, already much advanced in years, returned to Persia, tarried awhile in the province of Iraq, and thence proceeded to Khurasan. His kindly disposition, extreme forbearance, and unaffected simplicity earned him the appellation of the Siyyid-i-Nur.[3]

[1 Title given by the Bab to Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi.]

[2 The remarkable circumstances attending the conversion of Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i are fully related in the "Kashfu'l-Ghita" (pp. 70-77), and reference is made to a significant Tablet revealed to him by Baha'u'llah (p. 63), in which the importance of the Kitab-i-Aqdas is fully stressed, and the necessity of exercising the utmost caution and moderation in the application and execution of its precepts emphasised. The text of this Tablet is found on pp. 64-70 of the same book. The following passage of the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" refers to the conversion of Haji Siyyid Javad: "Aqa Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i a dit qu'avant la manifestation, un indien lui avait ecrit le nom de celui qui serait manifeste." ("Le Livre des Sept Preuves," traduction par A. L. M. Nicolas, p. 59.)]

[3 Literally meaning "radiant siyyid."]

Haji Siyyid Javad, one day, while crossing a street in Tihran, suddenly saw the Shah as he was passing on horseback. Undisturbed by the presence of his sovereign, he calmly approached and greeted him. His venerable figure and dignity of bearing pleased the Shah immensely. He acknowledged his salute and invited him to come and see him. Such was the reception accorded him that the

courtiers of the Shah were moved with envy. "Does not your Imperial Majesty realise," they protested, "that this Haji <p189> Siyyid Javad is none other than the man who, even prior to the declaration of the Siyyid-i-Bab, had proclaimed himself a Babi, and had pledged his undying loyalty to his person?" The Shah, perceiving the malice which actuated their accusation, was sorely displeased, and rebuked them for their temerity and low-mindedness. "How strange!" he is reported to have exclaimed; "whoever is distinguished by the uprightness of his conduct and the courtesy of his manners, my people forthwith denounce him as a Babi and regard him as an object worthy of my condemnation!" Haji Siyyid Javad spent the last days of his life in Kirman and remained until his last hour a staunch supporter of the Faith. He never wavered in his convictions nor relaxed in his unsparing endeavours for the diffusion of the Cause.

Shaykh Sultan-i-Karbila'i, whose ancestors ranked among the leading ulamas of Karbila, and who himself had been a firm supporter and intimate companion of Siyyid Kazim, was also among those who, in those days, had met the Bab in Shiraz. It was he who, at a later time, proceeded to Sulaymaniyyih in search of Baha'u'llah, and whose daughter was subsequently given in marriage to Aqay-i-Kalim. When he arrived at Shiraz, he was accompanied by Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, to whom we have referred in the early pages of this narrative. To him the Bab assigned the task of transcribing, in collaboration with Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, the Tablets which He had lately revealed. Shaykh Sultan, who had been too ill, at the time of his arrival, to meet the Bab, received one night, while still on his sick-bed, a message from his <p190> Beloved, informing him that at about two hours after sunset He would Himself visit him. That night the Ethiopian servant, who was acting as lantern-bearer to his Master, was instructed to walk in advance at a distance which would keep away the attention of the people from Him, and to extinguish the lantern as soon as he reached his destination.

I have heard Shaykh Sultan himself describe that nocturnal visit: "The Bab, who had bidden me extinguish the lamp in my room ere He arrived, came straight to my bedside. In the midst of the darkness which enveloped us, I was holding fast to the hem of His garment and was imploring Him: 'Fulfil my desire, O Beloved of my heart, and allow me to sacrifice myself for Thee; for no one else except Thee is able to confer upon me this favour.' 'O Shaykh!' the Bab replied, 'I too yearn to immolate Myself upon the altar of sacrifice. It behoves us both to cling to the garment of the Best-Beloved and to seek from Him the joy and glory of martyrdom in His path. Rest assured I will, in your behalf, supplicate the Almighty to enable you to attain His presence. Remember Me on that Day, a Day such as the world has never seen before.' As the hour of parting approached, he placed in my hand a gift which He asked me to expend for myself. I tried to refuse; but He begged me to accept it. Finally I acceded to His wish; whereupon He arose and departed.

"The allusion of the Bab that night to His 'Best-Beloved' excited my wonder and curiosity. In the years that followed I oftentimes believed that the one to whom the Bab had referred was none other than Tahirih. I even imagined Siyyid-i-'Uluvv to be that person. I was sorely perplexed, and knew not how to

unravel this mystery. When I reached Karbila and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, I became firmly convinced that He alone could claim such affection from the Bab, that He, and only He, could be worthy of such adoration."

The second Naw-Ruz after the declaration of the Bab's Mission, which fell on the twenty-first day of the month of Rabi'u'l-Avval, in the year 1262 A.H.,[1] found the Bab still in Shiraz enjoying, under circumstances of comparative tranquillity and ease, the blessings of undisturbed association <p191> with His family and kindred. Quietly and unceremoniously, He celebrated the festival of Naw-Ruz in His own home, and, in accordance with His invariable custom, bountifully conferred upon both His mother and His wife the marks of His affection and favour. By the wisdom of His counsels and the tenderness of His love, He cheered their hearts and dispelled their apprehensions. He bequeathed to them all His possessions and transferred to their names the title to His property. In a document which He Himself wrote and signed, He directed that His house and its furniture, as well as the rest of His estate, should be regarded as the exclusive property of His mother and His wife; and that upon the death of the former, her share of the property should revert to His wife.

[1 1846 A.D.]

The mother of the Bab failed at first to realise the significance of the Mission proclaimed by her Son. She remained for a time unaware of the magnitude of the forces latent in His Revelation. As she approached the end of her life, however, she was able to perceive the inestimable quality of that Treasure which she had conceived and given to the world. It was Baha'u'llah who eventually enabled her to discover the value of that hidden Treasure which had lain for so many years concealed from her eyes. She was living in Iraq, where she hoped to spend the remaining days of her life, when Baha'u'llah instructed two of His devoted followers, Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i and the wife of Haji Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shirazi, both of whom were already intimately acquainted with her, to instruct her in the principles of the Faith. She acknowledged the truth of the Cause and remained, until the closing years of the thirteenth century A.H.,[1] when she departed this life, fully aware of the bountiful gifts which the Almighty had chosen to confer upon her.

[1 The thirteenth century A.H. ended in October, 1882 A.D.]

The wife of the Bab, unlike His mother, perceived at the earliest dawn of His Revelation the glory and uniqueness of His Mission and felt from the very beginning the intensity of its force. No one except Tahirih, among the women of her generation, surpassed her in the spontaneous character of her devotion nor excelled the fervor of her faith. To her the Bab confided the secret of His future sufferings, and unfolded <p192> to her eyes the significance of the events that were to transpire in His Day. He bade her not to divulge this secret to His mother and counselled her to be patient and resigned to the will of God. He entrusted her with a special prayer, revealed and written by Himself, the reading of which, He assured her, would remove her difficulties and lighten the burden of her woes. "In the hour of your perplexity," He directed her, "recite this prayer ere you go to sleep. I Myself will appear to you and will banish your anxiety." Faithful to His advice, every time she turned to Him in prayer, the light of His unfailing guidance illumined her path

and resolved her problems.[1]

[1 "The Bab's widow survived till A.H. 1300, only six years ago. She was the sister of my friend's maternal grandfather. The above particulars are derived from an old lady of the same family, so that there is every reason to regard them as reliable." (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 993.)]

After the Bab had settled the affairs of His household and provided for the future maintenance of both His mother and His wife, He transferred His residence from His own home to that of Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali. There He awaited the approaching hour of His sufferings. He knew that the afflictions which were in store for Him could no longer be delayed, that He was soon to be caught in a whirlwind of adversity which would carry Him swiftly to the field of martyrdom, the crowning object of His life. He bade those of His disciples who had settled in Shiraz, among whom were Mulla Abdu'l-Karim and Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, to proceed to Isfahan and there await His further instructions. Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi, <p193> one of the Letters of the Living, who had recently arrived at Shiraz, was likewise instructed to proceed to Isfahan and to join the company of his fellow-disciples in that city.

Meanwhile Husayn Khan, the governor of Fars, was bending every effort to involve the Bab in fresh embarrassments and to degrade Him still further in the eyes of the public. The smouldering fire of his hostility was fanned to flame by the knowledge that the Bab was allowed to pursue unmolested the course of His activities, that He was still able to associate with certain of His companions, and that He continued to enjoy the benefits of unrestrained fellowship with His family and kindred.[1] By the aid of his secret agents, he succeeded in obtaining accurate information regarding <p194> the character and influence of the Movement which the Bab had initiated. He had secretly watched His movements, ascertained the degree of enthusiasm which He had aroused, and scrutinised the motives, the conduct, and the number of those who had embraced His Cause.

[1 "Meanwhile the turmoil, the intense discussions, the scandal continued in Shiraz, so much so that, annoyed by all this uproar and fearful of the outcome, Haji Mirza Aqasi ordered Husayn Khan Nizamu'd-Dawlih to be done with the Reformer and to have him killed immediately and secretly." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 235.)]

One night there came to Husayn Khan the chief of his emissaries with the report that the number of those who were crowding to see the Bab had assumed such proportions as to necessitate immediate action on the part of those whose function it was to guard the security of the city. "The eager crowd that gathers every night to visit the Bab," he remarked, "surpasses in number the multitude of people that throngs every day before the gates of the seat of your government. Among them are to be seen men celebrated alike for their exalted rank and extensive learning.[1] Such are the tact and lavish generosity which his maternal uncle displays in his attitude towards the officials of your government that no one among your subordinates is inclined to acquaint you with the reality of the situation. If you would permit me, I will, with the aid of a number of your attendants, surprise the Bab at the hour of midnight and will deliver, handcuffed, into your hands certain of his associates who will

enlighten you concerning his activities, and who will confirm the truth of my statements." Husayn Khan refused to comply with his wish. "I can tell better than <p195> you," was his answer, "what the interests of the State require. Watch me from a distance; I shall know how to deal with him."

[1 "Extremely irritated, discontented and worried, the Mullas of Fars, unable to foresee the heights that popular indignation against them might reach were not the only ones to be perplexed.

The authorities of the town and of the province understood only too well that the people, who were under their care but who were never very much under their control, this time were quite independent of it.

