



Some time passed. Khayr'ulláh's classes attracted more and more people. But Elizabeth intuitively sensed some link was missing. Then she dreamed she was in a room in the Orient (she recognized it over twenty-five years later). Divans ran along the four walls, covered with oriental rugs. On one side of the room sat a glorious majestic figure whose face was hidden by the blaze of light shining from it. People were passing before it then turning to bow low to someone on the other side. Elizabeth's eyes followed to see another figure, equally majestic, seated on a similar divan. His person was glorious, but the face, though shining, could be discerned, full of loving dignity. On His forehead was written the word "Aga".

When she told Khayr'ulláh of this dream and asked for an explanation, he said he had been preparing the friends for this further teaching: the establishment of a Center of the Covenant in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's son! Great was the joy at this announcement, and correspondence began between Haifa and America.

As letters from Haifa took six weeks or more to arrive in America, a delay causing anxiety to many eager hearts, Dr. Khayr'ulláh suggested what he considered a practical solution which he presented to the class. He who had been praised by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for his magnificent services, now took the first step towards becoming a Covenant-breaker. This was his suggestion: that he write a letter to the Master explaining the difficulties of communications and asking Him to retain His station of Infallibility for the believers in the East and to confer Infallibility on him (Dr. Khayr'ulláh) for the believers in the West. He asked the friends to think, to meditate and pray about this, then come to the next Sunday meeting to sign the letter. It would then be sent to the Master.

Grave misgivings entered Elizabeth's heart but as Charles seemed to think it quite a sensible suggestion she tried to drown such thoughts. But they continued to trouble her until she had to tell Charles she could never sign such a letter. Charles felt impatient with such unfounded fears and the first coolness in all their married life grew between them. On the night before the meeting called to sign the letter, Elizabeth tried to ease her troubled heart with prayer. In the early morning, she awoke with a voice calling out within her, "Tell Charles to beware of the white ram!"

After a silent, unhappy breakfast, Charles prepared to go along to meet the friends. As he went to open the front door, Elizabeth could not contain herself any longer and called out that—to her—meaningless phrase: "Charles, beware of the white ram!" Immediately he was stilled, and turning to her a face white with shock, asked, "What do you know of the white ram?" "Nothing," she replied, "nor do I wish to know unless you wish to tell me, except a voice told me to say these words to you."

Then Charles proceeded to tell her of a recurring dream telling of his danger, though the dream recurred in slightly different forms. The past night he had dreamed he was walking on a high plateau. Across a deep, rocky ravine was a

beautiful meadow, the deep green grass blossomed with flowers. Connecting the plateau with this lovely meadow was a narrow, unguarded bridge. As Charles reached the middle of the bridge, a sleek, white-haired ram would step from the deep grass to meet him on the bridge. Charles stooped to touch the silky coat of the beautiful beast. The ram would put down his head to butt him off the bridge down into the rocky ravine. That morning the ram's eyes became the lustrous eyes of Khayr'ulláh! The Greenleafs went to the meeting to give a warning to the friends, without fully relating their dreams. Those who signed the letter disappeared from the history of the Faith. The faithful few became the bedrock of the Faith.

What was she like, the precious Elizabeth, to whom the Guardian said and wrote, "every moment of your life is precious"? The first word people used to describe her was "light"—an inner radiance of early morning light. One friend writes, "For me, always, Elizabeth was bride-like. She was not young, nor did she have classic features; as the years went by she became a little bent but still she had a secret joy that expressed itself even in her jewelry and simple, delicately colored clothes. One day I spoke admiringly of her dress and she said, "I dress for Bahá'u'lláh as I would for a lover." This then was her source of mysterious joy, her love for the Reality of Bahá'u'lláh was an undying flame within her heart. A personal reality—her response shining in all the atoms of her being. In this life she moved with beauty and winning charm.

She used the word "light" so often. She would say, "We must learn to live in the light, to bring all our plans, our words and doings to the source of light, to judge them by the words of Bahá'u'lláh."

So many met her first at Green Acre, that spot on the "River of Light", a proper setting. The Green Acre Committee had given her the use of the little cottage at the head of the road leading down to the Inn. It was her special joy to learn that the Master used to rest in a room there every afternoon during His visit to Green Acre the summer of 1912. This room she kept apart, only to let others enter on special occasions associated with His visit, or as a haven of prayer for those seeking comfort or to express their joy. The little garden around the Green Acre cottage was her laboratory as well as a delight to see and smell. The exquisite little nosegays she made as a love token for her visitors seemed to reveal the very essence, the inner reality of color, form and perfume of the flowers.

She longed to learn the sciences pertaining to this wonderful world, the outer a reflection of the inner. She would show visitors the result of her cross-pollination of flowers and the pink potatoes she was one of the first to develop. She corresponded with a McGill University professor for several years as an equal on the results of her experiments. She related how she prayed for the inner knowledge of the sciences. She amusingly told of visiting some non-Bahá'í relatives and of being seated beside Steinmetz (the electrical wizard) at the dinner table. She began to speak to him and to question him on his theories. After a few moments, he turned to look at her more fully and

asked, "At which university did you study?" he was so impressed by her knowledge. Her niece writes of a precious moment spent with Elizabeth in her garden. They stood together to watch an eclipse of the sun and Elizabeth remarked that the corona was like the circle of light in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's eyes.

