

resident in the Holy Land, for devoting much of their time to read and review for publication this book, which is the first of four volumes on the life and times of Baha'u'llah. This volume presents a complete biography.

Apart from a variety of documents and sundry accounts, my chief sources have been: the unpublished part of the immortal chronicle by Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi, Nabil-i-A'zam; the reminiscences of Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi; and the narrative of Aqa Muhammad-Riday-i-Qannad-i-Shirazi.

Aqa Husayn was the son of Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Kashani, a Babi of early days. Orphaned, when a young boy, he was taken to Baghdad, where he grew up in the household of Baha'u'llah, eventually becoming His cook. For that reason he came to be known as Ashchi (Broth-maker).

When, in December 1924, Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi was at an advanced age and on his death-bed, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, instructed Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul-i-Mansur-i-Kashani to sit by his bedside and take down all that the dying man could remember of the events of seven decades. It is a fascinating story that Ashchi had to tell; and what is particularly striking is the amazing rapport between the reminiscences of an elderly man, very soon to die, and the narrative of Aqa Riday-i-Qannad.

Aqa Rida, a native of Shiraz and a confectioner (Qannad) by trade, was a devout follower of Baha'u'llah, and was closely beside Him from Baghdad days until His ascension. He later served 'Abdu'l-Baha with equal zeal and devotion, until his death in 1912, while 'Abdu'l-Baha was in America. [p. viii]

Aqa Rida states that he wrote his narrative at the request of Nabil-i-A'zam, and he put his pen to paper some time in the early eighties of the last century. The exact date is unknown because, unfortunately, in the copy made available to me, the final pages of his all-absorbing narrative are missing. It is to be hoped that somewhere a complete copy exists and will come to light, although it is possible that Aqa Rida may not have finished his invaluable account.

The great value of both Aqa Rida's narrative and Aqa Husayn's reminiscences lies in the fact that they are eye-witness accounts, and not recollections and anecdotes told them by someone else. Both men were personally involved in and with the events they describe.

The narrative of Nabil-i-A'zam hardly needs any introduction. That superb volume, *The Dawn-Breakers*, has already made it known. In that part of his chronicle which is unpublished, Nabil, like Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn, relates mostly the events and incidents in which he himself was involved, which he saw with his own eyes.

The autobiography of Haji Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan, dealing as it does with months lived in close proximity to the residences of Baha'u'llah, has a unique importance. I am most grateful to my cousin, Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, for lending me this invaluable document from the [p. ix] pen of his father, and for providing me with other material of great historical interest.

It should be stressed that the spoken words of Baha'u'llah, quoted in these pages, cannot be equated with His Writings. No one could have been taking notes at the time, although it cannot be ruled out that some may be the very words spoken. The reporting of Nabil, however, is in a different category, because he usually read to Baha'u'llah what he had heard Him say. Nevertheless, none of these reported words of Baha'u'llah has scriptural value.

Quotations are reproduced in their original form, even though differing from the spelling and transliteration of Persian words adopted in this book.

Translations from Arabic and Persian are my own, unless otherwise attributed. For Constantinople, Adrianople, and Smyrna, I have used at times their Turkish names: Istanbul, Edirne (Adirnih), Izmir, which are common usage today for referring to those cities.

That the many Persian names in the book may present difficulties to the Western reader is clear, but the innumerable persons, who, in one way or another, had some connexion with Baha'u'llah, cannot be omitted from His biography. They can be identified only by the names they used, however difficult. For a guide to the construction of Persian [p. x] names, the reader may wish to refer to my earlier book, *The Bab*, where a preliminary note deals with this subject.

Immense indeed, as in the past, is my indebtedness to Marion Hofman. Without her prodigious editorial work, the contents of this book would have remained loosely-jointed and diffused.

I am profoundly grateful to Moojan Momen, whose help and assistance to me have been of inestimable value. Throughout this book and its addenda, there are biographical notes, historical accounts of cities and localities in which Baha'u'llah dwelt, as well as other material written by him, based on his assiduous and able research.

I am very thankful to Mr Horst Kolo for his excellent production of the frontispiece and a number of other photographs. The contribution of the Audio-Visual Department of the Baha'i World Centre, Haifa, Israel, in providing the major number of illustrations, is deeply appreciated, and I also acknowledge gratefully certain photographs from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran, as well as from several others to whom due attribution is given. Some old engravings and photographs from books are reproduced and acknowledged (see bibliography for details).

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I also wish to thank, in addition to those mentioned above, Mr Stratford Caldecott for his meticulous copy editing, and Mr Rustom Sabit for his additional careful proof reading.

And, finally, I wish to pay my tribute to my wife's share in the writing and shaping of this book. Her support constantly eased my path.

H. M. Balyuzi

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INTRODUCTION

THE ancient land of Iran, from which the voice of Zoroaster was heard some three thousand years ago, calling men to right thought, right speech, right deed, is the cradle of the Babi-Baha'i Faith. It is a vast land, 628,000 square miles, where towns and cities are situated 5,000 feet above sea-level. On the Iranian plateau there are high peaks reaching up to 18,934 feet, which is the height of Mt Damavand in the north. Its snow-clad top is visible from the capital, Tihiran. Beyond the Alburz range, of which Mt Damavand forms a part, lie the Caspian provinces of Gilan and Mazindaran, covered with lush vegetation and thick forests. The Zagros range in the west descends to the flat plain of 'Iraq--the historic land of two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. There was a time when 'Iraq was part of the Iranian Empire, whose rulers had a winter capital on the bank of the Tigris: the renowned city of Ctesiphon, where the world-famed Arch of Chosroes still stands. In the centre and to the east of the Iranian plateau, there are extensive tracts of desert--Dasht-i-Kavir and Dasht-i-Lut--and there are numbers of oasis cities on the fringes of these inhospitable deserts, cities such as Yazd and Kirman that have stood up bravely in the course of centuries, to the ravages of man and nature. In the north-east, near the frontier with the Soviet Union, lies the holy city of Mashad, which harbours the mausoleum of the eighth Imam, 'Ali Ibn Musa, ar-Rida. The Mosque of Gawhar-Shad, of which the Shrine of Imam Rida is an integral part, is a gem of architecture and design, one of the most beautiful structures of the world. It was thus beheld and described by an Englishman, who, dressed as a Persian, dared to enter its holy precincts:

..... I hastened down the dark bazaar, found the dome where I turned to the left, and was greeted, on coming out into the court, by such a fanfare of colour and light that I stopped a moment, half blinded. It was as if someone had switched on another sun. [p. 2]

..... The whole quadrangle was a garden of turquoise, pink, dark red, and dark blue, with touches of purple, green, and yellow, planted among paths of plain buff brick. Huge white arabesques whirled above the ivan[1] arches. The ivans themselves hid other gardens, shadier, fritillary-coloured. The great minarets beside the sanctuary, rising from bases encircled with Kufic the size of a boy, were bedizened with a network of jewelled lozenges. The swollen sea-green dome adorned with yellow tendrils appeared between them. At the

opposite end glistened the top of a gold minaret. But in all this variety, the principle of union, the life-spark of the blazing apparition, was kindled by two great texts: the one, a frieze of white suls[2] writing powdered over a field of gentian blue along the skyline of the entire quadrangle; the other, a border of the same alphabet in daisy white and yellow on a sapphire field, interlaced with turquoise Kufic along its inner edge, and enclosing, in the form of a three-sided oblong, the arch of the main ivan between the minarets. The later was actually designed, it says, by 'Baisanghor, son of Shah Rukh, son of Timur Gurkani (Tamerlane), with hope in God, in the year 821 (AD 1418).' Baisanghor [Baysunqur] was a famous calligrapher; and being the son of Gohar Shad also, he celebrated his mother's munificence with an inscription whose glory explains for ever the joy felt by Islam in writing on the face of architecture.[I-1]

..... [1. Ayvan: portico, open gallery. (HMB)]

..... [2. Thulth: a style of calligraphy. (HMB)]

..... [I-1. Byron, The Road to Oxiana, pp. 243-4.]

Iran's second holy city is Qum, directly south of the capital where we come upon another famed mausoleum, that of Ma'sumih, a sister of the eighth Imam. Here in Qum, around the shrine of Ma'sumih, some of the Safavi and the Qajar monarchs are buried. Still further to the south, two of Iran's most celebrated cities are situated: Isfahan, the beloved city of 'Abbas the Great--of which it has been said: 'Isfahan, Nisf-i-Jahan: Isfahan, half the world'--right in the heart of Iran, at a distance of 414 kilometres from Tihran; and more to the south, at a distance of 895 kilometres from the capital, the city of Shiraz, where the Dawn broke in the year 1844, the city of Sa'di and Hafiz, beloved and enriched by that exemplary and benevolent ruler, Karim Khan-i-Zand--in praise of which Sa'di wrote and sang:[I-2]

..... [I-2. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... O, blessed and blissful is that dawn,

..... When myself, once again, I shall find atop

..... the Allah-u-Akbar Pass of Shiraz-town.

..... O, to see once again that Paradise on Earth,

..... Where security dwells, not oppression of want and dearth.

[p. 3]

Under the Qajars, in the course of the nineteenth century, these two cities of high renown suffered both neglect and desecration. Agha Muhammad Khan, the founder of the dynasty, laid hands on structures majestically reared by Karim Khan in Shiraz. And in Isfahan, Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, the eldest son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, began defacing the beauties lavished on his city by 'Abbas the Great. In close vicinity to Shiraz stand the monumental ruins of Persepolis: the magnificent palace of Apadana, raised by Darius and

Xerxes, and set on fire by Alexander, the Macedonian; also Naqsh-i-Rustam, where the Achaemenian kings were entombed.

Between Shiraz and the Persian Gulf littoral, there are ranges of high peaks and difficult passes, before the plateau descends to sea-level. And in the south-west lie both oil wells and the remains of the ancient city of Susa (Shush), which knew the presence of great kings and of Daniel, the Prophet of the Israelites. Over Khuzistan, the province of oil wells, are the provinces of Luristan and Kurdistan, haunts of the Lurs and the Kurds, heirs of great traditions and of stalwart warriors. The Zagros range, with the very high peak of Alvand, cuts through the territories of the Lurs and the Kurds, embraces rocks on which mighty kings of old (such as Darius the Achaemenian) had their stories inscribed, and holds in its fold two other renowned cities: Kirmanshah and Hamadan. Close to Hamadan is the site of the Median city of Ecbatana. And in the north-west, close to both the Turkish and the Soviet frontiers, is the city of Tabriz, illustrious in the past--the capital of Shah Isma'il, the founder of the Safavid dynasty--and in the mid-nineteenth century its earth sanctified by the sacred blood shed upon it. Here the Bab was executed in 1850.

Once territories north of the river Aras formed part of the Iranian Empire, until they were wrenched away from Iran in the reign of Fath-'Ali Shah. Not far from the river Aras (Araxes of the Greeks) the Bab spent many months in captivity. And it was Hafiz of Shiraz, the city where the glorious Bab first saw the light of day, who wrote:[I-3]

..... [I-3. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... Over the banks of Aras shouldst thou, O Zephyr, pass,

..... Kiss the earth of that vale and refreshed thy breath thereby.

This is Iran of the present day, which the followers of Baha'u'llah, wherever they be, know as 'the sacred Land of Iran', the cradle of their Faith. Of its future, 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Son of Baha'u'llah and the [p. 4] Centre of His Covenant, has written: 'The government of the native land of the Blessed Perfection will become the most respected government of this world ... and Iran will become the most prosperous of all lands.'[I-4]

..... [I-4. From a compilation, made many years ago, by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran.]

But, when the nineteenth century opened, Iran was fast becoming the darkest of all lands. The monstrous yoke of the Qajars had just come to rest on the neck of a nation stunned by blow after blow. Ruled by ignorant and avaricious kings, and lorded over by venal officials and rapacious landlords taking their example from their brutish sovereigns, Persians sank into a stupor; the worst of human nature and the most loathsome of human characteristics took the upper hand; ferocity and greed and cruelty abounded; Iran became intellectually starved and morally corrupt. Self-willed and self-seeking clerics veered a credulous people one way and the other with their insensate rivalries, their false judications, their contradictory pronouncements; and Iran became spiritually moribund. Some

seven decades ago, in a sea-town of Iran where many foreign nationals resided and traded, the Governor, sensing the great need for a civil court, instituted such a court and put at its head a learned man, turbaned and well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence. Immediately the cry went up from the clerics of the town, denouncing the civil court as Taghut, an idol of pre-Islamic Arabia. Thereupon, the Governor told them that should they choose one among themselves to be the judge and the adjudicator, with the rest promising to obey and enforce his verdicts, he, the Governor, would at once dissolve the civil court. But they would not and could not take the step which would concede supremacy to one amongst themselves. And the civil court remained and prospered to the discomfiture of the clerics. Of course there were outstanding exceptions to these degradations, but those exceptions only tended to prove the rule.

The Manifestation of God has always appeared amongst the most depraved, the most demoralized people of His age, in the most benighted, downtrodden land. Moses came to a people who had become enslaved, had lost their self-respect and fallen a prey to their idle fancies. He challenged both the might of the tyrant and the waywardness of His own people, and both did He vanquish. Jesus stepped out of the lowest ranks of the same people, the children of Israel, who had once again forfeited their birthright, fallen into serfdom, and forgotten [p. 5] the warnings and counsels of their Prophets. He suffered grievously both at their hands and at the hands of their brutal oppressors. But triumph was His in the final count. Muhammad, the Arabian Prophet, rose up amongst idolaters, uncouth and unbridled, who buried their daughters alive, who were lawless and predatory. He made of a people, disparate and forlorn, a single and single-minded nation, gave it law, vision and understanding, and taught it to worship the One True God. And in the nineteenth century, in the ancient land of Iran, amongst a people wallowing in the depths of ignominy, there arose two Manifestations of God: One of pure lineage, a descendant of the Arabian Prophet, the Other a scion of the royal house of Iran that ruled the Empire before the advent of Islam. They had the power to recreate lives, to confer on men the gift of second birth. In the almost impenetrable gloom, the darkness of fanaticism, ignorance and rapacity that had enshrouded the people of Iran, the star of Their Faith shone as brightly as a million suns, illuminating the paths of countless men and women to heroic action. Their call was directed not only to the inhabitants of Iran, but to the entire concourse of mankind. They too suffered grievously, as had Jesus of Nazareth and Muhammad of Mecca. But Their persecutors paid the penalty in the end a hundredfold, as had the persecutors of Jesus and Muhammad. History does not show a single instance of anyone who dared to raise his hands to harm and injure the Bab, Baha'u'llah or Their followers, who escaped the consequences of his actions.

These pages will relate the story of Baha'u'llah, as well as the story of the retrogression of a nation under the yoke of the Qajars. [p. 6] [p. 7]

Prologue

THE towering grandeur, the compelling majesty, and the tender beauty of the life of a Manifestation of God cannot be comprehended by events usually

associated with a saintly life. The immensity of such a life presents itself in that mysterious influence which it exerts over countless lives--an influence which does not function through social status and prestige, wealth, secular power or worldly dominion, indeed not even through the medium of superior knowledge and the force of intellectual achievement.

The Manifestation of God is the Archetype, and His life is the supreme pattern. His vision, not arrested by time and space, encompasses the future as well as the past. He is the only and the necessary link between one cycle of social evolution and another. Without Him history is meaningless and co-ordination is impossible. Furthermore, the Manifestation of God releases deep reservoirs of spiritual power and quickens the forces latent in Man. By Him, and by Him alone, can Man attain 'second birth'. Through Him, and Him alone, can Man know God.

Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, Whom history knows as Baha'u'llah--the Glory of God--was born at dawn on 2 Muharram AH 1233, 12 November 1817, in Tihran, the capital of Persia. [p. 8] [p. 9]

1

The Ancestry of Baha'u'llah

BAHA'ULLAH was descended from the pre-Islamic monarchs of Iran. He came from a region of the country, bordering on the Caspian Sea and well protected by the high peaks of the Alburz range, whose dwellers, for scores of years after the victory of Arab arms, continued to defy the invader, refusing to accept the new ordering and new Faith. And when they finally bowed to the inevitable, they submitted not to the system accepted by the generality of Muslims and represented by the Caliphate in Baghdad, but to the Shi'ism of the Zaydi variety. In the succeeding centuries there were a number of dynasties and petty kingdoms which held sway and guarded their autonomy in the fastnesses of mountains and in the depths of thick forests by the Caspian Sea. And strangely enough, when Shah Isma'il united all of Iran in allegiance to the apostolic Imams of the House of the Prophet, Aqa Rustam-i-Ruzafzun, the last of these proud potentates, refused to recognize his authority, and chose to put his trust in Muhammad Khan-i-Shaybani (also known as Shaybak Khan), the Sunni Uzbek ruler of Transoxania, to overthrow the Safavid upstart. But fate decreed otherwise, and it was Shaybak Khan who met defeat and lost his life. Aqa Rustam, it is said, died of fright when a devotee of Shah Isma'il threw the severed hand of the Uzbek ruler onto his lap.

It is to Yazdigird III, the last Sasanian monarch to occupy the throne of Iran, that the genealogy of Baha'u'llah can be traced. Ustad Javanmard, the principal of the Zoroastrian school of Yazd, presented seven queries to Baha'u'llah, the seventh of which concerned His ancestry. The Tablet known as Shir-Mard (Lion of a Man)--thus called because the recipient was so addressed by Baha'u'llah--was sent to him in reply. (This Tablet is also known as Lawh-i-Haft-Pursish.) Answering his questions one by one, to the seventh query Baha'u'llah responded by referring him to the genealogy which Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani had

gathered and compiled. Many years later, in the [p. 10] [p. 11] year AH 1320 (10 April 1902-30 March 1903), Aqa Khusraw Biman, who was also of Zoroastrian origin, was visiting the Holy Land. He asked resident Baha'is[1] for information regarding the ancestry of Baha'u'llah. They presented his request to 'Abdu'l-Baha, who also referred them to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani, then visiting the United States. Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's answer to Aqa Khusraw Biman's letter was published in Bombay, at a later date, as a pamphlet.

..... [1. He names them, in a pamphlet published in Bombay, as Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, Aqa Muhammad-Ridiy-i-Qannad and Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani.]

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, designated by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith as one of the nineteen 'Apostles of Baha'u'llah', was a man of rare erudition and a degree of scholarship so far unequalled amongst the followers of Baha'u'llah, whether in the East or in the West. In his reply to Aqa Khusraw Biman, he describes how his interest was aroused in the genealogy of Baha'u'llah, and how his researches led him to Yazdigird III, the last of the Sasanian monarchs of Iran. He goes on to state, however, that his work, which Baha'u'llah had mentioned in the Tablet addressed to the schoolmaster of Yazd, was lost when he and a number of other Baha'is were arrested in Tihiran in the early months of 1883 by the order of Kamran Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih, son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl writes that he was, in the course of his investigation, particularly impressed by the fact that so severe and unsympathetic a critic of the Baha'i Faith (and so hostile a commentator) as Rida-Quli Khan-i-Hidayat,[1] entitled the *Amiru'sh-Shu'ara'* (The Emir of Poets), had admitted in the *Nizhad-Namih* (The Book of Ancestry), that the Nuris of Mazindaran are descended from Chosroes I, the renowned Sasanian monarch known as Adil (The Just). And final confirmation came from Haji Mirza Rida-Quli, a half-brother of Baha'u'llah, who told Mirza Abu'l-Fadl categorically, in answer to his query, that the Nuris possessed a genealogical table tracing their line back to Yazdigird the Sasanian.

..... [1. Poet and historian of the nineteenth century, author of the supplement to the *Rawdatu's-Safa* of Mirkhund. See E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV; also H.M. Balyuzi, *The Bab*, pp. 141, 142.]

The father of Baha'u'llah was Mirza 'Abbas-i-Nuri, the son of Mirza Rida-Quli Big,[1] of the village of Takur, in the district of Nur, of the province of Mazindaran. Mirza 'Abbas came to be known as [p. 12] Mirza Buzurg-i-Vazir (Mirza Buzurg, the Vizier). And this is how it happened. One day Fath-'Ali Shah (reigned 1797-1834) was shown a masterpiece of calligraphy by Mir 'Imad, the celebrated calligrapher. Marvellous was the beauty of that piece of handwriting, and Fath-'Ali Shah wondered if anyone living could match its excellence. Hasan-'Ali Mirza, the Shuja'u's-Saltanih, the sixth son of the Shah, mentioned the name of Mirza 'Abbas-i-Nuri. He was sent for, shown the work of Mir 'Imad, and challenged to produce its like. Thereupon Mirza 'Abbas took Mir 'Imad's masterpiece, copied it, and after that exercise wrote his own lines, had them suitably illuminated and presented them to Fath-'Ali Shah. The

Shah's admiration was boundless. A royal decree bestowed upon Mirza 'Abbas the name Mirza Buzurg, and invested him with a robe of honour--a garment which the monarch himself had worn. At the same time the Shah exempted the people of the village of Takur from the payment of taxes. A few years later, Mirza Buzurg was appointed vizier to Imam-Virdi Mirza, the twelfth son of Fath-'Ali Shah, who was the Ilkhani (chief of the clans) of the Qajar tribe (to which the royal family itself belonged)...

..... [1. Mirza Rida-Quli Big's father was also named Mirza 'Abbas, son of Haji Muhammad-Rida Big, son of Aqa Muhammad-'Ali, son of Aqa Fakhr, son of Shahriya-Hasan.]

Mirza Buzurg prospered in the service of the State, until the days of Muhammad Shah (reigned 1834-48), when he encountered the ill will of that monarch's notorious grand vizier, Haji Mirza Aqasi, and lost his position and much of his considerable wealth. [p. 13]

2

The Family of Baha'u'llah

Mirza Buzurg, Vazir-i-Nuri, the father of Baha'u'llah, had seven wives, three of whom were concubines. It was his father, Rida-Quli Big, who arranged his first marriage to a relative of the family, named Khan-Nanih, before Mirza Buzurg left the district of Nur in Mazindaran to make his fortune in Tihran. Two sons, Mirza Aqa, the elder, and Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, were born of this union. Baha'u'llah mentions an occasion in His childhood, in the Persian Lawh-i-Ra'is--a Tablet addressed to 'Ali Pasha, the Ottoman grand vizier--when, during the nuptial fete of His brother, Mirza Aqa, who did not have long to live, His attention was drawn to a puppet show. Afterwards, Mirza Buzurg gave the widow in marriage to his second son, Mirza Muhammad-Hasan. This lady was a cousin of Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, the second grand vizier of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

Mirza Buzurg's second wife was Khadijih Khanum, who had been married once before and was widowed. She had one son and two daughters by her first marriage, namely, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, Sakinih Khanum and Sughra Khanum. Mirza Buzurg took Khadijih Khanum as his wife and wedded her daughter, Sakinih Khanum, to his younger brother, Mirza Muhammad. Khadijih Khanum was the mother of Baha'u'llah (Mirza Husayn-'Ali). The first-born of that marriage was a daughter, Sarih Khanum; she is generally known as 'Ukht', Arabic for sister, because Baha'u'llah has thus referred to her. The next was a son, Mirza Mihdi, who died in his father's lifetime; and Mirza Husayn-'Ali (Baha'u'llah) was the third-born. The fourth was another son, Mirza Musa, entitled Aqay-i-Kalim later years, and the fifth was another daughter, Nisa' Khanum, who was married eventually to Mirza Majid-i-Ahi, a secretary of the Russian Legation.

The third wife of Mirza Buzurg was Kulthum Khanum-i-Nuri, by whom he had five children. The first was a daughter, Shah-Sultan Khanum (also called Izziyih Khanum), who became a firm supporter [p. 14] of Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal). Next came three sons: Mirza Taqi, a poet with the sobriquet Parishan, who became a

Shaykhi much opposed to Baha'u'llah; Mirza Rida-Quli, who earned the designation 'Haji' by his pilgrimage to Mecca, and who kept apart from Baha'u'llah, even trying to conceal the fact of their relationship (see p.443), although his wife, Maryam, was greatly devoted to Him; and the third son, Mirza Ibrahim, who also died in his father's lifetime. The fifth child of that marriage of Mirza Buzurg was another daughter, Fatimih-Sultan Khanum, who also chose to follow Mirza Yahya into the wilderness.

The next three wives of Mirza Buzurg were concubines. The first was Kuchik Khanum of Kirmanshah, the mother of Mirza Yahya. The second was a Georgian lady, Nabat Khanum, and by her Mirza Buzurg had another daughter, Husniyyih Khanum, of whom not much is known. The last concubine, Turkamaniyyih, was the mother of Mirza Muhammad-Quli who was greatly devoted to Baha'u'llah.

And then came Mirza Buzurg's marriage to a daughter of Fath-'Ali Shah. This lady, who was entitled Diya'u's-Saltanih[1]--like her husband, a noted calligraphist--overbearing, haughty and grasping. Their marriage was to bring the Vazir-i-Nuri nothing but misfortune and, in the end, to prove his undoing.

..... [1. According to I'timadu's-Saltanih's Muntazim-i-Nasiri (Tihiran 1300, p. 161), her name was Shah Bigum.] [p. 15]

Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Prime Minister, was both vain and vengeful, and, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, he was antagonistic to Mirza Buzurg. One reason which prompted his enmity was Mirza Buzurg's particular friendship with the celebrated Qa'im-Maqam, Mirza Abu'l-Qasim of Farahan. These two thought very highly of each other, as evidenced by letters contained in the Compendium of Letters by the great Minister.[1] In June 1835 the Qa'im-Maqam was treacherously put to death by Muhammad Shah. The very manner of his fall from power and his execution, which was followed by the rise to high office of Haji Mirza Aqasi, left no doubt in the mind of Mirza Buzurg that the sad fate of his dear friend was to be attributed to the low cunning of the monster who was now in the saddle, and he could not hide his feelings of horror and disgust. One of his letters condemnatory of Haji Mirza Aqasi fell into the hands of the Grand Vizier, who, before long, retaliated with force. As soon as he conveniently could, he struck at Mirza Buzurg. First, he had Mirza Buzurg dismissed from the governorship of Burujird and Luristan. This post, which included control over a sizeable part of the Bakhtiyari territory--a very disturbed and rebellious region--has been entrusted to Mirza Buzurg by his great friend, Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Qa'im-Maqam, soon after [p. 16] the accession of Muhammad Shah to the throne. A document exists in the handwriting of Muhammad Shah himself, commending and praising the services rendered by Mirza Buzurg in this capacity.[2] Next, Haji Mirza Aqasi stopped Mirza Buzurg's annual allowance. Then, he did all in his power to disturb the relationship between Mirza Buzurg and his last wife, Diya'u's-Saltanih, the daughter of Fath-'Ali Shah. Through her nephew, Firaydun Mirza, the Farman-Farma--who had been his favourite for the governorship of the province of Fars--he induced Diya'u's-Saltanih to seek and obtain divorce from her husband. Mirza Buzurg was already in dire financial straits, for he had a very large family, and the yearly allowance, which was

rightly his, was no longer available because of the malice of Haji Mirza Aqasi. He had had to sell a part of his properties and mortgage others, including the complex of houses in Tihran in which he and his family resided. For a while, these houses had passed out of his possession, until he had bought them back through his son, Mirza Husayn-'Ali (Baha'u'llah). Mirza Buzurg had the added misfortune of losing the better part of the palatial mansion which he had built and richly furnished in Takur, by the descent of floods upon the town.

..... [1. This Compendium was compiled and edited, in later years, at the instance of Haji Farhad Mirza the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, a brother of Muhammad Shah. It has been printed several times, under the title Munshi'at-i-Qa'im-Maqam, to provide a guide to and an example of excellence of style and diction.]

..... [2. It appears that for a time Mirza Buzurg was also vazir of this province--the official responsible for the collection of taxes. Mirza Buzurg seems to have been particularly successful in organizing and levying taxes among the unruly and remote Luir tribesmen--a feat that eluded most of his predecessors and successors in this post. In his 'Notes on a March from Zohab to Khuzistan', Sir Henry Rawlinson remarks: 'The valuation of katir [the unit of taxation, usually about 100 tumans] varies ... according to the state of the province; but under the late Wazir, Mirza Buzurg, who administered the revenues with eminent success for about ten years, it was raised to the rate of 200 old tomans, or 33 1/3 of the present currency; the 120 katirs [being the assessment of the tribes of Pish-Kuh] were, therefore, equivalent to 40,000 tomans, and the amount annually realized from Pish-Kuh alone rather exceeded than fell short of this sum. [Rawlinson then sets out the classification of the tribes and the revenue system as observed by Mirza Buzurg] ...The system of revenue of Pish-Kuh is very simple; when the 120 katirs have been duly distributed among the tribes ... each subdivision determines the amount of share to be paid by the different camps of which it is composed... But in a wild country like this, where many of the tribes live in a state of open rebellion ... the governor would certainly fail in his contract to the crown, unless he had indirect means of raising an extraordinary revenue to make up for many defalcations. Mirza Buzurg, therefore, introduced an extensive system of fees and fines; and, where robberies and murder were of almost daily occurrence, he did not want opportunities of exaction; indeed his is said to have realized about 20,000 tomans annually in this manner, and that too, without cruelty or injustice.'][2-1]

..... [2-1. Ferrier, Caravan Journeys, pp. 503-5.]

Diya'u's-Saltanih, with the backing of the Grand Vizier and her powerful nephew, Firaydun Mirza, forced through her divorce. But the marriage settlement was of such proportions that the Vazir-i-Nuri, enmeshed as he was in financial difficulties, could not pay it immediately. Diya'u's-Saltanih then had Mirza Buzurg imprisoned in his own house, and set men to beat him daily and torture him so as to extort the [p. 17] money from him. At last, Mirza Buzurg was obliged to sell, once again, his complex of houses in Tihran, and part with the

valuable carpets and other furnishings which they contained. In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah refers to the sale of these houses:

..... In the early days we all lived in one house, which later on was sold at auction, for a negligible sum, and the two brothers, Farman-Farma [Firaydun Mirza] and Hisamu's-Saltanih [Sultan-Murad Mirza], purchased it and divided it between themselves. After this occurred, We separated from Our brother.[1] He established his residence close to the entrance of Masjid-i-Shah [the Mosque of the Shah], whilst We lived near the Gate of Shimiran [Shimran].[2-2]

..... [1. This brother mentioned by Baha'u'llah was Mirza Rida-Quli. (HMB)]

..... [2-2. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 170.]

Kulthum Khanum, the third wife of Mirza Buzurg and mother of Haji Mirza Rida-Quli, had inherited the house 'close to the entrance of Masjid-i-Shah' from her father. Mirza Buzurg moved to that house. Mirza Husayn-'Ali (Baha'u'llah) rented the house 'near the Gate' of Shimran, and took His mother, His wife, His other step-mothers and the rest of His brothers and sisters to live with Him. This rented house remained His residence for the remaining years He spent in Iran. It was near the Madrisiy-i-Mirza Salih, the theological college where Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i would stay when bearing the message of the Bab to Tihiran. The children of Baha'u'llah--'Abdu'l-Baha (the Most Great Branch), Baha'iyih Khanum (the Greatest Holy Leaf) and Mirza Mihdi (the Purest Branch)--were all born in this rented house; their mother was his first wife, Asiyih Khanum.

After the storms subsided, Mirza Buzurg made an effort to regain the houses which he had had to sell under duress 'for a negligible sum'. A document exists in the handwriting of Baha'u'llah, drawn up for the purpose of eliciting from those in the know their testimony to the fact that the sale of the houses had taken place under unlawful pressure. But it did not produce the desired effect and no restitution was made.[2]

..... [2. Two other documents are also extant, issued by two of the noted divines of the capital, one the brother of the Imam-Jumih, pronouncing the illegality of the sale by auction of the houses of Mirza Buzurg-i-Nuri.]

Mirza Buzurg then decided to retire to 'Iraq, but death supervened. He passed away in 1839, and his body was taken to 'Iraq and buried at Najaf, where the tomb of 'Ali--the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, the first apostolic Imam and the fourth caliph--is situated. He was survived by seven sons and five daughters. Apart from the Central [p. 18] Figure of this history, we shall, time and again, meet in its course other sons of this remarkable and highly-respected Nuri minister. Manuscripts exist in his superb and much-admired handwriting, in various collections both in and outside of Iran. There is one such scroll in the International Archives of the Baha'i Faith on Mount Carmel.

Diya'u's-Saltanih, after obtaining her divorce and receiving her marriage

settlement, married Haji Mas'ud-i-Garmrudi, who held the post of Foreign Minister of Iran for a considerable time. They had a daughter, named Shahanshah Bigum, who embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah; always she deplored what her mother had done to Mirza Buzurg. Of the two daughters of Shahanshah Bigum herself, one was married to Ibn-i-Asdaq, one of the four Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Baha'u'llah, and the other to Intizamu's-Saltanih, who was greatly devoted to 'Abdu'l-Baha, and whose sons rose high in the service of the State. [p. 19]

3

Childhood and Early Life

Baha'u'llah was born and brought up in Tihran, in a house in the district known as Darvazih Shimran (Shimran Gate). In those days this district was on the edge of the city, close to the moat which was filled in during the reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Another moat was dug much further away: that too has now disappeared. But the house of Mirza Buzurg and its adjuncts still stand today.

The infancy of Baha'u'llah was a cause of astonishment to His mother, as 'Abdu'l-Baha recalled one day. He never cried, never showed restlessness. Mirza Buzurg had come to realize that amongst all his sons and daughters, this son, Mirza Husayn-'Ali, was one apart. It will be remembered that Takur, in the district of Nur, was the home of Mirza Buzurg and his ancestors. There he had built a palatial house, and Baha'u'llah always spent part of the year in Takur, usually in the summer months. Mirza Buzurg, in his own masterly calligraphic hand, had written the following lines in a prominent place in that mansion:

..... When thou reachest the threshold of the Beloved say 'Aye',
..... For there neither 'salam' nor 'alayk' can find a way.[1]
This is the vale of Love, hold thy steps; This is holy ground, shed
thy foot-gear.[2]

..... [1. Salam means 'Peace'; alayk means 'upon thee'.]

..... [2. That is what Moses heard on Mount Sinai, as He approached the Burning Bush.]

To this day, those lines written by Mirza Buzurg have endured.

When Baha'u'llah was a child of five or six years, He dreamt that He was in a garden where huge birds were flying overhead and attacking Him, but they could not harm Him; then went to bathe in the sea, and there he was attacked by fishes, but they too could cause Him no injury. Baha'u'llah related this strange dream to His father, and Mirza Buzurg sent for a man who claimed to interpret dreams. After making his calculations, he told Mirza Buzurg that the expanse of the sea was [p. 20] this world in its entirety, and the birds and fishes were the peoples of the world assailing his Son, because He would promulgate something of vital importance related to the minds of men. But they would be powerless to harm Him, for He would triumph over them all to achieve a momentous matter.

It is related that one day, when Mirza Husayn-'Ali was seven years old, as He was walking His parents were watching Him, and His mother remarked that He was a little short in stature. His father replied: 'That matters not. Do you not know how intelligent He is and what a wonderful mind He has!'

The education and instruction which Mirza Husayn-'Ali received was limited both in nature and extent, as He Himself states in the Tablet addressed to Nasiri'd-Din Shah: 'The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely.'

In those days, the scions of noble houses were taught such matters as befitted their station in life, such as riding, handling a gun, wielding a sword, calligraphy, acquaintance with the works of the great classical poets of the land, a good reading knowledge of the Holy Book, the Qur'an, and hardly ever anything more. They were given such instruction by tutors, specially engaged by the parents, who were also required to teach them good manners. [p. 21]

But as Mirza Husayn-'Ali, the son of the Vazir-i-Nuri, grew up, the fame of His keen intelligence, His alert mind, His upright character, His benign, compassionate, benevolent nature, spread.

By the time Mirza Husayn-'Ali was fourteen, His rare understanding, His complete mastery of argument, and His unparalleled powers of exposition were remarked in all circles. Yet He was never assertive nor argumentative; rather, always courteous and patient. Only one thing aroused His ire, and that was any disrespectful reference to the Messengers of God and His Chosen Ones. Even then He would admonish the offender with kindness and calm.

In a Tablet addressed to a Baha'i of Shiraz, Baha'u'llah Himself tells of all incident in His childhood, when two hugely-turbaned divines were expounding theological questions to ladies in purdah. One such was whether the angel Gabriel had a higher station than Qanbar, the slave of 'Ali (the first Imam), who was greatly devoted to his master. Another concerned the station of 'Abbas, the brother of Husayn (the third Imam), who suffered a martyr's death with the Imam in Karbila; had he a rank higher than Salman the Persian (Salman-i-Farsi), who was one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad? Baha'u'llah recalls in that Tablet that He was astonished by this line and tone of argument, for if Gabriel, as stated in the holy Book, was the One by Whom the Holy Spirit descended upon the heart of the Apostle of God, then even the master of Qanbar could have no entry to that sphere.

In Yalrud there lived a mujtahid, Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi (see Addendum V), well-famed throughout the land. He had a thousand scholars of divinity around him, whom he taught and, from time to time, presented with a complex question to resolve. Whenever He returned to His home in Takur, Baha'u'llah would usually stop for a while in Yalrud, and here He would visit the mujtahid, who was distantly related to His family.[1] 'Abdu'l-Baha has described how His own grandmother, who lived in Yalrud, went one day at dawn to the house of the mujtahid to pray. After the morning prayer Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi told her that

he had some excellent news for her. He had had a dream in which he had found himself outside a house which no one was allowed to enter, because, said the door-keeper, within it the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad was closeted with Mirza [p. 22] Husayn-'Ali of Nur. At first the mujtahid had expressed his surprise that the son of a vizier should be so privileged; but on remembering their distant kinship, he had ascribed the privilege to this fact.

..... [1. Yalrud was the home of Asiyih Khanum, the future wife of Baha'u'llah.]

During a visit to Yalrud, when Mirza Husayn-'Ali was sitting in the company of Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi and other scholars and divines, He was asked to resolve a question they had been unable to answer to the mujtahid's satisfaction. The problem was this: an Islamic tradition states that 'Fatimih is the best of the women of this world, but for the one born of Mary'. But since Mary had no daughter, what did this conundrum mean? Baha'u'llah replied that the initial statement emphasized the impossibility of its alternative, since there could be no other woman comparable to Fatimih. It was like saying that a certain monarch is the greatest of the kings of this world, except for the one who comes down from Heaven; since no king has or will come down from Heaven, the uniqueness of that one monarch is stressed. Baha'u'llah's explanation left the great mujtahid silent, but next day he upbraided his disciples for having let him down badly. 'I have taught and trained you for years on end,' he complained, 'but when the need arises, I find you wanting in understanding, whereas an unturbaned youth has brilliantly explained the problem I had presented to you.'

At another time, Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi had a dream of coming upon a room filled with trunks, which, he was told, belonged to Baha'u'llah. On opening one of them, he found it packed with books, and all the lines of those books studded with gems, the brilliance of which awakened him, he said.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani relates in one of his works what he himself heard from a divine. In a gathering where Baha'u'llah was present, Mirza Nazar-'Ali of Qazvin (see Addendum V), the celebrated Sufi murshid who was highly esteemed by Muhammad Shah, was holding forth on the station that a human being can attain. Referring to himself, he said, 'Should my servant come to me and say that Jesus the Christ was at the door, asking for me, my detachment is such that I would express no wish to see Him.' Some of those present kept silent, while others out of flattery murmured assent. Only Mirza Husayn-'Ali spoke up. He turned to the Qazvini braggart, who had expressed such disrespect for a Manifestation of God, and said:[1] 'You are very close to the person of the sovereign and he is very devoted to [p. 23] you, but if the chief executioner with ten of his men were to come to this door and tell you that the monarch wanted to see you, would you take it calmly or would you be perturbed?' Mirza Nazar-'Ali paused for a while before replying, 'In truth, I would feel anxious.' 'In that case,' said Baha'u'llah, 'you should not make such an assertion.' Baha'u'llah's authoritative statement, according to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, left them all speechless.

..... [1. The words spoken by Baha'u'llah in this anecdote are not an exact quotation.]

When Baha'u'llah was nearly fifteen years old, His elder sister Sarih Khanum and Mirza Mahmud, the son of Mirza Isma'il-i-Vazir of Yalrud, were married. This Mirza Mahmud, who never espoused the new Faith, had a younger sister, Asiyih Khanum: winsome, vivacious and exceedingly beautiful. As soon as she came of age, and Baha'u'llah was nearly eighteen, Sarih Khanum requested her father, Mirza Buzurg, to ask the hand of this sister-in-law for her Brother, Mirza Husayn-'Ali. Their marriage took place in Jamadiyu'l-Ukhra (Jamadiyu'th-Thani) AH 1251 (about October 1835). Asiyih Khanum was the mother of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Even those who were inimical towards His father, held Baha'u'llah in high esteem. One such was the Grand Vizier, Haji Mirza Aqasi. Rightly, Mirza Buzurg had suspected that Haji Mirza Aqasi was largely responsible for the dismissal and the murder of that great man, his very good friend, Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Qa'im-Maqam. At one time it was rumoured that Muhammad Shah had replaced the Haji [p. 24] [p. 25] with another grand vizier, namely Amir-Nizam of Kirmanshah. Mirza Buzurg, who was then the Governor of Burujird and Luristan, expressed his delight in a letter to Prince Bahman Mirza--a stormy petrel of Persian politics who eventually fled to Russia--and included this line:

..... 'May this satyr be kept away from the Shah.'

Bahman Mirza, who was not at all friendly towards Mirza Buzurg, showed this letter to Haji Mirza Aqasi. Infuriated, the latter sent for Mirza Husayn-'Ali and gave Him the letter His father had written to Bahman Mirza, saying, 'See this; I do not know what I have done to your father to deserve this.' Mirza Husayn-'Ali kept silent. Then Mirza Shafi' Khan, the Sahib-Divan, who was present, took the letter, had a good look at it and, in order to smooth matters, said, 'This is not written by Mirza Buzurg. Someone has imitated him', whereat Haji Mirza Aqasi exclaimed, 'Impossible! There is no one who can produce such a beautiful specimen of calligraphy and such a wonderful piece of writing, such prose!' Still Mirza Husayn-'Ali kept silent. Once again the Haji turned to Him: 'What shall I, what can I do? He is your father. For your sake I will try to forget this and let bygones be bygones; but write to your father and advise him not to do it again.' [p. 26]

4

The Dawn

IT was during the reign of Muhammad Shah, in the year 1844, that the dawn of the long-awaited Day of God, foretold by all the Scriptures of mankind, appeared resplendent in the famed and delectable city of Shiraz--the home and the resting-place of two of the greatest figures in the literary history of Iran, Sa'di and Hafiz, both of whom, in their own ways, prophetically foresaw the coming glory of their city and the rise of that wondrous orb, the Sun of Truth, in the person of the Bab.

Hafiz wrote:[4-1]

..... [4-1. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... Shiraz shall tumultuous be, and One sweet-lipped there shall be, The wonders of whose lips shall set Baghdad a-trembling.

And Sa'di:[4-2]

..... [4-2. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... By God! This realm merits not darkness and gloom, This throne-seat of Solomon and of the Mystery of God.

In the centennial year of that effulgent dawn, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith wrote:

..... 'May 23, 1844, signalizes the commencement of the most turbulent period of the Heroic Age of the Baha'i Era, an age which marks the opening of the most glorious epoch in the greatest cycle which the spiritual history of mankind has yet witnessed. No more than a span of nine short years marks the duration of this most spectacular, this most tragic, this most eventful period of the first Baha'i century. It was ushered in by the birth of a Revelation whose Bearer posterity will acclaim as the 'Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve,' and terminated with the first stirrings of a still more potent Revelation, 'whose day' Baha'u'llah Himself affirms, 'every Prophet hath announced,' 'for which 'the soul of every Divine [p. 27] Messenger hath thirsted,' and through which 'God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets.' ...In sheer dramatic power, in the rapidity with which events of momentous importance succeeded each other, in the holocaust which baptized its birth, in the miraculous circumstances attending the martyrdom of the One Who had ushered it in, in the potentialities with which it had been from the outset so thoroughly impregnated, in the forces to which it eventually gave birth, this nine-year period may well rank as unique in the whole range of man's religious experience. We behold, as we survey the episodes of this first act of a sublime drama, the figure of its Master Hero, the Bab, arise meteor-like above the horizon of Shiraz, traverse the sombre sky of Persia from south to north, decline with tragic swiftness, and perish in a blaze of glory. We see His satellites, a galaxy of God-intoxicated heroes, mount above that same horizon, irradiate that same incandescent light, burn themselves out with that self-same swiftness, and impart in their turn an added impetus to the steadily gathering momentum of God's nascent Faith....

..... 'The opening scene of the initial act of this great drama was laid in the upper chamber of the modest residence of the son of a mercer of Shiraz, in an obscure corner of that city. The time was the hour before sunset, on the 22nd day of May, 1844. The participants were the Bab, a twenty-five year old siyyid, of pure and holy lineage, and the young Mulla Husayn, the first to believe in Him. Their meeting immediately before that interview seemed to be purely fortuitous. The interview itself was protracted till the hour of dawn.

The Host remained closeted alone with His guest, nor was the sleeping city remotely aware of the import of the conversation they held with each other. No record has passed to posterity of that unique night save the fragmentary but highly illuminating account that fell from the lips of Mulla Husayn.

..... "I sat spellbound by His utterance, oblivious of time and of those who awaited me,"[1] he himself has testified, after describing the nature of the questions he had put to his Host and the conclusive replies he had received from Him, replies which had established beyond the shadow of a doubt the validity of His claim to be the promised Qa'im. "Suddenly the call of the Mu'adhdhin [muezzin], summoning the [p. 28] 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 [the Qur'an] 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!" Sleep had departed from me that night. I was enthralled by the music of that voice which rose and fell as He chanted; now swelling forth as He revealed verses of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', again acquiring ethereal, subtle harmonies as He uttered the prayers He was revealing. 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!'"...

..... [1. They were his brother, nephew and other companions, who had come together from Karbila to Shiraz, as if drawn by a magnet, in their quest. Their teacher and mentor, Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti (who had died some months before had told them to keep watch, because the advent of the Sahibu'z-Zaman (the Lord of the Age), the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad, was close at hand. (HMB)]

..... 'A more significant light, however, is shed on this episode, marking the Declaration of the Mission of the Bab, by the perusal of that "first, greatest and mightiest" of all books in the Babi Dispensation, the celebrated commentary on the Surih of Joseph, the first chapter of which, we are assured, proceeded in its entirety, in the course of that night of nights from the pen of its divine Revealer. The description of this episode by Mulla Husayn, as well as the opening pages of that Book attest the magnitude and force of that weighty Declaration. A claim to be no less than the mouthpiece of God Himself, promised by the Prophets of bygone ages; the assertion that He was, at the same time, the Herald of One immeasurably greater than Himself; the summons which He trumpeted forth to the kings and princes of the earth; the dire warnings directed to the Chief Magistrate of the realm, Muhammad Shah; the counsel imparted to Haji Mirza Aqasi to fear God, and the peremptory command to abdicate his authority as grand vizir of the Shah and submit to the One Who is

the "Inheritor of the earth and all that is therein"; the challenge issued to the rulers of the world proclaiming the self-sufficiency of His Cause, denouncing the vanity of their ephemeral power, and calling upon them to "lay aside, one and all, their dominion," and deliver His Message to "lands in both [p. 29] the East and the West"--these constitute the dominant features of that initial contact that marked the birth, and fixed the date, of the inception of the most glorious era in the spiritual life of mankind.[4-3]

..... [4-3. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 3-7.]

The Bab (the Gate) laid the injunction on Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i--who was soon to be known as Babu'l-Bab (the Gate of the Gate)--not to divulge His name (Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad) to anyone. Nor should he show any sign that he had reached the end of his quest, had been led to the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad, the Sahibu'z-Zaman, had recognized Him, believed in Him and given Him wholehearted allegiance. The secret of that most auspicious night was, for the time being, to remain a secret. Seventeen others, the Bab said, must seek Him, find Him and recognize Him, entirely by themselves.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith continues: 'Not until forty days had elapsed, however, did the enrollment of the seventeen remaining Letters of the Living commence. Gradually, spontaneously, some in sleep, others while awake, some through fasting and prayer, others through dreams and visions, they discovered the Object of their quest, and were enlisted under the banner of the new-born Faith.[4-4]

..... [4-4. *ibid.* p. 7. (*God Passes By*)]

The last thus to enlist, who was destined to rank above them all, was a 22-year-old youth, Mulla Muhammad-'Ali of Barfurush (today named Babul) in the province of Mazindaran. On the very hour of his arrival in Shiraz, he came face to face with the Bab in a thoroughfare, and without any questioning immediately recognized Him by His bearing and His gait as the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad. On him the Bab conferred the title of Quddus, which means 'most holy and pure'.

The circle of the Huruf-i-Hayy[1]--the eighteen Letters of the Living--was now complete. They were all in Shiraz, all but one. That solitary figure was a woman, some thirty years of age, learned, eloquent, a composer of noble verse, the daughter, niece and wife of famed and influential clerics of Qazvin. So assured and certain was she that the Lord of the Age had indeed come, and that whoever laid claim to that exalted station must be believed, that when Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qazvini, the husband of her younger sister and a stalwart disciple of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, was setting out from Karbila on his quest to find and offer his allegiance to the Qa'im, she gave him a [p. 30] sealed letter to present to that Lord of the Age, and these words to say to Him:[4-5]

..... [1. Huruf is the plural of Harf: a letter of the alphabet. Hayy, which means Living, is numerically equal to eighteen.]

..... [4-5. Ross (ed.), *A Persian Anthology*, p. 72. Translation by E. G.

Browne.]

..... The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth, and the rays of Thy visage arose on high;

..... Then speak the word, 'Am I not your Lord?' and 'Thou art, Thou art!' we will all reply.

Her name was Umm-Salamih. Siyyid Kazim had called her Qurratu'l-'Ayn--the Solace of the Eyes. Baha'i history knows her best as Tahirih--the Pure--a designation bestowed on her by Baha'u'llah. Although she never attained the presence of the Bab, yet she arose with burning zeal, all ardour and steadfastness and with determination, to declare and promote His Faith, giving up kith and kin and finally life itself in His path.

Now, the Bab summoned His Letters of the Living to His presence and addressed them:

..... '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.... 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.... You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?..." 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 first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point [the Bab]... I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day.... The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. [p. 31] It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time... 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.'[4-6]

..... [4-6. Nabil, The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 63-5 (Brit.), pp. 92-4 (US).]

The Bab specifically directed Mulla 'Aliy-i-Bastami to 'Iraq--the stronghold of the Shi'ih clerics.[1] He chose Quddus to accompany Him on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and He gave the Babu'l-Bab a mission, holy and exalted and of immeasurable significance, to accomplish in the capital city of Iran.

..... [1. Mulla 'Ali was before long caught up in a furore of agitation and oppression, was apprehended, put on trial and condemned to death. It has always been assumed that he was put to death somewhere in 'Iraq (either in Mosul or beyond), while being taken to Istanbul, because nothing more was ever heard of him after he reached Mosul. But recent research in official archives has established the fact that he arrived in the Ottoman capital, was once again put on trial and was condemned to hard labour in the dockyards. Then all trace of him is again lost. (For this information the author is much indebted to Mr Sami Doktoroglu.) [p. 32]

5

To the Capital City of Iran

..... To Sheba I send thee, O Zephyr, Lapwing of the Morn;

..... Behold well, whence thou goest and whither I send thee.

..... --Hafiz

THE glorious mission entrusted to Mulla Husayn was truly enviable. Its nature was intimated to him by the Bab in assuring words: '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 Tihran. 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,[1] and there proclaim anew the Call. From thence return to Najaf and Karbila, and there await the summons of your Lord. Be assured that the high mission for which you have been created will, in its entirety, be accomplished by you....'[5-1]

..... [1. Bushruiyih, the home town of Mulla Husayn, is situated in that province. (HMB)]

..... [5-1. Nabil, The Dawn-Breakers, p. 58 (Brit.), pp. 86-7 (US).]