The men of Shiraz, superficial, mockers, noisome, quarrelsome, rebellious, insolent in the extreme, perfectly indifferent toward the Qajar dynasty, were never easy to govern and their administrators often passed wearisome days.

What then would be the position of these administrators if the real chief of the city and of the country, the arbiter of their thoughts, their idol, were to be a young man who, undaunted, with no ties whatsoever, and no love of personal gain, made a pedestal of his independence and took advantage of it by impudently and publicly attacking every day all that which, until now, had been considered as strong and respected in the city? "In truth, the court, the government and its policies had not as yet been the object of any of the violent denunciations of the Innovator, but, in view of the fact that he was so rigid in his habits, so unrelenting against intellectual dishonesty and the plundering practices of the clergy, it was unlikely that he would approve the same rapaciousness so flagrant in the public officials.

One could well believe that the day when they would fall under his scrutiny, he would not fail to see and violently condemn the abuses which could no longer be concealed." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp.

122-123.)]

That very moment, the governor summoned Abdu'l-Hamid Khan, the chief constable of the city. "Proceed immediately," he commanded him, "to the house of Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali. Quietly and unobserved, scale the wall and ascend to the roof, and from there suddenly enter his home. Arrest the Siyyid-i-Bab immediately, and conduct him to this place together with any of the visitors who may be present with him at that time. Confiscate whatever books and documents you are able to find in that house. As to Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, it is my intention to impose upon him, the following day, the penalty for having failed to redeem his promise. I swear by the imperial diadem of Muhammad Shah that this very night I shall have the Siyyid-i-Bab executed together with his wretched companions. Their ignominious death will quench the flame they have kindled, and will awaken every would-be follower of that creed to the danger that awaits every disturber of the peace of this realm. By this act I shall have extirpated a heresy the continuance of which constitutes the gravest menace to the interests of the State."

Abdu'l-Hamid Khan retired to execute his task.

He, together with his assistants, broke into the house of Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali [1] and found the Bab in the company of His maternal uncle and a certain Siyyid Kazim-i-Zanjani, who was later martyred in Mazindaran, and whose brother, Siyyid Murtada, was one of the Seven Martyrs of Tihiran.

He immediately arrested them, collected whatever documents he could find, ordered Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali to remain in his house, and conducted the rest to the seat of government.

The Bab, undaunted and self-possessed, was heard to repeat this verse of the Qur'an: "That with which they are threatened is for the morning.

Is not the morning near?"

No sooner had the chief constable reached the marketplace than he discovered, to his amazement, that the people of the city were fleeing from every side in consternation, as if overtaken by an appalling calamity.

He was struck <p196> with horror when he witnessed the long train of coffins being hurriedly transported through the streets, each followed by a procession of men and women loudly uttering shrieks of agony and pain.

This sudden tumult, the lamentations, the affrighted countenances, the imprecations of the multitude distressed and bewildered him.

He enquired as to the reason. "This very night," he was told, "a plague [2] of exceptional virulence has broken out.

We are smitten by its devastating power.

Already since the hour of midnight it has extinguished the lives of over a hundred people.

Alarm and despair reign in every house.

The people are abandoning their homes, and in their plight are invoking the aid of the Almighty." [3]

[1 September 23, 1845 A.D. See "Tarikh-i-Jadid," p. 204.]

[2 Outbreak of cholera.]

[3 The Bab refers to this incident in the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" in the following terms: "Recall the first days of the Manifestation, how many people died of cholera! That was one of the wonders of the Manifestation yet no one understood it. During four years the scourge raged among the Muhammadan Shiites without anyone grasping its true significance." ("Le Livre des Sept Preuves," translated by A. L. M. Nicolas, pp. 61-62.)]

Abdu'l-Hamid Khan, terrified by this dreadful intelligence, ran to the home of Husayn Khan. An old man who guarded his house and was acting as door-keeper informed him that the house of his master was deserted, that the ravages of the pestilence had devastated his home and afflicted the members of his household. "Two of his Ethiopian maids," he was told, "and a man-servant have already fallen victims to this scourge, and members of his own family are now

dangerously ill. In his despair, my master has abandoned his home and, leaving the dead unburied, has fled with the rest of his family to the Bagh-i-Takht." [1]

[1 A garden in the outskirts of Shiraz.]

Abdu'l-Hamid Khan decided to conduct the Bab to his own home and keep Him in his custody pending instructions from the governor. As he was approaching his house, he was struck by the sound of weeping and wailing of the members of his household. His son had been attacked by the plague and was hovering on the brink of death. In his despair, he threw himself at the feet of the Bab and tearfully implored Him to save the life of his son. He begged Him to forgive his past transgressions and misdeeds. "I adjure you," he entreated the Bab as he clung to the hem of His garment, "by Him who has elevated you to this exalted position, to intercede in my behalf and to offer a prayer for the recovery of my son. Suffer not that he, in the prime of youth, be taken away from me. Punish him not for the guilt which his father has committed. I repent of what I have done, and at this moment resign my post. I solemnly pledge my word that never again will I accept such a position even though I perish of hunger."

The Bab, who was in the act of performing His ablutions and was preparing to offer the prayer of dawn, directed him to take some of the water with which He was washing His face to his son and request him to drink it. This He said would save his life.

No sooner had Abdu'l-Hamid Khan witnessed the signs of the recovery of his son than he wrote a letter to the governor in which he acquainted him with the whole situation and begged him to cease his attacks on the Bab. "Have pity on yourself," he wrote him, "as well as on those whom Providence has committed to your care. Should the fury of this plague continue its fatal course, no one in this city, I fear, will by the end of this day have survived the horror of its attack." Husayn Khan replied that the Bab should be immediately released and given freedom to go wherever He might please. [1]

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 11), "Husayn Khan released the Bab on condition of his quitting the city."]

As soon as an account of these happenings reached Tihiran and was brought to the attention of the Shah, an imperial edict dismissing Husayn Khan from office was issued and sent to Shiraz. From the day of his dismissal, that shameless tyrant fell a victim to countless misfortunes, and was in the end unable to earn even his daily bread. No one seemed willing or able to save him from his evil plight. When, at a later time, Baha'u'llah had been banished to Baghdad, Husayn Khan sent Him a letter in which he expressed repentance and promised to atone for his past misdeeds on condition that he should regain his former position. Baha'u'llah refused to answer him. Sunk in misery and shame, he languished until his death.

The Bab, who was staying at the home of Abdu'l-Hamid Khan, sent Siyyid Kazim to request Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali to come and see Him. He informed His uncle of His intended departure from Shiraz, entrusted both His mother and His wife to his care, and charged him to convey to each the expression of His affection and the assurance of God's unfailing assistance. "Wherever they may be," He

told His uncle, as He bade him farewell, "God's all-encompassing love and protection will surround them. I will again meet you amid the mountains of Adhirbayjan, from whence I will send you forth to obtain the crown of martyrdom. I Myself will follow you, together with one of My loyal disciples, and will join you in the realm of eternity." <p199>

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CHAPTER X

THE BAB'S SOJOURN IN ISFAHAN

THE summer of the year 1262 A.H.[1] was drawing to a close when the Bab bade His last farewell to His native city of Shiraz, and proceeded to Isfahan. Siyyid Kazim-i-Zanjani accompanied Him on that journey. As He approached the outskirts of the city, He wrote a letter to the governor of the province, Manuchihr Khan, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih,[2] in which He requested him to signify his wish as to the place where He could dwell. The letter, which He entrusted to Siyyid Kazim, was expressive of such courtesy and revealed such exquisite penmanship that the Mu'tamid was moved to instruct the Sultanu'l-'Ulama, the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan,[3] the foremost ecclesiastical authority of that province, to receive the Bab in his own home and to accord Him a kindly and generous <p200> reception. In addition to his message, the governor sent the Imam-Jum'ih the letter he had received from the Bab. The Sultanu'l-'Ulama accordingly bade his own brother, whose savage cruelty in later years earned him the appellation of <p201> Raqsha'[3] from Baha'u'llah, to proceed with a number of his favourite companions to meet and escort the expected Visitor to the gate of the city. As the Bab approached, the Imam-Jum'ih went out to welcome Him in person, and conducted Him ceremoniously to his house.

[1 1846 A.D.]

[2 "He [Manuchihr Khan] was a man of energy and courage and in 1841 completely crushed the Bakhtiyari tribes, which had risen in rebellion. His vigorous though severe administration secured to the people of Isfahan some little justice." (C. R. Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia," p. 487.)]

[3 According to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl (manuscript, p. 66), the name of the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan was Mir Siyyid Muhammad, and his title "Sultanu'l-'Ulama'." "The office of Sadru's-Sudur, or chief priest of Safavi times, was abolished by Nadir Shah, and the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan is now the principal ecclesiastical dignitary of Persia." (C. R. Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia," p. 365.)]

[3 Meaning female serpent.]

Such were the honours accorded to the Bab in those days that when, on a certain Friday, He was returning from the public bath to the house, a multitude of people were seen eagerly clamouring for the water which He had used for His ablutions. His fervent admirers firmly believed in its unfailing virtue and power to heal their sicknesses and ailments. The Imam-Jum'ih himself had, from the very first night, become so enamoured with Him who was the object of such devotion, that, assuming the functions of an attendant, he undertook to minister to the needs and wants of his beloved Guest. Seizing the ewer from the hand of the chief steward and utterly ignoring the customary dignity of his

rank, he proceeded to pour out the water over the hands of the Bab.

One night, after supper, the Imam-Jum'ih, whose curiosity had been excited by the extraordinary traits of character which his youthful Guest had revealed, ventured to request Him to reveal a commentary on the Surih of Va'l-'Asr.[1] His request was readily granted.

Calling for pen and paper, the Bab, with astonishing rapidity and without the least premeditation, began to reveal, in the presence of His host, a most illuminating interpretation of the aforementioned Surih.

It was nearing midnight when the Bab found Himself engaged in the exposition of the manifold implications involved in the first letter of that Surih.

That letter, the letter 'vav' upon which Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i had already laid such emphasis in his writings, symbolised for the Bab the advent of a new cycle of Divine Revelation, and has since been alluded to by Baha'u'llah in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" in such passages as "the mastery of the Great Reversal" and "the Sign of the Sovereign."

The Bab soon after began to chant, in the presence of His host and his companions, the homily with which He had prefaced His commentary on the Surih.

