

society for home visiting, and was untiring in his support of those who had so little of that of which he had so much.

The Dreyfus family used to give musicales frequented by people of taste, including many artists. It was at one of these entertainments that he met Mrs. Sanderson and her daughters, Sybil of opera fame and Edith who became later a leading Bahá'í in France. It was through May Bolles that both Edith and Hippolyte entered the Faith a short time after she had given me the Message. It was really May, our spiritual guide, who started the Bahá'í group in France; though the Babi and Bahá'í movement was known to an elite through the writings of several distinguished French authors.

The first meeting with Hippolyte Dreyfus that I can recall was in 1900 in Paris on the threshold of May Bolles' apartment near l'École des Beaux Arts. He was leaving, I was arriving to hear more of the Babi epilogue. Though I was away from France almost constantly from 1901 to 1906 I knew that he had become an outstanding Bahá'í and that his father and mother, his sister and brother-in-law had all joined the Cause. Their gracious home was a center for inquirers and followers. Their summer house, "Daru'l-Salam" on Mont Pelèrin, Switzerland, was also open wide to people of many lands and many beliefs. It was on this mountain that he made some of his first French translations of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh with Mirza Habibu'llah of Shiraz.

Hippolyte Dreyfus was already an excellent linguist and his trained mind grasped readily the force and beauty of the idioms of the Persian tongue that he had decided to learn. His constant reading of Bahá'u'lláh's works in this language and later on in Arabic gave him an unusual insight into the teachings and mission of this great Manifestation. Throughout the years he translated and published many of these works.

He translated from the Arabic the Book of Aqdas which he annotated during a sojourn in `Akka with the aid of `Abdu'l-Bahá. This work as well as the French translation of the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá, and a number of valuable tablets are unpublished. May they be preserved in my Paris home!

His translation of An-Nuru'l-Abha-fi-Mufawadat (Some Answered Questions) was appreciated by the French reader and he was requested to write an introductory book on the Bahá'í

Cause which he named *Essai sur le Béhaïsme*. He published articles in reviews: of particular interest is his study on the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkar*.

He visited the Holy Land seven or eight times. His last three trips were after the departure of `Abdu'l-Bahá, when he wished to be with the Guardian whom he had known as a youth and for whom he bore a deep and understanding love. As soon as the news of the Master's death reached us in Burma we returned to Palestine as rapidly as transportation could take us. [His trip to `Akka in 1903 was with Lua Getsinger and Edith Sanderson]. The last journey East was in 1926 with his valued friend Mountfort Mills. They visited Shoghi Effendi in Haifa in that year and went on to Cairo on a special mission for the Guardian before returning to France. He was often called upon to perform these special missions, to arrange an audience with the Shah of Persia during his visit to Paris [in 1902] when a Bahá'í delegation was received to protest the persecutions then taking place in Persia against their spiritual brethren. Again in 1906 he was one of the two first Bahá'ís from the West sent to Persia. Later in Tunis he obtained from the French authorities permission to have the Bahá'í teachings promulgated in Tunisia.

It was he who met `Abdu'l-Bahá at Marseille in 1911 when the Master reached Europe for the first time. He had the privilege of guiding him to Thonon-les-Bains. The Master delighted in the verdant country the train passed through to bring him to this quiet place on the Lake of Geneva, where the Bahá'ís came to see him from other parts of Europe.

'Abdu'l-Bahá relied on Hippolyte Dreyfus to arrange his stays in France and his trip to and from England. He called upon him not only to interpret into French an address he gave in Pasteur Wagner's noted church in Paris, but also to interpret into English the words he spoke to the congregations of some of the outstanding churches in London. The Master liked talking with this refined Frenchman skilled in *répartie*. There was no restraint between them. Hippolyte Dreyfus never put himself forward, but he was always ready to carry out the most difficult tasks that might be asked of him. He never "borrowed trouble"; he faced situations with ease and when the occasion demanded with unflinching courage. He was rapid in decision, but deliberate in manner.

While he and I were in Qingdao, China, ready to journey up

the Yangzi River and overland by trail to Kunming (Yunnan), the war broke out in 1914. Through his adroitness we got away from the German colony and returned to France in time for him to assume his military obligations. These were for the most part in censorship because of his military classification, linguistic abilities and legal training. He welcomed the League of Nations as a great experiment and went several times to Geneva to follow the sessions and to talk with statesmen and experts.

Before and after the war he traveled extensively, making friends easily wherever he went. Sometimes on train or steamer, at the bridge table, at the Sorbonne, and again in long walks which he liked to take through the city and in the country.

Hippolyte Dreyfus was a well balanced and independent person. He liked both thought and action. He could sit at his desk and translate and read all day and late into the night. Or he could go for a swim or horseback ride with friends or alone. Though ready of speech and eloquent he preferred talking of the Bahá'í Message to individuals and to small groups rather than addressing large audiences.