And when the hour came for Mulla Husayn to depart, the Bab strengthened him with words of utmost encouragement: '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 [p. 33] minds of the malevolent.... 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.[5-2]

..... [5-2. *ibid.* p. 66 (Brit.), p. 96 (US). (The Dawn-Breakers)]

Mulla Husayn was well known in Isfahan. He had visited that renowned city in the lifetime of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti on his behalf, to gain the approval of the celebrated mujtahid, Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir-i-Shafti, who had since died. Now his son, Haji Siyyid Asadu'llah, proved friendly, as his father before, and so did Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Kalbasi, another leading and remarkable divine of Isfahan. Even more crucial was the attitude of no less a person than Manuchihr Khan, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, the Georgian Governor of Isfahan, who refused to pay any heed to those who were already opposing Mulla Husayn. With circumspection, because he was not yet allowed to mention the Bab by name, Mulla Husayn led a number of people to recognize and give their allegiance to the newly-born Faith. The first convert, whom the Bab has immortalized in His Book, the Bayan was a simple, ardent youth named Mulla Ja'far, known usually by his occupation: Gandum-Pak-Kun, the Sifter of Wheat, who fell at Shaykh Tabarsi. And the most outstanding of these new converts was Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani, a notable disciple of Siyyid Kazim, who in later years was one of the few to come safely through the holocaust at Tabarsi. He attained the presence of Baha'u'llah within the city-walls of 'Akka, became as stalwart a Baha'i as he had been a Babi, was honoured by Baha'u'llah with the designation Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq (the Name of God, the Most Truthful), and remained true and loyal to the end of his life.[1] His son, Ibn-i-Asdaq, was one of the four Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Baha'u'llah, while Mulla Sadiq himself was named posthumously a Hand of the Cause by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Memorials of the Faithful (p.5).

..... [1. Some of those designated Ismu'llah later broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah--men such as Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahiji (Ismu'llah'l-Mihdi), Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini (Ismu'llahu'l-Javad), and Aqa Jamal-i-Burujirdi (Ismu'llahu'l-Jamal). Others remained true: Mulla Sadiq (Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq), Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin (Ismu'llahu'l-Zayn), Siyyid 'Abdu'r-Rahim-i-Isfahani (Ismu'llahi'r-Rahim), and Jinab-i-Munir (Ismu'llahu'l-Munib), who died in Smyrna in 1868. There were still others, not all of whom have as yet been identified.] [p. 34]

In Kashan, Mulla Husayn tarried only a short while, but delivered the tidings of the dawn of the Day of God to Haji Mirza Jani, a prominent merchant of that

town. Proceeding next to Qum, he found no one ready to hear him and so made his way to Tihiran, the capital city. Here dwelt the 'Mystery' spoken of by the Bab, He Whom the Bab's message and petition had to reach. Mulla Husayn did not know in which direction or in which way he should seek that Mystery. But God had led him to the Qa'im, and he felt assured that, once again, he would be guided to the goal of his quest. He went to lodge in a theological college called the Madrisih (School) of Mirza Salih, alternatively the Madrisih of Paminar (Pay-i-Minar), which was that district of Tihiran in which the college was situated. Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Khurasani, who stood at the head of the Shaykhis of the capital, was also the head of the Madrisiy-i-Mirza Salih. In vain did Mulla Husayn [p. 35] try to wake him to the truth of the dawning Day of God. Instead, Haji Mirza Muhammad reprimanded Mulla Husayn for deviating from the path of Siyyid Kazim. Even more, he regarded Mulla Husayn's sojourn in Tihiran as most undesirable, a menace to the safety and the integrity of the Shaykhi community. Mulla Husayn assured him that he would not stay long in Tihiran and, in any case, he did not consider that he had said or done anything to denigrate the station and the position of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i or Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti.

Not to antagonize Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Khurasani any more, Mulla Husayn stayed away as much as he could from the Madrisih of Mirza Salih. After all, it was an infinitely higher purpose than entanglement with this Shaykhi divine, that had brought him to Tihiran. He would leave the college early in the morning, and come back to his room after sunset. Mulla Muhammad-i-Mu'allim (teacher or tutor), a native of the district of Nur in the province of Mazindaran, has given this account of how Mulla Husayn reached the end of his quest and fulfilled the high mission entrusted to him by the Bab:

..... 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 fell 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 inquired Mulla Husayn, 'is there today 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?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'among [p. 36] his sons now living, one has distinguished Himself by the very traits which characterized 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.' '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 inquired: '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.

..... 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 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 Mulla Husayn, as a gift from Him, a loaf of Russian sugar and a package of tea, and to convey to him the expression of His appreciation and love.

..... 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 [p. 37] 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 heart. 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, 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.'[5-3]

..... [5-3. *ibid.* pp. 71-4 (Brit.), pp. 104-8 (US). (The Dawn-Breakers)]

Once again Divine Providence had led Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i to the end of his quest--the most momentous in the history of mankind.

As for the obscure Shaykhi student of theology, Mulla Muhammad-i-Mu'allim-i-Nuri--whom that same Providence had guided to seek the company of Mulla Husayn and consort with him, that he might point the way to the goal and perform a service unmatched, holy and supremely meritorious--he would shed his blood on the same battlefield as Mulla Husayn. There an implacable enemy would tear his frail body into shreds. [p. 38] [p. 39]

6

In the Home of His Ancestors

FROM the day Mirza Husayn-'Ali, the Son of the Vazir-i-Nuri, gave His allegiance to the Cause of the Bab, He arose with all His vigour to promote that Cause. It was a fact well known that He had never attended a theological college, nor ever sat at the feet of a famed theologian, teacher, philosopher or guide. It was also well known that He was a master of argument, a fount of knowledge, a model of eloquence. Now, as an Exponent of the Faith of the Bab, these high qualities which He had evinced became more keen, more acute and more penetrating.

His first journey to propagate the Cause of the Bab was to Mazindaran, to the home of His ancestors. Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, the influential divine of Nur, whom we have met before in these pages, was now dead, and his seat of authority was occupied by his son, Shaykh Muhammad. The latter knew that he could never surpass, nor even match, Baha'u'llah's powers of expression and exposition, and that, in truth, he was certain to fall far short. So when Baha'u'llah's

ceaseless exertions to spread, throughout the district of Nur, the knowledge of the advent of the Bab, had brought a large number of its prominent citizens, including Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, His brother, and the heroic Muhammad-Taqi Khan, one of His close relatives, under the banner of the new Faith, provoking at the same time intense opposition and hostility among a number of others--the chief of whom was Mirza 'Azizu'llah, an uncle of Baha'u'llah. Shaykh Muhammad remained silent and held his peace. His students, however, would not leave him alone, and insisted that he should make an effort to counter Baha'u'llah's activities. They pressed him so hard that he finally gave way, appointing two of the most learned and accomplished of his pupils--his brothers-in-law Mulla 'Abbas and Mulla Abu'l-Qasim--to go to meet Baha'u'llah and challenge Him. Just then Baha'u'llah was at Darkala. Arriving there, the two went straight to an assemblage [p. 40] where a large number had congregated to listen to Baha'u'llah. He was expounding for them the inner essence of the very first surih of the Qur'an. The two emissaries sat down, listened with rapt attention, and found themselves totally captivated. Mulla 'Abbas was first to get to his feet, and trembling, with tears streaming down his cheeks, he told his compatriots, 'You do as you wish, but as for me, I am struck dumb; no memory and no speech is left to me; go and tell Mulla Muhammad that henceforth my duty is service at the threshold of Mirza Husayn-'Ali.' Mulla Abu'l-Qasim too had been overwhelmed he told Mulla 'Abbas, 'Like you, I shall never abandon Him to serve anyone else. My place too is at His door.'

Then Baha'u'llah Himself went to the village of Sa'adat-Abad to visit Mulla Muhammad. The latter, aware of his own inability, would not enter into a discussion with Him and found all manner of pretext to evade the issue. Finally, he decided to consult the Qur'an. He took up the holy Book, opened it at random, but soon shut it, saying lamely that the verses on that page did not omen well.

Travelling throughout the homeland of His ancestors, Baha'u'llah one day encountered a young dervish sitting by a brook, busy with his cooking. When Baha'u'llah asked what he was doing, the young man replied, 'Oh, I am cooking God to eat Him.' Baha'u'llah was highly amused by the simplicity of this response and showed great kindness to him.

That dervish, whose name was Mustafa Big, was a native of Sanandij in Kurdistan, a poet using the sobriquet of Majzub (the Attracted). He became so attracted and attached to Baha'u'llah that he followed Him, singing His praises and calling out to Baha'u'llah to 'tear asunder the veils, ... tear asunder the veils.' Many who witnessed his behaviour were in their turn attracted, and devoted themselves to Baha'u'llah. [p. 41]

7

The First Imprisonment

BAHA'ULLAH'S first imprisonment was in connection with the murder of Haji Mulla Taqiy-i-Baraghani, the uncle and father-in-law of Qurratu'l-'Ayn. Haji Mulla Taqi (who has come to be known as Shahid-i-Thalith--the Third Martyr) was

an obscurantist divine, extremely narrow-minded and extremely hostile towards the persons and teachings of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti. From his pulpit he would thunder against them in abusive language. And this was why he was murdered in his mosque, in the dim light of dawn. He who committed the murder was a fervent admirer of Shaykhi tenets, and publicly confessed that he had stabbed Haji Mulla Taqi in the mouth, because of that divine's intemperate language. He was a native of Shiraz, variously named as Mirza Salih, Mulla 'Abdu'llah and Mirza Tahir, the Baker, who, by his own testimony at his trial in Tihiran, had never been a convinced Babi, but was on his way to Mah-Ku to visit the Bab and investigate His Cause. But Mulla Muhammad, the husband of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, was a man as fanatical and vindictive as his father, and he cast his net widely to secure the arrest of a number of innocent Babis, who were transported to Tihiran.

One day in August 1919, 'Abdu'l-Baha, speaking to a number of Baha'is gathered in the drawing-room of His Haifa residence, related the story of that first imprisonment of Baha'u'llah. He said that four men, one of whom was the actual assassin, were taken to Tihiran and detained in the house of Khusraw Khan. Baha'u'llah requested Mirza Shafi' Khan, the Sahib-Divan, to tell Haji Mirza Aqasi what the true situation was. Sahib-Divan, a man free from prejudice, had great influence over the Grand Vizier; he gave him Baha'u'llah's message, which seemed to please him. Then, Baha'u'llah went with His retinue to visit the detainees, and gave them whatever money they required. Soon all of Tihiran came to hear of it.

The man who had murdered the mujtahid of Qazvin, and was [p. 42] openly confessing it, finding that his confession had been useless, decided to escape. One night, when it was snowing, he broke gaol (with his fetters) and made his way to the house of Rida Khan, the Turkoman, an officer in the service of Muhammad Shah. Cunningly, instead of running to the gate of the house, he sent his walking-stick flying at it. The gate was opened, and a plank was put on the snow, over which the escapee walked into the house. When a search was instituted in the morning, they found no trace of the footsteps of the escapee. Because Baha'u'llah had been to see the detainees and had given them money, the relatives of the murdered mujtahid came from Qazvin to accuse Baha'u'llah of having helped the self-confessed assassin to escape. Baha'u'llah, undaunted, rode over, accompanied by farrashes and horsemen, to the place of the detention of the prisoners. He was put under arrest and also imprisoned. However, it was soon proved that the accusations were baseless, and Baha'u'llah was freed after a short spell in prison. But what these relatives of Haji Mulla Taqiy-i-Baraghani did not know was that it was Baha'u'llah Who had ordered and arranged the rescue of Qurratu'l-'Ayn from their clutches.[7-1]

..... [7-1. See Balyuzi, The Bab, pp. 166-7.]

As for the murderer of the mujtahid, Rida Khan took him out of Tihiran. 'Abdu'l-Baha said that when it was discovered what had happened, a thousand horsemen were sent in pursuit of Rida Khan, but he was never caught. Eventually both of them reached the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsi, and met there the death of

The Conference of Badasht

THE Conference of Badasht was unique and unparalleled in the religious annals of mankind. Never before, in the lifetime of a Manifestation of God, had His followers gathered to take counsel together, as one body, regarding the nature of their Faith and their future course of action. The moving Genius and the Convener of that unprecedented conference was no less a person than Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nuri, Who subsequently became known in the Babi community as Jinab-i-Baha.[1] As the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has particularly remarked: 'The primary purpose of that gathering was to implement the revelation of the Bayan by a sudden, a complete and dramatic break with the past--with its order, its ecclesiasticism, its traditions, and ceremonials. The subsidiary purpose of the conference was to consider the means of emancipating the Bab from His cruel confinement in Chihriq. The first was eminently successful; the second was destined from the outset to fail.'[8-1]

..... [1. It ought to be noted that the name 'Baha'u'llah' was first mentioned by the Bab in His Book, the Persian Bayan; and that it was 'Jinab-i-Baha' that Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nuri became known in the Babi community, after the Conference of Badasht.]

..... [8-1. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 31.]

Badasht was a hamlet, situated on the borders of Mazindaran. When Baha'u'llah reached this hamlet, He rented three gardens: one He assigned to Quddus, Haji Mulla Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Barfurushi, the eighteenth and the last of the Bab's Letters of the Living, and the first of them in rank. A second garden was specified as the residence of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, whom Baha'u'llah had rescued from the perils surrounding her in Qazvin, her native town. Baha'u'llah, Himself, stayed in the third garden. Nabil-i-A'zam writes:

..... ..Those who had gathered in Badasht were eighty-one in number, all of whom, from the time of their arrival to the day of their dispersion, were the guests of Baha'u'llah. Every day, He revealed a Tablet which Mirza Sulayman-i-Nuri chanted in the presence of the assembled believers. Upon [p. 44] each He bestowed a new name. He Himself was henceforth designated by the name of Baha; upon the Last Letter of the Living was conferred the

appellation of Quddus, and to Qurratu'l-'Ayn was given the title of Tahirih [the Pure]. To each of those who had convened at Badasht a special Tablet was subsequently revealed by the Bab, each of whom He addressed by the name recently conferred upon him. When, at a later time, a number of the more rigid and conservative among her fellow-disciples chose to accuse Tahirih of indiscreetly rejecting the time-honoured traditions of the past, the Bab, to whom these complaints had been addressed, replied in the following terms: 'What am I to say regarding her whom the Tongue of Power and Glory has named Tahirih...?'[8-2]

..... [8-2. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 211 (Brit.), p. 293 (US).]

It was indeed Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the Pure, who, on that never-to-be-forgotten day, in the beginning of summer 1848, first raised the resonant clarion call to emancipation from the man-made fetters of the past, to the horror and consternation of a large number of her fellow-believers. She appeared before them, with her veil discarded, her face adorned and uncovered for all to see. To many of them it seemed as if the Day of Resurrection had overtaken them--as, in truth, it had. One of them, 'Abdu'l-Khaliq-i-Isfahani, cut his own throat--so horrified and scandalized he felt--and, screaming, with blood pouring out, rushed from the assemblage of his co-religionists. A number of others followed him, walked out and away from the Faith of the Bab. Quddus was furious; he had his bare sword in his hand, and it looked as if, at any moment, he would use it on Tahirih. Nabil writes, quoting Shaykh Abu-Turab:

..... His threatening attitude failed, however, to move her. Her countenance displayed that same dignity and confidence which she had evinced at the first moment of her appearance before the assembled believers. A feeling of joy and triumph had now illumined her face. She rose from her seat and, undeterred by the tumult that she had raised in the hearts of her companions, began to address the remnant of that assembly. Without the least premeditation, and in language which bore a striking resemblance to that of the Qur'an, she delivered her appeal with matchless eloquence and profound fervour. She concluded her address with this verse of the Qur'an: 'Verily, amid gardens and rivers shall the pious dwell in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King.' As she uttered these words she cast a furtive glance towards both Baha'u'llah and Quddus in such a manner that those who were watching her were unable to tell to which of the two she was alluding.[8-3]

..... [8-3. *ibid.* p. 213 (Brit.), p. 295 (US). (*The Dawn-Breakers*)]

Qurratu'l-'Ayn's bold bid for emancipation happened on a day when Baha'u'llah was indisposed. Quddus had gone to visit Him in [p. 45] His garden, and other companions had also gathered there around Him. Then Tahirih came in, and her entry, as we have seen, was exactly like a thunderbolt. 'I am the Word', she declared, 'which the Qa'im is to utter, the Word which shall put to flight the chiefs and nobles of the earth!' And, at the very end, she said: 'This day is the day of festivity and universal rejoicing, the day on which the fetters of the past are burst asunder. Let those who have shared in this great achievement arise and embrace each other.'[8-4]

..... [8-4. *ibid.* pp. 213-14 (Brit.), p. 296 (US). (*The Dawn-Breakers*)]

After the pandemonium had subsided, Baha'u'llah quietly took command. Nabil-i-A'zam writes:

..... That memorable day and those which immediately followed it witnessed the most revolutionary changes in the life and habits of the assembled followers of the Bab. Their manner of worship underwent a sudden and fundamental transformation. The prayers and ceremonials by which those devout

worshippers had been disciplined were irrevocably discarded. A great confusion, however, prevailed among those who had so zealously arisen to advocate these reforms. A few condemned so radical a change as being the essence of heresy, and refused to annul what they regarded as the inviolable precepts of Islam. Some regarded Tahirih as the sole judge in such matters and the only person qualified to claim implicit obedience from the faithful. Others who denounced her behaviour held to Quddus whom they regarded as the sole representative of the Bab, the only one who had the right to pronounce upon such weighty matters. Still others who recognized the authority of both Tahirih and Quddus viewed the whole episode as a God-sent test designed to separate the true from the false and distinguish the faithful from the disloyal.

..... This state of tension persisted for a few days until Baha'u'llah intervened and, in His masterly manner, effected a complete reconciliation between them. He healed the wounds which that sharp controversy had caused, and directed the efforts of both along the path of constructive service.[8-5]

..... [8-5. *ibid.* p. 214 (Brit.), pp. 296-7 (US). (The Dawn-Breakers)]

Baha'u'llah had the fifty-sixth surih of the Qur'an, 'al-Waqi'ah' ('The Event', or 'The Terror' in the translation of A. J. Arberry), read to that assemblage, and when their minds comprehended the meaning and the allusions and the purport of those verses of the Qur'an, they understood that indeed the Day of Resurrection had overtaken them:

..... When the Terror descends

..... (and none denies its descending)

..... abasing, exalting,

..... when the earth shall be rocked [p. 46]

..... and the mountains crumbled

..... and become a dust scattered,

..... and you shall be three bands--

..... Companions of the Right (O Companions of the Right!)

..... Companions of the Left (O Companions of the Left!)

..... and the Outstrippers: the Outstrippers

..... those are they brought nigh the Throne,

..... in the Gardens of Delight

..... (a throng of the ancients

..... and how few of the later folk)

..... upon close-wrought couches

..... reclining upon them, set face to face,

..... immortal youths going round about them
..... with goblets, and ewers, and a cup from a spring
..... (no brows throbbing, no intoxication)
..... and such fruits as they shall choose,
..... and such flesh of fowl as they desire,
..... and wide-eyed houris
..... as the likeness of hidden pearls,
..... a recompense for that they laboured.
..... Therein they shall hear no idle talk, no cause of sin,
..... only the saying 'Peace, Peace!'[8-6]
..... [8-6. Arberry, The Koran Interpreted.]

Baha'u'llah stayed in Badasht for twenty-two days. Then, the Babis--those who had remained constant and steadfast--with their faith fortified, set out from the environs of that epoch-making conference; but at the village of Niyala they were attacked on all sides. Baha'u'llah, Himself, related to Nabil:

..... 'We were all gathered in the village of Niyala and were resting at the foot of a mountain, when, at the hour of dawn, we were suddenly awakened by the stones which the people of the neighbourhood were hurling upon us from the top of the mountain. The fierceness of their attack induced our companions to flee in terror and consternation. I clothed Quddus in my own garments and despatched him to a place of safety, where I intended to join him. When I arrived, I found that he had gone. None of our companions had remained in Niyala except Tahirih and a young man from Shiraz, Mirza 'Abdu'llah. The violence with which we were assailed had brought desolation into our camp. I [p. 47] found no one into whose custody I could deliver Tahirih except that young man, who displayed on that occasion a courage and determination that were truly surprising. Sword in hand, undaunted by the savage assault of the inhabitants of the village, who had rushed to plunder our property, he sprang forward to stay the hand of the assailants. Though himself wounded in several parts of his body, he risked his life to protect our property. I bade him desist from his act. When the tumult had subsided, I approached a number of the inhabitants of the village and was able to convince them of the cruelty and shamefulness of their behaviour. I subsequently succeeded in restoring a part of our plundered property.'[8-7]

..... [8-7. Nabil, The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 215 16 (Brit.), p. 299 (US).]

[p. 48]

FROM Badasht Baha'u'llah went to His native district of Nur. He placed Tahirih in the charge of Shaykh Abu-Turab-i-Ishtahardi, to be taken to a place of safety. Meanwhile, adversaries in the capital (no doubt one of them being Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Antichrist of the Babi Revelation) were poisoning the mind of Muhammad Shah against Baha'u'llah, making it appear that He had incited rebellion. Then a day came, according to Nabil, that Muhammad Shah declared: 'I have hitherto refused to countenance whatever has been said against him. My indulgence has been actuated by my recognition of the services rendered to my country by his father. This time, however, I am determined to put him to death.' [9-1] Haji Mirza Aqasi, accordingly, obtained an edict from Muhammad Shah and instructed one of the notables of Mazindaran to put Baha'u'llah under arrest.

..... [9-1. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 216 (Brit.), p. 299 (US).]

Baha'u'llah states in one of His Tablets that after leaving Badasht,]

He travelled to Nur by easy stages. He visited Shah-rud, the district of Hizarjarib, Jaz (Gaz)--to the south of Bandar-Jaz (Bandar-Gaz) on the Caspian Sea--and Ashraf--'village by village, town by town'--until He arrived at Nur. It was probably while Baha'u'llah was at Bandar-Jaz during the course of this journey that the following incident occurred. 'Abdu'l-Baha has related that when Baha'u'llah arrived at Bandar-Jaz, He was taken ill. In this sea-town lived a Babi, named Mirza Masih, a man of superior qualities. 'Abdu'l-Baha describes him as 'spirit personified', one who, 'having read just one verse from the pen of the Primal Point, observed: "Just let this Bab be mine; you may have everyone else"'. At this very time, while Baha'u'llah was at Bandar-Jaz, Mirza Masih passed away. Baha'u'llah held a memorial meeting for him, and also wrote a prayer of visitation for this, wonderful man.

It was while Baha'u'llah was at Bandar-Jaz that the edict came from Muhammad Shah ordering His arrest. Baha'u'llah was at this time the [p. 49] [p. 50] guest of some of the notables of the town, and these, together with the Russian agent at Bandar-Jaz, who was a Persian, came to Baha'u'llah offering Him a passage in a Russian ship which was at anchor there. But Baha'u'llah did not accept it and did not run away. Next day, Baha'u'llah was the guest of a notable of that area. The Russian agent had also been invited to that banquet. Many of the prominent men of that district of Mazindaran were there to meet Baha'u'llah. Then a courier arrived, bringing news of Muhammad Shah's demise. The edict of Muhammad Shah for Baha'u'llah's arrest had lost its authority.

Amidst these happenings, Quddus had been arrested and imprisoned in the town of Sari, in the house of Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, one of the prominent divines of the province of Mazindaran. Tahirih had also been detained. She was taken to Tihran where she was held under house arrest in the residence of Mahmud Khan, the kalantar (mayor) of the capital. There she remained until her martyrdom in the blood-bath of August 1852.

At Badasht, Mulla Husayn, the Babu'l-Bab, had been a notable absentee. He was a guest, at the time, of Hamzih Mirza, the Hishmatu'd-Dawlih--a brother of

Muhammad Shah (see Addendum V), and the Governor-General of Khurasan--where he was treated with courtesy and consideration. After leaving the camp of the Governor-General, he intended to go to Karbila, but now a Tablet reached him from the Bab which totally changed his plans. In it the Bab had conferred on him a new name, Siyyid 'Ali, had sent him a green turban of His own to wear, and had directed him to go to Mazindaran to aid and support Quddus, with a black standard unfurled and carried before him. This black standard would be that of which the Prophet Muhammad had given tidings: 'Should your eyes behold the Black Standards proceeding from Khurasan, hasten ye towards them, even though ye should have to crawl over the snow, inasmuch as they proclaim the advent of the promised Mihdi, the Vicegerent of God.' [9-2] In the course of his long march from Khurasan to Mazindaran, the Babu'l-Bab was joined by Babis who had been at Badasht. And as they went on, more and more came to enlist under the Black Standard. Thus the number of the companions reached 300 and beyond. At Barfurush (Babul)--the home of Quddus, who was still a captive in Sari--because of the intense hostility of Sa'idu'l-'Ulama, the vindictive [p. 51] leading divine of that district, the Babis had to use arms to defend themselves, and then because of treachery and broken pledges, they had, hurriedly, to throw up a wall and build a fortress around the mausoleum of Shaykh Tabarsi, in the heart of the forests of Mazindaran, and stay beleaguered within it.

..... [9-2. *ibid.* p. 253 (Brit.), p. 351 (US). (The Dawn-Breakers)]

Hearing of these events, while at Nur, Baha'u'llah decided to visit Shaykh Tabarsi. With His preparations completed, He moved to the village of Afra, which belonged to a certain Nazar-'Ali Khan. There He stopped to order a sumptuous dinner for the inmates of the fortress and sent Shaykh Abu-Turab-i-Ishtahardi to inform them of His impending arrival. Then, accompanied by Nazar-'Ali Khan, He went to the fortress, to be received very warmly by the Babu'l-Bab. It ought to be recalled that it had been Mulla Husayn, the Babu'l-Bab, who had conveyed, some four years before, the message of the Bab to Baha'u'llah, and thus he knew how exalted was the station of Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nuri, now known as Jinab-i-Baha. Mulla Husayn was lost in wonderment as he gazed at Baha'u'llah and heard Him for the first time. All his attention was riveted on Him. Baha'u'llah approved of all the arrangements made at Shaykh Tabarsi, but what was much missing there, He observed, was the person of Quddus. It ought to be emphasized that the Babis had not gathered at the mausoleum of Shaykh Tabarsi in order to stage a rebellion against the government of their country, but rather to seek safety.

Baha'u'llah instructed Mulla Mihdiy-i-Khu'i to take six men with him to Sari and demand the release of Quddus. This was done, and Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, the leading mujtahid of that town, feared not to comply. In this manner, Quddus was released after ninety-five days of detention, and joined the companions at Shaykh Tabarsi. Baha'u'llah Himself left the fortress, together with Nazar-'Ali Khan and Shaykh Abu-Turab, and by way of Nur went to the capital city of Iran, intending to return at a later date to the fortress, to bring provisions and

other necessities for the companions. This was the promise that He made to the Babu'l-Bab. [p. 52]

10

The Downfall of Haji Mirza Aqasi

THE wily Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Antichrist of the Babi Revelation, well knew that with the death of Muhammad Shah in September 1848, his hold on power would become tenuous and the reins of affairs would slip from his incompetent hands. And so, as soon as it became evident that the Shah was dangerously ill, the Grand Vizier kept away from the royal residence. And when Muhammad Shah breathed his last, the Grand Vizier was nowhere to be seen. He had made many enemies, and to whom could he turn in his hour of need?

As was usual after the demise of a monarch, the whole country, or most of it, was plunged into a state of unease or restiveness. In Shiraz, for example, Husayn Khan--the Ajudan-Bashi (honoured with the titles Nizamud-Dawlih and Sahib-Ikhtiyar), who had governed with a fist of iron, bringing Shiraz and indeed the whole province of Fars to respect order--was now facing a combination of two of the most powerful and influential grandees of the province, who were determined to oust him: the chieftain of the Qashqa'i tribe, and the ever-diplomatic and cautious Haji Mirza 'Ali-Akbar, the Qavamul-Mulk. And the common people had fallen in line with them. It was this Husayn Khan who had subjected the Bab to indignities and inflicted punishments on His followers and the members of His family. Now even he, who had succeeded in subduing an unruly people, who had driven out two governors in the past--one of whom, Firaydun Mirza, was a brother of Muhammad Shah--could not on this occasion force his will on an alliance of the mob and the grandees, and had to quit. He was not heard of again after this debacle, and his stormy career came to an abrupt end.

As to the circumstances of the downfall of the Prime Minister himself, let Jahangir Mirza, a brother of Muhammad Shah and author of *Tarikh-i-Naw* (New History), who was an eyewitness, describe what happened to Haji Mirza Aqasi. Already the Epistle of the Bab, addressed [p. 53] to him, had been delivered to this Antichrist of His Faith by Mulla Muhammad 'Aliy-i-Zanjani (Hujjat), and it must have struck terror into his craven heart.

The following is the gist of what Jahangir Mirza writes, although not an exact translation:

After the passing of the late sovereign, Haji Mirza Aqasi called in the Russian and British ministers, and together they wrote a letter which conveyed the news to the heir apparent in Tabriz. Haji Mirza Aqasi was then overcome by fear, and for reasons of his own [whatever they were] wanted to take 'Abbas Mirza, a younger son of the late sovereign, to 'Abbasabad (the Haji's own property), and he sent Mahmud Pashay-i-Maku'i to bring 'Abbas Mirza from Tajrish--the summer resort in the district of Shimran, where the late sovereign had passed away--but it could not be done. Then Haji Mirza Aqasi [p. 54] remained the

night in 'Abbasabad, collected about fifteen hundred Maku'is and Iravanis round himself and set out for the royal citadel in the capital, which he took into his own possession, and sat there waiting. In Tajrish, Mirza Nasru'llah, the Sadru'l-Mamalik, gathered together the khans and the courtiers who were there, and they decided to summon all the grandees and princes then in the capital, have the 'ulama and the mujtahids wash and shroud the body of the late sovereign, after which they would all proceed to Tihran to place the body in the garden of Lalihzar, and thence to the royal citadel. But after preparing the body for interment, for fear of some untoward event in the royal citadel which was occupied by Haji Mirza Aqasi, they delayed its removal, and the grandees and princes returned to the capital. At this point, the mother of the heir apparent, Mahd-i-'Ulya, took affairs into her own hands and informed the foreign envoys that the presence of Haji Mirza Aqasi in the royal citadel, with all his following, was most undesirable. And Prince Bahram Mirza [the Mu'izzu'd-Dawlih, brother of Muhammad Shah] went to the citadel and counselled the Haji to leave. The artillery officer in charge of the guards at the citadel was also advised by the mother of the heir apparent to force the Haji to leave, and he trained his cannon on the house of Haji Mirza Aqasi, which was in the neighbourhood. Haji Mirza Aqasi had also heard of the forgathering of all the princes and grandees in Tajrish, and that added to his alarm and distress.

At last, after a stay of twenty-four hours in the citadel, the Haji rode out, together with his Maku'is and Iravanis, most of whom left him to go to the garden of Khan-Baba Khan-i-Sardar. The Grand Vizier was now almost alone, and to whatever village he went, the people there would not let him enter. So, helplessly, with only fifty or sixty horsemen, he took the road to Karaj. By the river, Nuru'llah Khan-i-Shahsavan, who had set out in his pursuit, reached him. The Haji had fully armed himself with rifles and pistols (some carried on his own person and some tied to the saddle) and also with daggers, a mace and a sword. He fired at Nuru'llah Khan and set his horse galloping towards the Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim. Nuru'llah Khan pursued him to the very precincts of the shrine, but the Haji fled into its enclave. Nuru'llah Khan then possessed himself of the Haji's horse and belongings and what appertained to the Haji's men, leaving them almost naked. [p. 55]

As soon as Mirza Nasru'llah, the Sadru'l-Mamalik, heard how the Haji had fared, he intervened once again, informed the mother of the heir apparent of these events, and then in the company of all the princes, the courtiers, the grandees, and the foreign envoys, brought the body of the late sovereign to the capital with full military honours, and placed it in safe keeping in the garden of Lalihzar. He then wrote to Tabriz to inform the new sovereign of all that had occurred.

With Haji Mirza Aqasi out of the way, deserted, discredited, and a basti [one who takes refuge in a bast or sanctuary] in the Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim, what happened next, according to Jahangir Mirza, was something unheard of, for certain persons gathered round Mirza Nasru'llah, who apparently had ambitions of his own, to speak of something amounting to a republic or, at least,

constitutional government. The new Shah had not yet arrived from Tabriz, but, as Jahangir Mirza puts it, his determined, energetic mother was equal to the occasion and would have none of that nonsense. She took immediate steps to safeguard the royal treasures, and then by quiet diplomacy won over most of those who had congregated around Sadru'l-Mamalik. She also made handsome presents of money to a number of divines, such as Aqa Muhammad-Salih of Kirmanshah (who was then sent to his home town to ensure the loyalty of its people), and Mirza Askari, the Imam-Jum'ih of Mashad, who was directed to that holy city for the same purpose. Nevertheless, disturbances of diverse sorts were rife, some of which were nipped in the bud--such as the activities of Muhib-'Ali Khan, the Governor of Kirmanshah, and of Sayfu'l-Muluk Mirza, a son of Fath-'Ali Shah; and also the moves of Allahyar Khan, the Asafu'd-Dawlih, and of 'Ali-Shah, the Zillu's-Sultan, in 'Iraq (stopped in time by the British representative in Baghdad and the Ottoman vali there).

At last, Nasiri'd-Din and his Minister, Mirza Taqi Khan, the Vazir-Nizam--who, en route had been elevated to the rank of Amir-Nizam and was soon to be further honoured by the title Amir Kabir--reached the capital. By a royal rescript the new Grand Vizier occupied the houses of the basti Antichrist, and Haji Mirza Aqasi himself; who had aged considerably during those weeks, was shorn of his wealth and given a safe conduct to 'Iraq, where, nine months later, he died in the holy city of Karbila. [p. 56]

11

The Second Imprisonment

IN December 1848, to fulfil His promise to visit Shaykh Tabarsi for a second time, Baha'u'llah set out with a number of the Babis intending to visit the besieged fortress. Those who went with Him included Haji Mirza Janiy-i-Kashani,[1] Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi (one of the Bab's Letters of the Living), Shaykh Abu-Turab-i-Ishtahardi, Aqa Siyyid Hasan-i-Khu'i, Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Turshizi (one of the Seven Martyrs of Tihran), 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Big, Muhammad-Taqi Khan-i-Nuri and Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal.

..... [1. The merchant who had acted as host to the Bab in Kashan, and the first chronicler of His Faith, who was martyred in August 1852.]

But Baha'u'llah did not succeed in fulfilling His intention, for He and His companions were arrested and detained when they reached a village some nine miles from Shaykh Tabarsi. People of that village had abandoned it and night had fallen when Baha'u'llah and His entourage arrived there. They put the arms which they had with them in one room, away from any fire, and settled down for the night. The next day they were to make their way into the fortress. But in the course of the night, informed by guards and spies from the royal army stationed around Shaykh Tabarsi, an officer surrounded the abandoned village with a considerable number of riflemen, and apprehended Baha'u'llah, taking Him with His companions to the town of Amul. Because 'Abbas-Quli Khan, the general who was also Governor of Amul, had gone to the camp of Prince Mihdi-Quli Mirza, the Deputy-Governor, Muhammad-Taqi Khan-i-Larijani, recognizing Baha'u'llah,

lodged Him and His companions in his own house. But Amul was soon in turmoil, on hearing of the detention of a number of Babis whom the Deputy-Governor had respectfully taken to his own house, instead of putting them in fetters and chains. And, as usual, the clergy, always on the alert to make mischief, were agitating. The divines of Amul were particularly marked for their rapacity [p. 57] (as 'Abdu'l-Baha has described them). They demanded from Muhammad-Taqi Khan that Baha'u'llah be taken to the mosque. So strident was their clamour that the Deputy-Governor, although reluctant and apprehensive, had no alternative but to comply. Then the divines declared that the people ought to come to the mosque, fully armed. Next day they all arrived: the butcher with his axe, the carpenter with his hatchet. It was their intention to make a rush at Baha'u'llah and murder Him. Surrounded by the crowd, Baha'u'llah was led to the mosque, where He sat under one of the arches. Two merchants from Shiraz, guests of the Governor, also came in and took their seats. The divines were there, of course, in full force.

This is how 'Abdu'l-Baha related the story of that day and that event, one evening in August 1919, in the drawing-room of His house in Haifa.[11-1] One of the Shirazi merchants mentioned a dream he had had the previous night, and wished it to be interpreted for him. When invited by Baha'u'llah to say what his dream was, the merchant replied: 'I dreamt that the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad was in this mosque, holding a finger between his teeth.' 'But that is blasphemy', shouted one of the divines. Baha'u'llah asked the impetuous [p. 58] priest to desist, because it was nothing of the kind: holding a finger between one's teeth was a sign of astonishment. The two merchants were much attracted to Baha'u'llah. In the pocket of Haji Mirza Jani when he was searched, a letter had been found in the handwriting of Siyyid Husayn-i-Katib, written with great speed, which they could not read. Someone suggested that only Mulla 'Ali-Jan could read that type of hand-writing. So he, who in the past had been generously treated by Baha'u'llah, was sent for. Now he chose to forget Baha'u'llah's kindness, took up the letter, but, finding that he could not read it, his eyes caught a word which he considered to have been wrongly spelt. He exclaimed that this was a composition of the Bab, indicative of His ignorance and illiteracy. By quoting an incident in the life of Muhammad, and the Prophet's saying, Baha'u'llah proved to Mulla 'Ali-Jan that this particular word was not at all what he thought it should be--that it was the right word and correctly spelt. Mulla 'Ali-Jan was abashed.

..... [11-1. Verbatim notes of Abdu'l-Baha's talk to pilgrims, August 1919, recorded by Dr Lutfu'llah Hakim.]

By now the divines were downcast but would not give up. They insisted that Baha'u'llah should be bastinadoed. Muhammad-Taqi Khan was alarmed and told them that he could not carry out their verdict without permission from the Sardar. He would write to him about the matter, but it would take a horseman about four hours to reach Shaykh Tabarsi and deliver his letter; meanwhile, they ought to wait. His pleading had no effect on the divines, who clamoured that their verdict should be carried out there and then. However Muhammad-Taqi Khan found

a way to thwart them. As mentioned Baha'u'llah was sitting in the mosque, under an arch next to the clay wall. He set his men to take away the clay bricks from outside, one by one, until they reached the last thickness. Then suddenly they brought down the wall and, through the passage made, Baha'u'llah was led to a place of safety. When armed men surrounded the house of Muhammad-Taqi Khan, he went to the roof to tell them that Mirza Husayn-'Ali was in his custody, nor would he deliver Him to them until he had heard from the Sardar. His own men, fully armed, took up defensive positions with their rifles trained on the excited mob who were egged on by the divines. Finding how matters stood the mob dispersed.

The next day Muhammad-Taqi Khan received a letter from 'Abbas-Quli Khan, the Governor, reprimanding him for having arrested Baha'u'llah in the first instance. Should any harm come to Mirza [p. 59] Husayn-'Ali, he declared, he would burn down the city of Amul. He did not want a blood-feud to be perpetuated between his family and the family of Mirza Buzurg-i-Nuri. Muhammad-Taqi Khan took this letter to the divines, but they refused to be placated, claiming that matters of faith concerned them and were no concern of the Khan. Muhammad-Taqi Khan had a brother named Mirza Hasan, described by 'Abdu'l-Baha as 'a man of ferocious character'. He arrived the next midnight and made straight for his brother's house. As soon as he set foot in it, he enquired where Baha'u'llah was, and whether 'Abbas-Quli Khan's letter had reached them. When informed that Baha'u'llah was within, and that the Sardar's letter had indeed arrived, he calmed down. In turn, He was asked why he had come away from the royal camp. The answer was simple: he had fled. So had Prince Mihdi-Quli Mirza and 'Abbas-Quli Khan, and nobody knew where they were. The Babis, he said, had made a sortie, broken through all the fortifications, set the whole army to flight and burned down the house (made of logs) in which the princes were lodged. Then Mirza Hasan began a verbal attack on the divines, which he continued on the morrow, when they came to get a definite reply from Muhammad-Taqi Khan. He used such choice epithets as 'pidar-sukhtih' (burnt father) which caught them thoroughly by surprise. 'If you are men of your word,' he told them, 'and want a jihad, why do you not come out to Shaykh Tabarsi?' But they were poltroons, and thus challenged they gave up and went away.

Now, both Muhammad-Taqi Khan and Mirza Hasan were full of apologies and wished to make restitution for all the stolen property, but Baha'u'llah would have none of it. 'It was all given in the path of God', He said.

Nabil-i-A'zam has also given an account of this episode which conforms in general to the paragraphs above, as based on the talk by 'Abdu'l-Baha. The significant addition is that the Deputy-Governor, much embarrassed by the insistence of the divines, who were interrogating Baha'u'llah in the mosque, that He and His companions be put to death as Babis, attempted 'to hold in check the passions which had been aroused', by ordering 'his attendants to prepare the rods and promptly inflict a befitting punishment upon the captives', and promising to hold them in prison until the Governor's return. At

this point, Baha'u'llah intervened to prevent His companions receiving [p. 60] the bastinado, and requested that the punishment be inflicted upon Him in their stead. The Deputy-Governor 'was reluctantly compelled to give orders that Baha'u'llah alone be chosen to suffer the indignity which he had intended originally for His companions.' [11-2] The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has stated, in a letter to the believers in the East, dated January 1929, that Baha'u'llah suffered the bastinado in Mazindaran.

..... [11-2. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 266-8 (Brit.), pp. 369-72 (US).]

Nabil also gives Baha'u'llah's own description of this episode, in which he reports Him as saying:

..... ... Mirza Taqi succeeded, in spite of the tumult Our arrival had raised, and in the face of the opposition of the 'ulamas, in releasing Us from their grasp and in conducting Us to his house. He extended Us the warmest hospitality. Occasionally he yielded to the pressure which the 'ulamas were continuously bringing to bear upon him, and felt himself powerless to defeat their attempts to harm Us. We were still in his house when the Sardar, who had joined the army in Mazindaran, returned to Amul. No sooner was he informed of the indignities We had suffered than he rebuked Mirza Taqi for the weakness he had shown in protecting Us from Our enemies.... 'You should have been satisfied with preventing the party from reaching their destination and, instead of detaining them in this house, you should have arranged for their safe and immediate return to Tihiran.' [11-3]

..... [11-3. *ibid.* p. 428 (Brit.), p. 584 (US). (*The Dawn-Breakers*)]

In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah refers to His imprisonment in these words: 'While confined in the prison of the Land of Mim (Mazindaran) We were one day delivered into the hands of the divines. Thou canst well imagine what befell Us.' [11-4]

..... [11-4. Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 77.]

The peril being averted, Baha'u'llah returned to Nur, and from Nur proceeded to Tihiran. [p. 61]

12

A Momentous Year

THE ensuing year, from the summer of 1849 to the summer of 1850, witnessed a number of signal events in the ministry of the Bab. May 1849 had marked the termination of the eleven-month-long Mazindaran upheaval at Shaykh Tabarsi and the martyrdom of Quddus, the last Letter of the Living and the foremost disciple of the Bab. Persecution of the Babis erupted with unprecedented ferocity in the opening months of 1850. In Tihiran occurred the episode of the Seven Martyrs; in Yazd, Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi (Vahid) became embroiled in agitation against the Faith of the Bab and had to leave, but in Nayriz (in the province of Fars in the south of Persia), he and his companions were

surrounded, and fell eventually to treachery on the part of his opponents; at Zanzan, in the north, the Shi'ih 'ulama incited the people against the redoubtable Mulla Muhammad 'Ali (Hujjat), a conflict that was to continue to the end of the year, with an outcome equally tragic. Finally, the Bab, Himself, was martyred in July 1850 in Tabriz. In the words of Nabil-i-A'zam:

..... That year, rendered memorable by the magnificent heroism which those staunch supporters of His Faith displayed, not to speak of the marvellous circumstances that attended His own martyrdom, must ever remain as one of the most glorious chapters ever recorded in that Faith's bloodstained history. The entire face of the land was blackened by the atrocities in which a cruel and rapacious enemy freely and persistently indulged. From Khurasan, on the western confines of Persia, as far west as Tabriz, the scene of the Bab's martyrdom, and from the northern cities of Zanzan and Tihran, stretching south as far as Nayriz, in the province of Fars, the whole country was enveloped in darkness, a darkness that heralded the dawning light of the Revelation which the expected Husayn was soon to manifest, a Revelation mightier and more glorious than that which the Bab Himself had proclaimed.[12-1]

..... [12-1. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 341-2 (Brit.), p. 464 (US).]

Baha'u'llah, too, played a major role in these events. His house in Tihran became a focal point for the Babis of the capital city, and those [p. 62] Babis who were passing through Tihran also received His hospitality. Among the Babis who at this time frequented the house of Baha'u'llah was Vahid, who was to go from there to earn eternal fame and glorious martyrdom at Nayriz. Another visitor was Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah (Mulla Adi Guzal of Maraghih), who was acting as courier for the Bab and was commissioned by Him to perform a pilgrimage to Shaykh Tabarsi and pray at the graves of those distinguished martyrs (see Addendum V for a note on his life). Yet another who called on Baha'u'llah was Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini (Mirza Ahmad), bringing with him the pen-case, seals and rings of the Bab. A frequent caller of those days was Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi (Nabil-i-A'zam), who has recorded some of the incidents connected with Baha'u'llah in that memorable year, one of these being the arrival and reception of Sayyah:

..... I have heard Aqay-i-Kalim, who received Sayyah at the entrance of Baha'u'llah's home in Tihran, relate the following: 'It was the depth of winter when Sayyah, returning from his pilgrimage, came to visit Baha'u'llah. Despite the cold and snow of a rigorous winter, he appeared attired in the garb of a dervish, poorly clad, barefooted, and dishevelled. His heart was set afire with the flame that pilgrimage had kindled. No sooner had Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi, surnamed Vahid, who was then a guest in the home of Baha'u'llah, been informed of the return of Sayyah from the fort of Tabarsi, than he, oblivious of the pomp and circumstance to which a man of his position had been accustomed, rushed forward and flung himself at the feet of the pilgrim. Holding his legs, which had been covered with mud to the knees, in his arms, he kissed them devoutly. I was amazed that day at the many evidences of loving solicitude which Baha'u'llah evinced towards Vahid. He showed him such favours as I had

never seen Him extend to anyone. The manner of His conversation left no doubt in me that this same Vahid would ere long distinguish himself by deeds no less remarkable than those which had immortalized the defenders of the fort of Tabarsi.'

..... Sayyah tarried a few days in that home. He was, however, unable to perceive, as did Vahid, the nature of that power which lay latent in his Host. Though himself the recipient of the utmost favour from Baha'u'llah, he failed to apprehend the significance of the blessings that were being showered upon him. I have heard him recount his experiences, during his sojourn in Famagusta: 'Baha'u'llah overwhelmed me with His kindness. As to Vahid, notwithstanding the eminence of his position, he invariably gave me preference over himself whenever in the presence of his Host. On the day of my arrival from Mazindaran, he went so far as to kiss my feet. I was amazed at the reception accorded me in that home. Though immersed in an ocean of bounty, I failed in those days, to appreciate [p. 63] the position then occupied by Baha'u'llah, nor was I able to suspect, however dimly, the nature of the Mission He was destined to perform.' [12-2]

..... [12-2. *ibid.* pp. 316-17 (Brit.), pp. 432-3 (US). (The Dawn-Breakers)]

'Abdu'l-Baha has also recounted this episode, in a somewhat different form. One day when travelling by train from Salt Lake City to San Francisco, during the course of His historic journey in the United States and Canada in the evening of His Life, He recalled a day more than six decades before when, as a small child in Tihiran, he had been seated next to Vahid in His Father's house. Of a sudden an unkempt dervish, wild in appearance, came into the room, his feet covered with mud. He was Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah. Hearing that he had just returned from Mah-Ku where the Bab was imprisoned, Vahid knelt to kiss his mud-stained feet, for those feet had trod the earth where the Bab had stood.

Sayyah was also the bearer of a message from Baha'u'llah to the Bab, which was dictated to Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal) and sent in his name. Nabil describes the significant reply:

..... Shortly after, a reply, penned in the Bab's own handwriting, in which He commits Mirza Yahya to the care of Baha'u'llah and urges that attention be paid to his education and training, was received. That communication the people of the Bayan have misconstrued as an evidence of the exaggerated claims which they have advanced in favour of their leader. Although the text of that reply is absolutely devoid of such pretensions, and does not, beyond the praise it bestows upon Baha'u'llah and the request it makes for the upbringing of Mirza Yahya, contain any reference to his alleged position, yet his followers have idly imagined that the letter constitutes an assertion of the authority with which they have invested him. [12-3]

..... [12-3. *ibid.* p. 317 (Brit.), p. 433 (US). (The Dawn-Breakers)]

It is probable that the following episode related by 'Abdu'l-Baha years later,

when staying as a guest in Lady Blomfield's house in London, also occurred during the course of this year when Qurratu'l-'Ayn (Tahirih) was being held a prisoner at the house of Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar. (The fact that she was to be found visiting Baha'u'llah's house is not particularly surprising, since someone of Baha'u'llah's eminence could without difficulty arrange to act as guarantor for her temporary release from confinement.) Lady Blomfield writes:

..... He, being a little boy, was sitting on the knee of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, who was in the private parlour of His mother, Asiyih Khanum; the door of this room being open, they could hear, from behind the curtain, the voice of Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi, who was talking and 'arguing with my Father'. [p. 64]

..... Qurratu'l-'Ayn, that beautiful, fearless poetess, addressing the Siyyid with her musical, yet penetrating voice, said: 'O Siyyid this is not the time for arguments, for discussions, for idle repetitions of prophecies or traditions! It is the time for deeds! The day for words has passed!

..... 'If you have courage, now is the appointed hour for manifesting it; if you are a man of deeds, show a proof of your manhood by proclaiming day and night:

..... The Promised Herald has come!

..... He has come, the Qa'im, the Imam, the Awaited One has come!

..... He has come!'"

..... 'Abbas Effendi told us that He remembered this episode very distinctly the expression of enthusiasm on her lovely, radiant face as she spoke those inspiring words from behind the curtain, which hung before the door, was wonderfully impressive.

..... 'Abbas Effendi added:

..... 'She used often, during her short visit, to take me on to her knee caress me, and talk to me. I admired her most deeply.' [12-4]

..... [12-4. Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 22.]

The significant delivery to Baha'u'llah of the seals and other personal effects of the Bab has also been described by Nabil:

..... Forty days before the arrival of that officer at Chihriq,[1] the Bab collected all the documents and Tablets in His possession and, placing them, with His pen-case, His seals, and agate rings, in a coffer, entrusted them to the care of Mulla Baqir, one of the Letters of the Living. To him He also delivered a letter addressed to Mirza Ahmad, His amanuensis, in which He enclosed the key to that coffer. He urged him to take the utmost care of that trust, emphasized the sacredness of its character, and bade him conceal its contents from anyone except Mirza Ahmad.