Those words of power confounded His hearers with wonder. <p202> They seemed as if bewitched by the magic of His voice.

Instinctively they started to their feet and, together with the Imam-Jum'ih, reverently kissed the hem of His garment.

Mulla Muhammad-Taqi-y-i-Harati, an eminent mujtahid, broke out into a sudden expression of exultation and praise. "Peerless and unique," he exclaimed, "as are the words which have streamed from this pen, to be able to reveal, within so short a time and in so legible a writing, so great a number of verses as to equal a fourth, nay a third, of the Qur'an, is in itself an achievement such as no mortal, without the intervention of God, could hope to perform.

Neither the cleaving of the moon nor the quickening of the pebbles of the sea can compare with so mighty an act."

[1 Qur'an, 103.]

As the Bab's fame was being gradually diffused over the entire city of Isfahan, an unceasing stream of visitors flowed from every quarter to the house of the Imam-Jum'ih: a few to satisfy their curiosity, others to obtain a deeper understanding of the fundamental verities of His Faith, and still others to seek the remedy for their ills and sufferings. The Mu'tamid himself came one day to visit the Bab and, while seated in the midst of an assemblage of the most brilliant and accomplished divines of Isfahan, requested Him to expound the nature and demonstrate the validity of the Nubuvvat-i-Khassih.[1] He had previously, in that same gathering, called upon those who were present to adduce such proofs and evidences in support of this fundamental article of their Faith as would constitute an unanswerable testimony for those who were inclined to repudiate its truth. No one, however, seemed capable of responding to his invitation. "Which do you prefer," asked the Bab, "a verbal or a written

answer to your question?" "A written reply," he answered, "not only would please those who are present at this meeting, but would edify and instruct both the present and future generations."

[1 Muhammad's "Specific Mission."]

The Bab instantly took up His pen and began to write.

In less than two hours, He had filled about fifty pages with a most refreshing and circumstantial enquiry into the origin, the character, and the pervasive influence of Islam.

The originality of His dissertation, the vigour and vividness of <p203> its style, the accuracy of its minutest details, invested His treatment of that noble theme with an excellence which no one among those who were present on that occasion could have failed to perceive.

With masterly insight, He linked the central idea in the concluding passages of this exposition with the advent of the promised Qa'im and the expected "Return" of the Imam Husayn.[1] He argued with such force <p204> and courage that those who heard Him recite its verses were astounded by the magnitude of His revelation.

No one dared to insinuate the slightest objection--much less, openly to challenge His statements.

The Mu'tamid could not help giving vent to his enthusiasm and joy. "Hear me!" he exclaimed. "Members of this revered assembly, I take you as my witnesses.

Never until this day have I in my heart been firmly convinced of the truth of Islam.

I can henceforth, thanks to this exposition penned by this Youth, declare myself a firm believer in the Faith proclaimed by the Apostle of God.

I solemnly testify to my belief in the reality of the superhuman power with which this Youth is endowed, a power which no amount of learning can ever impart."

With these words he brought the meeting to an end.

[1 Reference to His own Mission and to Baha'u'llah's subsequent Revelation.]

The growing popularity of the Bab aroused the resentment of the ecclesiastical authorities of Isfahan, who viewed with concern and envy the ascendancy which an unlearned Youth was slowly acquiring over the thoughts and consciences of their followers.

They firmly believed that unless they rose to stem the tide of popular enthusiasm, the very foundations of their existence would be undermined.

A few of the more sagacious among them thought it wise to abstain from acts of direct hostility to either the person or the teachings of the Bab, as such action, they felt, would serve only to enhance His prestige and consolidate His position.

The mischief-makers, however, were busily engaged in disseminating the wildest

reports concerning the character and claims of the Bab.

These reports soon reached Tihran and were brought to the attention of Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Grand Vazir of Muhammad Shah.

This haughty and overbearing minister viewed with apprehension the possibility that his sovereign might one day feel inclined to befriend the Bab, an inclination which he felt sure would precipitate his own downfall.

The Haji was, moreover, apprehensive lest the Mu'tamid, who enjoyed the confidence of the Shah, should succeed in arranging an interview between the sovereign and the Bab.

He was well aware that should such an interview take place, the impressionable and tender-hearted Muhammad Shah would be completely won over by the attractiveness and novelty of that creed.

Spurred on by such reflections, he addressed a strongly worded communication to the Imam-Jum'ih, in which he upbraided him for his grave neglect of the obligation imposed upon him to safeguard the interests of Islam. "We have expected you,"

Haji Mirza Aqasi wrote him, "to resist with all your power every cause which conflicts with the best interests of the government and people of this land.

You seem instead to have befriended, nay to have glorified, the author of this obscure and contemptible movement."

He likewise wrote a number of encouraging letters to the ulamas of Isfahan, whom he had previously ignored but upon whom he now lavished his special favours.

The Imam-Jum'ih, while refusing to alter his respectful attitude towards his Guest, was induced by the tone of the message he had received from the Grand Vazir, to instruct his associates to devise such means as would tend to lessen the ever-increasing number of visitors who thronged each day to the presence of the Bab.

Muhammad-Mihdi, surnamed the Safihu'l-'Ulama', son of the late Haji Kalbasi, in his desire to gratify the wish and to earn the esteem of Haji Mirza Aqasi, began to calumniate the Bab from the pulpit in the most unseemly language. As soon as the Mu'tamid was informed of these developments, he sent a message to the Imam-Jum'ih in which he reminded him of the visit he as governor had paid to the Bab, and extended to him as well as to his Guest an invitation to his home.

The Mu'tamid invited Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah, son of the late Haji Siyyid Muhammad Baqir-i-Rashti, Haji Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Abadiyi, Muhammad-Mihdi, Mirza Hasan-i-Nuri, and a few others to be present at that meeting.

Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah refused the invitation and endeavoured to dissuade those who had been invited, from participating in that gathering. "I have sought to excuse myself," he informed them, "and I would most certainly urge you to do

the same.

I regard it as most unwise of you to meet the Siyyid-i-Bab face to face.

He will, no doubt, reassert his claim and will, in support of his argument, adduce whatever proof you may desire him to give, and, without the least hesitation, will reveal as a testimony to the truth he bears, verses of such a number as would equal half the Qur'an.

In the end he will challenge you in these words: 'Produce likewise, <p206> if ye are men of truth.' We can in no wise successfully resist him.

If we disdain to answer him, our impotence will have been exposed.

If we, on the other hand, submit to his claim, we shall not only be forfeiting our own reputation, our own prerogatives and rights, but will have committed <p207> ourselves to acknowledge any further claims that he may feel inclined to make in the future."

Haji Muhammad-Ja'far heeded this counsel and refused to accept the invitation of the governor.

Muhammad Mihdi, Mirza Hasan-i-Nuri, and a few others who disdained such advice, presented themselves at the appointed hour at the home of the Mu'tamid.

At the invitation of the host, Mirza Hasan, a noted Platonist, requested the Bab to elucidate certain abstruse philosophical doctrines connected with the Arshiyih of Mulla Sadra,[1] the meaning of which only a few had been able to unravel.[2] In simple and unconventional language, the Bab replied to each of his questions.

Mirza Hasan, though unable to apprehend the meaning of the answers which he had received, realised how inferior was the learning of the so-called exponents of the Platonic and the Aristotelian schools of thought of his day to the knowledge displayed by that Youth.

Muhammad Mihdi ventured in his turn to question the Bab regarding certain aspects of the Islamic law.

Dissatisfied with the explanation he received, he began to contend idly with the Bab.

He was soon silenced by the Mu'tamid, who, cutting short his conversation, turned to an attendant and, bidding him light the lantern, gave the order that Muhammad Mihdi be immediately conducted to his home.

The Mu'tamid subsequently <p208> confided his apprehensions to the Imam-Jum'ih. "I fear the machinations of the enemies of the Siyyid-i-Bab," he told him. "The Shah has summoned Him to Tihiran.

I am commanded to arrange for His departure.

I deem it more advisable for Him to stay in my home until such time as He can leave this city."

The Imam-Jum'ih acceded to his request and returned alone to his house.

[1 See Note K, "A Traveller's Narrative," and Gobineau, pp. 65-73.]

[2 "Muhammad having grown silent, Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, who followed the philosophical doctrine of Mulla Sadra, questioned the Bab in order to induce him to explain three miracles which it would suffice to relate in order to enlighten the reader.

The first one was the Tiyyu'l-Ard, or the immediate transfer of a human being from one part of the world to another very distant point.

The Shiites are convinced that the third Imam, Javad, had adopted this easy and economical way of traveling.

For example, he betook himself, in the twinkling of an eye, from Medina in Arabia to Tus in Khurasan. "The second miracle was the multiple and simultaneous presence of the same person in many different places.

Ali was, at the same moment, host to sixty different people. "The third miracle was a problem of cosmography which I submit to our astronomers who will certainly relish it.

It is said that, during the reign of a tyrant, the heavens revolve rapidly, while during that of an Imam they revolve slowly.

First, how could the heavens have two movements and then, what were they doing during the reign of the Umayyads and the Abbassids?

It was the solution of these insanities that they proposed to the Bab! "I shall not dwell on them any longer but I believe I must here make clear the mentality of the learned Moslems of Persia.

And if one should consider that, for nearly one thousand years, the science of Iran rests upon such trash, that men exhaust themselves in continuous research upon such matters, one will easily understand the emptiness and arrogance of all these minds. "Be that as it may, the reunion was interrupted by the announcement of dinner of which each one partook, after which they returned to their respective homes." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

239-240.)]

The Bab had tarried forty days at the residence of the Imam-Jum'ih. While He was still there, a certain Mulla Muhammad-Taqi-i-Harati, who was privileged to meet the Bab every day, undertook, with His consent, to translate one of His works, entitled Risaliy-i-Furu'-i-'Adliyyih, from the original Arabic into Persian. The service he thereby rendered to the Persian believers was marred, however, by his subsequent behaviour. Fear suddenly seized him, and he was induced eventually to sever his connection with his fellow-believers.

Ere the Bab had transferred His residence to the house of the Mu'tamid, Mirza

Ibrahim, father of the Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' and elder brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, to whom we have already referred, invited the Bab to his home one night.

Mirza Ibrahim was a friend of the Imam-Jum'ih, was intimately associated with him, and controlled the management of all his affairs.

The banquet which was spread for the Bab that night was one of unsurpassed magnificence.