Her sense of humor relieved many a troubled heart. A young Bahá'í visiting Green Acre in the late twenties was somewhat disturbed by a discussion of some of the older believers. They were not as yet completely freed from the concepts of reincarnation. There were little currents of irritation at the superior claims of some as to whether they were Mary Magdalene, or Martha, Peter or Thomas. Elizabeth had remained silent. Later, the young Bahá'í walked with her arm-in-arm from Fellowship House to the cottage. Elizabeth could sense the confusion in the mind and heart of her young companion, so, with a gentle squeeze of the arm and a burble of laughter in her voice, she whispered, "I'll let you be the Báb, and I'll be Bahá'u'lláh!" For a stunned moment, the young Bahá'í halted, then suddenly gales of laughter sent the cobwebs of cluttered thinking away and they walked on happily together.

Of her meetings with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she felt she could not adequately describe Him. From time to time she would describe His eyes, the movements of His hands and body, His gentleness, His strength. All adjectives were meaningless in relation to his state of being. However, she related this experience which linked itself to a private family joke. Whenever each of the Greenleafs thought the other was receiving undue adulation from others, the one or the other would murmur "Ham and eggs!" into the ear of the praised one as the most plebian expression possible to prick the ego balloon. One day Elizabeth was busy as usual with Lua Getsinger and other Bahá'í ladies in preparing and serving refreshments for the throng of visitors who came to meet the Master. They were arranging food on a table in the anteroom outside the room where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was holding His private interviews. Lua, glancing at Elizabeth, asked, "Have you been with the Master yet?" When Elizabeth answered "No", Lua looked at her a little impatiently, opened a second door near them leading into the Master's room and practically thrust Elizabeth inside. A chair being beside the door, Elizabeth sank into it gratefully. The Master was speaking to, and His secretary was translating for, two ladies seated beside 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Elizabeth sat, absorbed in watching Him. He suddenly paused in His flow of words, glanced at her and exclaimed, "Ham and eggs!" Then throwing back His head, burst into laughter. She sat stunned. The Master continued his discourse with his visitors until kindly He escorted them to the door.

The marriage of Charles and Elizabeth Greenleaf was a "Marriage for eternity" as 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote them. Charles said before his death that he would not have wished to have changed one word or deed of Elizabeth's during their life together. Later, after Charles' death in 1920, the Master wrote Elizabeth, "You shouldst not mourn nor grieve because this separation is but temporary. Thou wilt find him in the Divine Kingdom in the utmost joy, happiness and rapture. This union is eternal. . . . Do thou strive with heart

and soul to be confirmed with such deeds as to become the cause of his joy and happiness in the other world.”

The beloved Guardian showed every tenderness to Elizabeth on her pilgrimage to Haifa in 1926. It was then he told her, what he later wrote, “Every moment of your life is precious.” He suggested that she teach with Mrs. Maxwell in Canada. It was after her pilgrimage that she came to Montreal to give the stimulus which began the Montreal Youth Group. This group later gained continent-wide and even international renown; its original members served on Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, as well as becoming pioneers to other lands.

At a time when Mrs. Schopflocher was on one of her extended worldwide teaching tours, Elizabeth acted as hostess-housekeeper in the Schopflocher home. She was active as always in teaching. One evening she received a very abusive telephone call warning her that her life was in danger if she continued her teaching activities. The next night she went off, unperturbed, to class. There was a long walk of three blocks of badly lit streets to reach the streetcar. On her return late at night, when Elizabeth stepped off the streetcar, there was Bruce, the Schopflocker’s huge English bulldog waiting to escort her home. He had never done this before. He continued his guard for a month, then just as suddenly as he began, he stopped.

So many stories flood to mind. One afternoon as she sat praying in her hotel bedroom in a city of the deep south, she felt someone looking at her. The window was open to catch the breeze. There, on his high board sat a Negro window-washer looking so intently at her. When she greeted him, he said she looked so happy; he wanted so much to see a truly happy face. So, at the window, they chatted, Elizabeth giving him a copy of a Bahá’í prayer by which he could seek happiness for himself.

Whether it can be said she opened the city of Key West, Florida, to the Faith is not sure. She spent January 1939 there and was joined by a younger believer who spent several weeks there and was a witness to how her gentle influence touched so many hearts. We would walk each morning to the fruit shop to buy our luncheon. It was owned by a delightful Chinese family. The old grandfather usually sat in the sun, dressed in the traditional long blue Chinese gown, a black satin skull cap on his head. When he saw Elizabeth, he would rise, his hands crossed and hidden in the long sleeves, bow and repeat in singing Cantonese a verse (his son told us some saying of Confucius). Elizabeth would bow in return and repeat some verse of Bahá’u’lláh’s or ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s—a very precious interlude.

In these days, two years before her death, her sight was failing, limbs were weak, her hands shaking. One night as she stumbled and almost fell, she clung to her companion’s arm and exclaimed, “Oh, here am I, blind and lame and halt, able to do so little, yet if that little can serve the Guardian, I am willing to live forever!”

Many of these incidents in the lives of the Greenleafs have been confirmed at

one time or another by Charlotte Dakin, Elizabeth's beloved niece, by Dorothy Baker, Doris Mackay, Gertrude Blum, and Bahiyyih Randall Ford whose parents' home was a refuge, a source of joy and happiness weaving in and out of the lives of the Greenleafs.

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