..... [1. This was the officer sent to bring the Bab from the fortress of Chihriq where he was imprisoned, to Tabriz, following the orders of the

Amir-Nizam. (HMB)]

..... Mulla Baqir departed forthwith for Qazvin. Within eighteen days he reached that town and was informed that Mirza Ahmad had departed for Qum. He left immediately for that destination and arrived towards the middle of the month of Sha'ban (12 June-11 July AD 1850). I was then in Qum, together with a certain Sadiq-i-Tabrizi, whom Mirza Ahmad had sent to fetch me from Zarand. I was living in the same house with Mirza Ahmad, a house which he had hired in the Bagh-Panbih quarter. In those days Shaykh 'Azim, Siyyid Isma'il, and a number of other companions likewise were dwelling with us. Mulla Baqir delivered the trust into the hands of Mirza Ahmad, who, at the insistence of Shaykh 'Azim, opened it before us. We marvelled when we beheld, among the things which that scroll of blue paper, of the most delicate texture, on which the Bab, in His own exquisite handwriting, which was a fine Shikastih script, had penned, in the form of a pentacle, what numbered [p. 65] about five hundred verses, all consisting of derivatives from the word 'Baha'. That scroll was in a state of perfect preservation, was spotlessly clean, and gave the impression, at first sight, of being a printed rather than a written page. So fine and intricate was the penmanship that viewed at a distance, the writing appeared as a single wash of ink on the paper. We were overcome with admiration as we gazed upon a masterpiece which no calligraphist, we believed, could rival. That scroll was replaced in the coffer and handed back to Mirza Ahmad, who, on the very day he received it, proceeded to Tihran. Ere he departed, he informed us that all he could divulge of that letter was the injunction that the trust was to be delivered into the hands of Jinab-i-Baha [Baha'u'llah] in Tihran.[12-5]

..... [12-5. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 370-71 (Brit.), pp. 504-5 (US).]

Within that same month of Sha'ban, on 9 July 1850, occurred the martyrdom of the Bab. Haji Sulayman Khan had left Tihran for Tabriz as soon as he heard of the danger which threatened the Bab. Although he arrived too late to effect the Bab's deliverance, he succeeded in rescuing His remains and those of His companion. Under Baha'u'llah's direction they were brought to Tihran and there concealed. [p. 66]

13

One Year at Karbila

SOON after the martyrdom of the Bab, Mirza Taqi Khan, the Sadr-i-A'zam (Grand Vizier), who was responsible for and had ordered the death of the Bab, sought a meeting with Baha'u'llah. At this meeting he stated courteously but in no uncertain terms that had it not been for Baha'u'llah's support and guidance, the Babis would not have lasted for such a considerable period of time, resisting well-armed, well-equipped government forces at Shaykh Tabarsi and elsewhere; yet he had never discovered proof which would establish, beyond any measure of doubt, Baha'u'llah's involvement and complicity. Mirza Taqi Khan then expressed his regret that such superb abilities, which Baha'u'llah unquestionably possessed, had never been put to the service of the State.

Nevertheless, he intended to recommend that the Shah appoint Him to the post of Amir-i-Divan (Head of the Court). At the moment, however, the Shah was about to leave for Isfahan, and during his absence it would be advisable for Baha'u'llah also to go away temporarily from the capital. Although couched politely, this was tantamount to an order by the Sadr-i-A'zam. Baha'u'llah, as courteously, refused the offer of employment by the Government, and informed Mirza Taqi Khan of His wish to go on pilgrimage to the holy cities of 'Iraq. Mirza Taqi Khan was delighted and relieved. Accordingly Baha'u'llah left for Karbila, a few days after that meeting with the Grand Vizier. Baha'u'llah Himself told Nabil-i-A'zam: 'Had the Amir-Nizam been aware of My true position, he would certainly have laid hold on Me. He exerted the utmost effort to discover the real situation, but was unsuccessful. God wished him to be ignorant of it.'[13-1]

..... [13-1. From Nabil's unpublished history.]

At the very time when Baha'u'llah was on the point of leaving Tihran, the casket containing the remains of the Bab and His faithful disciple reached the capital. Acting on the instructions of Baha'u'llah, His brother Mirza Musa (Aqay-i-Kalim) and Mirza Ahmad-i-Katib [p. 67] (Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini) hid the casket in a safe place, within the precincts of the Shrine of Imam-Zadih Hasan.

Attending Baha'u'llah on His journey to 'Iraq were Aqa Shukru'llah-i-Nuri and Mirza Muhammad-i-Mazindarani, the latter one of the survivors of Shaykh Tabarsi. Baha'u'llah spent most of August 1851, the month of Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting), in Kirmanshah. There, both Nabil-i-A'zam and Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini attained His presence. He directed Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim to go to Tihran, and Nabil to take Mirza Yahya with him and stay in the vicinity of Shah-rud.

Baha'u'llah stopped in Baghdad for a few days, and reached Karbila on 28 August 1851. Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i and Shaykh Sultan, an Arab Babi converted to the Faith of the Bab by Tahirih, were both residents of Karbila, and both had been beguiled by a certain Siyyid-i-'Uluvv, who claimed to be a personification of the Holy Ghost. Baha'u'llah dealt with this Siyyid kindly but firmly, and persuaded him to renounce any such fantastic claim and promise never to indulge in it again. Shaykh Sultan and Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i realized how mistaken they had been, and reverted to their true allegiance, which they held firmly to the hour of death.

Shaykh Hasan-Zunuzi, who had served the Bab during His captivity in Adharbayjan, was now living in Karbila, having been directed by the Bab Himself to go to that holy city and make it his home. Shaykh Hasan had been a disciple of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, and had first attained the presence of the Bab during the Bab's pilgrimage to the holy cities of 'Iraq, in the lifetime of Siyyid Kazim. Later, Shaykh Hasan served Him as amanuensis, at Mah-Ku and then at Chihriq. When the Bab came to know that both Quddus and the Babu'l-Bab were besieged in Mazindaran, He urged the Babis to go to their aid, and He said to

Shaykh Hasan: 'Had it not been for My incarceration in this mountain fastness, I would have felt it My bounden duty to go in person to help My beloved Quddus. But such is not the case with you. I want you to go to Karbila, and await the day when with your own eyes you can behold the Beauty of the Promised Husayn. On that day remember Me, and offer Him My love and submission. I am giving you a very important commission. Beware lest your heart shall falter and forget the glory given unto you.' [13-2]

..... [13-2. Paraphrase of Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 23-4 (Brit.), p. 31. (US).]

Shaykh Hasan did as he was bidden, and was now in Karbila, until [p. 68] one day in October 1851 he came face to face with Baha'u'llah for the first time, inside the Shrine of Imam Husayn, and in Baha'u'llah he recognized that Husayn of Whom the Bab had spoken. He would have shouted it from roof-tops, but Baha'u'llah restrained him.

Many others, during those months of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in the holy cities of 'Iraq, attained His presence and became devoted to Him. Among them were Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab, that glorious youth of Shiraz (see Chapter 18); Shaykh-'Ali Mirza, also of Shiraz and the nephew of Shaykh Abu-Turab, the imam-jum'ih of that city who had stood up to protect the Bab; and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, a well-known physician of Zanjan, who, many years later, met a martyr's death.

During this period of Baha'u'llah's absence from Iran, dramatic changes had taken place. Surprisingly, owing to jealousy and fear, Nasiri'd-Din Shah had dismissed Amir Kabir and ordered him to Kashan, commissioning Haji 'Ali Khan, the Hajibu'd-Dawlih--who would, before long, persecute the followers of the Bab with callous butchery--to proceed to that town and have the fallen Minister put to death. Mirza Nasru'llah-i-Nuri, known as Mirza Aqa Khan, had been appointed Grand Vizier, and he wrote and asked Baha'u'llah to return to Iran. [p. 69]

14

The Fall of Amir Kabir

NASIRI'D-DIN SHAH, the fourth king of the Qajars, the obscurantist monarch who richly deserves the epithet 'Tyrant of Iran', had begun his five-decade-long, disastrous reign in September 1848. (See Addendum I.) It was the adroit skill and the iron will of Mirza Taqi Khan-i-Farahani, the Amir-Nizam--soon to be given the title Amir Kabir, the Great Emir, by which he is generally known--that had secured the throne firmly for the eighteen-year-old Nasiri'd-Din. Yet within three years of his accession, Nasiri'd-Din Shah had this Grand Vizier put to death.

Mirza Taqi Khan, whose father had been a cook in the service of the great Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Qa'im-Maqam, was undoubtedly a very capable man, well devoted to the service of his country. But he was also rash, merciless and self-willed. In recent times, as a modern Persian writer has put it, he has been almost deified in Iran. His virtues were abundant and abundantly clear, but so were his deficiencies and shortcomings. He it was who had used all his considerable

power to crush and eradicate the Faith of the Bab and wipe out its followers. He it was who took upon himself to ordain the execution of the Bab. He it was who almost destroyed 'Abbas Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih (later entitled Mulk-Ara), the half-brother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, of whom the sovereign's mother was inordinately jealous; had it not been for the intervention of Colonel Farrant, the British charge d'affaires, 'Abbas Mirza would certainly have lost his life through her machinations. Mirza Taqi Khan was imperious and unbending, but even he could not deter that uneasy, incompetent poltroon, Asafu'd-Dawlih, and his highly ambitious, daring, reckless and charming son, Hasan Khan (known as Salar), from rebelling in Khurasan for the second time. Sultan-Murad Mirza, the Hisamu's-Saltanih, uncle of the young Nasiri'd-Din, was given the task of bringing the Salar to his knees and pacifying the whole of the province of Khurasan, which he did with [p. 70] alacrity and ruthlessness--a characteristic of all the Qajar princes of the first rank. He laid siege to Mashhad, and Salar and his unfortunate father were overthrown.

But now it was not in Khurasan that heroic efforts were to be looked for--Khurasan which had witnessed, shortly before, the historic and crucial Conference of Badasht, and the exodus of the fearless Babu'l-Bab. Now great and tragic events were moving to a climax in the forests of Mazindaran, in the town of Nayriz (in the province of Fars), and in the city of Zanjan. Here, in all three, a few hundred Babis, persecuted, hounded and beleaguered, were forced to take up arms and fight, putting armies to flight, and in the end being overcome only by treachery and false promises. The indomitable Mulla Husayn, the stout-hearted Quddus and seven others of the Bab's Letters of the [p. 71] Living fell at Shaykh Tabarsi in Mazindaran, together with scores of other heroic men; the undaunted Hujjat (the outspoken cleric, Mulla Muhammad-'Ali of Zanjan) and his stalwart supporters--amongst whom was Zaynab, a young girl dressed as a youth, who took the masculine name of Rustam-'Ali and kept watch over the ramparts--fought every inch of the ground before falling with unparalleled bravery; at Nayriz the erudite Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi, surnamed Vahid, whom Muhammad Shah himself had commissioned to go to Shiraz and investigate the claim and the Cause of the Bab--and who had given Him his total allegiance--met a martyr's death in circumstances reminiscent of the martyrdom of the third Imam, the Prince of the Martyrs, while with him also fell many an intrepid soul, equally dedicated and unflinching in devotion to the Lord of the Age, the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad.

In the capital city of Iran, seven men--one of whom was the venerable Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, the maternal uncle of the Bab who reared Him when He was orphaned--were beheaded in public; and as these Seven Martyrs of Tihran walked resolutely and with firm steps to present their heads to the executioner, they were vilified, loaded with imprecations and mocked by a barbarous mob, who afterwards heaped insults on their corpses and set them on fire.

Then, one day in midsummer 1850, in a square of the city of Tabriz, the glorious Bab, Himself, together with a disciple whom no earthly attachment, not even the sight of his infant child, could induce to deviate from the path of

His Lord and renounce his faith, were riddled with bullets.

The heroism of these 'God-intoxicated' souls was truly unmatched.

But now it was the turn of Mirza Taqi Khan, in whose time as Grand Vizier the Bab and His followers had so greatly suffered, to be sent the same way as his predecessor, the ignorant, scheming Antichrist of the Babi Dispensation. He was summarily dismissed from office by his whimsical, ungrateful monarch, whose own sister, 'Izzatu'd-Dawlih he married. The fallen Minister was ordered to go to Kashan. It is claimed that the intervention of the Russian Minister on his behalf angered the young and unstable Nasiri'd-Din, who commissioned one of his courtiers, Hajibu'd-Dawlih, to travel covertly to Kashan and murder Mirza Taqi Khan. Hajibu'd-Dawlih bided [p. 72] his time until one day, when the fallen Grand Vizier was in his bath, he crept into the bath-house and told him of his commission. Mirza Taqi Khan faced death bravely. He chose to have his veins opened, and to die as his life-blood slowly oozed away. When 'Izzatu'd-Dawlih learned what had befallen her husband, it was too late to save him. Soon after his murder, Nasiri'd-Din Shah forced his widowed sister to marry izamu'l-Mulk, a son of his new Grand Vizier: Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri. But as soon as Mirza Aqa Khan was also dismissed (though not put to death), 'Izzatu'd-Dawlih obtained a divorce from him.

Mirza Taqi Khan left two daughters who, decades later, were married to two sons of Nasiri'd-Din Shah: Taju'l-Muluk (later entitled Ummu'l-Khaqan--'the Mother of the Sovereign') to Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza, who eventually came to the throne; and Hamdamu'l-Muluk (later entitled Hamdamu's-Saltanah) to Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan.

Of the ministry, dismissal and murder of Mirza Taqi Khan, Sir Percy Sykes writes:

..... It is said that people have the rulers they deserve and, if so, Persia is to be sincerely pitied; for she is ruled, as Europe was in mediaeval times, by officials whose main desire is to amass wealth per fas aut nefas. However this may be, the regrets which the traveller feels when visiting the charming gardens and pavilions of Fin [Fin, in the environs of Kashan, where Mirza Taqi Khan was murdered] are rendered more poignant when he reflects that, had this Minister governed for twenty years, he might have trained up some honest, capable men to succeed him. The execution of Amir-i-Nizam was, indeed, a calamity for Persia; for it arrested the progress which had been so painfully achieved and, as the near future was to prove, had an equally disastrous effect on her external relations.[14-1]

..... [14-1. Sykes, History of Persia, vol. II, p. 346 (3rd edn).]

It must be admitted, in fairness, that despite all the appalling injuries that Mirza Taqi Khan inflicted on the newly-born Faith, right in its cradle, he was a zealous, upright reformer, honest and hard-working. The imprint of his many good deeds remained to remind his nation, many decades later, of the benefits gained by the short and eventful vizierate of this enigmatic man. He it was who

laid the foundations of modern education in Iran, by instituting a college called 'Daru'l-Funun' (The Abode of Arts and Sciences), and employing European instructors, Austrian and French, to teach in that college. He it was who took the first steps to introduce journalism on Western lines into [p. 73] Iran, with its concomitant, a properly-run printing-press. But all his reforms and innovations, which included much else, do not equate him with being an advocate of democracy and democratic, constitutional government, which his over-zealous admirers have been attributing to him, in recent years. Both by temperament and by practice, he was a despot of the same mould as his whimsical royal master. [p. 74]

15

The Mad Attempt to Assassinate Nasiri'd-Din Shah

BAHA'ULLAH had hardly returned from His pilgrimage to the holy cities of 'Iraq, and while he was still an honoured guest of the Grand Vizier, a storm of titanic force and dimension broke over the heads of the Babis of Tihran. It decimated their ranks, shook their diminishing community to its foundations and almost wiped it out of existence. The Babis had no one to blame for their dire misfortune but the rashness and hot-headedness of some of their members. Baha'u'llah had already counselled them to walk in the ways of wisdom and moderation. But they had chosen to disregard His warnings.

Mulla Shaykh-'Ali, entitled 'Azim (Great) of Turshiz (now Kashmar) in Khurasan, a veteran of the Faith, was living in Tihran and had a cluster of the Babis round him. They met in various homes, including that of Haji Sulayman Khan, another veteran of the Faith, the same brave and devoted man who had, at the behest of Baha'u'llah, gone to Tabriz to recover the remains of the martyred Bab and bring them to Tihran. Amongst those Babis attached to Mulla Shaykh-'Ali were three young men, Sadiq of Tabriz, a confectioner, Fathu'llah, an engraver of Qum, and Haji Qasim of Nayriz. It so happened that Haji Qasim had suffered much at the hands of the adversaries of his Faith. In the eyes of these youths, the young Shah was the source of all the calamities that had befallen them, and so they plotted to assassinate him. It is not known how many were involved in this criminal folly, but Mulla Shaykh-'Ali certainly was. By the testimony of Baha'u'llah, as reported by Nabil-i-A'zam, Mulla Shaykh-'Ali made a full confession, and his frank and unhedged admissions convinced the authorities that Baha'u'llah had never been privy to such an evil design.

Sadiq, Fathu'llah, and Haji Qasim waylaid Nasiri'd-Din Shah on Sunday, 15 August 1852, in one of the summer resorts of the district of [p. 75] Shimran. Today the summer resorts of Shimran adjoin and have become part of the capital city, but in those days appreciable distances separated them from Tihran. The Shah and his retinue had just left his summer palace at Niyavaran on a hunting expedition, when the three young men approached him as petitioners seeking redress and justice. They were far from being professional assassins, and attempted their dastardly deed in a clumsy way. Their weapons were inadequate: short daggers and pistols that fired pellets. They tried to drag the Shah from

[p. 76] his horse, and inflicted pellet wounds on him which were not serious. By this time the members of the Shah's retinue had reached him to protect him, and beat off the assailants. Sadiq was killed on the spot. His body was cut in two, and each half was hoisted and left dangling over one of the several gates of the capital--Darvazih Shimran, the gate on the road to the summer resorts, and Darvaziy-i-Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim,[1] the gate on the road south to the tomb of the saint of that name. Fathu'llah, who would not say a word under torture, was taken to be deaf and dumb. Molten lead was poured down his throat. Haji Qasim too was soon dispatched.

..... [1. The tomb of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim or Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-'Azim, a descendant of the Prophet, was in those days several miles distant from Tihran. But today the village that bore the name of the saint has been renamed Shahr-i-Ray and adjoins the capital.] [p. 77]

Now Tihran fell into turmoil. There was a full hue and cry seeking the Babis. The mother of the young Shah was particularly vociferous in demanding vengeance. Haji 'Ali Khan, Hajibu'd-Dawlih (see Addendum V) of Maraghih, the farrash-bashi of the royal court, set about frenziedly seeking, finding and arresting as many of the Babis as he could. At this juncture 'Abbas, the man-servant of Haji Sulayman Khan, who had accepted the Faith of the Bab, turned coat and betrayed his master and his fellow believers. He had come to know personally many of the leading Babis of Tihran, and informed Hajibu'd-Dawlih of the meeting of his co-religionists in the house of his master. Therewith Haji Sulayman Khan's house was surrounded and entered, and all the Babis found there were arrested. All told, eighty-one Babis were apprehended, of whom thirty-eight were leading members of the community. They were thrown into the Siyah-Chal--the Dark Pit.

Baha'u'llah was, at this moment, staying in a summer residence at Afjih (Afchih), in the vicinity of Tihran. Ja'far-Quli Khan, the brother of Mirza Aqa Khan, the Sadr-i-A'zam (Grand Vizier), was still His host. The Grand Vizier himself sent word to inform Baha'u'llah of the engulfing tide, and particularly pointed out the venom of the anger and hatred of the mother of the Shah directed against His person. His friends offered to hide Him from the wrath of His ill-wishers until the danger had passed. But Baha'u'llah remained calm and composed. He had nothing to fear, and the next day He rode towards the royal quarters. On the way He alighted at the home of Mirza Majid Khan-i-Ahi, in the village of Zargandih. Mirza Majid Khan, secretary to the Russian envoy, was the husband of His sister, Nisa' Khanum. The news of His approach reached Hajibu'd-Dawlih, who promptly informed the Shah. And the sovereign immediately ordered His arrest. But His enemies were confounded, for while they were looking for Him to arrest Him, He was coming to them, of His own accord. But when had Baha'u'llah ever shown fear or panic?

They laid their rough hands upon His Person. On the road to the dungeon in Tihran, a big crowd gathered to jeer at Him and to heap insults upon Him. He Who had been their friend and defender, their shield and support in need, was now the victim of their blazing hatred.

People did the same to Jesus. On Palm Sunday they went out to greet Him. They gave Him a royal welcome. And Jerusalem echoed [p. 78] with 'Hosanna to the Son of David'. 'Blessed is He', they cried, 'that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest.' A few days later, in the courtyard of Pontius Pilate, they were given a choice. Which should die? Barrabas, the proved and convicted criminal, or Jesus, the Light of the World ? They asked for the death of Jesus. They rejected the Christ. 'Crucify Him', they cried.

Thus has the world ever treated its true friend.

Among the crowd, which hurled abuse at Baha'u'llah and pelted Him with stones, was an old woman. She stepped forward with a stone in her hand to strike at Him. Although frenzied with rage, her steps were too weak for the pace of the procession. 'Give me a chance to fling my stone in His face', she pleaded with the guard. Baha'u'llah turned to them and said, 'Suffer not this woman to be disappointed. Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God.' Such was the measure of His compassion.

About the attempt on the life of the Shah, Baha'u'llah writes in His Epistle to the Son of the Wolf:

..... By the righteousness of God! We were in no wise connected with that evil deed, and Our innocence was indisputably established by the tribunals. Nevertheless, they apprehended Us, and from Niyavaran, which was then the residence of His Majesty, conducted Us, on foot and in chains, with bared head and bare feet, to the dungeon of Tihran. A brutal man, accompanying Us on horseback, snatched off Our hat, whilst We were being hurried along by a troop of executioners and officials. We were consigned for four months to a place foul beyond comparison. As to the dungeon in which this Wronged One and others similarly wronged were confined, a dark and narrow pit were preferable. Upon Our arrival We were first conducted along a pitch-black corridor, from whence We descended three steep flights of stairs to the place of confinement assigned to Us. The dungeon was wrapped in thick darkness, and Our fellow-prisoners numbered nearly a hundred and fifty souls: thieves, assassins and highwaymen. Though crowded, it had no other outlet than the passage by which We entered. No pen can depict that place, nor any tongue describe its loathsome smell. Most of these men had neither clothes nor bedding to lie on. God alone knoweth what befell Us in that most foul-smelling and loomy place![15-1]

..... [15-1. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 20 21.]

[p. 79]

16

The Birth of the Baha'i Revelation

SIYAH-CHAL--the Black Pit--was a subterranean dungeon in the capital of Iran, dim, damp and dismal, never knowing the rays of the sun. At one time it had been the water reservoir of a public bath. Few people survived who were kept there for long. Now, in the summer of 1852, they herded together all the Babis

on whom they could lay their hands in Tihran, cast them into this dungeon and chained and fettered them. Amongst them were men from all walks of life: from distinguished courtiers to humble artisans, from well-to-do merchants to learned students of theology.

Baha'u'llah, Himself, was one of their number. Around His neck they placed one or other of the two most dreaded chains in the whole land. Under its ponderous weight His whole frame was bent. In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah speaks of those awesome chains:

..... Shouldst thou at some time happen to visit the dungeon of His Majesty the Shah, ask the director and chief jailer to show thee those two chains, one of which is known as Qara-Guhar, and the other as Salasil. I swear by the Day-Star of Justice that for four months this Wronged One was tormented and chained by one or the other of them. 'My grief exceedeth all the woes to which Jacob gave vent, and all the afflictions of Job are but a part of My sorrows!'"[16-1]

..... [16-1. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 77.]

Baha'u'llah and a glorious Shirazi youth, 'Abdu'l-Vahhab (see Chapter 18), were chained together. Though outwardly degraded in the eyes of men, and fettered as a dangerous criminal, Baha'u'llah had visitors in Siyah-Chal of such eminence as Dust-'Ali Khan, the Mu'ayyiru'l-Mamalik[1] and Nizamu'd-Dawlih and Haji Mirza [p. 80] Mahmud, the Nizamu'l-'Ulama, who had been the tutor of Nasiri'd-Din Shah in his youth and had assisted at the trial of the Bab in Tabriz. They went into His presence in that verminous dungeon, sat down courteously beside Him and spoke to Him with great respect.

..... [1. Some sixty years later, the third Mu'ayyiru'l-Mamalik, Dust-Muhammad Khan--the son of Dust-'Ali Khan and a son-in-law of Nasiri'd-Din Shah--met 'Abdu'l-Baha in London and became so devoted to Him that he sought His presence almost every day, and accompanied Him wherever He went. One day, Mirza Mahumd-i-Zarqani, 'Abdu'l-Baha's secretary and the chronicler of His journeys, came upon Dust-Muhammad Khan, gazing on 'Abdu'l-Baha with tears running down his cheeks.]

Nabil, the immortal historian of the Baha'i Faith, recounts in his work the words which he himself heard from Baha'u'llah, describing the torments of those days:

..... We were all huddled together in one cell, our feet in stocks, and around our necks fastened the most galling of chains. The air we breathed was laden with the foulest impurities, while the floor on which we sat was covered with filth and infested with vermin. No ray of light was allowed to penetrate that pestilential dungeon or to warm its icy coldness. We were placed in two rows, each facing the other. We had taught them to repeat certain verses which, every night, they chanted with extreme fervour. 'God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-Sufficing!' one row would intone, while the other would reply: 'In Him let the trusting trust.' The chorus of these gladsome voices

would continue to peal out until the early hours of the morning. Their reverberation would fill the dungeon, and, piercing its massive walls, would reach the ears of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, whose palace was not far distant from the place where we were imprisoned. 'What means this sound?' he was reported to have exclaimed. 'It is the anthem the Babis are intoning in their prison,' they replied. The Shah made no further remarks, nor did he attempt to restrain the enthusiasm his prisoners, despite the horrors of their confinement, continued to display.

..... One day, there was brought to Our prison a tray of roasted meat which they informed Us the Shah had ordered to be distributed among the prisoners. 'The Shah,' We were told, 'faithful to a vow he made, has chosen this day to offer to you all this lamb in fulfilment of his pledge.' A deep silence fell upon Our companions, who expected Us to make answer on their behalf. 'We return this gift to you,' We replied, 'we can well dispense with this offer.' The answer We made would have greatly irritated the guards had they not been eager to devour the food We had refused to touch. Despite the hunger with which Our companions were afflicted, only one among them, a certain Mirza Husayn-i-Mutivalliy-i-Qumi, showed any desire to eat of the food the sovereign had spread before us. With a fortitude that was truly heroic, Our fellow-prisoners submitted, without a murmur, to endure the piteous plight to which they were reduced. Praise of God, instead of complaint of the treatment meted out to them by the Shah, fell unceasingly from their lips--praise with which they sought to beguile the hardship of a cruel captivity.

..... Every day Our gaolers, entering Our cell, would call the name of one of Our companions, bidding him arise and follow them to the foot of the gallows. With what eagerness would the owner of that name respond to [p. 81] that solemn call! Relieved of his chains, he would spring to his feet and, in a state of uncontrollable delight, would approach and embrace Us. We would seek to comfort him with the assurance of an everlasting life in the world beyond, and, filling his heart with hope and joy, would send him forth to win the crown of glory. He would embrace, in turn, the rest of his fellow-prisoners, and then proceed to die as dauntlessly as he had lived. Soon after the martyrdom of each of these companions, We would be informed by the executioner, who had grown to be friendly with Us, of the circumstances of the death of his victim, and of the joy with which he had endured his sufferings to the very end.[16-2]

..... [16-2. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 461-3 (Brit.), pp. 631-3 (US).]

It was in the murk, the gloom, the twilight world of the Siyah-Chal that the Baha'i Revelation was born--in Tihiran, the same city where the Bearer of that Revelation Himself first saw the light of day. This dismal prison, where dangerous criminals were thrown, had been chosen to lodge the broken and shattered remnants of a once proud and flourishing community. All around Baha'u'llah, chained and fettered, lay the Babis, once carrying their heads high, but now bearing the stigma and the dishonour of would-be regicides. The enemy, fully aroused, knew no mercy and showed them none. They were doomed men, and they suffered horrible tortures before their lives were stifled.

The community of the Bab, become a shepherdless, aimless flock, courted disaster. Was it for this futility, this dubious, unedifying end, this seeming disgrace, one might well have asked, that the glorious Bab had gladly given His life, that the brave, the indomitable Babu'l-Bab, the gentle, unwavering Quddus, the fearless, courageous Hujjat, the erudite, steadfast Vahid and hundreds of other heroic souls, had fallen on the battlefield?

The answer would have been an emphatic, a thousandfold 'No', because the Babis, no matter how demoralized, how subject to influences alien to the truth of their Faith, or far strayed from the righteous purposes of the Bab, had kept aglow in their hearts the hope born of the promise of the near advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

It was in the path of that Supreme Manifestation of the Godhead that the Bab had shed His blood. It was to pave the way for His coming that martyrs had fallen at Shaykh Tabarsi, at Zanjan, at Nayriz. Indeed the whole raison d'etre of the Babis was to know and acknowledge 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. 'I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty day'--these had been the words of the [p. 82] glorious Bab addressed to the Letters of the Living, His first disciples, when He laid upon them the mandate to go out, 'scatter throughout the length and breadth' of the land and with 'steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming'. The Bab had assured His people of 'ultimate victory', but that 'ultimate victory' had surprisingly and cruelly eluded them. It must, therefore, of a certainty, be theirs under the standard of that Supreme Manifestation of the Godhead, Whose advent had also been promised to them, and Whom they eagerly awaited.

Baha'u'llah, Himself, has given us a vivid and overpowering account of those hours when He became conscious of His Divine Mission:

..... 'During the days I lay in the prison of Tihran, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.'

..... 'One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: "Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth--men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.'"

..... 'While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden--the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord--suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the

brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: "By [p. 83] God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive." [16-3]

..... [16-3. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 101-2. The words of Baha'u'llah are quoted here; the first two paragraphs are taken from His Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 22 and 21.]

These words are unique in the Scriptures of mankind. [p. 84]

17

Babi Martyrs of 1852

THE savageries perpetrated, and cruelties inflicted, on the Babi martyrs in the summer of 1852 were truly revolting, so revolting that an Austrian officer, Captain von Goumoens, in the employment of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, sent in his resignation and wrote this bitter letter to a friend; it is dated 29 August 1852:

..... 'Dear Friend, My last letter of the 20th inst. mentioned the attempt on the King. I will now communicate to you the result of the interrogation to which the two criminals were subjected. In spite of the terrible tortures inflicted, the examination extorted no comprehensive confession; the lips of the fanatics remained closed, even when by means of red-hot pincers and limb-rending screws they sought to discover the chief conspirator. All that transpired was that they belonged to the Babi sect. These Babis are heretics... This sect was founded ... by a certain Bab, who was shot by the King's command. The most faithful of his adherents fled to Zanjan, where, two years ago, they were reduced by the Royal Troops, and, as was generally believed, were exterminated without regard for age or sex. Like all religious intolerance, this unmeasured persecution produced exactly the opposite of the effects intended. The Bab's teaching gained more and more ground, and is at the present moment diffused through the whole country. Since the government obstinately clung to the system of persecution, the schismatics found occasion to steel their resolution, and to develop qualities which, contrasted with the effeminate luxury of the State Religion, compelled respect. Very skillfully had the Prophet [i.e. the Bab] pointed out to the disciples of his teaching that the way to Paradise lay through the torture-chamber. If he spoke truly, then the present Shah has deserved great merit, for he strenuously endeavours to people all the realms of the Saints with Babis! His last edict still further enjoins on the Royal servants the annihilation of the sect. If these simply followed the Royal command and rendered harmless [p. 85] such of the fanatics

as are arrested by inflicting on them a swift and lawful death, one must needs, from the oriental standpoint, approve of this; but the manner of inflicting the sentence, the circumstances which precede the end, the agonies which consume the bodies of the victims until their life is extinguished in the last convulsion are so horrible that the blood curdles in my veins if I now endeavour to depict the scene for you, even in outline. Innumerable blows with sticks which fall heavily on the back and soles of the feet, brandings of different parts of the body with red-hot irons, are such usual inflictions that the victim who undergoes only such caresses is to be accounted fortunate. But follow me my friend, you who lay claim to a heart and European ethics, follow me to the unhappy ones who, with gouged-out eyes, must eat, on the scene of the deed, without any sauce, their own amputated ears; or whose teeth are torn out with inhuman violence by the hand of the executioner; or whose bare skulls are simply crushed by blows from a hammer; or where the bazaar is illuminated with unhappy victims, because on right and left the people dig deep holes in their breasts and shoulders and insert burning wicks in the wounds. I saw some dragged in chains through the bazaar, preceded by a military band, in whom these wicks had burned so deep that now the fat flickered convulsively in the wound like a newly-extinguished lamp.

..... 'Not seldom it happens that the unwearied ingenuity of the Orientals leads to fresh tortures. They will skin the soles of the Babis' feet, soak the wounds in boiling oil, shoe the foot like the foot of a horse, and compel the victim to run. No cry escaped from the victim's breast; the torment is endured in dark silence by the numbed sensation of the fanatic; now he must run; the body cannot endure what the soul has endured; he falls. Give him the coup de grace! Put him out of his pain! No! The executioner swings the whip, and--I myself have had to witness it--the unhappy victim of hundred-fold tortures runs! This is the beginning of the end. As for the end itself, they hang the scorched and perforated bodies by their hands and feet to a tree head-downwards, and now every Persian may try his marksmanship to his heart's content from a fixed but not too proximate distance on the noble quarry placed at his disposal. I saw corpses torn by nearly 150 bullets. The more fortunate suffered strangulation, stoning or suffocation: they were bound before the muzzle of a mortar, cut down with swords, or killed with dagger thrusts, or blows from hammers and [p. 86] sticks. Not only the executioner and the common people took part in the massacre: sometimes Justice would present some of the unhappy Babis to various dignitaries and the Persian [recipient] would be well content, deeming it an honour to imbrue his own hands in the blood of the pinioned and defenceless victim. Infantry, cavalry, artillery, the ghulams or guards of the King, and the guilds of butchers, bakers, etc., all took their fair share in these bloody deeds. One Babi was presented to the crack officers-corps of the garrison; the general in command dealt the first blow, and afterwards each one as his rank determined. The Persian troops are butchers, not soldiers.... Would to God that I had not lived to see it! But by the duties of my profession I was unhappily often, only too often, a witness of these abominations.' [17-1]

..... [17-1. Browne, Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 268-71.]

Such was the measure of the disgust and revulsion of an upright and civilized Austrian officer. But those who ordered, 'sanctioned, and committed such savageries, not only committed them but pleasurably gloried in their abominable deeds, as the reportage in the pages of the official gazette of the time, Ruznamiy-i-Vaqayi'-i-Ittifaqiyyih, amply testifies.

One of that band of brave and unflinching souls, who died in the holocaust of 1852, was Sulayman Khan, the same fearless spirit who, at the bidding of Baha'u'llah, had rescued the mangled, inseparable remains of the glorious Bab and His faithful disciple. They bored nine holes in his body (even assisted by himself) and placed nine lighted candles in them. Thus they paraded him in the streets and bazars, with a howling, yelling, crazed mob jeering at his heels. Sulayman Khan was a young courtier, in the full vigour of his manhood, accustomed to power and display. On this day of his martyrdom he stopped in the midst of his tortures and exclaimed: 'What greater pomp and pageantry than those which this day accompany my progress to win the crown of glory! Glorified be the Bab, who can kindle such devotion in the breasts of His lovers, and can endow them with a power greater than the might of kings!' As the candles flickered in his wounds, he said, 'You have long lost your sting, O flames, and have been robbed of your power to pain me. Make haste, for from your very tongues of fire I can hear the voice that calls me to my Beloved!'[17-2] And when one of his brutal tormentors reviled him, he answered with these lines:

..... [17-2. Nabil, The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 452 3 (Brit.), pp. 619-20 (US).] [p. 87]

..... Clasp in one hand the wine-cup, in one hand

..... the Loved One's hair,

..... Thus my doom would I envisage dancing through

..... the market-square.[17-3]

..... [17-3. Browne, The Traveller's Narrative, vol. II, p. 334.]

Thus died Sulayman Khan.

Another distinguished victim in this tornado was Tahirih, the beautiful, talented poetess of Qazvin--the same heroic soul who, at the Conference of Badasht, raised the call of the emancipation of her downtrodden sex. Now, in the dead of night, they strangled her and cast her body into a pit of which no trace was left. But the memory of her supreme constancy, courage and devotion will for ever endure. No matter how malignant and denigrated she may be (or may have been) by those blinded to truth, because of their jealousy and fanaticism, the bright star of the silver-tongued poetess of Qazvin will dazzlingly shine to the end of time. Tahirih knew of her approaching death and was ready for it. To her hostess, the wife of the magistrate in whose custody she was placed, Tahirih said on the day preceding the night of her martyrdom: 'I am preparing

to meet my Beloved, and wish to free you from the cares and anxieties of my imprisonment.' [17-4] She was in bridal array.

..... [17-4. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 455 (Brit.), pp. 622-3 (US).]

Such was the fortitude of the Babis and such was the magnitude of their sacrifice.

Siyyid Husayn-i-Katib of Yazd, surnamed 'Aziz, one of the Bab's Letters of the Living, His amanuensis and companion in the mountain-prisons of Adharbayjan, was another prominent Babi who quaffed the cup of martyrdom in that summer of 1852. He was handed over to the Ajudan-Bashi and officers of the highest rank in the army, who hacked him with their swords.

Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini (known as Mirza Ahmad-i-Katib) was torn apart by artillery men with their daggers. His brother, Aqa 'Abdu'l-Hamid, also met a martyr's death.

The martyr mentioned by Captain von Goumoens to have been shod like a horse and made to run was, according to the official gazette, Aqa Muhammad-Taqi, a native of Shiraz. The perpetrators of that barbarous deed were Asadu'llah Khan, Nasiri'd-Din Shah's Master of the Horse, and his crew in the royal stables. [p. 88]

Even the young students of the Daru'l-Funun-the college recently instituted by Amir Kabir--were made to take part in those savageries. Their victim was Mirza Nabi of Damavand, a learned man, resident in Tihiran. They cut him down with swords and spears.

Haji Mirza Jani, the faithful merchant of Kashan, who had acted as host to the Bab in that city, and was the first chronicler of His Faith,[1] became the victim of Aqa Mihdi, the Maliku't-Tujjar (the King of the Merchants), and the leading traders of the capital, who set upon him with a variety of weapons.

..... [1. His short chronicle has been tampered with, beyond all recognition, and made the repository of hallucinations under the title Nuqtatu'l-Kaf. See Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith*. It is said that Mirza Aqa Khan, the Grand Vizier, wished to save Haji Mirza Jani.]

Another figure of note who met a martyr's death was Lutf-'Ali Mirza of Shiraz, a survivor of the holocaust of Shaykh Tabarsi. Lutf-'Ali Mirza was a scion of the Afsharid kings. He wrote a historical account of the episode of Shaykh Tabarsi in Mazindaran, which remained unfinished. The Shatir-Bashi (the chief runner or courier) and the shatirs (couriers) serving under him, put Lutf-'Ali Mirza to death by making him the target of stones, knives, daggers and sticks.

All these barbarities are reported in the official gazette with relish and pride. Shatir-Bashi had rendered signal services to the Shah, that very day when the attempt was made on his life, and therefore Nasiri'd-Din Shah wished to spare Mirza Sulayman-Quli, known as Khatibu'r-Rahman (the orator of the Merciful), who was the brother of Shatir-Bashi. But the latter, himself, brought about Mirza Sulayman-Quli's death, saying that he did not wish to have

a brother who was a Babi. Husayn-i-Milani, known as Husayn-Jan (Beloved Husayn), who had put forward a claim and had acquired a following, was another martyr in that August, that month of horrors. Soldiers of various regiments killed him with their spears, in their own fiendish way.

According to Nabil-i-A'zam, thirty-eight Babis met a martyr's death, in the fashions described, at the hands of various groupings of people. Enough has been said to show the barbarities committed by a vengeful enemy. Now, we shall only record the names of the other martyrs, as reported in the official gazette. No grave, no tombstone is there in the capital city of Iran, to remind one of their supreme sacrifice. But the pages of history will enshrine their glories and bear witness, throughout centuries unborn, to the heroism which they displayed, and to the infamy and eternal shame of their persecutors. [p. 89]

The rest of the martyrs are named as: Siyyid Hasan-i-Khurasani (Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Radavi, one of the survivors of Shaykh Tabarsi), Mulla Husayn-i-Khurasani, Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin-i-Yazdi, Mulla Fathu'llah-i-Qumi (one of the assailants of the Shah, according to the official gazette), Shaykh 'Abbas-i-Tihirani, Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Najafabadi, Mulla Mirza Muhammad-i-Nayrizi (according to the official gazette, he had fought at Mazindaran, Zanzan and Nayriz, his body bearing many scars of wounds received in those campaigns), Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Najafabadi, Aqa Mihdiy-i-Kashani, Sadiq-i-Zanjani (said to have been a native of Tabriz, he was one of those who attempted the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, and died the same day at the hands of the Shah's entourage), Haji Qasim-i-Nayrizi (he met his death with Sulayman Khan, and in the same manner, their bodies being cut into halves, each half to swing on a city-gate), Mirza Rafi'-i-Nuri, Mirza Mahmud-i-Qazvini, Najaf-i-Khamsi'i, Hasan-i-Khamsi'i, and Muhammad-Baqir-i-Quhpay'i.

The same official gazette reports that Nasiri'd-Din Shah sentenced the following to life imprisonment, because their guilt had not been proved: Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nuri (Baha'u'llah), Mirza Sulayman-Quli (whose own brother, as we have seen, encompassed his death), Mirza Mahmud, Aqa 'Abdu'llah (son of Aqa Muhammad-Ja'far), Mirza Javad-i-Khurasani, and Mirza Husayn-i-Qumi, of whom the official gazette adds: 'Though not quite guiltless, was kept for questionings'--most probably to make him incriminate 'Abbas Mirza, the half-brother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, whose tutor Mirza Husayn had been at Qum. Eventually, both he and 'Abbas Mirza were banished to 'Iraq.

Apart from those whose names were given in the official gazette, the following are also known to have been martyred in that summer of 1852: Haji Muhammad-Riday-i-Isfahani, Ibrahim Big-i-Khurasani, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad-i-Nuri (a cousin of Baha'u'llah, son of a paternal aunt), Mulla 'Abdu'l-Fattah (an old man, eighty years old, who was brought from Takur, and died as soon as he was cast into the Siyah-Chal). Mulla 'Ali Baba and Aqa Muhammad-Taqi (both natives of Takur and brought from there to Tihiran, where both died within the prison-walls).

And it is certain that there were other martyrs in Tihran whose names have not been recorded by friend or foe. [p. 90]

In Takur, in (he district of Nur, the native town of the father of Baha'u'llah, occurred an incident for which responsibility can be laid at the door of Mirza Yahya. Prior to the attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, Mirza Yahya, who knew of the plans concocted by 'Azim and Husayn-Jan-i-Milani and others, left the capital for Takur. So certain was he of the success which would attend the plans of his misguided fellow believers in Tihran that he took covert steps to consolidate his own position in Takur, and indeed in the whole district of Nur. Mulla 'Ali Baba was a divine of advanced years in Takur. Mirza Yahya persuaded him to lay aside his garb of a divine, a man of learning, to put on the garments of a fighting man, bedecked with weapons, and to wear on his head a hunting-cap. Muhammad-Taqi Khan, who was young and impressionable, followed suit, with a few others, and thus rumours spread that the Babis were planning an uprising. Soon, news came that an attempt had been made to assassinate the Shah and had signally failed. Mirza Yahya was extremely frightened, gave out that he was leaving for Tihran, and rode out of Takur in haste, only to return the same night and go into hiding. When he emerged from his hiding-place it was as a dervish, and in that disguise, together with his uncle, Mirza (or Mulla) Zaynu'l-Abidin, and another man named Mulla Ramadan, they went roaming in the forests of Mazindaran, until they reached the sea-town of Mashhad-Sar (now Babulsar). There, Mirza Yahya and his uncle took a boat to Anzali, in the Caspian province of Gilan. From Anzali, they made their way to Baghdad. The people of Takur had, however, been thoroughly alarmed and, led by Shaykh 'Azizu'llah (that uncle of Baha'u'llah who was hostile), kept sending exaggerated reports to Tihran which greatly angered Nasiri'd-Din Shah. He ordered Mirza Aqa Khan, the Sadr-i-A'zam, to give a salutary lesson to the Babis of Takur. Mirza Aqa Khan was a Nuri himself and knew how distorted the news of Takur was, but he had to do something to satisfy the Shah. So he chose a regiment of cavalymen, gave command to Hasan-'Ali Khan-i-Qajar, and made his own nephew, Mirza Abu-Talib Khan, the adviser of Hasan-'Ali Khan. Mirza Abu-Talib Khan's sister was the wife of Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, a brother of Baha'u'llah. Despite this relationship and despite the Grand Vizier's warnings and injunctions, and Hasan-'Ali Khan's protestations, Mirza Abu-Talib Khan took high-handed action. He refused to meet his own brother-in-law, terrorized [p. 91] the countryside, and let his soldiers loose upon the people of Takur, many of whom fled to the hilltops and mountain peaks. Baba Khan, Muhammad-Taqi Khan and 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Big were three of the leading Babis who took to the hills. Baba Khan managed to get away. Muhammad-Taqi Khan, beholding from his vantage point the riotous, unbridled behaviour of the soldiers and the sorry plight of his fellow believers, told his companion that he would go back to give whatever aid he could to the suffering inhabitants of Takur. 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Big tried to stop him, seeing how hopeless the situation was. But Muhammad-Taqi Khan was adamant and 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Big, together with his servant, accompanied him. On their descent into Takur they were fired on. 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Big and Muhammad-Taqi Khan both fell, while the servant threw himself into the river

and was carried away by its current.

'Abdu'l-Baha spoke, one evening in August 1919, in the drawing-room of His house at Haifa, of Muhammad-Taqi Khan of Takur, his high qualities and his bravery, Muhammad-Taqi Khan, He said, had been brought up in the lap of luxury, and was survived by an old mother, eighty years of age, who was constancy personified. All that had been left to her was a wrecked house, the contents of which had been pillaged. Throughout the night, 'Abdu'l-Baha related, she praised God and rendered thanks to Him: 'My Lord! I had but one son, and him I gave in Thy path. All praise be unto Thee!'

A month later, 'Abdu'l-Baha added, a certain Haji Hasan-i-Kujuri came to Muhammad-Taqi Khan's mother, to pay back, being a very honest man, something which he said he had owed to her martyred son. But the old lady, although in great need, refused to accept it, no matter how Haji Hasan pleaded to be allowed to make the repayment. She said, 'My son's wife and children are in Tihiran; take it to them.'

Mirza Abu-Talib Khan arrested about twenty of the leading Babis, amongst whom were the aged Mulla 'Abdu'l-Fattah, Mulla 'Ali Babay-i-Buzurg (the Elder) and Mulla 'Ali Babay-i-Kuchik (the Younger), and herded with a number of women, they were sent to Tihiran. The men were taken to the Siyah-Chal. The above-mentioned three with three others, one of whom was named Muhammad-Taqi Big, died in that dungeon, in the presence of Baha'u'llah. He closed the eyelids of Mulla 'Ali Babay-i-Buzurg, as death overtook him. 'Abdu'l-Baha has related that when a man was ordered by Mirza Abu-Talib [p. 92] Khan to cut off the beard of Mulla 'Abdu'l-Fattah, he cruelly cut off also part of his chin. That aged Babi was more dead than alive, and expired on arrival at the Siyah-Chal. The presumptuous, wayward Mirza Abu-Talib Khan even forced his own brother-in-law to abandon Takur. Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, who had charge of the properties of the family there, left his son, Mirza Ghulam-'Ali, in his own stead and proceeded to Tihiran. When Mirza Abu-Talib Khan was received by Nasiri'd-Din Shah, he boasted of all that he had achieved; but the Shah, turning to Hasan-'Ali Khan, enquired in Turkish what actually had occurred. The Qajar chieftain was quite truthful and told Nasiri'd-Din Shah that he had found no sign of rebellion in [p. 93] Takur, and taking troops there had only resulted in the death of a number of innocent men, the devastation of a large area of the countryside, the destruction of the house of Mirza Buzurg, and the pillage of all the valuable contents of that house. Nasiri'd-Din Shah, it is said, felt ashamed and abashed. Mirza Aqa Khan reprimanded his nephew although that young upstart received a commission in the army and was given a regiment to command.

But history records that this is what happened to those guilty of transgressions at Takur. Mirza Abu-Talib Khan went down with cholera within a month. At the hour of his death, his head was resting on the knees of Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, the brother-in-law whom he had slighted and scorned. Now that husband of his sister showed him all kindness and compassion, to the astonishment of Mirza Aqa Khan. Mirza Khalil-i-Yalrudi, who had committed

atrocities in the course of the same year, fell off a bridge with his horse and was fatally wounded. Tahmasb-Quli Khan-i-Kujuri, also guilty of atrocities, was torn to pieces by his own entourage. Nabi, the man who by his own confession had shot Muhammad-Taqi Khan, during the army's march back from Takur, fell from his steed and was killed. [p. 94]

18

The Story of a Shirazi Youth

THIS is the story of a Shirazi youth--a glorious youth who immolated himself, because his pure heart brimmed with love for Baha'u'llah. His story goes back to the opening months of the new Dispensation. It has been told by Baha'u'llah; it has been told by 'Abdu'l-Baha; and Nabil has recorded it.

When Mulla 'Ali-i-Bastami--one of the Bab's Letters of the Living instructed by Him to go to 'Iraq--left for his destination, he had gone only a short distance from Shiraz before he was overtaken by a youth. His name, the young man said, was 'Abdu'l-Vahhab. His purpose was very simple: to be with Mulla 'Ali wherever he was going. And he had a strange tale to tell. Let Nabil-i-A'zam take up the story:

..... '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 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 [p. 95] 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 and grandeur." Departing from him, you directed your steps towards the gate of Kaziran [Kazirun]. 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 was one among the favoured in the court of the sons of the Farman-Farma,[1] 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 inquired 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.

..... [1. Most probably Husayn-'Ali Mirza, son of Fath-'Ali Shah. The next Farma, also for a short while the Governor of Fars, was Firaydun Mirza, brother of Muhammad Shah. (HMB)]

..... '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 [p. 96] 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 from Shiraz to Baghdad.[18-1]

..... [18-1. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 59-61 (Brit.), pp. 87-90 (US).]

Next, we meet this God-intoxicated youth in Kazimayn,[1] the holy city adjacent to Baghdad, where he had set himself up in a shop. The year is 1851.

Baha'u'llah is temporarily in 'Iraq, having gone there on the advice of Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir Kabir.

..... [1. It is also stated that it was in Karbila that this young man had his shop, and it was there that he met Baha'u'llah.]

Kazimayn with its two sacred shrines was frequently visited by Baha'u'llah. It was inevitable that the Shirazi youth should encounter Baha'u'llah and, having encountered Him, become fervently attached to Him. Now he knew no peace save in the presence of Baha'u'llah, Who was still known only as Jinab-i-Baha by the Babis, and as Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nuri by the world at large. Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab's dearest wish was to travel back to Iran in the company of Baha'u'llah. But Baha'u'llah persuaded him to remain where he was, with his father, and gave him a sum of money to enlarge and extend his trade.

..... Whither can a lover go but to the land of his beloved? And what seeker findeth rest away from his heart's desire? To the true lover reunion is life, and separation is death. His breast is void of patience and his heart hath no peace. A myriad lives he would forsake to hasten to the abode of his beloved.[18-2]

..... [18-2. Baha'u'llah, *The Hidden Words*, no. 4 (Persian).]

Thus did the Most Sublime Pen inscribe, years later in Baghdad.

'Abdu'l-Vahhab could not but follow Baha'u'llah to Tihiran. He reached the capital at the time when the misguided attempt had been made on the life of the Shah and Tihiran was in turmoil. 'Abdu'l-Baha, [p. 97] relating in a Tablet the story of that glorious youth, speaks of the officials searching everywhere for the Babis, and 'Abdu'l-Vahhab, undaunted, giving praise to his Lord in the market-place. He was seized and thrown into the Siyah-Chal. Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Shirazi had, at long last, found that repose, that peace of heart and mind which his whole being craved, for he was continuously in the presence of his Lord. He was chained with Baha'u'llah.