It was commonly observed that neither the officials nor the notables of the city had offered a feast of such magnitude and splendour.

The Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' and his brother, the Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada', who were lads of nine and eleven, respectively, served at that banquet and received special attention from the Bab.

That night, during dinner, Mirza Ibrahim turned to his Guest and said: "My brother, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, has no child.

I beg You to intercede in his behalf and to grant his heart's desire."

The Bab took a portion of the food with which He had been served, placed it with His own hands on a platter, and handed it to His host, asking him to take it to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his wife. "Let them both partake of this,"

He said; "their wish will be fulfilled."

By virtue of that portion which the Bab had chosen to bestow upon her, the wife of Mirza <p209> Muhammad-'Ali conceived and in due time gave birth to a girl, who eventually was joined in wedlock with the Most Great Branch,[1] a union that came to be regarded as the consummation of the hopes entertained by her parents.

[1 Reference to Munirih Khanum's marriage with Abdu'l-Baha.]

The high honours accorded to the Bab served further to inflame the hostility of the ulamas of Isfahan. With feelings of dismay, they beheld on every side evidences of His all-pervasive influence invading the stronghold of orthodoxy and subverting their foundations. They summoned a gathering, at which they issued a written document, signed and sealed by all the ecclesiastical leaders of the city, condemning the Bab to death.[1] They all concurred in this condemnation with the exception of Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah and Haji Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Abadiyi, both of whom refused to associate themselves with the contents of so glaringly abusive a document. The Imam-Jum'ih, though declining to endorse the death-warrant of the Bab, was induced, by reason of his extreme cowardice and ambition, to add to that document, in his own handwriting, the following testimony: "I testify that in the course of my association with this youth I have been unable to discover any act that would in any way betray his repudiation of the doctrines of Islam. On the contrary, I have known him as a pious and loyal observer of its precepts. The extravagance of his claims, however, and his disdainful contempt for the things of the world, incline me to believe that he is devoid of reason and judgment."

[1 According to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, about seventy eminent ulamas and notables had set their seal to a document which condemned the Bab as a heretic, and which declared Him to be deserving of the penalty of death.]

No sooner had the Mu'tamid been informed of the condemnation pronounced by the ulamas of Isfahan than he determined, by a plan which he himself conceived, to nullify the effects of that cruel verdict.

He issued immediate instructions that towards the hour of sunset the Bab, escorted by five hundred horsemen of the governor's own mounted body-guard, should leave the gate of the city and proceed in the direction of Tihran.

Imperative orders had been given that at the completion of each farsang [1] one hundred of this mounted escort should return directly to Isfahan. <p210> To the chief of the last remaining contingent, a man in whom he placed implicit confidence, the Mu'tamid confidentially intimated his desire that at every maydan [2] twenty of the [2] Maydan:

A subdivision of a farsakh.

A square or open place. <p211> remaining hundred should likewise be ordered by him to return to the city.

Of the twenty remaining horsemen, the Mu'tamid directed that ten should be despatched to Ardistan for the purpose of collecting the taxes levied by the government, and that the rest, all of whom should be of his tried and most reliable men, should, by an unfrequented route, bring the Bab back in disguise to Isfahan. [2] They were, moreover, instructed so to regulate their march that before dawn of the ensuing day the Bab should have arrived at Isfahan and should have been delivered into his custody.

This plan was immediately taken in hand and duly executed.

At an unsuspected hour the Bab re-entered the city, was directly conducted to the private residence of the Mu'tamid, known by the name of Imarat-i-Khurshid, [3] and was introduced, through a side entrance reserved for the Mu'tamid himself, into his private apartments.

The governor waited in person on the Bab, served His meals, and provided whatever was required for His comfort and safety.[4]

[1 Refer to Glossary.]

[2 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 13), the Mu'tamid gave secret orders that when the Bab reached Murchih-Khar (the second stage out from Isfahan on the north road, distant about 35 miles therefrom), He should return to Isfahan.]

[3 "Thus this room (in which I find myself) which has neither doors nor definite limits, is today the highest of the dwellings of Paradise, for the Tree of Truth lives herein. It would seem that all the atoms of the room, all sing in one voice, 'In truth, I am God! There is no other God beside Me, the Lord of all things.' And they sing above all the rooms of the earth, even above those adorned with mirrors of gold. If, however, the Tree of Truth abides in one of these ornamented rooms, then the atoms of their mirrors sing

that song as did and do the atoms of the mirrors of the Palace Sadri, for in the days of Sad (Isfahan) he abided therein." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. 1, p. 128.)

[4 According to "A Traveller's Narrative," p. 13, the Bab remained four months in that house.] <p212>

Meanwhile the wildest conjectures obtained currency in the city regarding the journey of the Bab to Tihran, the sufferings which He was made to endure on His way to the capital, the verdict which had been pronounced against Him, and the penalty which He had suffered. These rumours greatly distressed the believers who were residing in Isfahan. The Mu'tamid, who was well aware of their grief and anxiety, interceded with the Bab in their behalf and begged to be allowed to introduce them into His presence. The Bab addressed a few words in His own handwriting to Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini, who had taken up his quarters in the madrisih of Nim-Avard, and instructed the Mu'tamid to send it to him by a trusted messenger. An hour later, Mulla Abdu'l-Karim was ushered into the presence of the Bab. Of his arrival no one except the Mu'tamid was informed. He received from his Master some of His writings, and was instructed to transcribe them in collaboration with Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi and Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi. To these he soon returned, bearing the welcome news of the Bab's well-being and safety. Of all the believers residing in Isfahan, these three alone were allowed to see Him.

One day, while seated with the Bab in his private garden within the courtyard of his house, the Mu'tamid, taking his Guest into his confidence, addressed Him in these words: "The almighty Giver has endowed me with great riches.[1] I know not how best to use them.

Now that I have, by the aid of God, been led to recognize this Revelation, it is my ardent desire to consecrate all my possessions to the furtherance of its interests and the spread of its fame.

It is my intention to proceed, by Your leave, to Tihran, and to do my best to win to this Cause Muhammad Shah, whose confidence in me is firm and unshaken.

I am certain that he will eagerly embrace it, and will arise to promote it far and wide.

I will also endeavour to induce the Shah to dismiss the profligate Haji Mirza Aqasi, the folly of whose administration has well-nigh brought this land to the verge of ruin.

Next, I will strive to obtain for You the hand of one of the <p213> sisters of the Shah, and will myself undertake the preparation of Your nuptials.

Finally, I hope to be enabled to incline the hearts of the rulers and kings of the earth to this most wondrous Cause and to extirpate every lingering trace of that corrupt ecclesiastical hierarchy that has stained the fair name of Islam."

"May God requite you for your noble intentions," the Bab replied. "So lofty a purpose is to Me even more precious than the act itself.

Your days and Mine are numbered, however; they are too short to enable Me to

witness, and allow you to achieve, the realisation of your hopes.

Not by the means which you fondly imagine will an almighty Providence accomplish the triumph of His Faith.

Through the poor and lowly of this land, by the blood which these shall have shed in His path, will the omnipotent Sovereign ensure the preservation and consolidate the foundation of His Cause.

That same God will, in the world to come, place upon your head the crown of immortal glory, and will shower upon you His inestimable blessings.

Of the span of your earthly life there remain only three months and nine days, after which you shall, with faith and certitude, hasten to your eternal abode."

The Mu'tamid greatly rejoiced at these words.

Resigned to the will of God, he prepared himself for the departure which the words of the Bab had so clearly foreshadowed.

He wrote his testament, settled his private affairs, and bequeathed whatever he possessed to the Bab.

Immediately after his death, however, his nephew, the rapacious Gurgin Khan, discovered and destroyed his will, seized his property, and contemptuously ignored his wishes.

[1 "On the fourth of March, 1847, Monsieur de Bonniere wrote to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of France: 'Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, governor of Isfahan, has just died leaving a fortune appraised at forty million francs.'" (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 242, note 192.)]

As the days of his earthly life were drawing to a close, the Mu'tamid increasingly sought the presence of the Bab, and, in his hours of intimate fellowship with Him, obtained a deeper realisation of the spirit which animated His Faith. "As the hour of my departure approaches," he one day told the Bab, "I feel an undefinable joy pervading my soul.

But I am apprehensive for You, I tremble at the thought of being compelled to leave You to the mercy of so ruthless a successor as Gurgin Khan.

He will, no doubt, discover Your presence in this home, and will, I fear, grievously ill-treat You." "Fear not," remonstrated the Bab; "I have <p214> committed Myself into the hands of God.

My trust is in Him.

Such is the power which He has bestowed upon Me that if it be My wish, I can convert these very stones into gems of inestimable value, and can instil into the heart of the most wicked criminal the loftiest conceptions of uprightness and duty.

Of My own will have I chosen to be afflicted by My enemies, 'that God might accomplish the thing destined to be done.'"[1] As those precious hours flew by, a sense of overpowering devotion, of increased consciousness of nearness to

God, filled the heart of the Mu'tamid.

In his eyes the world's pomp and pageantry melted away into insignificance when brought face to face with the eternal realities enshrined in the Revelation of the Bab.

His vision of its glories, its infinite potentialities, its incalculable blessings grew in vividness as he increasingly realised the vanity of earthly ambition and the limitations of human endeavour.

He continued to ponder these thoughts in his heart, until the time when a slight attack of fever, which lasted but one night, suddenly terminated his life.

Serene and confident, he winged his flight to the Great Beyond.[2]

[1 Qur'an, 8:42.]

[2 He died, according to E. G. Browne ('A Traveller's Narrative,' Note L, p. 227), in the month of Rabi'u'l-Avval of the year 1263 A.H. (Feb.-March, 1847 A.D.).]

As the life of the Mu'tamid was approaching its end, the Bab summoned to His presence Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi and Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, acquainted them with the nature of His prediction to His host, and bade them tell the believers who had gathered in the city, to scatter throughout Kashan, Qum, and Tihran, and await whatever Providence, in His wisdom, might choose to decree.