What he did he did with pleasure. He never grumbled. He took life as it came. In suffering he showed the simple fortitude which manifested a mature soul. He was ready to die.

In the words of the Guardian: "His gifts of unfailing sympathy and penetrating insight, his wide knowledge and mature experience, all of which he utilised for the glory and propagation of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, will be gratefully remembered by future generations who, as the days go by, will better estimate the abiding value of the responsibilities he shouldered for the introduction and consolidation of the Bahá'í Faith in the Western world."

Letters and Telegrams from Shoghi Effendi

Many of you manifested interest for my posting on Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney. So I persist and send you the telegrams and letters Shoghi Effendi wrote to Laura Dreyfus-Barney and Hippolyte's sister Mrs. Yvonne Meyer-May after Hippolyte's death (I appended a text written by Mrs. Meyer-May, which she sent to Shoghi Effendi -- I don't know when). The letters and telegrams are copied after photocopies of the originals, and Yvonne Meyer-May's text after a typed transcription. --Thomas Linard

Telegram to Dreyfus-Barney Paris 15 [rue] Greuze

Haifa December 21, 1928

FAMILY FRIENDS GRIEF STRICKEN PROFOUNDLY FEEL HIS LOSS
OFFERING HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES PRAYING FOR HIS BELOVED SOUL
-- SHOGHI

Telegram to Dreyfus-Barney 15 [rue] Greuze Paris

Haifa December 21, 1928

MOTHER MYSELF OVERWHELMED WITH UNSPEAKABLE SORROW MEMORY OF
HIS INESTIMABLE LOVING SUPPORT IN DAYS OF DARK AFFLICTION
FOLLOWING MASTERS PASSING EVER ENSHRINED IN OUR HEARTS ASSURE
YOU TENDEREST SYMPATHY -- SHOGHI

Haifa, Palestine

Dec. 21, 1928

My dear Laura Khanum:

We were all profoundly moved when we received the news of the passing of our dear Hippolyte, and I assure you that since the ascension of our Beloved, the family, and myself included, never felt the sense of loss & the pain of overwhelming sorrow as acutely as we did the night we received your wire, announcing the passing of one who was close & dear to us all.

Needless to say how overpowering is the sense of his loss to me, in particular, who received from him such comfort and support in perhaps the darkest days of my life, & cherished the fondest hopes for his future contribution to the advancement of the international work of the Cause.

None, I can confidently assert, among the Bahá'ís of the East & the West, combined to the extent that he did the qualities of genial & enlivening fellowship, of intimate acquaintance with the manifold aspects of the Cause, of sound judgement & distinctive ability, of close familiarity with the problems & condition of the world -- all of which made him such a lovable, esteemed & useful collaborator & friend.

I have, impelled by my love & admiration for him, addressed the enclosed message to my co-workers throughout the West, that those who knew him not may recognise his standing & appreciate his achievements. I am certain that the National Spiritual Assemblies of America & Persia, responding to my cabled request, will take the necessary measures for the holding of memorial gatherings as a tribute

to one who advanced so effectively the international interest of the Cause.

I will for ever regret that, not realizing the gravity & the hopelessness of the illness which afflicted him, I failed to demonstrate in a fuller manner, the sentiments of profound & abiding affection that I have always cherished for him in my heart.

My mother wishes me to express to you her deep sense of affectionate sympathy in the loss of one who proved such a sustaining & sympathetic friend in her gloomiest hours of anxiety & sorrow.

Rest assured, dear Laura Khanum, that in my hours of prayer & meditation at the holy Shrines, I will frequently & tenderly remember my dearly-beloved friend & fellow-worker who has served so well our beloved Cause & is now receiving from the hands of our Master the reward of his notable achievements.

With kind regards & deepest sympathy,

Yours affectionately,

Shoghi

Jan. 24, 1929

Dear Laura Khanum,

I thank you for the beautiful & touching poem you sent me as well as for the two previous letters you wrote me in connexion with the passing of our dear Hippolyte.

I have shared their contents with the family who deeply sympathize with you in your sorrow & loneliness.

I very much desire to have a good portrait of my departed friend to keep in my study wherein we have spent delightful hours conversing & collaborating with regard to the affairs of the Cause. With your consent I should very much like to forward a copy to America for publication in the next issue of the Bahá'í World. I am sending to your address a copy of the one recently published & would welcome any comment you wish to make.

Wishing you the best of health, & success in your work.

Believe me, dear Laura Khanum,

Yours affectionately

Shoghi

Haifa, Palestine

March 12, 1929

My dear Laura Khanum:

I have delayed answering your very kind letter till the receipt of the most welcome photos of our departed & beloved Hippolyte, one of which I will take the liberty with your consent, to send to America for publication in the next issue of the Bahá'í World.