And Baha'u'llah, one day, told Nabil:

..... 'We were awakened one night, ere break of day, by Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Shirazi, who was bound with Us to the same chains. He had left

Kazimayn and followed Us to Tihran, where he was arrested and thrown into prison. He asked Us whether We were awake, and proceeded to relate to Us his dream. "I have this night," he said, "been soaring into a space of infinite vastness and beauty. I seemed to be uplifted on wings that carried me wherever I desired to go. A feeling of rapturous delight filled my soul. I flew in the midst of that immensity with a swiftness and ease that I cannot describe." "Today," We replied, "it will be your turn to sacrifice yourself for this Cause. May you remain firm and steadfast to the end. You will then find yourself soaring in that same limitless space of which you dreamed, traversing with the same ease and swiftness the realm of immortal sovereignty, and gazing with that same rapture upon the Infinite Horizon."

..... "That morning saw the gaoler again enter Our cell and call out the name of 'Abdu'l-Vahhab. Throwing off his chains, he sprang to his feet, embraced each of his fellow-prisoners, and, taking Us into his arms, pressed Us lovingly to his heart. That moment We discovered that he had no shoes to wear. We gave him Our own, and, speaking a last word of encouragement and cheer, sent him forth to the scene of his martyrdom. Later on, his executioner came to Us, praising in glowing language the spirit which that youth had shown. How thankful We were to God for this testimony which the executioner himself had given!"[18-3]

..... [18-3. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 463 (Brit.), pp. 633-4 (US).]

'Abdu'l-Vahhab kissed the knees of Baha'u'llah; then he sang and danced all the way into the embrace of death. All the fiendish cruelties, all the unspeakable tortures, which, at the hour of death, the rapacious enemy inflicted upon that glorious youth of Shiraz, never made a dent in his constancy, because his blessed eyes were gazing 'upon the infinite Horizon'. His pure heart brimmed with love and joy.

Thus died 'Abdu'l-Vahhab, a simple youth from Shiraz.

And now we move with the years: sixty years after the martyrdom of 'Abdu'l-Vahhab. 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the Covenant of [p. 98] Baha'u'llah, is in the United States of America, travelling from the shores of the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific. One day, He relates the story of that Shirazi youth to a number of American Baha'is. Lua Getsinger (whom the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has honoured with the designation of the 'mother teacher of the West') is amongst those privileged to hear 'Abdu'l-Baha tell that stirring story. Reaching the crucial moment when 'Abdu'l-Vahhab took leave of Baha'u'llah to go to his martyrdom--but let Juliet Thompson complete the picture:

..... Suddenly Abdul Baha's whole aspect changed. It was as though the spirit of the martyr had entered into Him... With His head thrillingly erect, snapping His fingers high in the air, beating on the porch with His foot till we could scarcely endure the vibrations set up--such electric power radiated from Him--He sang the martyr's song, ecstatic and tragic beyond anything I had ever heard. This was what the Cause meant then! This was what it meant to live

near Him! Another realm opened to me--the realm of Divine Tragedy.

..... 'And thus,' ended Abdul Baha, 'singing and dancing he went to his death--and a hundred executioners fell on him! And later his old parents came to Baha'o'llah, praising God that their son had given his life in the Path of God!'

..... He sank back in His chair. Tears swelled in my eyes, blurring everything. When they cleared I saw a yet stranger look on His face. His eyes were unmistakably fixed on the invisible. They were as brilliant as jewels and so filled with delight that they almost made His vision real to us. A smile of exultation played on His lips. Very low, so that it sounded like an echo, he hummed the martyr's song. 'See!' He exclaimed, 'the effect that the death of a martyr has in the world. It has changed my condition.' There was a moment of silence; then He said: 'What is it, Juliet, that you are pondering so deeply?' 'I was thinking of the look on your face when you said that your condition was changed. I was thinking I had seen a flash of the joy of God over those who die happily for humanity.' [18-4]

..... [18-4. Thompson, Abdul Baha's First Days in America, p. 34.]

Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid, the father of 'Abdu'l-Vahhab--who inflicted such hard punishment on Mulla 'Aliy-i-Bastami--and his wife, took unhesitatingly the same path as their glorious son, as soon as they came face to face with Baha'u'llah. [p. 99]

19

Release and Exile

THE mother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah was vociferous in demanding the blood of Baha'u'llah, and Hajibu'd-Dawlih would, no doubt, have had Him executed, if he could have found a way to do it; but every time they took 'Abbas, the page-boy who had been in the employment of the martyred Haji Sulayman Khan, to Siyah-Chal to identify Baha'u'llah, he stoutly maintained that he had never seen Him in the company of the Babis, in the house of his master. In the meantime, Baha'u'llah's brothers and sisters were making every effort to bring about His release, but Nasiri'd-Din Shah was adamant. He had decided that Baha'u'llah should be kept in prison to the end of His days.

Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, the Sadr-i-A'zam who had replaced Mirza Taqi Khan, owed much to Baha'u'llah. At a time when he had fallen into disgrace during the premiership of Haji Mirza Aqasi, and was bastinadoed and fined, Baha'u'llah paid a good deal of the fine for him. And later, when Mirza Aqa Khan found himself in dire financial straits during his exile in Kashan, Baha'u'llah again came to his rescue, and through Mirza Shafi', the Sahib-Divan, got him an annuity of nineteen hundred tumans. Still later, Baha'u'llah helped Kazim Khan and his wife--he was the son of Mirza Aqa Khan--to join his father in Kashan. Now, in 1852, the relatives of Baha'u'llah sent handsome and valuable presents and even a large sum of money to Mirza Aqa Khan.

Urged by Mirza Majid-i-Ahi, the secretary of the Russian Legation--as previously noted, he was married to a sister of Baha'u'llah--Prince Dolgorouki, the Russian Minister, also pressed the Government to come soon to a decision and release Baha'u'llah. On the other hand, enemies were doing their utmost to bring about His death, particularly those who desired to obtain the patronage of the vengeful mother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Having failed in their attempt to gain an admission from the page-boy of Haji Sulayman Khan, they tried to poison Baha'u'llah. Some noxious substance was introduced into the food [p. 100] brought from His home, but the effect of that poison became so noticeable that Baha'u'llah ceased to partake of that food.

Mulla Shaykh-'Aliy-i-Turshizi, surnamed 'Azim, was also still languishing in the Siyah-Chal. Prince Dolgorouki insisted that his representative, together with Hajibu'd-Dawlih and a representative of the Sadr-i-A'zam, should visit the Siyah-Chal and interrogate Mulla Shaykh-'Ali. 'Azim completely exonerated Baha'u'llah; he told them that Baha'u'llah was never involved in any plot directed against the Shah, and he took upon himself all responsibility for the attempt on the Shah's life. Baha'u'llah has lauded the courage and truthfulness of Mulla Shaykh-'Ali of Turshiz, and has said that he was truly 'Azim--Great. However, Mirza Husayn-i-Mutavalli, in order to curry favour, tried to inculcate Baha'u'llah. This effrontery was too much even for Hajibu'd-Dawlih, who gave Mirza Husayn a hard slap in the face. [p. 101] This fickle man, from the time of his defection at Shaykh Tabarsi, when he dared to spit on the face of Quddus, had always betrayed the Faith which he had once so warmly espoused. Now, having been in Qum a tutor to 'Abbas Mirza, the ill-starred half-brother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, he was under grave suspicion; to show that he was guiltless, he took up a penknife and cut off an ear of Mulla Shaykh-'Ali. But this despicable deed did not save him from torture; he was branded and his screams rang throughout the dungeon.

Despite the fact that Mulla Shaykh-'Ali had clearly confessed to his own crucial part in the attempt to assassinate the Shah, Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Imam-Jum'ih of Tihran, would not consent to his execution. The rapacious Hajibu'd-Dawlih tricked the Imam-Jum'ih, got a verdict from him by false pretences, and had Mulla Shaykh-'Ali immediately put to death, an infamous action which greatly angered the Imam-Jum'ih. 'Azim was the last martyr of the holocaust of summer 1852.

At last, Nasiri'd-Din Shah agreed to let Baha'u'llah go, and decreed that He should be banished from Iran. Baha'u'llah had lingered in chains for four agony-laden months. Mirza Aqa Khan sent a confidant named Haji 'Ali to bring Him out of the Siyah-Chal. The sight of the appalling condition of the dungeon and the enfeebled condition of Baha'u'llah deeply shocked Haji 'Ali, who assured Baha'u'llah that they had had no idea of the terrible circumstances He had endured all those months. Haji 'Ali then offered his own cloak to Baha'u'llah, which He refused, preferring to appear before Mirza Aqa Khan and the others of the Government in the rags He was wearing.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... No sooner had He presented Himself before them than the Grand Vizir addressed Him saying: 'Had you chosen to take my advice, and had you dissociated yourself from the Faith of the Siyyid-i-Bab, you would never have suffered the pains and indignities that have been heaped upon you.' 'Had you, in your turn,' Baha'u'llah retorted, 'followed My counsels, the affairs of the government would not have reached so critical a stage.' Mirza Aqa Khan was thereupon reminded of the conversation he had had with Him on the occasion of the Bab's martyrdom, when he had been warned that 'the flame that has been kindled will blaze forth more, fiercely than ever.' 'What is it that you advise me now to do?' he inquired from Baha'u'llah. 'Command the governors of the realm,' was the instant reply, 'to cease shedding the blood of the innocent, to cease plundering their property, to cease dishonoring their women, and injuring their children.' That [p. 102] same day the Grand Vizir acted on the advice thus given him; but any effect it had, as the course of subsequent events amply demonstrated, proved to be momentary and negligible.[19-1]

..... [19-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 105.

Baha'u'llah was given one month to leave the country. At the time of His release from the Siyah-Chal, He was too ill to set out on a long journey. He had no home of His own now. His house had been wrecked and pillaged, and His two wives and children had found temporary accommodation in an obscure quarter of the capital. He went to live in the house of His brother, Mirza Rida-Quli, whose wife Maryam, the sister of Baha'u'llah's second wife and devoted to Him, made adequate arrangements for Him to rest and recuperate.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... This enforced and hurried departure of Baha'u'llah from His native land, accompanied by some of His relatives, recalls in some of its aspects, the precipitate flight of the Holy Family into Egypt; the sudden migration of Muhammad ... from Mecca to Medina; the exodus of Moses, His brother and His followers from the land of their birth, in response to the Divine summons, and above all the banishment of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised Land a banishment which, in the multitudinous benefits it conferred upon so many divers peoples, faiths and nations, constitutes the nearest historical approach to the incalculable blessings destined to be vouchsafed, in this day, and in future ages, to the whole human race, in direct consequence of the exile suffered by Him Whose Cause is the flower and fruit of all previous Revelations.[19-2]

..... [19-2. *ibid.* p. 107. (*God Passes By*)

On the twelfth day of January 1853, Baha'u'llah and His family left Tihiran, together with two of His brothers--Mirza Musa, known in later years as Aqay-i-Kalim, and Mirza Muhammad-Quli--and accompanied by a representative of the Imperial Government of Iran, and an official of the Russian Legation. Baha'u'llah's youngest son, Mirza Mihdi, the Purest Branch, then a young child, had to be left behind with relatives, and it was some years before he could be reunited with his parents. The Russian Government had offered Baha'u'llah a

refuge in its own territories, but He chose to go to 'Iraq. The time allowed Him to prepare had been too short, and particularly so since He needed a long period of rest before embarking on this journey in the heart of winter, over the high peaks and mountain passes of western Iran. He, His family and His brothers had not been able to provide themselves with all that was required for adequate protection against the intense cold of those heights. [p. 103]

[p. 104]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has further written:

..... In a prayer revealed by Him at that time, Baha'u'llah, expatiating upon the woes and trials He had endured in the Siyah-Chal, thus bears witness to the hardships undergone in the course of that 'terrible journey': 'My God, My Master, My Desire!... Thou hast created this atom of dust through the consummate power of Thy might, and nurtured Him with Thine hands which none can chain up... Thou hast destined for Him trials and tribulations which no tongue can describe, nor any of Thy Tablets adequately recount. The throat Thou didst accustom to the touch of silk Thou hast, in the end, clasped with strong chains, and the body Thou didst ease with brocades and velvets Thou hast at last subjected to the abasement of a dungeon. Thou Thy decree hath shackled Me with unnumbered fetters, and cast about My neck chains that none can sunder. A number of years have passed during which afflictions have, like showers of mercy, rained upon Me.... How many the nights during which the weight of chains and fetters allowed Me no rest, and how numerous the days during which peace and tranquillity were denied Me, by reason of that wherewith the hands and tongues of men have afflicted Me! Both bread and water which Thou hast, through Thy all-embracing mercy, allowed unto the beasts of the field, they have, for a time, forbidden unto this servant, and the things they refused to inflict upon such as have seceded from Thy Cause, the same have they suffered to be inflicted upon Me, until, finally, Thy decree was irrevocably fixed, and Thy behest summoned this servant to depart out of Persia, accompanied by a number of frail-bodied men and children of tender age, at this time when the cold is so intense that one cannot even speak, and ice and snow so abundant that it is impossible to move." [19-3]

..... [19-3. *ibid.* pp. 108-9. (God Passes By)]

As Baha'u'llah neared the frontier, a period drew to its close. Were the people of Iran aware of the loss they sustained? Steeped in ignorance, sunk in bigotry, blinded by prejudice, led by self-seeking men, beguiled by falsehoods, theirs was not to see and know. And thus the Redeemer of the world passed out of their midst. He Who once was loved and respected by rich and poor, high and low, prince and peasant alike, was now deserted by the same people on whom He had lavished mercy, love, justice and charity at all times. Iran lost the presence of Baha'u'llah, but could His spirit ever be absent from that or any other land?

Despite the hardships of that long journey, all along the road road Baha'u'llah received every consideration. He stopped any forcible levy on the peasantry for

provisions, and He refused offers of presents made by landlords and owners of villages. In Kirmanshah, he stayed for a few days. A number of the Babis who lived in that city attained [p. 105] His presence. Among them were Mirza 'Abdu'llah, a dealer in shoes, whose native town was Qazvin, and Aqa Ghulam-Husayn, a merchant of Shushtar. Nabil relates that later he found this merchant firmly devoted to Baha'u'llah. Pilgrims on their way to the holy cities of 'Iraq gathered in Kirmanshah, joining the entourage of Baha'u'llah to ease and expedite their departure.

At Karand, which has been a Centre of 'Aliyu'llahis,[1] the Governor, Hayat-Quli Khan, who belonged to that sect, greeted Baha'u'llah with marked reverence. 'He was shown, in return,' the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes, 'such kindness by Baha'u'llah that the people of the entire village were affected, and continued, long after, to extend such hospitality to His followers on their way to Baghdad that they gained the reputation of being known as Babis.'[19-4]

..... [1. Those who equate the Imam 'Ali with God. They are known for their tolerance, charity and compassion.]

..... [19-4. ibid. p. 108. (God Passes By)]

As the frontier was reached, on Baha'u'llah's instructions Mirza Musa went ahead to Khaniqayn and rented an orchard, redolent with flowers, as it was springtime and the days of Naw-Ruz. Water ran through its brooks and the birds were singing. On one side there was an orangery and on the other palm trees. Baha'u'llah stopped there and rested. He told His entourage that all that His enemies had devised had come to nought. [p. 106]

20

Baghdad--the First Year

BAHA'ULLAH reached Baghdad on 8 April 1853.[1] He had been travelling for three months, in the heart of winter, over the bleak, snow-bound heights of the western Iranian plateau. After the rigours He had suffered in the dungeon of Tihiran, a journey of that length, over such ground and in such a climatic condition, would have taxed any physical frame beyond endurance. But He had come through His ordeal strong and unswerving.

..... [1. 28 Jamadiyu'th-Thani AH 1269.]

After a few days in Baghdad, He moved to the township of Kazimayn, three miles away, which harbours the shrines of the seventh and the ninth Imams. Mirza Ibrahim Khan of Tabriz,--the Consul-General of Persia from 1846 until his death in December 1858--calling to pay his respects, suggested that because of the fanaticism of the populace and the pilgrims it might be more convenient for Baha'u'llah to return to Baghdad and live in the old quarter, which was close to Kazimayn. Baha'u'llah agreed and a search was made for a suitable house. About a month later, He and His family came back to Baghdad and settled in the house of Haji 'Ali Madad, which had been rented for Him.

At this time, Baghdad was a provincial centre of the Ottoman Empire, with a population of about 60,000. Little there was to bespeak its renowned history as the city built, between AD 762 and 766, by the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur, and called by him Madinat-u's-Salam--the City of Peace. Al-Mansur had made his city the capital of a vast empire stretching from Egypt to the confines of China. Subsequent caliphs enlarged and beautified it, until by the tenth century it was some 8 1/2 kilometres in length and 7 1/4 kilometres in width, filled with the finest palaces, most magnificent mosques, and most extensive bazars of that age. Its population at that time is estimated to have been some 1 1/2 million. From this time on there was a general decline in [p. 107] Baghdad's fortunes, until two successive sackings by the Mongols in 1258 and 1401 put a complete end to its former glory. In 1534, the Ottoman Sultan, Sulayman the Magnificent, took Baghdad and, in the next century, it was ruled alternately by Ottomans and Safavids, until in 1638 it settled into its role as an Ottoman provincial centre until the First World War.

When Baha'u'llah took up residence in Baghdad, where He would live for the next ten years, what had remained of the disconsolate, bewildered and decimated community of the Bab learned to turn to Him for advice, for guidance, for protection, because Mirza Yahya, who was known as the 'nominee' of the Bab, was nowhere to be seen. Having managed, as we have seen, to escape from Takur in the company of his uncle, Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin, he was now living in Baghdad under the assumed name of Haji 'Aliy-i-Las Furush, in the street of the charcoal-vendors (Dhughal-Furushan). It was Baha'u'llah's wish that he should return to Persia, there to serve the Faith of the Bab, as His own words make clear:

..... ..About two months after Our arrival in 'Iraq, following the command of His Majesty the Shah of Persia--may God assist him--Mirza Yahya joined Us. We said unto him: 'In accordance with the Royal command We have been sent unto this place. It is advisable for thee to remain in Persia. We will send Our brother, Mirza Musa, to some other place. As your names have not been mentioned in the Royal decree, you can arise and render some service.' Subsequently, this Wronged One departed from Baghdad, and for two years withdrew from the world. Upon Our return, We found [p. 108] that he had not left, and had postponed his departure. This Wronged One was greatly saddened.[20-1]

..... [20-1. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 166.]

One of the very first to recognize in Baha'u'llah that true mentor, counsellor and guide which the community of the Bab sorely needed, was Haji Hashim-i-'Attar, a wealthy Persian merchant who lived in new Baghdad. Having once attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, he became devoted to Him, and in the end gave Him his allegiance. We shall meet him in these pages in future years. Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, a merchant of Isfahan; Siyyid Muhammad-Rida and Siyyid Muhammad-Taqi, two brothers, sons of Siyyid-i-Buka'; Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shirazi--the father of that glorious martyr, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab--and his brother, Mirza Hasan, who was known as 'Gul-i-Gulab'

(Red Rose, literally, 'the flower of the rose-water')--all Persians who lived in Kazimayn--rallied round Him. And so did the Arab Babis of Baghdad, notably Shaykh Sultan and Aqa Muhammad-Mustafa. Another veteran of the Faith of the Bab, who very soon came to see that the hopes of the Babis must be centered in the person of Baha'u'llah, was Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i.

Shaykh-'Ali Mirza of Shiraz, a distinguished figure related to the imam-jum'ih[1] of that city, as well as Siyyid 'Abdu'r-Rahim of Isfahan (honoured in later years with the designation of Ismu'llahi'r-Rahim--the Name of God, the Merciful), and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the physician of Zanzan, who was to meet a martyr's death, were the most notable of the Babis in Iran who, from that early time, became convinced that only by turning to Jinab-i-Baha could they find that sure anchor which could and would steady the storm-tossed ship of their Faith.

..... [1. Two imam-jum'ih's of Shiraz, Shayky Abu-Turab and his son, Haji Shaykh Yahya, who lived to over ninety years of age, from the days of the Bab onwards always strove to give aid and afford protection to the followers of the Babi-Baha'i Faith. And they succeeded well beyond all expectation.]

But winds of dissension were already blowing, and rifts were making their mark. Whilst bound in chains in the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran, at a time when Mirza Yahya was constantly running for shelter, Baha'u'llah had vowed to arise and regenerate the shattered community of the Bab. Now, from the obscurity he had chosen, Mirza Yahya was secretly engaged in engineering opposition to Baha'u'llah, in company with Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, who had established himself in Karbila. [p. 109]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... Little wonder that from the pen of Baha'u'llah, Who was as yet unable to divulge the Secret that stirred within His bosom, these words of warning, of counsel and of assurance should, at a time when the shadows were beginning to deepen around Him, have proceeded: 'The days of tests are now come. Oceans of dissension and tribulation are surging, and the Banners of Doubt are, in every nook and corner, occupied in stirring up mischief and in leading men to perdition.... Suffer not the voice of some of the soldiers of negation to cast doubt into your midst, neither allow yourselves to become heedless of Him Who is the Truth, inasmuch as in every Dispensation such contentions have been raised. God, however, will establish His Faith, and manifest His light albeit the stirrers of sedition abhor it.... Watch ye every day for the Cause of God.... All are held captive in His grasp. No place is therefor any one to flee to. Think not the Cause of God to be a thing lightly taken, in which any one can gratify his whims. In various quarters a number of souls have, at the present time, advanced this same claim. The time is approaching when ... every one of them will have perished and been lost nay will have come to naught and become a thing unremembered, even as the dust itself.'[20-2]

..... [20-2. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 115.]

There was one person, however, to whom Baha'u'llah vouchsafed a view of that 'Secret that stirred within His bosom'. He was a Babi youth of Kashan named Mirza Aqa Jan. This youth had a dream, in which the Bab appeared, and then he came upon some of the writings of Baha'u'llah. Ascertaining that Jinab-i-Baha was in Baghdad, he made his way to 'Iraq, and in Karbila attained His presence. No matter how grievous Mirza Aqa Jan's waywardness would become--for eventually he chose to break the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and stray into the wilderness--this distinction remains his, that he was the first to recognize in the person of Baha'u'llah the Promised One of the Bayan--the Promise of All Ages. In later years, Baha'u'llah honoured him with the title of Khadimu'llah--Servant of God.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... This same Mirza Aqa Jan, recounting to Nabil his experiences, on the first and never to be forgotten night spent in Karbila, in the presence of his newly-found Beloved, Who was then a guest of Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Hakim-Bashi, had given the following testimony: 'As it was summertime Baha'u'llah was in the habit of passing His evenings and of sleeping on the roof of the House. [Aqa Mirza Muhammad-Quli and I sprinkled water on the roof, swept and carpeted it, until He came. He talked to us, had His dinner and retired to rest.] That night, when He had gone to sleep, I, [p. 110] according to His directions, lay down for a brief rest, at a distance of a few feet from Him. No sooner had I risen, and ... started to offer my prayers, in a corner of the roof which adjoined a wall, than I beheld His blessed Person rise and walk towards me. When He reached me He said: 'You, too, are awake.' Whereupon He began to chant and pace back and forth. How shall I ever describe that voice and the verses it intoned, and His gait, as He strode before me! Methinks, with every step He took and every word He uttered thousands of oceans of light surged before my face, and thousands of worlds of incomparable splendor were unveiled to my eyes, and thousands of suns blazed their light upon me! In the moonlight that streamed upon Him, He thus continued to walk and to chant. Every time He approached me He would pause, and, in a tone so wondrous that no tongue can describe it, would say: 'Hear Me, My son. By God, the True [p. 111] One! This Cause will assuredly be made manifest. Heed thou not the idle talk of the people of the Bayan, who pervert the meaning of every word.' In this manner He continued to walk and chant, and to address me these words until the first streaks of dawn appeared.... Afterwards I removed His bedding to His room, and, having prepared His tea for Him, was dismissed from His presence.[20-3]

..... [20-3. *ibid.* pp. 115-16. The two sentences in brackets are the author's addition, from Nabil's unpublished history.]

Nabil writes that Mirza Aqa Jan further related to him that the Abha Beauty (Baha'u'llah) said to him: "'If you see Me in the marketplace, do not show any sign of recognition, unless I call you Myself.'" That day, when I went out to the bazar, I encountered His Blessed Person. He called out loudly for me and I ran into His presence. For a while, an hour or more, He spoke to me there in the market-place. Afterwards, He went to Najaf. He instructed me: "Stay in

Karbila. When I return [from Najaf], should I pass this way, I shall take you with Myself to Baghdad, and, should I go [to Baghdad] by way of Hillih, I shall send for you." I stayed in Karbila for three months. I used to gather thorn, and sell it to the bath-keepers. One day, Shaykh Abu-Turab [-i-Ishtahardi] told me, "If I could get hold of a copy of the Persian Bayan, I would read something out of it to you." I said: "It can be found." "Where?" enquired Shaykh Abu-Turab. I replied that Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shirazi in Kazimayn had a copy, and I left that very hour for Kazimayn to obtain it. When I neared Baghdad I ran into Abu'l-Qasim-i-Kashani and enquired about Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid. At first, he thought that I intended to meet Azal, but when he realized that my heart had been captivated by someone else, he asked me for a reason, and, when I mentioned the gait and the speech of the Abha Beauty, he gave me a luminous Tablet revealed for me, in which the People of Baha and the qualities of the Abha Beauty had been mentioned. When the news of my coming was given to His Blessed Person, He summoned Me and said that He had intended to send for me.' [20-4]

..... [20-4. From Nabil's unpublished history.]

Thus began Mirza Aqa Jan's forty-year-long service to Baha'u'llah as attendant, amanuensis and companion.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... The confidence instilled in Mirza Aqa Jan by this unexpected and sudden contact with the spirit and directing genius of a new-born Revelation stirred his soul to its depths--a soul already afire with a consuming love born of his recognition of the ascendancy which his newly-found Master had already achieved over His fellow-disciples in both 'Iraq and Persia. This intense adoration that informed his whole being, and which could [p. 112] neither be suppressed nor concealed, was instantly detected by both Mirza Yahya and his fellow-conspirator Siyyid Muhammad. [20-5]

..... [20-5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 116.]

It was at this time that Haji Mirza Kamalu'd-Din-i-Naraqı came to Baghdad. He was a grandson of Haji Mulla Ahmad-Naraqı, a distinguished divine of past times, and was himself a man of learning. Through Aqay-i-Kalim, he asked Mirza Yahya to write for him a commentary on the Qur'anic verse: 'All food was allowed to the children of Israel'. Of course as soon as Mirza Yahya became aware of the fact that the Bab of Naraq had learned of his whereabouts, fear overcame him. Nevertheless, he wrote a commentary, but it was an affront to the intellect of such a man as Haji Mirza Kamalu'd-Din, who saw clearly Mirza Yahya's incompetence. Instead he looked to Baha'u'llah for guidance and enlightenment, and in response to his request Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet which is known as the Tablet of Kullu't-Ta'am (All Food). In this Tablet, as the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes,

..... ..Israel and his children were identified with the Bab and His followers respectively--a Tablet which by reason of the allusions it contained,

the beauty of its language and the cogency of its argument, so enraptured the soul of its recipient that he would have, but for the restraining hand of Baha'u'llah, proclaimed forthwith his discovery of God's hidden Secret in the person of the One Who had revealed it.[20-6]

..... [20-6. ibid. pp. 116-7. (God Passes By)]

The fame of the Tablet of Kullu't-Ta'am aroused fresh jealousy in the heart of Mirza Yahya, who could not realize his own inability. Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation, was pushing Mirza Yahya more and more to oppose and thwart Baha'u'llah. Friends were gathering around Baha'u'llah from every side, not only from the ranks of the Babis, who were just beginning to hold their heads high once again, but from circles well beyond. The Vali of Baghdad had come to see that this Exile, recently arrived from Iran, was of a different category from the many Persian princes and princelings banished to Iraq or who had fled there. Baha'u'llah was well in the public eye. It was He Who had suffered months of inhuman incarceration in the dungeon of Tihiran, whereas Mirza Yahya's cowardice had condemned him to feel always insecure, to be always on the run and, not daring to use his own name, to pursue an obscure existence in a dilapidated corner of Baghdad.

Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin, the uncle with whom Mirza Yahya had fled [p. 113] from Takur, whom Baha'u'llah had just named Ahmad and the Babis called Jinab-i-Baba,[1] was, about this time, Baha'u'llah's guest in Baghdad. Mirza Aqa Jan described to Nabil the sequel to the revealing of the Tablet of Kullu't-Ta'am, who recorded it thus: 'Jinab-i-Baba came along and told me that He [Baha'u'llah] had gone to Kazimayn. Without thinking I hurried there, and not knowing where to go, I was standing on a corner. Then I saw a siyyid coming towards me. He asked me: "Are you the Kashani youth?" and then added: "Come with me; He [Baha'u'llah] has asked for you." Afterwards, I found out that this siyyid was Siyyid Muhammad-Taqi, the son of Siyyid-i-Buka', who lived in Kazimayn. That day, when I attained His Blessed Presence, He was saying to Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, the Isfahani merchant: "Prior to your coming, Haji Mirza Kamalu'd-Din-i-Naraqi was here. He had asked a question regarding the verse, Kullu't-Ta'am, from there [meaning Azal], but not having understood anything from his answer, he asked Me the same. I wrote an answer for him, read it to him, but did not give it to him. I want to read it to you now." He began to chant and read. How can I describe what hearing every word, uttered in that blessed tone, did to one? In between, He read a number of verses in the same tone He had used that first night in Karbila, on the roof of the Daru'sh-shafa [the House of Treatment]. When He reached the end, He said: "What do you say?" I offered the comment: "If there be fairness, all of the learned men [ulama] should bow their heads." His Blessed Person replied: "As thou sayest, if there be fairness." [20-7]

..... [1. Baba means father.]

..... [20-7. From Nabil's unpublished history.]

That uncle of Baha'u'llah, Jinab-i-Baba, according to Mirza Aqa Jan, many a

time swore that had he not attained the presence of his Nephew, he would have lost his faith completely.

Mirza Aqa Jan further related to Nabil that, one day in Kazimayn, when both he and Aqa Muhammad-Hasan-i-Isfahani were in the presence of Baha'u'llah, in the house of Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shirazi, He asked the host whether he wished to hear the Badi' (Unique) language, which, He said, was the language used by the denizens of one of the worlds of God. He then proceeded to chant in that language. Mirza Aqa Jan said that hearing this language had a wonderful effect on the listener. One day, Mirza Aqa Jan related, Baha'u'llah said to Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid: 'Haji, you have heard the Badi' language, [p. 114] and witnessed God's supremacy over His worlds. Render thanks for this bounty and appreciate its worth.'

Mirza Yahya had never lifted a finger to protect the Faith of which he was supposed to be the nominal head. Now, incited and aided by Siyyid Muhammad and a few, very few, others of the same nature, Mirza Yahya began a secret campaign to discredit Baha'u'llah. He circulated wild rumours, ascribed to Baha'u'llah actions, opinions, views and intentions totally at variance with truth. These undercurrents and innuendoes became so perilous for the integrity of the Faith of the Bab, threatening it with bitter controversies and even fatal divisions, that Baha'u'llah reached the decision to take Himself away from Baghdad and from the society of men whom He knew--and who knew Him. Such seclusion from the gatherings of men has always occurred in the lives of the Manifestations of God. Moses went out to the desert of Sinai. Buddha sought the wilds of India. Christ walked the wilderness of Judaea, Muhammad paced the sun-baked hillocks of Arabia.

..... Mirza Aqa Jan himself has testified: 'That Blessed Beauty evinced such sadness that the limbs of my body trembled.' He has, likewise, related, as reported by Nabil in his narrative, that, shortly before Baha'u'llah's retirement, he had on one occasion seen Him, between dawn and sunrise, suddenly come out from His house, His night-cap still on His head, showing such signs of perturbation that he was powerless to gaze into His face, and while walking, angrily remark: 'These creatures are the same creatures who for three thousand years have worshipped idols, and bowed down before the Golden Calf: Now, too, they are fit for nothing better. What relation can there be between this people and Him Who is the Countenance of Glory? What ties can bind them to the One Who is the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable?' 'I stood,' declared Mirza Aqa Jan, 'rooted to the spot, lifeless, dried up as a dead tree, ready to fall under the impact of the stunning power of His words. Finally, He said: "Bid them recite: 'Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!' Tell them to repeat it five hundred times, nay, a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping and waking, that haply the Countenance of Glory may be unveiled to their eyes, and tiers of light descend upon them." He Himself, I was subsequently informed, recited this same verse, His face betraying the utmost sadness. ...Several times during those days, He was heard to remark: "We have,

for a while, tarried amongst this people, and failed to discern the slightest response on their part." Oftentimes He alluded to His disappearance from our midst, yet none of us understood His meaning.'[20-8]

..... [20-8. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 119.]

[p. 115]

21

Sulayminiyyih

ONE morning, the household of Baha'u'llah awoke to find Him gone. And no one knew where to seek Him. That day was 10 April 1854.

It was to Sulayminiyyih, in the heart and uplands of Kurdish 'Iraq, that Baha'u'llah had turned for seclusion. Some eight years later He described that episode in the *Kitab-i-Iqan--The Book of Certitude--* which He revealed for Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, a maternal uncle of the Bab:

..... We fain would hope that the people of the Bayan will be enlightened, will soar in the realm of the spirit and abide therein, will discern the Truth, and recognize with the eye of insight dissembling falsehood. In these days however, such odours of jealousy are diffused, that--I swear by the Educator of all beings, visible and invisible--from the beginning of the foundation of the world--though it hath no beginning--until the present day, such malice, envy, and hate have in no wise appeared, nor will they ever be witnessed in the future. For a number of people who have never inhaled the fragrance of justice, have raised the standard of sedition, and have leagued themselves against Us. On every side We witness the menace of their spears, and in all directions We recognize the shafts of their arrows. This, although We have never gloried in any thing, nor did We seek preference over any soul. To everyone We have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend. In the company of the poor We have sought their fellowship, and amidst the exalted and learned We have been submissive and resigned. I swear by God, the one true God! grievous as have been the woes and sufferings which the hand of the enemy and the people of the Book inflicted upon Us, yet all these fade into utter nothingness when compared with that which hath befallen Us at the hand of those who profess to be Our friends.

..... What more shall We say? The universe, were it to gaze with the eye of justice, would be incapable of bearing the weight of this utterance! In the early days of Our arrival in this land, when We discerned the signs of impending events, We decided, ere they happened, to retire. We betook Ourselves to the wilderness, and there, separated and alone, led for two years a life of complete solitude. From Our eyes there rained tears of anguish, and in Our bleeding heart there surged an ocean of agonizing [p. 116] pain. Many a night We had no food for sustenance, and many a day Our body found no rest. By Him Who hath My being between His hands! notwithstanding these showers of afflictions and unceasing calamities, Our soul was wrapt in blissful joy, and Our whole being evinced an ineffable gladness. For in Our solitude We were

unaware of the harm or benefit, the health or ailment, of any soul. Alone, We communed with Our spirit, oblivious of the world and all that is therein. We knew not, however, that the mesh of divine destiny exceedeth the vastest of mortal conceptions, and the dart of His decree transcendeth the boldest of human designs. None can escape the snares He setteth, and no soul can find release except through submission to His will. By the righteousness of God! Our withdrawal contemplated no return, and Our separation hoped for no reunion. The one object of Our retirement was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto Our companions, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart. Beyond these, We cherished no other intention, and apart from them, We had no end in view. And yet, each person schemed after his own desire, and pursued his own idle fancy, until the hour when, from the Mystic Source, there came the summons bidding Us return whence We came. Surrendering Our will to His, We submitted to His injunction.[21-1]

..... [21-1. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, pp. 159-60 (Brit.), pp. 249-51 (US).]

Baha'u'llah had taken only one companion with Him, Aqa Abu'l-Qasim-i-Hamadani. Eventually, as we shall see, it was because of a mishap that led to Aqa Abu'l-Qasim's death, in the western regions of Iran, that the Family of Baha'u'llah learned where to seek Him. But in Sulayminiyyih, Baha'u'llah had totally concealed His identity. Dressed in the garb of a dervish (darvish), He had assumed the name of Darvish Muhammad-i-Irani, and lived the life of a hermit in the caves above Sulayminiyyih. (The kashkul which He had with Him in the mountains of Kurdistan is preserved today in the International Baha'i Archives on Mount Carmel.) Many years later, Baha'u'llah described His situation: 'We sought shelter upon the summit of a remote mountain which lay at some three days' distance from the nearest human habitation. The comforts of life were completely lacking. We remained entirely isolated from Our fellow men...'[21-2]

..... [21-2. Nabil, The Dawn-Breakers, p. 429 (Brit.), p. 585 (US).]

From time to time, Baha'u'llah came into Sulayminiyyih from the caves in search of the necessities of life. Aqa Abu'l-Qasim also visited Him and carried provisions to Him. Then a time came when Aqa Abu'l-Qasim had to leave Baha'u'llah and go to Iran to obtain money and certain goods. At the frontier, on his return, he was set upon either by highwaymen or frontier patrols and was mortally wounded. When he was found he was near to death, but was able to say that his name [p. 117] was Abu'l-Qasim, that he was a native of Hamadan, and that whatever he carried of money and goods belonged to Darvish Muhammad-i-Irani, whose haunts were the uplands of Kurdish 'Iraq.

In a Tablet addressed to Maryam (Mary), the wife of His brother, Haji Mirza Rida-Quli, soon after His return from Sulayminiyyih, Baha'u'llah wrote:

..... The wrongs which I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name [the Bab] from the Tablet of creation.... After countless

afflictions, We reached 'Iraq at the bidding of the Tyrant of Persia, where, after the fetters of Our foes, We were afflicted with the perfidy of Our friends. God knoweth what befell Me thereafter! At length I gave up My home and all therein, and renounced life and all that appertaineth unto it, and alone and friendless, chose to go into retirement. I roamed the wilderness of resignation, travelling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates.... By the righteousness of God! I have borne what neither the oceans, nor the waves, nor the fruits, nor any created thing whether of the past or of the future, hath borne or will be capable of bearing.[21-3]

..... [21-3. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 118, 120, with additional passages translated by H. M. Balyuzi.]

Today Sulayminiyyih is a very pleasant small town, at a distance of about 200 miles from Baghdad, built amidst three hills and surrounded by trees and verdure. But it must have been otherwise in Baha'u'llah's time, for Commander James F. Jones of the Indian Navy, who accompanied Sir Henry Rawlinson on a tour of Kurdistan in 1844, writes thus of Sulayminiyyih as he found it:

..... Sulimaniyeh, the capital of the Pachalic, is a collection of small and ruinous houses, bearing a more mean appearance than, I believe, the most wretched hamlet in England. This is, however, not attributable to the poverty of the Kurds alone, but to the nomade habits of its occupants, who, in the spring, summer, and autumn, abandon the town, and spread themselves over the country... After its second foundation by Ibrahim Pacha [sixty-two years previously], it gradually improved, and in Rich's time boasted of about a thousand houses. I believe, at the present time, it scarcely contains half that number of tenable dwellings, and is, moreover considered unhealthily situated when compared with the more salubrious and less confined region of the adjoining plain. Built on the skirt of a low and barren range, which rises up immediately behind it, it is either entirely shut out from the cooler breezes that sweep the plain, or is visited by constant hot winds which blow from the E. and NE. over the heated ridge during the summer months.[21-4]

..... [21-4. Thomas (ed.), *Memoirs by Commander James Felix Jones*, pp. 207-8.]

[p. 118]

There are many of its prominent citizens who treasure tenderly the memory of Baha'u'llah's sojourn amongst their forefathers. At first, the people, although much impressed by Him, took Him only to be as He presented Himself, an itinerant dervish from Iran, until a fragment of His writing came into the hands of a disciple of Shaykh Isma'il, a Sufi murshid of that region. This man took it to his mentor, who found it irresistible. Shaykh Isma'il and some of his disciples then hurried into the presence of Baha'u'llah and learned much from Him. One day, they asked Him to explain to them the intricacies of the book, *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah*, by the great Andalusian mystic, Shaykh

Muhyi'd-Din Ibnu'l-'Arabi. Baha'u'llah replied that He had never read it and did not know its contents, but would grant them their wish. So, every day, a page would be read in His presence and He would expound and explain the views of that celebrated mystic seer. Then they begged Him to compose an ode in the style of the famous Ta'yyih ode of another celebrated mystic, the Egyptian Ibnu'l-Farid. And He agreed to grant them that request as well. The result was a poem of utmost eloquence which gained widespread fame and acceptance as the Qasidiy-i-'Izz-i-Varqa'yyih. It originally consisted of 2,000 couplets, but Baha'u'llah chose 127 of them, which He allowed to be copied and preserved. No one previously had dared to compose such an ode in such a style as that of Ibnu'l-Farid.

Thus, the fame of Darvish Muhammad-i-Irani began to reach areas beyond the confines of the small Kurdish town.

Whenever Baha'u'llah came into Sulayminiyyih, to make use of the public bath or to make any purchases, He would stay in the Takyih, the theological seminary of Mawlana Khalid. The original mosque of which Mawlana Khalid had been the custodian was destroyed in later times, but had been rebuilt to the same proportions. Mawlana Khalid was, at the time of Baha'u'llah's sojourn, an old man highly revered amongst the Kurds. He requested Darvish Muhammad to draw up a document which would perpetuate the custodianship of his institution for his descendants. That and other works from Baha'u'llah's pen are now owned by families in Sulayminiyyih, who refuse to part with them at any price. Some three decades ago, a possessor of such a highly-valued relic stated that even should he be offered a million dinars (a million pounds) he would still refuse to let that priceless document go, because he was certain all bounties would be cut off [p. 119] from him and his family, should it leave their possession. A figure highly revered by the Kurds in Sulayminiyyih is Kaka Ahmad, a saint of past ages. But as compared with Ishan,[1] the designation given out of veneration to Darvish Muhammad-i-Irani, they had no doubt that the latter ranked higher. Even the particular mountain, called Sar-Galu, which Baha'u'llah had especially made His home, is held to be a place holy and sacred.[2]

..... [1. Ishan means 'they', and Baha'u'llah was known by this designation even before going to Sulaymaniyyih.]

..... [2. The author is indebted to Mr Mas'ud Berdjis for details of Sulaymaniyyih and its inhabitants during recent years.]

In those years of Baha'u'llah's absence from Baghdad, the fortunes of the Babis had touched their nadir. Mirza Yahya, incompetent, terror-stricken, helpless, could and would do nothing to halt the ebb. the impending disaster of total, irreparable disintegration. Earnest, dedicated souls in Iran, finding life impossible--not only because of the tyrannies of the times and the venom injected into society by selfish divines, but also because of the lawlessness which still held the terribly reduced community of the Bab in its grip--would, with very great [p. 120] effort, make their way to Baghdad, only to be told that Mirza Yahya, the nominee of the Bab, could not be reached. He had

forbidden even the mention of the name of the street in which he lived. One such distinguished proponent of the Faith, who had travelled to Baghdad both to escape the increasing hostility of the people and to seek solace in consorting with Mirza Yahya, was Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin of Najaf-Abad (in the environs of Isfahan), who was destined to shine brilliantly in future years in the galaxy of the apostles of Baha'u'llah, honoured by the designation Jinab-i-Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin conferred upon him by the Most Sublime Pen. Unable to meet Mirza Yahya, in despair he retraced his steps to his homeland, but hearing at the frontier of fresh outbursts of fanatical assaults, took the weary road once again to Baghdad. He was well rewarded because, soon after, Baha'u'llah came back from Sulayminiyyih and Mulla Zaynu'l-Abidin found all that his soul craved.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has described those days and the shameful deeds perpetrated by Mirza Yahya and his henchmen:

..... While the foundations of Baha'u'llah's future greatness were being laid in a strange land and amidst a strange people, the situation of the Babi [p. 121] community was rapidly going from bad to worse.... Mirza Yahya, closeted most of the time in his house, was secretly directing, through his correspondence with those Babis whom he completely trusted, a campaign designed to utterly discredit Baha'u'llah. In his fear of any potential adversary he had dispatched Mirza Muhammad-i-Mazindarani, one of his supporters, to Adhirbayjan for the express purpose of murdering Dayyan [Mirza Asadu'llah of Khuy], the 'repository of the knowledge of God' [so designated by the Bab], whom he surnamed 'Father of Iniquities' [Abu'sh-Shurur] and stigmatized as 'Taghut' [an idol of Pre-Islamic Arabia], and whom the Bab had extolled as the 'Third Letter to believe in Him Whom God shall make manifest'. In his folly he had, furthermore, induced Mirza Aqa Jan to proceed to Nur, and there await a propitious moment when he could make a successful attempt on the life of the sovereign.... He even, as a further evidence of the enormity of his crimes, ordered that the cousin of the Bab, Mirza 'Ali-Akbar,[1] a fervent admirer of Dayyan, be secretly put to death--command which was carried out in all its iniquity. As to Siyyid Muhammad, now given free rein by his master, Mirza Yahya, he had surrounded himself, as Nabil who was at that time with him in Karbila categorically asserts, with a band of ruffians, whom he allowed, and even encouraged, to snatch at night the turbans from the heads of wealthy pilgrims who had congregated in Karbila, to steal their shoes, to rob the shrine of the Imam Husayn of its divans and candles, and seize the drinking cups from the public fountains...[21-5]

..... [1. See genealogy, p. 404.]

..... [21-5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 124-5.]

The Babis, if they were to escape total annihilation, desperately needed a guiding hand, but it could not be the trembling, ineffectual hand of Mirza Yahya. Twenty-five men, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated, had presumed to claim the station of the Promised One of the Bayan. Some of them were men of deep guile

and duplicity, some simple, misguided souls, and some saw themselves as standing head and shoulders above Mirza Yahya. Some were irretrievably lost, but others came to do penance at the door of Baha'u'llah.

When the news reached Baghdad of the death of Aqa Abu'l-Qasim-i-Hamadani, who had been missed at the same time that Baha'u'llah had disappeared from His home, it became evident that Darvish Muhammad-i-Irani, who dwelt in the mountains of the Kurdish north, and whose fame had also reached Baghdad, could be no other than the person of Baha'u'llah. At the instance of the Most Great Branch, who was no more than twelve years old, and of Aqay-i-Kalim, the faithful brother of Baha'u'llah, Shaykh Sultan--the father-in-law of Aqay-i-Kalim and a Babi of Arab origin converted by the efforts of [p. 122] Tahirih--left Baghdad accompanied by Javad the Hattab (woodcutter), who was also of Arab origin, to seek Baha'u'llah in Sulayminiyyih and implore Him to return. Mirza Yahya, now in dire straits, renounced and rejected by such remaining stalwarts of the Faith of the Bab as Mirza Asadu'llah-i-Dayyan and Haji Mirza Musay-i-Qumi, also wrote to beg Him to come back.

To Shaykh Sultan Baha'u'llah said: 'But for My recognition of the fact that the blessed Cause of the Primal Point was on the verge of being completely obliterated, and all the sacred blood poured out in the path of God would have been shed in vain, I would in no wise have consented to return to the people of the Bayan, and would have abandoned them to the worship of the idols their imaginations had fashioned.'

And as they neared Baghdad, on 'the banks of the River of Tribulations'[1], He told Shaykh Sultan that the few days still left were the last days for Him of peace and tranquillity on this earth--'days' which He said 'will never again fall to My lot'. [21-6]

..... [1. Such is the way Baha'u'llah referred to the city of the 'Abbasids and its stream: the Tigris.]

..... [21-6. ibid. p. 126 (for two references). (God Passes By)]

They reached Baghdad on 19 March 1856.[1] Exactly two lunar years had passed since Baha'u'llah's departure, and He Himself has described the situation which then confronted Him: 'We found no more than a handful of souls, faint and dispirited, nay utterly lost and dead. The Cause of God had ceased to be on any one's lips, nor was any heart receptive to its message.' [21-7]

..... [1. 12 Rajab ah 1271. Shaykh Sultan has written in a book, describing his quest, his journey and his return in the company of Baha'u'llah.]

..... [21-7. ibid. p. 125 (God Passes By)] [p. 123]

22

Baghdad--Friend and Foe

ON His return to Baghdad, Baha'u'llah found the Babis demoralized and degraded.

The effect of this situation upon Him has been described by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith: 'Such was the sadness that overwhelmed Him on His arrival that He refused for some time to leave His house, except for His visits to Kazimayn and for His occasional meetings with a few of His friends who resided in that town and in Baghdad.' [22-1]

..... [22-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 125-6.]

Baha'u'llah's own words, in the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, are a sufficient testimony to the condition of the Babi community in those days, and to the spirit in which He arose to revive the Cause of the Bab:

..... What pen can recount the things We beheld upon Our return! Two years have elapsed during which Our enemies have ceaselessly and assiduously contrived to exterminate Us, whereunto all witness. Nevertheless, none amongst the faithful hath risen to render Us any assistance, nor did any one feel inclined to help in Our deliverance. Nay, instead of assisting Us, what showers of continuous sorrows, their words and deeds have caused to rain upon Our soul! Amidst them all, We stand, life in hand, wholly resigned to His will; that perchance, through God's loving kindness and His 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. By Him at Whose bidding the Spirit hath spoken, but for this yearning of Our soul, We would not, for one moment, have tarried any longer in this city. 'Sufficient Witness is God unto Us.' We conclude Our argument with the words: 'There is no power nor strength but in God alone.' 'We are God's and to Him shall we return.' [22-2]

..... [22-2. Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Iqan*, pp. 160-61 (Brit.), pp. 251-2 (US).]

Shortly after Baha'u'llah's return from Sulayminiyyih, there occurred an event which caused Him great sorrow. We have already seen that Mirza Yahya had (in his book *Mustayqiz*) openly reviled Mirza Asadu'llah-i-Dayyan for having advanced a claim, and during Baha'u'llah's absence had despatched Mirza Muhammad-i-Mazindarani to Adharbayjan for the express purpose of murdering that distinguished believer. As it happened, Dayyan had simultaneously set out from [p. 124] Adharbayjan for Baghdad, and so Mirza Muhammad railed to find him. It was at this time that Baha'u'llah returned from Sulayminiyyih and Dayyan attained His presence and renounced all claims he had made for himself. Mirza Yahya, however, was not to be turned aside from his purpose. One day Mirza Muhammad tricked Dayyan into accompanying him from Kazimayn to Baghdad and there fell upon him and encompassed his death.

Gradually, Baha'u'llah began to rebuild the Babi community and restore its self-respect, integrity and prestige, until He had extricated the Babis (those few who were left) from the depths of ignominy to which they had sunk, during His absence in the mountains of Kurdistan. They could now hold their heads high, and were no longer the butt of every sort of foul abuse.

On one occasion some retainers of 'Ali-Shah, the Zillu's-Sultan (see Addendum

V), cursed a Babi who was passing the door of that exiled prince's residence. Baha'u'llah sent a message to Zillu's-Sultan to ask his men to hold their tongues. The Prince obeyed. Before long his sons, Shuja'u'd-Dawlih and Sayfu'd-Dawlih, were habituÈs of the biruni of the house of Baha'u'llah. Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the Fakhru'd-Dawlih, another nobleman from Iran, was often heard to say: 'I cannot explain it, I do not know how it is, but whenever I feel gloomy and depressed, I have only to go to the house of Baha'u'llah to have my spirits uplifted.'