A few days after the death of the Mu'tamid, a certain person who was aware of the design which he had conceived and carried out for the protection of the Bab, informed his successor, Gurgin Khan, [1] of the actual residence of the Bab in the Imarat-i-Khurshid, and described to him the honours which his predecessor had lavished upon his Guest in the privacy of his own home. On the receipt of this unexpected intelligence, Gurgin Khan despatched his messenger to Tihran and instructed him to deliver in person the following <p215> message to Muhammad Shah: "Four months ago it was generally believed in Isfahan that, in pursuance of your Majesty's imperial summons, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, my predecessor, had sent the Siyyid-i-Bab to the seat of your Majesty's government. It has now been disclosed that this same siyyid is actually occupying the Imarat-i-Khurshid, the private residence of the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih. It has been ascertained that my predecessor himself extended the hospitality of his home to the Siyyid-i-Bab and sedulously guarded that secret from both the people and the officials of this city. Whatever it pleases your Majesty to decree, I unhesitatingly pledge myself to perform."

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative," p. 13, he was the nephew of the Mu'tamid.]

The Shah, who was firmly convinced of the loyalty of the Mu'tamid, realised, when he received this message, that the late governor's sincere intention had been to await a favourable occasion when he could arrange a meeting between him and the Bab, and that his sudden death had interfered with the execution of that plan. He issued an imperial mandate summoning the Bab to the capital. In his written message to Gurgin Khan, the Shah commanded him to send the Bab in disguise, in the company of a mounted escort [1] headed by Muhammad

Big-i-Chaparchi,[2] of the sect of the Aliyu'llahi, to Tihran; to exercise the utmost consideration towards Him in the course of His journey, and strictly to maintain the secrecy of His departure.[3]

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative," p. 14, the members of the escort were Nusayri horsemen. See note 1, p. 14.]

[2 Chaparchi means "courier."]

[3 "The Shah, whimsical and fickle, forgetting that he had, a short time before, ordered the murder of the Reformer, felt the desire of seeing, at last, the man who aroused such universal interest; he therefore gave the order to Gurgin Khan to send the Bab to him in Tihran." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 242.)]

Gurgin Khan went immediately to the Bab and delivered into His hands the written mandate of the sovereign. He then summoned Muhammad Big, conveyed to him the behests of Muhammad Shah, and ordered him to undertake immediate preparations for the journey. "Beware," he warned him, "lest anyone discover his identity or suspect the nature of your mission. No one but you, not even the members of his escort, should be allowed to recognize him. Should anyone question you concerning him, say that he is <p216> a merchant whom we have been instructed to conduct to the capital and of whose identity we are completely ignorant." Soon after midnight, the Bab, in accordance with those instructions, set out from the city and proceeded in the direction of Tihran. <p217>

CHAPTER XI

THE BAB'S STAY IN KASHAN

ON THE eve of the Bab's arrival at Kashan, Haji Mirza Jani, surnamed Parpa, a noted resident of that city, dreamed that he was standing at a late hour in the afternoon at the gate of Attar, one of the gates of the city, when his eyes suddenly beheld the Bab on horseback wearing, instead of His customary turban, the kulah [1] usually worn by the merchants of Persia. Before Him, as well as behind Him, marched a number of horsemen into whose custody He seemed to have been delivered. As they approached the gate, the Bab saluted him and said: "Haji Mirza Jani, We are to be your Guest for three nights. Prepare yourself to receive Us."

[1 See Glossary.]

When he awoke, the vividness of his dream convinced him of the reality of his vision.

This unexpected apparition constituted in his eyes a providential warning which he felt it his duty to heed and observe.

He accordingly set out to prepare his house for the reception of the Visitor, and to provide whatever seemed necessary for His comfort.

As soon as he had completed the preliminary arrangements for the banquet which he had decided to offer the Bab that night, Haji Mirza Jani proceeded to the gate of Attar, and there waited for the signs of the Bab's expected arrival.

At the appointed hour, as he was scanning the horizon, he descried in the distance what seemed to him a company of horsemen <p218> approaching the gate

of the city.

As he hastened to meet them, his eyes recognized the Bab surrounded by His escort dressed in the same clothes and wearing the same expression as he had seen the night before in his dream.

Haji Mirza Jani joyously approached Him and bent to kiss His stirrups.

The Bab prevented him, saying: "We are to be your Guest for three nights.

To-morrow is the day of Naw-Ruz; we shall celebrate it together in your home."

Muhammad Big, who had been riding close to the Bab, thought Him to be an intimate acquaintance of Haji Mirza Jani.

Turning to him, he said: "I am ready to abide by whatever is the desire of the Siyyid-i-Bab.

I would ask you, however, to obtain the approval of my colleague who shares with me the charge of conducting the Siyyid-i-Bab to Tihran."

Haji Mirza Jani submitted his request and was met with a flat refusal. "I decline your suggestion," he was told. "I have been most emphatically instructed not to allow this youth to enter any city until his arrival at the capital.

I have been particularly commanded to spend the night outside the gate of the city, <p219> to break my march at the hour of sunset, and to resume it the next day at the hour of dawn.

I cannot depart from the orders that have been given to me."

This gave rise to a heated altercation which was eventually settled in favour of Muhammad Big, who succeeded in inducing his opponent to deliver the Bab into the custody of Haji Mirza Jani with the express understanding that on the third morning he should safely deliver back his Guest into their hands.

Haji Mirza Jani, who had intended to invite to his home the entire escort of the Bab, was advised by Him to abandon this intention. "No one but you,"

He urged, "should accompany Me to your home."

Haji Mirza Jani requested to be allowed to defray the expense of the horsemen's three days' stay in Kashan. "It is unnecessary," observed the Bab; "but for My will, nothing whatever could have induced them to deliver Me into your hands.

All things lie prisoned within the grasp of His might.

Nothing is impossible to Him.

He removes every difficulty and surmounts every obstacle."

The horsemen were lodged in a caravanserai in the immediate neighbourhood of the gate of the city.

Muhammad Big, following the instructions of the Bab, accompanied Him until they

drew near the house of Haji Mirza Jani.

Having ascertained the actual situation of the house, he returned and joined his companions.

The night the Bab arrived at Kashan coincided with the eve preceding the third Naw-Ruz, after the declaration of His Mission, which fell on the second day of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani, in the year 1263 A.H.[1] On that same night, Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi, who had previously, in accordance with the directions of the Bab, come to Kashan, was invited to the house of Haji Mirza Jani and introduced into the presence of his Master.

The Bab was dictating to him a Tablet in honour of His host, when a friend of the latter, a certain Siyyid Abdu'l-Baqi, who was noted in Kashan for his learning, arrived.

The Bab invited him to enter, permitted him to hear the verses which He was revealing, but refused to disclose His identity.

In the concluding passages of the Tablet which He was addressing to Haji Mirza Jani, He prayed in his behalf, supplicated the Almighty to illumine <p220> <p221> his heart with the light of Divine knowledge, and to unloose his tongue for the service and proclamation of His Cause.

Unschooling and unlettered though he was, Haji Mirza Jani was able, by virtue of this prayer, to impress with his speech even the most accomplished divines of Kashan.

He became endowed with such power that he was able to silence every idle pretender who dared to challenge the precepts of his Faith.

Even the haughty and imperious Mulla Ja'far-i-Naraqı was unable, despite his consummate eloquence, to resist the force of his argument, and was compelled to acknowledge outwardly the merits of the Cause of his adversary, though at heart he refused to believe in its truth.

[1 1847 A.D.]

Siyyid Abdu'l-Baqi sat and listened to the Bab. He heard His voice, watched His movements, looked upon the expression of His face, and noted the words which streamed unceasingly from His lips, and yet failed to be moved by their majesty and power. Wrapt in the veils of his own idle fancy and learning, he was powerless to appreciate the meaning of the utterances of the Bab. He did not even trouble to enquire the name or the character of the Guest into whose presence he had been introduced. Unmoved by the things he had heard and seen, he retired from that presence, unaware of the unique opportunity which, through his apathy, he had irretrievably lost. A few days later, when informed of the name of the Youth whom he had treated with such careless indifference, he was filled with chagrin and remorse. It was too late, however, for him to seek His presence and atone for his conduct, for the Bab had already departed from Kashan. In his grief, he renounced the society of his fellowmen, and led, to the end of his days, a life of unrelieved seclusion.

Among those who were privileged to meet the Bab in the home of Haji Mirza Jani

was a man named Mihdi, who was destined at a later time, in the year 1268 A.H.,[1] to suffer martyrdom in Tihran. He and a few others were, during those three days, affectionately entertained by Haji Mirza Jani, whose lavish hospitality earned him the praise and commendation of his Master. To even the members of the Bab's escort he extended the same loving-kindness, and, by <p222> his liberality and charm of manner, won their lasting gratitude. On the morning of the second day after Naw-Ruz, he, mindful of his pledge, delivered the Prisoner into their hands, and, with a heart overflowing with grief, bade Him a last and touching farewell. <p223>

[1 1851-2 A.D.]

CHAPTER XII

THE BAB'S JOURNEY FROM KASHAN TO TABRIZ

ATTENDED by His escort, the Bab proceeded in the direction of Qum.[1] His alluring charm, combined with a compelling dignity and unfailing benevolence, had, by this time, completely disarmed and transformed His guards.

They seemed to have abdicated all their rights and duties and to have resigned themselves to His will and pleasure.

In their eagerness to <p224> serve and please Him, they, one day, remarked: "We are strictly forbidden by the government to allow You to enter the city of Qum, and have been ordered to proceed by an unfrequented route directly to Tihran.

We have been particularly directed to keep away from the Haram-i-Ma'sumih,[2] that inviolable sanctuary under whose shelter the most notorious criminals are immune from arrest.

We are ready, however, to ignore utterly for Your sake whatever instructions we have received.

If it be Your wish, we shall unhesitatingly conduct You through the streets of Qum and enable You to visit its holy shrine." "The heart of the true believer is the throne of God," observed the Bab. "He who is the ark of salvation and the Almighty's impregnable stronghold is now journeying with you through this wilderness.

I prefer the way of the country rather than to enter this unholy city.

The immaculate one whose remains are interred within this shrine, her brother, and her illustrious ancestors no doubt bewail the plight of this wicked people.

With their lips they pay homage to her; by their acts they heap dishonour upon her name.

Outwardly they serve and reverence her shrine; inwardly they disgrace her dignity."

[1 The site of the second most sacred shrine in Persia, and the burial-place of many of her kings, among them Fath-'Ali and Muhammad Shah.