I am deeply appreciative of your generous offer of a scholarship in memory of your dear husband, & I feel that the best procedure would be to send the pamphlet you sent me to the Teheran Assembly who will be acquainted thereby with the nature of the work of the university & will be better qualified to appoint the suitable student. I will myself communicate with them & will ask them to write to you directly in connexion with any matters that may arise in future. I find it difficult to make the appointment in person, as I find no one here in Haifa or the adjoining countries that could really use to the best advantage the opportunities presented by such a university. Furthermore, a direct connexion with the recognized national representatives of the Bahá'ís of Persia, would I feel, be more appropriate & closer to the wish of Hippolyte himself.

Please, be assured, dear Laura Khanum, of my profound sympathy with you in your great bereavement, as well as of my lively gratitude for your noble & generous action.

Yours affectionately,

Shoghi

Envelope:

Madame Paul Meyer-May

21 Boulevard Beausejour,

Paris,

France

Jan. 24, 1929

Dear Madam:

I am deeply touched & grateful to you for your beautiful translation of my circular letter in connexion with the passing of our dear Hippolyte. What I have written & attempted to express is indeed only an inadequate tribute to

the many & unforgettable services he has rendered to the Cause & humanity in the course of his rich & fruitful life.

I deeply sympathize with you in the severe loss you sustain, and will supplicate the almighty comforter to cheer & sustain you in your sorrow.

Hoping to meet you some day in Haifa, & welcome you in our home,

I am yours very sincerely,

Shoghi

CV sent from Yvonne Meyer-May to Shoghi Effendi

Curriculum vitae et activités de Hippolyte DREYFUS, né à Paris le 12 Avril 1873, fit ses études au Lycée Condorcet. Il suivit ensuite les cours de la Faculté de Droit et de l'École des Sciences Politiques.

Docteur en Droit en 1898 avec une thèse sur les Droits de Succession du Conjoint Survivant, il s'intéressait aux questions sociales et comme membre très actif de la Société des Visiteurs dès sa fondation, il partageait son temps entre les malheureux et ses fonctions de secrétaire de Me Thevenet, avocat à la cour, ancien Garde des Sceaux.

En 1900, il eut connaissance de la religion bahaie. Fortement intéressé, il partit pour St-Jean-d'Acre afin de voir Abdul Baha "le Maître" qui y était emprisonné. Il en revint convaincu de l'intérêt social et mondial de cette Cause et désormais sa vie fut consacrée à l'étude des civilisations et à la propagation de la pensée bahaie.

Il apprit le persan et l'arabe pour pouvoir lire les textes originaux des livres du Bab et de Baha Ullah.

Dans son premier voyage aux Indes et en Birmanie qu'il entreprit pour visiter les Bahais et gagner la Perse, il étudia à fond toutes les religions hindoues et de l'Asie Centrale. Il ne put arriver en Perse, et de retour à Paris, fit des conférences à Paris et à Lyon.

Le Livre de la Certitude
(Kitab-i-Iqan) fut traduit et publié en
1905.

En 1906, il visita la Perse où, grâce à
sa connaissance de la langue qu'il parlait et
écrivait couramment, il put nouer des amitiés
qui lui restèrent toujours fidèles.

Les Paroles Cachées furent
publiées en 1905

Les Préceptes du Bahaisme furent
publiées en 1906

Les Leçons de Saint-Jean-d'Acre
furent publiées en 1908

L'Essai sur le Bahaisme furent
publiées en 1909

L'Épître au Fils du Loup furent
publiées en 1913

L'Oeuvre de Baha Ullah furent
publiées en 1923-1924 (3 volumes)

(Envoyé à Shoghi Effendi par la soeur du
disparu, Madame Yvonne Meyer-May)

METADATA

Views26256 views since posted 2000; last edit 2025-04-04 21:42 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../dreyfus-barney_biography_hippolyte_dreyfus-barney;
URLs changed in 2010, see archive.org.../bahai-library.org

Languages

English, French

Permission

fair use

History

Formatted 2000 by Thomas Linard.

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/473

Citation: ris/473

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC
Biographies
Books
Chronologies
Compilations
Compilations-NSA
Compilations-personal
Documents
East-asia
Encyclopedia
Essays
Etc
Excerpts
Fiction
Glossaries
Guardian
Histories
Introductory
Letters
Maps
Music
Newspapers
NSA-documents
NSA-letters
Personal
Pilgrims
Poetry
Presentations
Resources
Reviews
Scripts
Software
Statistics
Study
Talks
Theses
Transcripts
Translations
UHJ-documents
UHJ-letters
Video
Visual
Writings

home

sitemap

[series](#)

[chronology](#)

[search:](#)

[author](#)

[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

[adv. search](#)

[languages](#)

[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

[links](#)

[about](#)

[contact](#)

[RSS](#)

[new](#)

— Biography of Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney (Used by permission of the curator)