As for the notables of the city, whoever met Baha'u'llah and came into His presence became attracted and devoted to Him. Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Qadir (possibly al-Gilani, an 'ulama famous for his calligraphy, who died in 1897), 'Abdu's-Salam Effendi (who is mentioned by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Badi'), Ibn-Alusi, and Siyyid Dawudi. all men of learning; 'Abdu'llah Pasha of Sulayminiyyih and his vizier, Mahmud Aqa, and Mulla 'Ali-Mardan (the controller of customs), men of public affairs, were equally devoted to Him.[1] There [p. 125] were numbers of Persian princes living in exile in Baghdad, some of whom we have already noted, and to name one more: Rida-Quli Mirza, the Nayibu'l-Iyalih (the eldest son of the pretender, Husayn-'Ali Mirza, the Farman-Farma)--all were to be seen reverentially attending Baha'u'llah in the biruni of His residence.

..... [1. 'Abdu's-Salam Effendi--probably Shaykh 'Abdu's-Salam ash-Shawwaf--was born about 1819 and attended the classes of Shaykh Mahmud al-Alusi. He then became one of the teachers at the al-Qadiriya theological college. He died in 1900.

Ibn-Alusi--one of the five sons of the famous Shaykh Mahmud al-Alusi, who died in 1854. It is not clear which son is referred to here, but he is probably one of the three eldest: 'Abdu'llah, Baha'u'd-Din; 'Abdu'l-Baqi; and Siyyid Na'man, Khayru'd-Din.

Siyyid Dawudi is probably Siyyid Dawudi an-Naqshbandi al-Khalidi, who was one of the 'ulama and a Shaykh of the Khalidiya section of the Sufi Naqshbandi order. He died in 1882. 'Abdu'llah Pasha was on of the Baban family, hereditary pashas of Sulaymaniyyih.]

So many were the devotees of Baha'u'llah, among all classes of the population and particularly the ruling class, that anyone who dared to say a word derogatory to Him would be silenced in no time.

Aqa Muhammad, a Kurd from Iran, had come to Baghdad and opened a shop to sell kabab (kebab). Towards the Babis he was not at all well disposed. Under his influence people in the bazar, particularly the Persians, had waxed bold in abusing the Babis. One day a confectioner named Hasan used a foul epithet in reference to some of the Babis who accompanied Baha'u'llah as He passed by. One of them went back and gave Hasan a sound beating. Next day, Aqa Muhammad took that Babi to task, telling him: 'You should not have punished Hasan yourself, but should have come to me, the leader of this bazar, with your complaint.' Knowing full well that Aqa Muhammad was the source of all the mischief in the

bazaar, this Babi told him so to his face and gave him a beating as well. The Kurd, enraged, stood up on a platform in his shop to shout that the vile Babis had now become so aggressive as to beat him. 'I will go', he threatened, 'to their leader and demand justice. Should he not heed me, I know what to do; I will take the matter into my own hands.' The next day he stopped Baha'u'llah while He was on His way to a coffee-house, and complained bitterly of the behaviour of the Babi youth. Baha'u'llah assured him that He would summon all those who had seen the incident and question them. Whoever had misbehaved would be punished. Aqa Muhammad went back to his shop, greatly surprised that Baha'u'llah had said He would punish the guilty person, rather than putting the case to the Consul. The Persian consul at this time was Mirza Ibrahim Khan, who was away in Karbila. When Aqa Muhammad ran to the Consulate with his complaint, the Vice-Consul sent an agent to Baha'u'llah's house to find out what had happened. He was informed in no uncertain terms that should the shopkeepers in the bazar not cease their foul language, they would all receive their due. The agent said no more, nor did he approach the person of Baha'u'llah, but the Vice-Consul took steps to put an end to this [p. 126] misbehaviour. He also had both Aqa Muhammad and Hasan brought in, berated them and kept them in custody. After a few days, when their families came crying to Baha'u'llah's door that they had no one to look after them, Baha'u'llah sent word to the Vice-Consul and both were released. When the Consul returned from Karbila, and heard what had happened in his absence, he was angered by the insulting behaviour of the shopkeepers and ordered the re-arrest of the two ringleaders. As the river was in flood with no bridge crossing, they were pushed into a quffih (covered boat) and taken over to the Consul's house, where Mirza Ibrahim Khan castigated and held them. Once again, after a few days, their families came to Baha'u'llah to plead for His intercession, and on His word the two men were warned and sent home.

But now the Kurds of Iran (there were some 2,000 in Baghdad) felt aggrieved that one of their leaders had twice suffered punishment and detention, and they made a pact to exterminate the Babis, of whom, according to Aqa Rida, there were no more than thirty to forty, Persian and Arab, then in Baghdad. These gathered round the house^[1] of Baha'u'llah to protect it. When Baha'u'llah, as was His wont, came out shortly before sunset to go to a coffee-house. He was told what the Kurds intended to do that night. He went on as usual, first to Salih's coffee-house, which was situated at the eastern side of the bridge, and after a while He got up to visit 'Abdu'llah's coffee-house at the western side, which was frequented by Kurds and Persians. He was accompanied by Mirza Javad-i-Khurasani, with whom He was talking, while a few of the Babis walked behind. To Mirza Javad He said, 'We have been threatened with death. We have no fear, We are ready for them. Here is Our head.' He spoke with such vehemence and authority that all who heard Him were struck dumb. Then He entered the coffee-house and stayed until three hours after sunset, after which He walked home and no one dared approach Him. After this episode, Aqa Rida states, there was no further mischief-making or insulting behaviour in the market-place, and all was calm.

..... [1. This was the house of Sulayman-i-Ghannam, in the Karkh quarter

of Baghdad, near the western bank of the Tigris.]

Then, 'Umar Pasha, a man high in military command, was appointed Governor of Baghdad (see Addendum V). He had an iron will and governed with an iron hand. He it was who had hordes of resident [p. 127] [p. 128] Persians in Karbila detained, hauled to Baghdad and made to wear Ottoman military uniform. To the pleadings and protests of the Iranian envoy this haughty Governor paid not the slightest attention. A good many of these unfortunate people were forced to pay large sums to buy their release.

During the governorship of 'Umar Pasha, a relative of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani named Mirza Rida, and Mirza 'Aliy-i-Nayrizi were plotting and conspiring to injure Baha'u'llah. Without His knowledge and permission, one or more Babis set upon them in the bazar. Mirza Rida died on the spot and Mirza 'Ali, badly wounded, managed to reach the Seraye (Government House). 'Umar Pasha, seeing his plight, enquired furiously who was responsible for this outrage. On being told that the perpetrator of the savage assault was a member of the retinue of Baha'u'llah, he impetuously ordered that cannons be trained on Baha'u'llah's residence. He was advised that it was an impossible task. He then demanded that Baha'u'llah come in person before him. Siyyid Dawudi, who was present, intervened to say: 'Your Honour must know this, that even ordering one of His servants to come here is not admissible, not to speak of ordering His own presence in this assemblage.' 'Umar Pasha, on hearing these words so bluntly stated as a fact by a prominent member of the Sunni hierarchy, fell silent, and sent Mirza 'Ali to Baha'u'llah's house to obtain justice from His hands.

As remarked previously, Baha'u'llah had no more than a few dozen Babis with and around Him, but His spiritual authority and influence increased so vastly that all those who felt aggrieved and oppressed would flock to His door, begging for His assistance and intercession. Aqa Rida mentions a certain Yusuf Khan, who, when rescued by Baha'u'llah from an unjust situation, repeatedly claimed that he had been a believer since the year 1250--ten years earlier than the advent of the Bab!

Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi, later entitled Nabil-i-A'zam, destined to become the most outstanding chronicler and historian of the Babi-Baha'i Faith, and who had himself made certain claims, reached Baghdad at a time when Baha'u'llah was at Sulayminiyyih. By his own admission, he still believed that Mirza Yahya was a man of consequence and sought a meeting with him. Mirza Musa; Aqay-i-Kalim, [p. 129] whom Nabil encountered on the bridge, took him home (to the house of 'Ali Madad) to meet the Most Great Branch, then barely ten years old. From Mirza Musa he learned that Mirza Yahya did not meet anyone, and so it was, for not only did Mirza Yahya not show his face, but he sent Nabil a message, urging him to quit Baghdad and seek the safety of Karbila where Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani had stationed himself.

In Karbila, Nabil carefully watched Siyyid Muhammad's riotous behaviour and childish pranks, and eventually recorded them. He was unhappy. He had dared to

claim leadership; he had not found in Mirza Yahya a 'shepherd' of a battered and mutilated flock. He writes very movingly of his spiritual odyssey--of Baha'u'llah's return from Sulayminiyyih, attainment to His presence, finding in Him all that he desired, doing penance at His door, coming upon Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir-i-Nayrizi (see Addendum V) sweeping the roadway and taking the broom from him to do likewise (the act of a humble penitent), performing a ceremonial ablution in the Tigris (symbolic of washing away all the stains of the past), divesting himself of the robes of a would-be priest. With his rebirth, Nabil composed a translucent poem, which Baha'u'llah lovingly and graciously acknowledged, assuring Nabil that that poem had set the seal on and completely redeemed the past. Now, at long last, Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi was at peace with himself and with the world. When Baha'u'llah was told that Mulla Muhammad, whom He eventually honoured with the designation of Nabil-i-A'zam, had been sweeping the roadway outside His house, He administered a gentle reproof to His attendant for having allowed it, and said, 'This makes Me feel ashamed', which, when Nabil heard of it, brought to his mind the famous lines of the poet Sa'di (the reflection of a verse in the Qur'an):[22-3]

..... [22-3. Nabil's account in this chapter is from his unpublished history.]

..... 'Consider the generosity and the kindness of the Lord;

..... Sinned the servant has, but ashamed is He.'

Aqa Muhammad-Karim, a veteran of the Faith from Shiraz, who had been in the presence of the glorious Bab and had known His powers, was another bewildered soul, stranded in 'Iraq. Nabil found him and led him into the presence of Baha'u'llah. He too received that which his whole being longed for: the assurance that the Cause of God was not lost, and that it was in safe hands.
[p. 130]

Haji Muhammad-Taqi of Nayriz, who had stood heroically and proudly under the banner of the erudite, the peerless Vahid, and had suffered immeasurably, was another well-tested veteran of the Faith, come to seek solace and asylum in 'Iraq; he found both, on attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah. The story of Haji Muhammad-Taqi, whom Baha'u'llah later honoured with the designation of Ayyub (Job), is both moving and awe-inspiring. He survived the holocaust of Nayriz and fell into the clutches of Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the sadistic and greedy governor of that town, who had helped himself copiously to the riches of the wealthy Haji. Every day, as the Governor sat watching and mocking him, he was thrown into an ice-cold pool, battered on the head every time he surfaced, then dragged out and mercilessly lashed (to the accompaniment of the Governor's evident enjoyment and laughter) until blood poured out of his wounds. In response to Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan's jeers, Haji Muhammad-Taqi praised God for the bounty of suffering in His path. At last, the Governor tired of his satanic pleasures and decided to get rid of the Haji. But the Governor's men proved more God-fearing. They let Haji Muhammad-Taqi go, and told him to take himself away as soon and as far as he could, lest he should be discovered alive by

their master.

Haji Muhammad-Taqi, covered with wounds, was left alone in the wilderness. With that superb patience which would earn him the designation of Ayyub from the Most Sublime Pen, he managed to reach a village in the neighbourhood, with the headman of which he had been on very friendly terms in the past. That excellent man harboured the Haji for a month, hiding him from all and nursing him with care. But Haji Muhammad-Taqi knew that before long he must put a safe distance between himself and the town of Nayriz. As soon as he could walk, he bade farewell to the kind headman and joined a caravan wending its way to the holy cities of 'Iraq. In that caravan there were many pilgrims trudging on foot, and Haji Muhammad-Taqi kept them company, although after all he had gone through he was weak and enfeebled. However, out of a tent emerged a man, obviously well provided for the long journey, who had a good look at Haji Muhammad-Taqi, and then invited him to be his guest as far as Karbila. 'In my dream last night,' the man said, 'the Prince of the Martyrs, himself, commanded me to take you as my guest.' In this miraculous way Haji Muhammad-Taqi reached 'Iraq and the presence [p. 131] of Baha'u'llah. The Lawh-i-Ayyub (Tablet of Ayyub), revealed by Baha'u'llah, has immortalized the name of Haji Muhammad-Taqi of Nayriz.

Another claimant to spiritual authority, who came penitent to the door of Baha'u'llah, was Haji Mirza Musa of Qum. He was also a veteran of the Faith of the Bab, who had turned away from Mirza Yahya because he had found him totally wanting. Considering himself in every way more competent and more accomplished, more daring and more independent than Mirza Yahya, and viewing with despair the sorry plight of the once renowned community of the Bab, he made a bold attempt to assume authority, but, hearing of the fame of Baha'u'llah he soon became conscious of his gross error, hurried to Baghdad and laid his head on the threshold of that true Redeemer. So pure in heart was he, and so devoid of egotism, that Baha'u'llah observed that, should the Haji have persisted with his claim, 'We would have endorsed it'. For penance, Haji Mirza Musa decided to fast unto death. But Baha'u'llah prevented it. Haji Mirza Musa stayed on in Baghdad until, three days after Baha'u'llah's departure for Istanbul, he passed out of this world.

The last claimant whom we shall take note of (although he was not the least of them), was Haji Mulla Hashim, who had been a Shi'ih divine possessed of considerable authority. But he too, having seen the error into which he had fallen, turned to Baha'u'llah for forgiveness and rehabilitation, and was amply rewarded.

After recounting in his enchanting chronicle the stories of these devoted followers and faithful friends, Nabil-i-A'zam tells us that, having been three months in Baghdad, he was directed by Baha'u'llah to travel to Qazvin and teach the Faith there. 'Outside the gates of Baghdad,' Nabil writes, Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir overtook me, and brought me money, the expenses of my journey granted by the Blessed Perfection, that I might be able to hire a steed and join a caravan. I told Amir that when I had first reached His blessed presence, He had graciously granted me the means of living that I should never

again suffer want; and I asked Amir to beg at the threshold of His bounty to keep secure that which above everything else He had given me... However, as Amir insisted, I took some of the money which he had brought, and we bade farewell. Every instant a new door would fling open before me. It was as if I had wings to soar in the Heaven of [p. 132] the Beloved. I felt no need to have a companion on the road and I had no fear of highwaymen.' Thus he graphically describes his ecstasy and elation as he made his way to Qazvin, over the high peaks and plains of Western Iran. He rested, he writes, in day-time, and started walking some two hours after sunset. In Kirmanshah he met Mirza 'Abdu'llah-i-Ghawgha, who had, obviously, made some claim because, as Nabil points out, Darvish Sidq-'Ali (see Addendum V) was with him and attending him. (But Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahiji denies, in his Risalih, that Mirza 'Abdu'llah-i-Ghawgha had ever made any claim.)

Nabil was once again back in Baghdad. Baha'u'llah told him then to go over a manuscript of the Qayyumu'l-Asma' which Aqa Siyyid Isma'il-i-Zavari'i had been copying, to ensure that all was correct. Siyyid Isma'il had come from Iran with high hopes and had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah. He found all that he expected, all that he craved. He was of noble descent, a learned man and a master of calligraphy. He is also known as Dhabih, but should not be confused with Haji Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Dhabih-i-Kashani, the brother of Haji Mirza Jani. Nabil says that it took them eighteen days. When the task was completed, he asked Siyyid Isma'il to tell him of his experience. Nabil knew that Siyyid Isma'il went out, every night around midnight, and with his turban swept the street where the house of Baha'u'llah was situated, gathering up all the sweepings in his 'aba to fling them into the Tigris. This earth and this dust, he would say, was hallowed by His blessed feet, and should not be touched by anything unclean. To Nabil's query, Siyyid Isma'il answered, precisely and considerately, while his eyes welled with tears: 'What I have seen cannot be described. After I asked Him for spiritual sustenance, and He said that it had been granted to me, door after door opened upon my heart, and my soul became acquainted with thoughts not of this world. One night, in His biruni, His Blessed Person asked for a candle to peruse a paper, and I, as usual lost in wonderment at my own condition, suddenly thought: "Is it possible that that visage, the sight of which the Chosen Ones and the Messengers of God had longed to behold, could be unveiled in a human temple?" and as soon as this thought passed through my mind, His blessed voice called out to me: " Aqa Siyyid Isma'il, look!" and when I gazed at His blessed face, I saw that which no word can ever describe. All that I can say is this: it seemed as if a hundred thousand seas, vast and sunlit, billowed upon that Blessed [p. 133] Face. What happened then, I do not know. My last word to you is this: never ask for anything like this and be contented with what is given unto you, and always say, "O God! allow it all to end well with us"--and pray for me that my own end shall be well.'

The incident which Siyyid Isma'il had described to Nabil happened thus. One day Baha'u'llah was a guest in the house of Aqa Muhammad-Riday-i-'Arid. In front of Him were laid dishes of fruits and sweets. Siyyid Isma'il too was there. When

Baha'u'llah gave the Siyyid some sweets, the latter expressed his desire for spiritual sustenance, to which Baha'u'llah replied, 'That has been given to you'.

Now Siyyid Isma'il became afire with the love of Baha'u'llah. Poems left by him testify to that all-consuming love.[22-4]

..... [22-4. From unpublished diary of Aqa Rida.]

..... Hear this from me,

..... Once again I say, and saying it, burn do I:

..... 'Has anyone ever seen flowers pullulant in fire?'

..... This I say, and saying it, burn do I.

..... 'Tear apart the veils,

..... Bring forth the means,

..... Breathe the breath of love.'

..... This I say, and saying it, burn do I.

..... 'Behold the garden of the Lord,

..... The land divine,

..... All in Him to nothingness reach.'

..... This I say, and saying it, burn do I.

..... Suffice thus to end my word:

..... 'My soul alight has He set,

..... My life in His path shall be shed.'

..... This I say, and saying it, burn do I.

After that, Siyyid Isma'il could be seen sweeping before sunrise the doorway of Baha'u'llah's house. One day, early in the morning, he was observed leaving Baghdad and going towards Kazimayn. There by the roadside he sat down and, facing the direction of the house of Baha'u'llah and the holy shrines of the seventh and the ninth Imams, he cut his throat, and thus he died. By his act he became known as 'Dhabih'--the Sacrifice. And the pen of Baha'u'llah extolled him as the 'Beloved and the Pride of the Martyrs'. [p. 134]

Customs men, who had noticed the Siyyid leaving the city, when nothing more was seen of him went to investigate. They found him dead with a razor in his hand. They informed the Persian consul, and took the Siyyid's body to the Seraye, whence it was carried to Kazimayn and buried in Tall-i-Ahmar (the Red Mount).[1]

..... [1. The self-sacrifice of Siyyid Isma'il took place during the term of Dabiru'l-Mulk as Persian consul, from 8 June 1859 for about one year. He had

succeeded Mirza Ibrahim Khan who died on 28 December 1858. (Dates from British consular records, FO 195 577 and 624.) Both men were friendly to Baha'u'llah and His companions.]

And there was Haji Hasan-i-Turk. He had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah first in Kirmanshah, and had been several times to Baghdad. A new life was, indeed, breathed into him. Although devoid of learning, he began to compose a commentary on the Bab's *Qayyumu'l-Asma'*. But most of the time he said not a word. When his silence was commented on in the presence of Baha'u'llah, He observed that the Haji's turn to speak would come soon. Then one day Haji Hasan came to Baha'u'llah, arrayed with a dagger, and asked for His permission to go, with dagger drawn, to stand on the bridge and proclaim to all the Cause of God. Baha'u'llah told him kindly, but firmly: 'Haji, put aside your dagger. The Faith of God has to be given with amity and love to receptive souls. It does not need daggers and swords.' [p. 135]

23

Baghdad--Final Years

THE case and the conduct of a young student of theology, who had been converted to the Faith of the Bab, led to a fresh crisis in the affairs of the Babi community.

This young man was named Mulla Baqir. He was the son of the Imam-Jum'ih of Qumshih, a township in the environs of Isfahan. His father had sent him to Najaf to study theology. There, at the very heart of the Shi'ih world, he became fully aware of the advent of the Bab and met the celebrated Nabil-i-Akbar, Mulla Muhammad (or Aqa Muhammad) of Qa'in. This Nabil had been one of the most accomplished and learned students of the famed Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari, the foremost Shi'ih mujtahid of his day (see Addendum V), and had received a certificate for Ijithad from his hands. Consorting with Aqa Muhammad-i-Qa'ini led Mulla Baqir to espouse the Faith of the Bab, and he did it with great zeal and ardour. Then he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad and became well confirmed. However, his misfortune was acquaintance with a young Shaykhi, a disciple and follower of Haji Muhammad-Karim Khan-i-Kirmani; he was implacably opposed to the Faith of the Bab and kept abusing the Bab and the Babis within the hearing of Mulla Baqir. The latter tried very hard to dissuade the young Shaykhi from pursuing this abominable habit, but he failed in his purpose and the Shaykhi antagonist remained abusive. Then came a day when Mulla Baqir could bear his foul language no longer. He told his co-religionists that he felt more and more severely inclined to inflict some injury on his tormentor. They tried to stay his hand, but also failed.

One day in the market-place, Mulla Baqir attacked the Shaykhi youth with a scimitar. Others intervened, stopped Mulla Baqir and took him to the Persian consul, who advised him to leave Baghdad. That same night he took the road to Iran. But bad luck dogged his [p. 136] footsteps. In Hamadan he ran into the same obstinate, foul-mouthed youth, now recovered from his wounds, who promptly

denounced him to the Governor. Mulla Baqir was arrested and searched. On him they found a Tablet of Baha'u'llah, in which he was reprimanded for his rash deed.

The Governor of Hamadan decreed that Mulla Baqir had disobeyed his Master and deserved imprisonment. He was cast into prison and when, at last, he obtained release, he made his way back to Baghdad. However, Baha'u'llah did not give him the same reception as before. His assault on the Shaykhi youth had had repercussions detrimental to the Babi community, and the detention of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul and his brother resulted from that rash and foolish deed. Baha'u'llah instructed most of the Babis to leave Baghdad.

Now, Mirza Buzurg Khan-i-Qazvini arrived on the scene, in July 1860, as Persian consul. He was a man of consequence and had previously held the post of Consul in Erzeroum. Before his arrival it had been rumoured and passed from mouth to mouth that he was coming to put an end, once and for all, to these troublesome Babis. To show what an important and distinguished man he was, Mirza Buzurg Khan went riding or strutting about, preening himself in public, attended by a large number of ruffians whom he had brought with him.

Mirza Buzurg Khan joined forces with Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani, who had already been in 'Iraq for about two years and was an implacable enemy of Baha'u'llah. Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn, entitled Shaykhu'l-'Iraqayn (see Addendum V), had been sent to Karbila by Nasiri'd-Din Shah, commissioned to supervise the much needed repairs in the holy shrines.

The new Persian consul went to the Ottoman authorities with a a strange statement, saying that he intended to lay hands on a number of rascally men who had fled from Iran. Mustafa Nuri Pasha, the Vali (see Addendum V), who had come a few months before the Consul (in March 1860), was a just man and had heard 'Abdu'llah Pasha of Sulayminiyyih speak very highly of Baha'u'llah. He was also well aware of the purpose of Mirza Buzurg Khan. But he pretended ignorance and told the Consul to go ahead and make his arrests. To do this, replied Mirza Buzurg Khan, he would need help from the Government, at which the Vali expressed his surprise that the Persian consul required so much help just to lay hands on a few men. Perforce, [p. 137] Mirza Buzurg Khan had to reveal the identity of those Persians whom he wanted to arrest. Mustafa Nuri Pasha showed even greater astonishment that the Consul should speak in such coarse terms of persons whom all the residents of Baghdad, high and low alike, held in great esteem. He refused to have anything to do with Mirza Buzurg Khan's nefarious designs. The Consul's lame response was: 'But they are enemies of our Faith and yours', to which he received this crushing reply from the Vali: 'Do we then follow different Faiths?'

Nabil writes that from time to time Baha'u'llah would send Aqay-i-Kalim to visit Mirza Buzurg Khan. One day the foolish Consul, in all haughtiness, told Aqay-i-Kalim that he could do whatever he liked about Baha'u'llah. Aqay-i-Kalim replied: 'Why is it that I come occasionally to visit you? Do you think I come to ask you for a post, an office, an allowance? It is only to show you our

friendly intent. By God! Should His favour towards you cease, these very men who are close to you would assuredly destroy you.' Then Aqay-i-Kalim went on to recount all the Consul's intrigues and evil actions, so precisely and effectively that all he could reply was: 'The past is past. Should He [Baha'u'llah] consider me with favour in future, I shall be of service to Him.' But, as Nabil points out, Mirza Buzurg Khan was incorrigible, and he never ceased concocting plots with Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn.

The opposition of the Consul went to the length of offering rich rewards to a ruffian named Rida Turk, should he seek out Baha'u'llah and murder Him. This ruthless man, who never knew fear and dared anything for gain, himself related in after years that he kept watch for a suitable opportunity to carry out the wishes of the Persian consul. One day, knowing that Baha'u'llah was visiting the bath, he found an opportunity when Baha'u'llah's attendant, Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir, had gone for a short while on an errand. Rida Turk entered the bath but, on his own admission, when he found himself in the presence of Baha'u'llah, he was so struck by awe and remorse that he turned on his heel and fled.

Now began a campaign by Mirza Buzurg Khan for the removal of Baha'u'llah from Baghdad. The shrewd Ambassador of Iran at Istanbul, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, wrote to Mirza Sa'id Khan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Tihiran (see Addendum V for both men), that the Consul's ardour in clamouring for this was not due to zeal in the service of his country, but to ulterior [p. 138] motives. He wished to marry the daughter of Haji Mirza Haidiy-i-Javahiri for her money, and considered Baha'u'llah to be standing in his way. Mirza Sa'id Khan replied that he was well aware of that fact; nevertheless, it was imperative to press for the banishment of Baha'u'llah from the vicinity of the frontiers of Iran.

As to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn, sheer fanaticism combined with native ambition to achieve greater fame and reputation motivated him to take the course he did, in agitating against Baha'u'llah. Decades later, Fadil-i-Tihrani, the grandson of this inveterate enemy of Baha'u'llah, ardently embraced His Faith, which his wayward grandfather had spurned and despised, and achieved well-deserved fame as a teacher and propagator of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

This Vali of Baghdad, Mustafa Nuri Pasha, prior to his appointment to the governorship of 'Iraq, stood very close to the person of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Majid. Because of that, he managed to have a certain Rida Pasha dismissed from his post in the court of the Sultan. But later, Rida Pasha was returned to favour and a new position. Once well established, Rida Pasha began plotting to take his revenge. He arranged for a military adviser, named Ahmad Tawfiq Pasha, to be sent to Baghdad, and instructed him to draw up such charges against Mustafa Nuri Pasha as would cause his dismissal. He told Ahmad Pasha that should he succeed, the governorship of 'Iraq would be his. Thus primed, Ahmad Pasha worked his way steadily into the confidence of some of the notables of Baghdad, who, knowing of his close friendship with Rida Pasha and the latter's immense influence in the inner circles around Sultan 'Abdu'l-Majid, lent themselves to

his designs, and a list of charges of embezzlement and acceptance of bribes was secretly prepared and signed by some of the notables and despatched to Istanbul. As soon as Rida Pasha received this document, he had a cable sent to Baghdad, conveying the news of the dismissal of Mustafa Nuri Pasha and his house arrest, pending proper investigation.

Ahmad Pasha, the military man, got his governorship in March 1861 (though it had to be fully confirmed later) and proceeded to post sentries round the residence of poor Mustafa Nuri Pasha, cutting him off from all association with anyone outside. 'Abdu'llah Pasha of Sulayminiyyih, who was a personal friend of the dismissed Vali, found himself prevented from meeting him. As he, too, was threatened, he [p. 139] realized that he stood in great danger. He had no one to turn to but Baha'u'llah, Who received him graciously and kindly, advising him not to grieve. 'Go and tell the Vali from Us,' He told 'Abdu'llah Pasha, 'to put his trust wholly in God, and repeat every day, nineteen times, these two verses: "He who puts his trust in God, God will suffice him" and "He who fears God, God will send him relief."' When 'Abdu'llah Pasha mentioned that no one was allowed to visit the Vali, Baha'u'llah advised him to make a direct appeal to Ahmad Pasha. 'When he sees you appealing to him in the right way,' Baha'u'llah said, 'he will grant you permission to visit your friend.'

'Abdu'llah Pasha took this advice; Ahmad Pasha was greatly impressed by his fidelity and allowed him to visit the dismissed Vali as often as he wished. Thus 'Abdu'llah Pasha was enabled to visit Mustafa Nuri Pasha and give him the message of Baha'u'llah. Within a few days, the news came of the death of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Majid and the accession of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz to the throne, on 14 August 1861, followed by the expulsion of Rida Pasha, once again, from the Court, and the receipt of a cable reinstating Mustafa Nuri Pasha. And now it was the turn of Ahmad Pasha to appeal for help, reminding 'Abdu'llah Pasha that he had acceded to his request and that the latter should intervene to save him from the Vali's anger. The Pasha of Sulayminiyyih readily complied and took Ahmad Pasha to meet the Vali, when a reconciliation was effected. After a while, the Vali's son-in-law arrived from Istanbul, with full powers to make a proper investigation. Mustafa Nuri Pasha's total innocence was proved, to everyone's amazement. And it was left to 'Abdu'llah Pasha to tell them to Whom the Governor should be grateful for his deliverance.

Mustafa Nuri Pasha, who owed his rescue from disgrace to Baha'u'llah, remained firmly devoted to Him to the end of his life, although in Baghdad he had not been able to attain His presence. When Baha'u'llah reached Constantinople in 1863, Mustafa Nuri Pasha was also there. Ignoring all restraints, he had his respects conveyed to Baha'u'llah, Who sent the Most Great Branch and Aqay-i-Kalim to meet the Pasha. After that, Mustafa Nuri Pasha himself came several times, and his heart's desire was fulfilled.

As to 'Abdu'llah Pasha of Sulayminiyyih, who had always been a faithful friend to Baha'u'llah, he was even more confirmed when he read The Seven Valleys. He was given the governorship of Van, but [p. 140] was loath to go because it meant separation from Baha'u'llah. Later, he attempted to reach Adrianople to

meet Him, but it was not to be. In the year AH 1304 (1886-7), he travelled to Beirut for medical treatment and passed away in that city.

Two distinguished and wealthy Persian residents of Baghdad had become so attracted to Baha'u'llah that not only did they espouse the Faith of the Bab, but in their wills they made the settlement of their estates dependent on the wishes of Baha'u'llah. One was Haji Mirza Hadiy-i-Javahiri and the other Haji Hashim-i-'Attar. Haji Mirza Hadi's son, Mirza Musa, had been for years the despair of his father, who was rightly apprehensive about his future. It was the change in Mirza Musa, through his attachment to Baha'u'llah, which moved his father to follow the way of his son, and to make his will in the terms he did. Nabil says that the news of the actions taken by these two prominent Persians so inflamed Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn and Mirza Buzurg Khan, that they began to agitate afresh against Baha'u'llah. But, as already noted, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih was astute enough to see through the Consul's stratagems.

Next, Haji Hashim-i-'Attar organized a feast that it might be honoured with the presence of Baha'u'llah. Nabil states that it was so magnificent an occasion that the people of Baghdad affirmed they had never seen the like of it, and it was particularly reported to Nasiri'd-Din Shah and the Sultan of Turkey. On the day of the feast, Haji Hashim himself, despite his advanced years, was continuously on his feet and serving. When it was over, greatly honoured as it had been by the presence of Baha'u'llah, Haji Hashim felt that he had nothing more to live for, and soon after he died. Despite the provisions of his will, his sons-in-law, allied with mischief-makers, began to help themselves indiscriminately to his bequest. Some of the upright men of Baghdad came to Baha'u'llah and requested Him to intervene, since everyone knew the terms of Haji Hashim's will. But Baha'u'llah responded: 'What was ours was the blessed person of the Haji, who has now gone from this world. As for his wealth, let those who set store by the riches of this world go on purveying it.' However, when those sons-in-law began to rob the widow and minor children of the Haji, Baha'u'llah intervened, summoned some of those who were behaving so unjustly, and counselled them to mend their ways. They submitted to His authority. The share of the young was separated and given to their [p. 141] mother, and Baha'u'llah appointed a trustworthy person to take charge of their inheritance and trade on their behalf.

Likewise, in the case of the bequest of Haji Mirza Hadiy-i-Javahiri, Baha'u'llah took steps to ensure that no one was treated unjustly. He directed the Most Great Branch and Aqay-i-Kalim to attend to the matter. Nabil states that 30,000 tumans (an appreciable sum in those days) was a tenth^[1] of what Haji Mirza Hadi had left, and that Baha'u'llah announced his intention in these words: 'I shall give these 30,000 tumans to Mirza Musa [the son of Haji Mirza Hadi] so that he may be at peace with his sisters.'

..... [1. A tenth (ushr) was the customary share given to the executor of a will.]

Nabil stresses the fact that these increasing evidences of Baha'u'llah's

authority were galling to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn, who, although a mujtahid, and honoured and invested with special powers by Nasiri'd-Din Shah, could never command a moiety of that authority. Instead, he took refuge in bragging. 'I had a dream,' he said, 'that I was standing with the Shah under a dome, and there was a tablet swinging above the head of the Shah on which verses of the Qur'an were inscribed in Latin characters. It seemed that this was the doing of the Babis, and the Shah, sighting the tablet, informed me that the Babis were responsible for this outrage; "but wait and see," the Shah continued; "soon, with this very sword I am wearing, I shall demolish these people."' On another occasion, the Shaykh related mendaciously a second dream. 'I dreamt', he said, 'that I was on my way to Tihran, on horseback, with a number of others. One of the Babis of Baghdad caught up with me near Khaniqayn. He had a bottle in his hand, filled with blood, and sprinkled some of the blood over me. It means', he interpreted, 'that my efforts at overthrowing these people will receive royal acclamation and I shall be called to Tihran. But the Babis will murder me, and my death at their hands will so enrage the government and people of Iran that they will combine to wipe them out.'

One who was close to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn, and who frequented the house of Baha'u'llah in the vain hope of securing the secret of the elixir so eagerly sought by alchemists, reported these dreams to Baha'u'llah. He replied with a smile that the Shaykh's first dream was indicative of the fact that the Source of the Bab's Revelation was the same as that of the Qur'an, but renewed and restated; and as to the [p. 142] second dream, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn could rest assured that no Babi would murder him, nor would he be summoned for investiture with fresh honours. All that he heard from Baha'u'llah was reported by this man to the Shaykh, with the advice to put aside his extravagant language and seek a meeting with Baha'u'llah, to see for himself how genuine were the powers and how wonderful the mien and the speech of the Head of the Babi community. It seemed that Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn was pleased with the suggestion; Baha'u'llah agreed to receive him, but at the last moment the Shaykh failed to come, and continued his plots and intrigues.

Mirza Buzurg Khan had been shaken and disappointed by the ill-success of his efforts to procure the co-operation of the Vali against the Babis, and he started to look for chinks in the armour of total integrity surrounding Baha'u'llah, in order to effect a grievous injury on Him, but there, too, he was bitterly disappointed because he could find none. Well-wishers of Baha'u'llah, aware of the Persian consul's hatred and hostility, were constantly begging Him to take steps for His own protection. His response to all their pleas was always the same: He had placed His trust in God, and 'God is the best of Protectors'. Mulla 'Ali-Mardan, a native of Karkuk, offered Him the use of a very comfortable house which he owned in that city, hoping that Baha'u'llah would absent Himself for a while, far from the venomous Consul and his associates.

The failure of the villainous Rida Turk to carry out his wishes and murder Baha'u'llah must also have been particularly galling to the Consul. Aqa Rida

writes that the Babis had gradually become aware of Mirza Buzurg Khan's wretched designs and his alliance with Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn, and some were quietly keeping a vigilant eye on the house of Baha'u'llah.

Decades later, in August 1919, 'Abdu'l-Baha was relating to the Baha'is gathered in His drawing-room in Haifa the events of past times. One evening He spoke of the plots of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn and Mirza Buzurg Khan. Dr Lutfu'llah Hakim took down what the Master was saying, and although his record could not have been word for word, it reflects fairly accurately the Master's recollections of those far-off days. Here is the gist of 'Abdu'l-Baha's account:[1]

..... [1. What follows is not an exact translation, but is a faithful rendering.] [p. 143]

..... When the mujtahids and Nasiri'd-Din Shah sent Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn to 'Iraq, and he began agitating against the Blessed Perfection [Baha'u'llah], the mujtahids gathered at Kazimayn to talk of waging a holy war, and they appealed to the Vali for help. When the Vali replied that he could not intervene, they sent letters to Baghdad, and a very large number of Persians and Shi'ih Arabs congregated there. Feelings in Baghdad came to the boil; they even sent for Shaykh Murtada to come from Karbila, on the grounds that the welfare of their Faith was threatened. On his way to Baghdad, Shaykh Murtada met with an accident; he held himself apart then and asked to be left alone. Because he had not personally investigated the matter, he refused to intervene. Through Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the Fakhru'd-Dawlih, the Shaykh sent this message to the Blessed Perfection: 'I did not know; had I done so, I would not have come. Now I will pray for you.'

..... Those gathered in Kazimayn then arranged to come two days later and attack us. We were only forty-six in all, and our strong man was Aqa Asadu'llah-i-Kashi (Kashani), whose dagger, even when worn above his shal [the cloth used as a girdle], would dangle and touch the ground. Now there was a certain Siyyid Hasan from Shiraz. He was not a believer, but he was a very good man. One morning, when the Blessed Perfection had been up and about, this Aqa Siyyid Hasan came knocking at our door. Our black maid opened the door, Aqa Siyyid Hasan came in and, much agitated, asked, 'Where is the Aqa [Baha'u'llah]?' I said, 'He has gone to the riverside.' 'What is it that you say?' he responded. I offered him tea and said, 'He will come back.' He replied, Aqa! The world has been turned upside down... It has become turbulent... Do you know that last night they held a council in the presence of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn and the Consul? They have also reached some sort of agreement with the Vali. How is it that the Blessed Perfection has gone to the riverside? They have decided to start their attack tomorrow.' Whilst he was telling me what had happened, the Blessed Perfection came in. Aqa Siyyid Hasan wanted immediately to express his anxiety. But the Blessed Perfection said, 'Let us talk of other matters', and went on speaking. Later, Aqa Siyyid Hasan insisted on unburdening himself. However, the Blessed Perfection told him, 'It is of no consequence.' So Aqa Siyyid Hasan stayed to lunch and then went home.

..... Late in the afternoon the Blessed Perfection came out. The friends gathered round Him. Amongst them were two who were double-faced: Haji 'Abdu'l-Hamid and Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Isfahani. The Blessed Perfection was walking up and down. Then He turned to the Friends and said, 'Have you heard the news? The mujtahids and the Consul have come together and gathered ten to twenty thousand people round them to wage jihad against Us.' Then He addressed the two double-faced men, 'Go and tell them, by the One God, the Lord of all, I will send two men to drive them away, all the way to Kazimayn. If they are capable of accepting a [p. 144] challenge, let them come.' The two hurried away and repeated what they had heard. And do you know, they dispersed!

Aqa Rida writes that during all that time Baha'u'llah did not cease His daily visits to the coffee-houses. He went out alone, except for His two attendants, Aqa Najaf-'Ali and Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir-i-Nayrizi, and even then, there were days, Aqa Rida reports, when Baha'u'llah would leave His house without asking them to accompany Him. He never showed fear, nor displayed anxiety. In contradistinction to Him, Mirza Yahya went about disguised and never showed his face. At one time he was Haji 'Aliy-i-Las-Furush (silk merchant), at another a dealer in shoes and slippers in Basrah, ever afraid, ever apprehensive.

And then Mulla Hasan-i-'Amu came to visit Baha'u'llah. Let us have his story from 'Abdu'l-Baha:

..... It often happened that in Baghdad certain Muhammadan 'ulama, Jewish rabbis, and Christians, met together with some European scholars, in a blessed reunion:[1] each one had some question to propose, and although they were possessed of varying degrees of culture, they each heard a sufficient and convincing reply, and retired satisfied. Even the Persian 'ulama who were at Karbila and Najaf chose a wise man whom they sent on a mission to him; his name was Mulla Hasan-i-'Amu. He came into the Holy Presence, and proposed a number of questions on behalf of the 'ulama, to which Baha'u'llah replied. Then Hasan-i-'Amu said: 'The 'ulama recognize without hesitation and confess the knowledge and virtue of Baha'u'llah, and they are unanimously convinced that in all learning he has no peer or equal; and it is also evident that he has never studied or acquired this learning'; but still the 'ulama said: 'We are not contented with this, we do not acknowledge the reality of his mission by virtue of his wisdom and righteousness. Therefore we ask him to show us a miracle in order to satisfy and tranquillize our hearts.'

..... [1. A reunion with Baha'u'llah.]

..... Baha'u'llah replied: 'Although you have no right to ask this, for God should test His creatures, and they should not test God, still I allow and accept this request. But the Cause of God is not a theatrical display that is presented every hour, of which some new diversion may be asked for every day. If it were thus, the Cause of God would become mere child's play.

..... 'The 'ulama must therefore assemble and with one accord choose one miracle, and write that after the performance of this miracle they will no longer entertain doubts about me, and that all will acknowledge and confess the

truth of my Cause. Let them seal this paper and bring it to me. This must be the accepted criterion: If the miracle is performed, no doubt [p. 145] will remain for them; and if not, we shall be convicted of imposture.' The learned man, Hasan-i-'Amu, rose and replied, 'There is no more to be said'; he then kissed the knee of the Blessed One although he was not a believer, and went. He gathered the 'ulama and gave them the sacred message. They consulted together and said, 'This man is an enchanter: perhaps he will perform an enchantment, and then we shall have nothing more to say.' Acting on this belief, they did not dare to push the matter further.

..... This man, Hasan-i-'Amu, mentioned this fact at many meetings. After leaving Karbila he went to Kirmanshah and Tihran, and spread a detailed account of it everywhere, laying emphasis on the fear and the withdrawal of the 'ulama.

..... Briefly, all his adversaries in the orient acknowledged his greatness, grandeur, knowledge, and virtue; and though they were his enemies, they always spoke of him as 'the renowned Baha'u'llah'. [23-1]

..... [23-1. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, chapter IX.]

Mulla Hasan was so abashed that he felt he could not face Baha'u'llah again; he sent a message instead, through Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the Fakhru'd-Dawlih: 'I am ashamed of the behaviour of my colleagues'.

Amongst this group of mujtahids, the one who stood head and shoulders above them, the most pious, the most learned, the greatest of all, was Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari. He was truly peerless and matchless in his day, and he categorically refused to lend his weighty support to those who had arisen to oppose Baha'u'llah. Whenever anyone asked him what to think of Baha'u'llah and the Babis, he would reply, 'Go and investigate for yourself'.

At the opposite pole, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani had viciously placed himself, and as the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... Balked in his repeated attempts to achieve his malevolent purpose, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn now diverted his energies into a new channel. He promised his accomplice [Mirza Buzurg Khan] he would raise him to the rank of a minister of the crown, if he succeeded in inducing the government to recall Baha'u'llah to Tihran, and cast Him again into prison. He despatched lengthy and almost daily reports to the immediate entourage of the Shah. He painted extravagant pictures of the ascendancy enjoyed by Baha'u'llah by representing Him as having won the allegiance of the nomadic tribes of 'Iraq. He claimed that He was in a position to muster, in a day, fully one hundred thousand men ready to take up arms at His bidding. He accused Him of meditating, in conjunction with various leaders in Persia, an insurrection against the sovereign. [23-2]

..... [23-2. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 143 (for two references).]

[p. 146] [p. 147]

Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn had gathered, as we have already noted in 'Abdu'l-Baha's account, a company of turbaned heads round himself, to declare a holy war and

launch an attack on the Babis, but, as the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith comments:

..... To their amazement and disappointment, however, they found that the leading mujtahid amongst them, the celebrated Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari, a man renowned for his tolerance, his wisdom, his undeviating justice; his piety and nobility of character, refused, when apprized of their designs, to pronounce the necessary sentence against the Babis. He it was whom Baha'u'llah later extolled in the 'Lawh-i-Sultan' [the Tablet addressed to Nasiri'd-Din Shah], and numbered among 'those doctors who have indeed drunk of the cup of renunciation,' and 'never interfered with Him,' and to whom 'Abdu'l-Baha referred as 'the illustrious and erudite doctor, the noble and celebrated scholar, the seal of seekers after truth.' Pleading insufficient knowledge of the tenets of this community, and claiming to have witnessed no act on the part of its members at variance with the Qur'an, he, disregarding the remonstrances of his colleagues, abruptly left the gathering, and returned to Najaf, after having expressed, through a messenger, his regret to Baha'u'llah for what had happened, and his devout wish for His protection.[23-2]

..... [23-2. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 143 (for two references).]

It seems that so repelled was Shaykh Murtada by the course which Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn and his accomplices were advocating that he felt moved to present his regret and his prayers for the deliverance of Baha'u'llah from the evil and venom of those men, through two messengers; one was, as noted before, Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the Fakhru'd-Dawlih, and the other, Mirza Hasan-i-Gul-i-Gulab.

Two years later, when Baha'u'llah was about to leave Baghdad, one of the same squad of turbaned men came up to Him to say: 'We do not yet know what to do or say about you'. Baha'u'llah, relating the effrontery of this man to Nabil, said: 'We told him: for years Shaykh Murtada, when asked about Us, replied, this is a matter for investigation, not imitation;[1] go and find out for yourself. You did not follow his advice, but at this late hour, when We are on the point of departing, you come to us with your query. What shall we do, you say! Indeed, go away and read your commentaries.' And Baha'u'llah added, to Nabil: 'We have never spoken to anyone in that manner, but the man was transparently insincere.'

..... [1. Imitation of a fully-qualified mujtahid is a cardinal point of the Shi'ih doctrine.]

Throughout His exile in Baghdad, Baha'u'llah stood ready to meet the religious leaders, as He Himself has testified: [p. 148]

..... For twelve years We tarried in Baghdad. Much as We desired that a large gathering of divines and fair-minded men be convened, so that truth might be distinguished from falsehood, and be fully demonstrated, no action was taken.... We wished to come together with the divines of Persia. No sooner did they hear of this, than they fled and said: 'He indeed is a manifest sorcerer!'

This is the word that proceeded aforetime out of the mouths of such as were like them. These (divines) objected to what they said, and yet, they themselves repeat, in this day, what was said before them, and understand not. By My life! They are even as ashes in the sight of thy Lord.[23-3]

..... [23-3. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, p. 88.]

The praiseworthy attitude of Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari caused dismay and despondency in Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn's circle. Next, the failure of this group to respond to the efforts of Mulla Hasan-i-'Amu exposed the futility of their contentions. But mischief was still rearing its head, and mischief-makers would not keep their peace. Nevertheless, Baha'u'llah went on, totally disregarding the perils which beset Him. Many a night He went out, alone and unaccompanied, to the banks of the Tigris, to coffee-houses which He had always frequented during the years of His sojourn in Baghdad. Nabil remarks that no one would know, at times, where He had gone, except the Most Great Branch and Aqay-i-Kalim. He would go to places where enemies lurked to harm Him, utterly fearless and unconcerned. Whenever He came face to face with them, He would converse and even joke with them, making it plain that He was well aware of their intentions. Whilst Baha'u'llah was standing His ground with such serenity and confidence, Mirza Yahya was in Basrah, disguised, selling slippers and shoes. Rida Turk, the same man who had burst into the bath to assassinate Baha'u'llah, but had fled trembling, also related in later years that one day, pistol in hand, he was keeping watch at a vantage point. Baha'u'llah appeared in the distance, attended by Aqay-i-Kalim. Rida Turk, on his own admission, became so perplexed, as soon as he saw Baha'u'llah, that he dropped his pistol and was unable to move. When Baha'u'llah came level with him, He said to Aqay-i-Kalim: 'Pick up his pistol and give it to him, and show him the way to his house; he seems to have lost his way.'

Nabil states that the companions were on the alert, night after night patrolling outside the house of Baha'u'llah, to ward off the enemy should he dare to attack. A certain Siyyid Husayn-i-Rawdih-Khan--a Reciter of the sufferings of the House of the Prophet--who had come on pilgrimage to 'Iraq from Tihrah and was devoted to Baha'u'llah, [p. 149] made his way to His house one night, in disguise, to report that His adversaries had incited more than a hundred Kurds to come the next night as mourners, and mount an assault on His house. Arab Babis, hearing of the plot, gathered in full force, prepared to offer defence. Baha'u'llah assured them that there was no need for action of any kind. And when the next night, about four hours after sunset, the mourners appeared in the street, beating their breasts, Baha'u'llah requested His attendants to open the door and let them come in. 'They are our guests', He said, and He had rose-water sherbet and then tea served to them. They came as enemies and went away as friends, readily admitting that they had had evil intents but, on beholding the majesty and the kindness of Baha'u'llah, had a change of heart. As they departed, they were shouting: 'May God curse your enemies.'

Nabil tells us that even Mirza Husayn-i-Mutavalli of Qum had written to beseech

Baha'u'llah not to leave His house for a while. In reply, Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet for him which opens with two lines of an ode by Hafiz:

..... Warblers, mellifluous-toned, all the parrots of Ind shall be,

..... Because of this Parsi sugar-cone which to Bengal goes.[1]

..... [1. This Tablet, which is known as Shikkar-Shikan-Shavand, was long supposed to have been addressed to Mirza Sa'id Khan, the Foreign Minister of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. But Nabil's statement makes it clear that it was the fickle Mutavalli of Qum who was honoured by receiving it.]

In this Tablet, Baha'u'llah fearlessly declares that He would never waver, never submit to threats, never be daunted by the turmoil of this world. 'We are incandescent as a candle.... We have burnt all the veils, We have lighted the fire of love.... We shall not run away, We shall not endeavour to repel the stranger, We pray for calamity.... What doth a soul celestial care if the physical frame is destroyed; indeed, this body is for it a prison.... Until the time ordained cometh no one hath power over Us, and when the ordained time cometh it will find Our whole being longing for it....' Nabil says that when the mujtahids of Karbila and Najaf read this Tablet, they were mightily astonished.

Aqay-i-Kalim, speaking once with Nabil about those days, recalled that he had felt certain that soon they would all be arrested and turned over in manacles to the Persian authorities, because he knew only too well the motives of the populace of Baghdad and their notables. However, he had not wished to report such matters to Baha'u'llah, lest [p. 150] they should cause Him sorrow. 'One night,' he related, 'sleep departed from my eyes. I kept pacing up and down the courtyard, wondering what would happen to our wives and children, once we were apprehended. Then I heard a knock and, going to the door, I was told that a number of people had been detailed to keep watch and patrol outside in the street.... When I heard that, I knew that all would be well ... and went to sleep.'

Then, Baha'u'llah decided that the companions should apply for Ottoman nationality, that they might receive the protection of the Ottoman authorities. Namiq Pasha, the Governor of Baghdad, was delighted to hear of it. Nabil relates that Aqa Muhammad-Riday-i-Kurd, who was well versed in legal matters, took each day a number of the companions, two by two, to Government House, and obtained for them Turkish passports. Nabil himself, with Aqa Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Kashani, was among them. These visits went on for nearly three weeks, until all the Persians were naturalized. Great was the consternation of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn and Mirza Buzurg Khan when they came to know that the companions had obtained Ottoman nationality.