[2 "At Qum are deposited the remains of his [Imam Rida's] sister, Fatimiy-i-Ma'sumih, i.e. the Immaculate, who, according to one account, lived

and died here, having fled from Baghdad to escape the persecution of the Khalifs; according to another, sickened and died at Qum, on her way to see her brother at Tus. He, for his part, is believed by the pious Shi'ahs to return the compliment by paying her a visit every Friday from his shrine at Mashhad." Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question," 1 vol. 2, p. 8.)]

Such lofty sentiments had instilled such confidence in the hearts of those who accompanied the Bab that had He at any time chosen to turn away suddenly and leave them, no one among His guards would have felt in the least perturbed or would have attempted to pursue Him. Proceeding by a route that skirted the northern end of the city of Qum, they halted at the village of Qumrud, which was owned by a relative of Muhammad Big, and the inhabitants of which all belonged to the sect of the Aliyu'llahi. At the invitation of the headman of the village, the Bab tarried one night in that place and was touched by the warmth and spontaneity of the reception which those simple folk had accorded Him. Ere He resumed His journey, He invoked the blessings of <p225> the Almighty in their behalf and cheered their hearts with assurances of His appreciation and love.

After a march of two days from that village, they arrived, on the afternoon of the eighth day after Naw-Ruz, at the fortress of Kinar-Gird,[1] which lies six farsangs to the south of Tihiran.

They were planning to reach the capital on the <p226> ensuing day, and had decided to spend the night in the neighbourhood of that fortress, when a messenger unexpectedly arrived from Tihiran, bearing a written order from Haji Mirza Aqasi to Muhammad Big.

That message instructed him to proceed immediately with the Bab to the village of Kulayn,[2] where Shaykh-i-Kulayni, Muhammad-ibn-i-Ya'qub, the author of the Usul-i-Kafi, who was born in that place, had been laid to rest with his father, and whose shrines are greatly <p227> honoured by the people of that neighbourhood.[3] Muhammad Big was commanded, in view of the unsuitability of the houses in that village, to pitch a special tent for the Bab and keep the escort in its neighbourhood pending the receipt of further instructions.

On the morning of the ninth day after Naw-Ruz, the eleventh day of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani, in the year 1263 A.H.,[4] in the immediate vicinity of that village, which belonged to Haji Mirza Aqasi, a tent which had served for his own use whenever he visited that place was erected for the Bab, on the slopes of a hill pleasantly situated amid wide stretches of orchards and smiling meadows.

The peacefulness of that spot, the luxuriance of its vegetation, and the unceasing murmur of its streams greatly pleased the Bab.

He was joined two days after by Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi, Siyyid Hasan, his brother; Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, and Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, all of whom were invited to lodge in the immediate surroundings of His tent.

On the fourteenth day of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani,[5] the twelfth day after

Naw-Ruz, Mulla Mihdiy-i-Khu'i and Mulla Muhammad-Mihdiy-i-Kandi arrived from Tihiran.

The latter, who had been closely associated with Baha'u'llah in Tihiran, had been commissioned by Him to present to the Bab a sealed letter together with certain gifts which, as soon as they were delivered into His hands, provoked in His soul sentiments of unusual delight.

His face glowed with joy as He overwhelmed the bearer with marks of His gratitude and favour.

[1 A station on the old Tsfahan road, distant about 28 miles from Tihiran. ("A Traveller's Narrative," p. 14, note 2.)

[2 See "A Traveller's Narrative," p. 14, note 3.

[3 "As the order of the prime minister Haji Mirza Aqasi became generally known, it was impossible to carry it out. From Isfahan to Tihiran, everyone spoke of the iniquity of the clergy and of the government towards the Bab; everywhere the people muttered and exclaimed against such an injustice." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p. 355.)]

[4 March 29, 1847 A.D.]

[5 April 1, 1847 A.D.]

That message, received at an hour of uncertainty and suspense, imparted solace and strength to the Bab. It dispelled the gloom that had settled upon His heart, and imbued His soul with the certainty of victory. The sadness which had long lingered upon His face, and which the perils of His captivity had served to aggravate, visibly diminished. He no longer shed those tears of anguish which had streamed so profusely from His eyes ever since the days of His arrest and departure from Shiraz. The cry "Beloved, My Well-Beloved," <p228> which in His bitter grief and loneliness He was wont to utter, gave way to expressions of thanksgiving and praise, of hope and triumph. The exultation which glowed upon His face never forsook Him until the day when the news of the great disaster which befell the heroes of Shaykh Tabarsi again beclouded the radiance of His countenance and dimmed the joy of His heart.

I have heard Mulla Abdu'l-Karim recount the following incident: "My companions and I were fast asleep in the vicinity of the tent of the Bab when the trampling of horsemen suddenly awakened us.

We were soon informed that the tent of the Bab was vacant and that those who had gone out in search of Him had failed to find Him.

We heard Muhammad Big remonstrate with the guards. 'Why feel disturbed?' he pleaded. 'Are not His magnanimity and nobleness of soul sufficiently established in your eyes to convince you that He will never, for the sake of His own safety, consent to involve others in embarrassment?'

He, no doubt, must have retired, in the silence of this moonlit night, to a place where He can seek undisturbed communion with God.

He will unquestionably return to His tent.

He will never desert us.' In his eagerness to reassure his colleagues, Muhammad

Big set out on foot along the road leading to Tihran.

I, too, with my companions, followed him.

Shortly after, the rest of the guards were seen, each on horseback, marching behind us.

We had covered about a maydan [1] when, by the dim light of the early dawn, we discerned in the distance the lonely figure of the Bab.

He was coming towards us from the direction of Tihran. 'Did you believe Me to have escaped?' were His words to Muhammad Big as He approached him. 'Far be it from me,' was the instant reply as he flung himself at the feet of the Bab, 'to entertain such thoughts.' Muhammad Big was too much awed by the serene majesty which that radiant face revealed that morning to venture any further remark.

A look of confidence had settled upon His countenance, His words were invested with such transcendent power, that a feeling of profound reverence wrapped our very souls.

No one dared to question Him as to the cause of so remarkable a change in His speech <p229> and demeanour.

Nor did He Himself choose to allay our curiosity and wonder."

[1 See Glossary.

For a fortnight [1] the Bab tarried in that spot. The tranquillity which He enjoyed amidst those lovely surroundings was rudely disturbed by the receipt of a letter which Muhammad Shah [2] himself addressed to the Bab and which was <p230> composed in these terms:[3]1 "Much as we desire to meet you, we find ourself unable, in view of our immediate departure from our capital, to receive you befittingly in Tihran. We have signified our desire that you be conducted to Mah-Ku, and have issued the necessary instructions to Ali Khan, the warden of the castle, to treat you with respect and consideration. It is our hope and intention to summon you to this place upon our return to the seat of our government, at <p231> which time we shall definitely pronounce our judgment. We trust that we have caused you no disappointment, and that you will at no time hesitate to inform us in case any grievances befall you. We fain would hope that you will continue to pray for our well-being and for the prosperity of our realm." (Dated Rabi'u'th-Thani, 1263 A.H.)[4]

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 14), the Bab remained in the village of Kulayn for a period of twenty days.]

[2 "Muhammad Shah," writes Gobineau, "was a prince of peculiar] temperament, a type often seen in Asia but not often discovered or understood by Europeans.

Although he reigned during a period when political practices were rather harsh, he was kind and patient and his tolerance extended even to the discords of his harem which were of such a nature as normally to cause grave annoyance; for, even in the days of Fath-'Ali Shah, the *laisser-aller*, the whims and fancies were never carried to such an extreme.

The following words which our 18th century might recognize as its own are

attributed to him: 'Why are you not more discreet, Madam?

I do not wish to hinder you from enjoying yourself.' "But, in his case, it was not affected indifference, but fatigue and boredom.

His health had always been wretched; seriously ill with gout, he was hardly ever free from pain.

His disposition naturally weak, had become very melancholy and, as he craved love and could not find it in his family either with his wives or children, he had centered all his affection upon the aged Mulla, his tutor.

He had made of him his only friend, his confidant, then his first and all-powerful minister, even his god!

Brought up by this idol with very irreverent sentiments toward Islam, he was equally as indifferent toward the dogmas of the Prophet as toward the Prophet himself.

He cared little for the Imams and, if he had any regard for Ali, it is because the Persian mind is wont to identify this venerable personage with the nation itself. "But in brief, Muhammad Shah was no better Muhammadan than he was Christian or Jew.

He believed that the Divine Essence incarnates Itself in the Sages with all Its power, and, as he considered Haji Mirza Aqasi a Sage par excellence, he felt certain that he was God and he would piously ask him to perform miracles.

Often he said to his officers with earnestness and conviction, "The Haji has promised me a miracle for tonight, you shall see!" As long as the character of the Haji was not involved, Muhammad Shah was completely indifferent regarding the success or failure of this or that religious doctrine; he was rather pleased to witness the conflict of opinions which were proof to him of the universal blindness." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp.

131-132.)]

[3 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p.

14), the Bab "forwarded a letter to the Royal Presence craving audience to set forth the truth of His condition, expecting this to be a means for the attainment of great advantages."

Regarding this letter, Gobineau writes as follows: "Ali-Muhammad wrote personally to the Court and his letter and the accusations of his adversaries all arrived at the same time.

Without assuming an aggressive attitude toward the king, but trusting on the contrary to his authority and justice, he represented to them that the depravity of the clergy in Persia had been well known for many years; that not only morals were thereby corrupted and the well-being of the nation affected, but that religion itself, poisoned by the sins of so many, was in great danger and was about to disappear leaving the people in perilous darkness. "As for

himself, called by God, in virtue of a special mission, to prevent such an evil, he had already begun to apprise the people of Fars that the true doctrine had made evident and rapid progress; that all its adversaries had been confounded and were now powerless and universally despised; but that this was only a beginning. "The Bab, confident of the magnanimity of the king, requested the permission to come to the capital with his principal disciples and there hold conferences with all the Mullas of the Empire, in the presence of the Sovereign, the nobles and the people, convinced that he would shame them by exposing their faithlessness.

He would accept beforehand the judgment of the king and, in case of failure, was ready to sacrifice his head and that of each one of his followers." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p.

124.)]

[4 March 19-April 17, 1847 A.D.]

Haji Mirza Aqasi [1] was no doubt responsible for having induced Muhammad Shah to address such a communication to the Bab.

He was actuated solely by a sense of fear [2] lest <p232> the contemplated interview should rob him of his position of unquestioned pre-eminence in the affairs of the State and should lead eventually to his overthrow from power.

He entertained no feelings of malice or resentment toward the Bab.

He finally succeeded [3] in persuading his sovereign to transfer so dreaded an opponent to a remote and sequestered corner of his realm, and was thus able to relieve his mind of a thought that continually obsessed him.[4] How stupendous was his mistake, how grievous his blunder!

Little did he realise, at that moment, that by his incessant intrigues he was withholding from his king and country the incomparable benefits of a Divine Revelation which alone had the power to deliver the land from the appalling state of degradation into which it had fallen.

By his act that short-sighted minister did not only withhold from Muhammad Shah the supreme instrument with which he could have rehabilitated a fast-declining empire, but also deprived him of that spiritual Agency which could have enabled him to establish his undisputed ascendancy over the peoples and nations of the earth.

By his folly, his extravagance and perfidious counsels, he undermined the foundations of the State, lowered its prestige, sapped the loyalty of his subjects, and plunged them into <p233> an abyss of misery.[5] Incapable of being admonished by the example of his predecessors, he contemptuously ignored the demands and interests of the people, pursued, with unremitting zeal, his designs for personal aggrandisement, and by his profligacy and extravagance involved his country in ruinous wars with its neighbours.

Sa'd-i-Ma'adh, who was neither of royal blood nor invested with authority, attained, through the uprightness of his conduct and his unsparing <p234>

devotion to the Cause of Muhammad, so exalted a station that to the present day the chiefs and rulers of Islam have continued to reverence his memory and to praise his virtues; whereas Buzurg-Mihr, the ablest, the wisest and most experienced administrator among the vazirs of Nushiravan-i-'Adil, in spite of his commanding position, eventually was publicly disgraced, was thrown into a pit, and became the object of the contempt and the ridicule of the people.

He bewailed his plight and wept so bitterly that he finally lost his sight.

Neither the example of the former nor the fate of the latter seemed to have awakened that self-confident minister to the perils of his own position.

He persisted in his thoughts until he too forfeited his rank, lost his riches,[6] and sank into abasement and shame.

The numerous properties which he forcibly seized from the humble and law-abiding subjects of the Shah, the costly furnitures with which he embellished them, the vast expenditures of labour and treasure which he ordered for their improvement--all were irretrievably lost two years after he had issued his decree condemning the Bab to a cruel incarceration in the inhospitable mountains of Adhirbayjan.

All his possessions were confiscated by the State.

He himself was disgraced by his sovereign, was ignominiously expelled from Tihran, and fell a prey to disease and poverty.

Bereft of hope and sunk in misery, he languished in Karbila until the hour of his death.[7]

[1 According to Hidayat in the "Majma'u'l-Fusaha'," the name of Haji Mirza Aqasi was Abbas-'Ali.

He was the son of Mirza Muslim, one of the well-known divines of Iravan.

His son, Abbas-'Ali, was a pupil, while in Karbila, of Fakhru'd-Din Abdu's-Samad-i-Hamadani.

From Karbila he proceeded to Hamadan, visited Adhirbayjan, and from there undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Returning, in circumstances of extreme poverty, to Adhirbayjan, he succeeded in gradually improving his position, and was made the tutor of the children of Mirza Musa Khan, the brother of the late Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Qa'im-Maqam.

Muhammad Mirza, to whom he had announced his eventual accession to the throne of Persia, was greatly devoted to him.

He eventually was appointed his prime minister, and retired after the death of the monarch to Karbila, where he died in Ramadan, 1265 A.H. (Notes of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl.) According to Haji Mu'inu's-Saltanih's narrative (p.

220), Haji Mirza Aqasi was born in Mah-Ku, where his parents had been residing after their departure from Iravan, in the Caucasus. "Haji Mirza Aqasi, native of Iravan, attained unlimited influence over his weak-minded master, formerly

his tutor, and professed Sufi doctrine.

A quizzical old gentleman, with a long nose, whose countenance betokened the oddity and self-sufficiency of his character." (C.

R.

Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia" p.

473.) "As for the Haji, he was a very special kind of god.

It was not absolutely certain that he did himself believe that of which the Shah was convinced.

In any case, he preferred the same general principles as the King and he had taught them to him in good faith.

He could nevertheless be a buffoon; jesting was the policy, the rule of his conduct and of his life.

He pretended to take nothing seriously, not even himself. "I am not a prime minister,' he often said, especially to those whom he mistreated; 'I am an old Mulla of humble birth and without merit and, if I find myself in this high office, it is because it is the wish of the King.' "He never referred to his sons without calling them 'sons of hussies and sons of dogs.' It is in these terms that he enquired of them or sent them orders by his officers, when they were away.

His greatest delight was to pass in review units of cavalry in which he would assemble, in their most gorgeous trappings, all the nomad Khans of Persia.

When these warlike tribes were gathered in the valley, the Haji would appear, dressed like a beggar, with a threadbare and shapeless cap, a sword dangling awkwardly at his side and riding a small donkey.

Then he would draw up the horsemen about him, call them fools, make fun of their attire, show their worthlessness, and then send them home with presents; for his sarcasm was always tempered with generosity." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp.

132-133.)]

[2 "An anecdote shows the real motive of the prime minister in the suggestions he made to the Shah concerning the Bab.

The Prince Farhad Mirza, still young, was the pupil of Haji Mirza Aqasi.

The latter related the following story: "When His Majesty, after consulting the prime minister, had written to the Bab to betake himself to Mah-Ku, we went with Haji Mirza Aqasi to spend a few days at Yaft-Abad, in the neighborhood of Tihran, in the park which he had created there.

I was very desirous of questioning my master regarding the recent happenings but I feared to do so publicly.

One day, while I was walking with him in the garden and he was in a good humor,

I made bold to ask him: "Haji, why have you sent the Bab to Mah-Ku?"

He replied,--"You are still too young to understand certain things, but know that had he come to Tihiran. you and I would not be, at this moment, walking free from care in this cool shade." (A.

L.

M.

Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp.

243-244) According to Haji Mu'inu's-Saltanih's narrative (p.

129), the chief motive which actuated Haji Mirza Aqasi to urge Muhammad Shah to order the banishment of the Bab to Adhirbayjan was the fear lest the promise which the Bab had given to the sovereign that He would cure him of his illness, were he to allow Him to be received in Tihiran, should be fulfilled.

He felt sure that should the Bab be able to effect such a cure, the Shah would fall under the influence of his Prisoner and would cease to confer upon his prime minister the honours and benefits which he exclusively enjoyed.]

[3 According to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, Haji Mirza Aqasi sought, by his reference to the rebellion of Muhammad Hasan Khan, the Salar, in Khurasan, and the revolt of Aqa Khan-i-Isma'ili, in Kirman, to induce the sovereign to abandon the project of summoning the Bab to the capital, and to send Him instead to the remote province of Adhirbayjan.]

[4 "Nevertheless, on this occasion, his expectations did not materialize.

Fearing that the presence of the Bab in Tihiran would occasion new disturbances (there were plenty of them due to his whims and his poor administration), he altered his plans and the escort, charged to take the Bab from Isfahan to Tihiran, received, when about thirty kilometers from the city, the order to take the prisoner directly to Mah-Ku. This town, in the mind of the prime minister, would offer nothing to the impostor because its inhabitants, out of gratitude for the favors and protection they had received from him, would take steps to suppress any disturbances which might break out." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p. 356.)]

[5 "The state of Persia, however, was not satisfactory; for Haji Mirza Aqasi, who had been its virtual ruler for thirteen years, 'was utterly ignorant of statesmanship or of military science, yet too vain to receive instruction and too jealous to admit of a coadjutor; brutal in his language; insolent in his demeanour; indolent in his habits; he brought the exchequer to the verge of bankruptcy and the country to the brink of revolution. The pay of the army was generally from three to five years in arrears. 'The cavalry of the tribes was almost annihilated.' Such--to adopt the weighty words of Rawlinson--was the condition of Persia in the middle of the nineteenth century." (P. M. Sykes' "A History of Persia," vol. 2, pp. 439-40.)]

[6 "Haji Mirza Aqasi, the half crazy old Prime Minister, had the whole administration in his hands, and obtained complete control over the Shah. The misgovernment of the country grew worse and worse, while the people starved,

and cursed the Qajar dynasty.... The condition of the province was deplorable and every man with any pretension to talent or patriotism was driven into exile by the old haji, who was sedulously collecting wealth for himself at Tihran, at the expense of the wretched country. The governorships of provinces were sold to the highest bidders, who oppressed the people in a fearful manner." (C. R. Markham's "A General Sketch of the History of Persia," pp. 486-7.)

[7 Gobineau writes regarding his fall: "Haji Mirza Aqasi, robbed of the power which he had constantly ridiculed, had retired to Karbila and he spent his remaining days playing tricks on the Mullas and scoffing even at the holy martyrs." ("Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 160.)

"This shrewd man had gained such power over the late Shah that one could truly say that the minister was the real sovereign; he could not therefore survive the loss of his good fortune. At the death of Muhammad Shah, he had disappeared and had gone to Karbila where, under the protection of the sainted Imam, even a state criminal could find an inviolable asylum. He was soon overcome by gnawing grief which, more than his remorse; shortened his life." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, pp. 367-368.) <p235>

The Bab was accordingly ordered to proceed to Tabriz.[1] The same escort, under the command of Muhammad Big, attended Him on His journey to the northwestern province of Adhirbayjan. He was allowed to select one companion and one attendant from among His followers to be with Him during His sojourn in that province. He selected Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi and Siyyid Hasan, his brother. He refused to expend on Himself the funds provided by the government for the expense of that journey. All the allowances that were given by the State He bestowed upon the poor and needy, and devoted to His own private needs the money which He, as a merchant, had earned in Bushihr and Shiraz. As orders had been given to avoid entering the towns in the course of the journey to Tabriz, a number of the believers of Qazvin, informed of the approach of their beloved Leader, set out for the village of Siyah-Dihan [2] and were there able to meet Him.

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 16), the Bab "wrote a letter, in the course of the journey, to the Prime Minister, saying: 'You summoned me from Isfahan to meet the doctors and for the attainment of a decisive settlement. What has happened now that this excellent intention has been changed for Mah-Kuh and Tabriz?'"