Nabil writes that in those days Baha'u'llah visited oftentimes the Mazra'iy-i-Vashshash, a farm in the environs of Baghdad. Most evenings, when He returned at sunset, Nabil himself would wait upon Him until He neared the door of His house. Occasionally, Nabil reports, Baha'u'llah would visit a dwelling

known as the house of Nabuki, situated in the same street as His own house, but on the opposite side. A number of the companions, including Nabil, lived in this house. Aqa Muhammad-Zaman, a merchant of Shiraz, and Ustad 'Ali-Akbar-i-Najjar (carpenter) also lived there. Shatir-Rida (see Addendum V) and his brother had a house in the same street, and had set up a grinding-mill and a bakery. Baha'u'llah owned this bakery, which supplied all the companions, without charge, with the bread they required. The father of the two bakers, the ninety-year-old Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq, came to Baghdad from Ardakan, near Yazd. He had many stories to tell of the behaviour of the ecclesiastics, and of his own conversion to the Faith of the Bab, which, Nabil says, evoked smiles from Baha'u'llah. This made the old man very happy. Raising his hands in thanksgiving for the privilege of making Baha'u'llah smile, he would quote the Prophet: Whoever caused a believer to [p. 151] laugh, he would have made Me happy, and whoever made Me happy, God would be contented with him.

Nabil relates that one of those Persian ecclesiastics, well-fed and corpulent, came one day into the presence of Baha'u'llah, and announced that his title was 'Khatamu'l-Mujtahidin' (the Seal of the Mujtahids), to which Baha'u'llah replied: 'Insha'allah'--God willing.

This 'Seal of the Mujtahids' was a humorous man, who amused Baha'u'llah greatly with his stories. To him Baha'u'llah showed much kindness. Indeed, everyone received an ample share of His generosity--companions, visitors, neighbours, passers-by alike. Nabil tells us that in the district where Baha'u'llah lived, people of the entire neighbourhood, particularly the poor, the disabled and the orphans, were sent gifts by Him. And as He went about, whenever He came upon the needy, He showered His bounties on them. There was an old woman, eighty years of age, who lived in a ruined house. Every day, at the time when Baha'u'llah was going to the coffee-house by the bridge, she would be standing in the roadway awaiting Him. Baha'u'llah would stop, enquire after her health and give her some money. She would kiss His hands, and sometimes wanted to kiss His face but, being short of stature, she could not reach Him, and He would bend down His face towards her. He used to say, 'She knows that I like her, that is why she likes Me.' When He left Baghdad, He arranged a daily allowance to be given to her, to the end of her days. Whichever coffee-house He visited, Nabil comments, would become so thronged with the notables of the city that the owner would find himself greatly prospering. One coffee-house that He frequented belonged to Siyyid Habib, a white-bearded man of imposing appearance, who presided over his quarter. Every day, Baha'u'llah would send for him and give him tea. Any day that passed without attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah, Siyyid Habib felt deprived and considered that day to have been wasted. After Baha'u'llah's departure from Baghdad, no one ever saw him again in his coffee-house, and he gave up drinking tea. Such was also the case with Hamd, another coffee-house owner. He abandoned his occupation.

Late in 1861, Mirza Malkam Khan (later Prince, and invested with the title of Nazimu'd-Dawlih) reached Baghdad, much concerned for his safety. His activities in Tihran, and particularly the founding of a Masonic lodge called

Faramush-Khanih (the House of Forgetfulness), [p. 152] had angered Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who ordered him out of the country. However, Mirza Buzurg Khan gave out that he had been charged by his superiors to have Malkam Khan detained and returned to Iran. Alarmed, Malkam Khan came to Baha'u'llah. Nabil states that Baha'u'llah judged it wiser for him to lodge elsewhere. He sent him to the Seraye, and put him in the care of the Vali, who had him sent safely to Istanbul.

Another who sought out Baha'u'llah in those days was Mirza Muhammad-Husayn-i-Kirman, known as Mirza Muhit, he who had vied for the leadership of the Shaykhi movement after Siyyid Kazim's death. This was the man who had been overwhelmed when the Bab challenged him with a declaration of His Mission by the Ka'bah at Mecca, and in answer to whose questions, the Bab revealed the Sahifiy-i-Baynu'l-Haramayn. But despite this, Mirza Muhit had turned away from the Bab and had lived on in Karbila until, more than two decades later, he now sought a secret meeting with Baha'u'llah.

Nabil writes:

..... 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 mountain of Sulayminiyyih, 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 thy heart thou seekest reunion with Baha; shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us? Begone!" If he is 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.[23-4]

..... [23-4. Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 95-6 (Brit.), pp. 137-8 (US).]

At long last, Mirza Buzurg Khan, without having achieved his purpose, was recalled to Iran, where he continued his vendetta against Baha'u'llah, and 'Iraq had another governor, as well. Namiq Pasha (see Addendum V) replaced Mustafa Nuri Pasha. This change took place in 1862. Namiq, who had once before governed 'Iraq, was, like the previous Vali, a just and disinterested man. [p. 153]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes of these final years in Baghdad:

..... Persians of high eminence, living in exile, rejecting, in the face of the mounting prestige of Baha'u'llah, the dictates of moderation and prudence, sat, forgetful of their pride, at His feet, and imbibed, each

according to his capacity, a measure of His spirit and wisdom. Some of the more ambitious among them, such as 'Abbas Mirza, a son of Muhammad Shah the Vazir-Nizam,[1] and Mirza Malkam Khan, as well as certain functionaries of foreign governments, attempted, in their short-sightedness, to secure His support and assistance for the furtherance of the designs they cherished, designs which He unhesitatingly and severely condemned. Nor was the then representative of the British government, Colonel Sir Arnold Burrows Kemball, consul-general in Baghdad, insensible of the position which Baha'u'llah now occupied. Entering into friendly correspondence with Him, he, as testified by Baha'u'llah Himself, offered Him the protection of British citizenship, called on Him in person, and undertook to transmit to Queen Victoria any communication He might wish to forward to her. He even expressed his readiness to arrange for the transfer of His residence to India, or to any place agreeable to Him. This suggestion Baha'u'llah declined, choosing to abide in the dominions of the Sultan of Turkey. And finally, during the last year of His sojourn in Baghdad the governor Namiq-Pasha, impressed by the many signs of esteem and veneration in which He was held, called upon Him to pay his personal tribute to One Who had already achieved so conspicuous a victory over the hearts and souls of those who had met Him.... On one occasion, when 'Abdu'l-Baha and Aqay-i-Kalim had been delegated by Baha'u'llah to visit him, he entertained them with such elaborate ceremonial that the Deputy-Governor stated that so far as he knew no notable of the city had ever been accorded by any governor so warm and courteous a reception. So struck indeed, had the Sultan 'Abdu'l-Majid been by the favorable reports received about Baha'u'llah from successive governors of Baghdad (this is the personal testimony given by the Governor's deputy to Baha'u'llah Himself) that he consistently refused to countenance the requests of the Persian government either to deliver Him to their representative or to order His expulsion from Turkish territory.

..... [1. This was Mirza Fadlu'llah-i-Nuri, who was the elder brother of Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, the Prime Minister. When the latter fell from power in 1858, Mirza Fadlu'llah also lost his position. It was at this time that he came to Baghdad and met Baha'u'llah. He died in Tihran in AH 1279 (AD 1862-3).]

..... On no previous occasion, since the inception of the Faith, not even during the days when the Bab in Isfahan, in Tabriz and in Chihriq was acclaimed by the ovations of an enthusiastic populace, had any of its exponents risen to such high eminence in the public mind, or exercised over so diversified a circle of admirers an influence so far reaching and so potent.[23-5]

..... [23-5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 131-2.]

[p. 154]

The Government of Nasiri'd-Din Shah now began to press hard for the removal of Baha'u'llah from the vicinity of its frontiers. Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Shah's ambassador in Istanbul, in concert with some other foreign envoys, notably the French, was moving heaven and earth to bring about Baha'u'llah's banishment. The Grand Vizier of Turkey, 'Ali Pasha, and Fu'ad

Pasha, the Foreign Minister (see Addendum V for both men), who were close associates in the governance of the Ottoman Empire and were noted for their reforming radical tendencies, finally gave way to the growing, incessant demands of Mushiru'd-Dawlih, and directed Namiq Pasha to invite Baha'u'llah to visit Istanbul.

Namiq Pasha, who was fully cognizant of all the intrigues and conspiracies, the agitations and plottings, the undercurrents, falsities, fears and fanaticism involved, was at a loss as to how to transmit this invitation to Baha'u'llah.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... So profound was the respect the governor entertained for Him, Whom he regarded as one of the Lights of the Age, that it was not until the end of three months, during which he had received five successive commands from 'Ali Pasha, that he could bring himself to inform Baha'u'llah that it was the wish of the Turkish government that He should proceed to the capital.[23-6]

..... [23-6. *ibid.* p.131. (God Passes By)]

Baha'u'llah celebrated the Festival of Naw-Ruz (1863) at the Mazra'iy-i-Vashshash. It was a happy occasion, until from His Pen--the Most Sublime Pen--flowed the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, 'whose gloomy prognostications', in the words of Shoghi Effendi, 'had aroused the grave apprehensions of His companions'. On the fifth day after Naw-Ruz, a message reached Baha'u'llah from the Vali, couched most courteously, requesting Him to visit the Seraye. Baha'u'llah replied that He had never set foot there but, should the Vali wish, He would meet Him in the mosque, opposite the Government House. Namiq Pasha was agreeable, but as Aqa Rida describes it, now the flood-gates of hearsay, rumour (false and true) and accusation opened wide. Some of the enemies put it about that Baha'u'llah would not stand by His word, would not go to the mosque; others remarked that all the Babis would be banded together and handed to the Persian authorities at the frontier; still others maintained that they would all be drowned in the Tigris. [p. 155]

One day, late in the afternoon as arranged, Baha'u'llah came out of His house attended by Aqa Muhammad-Rida, a Kurdish youth well versed in Turkish, to visit the Vali in the mosque. He permitted no one else to accompany Him. The news was conveyed to Namiq Pasha, who was delighted, but at the last minute he changed his mind and sent his deputy instead, armed with all the communications he had received from Istanbul.

It was an invitation to come to Istanbul that was presented to Baha'u'llah, definitely not a command, and He accepted in the spirit and the way it was offered.

When He returned home, He let it be known that He would go alone. Not only His Family, but all the Babis in Baghdad were greatly distressed when they heard of His intention. But the authorities expressed the hope that the members of His Family, His brothers and a number of attendants would accompany Him.

Everything happened exactly in reverse to what the adversaries had hoped. The reverence shown Baha'u'llah by the authorities was truly exemplary. The sum of money offered to Him, as expenses of the journey, He gave that same day, in its entirety, to the poor. When the Most Great Branch and Aqay-i-Kalim visited the Seraye to meet Namiq Pasha, as instructed to do by Baha'u'llah, they were accorded a reception truly regal. As the Most Great Branch wrote at the time: 'Such hath been the interposition of God that the joy evinced by them [the adversaries] hath been turned to chagrin and sorrow, so much so that the Persian consul-general in Baghdad regrets exceedingly the plans and plots the schemers had devised. Namiq Pasha himself, on the day he called on Him (Baha'u'llah) stated: "Formerly they insisted upon your departure. Now, however, they are even more insistent that you should remain."'[23-7] They plotted and God plotted, and God is the best of plotters.

..... [23-7. *ibid.* p. 150 (God Passes By). The following sentence is from the Qur'an, 8:30.]

Aqa Rida writes that on that first night, after Baha'u'llah's meeting with the Deputy-Governor and His return from the mosque, when the news of the migration to Istanbul spread, the Babis of Baghdad were so stricken by sorrow and the thought of their impending separation from Baha'u'llah that sleep departed from all eyes. Many of them, Aqa Rida says, made up their minds to die rather than suffer the disaster of separation. Gradually, with His counsel and tender care, Baha'u'llah calmed their fears, assuaged the pain of their bruised hearts and imbued them with strength to face the unknown future with [p. 156] hope and determination. Throughout those weeks, until the time of departure, Aqa Rida reports, meetings were held in the homes of the companions which Baha'u'llah attended, and there He spoke to them with love, compassion and authority. Not only were the Babis sad, anxious and forlorn, but, according to Aqa Rida, the whole populace of Baghdad were feeling the pangs of separation.

At last, preparations for the journey were put in hand. Ustad Baqir and Ustad Ahmad, two brothers, carpenters from Kashan, got down to constructing kajavihs (howdahs); and the two brothers, Ustad Baqir and Ustad Muhammad-Isma'il, tailors, also of Kashan, were busy making suitable garments for the journey.

Nabil-i-A'zam supplies, in his chronicle, a list of twenty men, other than His Family and brothers, whom Baha'u'llah chose to migrate with Him. They were:

Ustad Baqir and Ustad Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Khayyat of Kashan, the tailors

Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani, the bath-attendant and barber

Mirza Aqa Jan, the personal attendant and amanuensis of Baha'u'llah, who was at a later time given the designation of Khadimu'llah--the Servant of God

Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir-i-Nayrizi

Aqa Riday-i-Qannad-i-Shirazi, the confectioner of Shiraz

Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani

Darvish Sidq-'Aliy-i-Qazvini

Aqa Najaf-'Aliy-i-Zanjani

Aqa Muhammad-Baqir, Qahvih-chiy-i-Mahallati, the coffeeman of Mahallat

Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq-i-Isfahani

Aqa Muhammad-'Ali, Jilawdar-i-Yazdi, the horseman of Yazd, who was also known as Sabbagh-i-Yazdi, the dyer of Yazd

Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani

Aqa Mirza Ja'far-i-Yazdi

Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashani

Khayyat-i-Kashani, the tailor of Kashan

Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Kashani

Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir-i-Kashani

Haji Ibrahim-i-Kashani [p. 157]

Mirza Aqa, Munir-i-Kashani, entitled Ismu'llahu'l-Munib, the Name of God, the Patron

Although Nabil does not list the following names as having migrated with Baha'u'llah, they did in fact travel with him, the second person named below joining the caravan probably on the second stage of the journey:

Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar-i-Isfahani

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi

Aqa Muhammad-Hasan

Two others, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani, despite their known fickleness, were also included for different reasons in that entourage of Baha'u'llah. Haji Mirza Ahmad, apart from being unstable so far as his faith was concerned, had a fiery temper and would easily flare up. Once in the bazar in Baghdad, where he kept a shop, he had been abusive to a lady of high birth, who had spoken imperiously to him. Nabil-i-A'zam identifies that lady as a member of the royal family, mother of 'Aynu'l-Mulk (later I'tidadi'd-Dawlih).[1] That incident led to the apprehension of Haji Mirza Ahmad by Mirza Buzurg Khan, the Persian envoy, but he was saved by Baha'u'llah. Nabil states that it was this episode which led to the dismissal of Mirza Buzurg Khan, because the plaintive letter he wrote to his superiors in Tihran clearly indicated his incapacity, and he was recalled. Now Baha'u'llah decided to take Haji Mirza Ahmad with His party to Istanbul, lest that kind of incident be repeated in His absence. But this Kashani merchant was not of the same mettle as his illustrious martyred brother, Haji Mirza Jani, and another brother of whom we shall hear later, Haji Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Dhabih. Although later in Adrianople he was honoured with a Tablet from the pen of

Baha'u'llah--the Persian Tablet of Ahmad (Lawh-i-Ahmad-i-Farsi)--a Tablet of soaring power and unsurpassed eloquence, he persisted in his waywardness, sided with Mirza Yahya, and eventually returned to Baghdad where he met a violent death.

..... [1. He was Shir Khan, son of Sulayman Khan-i-Qajar (maternal uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah), and the third husband of 'Izzatu'd-Dawlih, the sister of the Shah. Shir Khan became the Ilkhani of the Qajars, and was in charge of the royal kitchen.]

As to Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, he had to be kept under observation after his idiotic activities in Karbila, which had brought enough ill-fame to the Faith of the Bab, although Baha'u'llah had [p. 158] intended that he remain in Baghdad. (According to Aqa Rida, he appealed to 'Abdu'l-Baha to be allowed to join the caravan.) He was included in Baha'u'llah's retinue, and in future would achieve notoriety as the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation. Both he and Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Naraqi, a man of the same ilk, had been named by Mirza Yahya as 'Witnesses of the Bayan'; yet they considered themselves superior to Mirza Yahya in talent, knowledge and intelligence. Nabil-i-A'zam, who knew them well, comments that each expected to become the 'King of the Bayan', and they were fantastically busy dividing the palatial homes of the nobility of Tihran between themselves. Indeed, Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far, when speaking of the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', would sometimes point a finger at himself.

At this hour of crisis, when Baha'u'llah was calmly and confidently preparing to start on His long journey to Istanbul, Mirza Yahya, panic-stricken, fled Baghdad, without informing his 'Witness' of his whereabouts (according to Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahiji). When Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far arrived from Iran, he had to look here and there in 'Iraq for Mirza Yahya.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... Seven years of uninterrupted, of patient and eminently successful consolidation were now drawing to a close. A shepherdless community, subjected to a prolonged and tremendous strain, from both within and without, and threatened with obliteration, had been resuscitated, and risen to an ascendancy without example in the course of its twenty years' history. Its foundations reinforced, its spirit exalted, its outlook transformed, its leadership safeguarded, its fundamentals restated, its prestige enhanced, its enemies discomfited, the Hand of Destiny was gradually preparing to launch it on a new phase in its checkered career, in which weal and woe alike were to carry it through yet another stage in its evolution. The Deliverer, the sole hope, and the virtually recognized leader of this community, Who had consistently overawed the authors of so many plots to assassinate Him, Who had scornfully rejected all the timid advice that He should flee from the scene of danger, Who had firmly declined repeated and generous offers made by friends and supporters to insure His personal safety, Who had won so conspicuous a victory over His antagonists--He was, at this auspicious hour, being impelled by the resistless

processes of His unfolding Mission, to transfer His residence to the center of still greater preeminence, the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, the seat of the Caliphate, the administrative center of Sunni Islam, the abode of the most powerful potentate in the Islamic world.[23-8]

..... [23-8. ibid. pp. 144-5. (God Passes By)]

[p. 159]

24

From the Most Exalted Pen

DURING the years of His sojourn in Baghdad, Baha'u'llah revealed three of His best-known Writings: The Hidden Words (about AD 1858), The Seven Valleys, and the Kitab-i-Iqan or The Book of Certitude (AD 1862). The Four Valleys was also revealed during the same period.

Walking on the banks of the Tigris, Baha'u'llah reflected on the nearness of God ('We are nearer to him than the jugular vein'[1]) and the remoteness of man, on the outpourings of God's Grace and Love and man's wayward, obstinate refusal to drink of that never-ceasing, never-ending fountain. From His meditations came The Hidden Words (Kalimat-i-Maknunih)--also known as Sahifiy-i-Fatimiyyih, the Book of Fatimih--in both Arabic and Persian, written in a lucid, captivating prose, presenting those never-changing, eternal verities that stand at the core of every revealed religion. Their sweeping range, the exquisite tenderness of their imagery and description, the majesty--the overwhelming majesty--of their conception, uplift the soul and disclose to the inner eye endless vistas of God's Love and Mercy, His Justice and His Power--an All-Pervading, All-Embracing, All-Conquering Power. The Hidden Words show in their crystal clarity the very structure of faith and religion:

..... [1. Qur'an: 50.15]

..... This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue.

..... O Son of Man! Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty. [p. 160]

..... O Son of Man! If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.

..... O Son of Being! With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence

of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.

..... O Son of Man! Thou art My dominion and My dominion perisheth not, wherefore fearest thou thy perishing? Thou art My light and My light shall never be extinguished, why dost thou dread extinction? Thou art My glory and My glory fadeth not; thou art My robe and My robe shall never be outworn. Abide then in thy love for Me, that thou mayest find Me in the realm of glory.

..... O Son of Spirit! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

..... O Companion of My Throne! Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and weep. Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed. Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.

..... O Son of Justice! Whither can a lover go but to the land of his beloved? and what seeker findeth rest away from his heart's desire? To the true lover reunion is life, and separation is death. His breast is void of patience and his heart hath no peace. A myriad lives he would forsake to hasten to the abode of his beloved.

..... O Children of Desire! Put away the garment of vainglory, and divest yourselves of the attire of haughtiness.

..... O Brethren! Be forbearing one with another and set not your affections on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement. By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.

..... O Children of Dust! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of [p. 161] the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

..... O Oppressors of Earth! Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man's injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed with My seal of glory.

Such is the range of the counsel of The Hidden Words.[24-1]

..... [24-1. The verses quoted, in sequence, are: Introduction (Arabic), nos. 3 (A.), 7 (A.), 2 (A.), 14 (A.), 22 (A.), 44 (Persian), 4 (P.), 47 (P.), 48 (P.), 49 (P.), 64 (P.).]

The Seven Valleys was composed in answer to the questions of Shaykh Muhyi'd-Din, the Qadi of Khaniqayn.[1] It is a gem of mystical prose, matchless in its beauty, simplicity and profundity. In this small book Baha'u'llah describes the stages that the seeker must needs traverse in his spiritual quest. The end of all search is to know God, and that knowledge can only be attained through His Manifestation. [p. 162] These seven valleys or stages are the Valleys of Search, Love, Knowledge, Unity, Contentment, Wonderment, True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness.

..... [1. A township in 'Iraq, close to the Iranian frontier.]

The Valley of Search

..... In this Valley, the wayfarer rides the steed of patience. Without patience the wayfarer in this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal... Were he to strive for ages, without beholding the beauty of the Friend, he should not become dejected... In this journey the seeker reaches a stage wherein he finds all beings madly in search of the Friend....

The Valley of Love

.....In this Valley, the wayfarer rides the steed of pain; for without pain this journey will never end... Every moment he would joyfully offer a hundred lives in the way of the Beloved and at every step he would throw a thousand heads on the path of the Friend... Love admits of no life and seeks no existence. In death it sees life and in abasement seeks glory....

The Valley of Knowledge

.....In this valley the wayfarer, in his pure insight, finds no contradiction or difference in the creation of God,... Many a knowledge he will find concealed in ignorance and hosts of wisdom manifest in knowledge....

The Valley of Unity

..... After traversing the Valley of Knowledge, which is the last plane of limitation, the wayfarer attains the first stage of the Valley of Unity, whereupon he quaffs the chalice of abstraction and witnesses the Manifestations of Oneness.... He hears with the ears of God and sees the mysteries of divine creation with the eyes of God.... He will gaze upon all things with the eye of oneness and will find the Divine Sun, from the Heavenly Day-Spring, shedding the same light and splendour upon all beings and will see the lights of singleness reflected and visible upon all creation....

The Valley of Contentment

..... In this Valley, he will feel the breezes of divine contentment wafting from the plane of the spirit; he will burn the veils of want; and with inward and outward eyes, he will witness, within and without all [p. 163] things, the meaning of the verse: 'In that Day, God will make all independent out of His abundance.' His sorrow will be changed into joy, and his grief be replaced by happiness; and his dejection and melancholy will yield to gladness

and exultation....

The Valley of Wonderment

..... Now he sees the temple of wealth as want itself, and the essence of independence as sheer impotence. Now he is astonished at the beauty of the All-Glorious One, and now he wearies of his own existence. ...For, in this Valley, the wayfarer is thrown into utter confusion;... He witnesses a wondrous world and a new creation at every instant, and adds wonderment to wonderment; and he is astonished at the works of the Lord of Oneness....

The Valley of True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness

..... This state is that of dying from self and living in God, and being poor in self and becoming rich in the Desired One.... And when you have attained this lofty plane and reached this mighty state, you will find the Friend and forget all else.... In this city, even the veils of light vanish.... Ecstasy alone can comprehend this theme, not discussion or argument... The seven stages of this journey which have no visible end in the world of time, may be traversed by the detached wayfarer in seven steps, if not in seven breaths, nay in one breath--if, God willing, invisible assistance favour him....[24-2]

..... [24-2. Extracts from Baha'u'llah, The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys, from 1936 edn. See Bibliography for later edn.]

The Four Valleys, another gem of mystical prose, was also revealed in Baghdad. It was a letter addressed to Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahman-i-Karkuti, a man of erudition and understanding. It is much shorter than The Seven Valleys, but partakes abundantly of its high qualities.

The Kitab-i-Iqan or The Book of Certitude was written in answer to questions presented by Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, a maternal uncle of the Bab, entitled Khal-i-Akbar (the Greatest Uncle). He and his brother, Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali, entitled Khal-i-Asghar (the Younger or the Junior Uncle) were visiting the holy shrines of 'Iraq, in the year 1862. Both of them, during the six short eventful years of the ministry of their Nephew, had stood firm and steadfast in His support and defence, but neither of them had given Him his allegiance. Baha'u'llah, Himself, relates in a Tablet that Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i spoke to Him of the presence of these two uncles of the Bab in 'Iraq. [p. 164] Baha'u'llah then enquired from Haji Siyyid Javad whether he had reminded them of the Cause of the Bab. Haji Siyyid Javad had not, and Baha'u'llah related in the Tablet that He wished such close relatives of the Primal Point not to remain deprived of the bounties conferred by the Faith of their glorious Nephew, and He directed Haji Siyyid Javad to bring one or both of them to meet Him. Already in Shiraz Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad had been prompted by a relative, Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, to travel to 'Iraq, outwardly on pilgrimage to the holy shrines, but in truth with the aim of attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah. (As a youth, Aqa Mirza Aqa had been converted to the Babi Faith by his aunt, Khadijih Bigum, the wife of the Bab.) Now, when Haji

Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i, whom he had known well for many years, brought Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad this invitation from Baha'u'llah, he gladly and readily responded. Baha'u'llah mentions in the same Tablet that when He asked Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad what it was that stood in his way, the latter replied that there were some questions which had caused him great concern. Baha'u'llah advised him to write down those questions that they might be answered. In recent years, amongst the papers left by Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, the questions he presented to Baha'u'llah have come to light. These, which we can read today in the handwriting of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad himself, are related to the Shi'ih expectations of the advent of the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad.

Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad worded his questions under four headings, namely:

1. The Day of Resurrection. Is there to be corporeal resurrection? The world is replete with injustice. How are the just to be requited and the unjust punished?
2. The twelfth Imam was born at a certain time and lives on. There are traditions, all supporting the belief. How can this be explained?
3. Interpretation of holy texts. This Cause does not seem to conform with beliefs held throughout the years. One cannot ignore the literal meaning of holy texts and scripture. How can this be explained?
4. Certain events, according to the traditions that have come down from the Imams, must occur at the advent of the Qa'im. Some of [p. 165] these are mentioned. But none of these has happened. How can this be explained?

This is the gist of the questions presented to Baha'u'llah, by the uncle of the Bab.

Baha'u'llah revealed the Kitab-i-Iqan, answering the questions posed by this uncle of the Bab, within forty-eight hours. The original manuscript, in the handwriting of 'Abdu'l-Baha, with marginal additions made by Baha'u'llah Himself, is now preserved in the International Baha'i Archives on Mount Carmel.

Fatimih Khanum Afnan, a great-granddaughter of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, had inherited this manuscript and she presented it to the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith. A copy, which must have been transcribed for Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali, the junior uncle of the Bab (who, although he did not accompany his brother into the presence of Baha'u'llah, before long gave Him his allegiance), bears a date only one year after its revelation; it is now in the possession of one of Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali's great-great-grandsons. The present writer has in his possession a fine copy in the handwriting of Aqa Mirza Aqay-i-Rikab-Saz, the first martyr of Shiraz, bearing the date 1871. (See frontispiece.)

The Book of Certitude was perhaps the earliest of the Writings of Baha'u'llah to appear in print. A beautifully lithographed copy, which does not bear a date and must have been printed in Bombay, is known to have been in circulation in the early eighties of the last century. In this book, which the Guardian of the

Baha'i Faith has described as 'of unsurpassed pre-eminence among the writings of the Author of the Baha'i Revelation', Baha'u'llah offers a logical, illuminating and irrefutable explanation of the symbolism and the enigmatic texts of the Scriptures of the past, establishes the fact of progressive revelation, and adduces proofs to substantiate the divine mission of the Bab. Shoghi Effendi says furthermore, of The Book of Certitude, 'Well may it be claimed that of all the books revealed by the Author of the Baha'i Revelation, this book alone, by sweeping away the age-long barriers that have so insurmountably separated the great religions of the world, has laid down a broad and unassailable foundation for the complete and permanent reconciliation of their followers.' [24-3] No single quotation can adequately present a picture of the vast field covered by [p. 166] the contents of this momentous book. Speaking of the powers and the signs of God manifest in the entire realm of creation, Baha'u'llah says:

..... [24-3. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 139.]

..... ..whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that most great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist. How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop! To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, hath been invested with the robe of such gifts, and hath been singled out for the glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed. All these names and attributes are applicable to him. Even as He hath said: 'Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery.'...

..... ..Man, the noblest and most perfect of all created things, excelleth them all in the intensity of this revelation, and is a fuller expression of its glory. And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished and the most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of their grace.... These Tabernacles of holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace, are made manifest. [24-4]

..... [24-4. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, pp. 65-7 (Brit.), pp. 100-103 (US).]

The Manifestations of God, the Founders of the world's religions, are the Bearers of God's will and purpose to mankind. They are the logos--the Word of God. In them nothing can be seen but the Reality and the Light of God.

..... The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace ... hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of [p. 167] celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade.[24-5]

..... [24-5. *ibid.* pp. 645 (Brit.), pp. 99-100 (US). (Kitab-i-Iqan)]

This is only one aspect of the great theme that The Book of Certitude unfolds.

There was a time, during His sojourn in Baghdad, when Baha'u'llah would order Mirza Aqa Jan to let the Tigris carry away the outpourings of His Pen. In a Tablet, revealed long after in 'Akka, Baha'u'llah mentions this fact. Nabil recalls that some of those writings were saved, because of the pleading of Mirza Aqa Jan, and these included the Tablet of the Munajat-i-Huriyyih (the Prayer of the Maid of Heaven). [p. 168]

25

The March of the King of Glory

THE sun was westering on 22 April 1863 (the thirty-second day after Naw-Ruz) when Baha'u'llah walked, for the last time, out of the house that, for many years, had been His home in the city of the 'Abbasids, and made His way to the bank of the Tigris, where a quffih awaited to take Him to the further bank, to the garden of Najib Pasha (known as the Najibiyyih). The thoroughfare to the riverside brimmed with people, men and women, young and old, from all walks of life, who had gathered to see Him go and bewail His departure.

Baha'u'llah, as he walked to the bank of the Tigris, gave generously to the poor and the deprived, and consoled and comforted the people who were never to see Him again. But they were now so acutely conscious of their evident and grievous loss that words failed to console them. And it must be remembered that the vast majority of them were men and women not in any way connected with the Faith of the Bab. Ibn-Alusi, a leading cleric of the Sunni community, was seen weeping over their plight, and he was heard to heap imprecations on Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who was generally held responsible for Baha'u'llah's exile from Baghdad. 'This man is not Nasiri'd-Din--the Helper of Religion; he is Mukhdhili'd-Din--the Abaser of Religion.' Such being the reaction of men in high position not affiliated to the Faith of the Bab, one can better imagine the feelings of those Babis who, perforce, had to remain in Baghdad. Aqa Rida

writes that so disconsolate were they that those who were to accompany Baha'u'llah sorrowed with them. 'God alone knows', he writes, 'how those believers who were not to come fared on that day.'

It was springtime and the garden of Najib Pasha, henceforth to become known to the Baha'is as the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise), was aflame with the brilliant hues of roses, and their bloom was super-abundant on that day. Those who have written of that April 22nd in [p. 169] the Garden of Ridvan linger particularly over the beauty of the roses and the bounties and blessings of nature. It was fitting for such a day, when nature was so gladsome and the hearts of men so weighed with sadness, that it should also bring the joyous tiding of the Divine Springtime. The Pen of Baha'u'llah wrote of that day:

..... 'The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new. Speak, and hold not thy peace. The day star of blissfulness shineth above the horizon of Our name, the Blissful, inasmuch as the kingdom of the name of God hath been adorned with the ornament of the name of thy Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Arise before the nations of the earth, and arm thyself with the power of this Most Great Name, and be not of those who tarry.

..... 'Methinks that thou hast halted and movest not upon My Tablet. Could the brightness of the Divine Countenance have bewildered thee, or the idle talk of the froward filled thee with grief and paralyzed thy movement? Take heed lest anything deter thee from extolling the greatness of this Day--the Day whereon the Finger of majesty and power hath opened the seal of the Wine of Reunion, and called all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. Preferrest thou to tarry when the breeze announcing the Day of God hath already breathed over thee, or art thou of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him? 'No veil whatever have I allowed, O Lord of all names and Creator of the heavens, to shut me from the recognition of the glories of Thy Day--the Day which is the lamp of guidance unto the whole world, and the sign of the Ancient of Days unto all them that dwell therein. My silence is by reason of the veils that have blinded Thy creatures' eyes to Thee, and my muteness is because of the impediments that have hindered Thy people from recognizing Thy truth. Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. By Thy name that excelleth all other names! If Thy overruling and all-compelling behest should ever reach me, it would empower me to revive the souls of all men, through Thy most exalted Word, which I have heard uttered by Thy Tongue of power in Thy Kingdom of glory. It would enable me to announce the revelation of Thy effulgent countenance wherethrough that which lay hidden from [p. 170] the eyes of men hath been manifested in Thy name, the Perspicuous, the sovereign Protector, the Self-Subsisting.

..... 'Canst thou discover any one but Me, O Pen, in this Day? What hath become of the creation and the manifestations thereof? What of the names and their kingdom? Whither are gone all created things, whether seen or unseen?

What of the hidden secrets of the universe and its revelations? Lo, the entire creation hath passed away! Nothing remaineth except My Face, the Ever-Abiding, the Resplendent, the All-Glorious.

..... "This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.

..... "This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out: "Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the foot-stool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne." The realm of glory exclaimeth: "Would that my life could be sacrificed for thee, for He Who is the Beloved of the All-Merciful hath established His sovereignty upon thee, through the power of His Name that hath been promised unto all things, whether of the past or of the future." This is the Day whereon every sweet-smelling thing hath derived its fragrance from the smell of My garment--a garment that hath shed its perfume upon the whole of creation. This is the Day whereon the rushing waters of everlasting life have gushed out of the Will of the All-Merciful. Haste ye, with your hearts and souls, and quaff your fill, O Concourse of the realms above!

..... 'Say: He it is Who is the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable, the Invisible of the Invisibles, could ye but perceive it. He it is Who hath laid bare before you the hidden and treasured Gem, were ye to seek it. He it is Who is the one Beloved of all things, whether of the past or of the future. Would that ye might set your hearts and hopes upon Him!

..... "We have heard the voice of thy pleading, O Pen, and excuse thy silence. What is it that hath so sorely bewildered thee?

..... "The inebriation of Thy presence, O Well-Beloved of all worlds, hath seized and possessed me. [p. 171]

..... 'Arise, and proclaim unto the entire creation the tidings that He Who is the All-Merciful hath directed His steps towards the Ridvan and entered it. Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise. We have chosen thee to be our most mighty Trumpet, whose blast is to signalize the resurrection of all mankind.

..... 'Say: This is the Paradise on whose foliage the wine of utterance hath imprinted the testimony: "He that was hidden from the eyes of men is revealed, girded with sovereignty and power!" This is the Paradise, the rustling of whose leaves proclaims: "O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had concealed His Face from the sight of creation is now come." From the whispering breeze that wafteth amidst its branches there cometh the cry: "He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is made manifest. The Kingdom is

God's," while from its streaming waters can be heard the murmur: "All eyes are gladdened, for He Whom none hath beheld, Whose secret no one hath discovered, hath lifted the veil of glory, and uncovered the countenance of Beauty."

..... "Within this Paradise, and from the heights of its loftiest chambers, the Maids of Heaven have cried out and shouted: "Rejoice, ye dwellers of the realms above, for the fingers of Him Who is the Ancient of Days are ringing, in the name of the All-Glorious, the Most Great Bell, in the midmost heart of the heavens. The hands of bounty have borne round the cup of everlasting life. Approach, and quaff your fill. Drink with healthy relish, O ye that are the very incarnations of longing, ye who are the embodiments of vehement desire!"

..... "This is the Day whereon He Who is the Revealer of the names of God hath stepped out of the Tabernacle of glory, and proclaimed unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth: "Put away the cups of Paradise and all the life-giving waters they contain, for lo, the people of Baha have entered the blissful abode of the Divine Presence, and quaffed the wine of reunion, from the chalice of the beauty of their Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High."

..... "Forget the world of creation, O Pen, and turn thou towards the face of thy Lord, the Lord of all names. Adorn, then, the world with the ornament of the favours of thy Lord, the King of everlasting days. For We perceive the fragrance of the Day whereon He Who is the Desire of [p. 172] all nations hath shed upon the kingdoms of the unseen and of the seen the splendour of the light of His most excellent names, and enveloped them with the radiance of the luminaries of His most gracious favours--favours which none can reckon except Him, Who is the omnipotent Protector of the entire creation.

..... "Look not upon the creatures of God except with the eye of kindness and of mercy, for Our loving providence hath pervaded all created things, and Our grace encompassed the earth and the heavens. This is the Day whereon the true servants of God partake of the life-giving waters of reunion, the Day whereon those that are nigh unto Him are able to drink of the soft-flowing river of immortality, and they who believe in His unity, the wine of His Presence, through their recognition of Him Who is the Highest and Last End of all, in Whom the Tongue of Majesty and Glory voiceth the call: "The Kingdom is Mine. I, Myself, am, of Mine own right, its Ruler."

..... "Attract the hearts of men, through the call of Him, the one alone Beloved. Say: This is the Voice of God, if ye do but hearken. This is the Day-Spring of the Revelation of God, did ye but know it. This is the Dawning-Place of the Cause of God, were ye to recognize it. This is the Source of the commandment of God, did ye but judge it fairly. This is the manifest and hidden Secret; would that ye might perceive it. O peoples of the world! Cast away, in My name that transcendeth all other names, the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves in this Ocean in whose depths lay hidden the pearls of wisdom and of utterance, an ocean that surgeth in My name, the All-Merciful.

Thus instructeth you He with Whom is the Mother Book.'

..... 'The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and exclaimeth: "Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!" By the righteousness of the Almighty! Every hidden thing hath been manifested through the power of truth. All the favours of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.

..... 'Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor [p. 173] the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled, and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: "Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!"

..... 'Rejoice with exceeding gladness, O people of Baha, as ye call to remembrance the Day of supreme felicity, the Day whereon the Tongue of the Ancient of Days hath spoken, as He departed from His House, proceeding to the Spot from which He shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of His name, the All-Merciful. God is Our witness. Were We to reveal the hidden secrets of that Day, all they that dwell on earth and in the heavens would swoon away and die, except such as will be preserved by God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

'Such is the inebriating effect of the words of God upon Him Who is the Revealer of His undoubted proofs, that His Pen can move no longer. With these words He concludeth His Tablet: "No God is there but Me, the Most Exalted, the Most Powerful, the Most Excellent, the All-Knowing." [25-1]

..... [25-1. Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, section XIV.]

While writers and chroniclers have left copious accounts of the throngs of people, their expression of sorrow, the excellence of the skilled work of the gardeners, nothing is said of how Baha'u'llah made His long-awaited Declaration. In the words of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith:

..... 'Of the exact circumstances attending that epoch-making Declaration we, alas, are but scantily informed. The words Baha'u'llah actually uttered on that occasion, the manner of His Declaration, the reaction it produced, its

impact on Mirza Yahya, the identity of those who were privileged to hear Him, are shrouded in an obscurity which future historians will find it difficult to penetrate. The fragmentary description left to posterity by His chronicler Nabil is one of the very [p. 174] few authentic records we possess of the memorable days He spent in that garden. "Every day," Nabil has related, "ere the hour of dawn, the gardeners would pick the roses which lined the four avenues of the garden, and would pile them in the center of the floor of His blessed tent. So great would be the heap that when His companions gathered to drink their morning tea in His presence, they would be unable to see each other across it. All these roses Baha'u'llah would, with His own hands, entrust to those whom He dismissed from His presence every morning to be delivered, on His behalf, to His Arab and Persian friends in the city." "One night," he continues, "the ninth night of the waxing moon, I happened to be one of those who watched beside His blessed tent. As the hour of midnight approached, I saw Him issue from His tent, pass by the places where some of His companions were sleeping, and begin to pace up and down the moonlit, flower-bordered avenues of the garden. So loud was the singing of the nightingales on every side that only those who were near Him could hear distinctly His voice. He continued to walk until, pausing in the midst of one of these avenues, He observed: 'Consider these nightingales. So great is their love for these roses, that sleepless from dusk till dawn, they warble their melodies and commune with burning passion with the object of their adoration. How then can those who claim to be afire with the rose-like beauty of the Beloved choose to sleep?' For three successive nights I watched and circled round His blessed tent. Every time I passed by the couch whereon He lay, I would find Him wakeful, and every day, from morn till eventide, I would see Him ceaselessly engaged in conversing with the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdad. Not once could I discover in the words He spoke any trace of dissimulation." [25-2]

..... [25-2. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 153.]

Aqa Rida also describes the constant stream of people who came each day from Baghdad to visit Baha'u'llah, who could not tolerate being parted from Him. Food, according to Aqa Rida, was brought from the house of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, where His family was still in residence, and also from the house of Mirza Musay-i-Javahiri.

Namiq Pasha himself came one day and offered to provide Baha'u'llah with whatever He required for the Journey, and asked to be forgiven for what had occurred. Baha'u'llah assured him that they had all they needed, and as Namiq Pasha insisted on being of some service, Baha'u'llah said: 'Be considerate to My friends and treat them [p. 175] kindly'. The Vali gave his word to this, and he also wrote a letter addressed to the officials on the way to Istanbul, instructing them to provide the travellers with all necessities, and entrusted this document to the officer who was detailed to accompany them. But, Aqa Rida states, all along the route Baha'u'llah never permitted them to accept such exactions, and they always bought their provisions and paid for them. Namiq Pasha had one more request to make: he had a very beautiful horse which he

wanted to send to Constantinople, and he asked to be allowed to leave the horse with Baha'u'llah's men to look after. His request was granted. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi has related that this horse, which was to be delivered to Namiq Pasha's son in Istanbul, was left in the care of Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashi (Kashani). He must have been particularly instructed to lend it well. Siyyid Husayn was a simple soul and a man full of jest and humour. He always longed to be able to do and say something to amuse Baha'u'llah and make Him smile. Ashchi says that he used to dance and caper in front of Baha'u'llah's own horse, 'a red roan stallion of the finest breed' named Sa'udi. One day along the route, he went to Baha'u'llah's tent to complain that the Greatest Branch gave out sufficient barley and fodder to feed the other animals, but did not give him any for his horse, but noticing 'Abdu'l-Baha come into the tent, he took to his heels and ran off into the desert. Siyyid Husayn, Ashchi says, was in the retinue of Baha'u'llah until they were to move to Adirnih (Adrianople). Then, Baha'u'llah told him and a number of others who had joined them en route to return home. Still longing to offer Baha'u'llah some amusement, he implored the Baha'is who were to remain with Him not to forget to mention some of his comic doings that Baha'u'llah might smile, should at any time his name come up.

On the ninth day the family of Baha'u'llah also moved to the Najibiyyih, and the twelfth day was appointed for departure. Thus the Festival of Ridvan comprises twelve days. Throughout the twelfth day, people poured into the garden for their final farewells. At last the mules were loaded, the kajavihs (howdahs) were settled on them, the ladies and children took their seats in the kajavihs, and towards sunset the red roan stallion was brought out for Baha'u'llah to mount. All those whose narratives have come down to us state that seeing Baha'u'llah in the saddle, and about to depart, evoked from the vast crowd heart-rending, unbearable cries of distress. The call: 'Allah-u-Akbar' [p. 176] --'God is the Greatest'--rang out time and again. People threw themselves in the path of His horse, and as Aqa Rida expresses it, 'it seemed as if that heavenly steed was passing over sanctified bodies and pure hearts'. On that day for the first time they witnessed Baha'u'llah's splendid horsemanship. During all those years in Baghdad, although horses were never unavailable, Aqa Rida states that Baha'u'llah had always chosen to ride a donkey. Another symbolic sign of the divine authority that He now visibly wielded was the change in His headgear, on the first day of the Festival of Ridvan--the day He left His house in Baghdad for the last time, to take His residence in the Najibiyyih prior to His departure for the capital of the Turkish Empire. It was then seen that He was wearing a taj (crown), finely embroidered. A number of these tall felt headgears have been preserved: red, green, yellow and and white, beautifully adorned with embroidery of the highest quality and skill.

The sun was about to set when they reached Firayjat, three miles away, on the bank of the Tigris. Here too there was a verdant garden which contained a considerable mansion, and here the caravan halted for seven days. While Mirza Musa, the brother of Baha'u'llah, was busy tidying their affairs in Baghdad and seeing to the packing and loading of the rest of their goods, Baha'u'llah

resided in that mansion. In Firayjat horses were made to run a course to test them, and once again Baha'u'llah's masterly horsemanship was witnessed. He had two other horses besides the stallion, Sa'udi, one called Farangi and the other Sa'id. There were also two donkeys for the younger sons of Baha'u'llah to ride occasionally. At Firayjat people were still coming daily from Baghdad. They could not bear to be wrenched from the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Baha'u'llah would, while on the move, take His seat in a kajaviih, but would mount His horse when approaching a village or a town, to meet the officials and notables who would invariably come out to greet Him. A man named Haji Mahmud walked in front, holding the reins of the mule which bore His kajaviih, and Mirza Aqa Jan, Mirza Aqay-i-Munir, surnamed Ismu'llahu'l-Munib, and Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir-i-Nayrizi walked on either side.

'Abdu'l-Baha has given a vivid and delightful account of the spirit of that journey, in His memoir of Mirza Aqay-i-Munir (Jinab-i-Munib; see Addendum V): 'At the time when, with all pomp and [p. 177] ceremony, Baha'u'llah and His retinue departed from Baghdad, Jinab-i-Munib accompanied the party on foot. The young man had been known in Persia for his easy and agreeable life and his love of pleasure also for being somewhat soft and delicate, and used to having his own way. It is obvious what a person of this type endured, going on foot from Baghdad to Constantinople. Still, he gladly measured out the desert miles, and he spent his days and nights chanting prayers, communing with God and calling upon Him.

'He was a close companion of mine on that journey. There were nights when we would walk, one to either side of the howdah of Baha'u'llah, and the joy we had defies description. Some of those nights he would sing poems; among them he would chant the odes of Hafiz, like the one that begins, "Come let us scatter these roses, let us pour out this wine," and that other:

..... "To our King though we bow the knee,

..... We are kings of the morning star.

..... No changeable colors have we--

..... Red lions black dragons we are!"[25-3]

..... [25-3. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 145-6.]

On the seventh day, the caravan set its face in earnest towards Constantinople. Keeping to the bank of the Tigris, Judaydah was [p. 178] reached in late afternoon. There was no garden to be found there and tents were raised. And here at Judaydah they halted for another three days.

At Judaydah, Shatir-Rida reached the caravan, bringing with him Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, a young boy whose father, Aqa 'Abdu'r Rasul-i-Qumi, was then a prisoner in Tihiran, and was to suffer martyrdom in Baghdad. This Aqa Muhammad-Hasan grew up in the household of Baha'u'llah and served Him faithfully. In later years he was put in charge of the Pilgrim House in 'Akka. The present writer well remembers Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, in his extreme old age,

in 'Akka in the mid-twenties. When no longer able to serve in the Pilgrim House, Aqa Muhammad-Hasan lived in Bayt-i-'Abbud(Baha'u'llah's house in 'Akka) and looked after the place. The old man possessed a veritable treasure--many specimens of the handwriting of Baha'u'llah, kept in a trunk, which gave him great pleasure to show to visitors. Haji Muhammad-Taqi, the Nayibu'l-Iyalih, also came to Judaydah from Baghdad. But when the caravan broke camp to proceed on the journey, Baha'u'llah instructed him, Shatir-Rida, Shaykh Sadiq-i-Yazdi and Ustad 'Abdu'l-Karim to return to Baghdad. Shaykh Sadiq was an old man greatly devoted to the person of Baha'u'llah. He felt so acutely the pangs of separation from Him that he could not rest, and not long after, started, a solitary figure, to walk to Istanbul. But he never finished the journey and died on the way, at Ma'dan-i-Nuqrih. (See p. 192)

Aqa Rida who himself, together with Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani (see Addendum V), was responsible for the culinary arrangements and for the preparing and dispensing of meals, gives a long and interesting list of other duties and the men who discharged them: Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Mahallati saw to providing coffee and water-pipes. The two brothers: Ustad Baqir and Ustad Muhammad-Isma'il, natives of Kashan, were in charge of the tea and the samovar. Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir and Aqa Najaf-'Ali were responsible for pitching the tents and for the security of the camp. Mirza Aqa Jan and Aqay-i-Munir served the person of Baha'u'llah. Darvish Sadiq-'Ali, Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashani and Haji Ibrahim groomed the horses. Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Jilawdar (see Addendum V) had charge of the fodder and barley for the animals. Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir, and Mirza Ja'far saw to the purchase of necessities on the way. Ustad [p. 179] Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani (see Addendum V), in addition to carrying on with his calling, kept watch over the tents and the chattels of the journey. Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar (Aqa 'Abdu'llah; see Addendum V), who was conversant with Turkish, made himself useful in contacts with the people the caravan met en route. The two boys, Aqa Muhammad-Hasan and Aqa Husayn (later known as Ashchi), served the ladies. According to Aqa Rida, others in Baha'u'llah's retinue were Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani. Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani.

The services of Aqa Rida himself, with Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani, were described by 'Abdu'l-Baha to his secretary:

..... [they] rested not for a moment. After our arrival they would immediately become engaged in cooking for this party of nearly seventy-two people--and this after their arduous work of guiding all day or all night the horses which carried the palanquin of the Blessed Perfection. When the meal was cooked and made ready all those who had slept would wake, eat and go to sleep again. These two men would then wash all the dishes and pack them up. By this time they would be so tired that they could have slept on even a hard boulder.

..... During the journey when they became utterly weary they would sleep while walking. Now and again I would see one of them take a bound and leap from one point to another. It would then become apparent that he was asleep and had dreamed that he had reached a wide creek--hence the jump.

..... In a word, from Baghdad to Samsun they served with rare faithfulness. Indeed no human being had the fortitude to bear cheerfully all this heavy labour. But, because they were kindled (by the spirit of God) they performed all these services with greatest happiness. I remember how, in the early morning, when we wanted to start for another caravanserai, we often saw these two men fast asleep. We would go and shake them and they would wake with much difficulty. While walking they always chanted communes and supplications.[25-4]

..... [25-4. Star of the West, vol. XIII (1922-3), pp. 277-8.]

'Abdu'l-Baha, in this same account, explained in brief but telling words the nature of the journey which lay ahead of them. 'Often, by day or by night we covered a distance of from twenty-five to thirty miles. No sooner would we reach a caravanserai than from sheer fatigue everyone would down and go to sleep: utter exhaustion having overtaken everybody they would be unable even to move.' But He, Himself, often had little or no rest during these stops, for His was the duty to see that the large party, including the animals, were supplied with food and daily necessities.[25-4]

..... [25-4. Star of the West, vol. XIII (1922-3), pp. 277-8.] [p. 180]

[p. 181]

From Judaydah the caravan wended its way to Dili-'Abbas, situated in a verdant plain by the river. Here again tents were pitched. However, because of the heat of the day it was customary to travel by night, and at midnight the caravan moved on and reached Qarih-Tapih the next day. The following stage was Salahiyih, a small town beside a mountain, situated on a tributary of the river Diyalah, which was the seat of a qa'im-Maqam. The Qa'im-Maqam and the notables of the place came out to greet the caravan, and offer their respects. But they went well beyond formal greetings and held a festival in honour of their guests. The caravan halted at Salahiyih for two nights, and the officials provided nightly watches against the incursion of highwaymen. The third night the caravan was once again on the move, despite intense darkness and winds of hurricane force. Aqa Rida, himself, had a frightening experience that night. He would sleep intermittently as he walked; at one time, noticing that Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir had sat down, because the kajaviih carrying Baha'u'llah needed some repair, he did likewise and promptly fell asleep again. He slept for five hours and when he awoke there was no sign of the caravan. In the intense darkness of the night his absence had gone unnoticed. What had awakened him was the noise made by some men riding and driving donkeys. Thinking it was his own caravan, he hurried in their direction. But they were too fast for him. Anxious and afraid he plodded on. Suddenly he noticed the glare of a fire in the distance. This must be Aqa Muhammad-Baqir and his brazier, Aqa Rida told himself, and so it proved to be. It was the hour of dawn and of the morning prayer. They had halted Baha'u'llah's kajaviih. When Aqa Rida regained his caravan, the first person he met was Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim, who informed him that his absence had just been noticed, and that they were about

to send some men in search of him.