[2 According to Samandar (manuscript, pp. 45), the Bab tarried in the village of Siyah-Dihan, in the neighbourhood of Qazvin, on His way to Adhirbayjan. In the course of that journey, He is reported to have revealed several Tablets addressed to the leading ulamas in Qazvin among whom were the following: Haji Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab, Haji Mulla Salih, Haji Mulla Taqi, and Haji Siyyid Taqi. These Tablets were conveyed to their recipients through Haji Mulla Ahmad-i-Ibdal. Several believers, among whom were the two sons of Haji Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab were able to meet the Bab during the night He spent in that village. It is from this village that the Bab is reported to have addressed His epistle to Haji Mirza Aqasi.]

One of them was Mulla Iskandar, who had been delegated by Hujjat to visit the Bab in Shiraz, and to investigate His Cause. The Bab commissioned him to

deliver the following message to Sulayman Khan-i-Afshar, who was a great admirer of the late Siyyid Kazim: "He whose virtues the late siyyid unceasingly extolled, and to the approach of whose Revelation he continually alluded, is now revealed. I am that promised One. Arise and deliver Me from the hand of the oppressor." When the Bab entrusted this message to Mulla Iskandar, Sulayman Khan was in Zanzan and was preparing to leave for Tihran. Within the space of three days, that message reached him. He failed, however, to respond to that appeal. <p236>

Two days later, a friend of Mulla Iskandar had acquainted Hujjat, who, at the instigation of the ulamas of Zanzan, had been incarcerated in the capital, with the appeal of the Bab. Hujjat immediately instructed the believers of his native city to undertake whatever preparations were required and to collect the necessary forces to achieve the deliverance of their Master. He urged them to proceed with caution and to attempt, at an appropriate moment, to seize and carry Him away to whatever place He might desire. These were shortly joined by a number of believers from Qazvin and Tihran, who set out, according to the directions of Hujjat, to execute the plan. They overtook the guards at the hour of midnight and, finding them fast asleep, approached the Bab and begged Him to flee. "The mountains of Adhirbayjan too have their claims," was His confident reply as He lovingly advised them to abandon their project and return to their homes.[1]

[1 In the "Tarikh-i-Jadid," Muhammad Big is reported to have related the following account to Haji Mirza Jani: "So we mounted and rode on till we came to a brick caravanserai distant two parsangs from the city. Thence we proceeded to Milan, where many of the inhabitants came to see His Holiness, and were filled with wonder at the majesty and dignity of that Lord of mankind. In the morning, as we were setting out from Milan, an old woman brought a scald-headed child, whose head was so covered with scabs that it was white down to the neck, and entreated His Holiness to heal him. The guards would have forbidden her but His Holiness prevented them, and called the child to Him. Then He drew a handkerchief over its head and repeated certain words; which he had no sooner done than the child was healed. And in that place about two hundred persons believed and underwent a true and sincere conversion." (Pp. 222-21.)]

Approaching the gate of Tabriz, Muhammad Big, feeling that the hour of his separation from his Prisoner was at hand, besought His presence and with tearful eyes begged Him to overlook his shortcomings and transgressions. "The journey from Isfahan," he said, "has been long and arduous. I have failed to do my duty and to serve You as I ought. I crave Your forgiveness, and pray You to vouchsafe me Your blessings." "Be assured," the Bab replied, "I account you a member of My fold. They who embrace My Cause will eternally bless and glorify you, will extol your conduct and exalt your name." [1] The rest of the guards followed the <p237> example of their chief, implored the blessings of their Prisoner, kissed His feet, and with tears in their eyes bade Him a last farewell. To each the Bab expressed His appreciation of his devoted attentions and assured him of His prayers in his behalf. Reluctantly they delivered Him into the hands of the governor of Tabriz, the heir to the throne of Muhammad Shah. To those with whom they were subsequently brought in contact, these

devoted attendants of the Bab and eye-witnesses of His superhuman wisdom and power, recounted with awe and admiration the tale of those wonders which they had seen and heard, and by this means helped to diffuse in their own way the knowledge of the new Revelation.

[1 Mirza Abu'l-Fadl states in his writings that he himself, while in Tihiran, met the son of Muhammad Big, and heard him recount the remarkable experiences his father had had in the course of his journey to Tabriz in the company of the Bab. Ali-Akbar Big was a fervent believer in the Cause of Baha'u'llah and was known as such by the Baha'is of Persia.]

The news of the approaching arrival of the Bab at Tabriz bestirred the believers in that city.

They all set out to meet Him, eager to extend to so beloved a Leader their welcome.

The officials of the government into whose custody the Bab was to be delivered refused to allow them to draw near and to receive His blessings.

One youth, however, unable to restrain himself, rushed forth barefooted, through the gate of the city, and, in his impatience to gaze upon the face of his Beloved, ran out a distance of half a farsang [1] towards Him.

As he approached the horsemen who were marching in advance of the Bab, he joyously welcomed them and, seizing <p238> the hem of the garment of one among them, devoutly kissed his stirrups. "Ye are the companions of my Well-Beloved," he tearfully exclaimed. "I cherish you as the apple of my eye."

His extraordinary behaviour, the intensity of his emotion, amazed them.

They immediately granted him his request to attain the presence of his Master.

As soon as his eyes fell upon Him, a cry of exultation broke from his lips.

He fell upon his face and wept profusely.

The Bab dismounted from His horse, put His arms around him, wiped away his tears, and soothed the agitation of his heart.

Of all the believers of Tabriz, that youth alone succeeded in offering his homage to the Bab and in being blessed by the touch of His hand.

All the others had perforce to content themselves with a distant glimpse of their Beloved, and with that view sought to satisfy their longing.

[1 See Glossary.]

When the Bab arrived at Tabriz, He was conducted to one of the chief houses in that city, which had been reserved <p239> for His confinement.[1] A detachment of the Nasiri regiment stood guard at the entrance of His house.

With the exception of Siyyid Husayn and his brother, neither the public nor His followers were allowed to meet Him.

This same regiment, which had been recruited from among the inhabitants of Khamsih, and upon which special honours had been conferred, was subsequently

chosen to discharge the volley that caused His death.

The circumstances of His arrival had stirred the people in Tabriz profoundly.

A tumultuous concourse of people had gathered to witness His entry into the city.[2] Some were impelled by curiosity, others were earnestly desirous of ascertaining the veracity of the wild reports that were current about Him, and still others were moved by their faith and devotion to attain His presence and to assure Him of their loyalty.

As He walked along the streets, the acclamations of the multitude resounded on every side.

The great majority of the people who beheld His face greeted Him with the shout of "Allah-u-Akbar,"[3] others loudly glorified and cheered Him, a few invoked upon Him the blessings of the Almighty, others were seen to kiss reverently the dust of His footsteps.

Such was the clamour which His arrival had raised that a crier was ordered to warn the populace of the danger that awaited those who ventured to seek His presence. "Whosoever shall make any attempt to approach the Siyyid-i-Bab," went forth the cry, "or seek to meet him, all his possessions shall forthwith be seized and he himself condemned to perpetual imprisonment."

[1 According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 16), the Bab remained forty days in Tabriz. According to Haji Mu'inu's-Saltani's manuscript (p. 138), the Bab spent the first night, on His arrival in Tabriz, in the home of Muhammad Big. From there He was transferred to a room in the Citadel (the Ark) which adjoined the Masjid-i-'Ali Shah.]

[2 "The success of this energetic man, Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili, was so great and so swift that, at the very gates of Tauris (Tabriz), the inhabitants of this populous village acknowledged him as their leader and took the name of Babi's. Needless to say that, in the town itself, the Babi's were quite numerous, even though the government was taking steps to convict the Bab, to punish him and thereby justify itself in the eyes of the people." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, pp. 357-358.)]

[3 'God is the Most Great.']

On the day after the Bab's arrival, Haji Muhammad-Taqiy-i-Milani, a noted merchant of the city, ventured, together with Haji Ali-'Askar, to interview the Bab.

They were warned by their friends and well-wishers that by such an attempt they would not only be risking the loss of their <p240> possessions but would also be endangering their lives.

They refused, however, to heed such counsels.

As they approached the door of the house in which the Bab was confined, they were immediately arrested.

Siyyid Hasan, who at that moment was coming out from the presence of the Bab, instantly intervened. "I am commanded by the Siyyid-i-Bab," he vehemently

protested, "to convey to you this message: 'Suffer these visitors to enter, inasmuch as I Myself have invited them to meet Me.'"

I have heard Haji Ali-'Askar testify to the following: "This message immediately silenced the opposers.

We were straightway ushered into His presence.

He greeted us with these words: "These miserable wretches who watch at the gate of My house have been destined by Me as a protection against the inrush of the multitude who throng around the house.

They are powerless to prevent those whom I desire to meet from attaining My presence.' For about two hours, we tarried with Him.

As He dismissed us, He entrusted me with two cornelian ringstones, instructing me to have carved on them the two verses which He had previously given to me; to have them mounted and brought to Him as soon as they were ready.

He assured us that at whatever time we desired to meet Him, no one would hinder our admittance to His presence.

Several times I ventured to go to Him in order to ascertain His wish regarding certain details connected with the commission with which He had entrusted me.

Not once did I encounter the slightest opposition on the part of those who were guarding the entrance of His house.

Not one offensive word did they utter against me, nor did they seem to expect the slightest remuneration for their indulgence.

"I recall how, in the course of my association with Mulla Husayn, I was impressed by the many evidences of his perspicacity and extraordinary power. I was privileged to accompany him on his journey from Shiraz to Mashhad, and visited with him the towns of Yazd, Tabas, Bushruiyih, and Turbat. I deplored in those days the sadness of my failure to meet the Bab in Shiraz. 'Grieve not,' Mulla Husayn confidently assured me; 'the Almighty is no doubt able to compensate you in Tabriz for the loss you have sustained in Shiraz. Not once, but seven times, can He enable you <p241> to partake of the joy of His presence, in return for the one visit which you have missed.' I was amazed at the confidence with which he uttered those words. Not until the time of my visit to the Bab in Tabriz, when, despite adverse circumstances, I was, on several occasions, admitted into His presence, did I recall those words of Mulla Husayn and marvel at his remarkable foresight. How great was my surprise when, on my seventh visit to the Bab, I heard Him speak these words: 'Praise be to God, who has enabled you to complete the number of your visits and who has extended to you His loving protection.'" <p242> <p243>