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi reports similar incidents, and it must have been a common experience for travellers to lose their way at night.

That morning the caravan reached Dust-Khurmatu (shown on maps as Tuz-Khurmatu) and camped in a copse. The next night's march brought them to Tawuq by a hillside, where a small river flowed. Thence, they made their way to Karkuk, where they stayed for two days in an orchard outside the city. They were now in the homeland of the Kurds, where lived the dervish leader of some 50,000 disciples scattered throughout Mesopotamia. Notables of the town [p. 182] came out, as usual, to pay their respects. And there was a man, in a state of exaltation, who came along shouting. Members of Baha'u'llah's retinue wanted to stop him, but Baha'u'llah, who had sojourned for two years among these people, told them to let him be. Karkuk was the largest town in Lower Kurdistan, situated on the Khaza-chai river, and a high bridge crossed the ravine at this stage. The water was cold and the current swift, but a local man, to show his ability, dived from the bridge into the river. This feat pleased Baha'u'llah, and when the diver came into His presence, He gave him a sum of money. Some high officials put in an appearance here, who had come to visit Baha'u'llah while on their way to Mosul to transact their business. Seeing them made Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and a few others greatly anxious and perplexed.

And so, on to Irbil (Arbil), a historic town, near which Alexander fought a great battle with the Persians in October 331 BC. It is located on the ethnological frontier between the Arab and Kurd domains, although little more than a ruin compared to its former greatness. The plain on which it stands opens westward to the Great Zab river, a tributary of the Tigris, and southwards to the valley of the Little Zab. Overlooked by a hill-top castle, it was the market town of the Kurds of that area, and the seat of a qa'im-maqam.

When the caravan arrived, it was the day of al-'Id al-Adha--one of the two great Muslim festivals, celebrating Abraham's offer of sacrifice, and on which the faithful throng Mecca to perform the rites of pilgrimage. The prominent men of the town, who came to greet Baha'u'llah, brought food prepared with meat of the sacrificial beasts as their offering. Their wondrous attachment to the person of Baha'u'llah was evident and unmistakable.

Leaving Irbil behind, the caravan came upon the great waters of the Zab. This swift-running river, by the banks of which battles famed in history have been fought,[1] was crossed by boats. Two mules were carried away and nothing could save them. The first part of the night they remained encamped on the bank which they had gained, and at midnight, as they were making ready to resume their journey towards Mosul, high winds began to blow. They halted for a short while at a village named Baratallih, whose inhabitants were Christians, reaching [p. 183] Mosul an hour or two after sunrise, where a camp was set up on the east bank of the Tigris, the same side of the river as Nabiyyu'llah-Yunis is situated. Both Muslims and Christians believe that the prophet Jonah is buried in the mound of this settlement, and hence its name. Most of ancient Nineveh

lay on this east bank, but Mosul was built on the opposite bank on the site of a western suburb. Though much decayed, Mosul was still a handsome city on the slope of the Jabal-Jubilah, its houses forming an amphitheater six miles in circumference.

..... [1. The fate of the Umayyads was decided here in January AD 750. (See Balyuzi, Muhammad and the Course of Islam, p. 218.)]

Mirza Yahya had already reached Mosul in disguise, in the company of an Arab named Zahir. Aqa Rida remarks that his behaviour had already lowered him in the eyes of his companion, who was supposed to be his servant, and when he showed his face he was bitter about Zahir's conduct towards himself. 'He lolls about,' complained Mirza Yahya, 'and although he knows how much I detest the smell of tobacco, he keeps filling his pipe, letting out swirls of smoke.' Furthermore, Aqa Rida reports Mirza Yahya as saying: 'I did not come away from Baghdad with you, because I feared you would be handed over to the Persian authorities, and so I disguised myself and left, to escape that eventuality.' Aqa Rida goes on to recount that Baha'u'llah had told Mirza Yahya in Baghdad: 'If you wish to come I will inform Namiq Pasha accordingly; but come in the open', but Mirza Yahya had turned down the invitation. At Mosul, however, which was a good distance from the Iranian frontier, Mirza Yahya became bold enough to show his face, although still in disguise; apart from Mirza Aqa Jan and Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani who knew him, others did not know who he was, and some took him for a travelling Jew, who had joined their caravan to travel in safety, and so they were kind to him. Sometimes, according to Aqa Rida, he would come into the tent which was common to all of the men, but would not reveal his identity.

In a Tablet addressed to the Baha'is of Shiraz, 'Abdu'l-Baha gives a detailed account of the life of Mirza Yahya: his craven fears, his incompetence, his uxoriousness, his constant flights from danger. real or imaginary, his failure to promote the Cause of the Bab. He writes: 'When we reached Mosul, and a camp was set up on the bank of the Tigris, where the notables of the town flocked group after group to come into His blessed presence [Baha'u'llah's], on a midnight that [p. 184] aforementioned Arab, Zahir, came to say that his Honour [Mirza Yahya] was staying at an inn outside the city, and wished to meet someone. My uncle, Mirza Musa, went there at midnight and met him. Mirza Yahya asked about his family, and was told that they were there and had their own tent and he could visit them. He said that he did not at all consider it advisable to do so, but he would accompany the caravan with which his family too would be travelling. Thus he continued to Diyarbakr, a black cord round his head, and a begging-bowl in his hand consorting only with the Arabs and the Turks in the caravan. At Diyarbakr, he sent word that he would visit his family at night and join the main body of the caravan in the morning. That was done. Since Haji Siyyid Muhammad knew him, he gave out that he was a Persian dervish, an acquaintance of his, and visited him, but other friends because they had never seen him [Mirza Yahya], did not recognize him.' [25-5] 'Abdu'l-Baha then relates how Mirza Yahya picked a quarrel with Siyyid Muhammad, the man who in years to come was to become his chief advocate and his evil genius, and then

ran complaining to Baha'u'llah. After hearing Siyyid Muhammad's explanation, Baha'u'llah upbraided him for causing controversy.

..... [25-5. From an unpublished Tablet, translated by H. M. Balyuzi.] [p. 185]

The caravan halted for three days in Mosul, and Baha'u'llah and the members of his retinue visited the public bath there. On the third day towards sunset they broke camp and started for Zakhu which was three stages away. At the last stage the Yazidi Kurds inhabiting the region were hostile. The caravan had halted at the foot of a mountain; the Kurds refused them sentinels, would not sell them food, were abusive and threw stones at them. They, themselves, provided the watch, one group intoning aloud, 'Whose is the dominion?' and another group answering: 'God's--the All-Powerful, the All-Mighty.' As dawn broke, the caravan, no doubt tired because of the night's experience, stirred to move on. The road lay now over stony mountain passes and through narrow defiles, shaded by an abundance of leafy trees. Aqa Rida states that their progress was necessarily very slow, as it was a difficult manoeuvre to get the kajavihs through. In the vicinity of Zakhu, the Qa'im-Maqam of the place sent a large body of men to help with the progress of the journey, particularly with the movement, of the kajavihs. Each kajavih was held in position and guided along by four men. Thus they went on, and when they neared Zakhu they found the Qa'im-Maqam himself with the notables of the town waiting by the roadside to greet them and pay their respects to Baha'u'llah. It was a very warm and joyous welcome they gave the travellers, and they had already prepared a feast for them, which Baha'u'llah graciously accepted. The Mufti, in particular, stressed the delight of the people to be thus honoured. Baha'u'llah told the Qa'im-Maqam: 'Whenever on our way they wanted to treat us as their guests and provide us with a feast, We did not accept, just as Noah's Ark rested nowhere but peak of Ararat.' Aqa Rida remarks that Zakhu was not far from Mount Ararat. The caravan now crossed the river which Aqa Rida particularly remembered for its cold, refreshing waters. Tents were pitched opposite the town. Aqa Rida recalled the Mufti saying that should Baha'u'llah have stayed a few days in their town, all the inhabitants would have become devoted to Him. But the day soon passed, and when night fell, the caravan resumed its journey towards Jazirih. The Qa'im-Maqam had sent various gifts, including snow, and had had the insubordinate, unruly Kurds of the previous night brought in for punishment. Zakhu's river joined another river on the route, and once more the Qa'im-Maqam provided an escort to see the caravan across, and give added protection to the kajavihs. [p. 186]

The next day Jazirih was gained. It had an old castle, near which, on the bank of the river, the caravan encamped. Centuries earlier, in the days of the Kurdish Ayyubid dynasty founded by the celebrated Salahi'd-Din (Saladin), Jazirih, peopled by Kurds, had been a flourishing town, but now it had dwindled in significance. In the fourteenth century a large Jewish colony dwelt there, and at the opening of the nineteenth century it was a stronghold of the Yazidis, until most were put to the sword during a Turkish attack. Thereafter

the populace of Jazirih remained chiefly Kurdish.

After sunset the caravan went on its way towards Nisibin, also once a historic city--residence of Tigranes of Armenia, a Roman bulwark against the Parthians, and at one time having several thousand inhabitants--but it was now fallen on evil days, being the seat only of a mudir. Here their tents were pitched in a delightful spot by the torrential Jakhjakh stream which rushed swiftly to the Khabur river.

From Nisibin, the caravan continued towards Mardin, two or three stages away, one of which was a place called Hasan-Agha, situated in a barren plain devoid of verdure and pasturage. 'Uthman, the muleteer, complained that his animals could not get enough to eat. That night, Aqa Rida writes, Baha'u'llah came out of His tent to visit the members of His retinue and see to their welfare.

'Abdu'l-Baha has related of that time:

..... In those days a famine raged all along the road. When we reached a station Mirza Jaf'ar and I would ride from one village to another, from one Arab or Kurdish tent to another trying to get food, straw, barley, etc., for men and animals. Many a time we were out till midnight.

..... One day we happened to call on a Turk who was harvesting. Seeing his large pile of straw we thought we had come to the end of our search. I approached the Turk politely, and said, 'We are your guests and one of the conditions of (religious) Faith is to honour the newly arrived guests. I have heard that you are a very liberal people, very generous, and that whenever you entertain a guest you kill and cook for him a whole sheep. Now, we desire such and such a thing, and are ready to pay any price that you demand. We hope this is sufficiently reasonable.'

..... He thought for a moment, and then said. 'Open your sack.'

..... Mirza Jaf'ar opened it and he put into it a few handfuls of straw.

..... I was amused, and said, 'Oh, my friend! What can we do with this straw? We have thirty-six animals and we want feed for every one of them!'

..... In brief everywhere we encountered many difficulties, until we arrived in Kharput. Here, we saw that our animals had become lean, and walked with great difficulty. But we could not get straw and barley for them.[25-6]

..... [25-6. Star of the West, idem, (vol. XIII) p. 278.]

[p. 187]

From Hasan-Agha, the caravan moved to a village at the foot of Mount Mardin, a limestone crag surmounted by a fortress deemed impregnable. There, during the night, two mules, belonging to an Arab travelling with the caravan, were stolen. The owner was beside himself with grief. Baha'u'llah asked the official who accompanied the caravan to try and find the missing animals. Other officials were called in, but no animal was forthcoming. As the caravan was on the point of departing, the poor Arab went crying to Baha'u'llah. 'You are

leaving,' he moaned, 'and I shall never get back my beasts.' Baha'u'llah immediately called off the resumption of the journey. 'We will go to Firdaws and stay there', He said, 'until this man's mules are found and restored to him.' Firdaws (Paradise), Aqa Rida explains, was a magnificent mansion standing within an orchard on the mountaintop, adjoining the city of Mardin, which is situated at an altitude of nearly 4,000 feet. Firdaws was indeed a beautiful place with running brooks. The kajavihs were led up there, and the part of the caravan that had gone ahead turned back. The Mutasarrif of Mardin together with other officials and the notables of the town hurried to greet Baha'u'llah. Men were sent to tidy and clean the mansion, and let water through the brooks and sprinklers. Now, there was a constant stream of prominent people of the town, passing through the gates of [p. 188] Firdaws, coming to pay their respects. Nearly half the population was Christian--Armenians, Chaldeans, Jacobites, Syrians--who had fled to the mountains before orthodox Christian and Muslim assaults.

The Mutasarrif threatened the headman of the village, where the mules had been stolen, with imprisonment if the animals were not found. The headman offered a sum of money in lieu of the mules. But Baha'u'llah insisted that the Arab was entitled to have his beasts restored to him. On the second day the headman came with a promissory note guaranteed by higher officials, offering to pay 60 pounds within a month, the value of the two mules. But Baha'u'llah refused this offer too. Then the headman realized that the game was up, sent for the animals and gave them to their distraught owner. People were amazed, for such a thing had never happened before. No stolen property had ever been retrieved, nor restitution made to the rightful owner. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi, in his reminiscences some four decades later, recalled that various officials went to Baha'u'llah to speak of the part they had played in retrieving the beasts and received suitable rewards. The Mutasarrif was given a costly cashmere shawl, the Mufti an illuminated copy of the Qur'an, the head of the horsemen a sword with bejewelled scabbard.

The purpose of the halt at Firdaws achieved, Baha'u'llah ordered the resumption of the journey on the third day. And what was seen then was also an event of rare splendour. The road lay through the main street of the city of Mardin. Government cavalry with flags flying and drums beating preceded the caravan; then came the caravan escorted by the Mutasarrif himself with other high officials and notables. And the whole town had come out, thronging the streets to hail and see the passage of the caravan. It was a slow descent from the mountain-top, and then Baha'u'llah bade farewell to the escort and told the men to go back to their town; while the caravan went on its way, moving all day long through copses and over lush meadows, until a halt was called at the end of the day, in a verdant spot beside running water. Tents were pitched there for the night. There were two more stages until another historic city was reached within three days: Diyarbakr, in the heartland of Kurdistan.

Diyarbakr, in the extreme north of Mesopotamia, stands on the site of ancient Amid, at the strategic confluence of the main routes between the Euphrates and

Tigris basins, where Turkish, Armenian, [p. 189] Kurd and Arab ethnical territories converge. At an altitude of 2,000 feet, it overlooks an immense and fertile plain, throughout history the granary of Western Asia. Although its climate is mild, within its black basalt walls the city was unhealthy and dank, its streets narrow and muddy, perhaps sufficient to account for the unpleasant reception accorded the travellers.

In any case, for some reason the Vali of Diyarbakr, Haji Kiyamili Pasha, unlike his colleagues in the service of the Government, was not friendly. He did not, would not, co-operate to find the caravan a suitable place for encampment. The official who accompanied the caravan had hastened into the town, long before its arrival, to find where they could stay. And when the caravan arrived outside the gates of the city, they had to wait a long while for the official to return. He had been kept waiting for two hours before being told that the caravan should go to 'Ali-Parib, at the southern side of Diyarbakr. As it happened they had stopped at the wrong side, and now, with some difficulty, they had to turn round, and skirt the town to get to 'Ali-Parib, which was an extensive orchard encircling a lovely mansion. But they were refused entry on the plea that the silk cocoons there would be disturbed by the smell of cooking. It was useless to carry on arguing, equally useless to go back to the recalcitrant Vali, and Baha'u'llah told His retinue to set up tents outside the orchard. These manoeuvres took the whole day, and it was about sunset before the caravan could settle down.

This Vali, who showed such rank discourtesy, had his meed before long. There was a shortage of bread in Diyarbakr, and prices rose abnormally. People cast their eyes around and rightly or wrongly concluded that the Vali himself was responsible for their misfortune. They rioted and inflicted such humiliations on him that the Government had no choice but to dismiss him from his post.[1]

..... [1. In a dispatch dated 1 July 1863, Mr I. G. Taylor, the British consul at Diyarbakr, reported to the British minister at Istanbul as follows:

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'I regret I am not able to report favorably on the condition of this Pashalik for the last six months. Disorder prevails everywhere ... and the Government seems to have lost all hold and influence over the people outside as well as in the towns...'

Less than two months before, 11 May 1863, Mr Taylor had reported the chaotic state of affairs in these terms: 'The administration of Government and justice in the town is in keeping with the confusion and tyranny outside. Just and fictitious complaints and claims are either swamped or carried by secret intimidation or unblushing perjury.' The same dispatch mentions some twenty murders that had recently occurred in the province. 'In no single case have the murderers been captured and the most perfect indifference seems to prevail if they are or not...' (FO 195 752)

As to the food riots, he reported in his July 1st dispatch:

'In Diarbekr [sic] itself the effects of the wretched and corrupt Government of the last eighteen months have resulted in disgraceful riots ostensibly caused by the high price of grain--I say ostensibly, for the actual price, stock on hand or state of the crops, do not warrant such an unseemly demonstration, which must be attributed to other causes. The Pasha sees this himself, and has consequently imprisoned [sic] several influential men of the party supposed to be unfavorable to him, altho' he has not scrupled on several occasions to borrow large sums from them. 'The financial state of the Province is also far from favorable. The Salt and Tobacco dues have--as compared with the large sums expected from them--proved miserable failures; nor, with the country in its present state, can any change for the better be expected.' (FO 195 752) The background to the riots was given in his semi-annual trade report, also dated 1 July 1863, from which these extracts come:

'The state of the crops, owing to our severe winter and late spring, are poor in comparison with the last three years--tho' not below the average--and causes apprehension among the poorer classes. There is not, nor do I in the least apprehend any serious scarcity--considering the large stocks of old wheat still on hand--but as the whole are in the hands of capitalists, who have been induced by the state of the crops to buy up and store all available grain the country is entirely at their mercy and they have already proved this by closing their magazines from time to time to suit their own purposes. These combinations; ravages committed by the locusts--most unduly magnified by unprincipled men who hope to obtain the government tithes on grain at a much lower rate than last year--;and large exportations of grain to Kharput; have caused a serious rise and wheat which I quoted in December at Ninety Piastres a Kilo ... is now One Hundred Fifty Piastres... Serious riots in which women however alone participated took place in consequence; magazines were broken open, loads forcibly discharged and plundered and well known corn dealers and the Pasha and other Government Officers insulted. To calm the rioters--against whom it was hardly possible to bring physical force--His Excellency forbade the export of grain and imposed a fixed rate. These measures have temporarily lowered the prices--tho' still high--and I am afraid no great reduction will take place as long as they are in force.'

On receipt of the British consul's dispatch of 11 May 1863, Sir Henry Bulwer, British minister at Istanbul, gave instructions that it be translated and sent to the Porte, with a note recommending that a severe example should be made of the murderers, and the Bali replaced. In December 1863, Haji Kiyamili Pasha was dismissed, his successor arriving early in January 1864. (FO 195 752 and 799)] [p. 190]

The caravan halted for three days outside Diyarbakr. Now, a long way from the frontiers of Iran, Mirza Yahya made himself known to all. He even began to take part in the life of the caravan, according to Aqa Rida, going into the town with some of the companions to make purchases. It must be noted that there were a few men travelling with the caravan who had no connection with the Babi community, but had chosen to travel in that fashion because of the greater

safety it provided, and also because of the hospitality they received. Among these was a dervish and also a Kurd named Shaykh Mahmud. That was the reason Mirza Yahya's inclusion in the caravan at Mosul had not aroused any particular interest. As mentioned before, some took him to be a Jew who had come to obtain protection.

From Diyarbakr the caravan continued on its way to Ma'dan-i-Mis (Copper Mine). The first day out they halted at the foot of a mountain. They could see a town and a castle on the peak, but the mountain road leading to the top was not an easy one and nobody went there. At this [p. 191] halting-place, towards sunset, Nabil-i-A'zam, Aqa Husayn-i-Naraqı and another person joined the caravan.

At Ma'dan-i-Mis they found a Persian imprisoned, who managed to reach the kajavıh in which Baha'u'llah was sitting to beg for His intercession. Baha'u'llah promised to approach, in Istanbul, the Persian envoy, Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushıru'd-Dawlıh, on his behalf, which He did when they reached the Ottoman capital. He sent word to Mushıru'd-Dawlıh to bring about the poor man's release, and it was done.

It would seem, from dispatches of the British consul in Diyarbakr to the British minister in Istanbul, that the Qa'im-Maqam of Ma'dan-i-Mis was given to incidents of this kind, as shortly before Baha'u'llah's arrival there, a British-protected Ionian Christian had been set upon by a rabble led by the Qa'im-Maqam's men, who had thrown him out of his house and plundered his property. It was nearly a year before the British consul could bring the affair to a satisfactory close. Ma'dan's population was about equally Muslim and Christian, but the power lay with the Muslims who, in the words of the Consul, 'domineer most insolently over the latter and have them entirely at their mercy'. It was an appeal to religion which had roused the populace to their attack on the Ionian Christian. (FO 195 752)

And here at Ma'dan-i-Mis, a mishap nearly brought very serious consequences Aqa Rıda gives a graphic description of how Baha'u'llah's life was endangered and how that calamity was averted. In a mountain pass on a narrow road, Haji Mahmud lost his hold on the rein of the mule which bore Baha'u'llah's kajavıh; the animal slipped, lost its balance and started to slide down the precipice. It all happened in an instant, and no one could do anything but watch in horror for what seemed inevitable: the animal hurtling down into the abyss. But then, miraculously, the mule regained its balance and slowly came to a stop. Aqa Rıda writes that the peril was indescribable and one had to be a witness to understand how miraculous was the deliverance. Because of the sheer joy of realization that the Blessed Perfection was safe, tears welled from their eyes.

This averted calamity was followed by the breaking of a carboy of rose-water which made the whole plain fragrant. Towards sunset the caravan came upon another mountain pass with many poplar trees and a running rivulet, the waters of which Aqa Rıda describes as [p. 192] 'delicious'. Here they halted for the night, although there were no dwellings around. The following day's march brought them to a village the inhabitants of which were Christian. Here also

was an abundance of trees, and tents were pitched under them.

The next day they reached the fortified city of Kharput, which overlooks a cultivated and fruitful plain. According to Aqa Rida, it was then called Ma'murati'l-'Azizah (the Glorious City). Within three miles of the town, officials and notables were awaiting their arrival to greet them and bid them welcome. Later, when they had pitched their tents, the Vali himself, accompanied by a number of high officials, came to pay his respects to Baha'u'llah, and on his return to the town sent presents of a sheep, meat, rice, cooking fat, cherries and other items of food. Here is 'Abdu'l-Baha's account of this most welcome event, and the days that followed, as told to his secretary:

..... At Kharput the Acting Governor-General came to call on us--and with him brought ten car-loads of rice, ten sacks of barley, ten sheep, several baskets of rice, several bags of sugar, many pounds of butter, etc. These were sent as gifts by the Governor-General, 'Izzat Pasha, to the Blessed Perfection.

..... After our experiences, and knowing how difficult it was to get anything from the farmers along the way--when I looked at these things I knew that they were sent from God, and they were gladly accepted.

..... At that time Aqa Husayn Ashchi was the assistant cook. He worked day and night and had no time to sleep.

..... We stayed at Kharput one week and had a good rest. For two days and nights I did nothing but sleep.

..... The Governor-General, 'Izzat Pasha, called on the Blessed Perfection. He was a very good man and showed much love and service.[25-7]

..... [25-7. *ibid.* (Star of the West, *idem*, (vol. XIII) p. 278.)

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, Ghusn-i-Akbar (Greater Branch), a younger son of Baha'u'llah, was taken ill here, and so the caravan halted until he recovered. In the meantime, Baha'u'llah and some members of His retinue visited the public bath. The original town of Kharput, possessing a fortified castle, is situated at the top of a peak. A number, including Mirza Ja'far, climbed the mountain to have a look at the old town, and reported back, according to Aqa Rida, that it was not attractive.

After a few days the caravan moved on to Ma'dan-i-Nuqrih (Silver Mine). It was here that Shaykh Sadiq-i-Yazdi died, he who, two months after being sent back to Baghdad, had found separation from [p. 193] Baha'u'llah unbearable and had started to walk to Istanbul. Now, they had gained the upper reaches of the Euphrates, which they crossed, and set up their tents on the opposite bank.

Here Baha'u'llah's anger was aroused by the behaviour of some members of His retinue, who had fallen on some mulberry trees, of which there were many, and were eating the fruit voraciously. He spoke sternly to His brother, Mirza Muhammad-Quli, and then entered His tent. In the late afternoon, when He was expected to come out of the tent, all the members of His retinue, including

Mirza Yahya, were waiting outside, and as Baha'u'llah emerged, they, one and all, bowed their heads. Baha'u'llah said, smiling: 'Today, Divine anger nearly seized all, as you witnessed'. There was absolute silence. Then Baha'u'llah sat down, and had tea served to them.

There were four stages from Ma'dan-i-Nuqrih to Sivas, the next large town on their route. Aqa Rida remarks how very cold it was in these uplands of Anatolia. And at all of these stages notables never failed to come out to make the travellers welcome. One of these stops was at a place called Dilik-Tash. Another was by the banks of a river where Baha'u'llah underwent blood-letting. Aqa Rida comments that Baha'u'llah's blood was spilled into this river.

Then they reached Sivas, about 4,000 feet above sea-level on the Kizil-Irmak river, and encamped at its northern side. As the point where caravan routes between the Euxine, Euphrates and the Mediterranean met, it was a large and flourishing town. Yet, Aqa Rida remarks, it did not possess orchards, and the fruit yield of its trees was meagre; vegetables were brought from Tuqat. Towards sunset the Vali came, attended by some officials and notables, to pay his respects. While in Sivas, Baha'u'llah visited the public bath.

And now the caravan made its way to Tuqat in three stages, and the weather, Aqa Rida remarks, was very cold. At one of these stages they found that all the houses were subterranean. The people living there told them that during the winter months they had, perforce, to go underground. At another stage they came upon a very large orchard, and pitched their tents beside it. Mirza Yahya was also helping to raise a tent, holding a rope; noticing him thus engaged, Nabil-i-A'zam composed a couplet, describing his condition.

At Tuqat, which they found blessed with an abundance of apples and pears of excellent flavour, they encamped on the bank of the [p. 194] Yeshil Irmak (or Iris) river that flows in the direction of Amasiya. Tuqat was an important town on the road between Upper Mesopotamia and Constantinople, but despite available marble and stone in the adjacent hills, and a busy copper foundry which exported to Persia, Turkistan and Egypt, most of the town dwellings were adobe hovels. The suburbs of Tuqat, however, with their fertile gardens, extended far into the hillside valleys.

Proceeding to Amasiya, the caravan stopped for two days outside the town, which was described as the 'Oxford of Anatolia' because of its eighteen theological colleges with their 2,000 Muslim students. Although it was a stronghold of Muslim orthodoxy, Greeks and Armenians made up about a quarter of the population. The town lay in a narrow valley of the Iris, overhung by mountain crags to the west and less precipitous slopes to the east where terraces of vines were planted and houses built. Strabo was born in Amasiya, and the citadel described by him still surmounted a western height. With its handsome mosque, fountains, old houses and relative cleanliness, the town held its attractions. As usual, the Governor and his officials came to pay their respects. Baha'u'llah visited the public bath, and the travellers [p. 195] found good supplies of fruit. But by this time they had exhausted their

resources, Aqa Rida tells us, and some had to sell their horses--that of Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Yazdi fetching an excellent price.

From Amasiya they moved to Ilahiyyih, a small town of pleasing aspect, which was the seat of a qa'im-maqam. He and his officials came out, well in advance, to greet the travellers, and finding that the tents had arrived but not the men, got down to pitching the tents for them, later going into the presence of Baha'u'llah to pay their respects. Some rain fell here, and Aqa Rida remarks that they had a wonderful time at Ilahiyyih, for its people were kindness itself.

Then the caravan set out on the last lap of its long overland journey, and moved on towards Samsun, on the shores of the Black Sea. The road lay now through wooded mountains and thick forests. A mule carrying trunks was lost in these woods. 'Abdu'l-Baha, accompanied by Aqa Muhammad 'Aliy-i-Jilawdar and another, went in search of it, found it and rejoined the caravan the next day, in the vicinity of the Black Sea port. That night the caravan halted at a large coffee-house en route. There was just one stage more to Samsun, and at long last they came within sight of the sea.[25-8] To mark the occasion, Mirza Aqa Jan begged Baha'u'llah to honour it with the revelation of a Tablet.

..... [25-8. The author wishes to acknowledge Reclus, The Universal Geography, from which much of the geographical and historical (not Baha'i) material has been taken.]

Mirza Aqa Jan brought writing material. And Baha'u'llah's hand moved over the paper, as He sat in His kajaviih, reciting aloud what flowed from His creative Pen. That was how the stirring verses of the Suriy-i-Hawdaj (the Surih of Howdah) were revealed, while drawing close to the shore of the Black Sea and within sight of it. It was the end of a journey which had lasted one hundred and ten days--through the flat northern regions of 'Iraq and the homeland of the Kurds, and finally across the uplands, mountains and valleys of Anatolia. When Baha'u'llah left His house in Baghdad for the last time, signaling the first day of the most memorable, the greatest of all festivals--the Festival of Ridvan--the Suriy-i-Sabr (Patience) had flowed from the Supreme Pen, as now did the Suriy-i-Hawdaj, on the last day of this toilsome but triumphant journey which had taken ten days short of four months to accomplish. Aqa Rida has recorded the full text of the Suriy-i-Hawdaj in his narrative, and writes movingly of the power and the majesty of that wondrous occasion. It was a fitting end to an exodus, intended by its instigators to be fraught with humiliation, but which became the march of a king. [p. 196]

The overland travel was over, but a short sea trip was yet to come. Baha'u'llah and His retinue stayed for a week at Samsun, waiting the arrival of an Ottoman steamer. An Inspector of Roads had also arrived at Samsun from Istanbul. Once in the presence of Baha'u'llah, he became captivated by His charm and graciousness. He had various Turkish dishes cooked to present to Him, and horses brought to take Him to view some construction work which was going on under his supervision. And at last the Ottoman steamer arrived. After their

trunks and goods and horses were put on the steamer, two boats took them to the ship, in one of which Baha'u'llah sat with the members of His family, and in another the members of His retinue. At sunset, on the day of their embarkation, the steamer cast off anchor, and the next day, about noon, it appeared before Sinope, continuing after a few hours to Anyabuli, which it gained the following day. On the third day, Sunday, 16 August 1863 (1 Rabi'u'l-Avval AH 1280), the steamer dropped anchor at Istanbul. And thus ended the remarkable journey of the King of Glory, from one city of ancient renown: the city of the 'Abbasids, to another city of equal renown: the city of Constantine the Great. [p. 197]

26

In the City of Constantine

WHEN the steamer had dropped anchor, the official who had accompanied the travellers went ashore to find out what arrangements had been made for their reception. He learned that the house of Shamsi Big was appointed as their residence and Shamsi Big himself was to be their host. And carriages were ready to take them there. The house, near the Mosque of Khirqiy-i-Sharif,[1] consisting of two storeys, was spacious, but not sufficient. It soon became evident that larger premises had to be acquired. They stayed for one month, in cramped conditions, in the house of Shamsi Big, who was fulfilling his task as host with promptitude and to the best of his ability. He had engaged two cooks, and the travellers themselves, Aqa Rida states, were also helping to prepare the meals.

..... [1. The Mosque of the Exalted Cloak, so called because the cloak of Muhammad is said to be preserved therein. It is one of the traditions of Islam that on hearing Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr's poem, the Prophet Muhammad gave him the cloak (burda) that He was wearing. This cloak was bought from the son of the poet by the Caliph Mu'awiyah and later was kept in the treasury of the 'Abbasid caliphs. It is said to have been burned by Hulagu Khan at the capture of Baghdad, but others maintain that it was saved and transferred to Egypt where it was used to shore up the claims of the puppet 'Abbasid Caliphate in Mamluk Egypt. When he conquered Egypt in 1517, Selim I removed this cloak to Istanbul where it is still preserved in this mosque. Thus this burda or khirqi-i-sharif became a symbol of the authority of the caliph.]

The day after Baha'u'llah's arrival at Constantinople, a representative came on behalf of the Persian envoy, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, to present his respects and compliments, and state that because of the circumstances he could not come in person and must forgo the pleasure of a visit. That day, about noon, Baha'u'llah went out to visit the mosque. And He did that regularly, as had been His wont in the Baghdad days. Actually the only places He visited in Istanbul were public baths and mosques. Many came to visit Him and pay their respects. But He never went to anyone's house, except His brother's. His visitors--men in high places--told Him that it was customary for a distinguished person visiting the capital to call on the [p. 198] Foreign Minister after three days, through him meet the Grand Vizier, and through the

Grand Vizier ask to be received by the Sultan; they advised Him to do likewise. He countered their advice by saying that He had no design or project to further, and no favour to solicit and gain, that He had come to Istanbul by the invitation of the Ottoman Government and for no other reason; therefore, let them seek Him if they had anything to convey to Him.

Aqa Rida recounts the delicious tale of a dream he had in those early days in Istanbul. He says he dreamt that Baha'u'llah had written a book, which was held by someone in a public square. And there was a mill which people wanted to set going, but the mill would only move in jerks--stop, then move, then stop again. Someone told Baha'u'llah of Aqa Rida's dream. That day, towards sunset, when Baha'u'llah was about to leave the house and visit the mosque, Aqa Rida went into His presence. Baha'u'llah told him, smiling, that he should endeavour to set the mill going. And Aqa Rida relates that for some time (even in the days of Adrianople) Baha'u'llah would occasionally turn to him and say 'the mill did not get started'.

One of the visitors who often came was Haji Mirza Safa (see [p. 199] Addendum V), a man with pretensions to murshidship amongst some of the Sufis, and a close confidant of the Persian ambassador, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan. Baha'u'llah spoke to him so authoritatively at times, Aqa Rida states, that he was at a loss for words to respond. One day when he was in the presence of Baha'u'llah, His voice addressing him in tones of power could be heard ringing even in the ground floor of the house. We shall meet this man, who was not always sincere and straightforward, again and again in the course of this narrative.

As already mentioned, the house of Shamsi Big was inadequate and too small for a large number of people. Shamsi Big saw to his duties as the official host, and was always courteous and attentive. But transfer to a larger residence was becoming imperative, and after a month's stay the house of Visi Pasha, in proximity to the Mosque of Sultan Muhammad-i-Fatih (the Conqueror of Constantinople) was secured. This was a palatial residence, having both a 'biruni' (outer, i.e. men's quarters), and an 'andaruni' (inner, i.e. ladies' quarters); both buildings were three-storeyed and provided with all appurtenances. The house had a Turkish bath of its own, and the biruni had a vast garden. There were facilities for storing the rain-water.

As stated earlier, the only other place apart from mosques and public baths which Baha'u'llah visited from time to time, was the house of Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim, to meet various officials who had come with messages from the Government. On these occasions He was attended by Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar, who was conversant with Turkish and acted as interpreter.

One day as Mirza Musa approached the Big-Ughli bazaar, a photographer came up and said that he wished to photograph him, without charge, and would present a number of copies to him. Nabil, who relates this incident, writes that Mirza Musa responded to the photographer's request: 'He wants to earn something by photographing us. This is his means of livelihood. We will not deprive him of it.' According to Nabil, they were then all photographed. (See p. 200).

Then came a day when Shamsi Big brought news of the possibility of transfer to Adrianople. And it was apparent that this transfer was of the nature of banishment, ordained by Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz and his chief ministers,[1] on the insistence of Mushiru'd-Dawlih. Baha'u'llah was angry and refused to comply. He had done nothing to deserve [p. 200] [p. 201] such curt treatment. Ever since His arrival at Istanbul He had kept aloof from the cross-currents of the capital. Several of the dignitaries of Istanbul had called upon Him. And none had heard from Him one word of complaint or denunciation.

..... [1. They were 'Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizier, and Fu'ad Pasha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.]

Around an oriental court, in the last century, there were droves of intriguers and malcontents, with axes to grind. While living in Baghdad, Baha'u'llah had been approached by a number of such persons, who had hoped to win the support and the affection of the Babis in Iran. Some He had refused to meet, and those who were honoured with admittance to His presence received no encouragement, much less any promise of support. In the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Baha'u'llah, adhered strictly to the same rule, refusing to endorse or advocate their nefarious designs. His Cause had not the remotest connection with treason and sedition. And this was exactly the same course which Christ had followed eighteen hundred years before.

To Haji Mirza Safa, who was one of the conspirators endeavouring to bring about the removal of the Babis from Constantinople and their banishment to a remote corner of the European continent, and who had now dared to show his face, Baha'u'llah, as attested by Aqa Rida, spoke sternly and reprovably, telling him: 'We, few that we are, will stand our ground, until every one of us meets a martyr's death'. Haji Mirza Safa replied, with obvious duplicity, 'But it is not possible to withstand a government'. Baha'u'llah said in answer to him, as reported by Aqa Rida: 'Are you intimidating Me with the power of the government? Whenever I find the whole world assailing Me with drawn swords, all alone and engulfed as I may be, I see Myself seated on the throne of Might and Authority. It has always been the fate of the Manifestations of God to meet such injustice and oppression, but repressive measures have never hindered Them from delivering what has been entrusted to Them by God, neither has Their purposed been thwarted.' He then spoke of that believer in the household of Pharaoh whose story is related in the Qur'an, and of his arguments with the monarch of Egypt, telling Haji Mirza Safa to call the Persian envoy's attention to that text. Aqa Rida writes that Haji Mirza Safa was thunderstruck and asked leave to depart. Then Baha'u'llah turned to His followers: 'What would you say? Do you wish Me to cause your deaths? Do you wish to drain the cup of martyrdom? No better time [p. 202] can there be than now to offer your lives in the path of your Lord. Our innocence is manifestly evident, and they have no alternative but to declare their injustice.' Words to that effect are reported by Aqa Rida, who adds: 'Truly, at that time, all of us, with the utmost joy, fidelity, unity and detachment, were eager to attain to that high station; and God is my witness that we were blissfully expecting martyrdom.'

But then, Mirza Yahya, poltroon as he always was, together with a few others of his kind, began to waver and show signs of alarm and perplexity. They made Mirza Yahya their spokesman to go to Baha'u'llah and entreat Him to accept this banishment. Their plea was: 'We have our wives and our children with us and they will perish too.' Baha'u'llah assured them: 'To offer all that one has in the path of God is an act of highest merit.' And as to the wives and children, He said, they could be sent to the houses of the foreign envoys, who would look after them. Aqa Rida quotes Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani that he himself witnessed Mirza Yahya, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani putting their heads together to contrive some means by which to save their lives. And Baha'u'llah, perceiving the possibility of a rift in the ranks of the Babis which would be [p. 203] damaging to the Cause of God, reluctantly agreed to leave Istanbul. But He commented that a golden opportunity, which would have redounded to the glory of the Cause, had been missed. 'They called us here, as their guests,' He is reported to have said, 'and innocent as we are, they turned on us with vengeance. If we, few as we are, had stood our ground to fall martyrs in the midmost heart of the world, the effect of that martyrdom would have been felt in all the worlds of God. And possibly nothing would have happened to us.'

It was the cowardice of Mirza Yahya, who had always fled from danger, eking out his days incognito, over the course of years risking nothing, that stayed the hand of Baha'u'llah.

It must not be thought that now Baha'u'llah chose complete seclusion and shut Himself away from all contact with the outside world. On the contrary, the comings and goings of people were as constant as before. Notables of the capital, including even the ministers (some anonymously, according to Aqa Rida), still came to call on Baha'u'llah. Shuja'u'd-Dawlih was one such frequent visitor.[1] Even Haji Mirza Safa came, as he had done in earlier days. Baha'u'llah met them all with composure and detachment, refusing to be bowed, refusing to be a suppliant. Aqa Rida hints that Mirza Yahya and his associates wished Baha'u'llah to beg for favours, to bend His knee before the oppressor. But in future years, he writes, the very people who had had a hand in bringing about Baha'u'llah's banishment confessed to the pride they had felt in His independent stand, His total disdain of mendacity, His refusal to grovel for favours. Mushiru'd-Dawlih is reported to have said in Tihnan that Baha'u'llah's mien and conduct brought His compatriots prestige and saved their reputations, at a time when Qajar princes and princelings were clamouring at the Sublime Porte, asking for money and pensions. The authorities of the Ottoman Government, he averred, came to realize that Iran had men who would not demean themselves. [1. Prince Shuja'u'd-Dawlih was a son of 'Ali-Shah, the Zillu's-Sultan, and a grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah. His father, Zillu's-Sultan, rebelled against Muhammad Shah (who was his nephew), but his assumption of power was short-lived.]

About this time, a daughter of Baha'u'llah named Sadhijiyih, eighteen months old, died. She was buried in a plot of land outside the Adirnih Gate of

Istanbul.

Now, additional Babis came to Constantinople, including Darvish Muhammad, whom Siyyid Isma'il-i-Zavari'i had converted to the [p. 204] Faith. But their arrival was contrary to the wishes of Baha'u'llah, for He did not want more Babis in Istanbul. Aqa Husayn-i-Qassab (the butcher) was one of those newly-arrived, who, with Darvish Muhammad, went one day into the presence of Baha'u'llah, when He was about to leave the house and visit a mosque. He received them, but with sorrow. Both these men, Aqa Rida states, came in future years to the Holy Land and attained joyfully the presence of Baha'u'llah.

When all arrangements had been made for departure to Adrianople, Baha'u'llah sent a number of His followers away, including Mirza Aqay-i-Munib (who had walked beside His kajavah all the way from Baghdad), Nabil-i-A'zam, Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rahim-i-Misgar (the coppersmith), Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashi (who groomed the horses during the journey from Baghdad), Khayyat-Bashi and Haji Baqir-i-Kashani (Makhmal-Baf, the weaver of velvet, and one of those who had come later to Istanbul). They were all given their travelling expenses. Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Jilawdar was told to stay in Istanbul, but eventually he rejoined the others in Adrianople. All went their several ways, except Khayyat-Bashi, who, disobeying, travelled independently to Adrianople and arrived there a day or two later than the rest.

It was now the heart of winter, which can be very severe in those eastern parts of Europe. Although carriages, wagons and pack animals were provided, as well as ox-carts for their belongings, it was a hard journey, taxing the strength of all, and it lasted twelve days. Snow was falling as they left Istanbul and they were not clad for freezing weather. Recalling their sufferings, Baha'u'llah declared, 'The eyes of Our enemies wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person.' 'They expelled us ... with an abasement with which no abasement on earth can compare.' [26-1]

..... [26-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 161.]

Mirza Mustafay-i-Naraqi arrived just as Baha'u'llah's carriage was starting. Having heard of Baha'u'llah's imminent departure, he had left his family on the quayside, and had hurried to Baha'u'llah's residence, but could only see Him for a few brief moments. Knowing that Mirza Yahya was there too, Mirza Mustafa now hastened to meet him, but Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani hid him behind themselves in the carriage. What danger could possibly have touched Mirza Yahya had he spoken to Mirza Mustafay-i-Naraqi is beyond conjecture, but the cowardly Yahya had always to seek cover. Aqay-i-Kalim, who as usual was bringing up the [p. 205] rear, attending to all the requirements of the journey, met Mirza Mustafa, a brave and heroic soul destined to die a martyr's death in the city of Tabriz.

In the late afternoon of the first day the travellers reached Kuchik-Chakmachih, about three hours' journey from Istanbul. An official named 'Ali Big, with the rank of Yuz-Bashi (Centurion, commander of a hundred men), who accompanied them, found lodgings for Baha'u'llah. The next day, they left

at dawn and arrived towards noon at Buyuk-Chakmachih, where they were housed in the home of a Christian. It was night-time when they took to the road again, to reach Salvari. Here too they were lodged in the house of a Christian. But Aqa Rida states, some had to be taken elsewhere with all the cooking utensils. At midnight, in pouring rain and intense cold, they moved out of Salvari, and reached Birkas the next day. The last halting-place before arrival at Adrianople was Baba-Iski. Apart from the inconveniences of the extreme cold, Aqa Rida had nothing in particular to record of the events of the journey. But he says that everywhere, the owners of the houses where they lodged were liberally remunerated, to their satisfaction. [p. 206]

It was Saturday, 12 December 1863 (1 Rajab AH 1280), when they arrived at Adrianople, a city characterized by Baha'u'llah as 'the place which none entereth except such as have rebelled against the authority of the sovereign'. [26-2] Baha'u'llah was now virtually a prisoner of the Ottoman government.

..... [26-2. *ibid.* (God Passes By, p. 161.)]

During His four-month sojourn in the city of Constantine the Great, Baha'u'llah, in addition to the Tablet of Subhanika-Ya-Hu, revealed Lawh-i-'Abud'l-'Aziz-Va-Vukala--a Tablet addressed to the Sultan. It was revealed on the very day that the brother-in-law of the Grand Vizier came to inform Baha'u'llah of the edict which had been issued against Him. Refusing to meet the envoy, Baha'u'llah delegated 'Abdu'l-Baha and Aqay-i-Kalim to receive it, and promised to reply within three days. Next morning the Tablet was delivered by Shamsi Big directly to 'Ali Pasha, with a message from its Author that 'it was sent down from God'. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith gives a vivid [p. 207] description of this occasion, as well as a summary of the contents of the Tablet:

..... 'I know not what that letter contained,' Shamsi Big subsequently informed Aqay-i-Kalim, 'for no sooner had the Grand Vizir perused it than he turned the color of a corpse, and remarked: "It is as if the King of Kings were issuing his behest to his humblest vassal king and regulating his conduct." So grievous was his condition that I backed out of his presence.' 'Whatever action,' Baha'u'llah, commenting on the effect that Tablet had produced, is reported to have stated, 'the ministers of the Sultan took against Us, after having become acquainted with its contents, cannot be regarded as unjustifiable. The acts they committed before its perusal, however, can have no justification.'

..... That Tablet, according to Nabil, was of considerable length, opened with words directed to the sovereign himself, severely censured his ministers, exposed their immaturity and incompetence, and included passages in which the ministers themselves were addressed, in which they were boldly challenged, and sternly admonished not to pride themselves on their worldly possessions, nor foolishly seek the riches of which time would inexorably rob them. [26-3]

..... [26-3. *ibid.* p. 160. (God Passes By)]

Unfortunately, the text of this Tablet is not available, but its tenor may be realized from these paragraphs which Baha'u'llah revealed in Adrianople at a later date for Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, in His Tablet to the concourse of monarchs, known as Suriy-i-Muluk:

..... 'Hearken, O King, to the speech of Him that speaketh the truth, Him that doth not ask thee to recompense Him with the things God hath chosen to bestow upon thee, Him who unerringly treadeth the straight Path. He it is Who summoneth thee unto God, thy Lord, Who showeth thee the right course, the way that leadeth to true felicity, that haply thou mayest be of them with whom it shall be well.

..... 'Beware, O King, that thou gather not around thee such ministers as follow the desires of a corrupt inclination, as have cast behind their backs that which hath been committed into their hands and manifestly betrayed their trust. Be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee, and abandon not the interests of thy people to the mercy of such ministers as these. Lay not aside the fear of God, and be thou of them that act uprightly. Gather around thee those ministers from whom thou canst perceive the fragrance of faith and of justice, and take thou counsel with them, and choose whatever is best in thy sight, and be of them that act generously.

..... 'Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither [p. 208] trustworthy nor truthful. This, indeed, is the truth, the undoubted truth. He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king. Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbour, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly.

..... 'Take heed that thou resign not the reins of the affairs of thy state into the hands of others, and repose not thy confidence in ministers unworthy of thy trust, and be not of them that live in heedlessness.... Beware that thou allow not the wolf to become the shepherd of God's flock, and surrender not the fate of His loved ones to the mercy of the malicious.... He that giveth up himself wholly to God, God shall, assuredly be with him; and he that placeth his complete trust in God, God shall, verily protect him from whatsoever may harm him, and shield him from the wickedness of every evil plotter.

..... 'Wert thou to incline thine ear unto My speech and observe My counsel, God would exalt thee to so eminent a position that the designs of no man on the whole earth could ever touch or hurt thee.... Seize thou, and hold firmly within the grasp of thy might, the reins of the affairs of thy people, and examine in person whatever pertaineth unto them. Let nothing escape thee, for therein lieth the highest good.

..... 'Render thanks unto God for having chosen thee out of the whole world, and made thee king over them that profess thy faith.... Thou canst best praise Him if thou lovest His loved ones, and dost safeguard and protect His servants from the mischief of the treacherous, that none may any longer oppress

them....

..... 'Shouldst thou cause rivers of justice to spread their waters amongst thy subjects, God would surely aid thee with the hosts of the unseen and of the seen and would strengthen thee in thine affairs....

..... 'Place not thy reliance on thy treasures. Put thy whole confidence in the grace of God, thy Lord. Let Him be thy trust in whatever thou doest, and be of them that have submitted themselves to His Will....

..... 'Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee. Bestow upon them according to their needs and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the extravagant. Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries. This is but manifest justice. [p. 209]

[p. 210]

..... 'Allow not the abject to rule over and dominate them who are noble and worthy of honour, and suffer not the high-minded to be at the mercy of the contemptible and worthless, for this is what We observed upon Our arrival in the City (Constantinople), and to it We bear witness. We found among its inhabitants some who are possessed of an affluent fortune and lived in the midst of excessive riches, whilst others were in dire want and abject poverty. This ill beseemeth thy sovereignty, and is unworthy of thy rank.

..... '...Beware lest thou aggrandize thy ministers at the expense of thy subjects. Fear the sighs of the poor and of the upright in heart who, at every break of day, bewail their plight, and be unto them a benignant sovereign. They, verily, are thy treasures on earth. It behoveth thee, therefore, to safeguard thy treasures from the assaults of them who wish to rob thee....

..... 'Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

..... 'It behoveth every king to be as bountiful as the sun, which fostereth the growth of all beings, and giveth to each its due, whose benefits are not inherent in itself, but are ordained by Him Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty. The king should be as generous, as liberal in his mercy as the clouds, the outpourings of whose bounty are showered upon every land, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing.

..... 'Have a care not to entrust thine affairs of state entirely into another's hands. None can discharge thy functions better than thine own self. Thus do We make clear unto thee Our words of wisdom, and send down upon thee that which can enable thee to pass over from the left hand of oppression to the

right hand of justice, and approach the resplendent ocean of His favours. Such is the path which the kings that were before thee have trodden, they that acted equitably towards their subjects, and walked in the ways of undeviating justice.

..... 'Thou art God's shadow on earth. Strive, therefore, to act in such a manner as befitteth so eminent, so august a station. If thou dost depart from following the things We have caused to descend upon thee and [p. 211] taught thee, thou wilt, assuredly, be derogating from that great and priceless honour. Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein. Not until thou dost purify thine heart from every trace of such love can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it, for to none hath God given more than one heart. This, verily, hath been decreed and written down in His ancient Book. And as the human heart, as fashioned by God, is one and undivided, it behoveth thee to take heed that its affections be, also, one and undivided.... God is My witness. My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory, that thou mayest, by the leave of God, be of them that abide and rule therein....

..... 'Let thine ear be attentive, O King, to the words We have addressed to thee. Let the oppressor desist from his tyranny, and cut off the perpetrators of injustice from among them that profess thy faith. By the righteousness of God! The tribulations We have sustained are such that any pen that recounteth them cannot but be overwhelmed with anguish. No one of them that truly believe and uphold the unity of God can bear the burden of their recital. So great have been Our sufferings that even the eyes of Our enemies have wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person....

..... 'Have I, O King, ever disobeyed thee? Have I, at any time, transgressed any of thy laws? Can any of thy ministers that represented thee in 'Iraq produce any proof that can establish My disloyalty to thee? No, by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds! Not for one short moment did We rebel against thee, or against any of thy ministers. Never, God willing, shall We revolt against thee, though We be exposed to trials more severe than any We suffered in the past.

..... 'In the day-time and in the night season, at even and at morn, We pray to God on thy behalf, that He may graciously aid thee to be obedient unto Him and to observe His commandment, that He may shield thee from the hosts of the evil ones. Do, therefore, as it pleaseth thee, and treat Us as befitteth thy station and beseemeth thy sovereignty. Be not forgetful of the law of God in whatever thou desirest to achieve, now or in the days to come. Say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds!'[26-4]

..... [26-4. Baha'u'llah, The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah, pp. 47-54. (See Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come, p. 37.)]

[p. 212]

But Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz failed to respond to the twice-repeated call of Baha'u'llah and brought doom and destruction upon himself.

Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Persian envoy who over the course of several years had been the focal point of opposition to Baha'u'llah in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, had received from Him, ere He left Constantinople, these startling words of admonition and prophecy.

..... What did it profit thee, and such as are like thee, to slay, year after year, so many of the oppressed, and to inflict upon them manifold afflictions when they have increased a hundredfold, and ye find yourselves in complete bewilderment, knowing not how to relieve your minds of this oppressive thought.... His Cause transcends any and every plan ye devise. Know this much: were all the governments on earth to unite and take My life and the lives of all who bear this name, this Divine Fire would never be quenched.[26-5]

..... [26-5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 160-61.]

[p. 213]

And later, from Adrianople, Baha'u'llah addressed to him this further reproof, in the *Suriy-i-Muluk* (Tablet of the Kings):

..... Dost thou imagine, O Minister of the Shah in the City (Constantinople), that I hold within My grasp the ultimate destiny of the Cause of God? Thinkest thou that My imprisonment, or the shame I have been made to suffer, or even My death and utter annihilation, can deflect its course? Wretched is what thou hast imagined in thine heart! Thou art indeed of them that walk after the vain imaginings which their hearts devise. No God is there but Him. Powerful is He to manifest His Cause, and to exalt His testimony, and to establish whatsoever is His Will, and to elevate it to so eminent a position that neither thine own hands, nor the hands of them that have turned away from Him, can ever touch or harm it.

..... Dost thou believe thou hast the power to frustrate His Will, to hinder Him from executing His judgment, or to deter Him from exercising His sovereignty? Pretendest thou that aught in the heavens or in the earth can resist His Faith? No, by Him Who is the Eternal Truth! Nothing whatsoever in the whole of creation can thwart His Purpose. Cast away, therefore, the mere conceit thou dost follow, for mere conceit can never take the place of truth. Be thou of them that have truly repented and returned to God, the God Who hath created thee, Who hath nourished thee, and made thee a minister among them that profess thy faith.[26-6]

..... [26-6. Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, section CXIII.]

But happily for Mushiru'd-Dawlih his story does not end there. In the *Lawh-i-Ibn-i-Dhi'b* (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf), which Baha'u'llah revealed in the evening of His life, an Ever-Forgiving Lord said this of him:

..... 'His Excellency, the late Mirza Husayn Khan, Mushiru'd-Dawlih--may

God forgive him--hath known this Wronged One, and he, no doubt, must have given to the Authorities a circumstantial account of the arrival of this Wronged One at the Sublime Porte, and of the things which He said and did. On the day of Our arrival the Government Official, whose duty it was to receive and entertain official visitors, met us and escorted Us to the place he had been bidden to take Us. In truth, the Government showed these wronged ones the utmost kindness and consideration. The following day Prince Shuja'u'd-Dawlih, accompanied by Mirza Safa, acting as the representatives of the late Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Minister, ... came to visit Us. Others, among whom were several Ministers of the Imperial Government, and including the late Kamal Pasha [see Addendum V], likewise called on Us. Wholly reliant on God, and without any reference to any need He might have had, or to any other matter, this Wronged One sojourned [p. 214] for a period of four months in that city. His actions were known and evident unto all, and none can deny them except such as hate Him, and speak not the truth. He that hath recognized God, recognizeth none other but Him. We have never liked, nor like We, to make mention of such things.

..... 'Whenever high dignitaries of Persia came to that city (Constantinople) they would exert themselves to the utmost soliciting at every door such allowances and gifts as they might obtain. This Wronged One, however, if He hath done nothing that would redound to the glory of Persia, hath at least acted in a manner that could in no wise disgrace it. That which was done by his late Excellency (Mushiru'd-Dawlih)--may God exalt his station--was not actuated by his friendship towards this Wronged One, but rather was prompted by his own sagacious judgment, and by his desire to accomplish the service he secretly contemplated rendering his Government. I testify that he was so faithful in his service to his Government that dishonesty played no part, and was held in contempt, in the domain of his activities. It was he who was responsible for the arrival of these wronged ones in the Most Great Prison ('Akka). As he was faithful, however, in the discharge of his duty, he deserveth Our commendation. This Wronged One hath, at all times, aimed and striven to exalt and advance the interests of both the government and the people, not to elevate His own station.' [26-7]

..... [26-7. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 68-70.]

And in a Tablet, addressed to one named Mihdi, Baha'u'llah specifically mentions that in later years Haji Mirza Husayn Khan said or did nothing to cause sorrow, and even spoke words that were commendable; and moreover, because he was closely related to a believer, nothing derogatory should be said about him, perchance this relationship would cause the past to be forgiven. [1]

..... [1. Mulla Kazim-i-Samandar (a native of Qazvin), one of the nineteen apostles of Baha'u'llah, so designated by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, mentions in his history that that close relative of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, was named Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, known as Kad-khuda (Headman). See pp. 441-8 for additional information about Mushiru'd-Dawlih.]

Thus writes the Ever-Forgiving Lord.

Baha'u'llah's four-month sojourn in Constantinople has been characterized by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith as the 'opening scene of one of the most dramatic episodes in the ministry of Baha'u'llah'. Its significance, in the course of His ministry of nearly forty [p. 215] years' duration, is summarized in so masterly a fashion by the Guardian as to call for repetition at this critical point in our narrative.

..... 'With the arrival of Baha'u'llah at Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire and seat of the Caliphate ... the grimmest and most calamitous and yet the most glorious chapter in the history of the first Baha'i century may be said to have opened. A period in which untold privations and unprecedented trials were mingled with the noblest spiritual triumphs was now commencing. The day-star of Baha'u'llah's ministry was about to reach its zenith. The most momentous years of the Heroic Age of His Dispensation were at hand. The catastrophic process, foreshadowed as far back as the year sixty [AH 1260] by His Forerunner in the Qayyumu'l-Asma', was beginning to be set in motion.

..... 'Exactly two decades earlier the Babi Revelation had been born in darkest Persia, in the city of Shiraz. Despite the cruel captivity to which its Author had been subjected, the stupendous claims He had voiced had been proclaimed by Him before a distinguished assemblage in Tabriz, the capital of Adhirbayjan. In the hamlet of Badasht the Dispensation which His Faith had ushered in had been fearlessly inaugurated by the champions of His Cause. In the midst of the hopelessness and agony of the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran, nine years later, that Revelation had, swiftly and mysteriously been brought to sudden fruition. The process of rapid deterioration in the fortunes of that Faith, which had gradually set in, and was alarmingly accelerated during the years of Baha'u'llah's withdrawal to Kurdistan, had, in a masterly fashion after His return from Sulaymaniyyih, been arrested and reversed. The ethical, the moral and doctrinal foundations of a nascent community had been subsequently, in the course of His sojourn in Baghdad, unassailably established. And finally, in the Garden of Ridvan, on the eve of His banishment to Constantinople, the ten-year delay, ordained by an inscrutable Providence, had been terminated through the Declaration of His Mission and the visible emergence of what was to become the nucleus of a world-embracing Fellowship. What now remained to be achieved was the proclamation, in the city of Adrianople, of that same Mission to the world's secular and ecclesiastical leaders, to be followed, in successive decades, by a further unfoldment, in the prison-fortress of 'Akka, of the principles and precepts constituting the bedrock of that Faith, by the formulation of [p. 216] the laws and ordinances designed to safeguard its integrity, by the establishment, immediately after His ascension, of the Covenant designed to preserve its unity and perpetuate its influence...

..... 'The initial phase of that Proclamation may be said to have opened in Constantinople with the communication (the text of which we, alas, do not possess) addressed by Baha'u'llah to Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz himself, the self-styled vicar of the Prophet of Islam and the absolute ruler of a mighty

empire. So potent, so august a personage was the first among the sovereigns of the world to receive the Divine Summons, and the first among Oriental monarchs to sustain the impact of God's retributive justice. The occasion for this communication was provided by the infamous edit the Sultan had promulgated, less than four months after the arrival of the exiles in his capital,...

..... '...an edict which evinced a virtual coalition of the Turkish and Persian imperial governments against a common adversary, and which in the end brought such tragic consequences upon the Sultanate, the Caliphate and the Qajar dynasty....

..... 'Thus closes the opening scene of one of the most dramatic episodes in the ministry of Baha'u'llah. The curtain now rises on what is admittedly the most turbulent and critical period of the first Baha'i century--a period that was destined to precede the most glorious phase of that ministry, the proclamation of His Message to the world and its rulers.'[26-8]

..... [26-8. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 157-60, 162.]

[p. 217]

27

Adrianople, the Remote Prison

..... O Ahmad! Forget not My bounties while I am absent. Remember My days during thy days, and My distress and banishment in this remote prison.

..... --Baha'u'llah

IN the well-known Arabic Tablet of Ahmad, revealed for a native of Yazd, Baha'u'llah refers to Adrianople as the 'remote prison'. [27-1] This historic city, in a far corner of the European continent, was the furthest place from His native land that Baha'u'llah was ever to reach in the course of His ministry. And it was the first time in the known history of religion that a Manifestation of God had come to dwell on the European continent.

..... [27-1. The quotation at the head of the chapter is from the Tablet of Ahmad, included in most Baha'i prayer books.]

Adrianople, now known as Edirne, is situated inside a bend of the river Tunja (Tunca) just before its junction with the Maritsa. Its strategic position on the main route between Asia Minor and the Balkans has made it an important city from ancient times. The city was captured from the Thracian tribes by the Macedonians, who named it Orestias. It was rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian in the second century and named after him Hadrianopolis or Adrianople. It thereafter had a turbulent history, being the scene of many battles between the Byzantines and other nations until its capture by the Ottoman Turks in 1362. From 1413 to 1458, Adrianople was the capital of the rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire, and even after the capital had been transferred to Istanbul, it continued to be an important administrative and commercial centre frequently visited by sultans and princes. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

a series of incidents such as a fire in 1745, an earthquake in 1751, brief occupation by the Russians in 1828-9 and 1878-9, and several mutinies, began to affect [p. 218] the city's fortunes. At the time of Baha'u'llah's sojourn there, Adrianople's population was 100,000 and it was the capital of an important province of the Turkish Empire.

At first sight, Adrianople appeared to Aqa Rida to be a delightful place; but it was very cold. He comments that for them, who were used to the warm climate of 'Iraq, the cold weather of Rumelia was trying--and particularly so that first year because of the exceptional severity of the winter, and because they lacked adequate clothing.

On their arrival the travellers were all huddled together in a caravanserai called Khan-i-'Arab, where accommodation was poor and restricted. Baha'u'llah stayed there for three nights. Then a house in the Muradiyyih quarter, in the north-eastern part of the city, was procured for Him and His family, which Ashchi recalls was on high ground, with a good view of the whole of Adrianople. (This quarter is centered on the Muradiyyih mosque, which was built by Sultan Murad II.) Others remained at the inn, where their meals were brought to them from the house of Baha'u'llah. Ashchi, too, has something to say about the extreme severity of that winter. On the road from Constantinople to Adrianople he had seen a number of people frozen to death. In Adrianople it was said that they had not experienced such a hard winter for forty years, and there were frequent snowfalls well into the spring. For several days the public baths had to shut their doors, and [p. 219] springs were blocked with ice so that people had to light huge fires by them and wait a long time before any water would flow. In Baha'u'llah's own room, despite the stove, a carafe of water froze one night. The suffering of Baha'u'llah and His people, ill-provided as they were, is obvious.

After a short stay in that house in the Muradiyyih quarter, which was too small, another house in the same quarter but more spacious, close to the Takyih of the Mawlavis,[1] was obtained for Baha'u'llah. Others, who were still in the caravanserai, moved to the first house which Baha'u'llah had just vacated. Next door to the second residence in the Muradiyyih quarter, a third house was rented for Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Yahya and their families. All these houses, Aqa Rida remarks, were old, draughty and badly constructed, and keeping out the cold was a constant problem.

..... [1. The meeting-place of members of a mystic order, going back to the great Sufi poet, Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi. It is adjacent to the Muradiyyih mosque.]

Aqa Rida recounts the story of 'Ali Big, the centurion, who had accompanied Baha'u'llah and His party from Constantinople. When he came to take his leave, he begged Baha'u'llah for promotion. He had been a centurion too long and was no longer young; to gain the rank of Big-Bashi and to be posted to Adrianople was his dearest wish. Baha'u'llah assured him that all would be well with him, and indeed, before long he turned up at Adrianople, a Big-Bashi. He sought

Baha'u'llah's presence to express his gratitude, telling everyone that it was by the bounty of Baha'u'llah that he had obtained his remarkable promotion. After a while, however, he began to long for another step up the ladder. Once again he begged Baha'u'llah that his desideratum be granted to him, and once again he was assured that he would be given the higher rank. And so, one day, he appeared with the badge of a Mir-Alay. He himself could not believe his luck in having attained such a high military rank, and never ceased to declare openly that he owed it all to Baha'u'llah. And he consorted with His followers wherever and whenever he could. But as he had come such a long way, would it be unreasonable to desire and attain the rank of a Pasha? 'How long do you want to live?' Baha'u'llah asked him. And not long after, he was dead- Mir-Alay 'Ali Big.

Life was indeed hard in that first winter in Adrianople. Before long, financial difficulties too began to be felt. By this time Aqa Husayn, [p. 220] himself, was working in the kitchen; hence his name of Ashchi (maker of broth, in other words, cook). He recalls that there were days when the only fare available for the luncheon spread was bread and cheese; yet he effected economies enabling him to prepare, every now and then, a feast for Baha'u'llah, and managed to buy two cows and a goat to provide the household with milk and yoghurt.

Aqa Rida brings to mind the unravelling of the mysteries of the 'year 80' (1280 AH) in that house in the Muradiyyih quarter. From the creative Pen of Baha'u'llah, Tablets were now unceasingly flowing, vibrant with power and authority, and carrying open and public announcement of His Revelation--Tablets such as Lawh-i-Sayyah and Lawh-i-Nuqtih. And the Babis everywhere, except for a few dissident voices, rallied to His Cause and submitted to His God-given mandate. Mirza Yahya, however, though outwardly subdued, was, with a number of the self-seeking around him--men such as Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani--secretly concerting plans for subversion and opposition. The account of his base intrigues, to which we shall come presently, makes sorry reading.

But, first, to the supreme joy and bliss of those loyal companions of Baha'u'llah which Aqa Rida's and Ashchi's narratives depict. No matter how hard the winter, no matter how straitened the circumstances, no matter how poorly clad and badly housed, how dire the dark look of an uncertain future, they had attained their heart's desire and were happy. They lived in close proximity to their Lord and served Him with utter devotion. They heard by day and by night, from His own lips, verses--majestic, commanding, compassionate--which betokened the sunrise of the Day of Days, and they basked continuously in the life-giving rays of that Sun. Aqa Rida relates that Baha'u'llah visited them oftentimes, in that first house of the Muradiyyih quarter, and also visited the house of Aqay-i-Kalim, His brother, next door to His own house, where those few of His followers who were in Adrianople forgathered.

It happened one day at sunset, when He was out in the open, that He turned to His companions and said: 'A bird perching on a branch of this tree (pointing to one) uttered these words three times, " Muhammad came and calamity came"'. Aqa

Rida comments that some of the companions thought that Baha'u'llah was referring to Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi, Nabil-i-A'zam, as it was rumoured that he [p. 221] had returned to Constantinople. Others put different interpretations on those words of Baha'u'llah. But, before very long, it became apparent that He was referring to Haji Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani--the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation.

Baha'u'llah, according to Aqa Rida, stayed about ten months in that second house in the Muradiyyih quarter. But since its accommodation was inadequate, and its situation made it lonely and difficult access, He wished to obtain another residence, more commodious and easier to reach. One day, Aqa Rida relates, Baha'u'llah said to Mirza Mahmud-Kashani: 'You are a tall man and nearer to God. Pray that He may give Us a better house', and within a few days a house was found, right in the heart of the city, to the north of the Mosque of Sultan Salim and close to it. This mosque, the glory of Adrianople, was built in the sixteenth century by the architect Sinan, with a great dome which is higher by six cubits than that of Saint Sophia in Istanbul. As to the house, it was a spacious and magnificent mansion, called the house of Amru'llah, which means 'the Cause of God'. [1] Baha'u'llah, Aqa Rida says, personally went to view it, and it met with His approval. Mirza Yahya was also present.

Baha'u'llah observed: 'God answers the prayer of Aqa Mirza Mahmud. He prayed that God may give us a house; his prayer was answered and this house was found.' Its andaruni (inner quarter) of three storeys had thirty rooms.

Baha'u'llah and His family occupied the upper floor, Mirza Muhammad-Quli and his family the middle one, and some of the attendants were housed in the ground floor. This vast house had a Turkish bath of its own, with running water in the kitchen and also a place for the storage of water. Aqa Rida writes: 'The house could not be faulted'. The biruni (outer quarter) had four or five beautiful rooms on its upper floor for reception, as well as accommodation for preparing and serving refreshments. The rest of the companions occupied the middle floor of the biruni. Two other houses were found in the same quarter, one for Aqay-i-Kalim and his family, and one for Mirza Yahya and his. All meals were prepared in the house of Amru'llah and distributed from there.

..... [1. Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 162, translates the 'house of Amru'llah' as 'House of God's Command'.]

Baha'u'llah had advised His companions that it was now the opportune [p. 222] time for them to engage in some trade. Aqa Rida says that he himself had no desire but to serve Baha'u'llah personally, and thought that plying a trade might stand in the way of the fulfilment of that desire. But, as it happened, it did not. One day, when they were all in the presence of Baha'u'llah, He told them: 'We commanded you to follow a trade so that you may be usefully occupied and not get bored, and may earn money and invite Us to feasts.'

In this house of Amru'llah, Aqa Rida comments, they were all together at night, and in the daytime, some went about their trades, while others served in the house. Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi and Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani saw to the preparation and serving of tea, coffee and other refreshments. Aqa

Husayn-i-Ashchi (now grown up) was in charge of the kitchen and did the cooking. Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, still a young lad, served in the andaruni. Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir (Nayrizi) and Aqa Najaf-Quli saw to the purchase of provisions and other necessities in the bazar. Mirza Aqa Jan was the amanuensis of Baha'u'llah. Haji Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani had no particular employment in the house, nor did they have a trade or manage a shop. Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir (see Addendum V) was engaged in the weaving of silk. Aqa Rida himself together with Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani kept a confectioner's shop. Aqa Muhammad-'Ali and Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar became tobacconists. Ustad Baqir, Aqa Muhammad-Isma'il and Khayyat-Bashi did tailoring. Mirza Ja'far and Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq (see Addendum V) also opened shops.

It was in the house of Amru'llah, on the night of 12 Rabi'u'l-Avval AH 1281 (15 August 1864), that Mirza Diya'u'llah, a son of Baha'u'llah, was born, according to Aqa Rida. 'We were all very happy together in that house of Amru'llah', he comments, 'and no thought of separation ever crossed anyone's mind.' This state of affairs lasted for about a year.

In the second year of their stay in that house, Aqa Rida states, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani began openly to show their true natures, compounded of treachery and insubordination. It will be recalled that Baha'u'llah had brought Haji Mirza Ahmad with Himself from Baghdad, lest he might again fall foul of the Persian consul-general because of his uncontrollable tongue, as a result of which he had been detained and jailed. The [p. 223] Persian Tablet of Ahmad, resonant with power and authority, is addressed to this Haji Mirza Ahmad:[1]

..... [1. See Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith, pp. 64-5, for further details about him.]

..... Thine eye is My trust, suffer not the dust of vain desires to becloud its lustre. Thine ear is a sign of My bounty, let not the tumult of unseemly motives turn it away from My Word that encompasseth all creation. Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. Thine hand is a symbol of My loving-kindness, hinder it not from holding fast unto My guarded and hidden Tablets.... Unasked, I have showered upon thee My grace. Unpetitioned, I have fulfilled thy wish. In spite of thy undeserving, I have singled thee out for My richest, My incalculable favours.... O My servants! Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multi-colored hyacinths of My knowledge. Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow, through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart. Be light and untrammelled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.[27-2]

..... [27-2. Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, section CLII.]

During that time, writes Aqa Rida, the companions gathered every night in the large room in the outer quarters of the house of Amru'llah, to read prayers of the Bab, because signs of Mirza Yahya's defection were appearing. But it was all still under cover. At times, he and Siyyid Muhammad were closeted together, concerting their plans. For a while, matters thus rested, until all at once a chasm gaped open, wide and unbridgeable. It was caused by the open rebellion of Mirza Yahya and the titanic upheaval which resulted from it.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has thus described the rebellion against Baha'u'llah of His half-brother, its origin, nature and threat to the newly-born Faith:

..... A twenty-year-old Faith had just begun to recover from a series of successive blows when a crisis of the first magnitude overtook it and shook it to its roots. Neither the tragic martyrdom of the Bab nor the ignominious attempt on the life of the sovereign, nor its bloody aftermath, nor Baha'u'llah humiliating banishment from His native land, nor even His two-year withdrawal to Kurdistan, devastating though they were in their consequences compare in gravity with this first major internal convulsion which seized a newly re-arisen community, and which threatened to cause an irreparable breach in the ranks of its members. ...the monstrous [p. 224] behavior of Mirza Yahya, one of the half-brothers of Baha'u'llah, the nominee of the Bab, and recognized chief of the Babi community, brought in its wake a period of travail which left its mark on the fortunes of the Faith for no less than half a century. This supreme crisis Baha'u'llah Himself designated as the *Ayyam-i-Shidad* (Days of Stress), during which 'the most grievous veil' was torn asunder, and the 'most great separation' was irrevocably effected. It immensely gratified and emboldened its external enemies, both civil and ecclesiastical, played into their hands, and evoked their unconcealed derision. It perplexed and confused the friends and supporters of Baha'u'llah, and seriously damaged the prestige of the Faith in the eyes of its western admirers.[1] It had been brewing ever since the early days of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Baghdad, was temporarily suppressed by the creative forces which, under His as yet unproclaimed leadership, reanimated a disintegrating community, and finally broke out, in all its violence, in the years immediately preceding the proclamation of His Message. It brought incalculable sorrow to Baha'u'llah, visibly aged Him, and inflicted, through its repercussions, the heaviest blow ever sustained by Him in His lifetime. It was engineered throughout by tortuous intrigues and incessant machinations of that same diabolical Siyyid Muhammad, that vile whispered who, disregarding Baha'u'llah's advice, had insisted on accompanying Him to Constantinople and Adrianople, and was now redoubling his efforts, with unrelaxing vigilance, to bring it to a head.

..... [1. Such as Nicolas and Edward Granville Browne. (HMB)]

..... Mirza Yahya had, ever since the return of Baha'u'llah from Sulaymaniyyih, either chosen to maintain himself in an inglorious seclusion in his own house, or had withdrawn, whenever danger threatened, to such places of safety as Hillih and Basra. To the latter town he had fled, disguised as a

Baghdad Jew, and become a shoe merchant. So great was his terror that he is reported to have said on one occasion: 'Whoever claims to have seen me, or to have heard my voice, I pronounce an infidel.' On being informed of Baha'u'llah's impending departure for Constantinople, he at first hid himself in the garden of Huvaydar, in the vicinity of Baghdad, meditating meanwhile on the advisability of fleeing either to Abyssinia, India or some other country. Refusing to heed Baha'u'llah's advice to proceed to Persia, and there disseminate the writings of the Bab, he sent a certain Haji Muhammad Kazim, who resembled him, to the government-house to procure for him a passport in the name of Mirza 'Aliy-i-Kirmanshahi, and left Baghdad, abandoning the writings there, and proceeded in disguise, accompanied by an Arab Babi, named Zahir, to Mosul, where he joined the exiles who were on their way to Constantinople.

..... allowing himself to be duped by the enticing prospects of unfettered leadership held out to him by Siyyid Muhammad, the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation, even as Muhammad Shah had been misled by the Antichrist of the Babi Revelation, Haji Mirza Aqasi; refusing to be admonished [p. 225] by prominent members of the community who advised him, in writing, to exercise wisdom and restraint; forgetful of the kindness and counsels of Baha'u'llah, Who, thirteen years his senior, had watched over his early youth and manhood; emboldened by the sin-covering eye of his Brother, Who, on so many occasions, had drawn a veil over his many crimes and follies, this arch-breaker of the Covenant of the Bab, spurred on by his mounting jealousy and impelled by his passionate love of leadership. was driven to perpetrate such acts as defied either concealment or toleration....

..... Desperate designs to poison Baha'u'llah and His companions, and thereby reanimate his own defunct leadership, began, approximately a year after their arrival in Adrianople, to agitate his mind. Well aware of the erudition of his half-brother, Aqay-i-Kalim, in matters pertaining to medicine, he, under various pretexts, sought enlightenment from him regarding the effects of certain herbs and poisons, and then began, contrary to his wont, to invite Baha'u'llah to his home, where, one day, having smeared His tea-cup with a substance he had concocted, he succeeded in poisoning Him sufficiently to produce a serious illness which lasted no less than a month, and which was accompanied by severe pains and high fever, the aftermath of which left Baha'u'llah with a shaking hand till the end of His life.[1] So grave was His condition that a foreign doctor, named Shishman was called in to attend Him. The doctor was so appalled by His livid hue that he deemed His case hopeless, and, after having fallen at His feet, retired from His presence without prescribing a remedy. A few days later that doctor fell ill and died. Prior to his death Baha'u'llah had intimated that doctor Shishman had sacrificed his life for Him. To Mirza Aqa Jan sent by Baha'u'llah to visit him, the doctor had stated that God had answered his prayers, and that after his death a certain Dr Chupan, whom he knew to be reliable, should, whenever necessary, be called in his stead.

..... [1. In the International Archives of the Baha'i Faith, on Mount

Carmel, a blood-stained handkerchief is preserved with which Baha'u'llah used to wipe His mouth on the night He fell ill, as a result of poisoning.]

..... On another occasion this same Mirza Yahya had, according to the testimony of one of his wives, who had temporarily deserted him and revealed the details of the above-mentioned act, poisoned the well which provided water for the family and companions of Baha'u'llah, in consequence of which the exiles manifested strange symptoms of illness.[1] [27-3]

..... [1. Aqa Rida states that Dr Shishman was Christian. That wife of Mirza Yahya, who revealed the poisoning of the well, according to Aqa Rida, was the woman from Tarfish, Badri-Jan, sister of Mirza Nasru'llah and Mirza Rida-Quli (see Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith, pp. 36-7).]

..... [27-3. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 163-6.]

Baha'u'llah had done His utmost to save His brother from the consequences of his 'crimes' and 'follies'; but His kindness and generosity had met with more venom and hatred. Time, that unfaltering test of right and wrong, eventually showed the true stature of [p. 226] Mirza Yahya the hollowness of his contentions and the misery of his purpose. Having failed in his dastardly attempt of poisoning, Mirza Yahya turned round and pointed an accusing finger at Baha'u'llah. It was his Brother, he alleged, Who had poisoned the food, and then accidentally partaken of it. Today, at the remove of a century, we can pity the malefactor, and see in perspective how puny and insignificant he was, matched against the overwhelming majesty of Baha'u'llah. We can even feel amused by the calumnies and presumption of Mirza Yahya; but at the time, such vile conduct served to increase the rigours of Baha'u'llah's life.

Narrating the circumstances of Baha'u'llah's prolonged illness, Aqa Rida says that for weeks the companions were bereft of attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah. They were heart-broken, but certainly would not be so bold as to ask to be permitted to visit Him. Then, one night during His convalescence, when most of them (including 'Abdu'l-Baha and His half-brother, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali) had been invited to dinner in the house of Aqay-i-Kalim, and Aqa Rida and two others had remained to carry wood for heating, Baha'u'llah, sitting up in His bed, called them in and bade them be seated. He spoke to them and told them how weak He felt. After that, as soon as He was able to walk unaided, He came to visit the companions. In the vicinity of the Muradiyyih quarter there was a piece of land, dotted with trees. Mirza Muhammad-Quli rented it, and Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani planted flowers there. In the late afternoon Baha'u'llah would repair to that shaded spot, and the companions, returning from their day's work, knew where to find Him and attain His presence. One such day, Baha'u'llah enquired how Khayyat-Bashi was, for the man had been ill. When Aqa Rida said that he had no news of his progress, Baha'u'llah replied that he should have gone first to visit Khayyat-Bashi before coming to this garden. 'This I tell you,' He said, 'that you all should learn to care for one another at all times, and look after each other.' The

house of Aqay-i-Kalim was close by this orchard, and Baha'u'llah would, at times, visit His brother's home before returning to His own.

Aqa Rida relates the circumstances of an embarrassing moment for Mirza Yahya in that house of Aqay-i-Kalim. The well-famed courier, Shaykh Salman, who came from Persia with letters and petitions and went back with Tablets and letters, had asked Mirza Yahya to explain [p. 227] for him the meaning of these famous lines from the poetry of Sa'di:

..... The Friend is nearer to me than myself.

..... Even more astonishing is my remoteness from Him.

Mirza Yahya's answer was nonsensical. Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani (the very people who became his lieutenants, when he rebelled against his Brother) joined forces to show him how mistaken he was, and that Sa'di was expressing in poetical lines the sentiment conveyed by this verse of the Qur'an: 'We are nearer to him than his jugular vein' (50:15). When his ignorance was shown up, Mirza Yahya tried to confuse the issue. It will be recalled that on the way to Istanbul, Siyyid Muhammad so routed Mirza Yahya in argument that the latter went to Baha'u'llah, bitterly complaining. Aqa Rida adds that Siyyid Muhammad always mocked Mirza Yahya and laughed at him. Then came a day when Siyyid Muhammad pretended that he had been insulted and went away to lodge in the Mawlavi-Khanih. Aqay-i-Kalim sought him out and took him to his own home and gave him sound counsel and advice, but, Aqa Rida says, the man was wedded to mischief and again the same thing happened. He ran away for a second time to the Mawlavi-Khanih.

Aqa Rida gives his witness that Mirza Yahya had for a long time nurtured enmity towards Baha'u'llah, designing to bring about His death. One episode of the kind is described by Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani, the barber, in his autobiography from which this extract is taken:

..... 'One day, while I was attending at the bath, waiting for the Blessed Perfection to arrive, Azal came in, washed himself and began to apply henna. I sat down to serve him and he began to talk to me. He mentioned a former governor of Nayriz who had killed the believers and had been an inveterate enemy of the Cause. Then Azal went on to praise courage and bravery and said that some were brave by nature and at the right time it showed in their conduct. He again mentioned Nayriz and said that at one time there was left of the children of the believers only one boy, of ten or eleven years. One day, when the Governor was in the bath, this boy went in with a knife, and as the Governor came out of the water, he stabbed him in the belly and ripped him open. The Governor cried out and his servants rushed into [p. 228] the bath, saw the boy with the knife in his hand and attacked him. Then they went to see how their master was, and the boy, although wounded, rose up and stabbed him again. Azal again began to praise bravery and to say how wonderful it is to be courageous. He then said, "See what they are doing to the Cause; everybody has risen up against me, even my Brother, and in my wretched state I know nothing of comfort." His tone and implication were that he, being the successor of the

Bab, was the wronged one and his Brother a usurper and aggressor. (I take refuge in God!) Then he again said that bravery is praiseworthy, and the Cause of God needs help. In all this talk, relating the story of the Governor of Nayriz and praising bravery and encouraging me, he was really urging me to kill Baha'u'llah.

..... "The effect of all this upon me was so disturbing that I had never felt so shattered in my life. I felt as if the building were tumbling about me. I said nothing, but in a very agitated state of mind went out to the ante-room and sat upon the bench there. I told myself that I would go back to the bath and cut off his head, no matter what the consequences. Then I reflected that to kill him was not an easy matter and perhaps I [p. 229] would offend Baha'u'llah. Suppose I kill this man, I said to myself, and then go into the presence of the Blessed Perfection and He asks me why I killed him, what answer could I give? This thought prevented me from carrying out my intention. I returned to the bath and being very angry told Azal to "clear off". [In Persian "Gum Shaw" is highly insulting.] Azal began to whimper and tremble and asked me to pour water over his head to wash off the henna. I complied and he washed and went out of the bath in a state of great trepidation and I have never met him since.

..... "My condition was such that nothing could calm me. As it happened I the Blessed Perfection did not come to the bath that day, but Mirza Musa came, and I told him that Azal had set me on fire with his fearful suggestion. Mirza Musa said, "He has been thinking of this for years; take no notice of him. He has always been thinking in this way." No one else came to the bath; so I closed it. I then went to the Master ['Abdu'l-Baha, the Most Great Branch] and told Him that Mirza Yahya had spoken words which had infuriated me and that I had wanted to kill him, but did not. The Master said this was something which people did not realize and told me not to speak of it but to keep it secret. I then went to Mirza Aqa Jan and reported the whole incident to him and asked him to tell Baha'u'llah. Mirza Aqa Jan returned and said: " Baha'u'llah says to tell Ustad Muhammad-'Ali not to mention this to anyone."

..... "That night I collected all the writings of Azal and went to the coffee-room of Baha'u'llah's house and burnt them in the brazier. Before doing this I showed them to seven or eight of the believers present, saying "These are the writings of Azal". They all protested and asked me why I did it. I answered that until today I esteemed Azal highly, but now he was less than a dog in my sight.'

Mirza Yahya's attempt to subvert and induce the barber was, according to Aqa Rida, of long standing, covering a period of at least three months until he was emboldened to speak so openly to the barber. As we have seen, it put Ustad Muhammad-'Ali in such a rage that he nearly did away with Mirza Yahya himself, on the spot.

Referring to this episode, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes, 'Though ordered subsequently by Baha'u'llah not to divulge this occurrence to any one,

the barber was unable to hold his peace and betrayed the secret, plunging thereby the community into great consternation. [p. 230] "When the secret nursed in his (Mirza Yahya's) bosom was revealed by God," Baha'u'llah Himself affirms, "he disclaimed such an intention, and imputed it to that same servant (Ustad Muhammad-'Ali)."[27-4]

..... [27-4. ibid. p. 166. (God Passes By)]

The same Ustad Muhammad-'Ali relates that Mirza Yahya, in his craven fear lest he be recognized, told Shamsi Big, who had been their official host in Istanbul, that he was a servant of Baha'u'llah. And to the same end, the concealment of his identity, he oftentimes betook himself to the quarters of the attendants, although he had a home of his own.

The actions of Mirza Yahya, in his vain attempt to 'reanimate his own defunct leadership', led to events of great significance which are described by Shoghi Effendi, as he continues his narrative of this 'first major internal convulsion':

..... The moment had now arrived for Him Who had so recently, both verbally and in numerous Tablets, revealed the implications of the claims He had advanced, to acquaint formally the one who was the nominee of the Bab with the character of His Mission. Mirza Aqa Jan was accordingly commissioned to bear to Mirza Yahya the newly revealed Suriy-i-Amr, which unmistakably affirmed those claims, to read aloud to him its contents, and demand an unequivocal and conclusive reply. Mirza Yahya's request for a one-day respite, during which he could meditate his answer, was granted. The only reply, however, that was forthcoming was a counter-declaration, specifying the hour and the minute in which he had been made the recipient of an independent Revelation, necessitating the unqualified submission to him of the peoples of the earth in both the East and the West.

..... So presumptuous an assertion, made by so perfidious an adversary to the envoy of the Bearer of so momentous a Revelation was the signal for the open and final rupture between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya--a rupture that marks one of the darkest dates in Baha'i history. Wishing to allay the fierce animosity that blazed in the bosom of His enemies, and to assure to each one of the exiles a complete freedom to choose between Him and them, Baha'u'llah withdrew with His family to the house of Rida Big (Shavval 22, 1282 AH),[1] which was rented by His order, and refused, for two months, to associate with either friend or stranger, including His own companions. He instructed Aqay-i-Kalim to divide all the furniture, bedding, clothing and utensils that were to be found in His home, and send half to the house of Mirza Yahya; to deliver to him certain relics he had long coveted, such as the seals, rings, and manuscripts in the handwriting [p. 231] of the Bab; and to insure that he received his full share of the allowance fixed by the government for the maintenance of the exiles and their families. He, moreover, directed Aqay-i-Kalim to order to attend to Mirza Yahya's shopping, for several hours a day, any one of the companions whom he himself might select, and to assure him

that whatever would henceforth be received in his name from Persia would be delivered into his own hands.[27-5]

..... [1. 10 March 1866. This house was in another quarter of the town. (HMB)]

..... [27-5. *ibid.* pp. 166-7. (God Passes By)]

Aqa Rida writes of the great distress which Baha'u'llah's seclusion caused amongst the companions. Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani, although leagued with Mirza Yahya, did not tarry in Adrianople, but asked for a passport and left. He made his way back to Baghdad, where he was murdered by an Arab, who was supposed to have been a Baha'i. Baha'u'llah was still in Adrianople when the news came of Haji Mirza Ahmad's foul murder, and the news grieved Him. Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq and Mirza Ja'far also preferred to leave Adrianople. Mirza Muhammad-Quli, another half-brother of Baha'u'llah, and Mirza Aqa Jan, His personal attendant and amanuensis, moved with Him to the house of Rida Big, and Aqa Husayn also went there to cook for the household. The rest of the companions, heart-broken and distressed, were one and all forbidden access to the house of Rida Big, except for one day, soon after the move from the house of Amru'llah. On that day, early in the afternoon, they were bidden to the presence of Baha'u'llah. He gave them tea and then addressed them: 'This restraint has an ordained time; you should all turn to God. Such must be your conduct as to see all under your shadow. Do not let anything deflect you from turning to God. Put your trust in Him, look up to Him. Be patient and forbearing. Do not seek conflict with anyone.' Aqa Rida, recalling the counsel of Baha'u'llah, says that such was the power of His utterance that they felt it in the very marrow of their bones, and tears welled from their eyes. Then Baha'u'llah bade them leave Him, instructing Darvish Sidq-'Ali to visit Mirza Yahya's house every day and make necessary purchases for him and his family. Darvish Sidq-'Ali hated it, but since he was bidden by Baha'u'llah, he obeyed, until the time when Mirza Yahya moved away to the Muradiyyih quarter, and told the Darvish that he no longer needed his services.

When Baha'u'llah decreed that Mirza Yahya and his family should receive their ample share of the monthly allowance which the Ottoman Government gave to the exiles, all of the companions were given their [p. 232] share of the money and also of the utensils in use, copper and otherwise.

Aqa Rida states that they were all stunned by the intensity and the ferocity of ill-feeling displayed by Mirza Yahya and those near to him. One of those won to the side of Mirza Yahya was a certain Haji Ibrahim-i-Kashi,[27-6] who was treated with extreme kindness, was given letters to Persia, and was instructed what to say, wherever he went. But Haji Ibrahim saw the shabbiness of their arguments, repented and rejoined the companions. 'I thought at first', Haji Ibrahim is reported to have said, 'that their aim was to bring about reform and reconciliation. However, on second thought, I found that they had nothing but hatred and calumny to impart.' Aqa Rida states that he and others had a look at some of the writings given to Haji Ibrahim, and were greatly astonished by the

measure of falsehood which these writings contained.

..... [27-6. See Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith, pp. 83-4.]

Next, having failed to achieve their ends by enticements offered to Haji Ibrahim-i-Kashi, Mirza Yahya and his infamous crew resorted to another shameful act. One of Mirza Yahya's wives, the mother of his a son, Mirza Ahmad,[1] was sent to the Governor's house, moaning and bewailing. She told the authorities that they were hungry and had nothing to eat, because Baha'u'llah had withheld funds from them. And this was at a time, says Aqa Rida, when two thousand tumans, recently sent from Qazvin, had all been handed over to Mirza Yahya. There was never a time, he repeats, when the needs of Mirza Yahya and those who were with him were neglected. Even when Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani had gone to lodge at the Mawlavi-Khanih he was provided with tea and sugar and other necessities. At this point in his diary, Aqa Rida, after relating these odious deeds of Mirza Yahya and his lieutenant, puts in a prayer of his own:

..... [1. This Mirza Ahmad, several decades later, turned to 'Abdu'l-Baha, pentinent and in need of care. The present writer well remembers him, in the twenties of this century, leading a very quiet life in his old age, in the Pilgrim House on Mount Carmel. When a number of students from the American University of Beirut were in Haifa, staying in the same Pilgrim House (the present writer was in that group), the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith particularly counselled them not to hurt the feelings of that old, silent man, by referring, in any manner, to the aberrations and misdeeds of his notorious father, while in his presence.]

'O God! Thou knowest that mentioning these events has only one purpose: to state the truth and explain the situation. That which happened and of which we were witnesses is mentioned so that it would become clear and evident to all. We have never entertained [p. 233] hatred towards anyone. We put our trust in Thy grace and bounty to preserve us from falsehood, so that we should never deviate from the path of justice and equity and trustworthiness and loyalty, that we should never speak but the truth. Thou confirmest all, Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful.'

Then Aqa Rida relates a tale even more strange. The supporters of Mirza Yahya, when in 'Iraq, were asked why he had sent his wife abegging to the Government House, when they knew full well that they were not in need of anything. They had replied that this was the work of Siyyid Muhammad, and it had been done without the knowledge of Mirza Yahya. The excuse offered was even worse than the deed!

In those days of turmoil Khurshid Pasha (see Addendum V) had just been appointed to the governorship of Adrianople, and had taken up his duties in March 1866, according to British consular records (FO 195 794). His deputy was 'Aziz Pasha. Both were capable administrators, whose integrity was beyond reproach. One day, 'Aziz Pasha called to visit Baha'u'llah, showing remarkable humility and reverence. He became particularly attached to 'Abdu'l-Baha, and

was eager to drink deeply from His fount of knowledge, although Ghusn-i-A'zam (the Most Great Branch) was a young man in His early twenties. Many years later, when Baha'u'llah had been exiled to 'Akka, 'Aziz Pasha became the Vali of Beirut. He visited 'Akka twice to pay his respects to Baha'u'llah and renew his friendship with Baha'u'llah's eldest Son, Whom he greatly admired.

Mirza Yahya now appealed to Khurshid Pasha obsequiously, as well as to 'Aziz Pasha. Khurshid Pasha and his deputy showed Mirza Yahya's letters, replete with fulsome flattery, to Ghusn-i-A'zam. Aqa Rida writes that when Baha'u'llah was apprised of Mirza Yahya's action, He knew that the time had come to end His seclusion; the 'ordained time' was over. 'We secluded ourselves', He said 'that perchance the fire of hostility might be quenched, and such disgraceful acts be averted, but they have resorted to measures more extreme than before.'

It was now springtime. 'We had rented a house in another quarter,' writes Aqa Rida; 'we were all together there, and prayed together by day and by night. We read from the sacred Writings and implored God that this night of separation might end, and the dawn of nearness [p. 234] [p. 235] break; that the door might be opened once again unto His presence. And when our prayers were answered, and the gates of bounty were flung open, we rented another house in the vicinity of the house of Rida Big and all took our abode there. That house had a well with good water, and the courtyard was vast with plenty of flower-beds, well planted. We took it in turns, every day, for one to stay in the house and do all the housework: draw water, sweep, cook, prepare tea, tend the flower-beds, as if all the rest were his guests for the day, and he himself was the host. When dinner was over he would wash up and hand over the plates and utensils to the one whose turn it was, the next day, to act as host. Most days, the Branches [sons of Baha'u'llah] came to this house, and occasionally the Blessed Beauty would come too. It was a good, pleasant house.'

There were visitors now, who had travelled to Adrianople to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah, such as Aqa 'Ali-Akbar-i-Khurasani and Shaykh Salman, the courier. They all stayed with evident joy at the house which Aqa Rida has described. Some Tablets were revealed in that house, and verses would flow from the tongue of Baha'u'llah as He sat with His companions. One day, Aqa Rida has recorded, He said: 'This is a fine place and a fine province. But I do not wish that we stay here. Before long all will be changed.' Aqa Rida adds that henceforth Baha'u'llah spoke frequently of the change which was to come, although outwardly there was no sign of it. Aqay-i-Kalim had also taken a house in that neighbourhood.

The house of Rida Big had both a biruni and an andaruni (outer and inner quarters), the former being smaller than the latter. The biruni had a vast courtyard with a variety of trees and bushes and flowers, and Baha'u'llah would occasionally come to the outer quarters, usually late in the afternoon, to pace up and down this garden and speak to the companions. Aqa Rida mentions one day in particular, when Baha'u'llah spoke of those who had opposed the Cause of God, tried to harm it, and persecuted the believers, naming them one by one, and saying how they had been brought low. Before long, He said (and Aqa Rida

has recorded), 'you shall see all the tyrants and enemies and opponents of the Cause of God vanquished, and the Word of God triumphant.' Then He added: 'It must be evident to all that We did not accept calamities and did not become captive except for the glorification of the Cause of God and bearing witness to the truth of His Word.' [p. 236] Abundant and prolific was the revelation of Tablets and verses in those days at Adrianople. Aqa Rida tells us that such was the outpouring that the Aghsan, sons of Baha'u'llah, and Mirza Aqa Jan, His attendant and amanuensis, spent long days and nights copying and recording.

Baha'u'llah was still living in the house of Rida Big, and would, at times, come to spend an hour or two in the orchard and meadow near the Muradiyyih quarter. Then the house of Amru'llah (which had been rented by 'Aziz Pasha) fell vacant again, and Baha'u'llah moved to it once more. The companions moved at the same time to a house close by, which had been previously occupied by Mirza Yahya and his family. Aqay-i-Kalim also moved to another house at this time.

Amongst the new arrivals now were Haji 'Ali-'Askar-i-Tabrizi and the brothers Haji Ja'far and Haji Taqi (see Addendum V), who lodged at an inn. Siyyid Ashraf of Zanzan (later to be martyred; see p. 471) together with his sister; and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, accompanied by Haji Mirza Husayn-i-Shirazi (both soon to be arrested in Egypt and banished to the Sudan) also came to Adrianople and stayed in the house which the companions occupied. Mirza Rida-Quli and Mirza [p. 237] Nasru'llah, two brothers of Tafrish, whose sister, Badri-Jan, was married to Mirza Yahya but estranged from him,[27-7] came about this time from Tihran, and took a house of their own. Both in the house of Amru'llah (which was now the residence of Baha'u'llah) and in the house rented by the companions, meetings were held regularly, to which Baha'u'llah came and spoke. And they, the companions, thus highly honoured, were privileged witnesses of how revelation came and how divine verses flowed from His tongue. It was in the house of Amru'llah that the answer to 'Ali-Muhammad-i-Sarraji (the leathermaker, who was a partisan of Mirza Yahya) was revealed. It has the proportions of a book.

..... [27-7. See *ibid.* p. 36. (Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith)]

Shaykh Salman, the courier, Ustad 'Abdu'l-Karim, Aqa 'Ali-Akbar, and Aqa Muhammad-Hasan and his sister were now advised to depart for 'Iraq. They were sorrowful, being wrenched from their Beloved, but they obeyed. Aqa Rida records that the day of their departure was unique, for when they had gone, Baha'u'llah received him in the andaruni, where the lamp had just been lit, and asked him whether he had written anything to anyone. Then Baha'u'llah said, 'Now write this'--and He spoke with tremendous power and authority--'write this'. He continued: 'By the truth of God, from the horizon of My visage a Sun hath dawned, on which the Supreme Pen of God hath inscribed: "This day, sovereignty is God's, the All-Powerful, the All-Encompassing, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious." Like a sword, when it smiteth the back of Satan, he and his hosts are put to flight; they flee to the lowest depths of hell. Thus hath emanated the command of God.' The Most Great Branch ('Abdu'l-Baha), who was present,

remarked that this verse ought to be recorded at once. Pen and paper were produced and that admonition was written down, to appear at the head of a Tablet addressed to Siyyid 'Aliy-i-'Arab, who lived in Tabriz.

The partisans of Mirza Yahya, the Azalis, have maintained that this man was murdered by Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani. The report of the British consular agent in Tabriz confirms their statement, and further confirmation is found in an unpublished history of the Baha'i Faith in the province of Adharbayjan, written by Mirza Haydar-'Ali Usku'i and supplemented by Aqa Muhammad-Husayn-i-Milani. They state that in the days when Baha'u'llah was still in Adrianople, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani, Mirza Mustafay-i-Naraqi and a dervish named [p. 238] 'Ali Naqi arrived at Tabriz, on their way to the Ottoman domain to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah. One night they chanced to meet Siyyid 'Aliy-i-'Arab. In the course of conversation, Siyyid 'Ali became abusive, and referred to Baha'u'llah in vile terms. This so stung his visitors and so taxed their patience that they rushed him and tied around his neck the shawl he wore round his waist, which led to his death. The next day, when Siyyid 'Ali's body was found, the three were arrested and later beheaded in public.[1] According to the British consular report, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani made no attempt to deny the deed and readily admitted that Siyyid 'Ali had died at his hand. Haji Mu'inu's-Saltanih of Tabriz, author of a detailed chronicle-history of the Babi Faith, personally witnessed the execution of the three Baha'is. It ought to be remarked, however, that those three were not beheaded because of the murder of Siyyid 'Aliy-i-'Arab, which was incidental in the eyes of the authorities who sought them, but because they were Baha'is.

..... [1. The reports of the Russian consul in Tabriz state that they were arrested in December 1866 and executed the following January.]

That deplorable and tragic episode had a sequel, even more tragic. In the pockets of the martyrs of Tabriz a petition was found, addressed to Baha'u'llah, which was written by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, a well-known physician of Zanjan. The authorities in Tabriz sent this letter to Tihran. When Nasiri'd-Din Shah was apprised of it, he wrote to the Governor of Zanjan, ordering him to put Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to death. One night the physician was summoned to the Governor's house to attend the sick. On his arrival there, the executioner was waiting for him. A tub was brought in, and the innocent physician was pitilessly decapitated. However, it was witnessing the execution of the three martyrs in Tabriz, who showed no fear at all of death and died joyously, that converted a high official, Shirzad Khan-i-Sartip. Strange indeed are the decrees of Providence.

Aqa Rida relates that another night, about that time, all of the visitors and most of the companions were in the presence of Baha'u'llah in the andaruni. He spoke to them of the events occurring in 'Iraq (where the partisans of Mirza Yahya were active), of the behaviour of Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Naraqi, and of miracles and supernatural feats. The natural ordering of matters, He said, is not to be trifled with; but if a group of people make a particular event the touchstone [p. 239] of their faith, and promise to abide by the outcome, God

will, from His grace, bring that event to pass for them. For example, said Baha'u'llah, Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far is crippled and lame; let him make his cure the test of his faith. The choice is his: let him first turn to Mirza Yahya, but if he does not find satisfaction, then let him turn to this exalted Threshold.

Baha'u'llah's challenge was conveyed to Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far, but he was irredeemable. The Shi'ih divines of 'Iraq had, some years before, run away in like manner, not daring to heed His challenge.

Baha'u'llah was still residing in the house of Amru'llah, when Mirza Aqa Jan and Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar were sent to Istanbul to counter the mischief of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani. But His second stay in that house was of short duration, for within six months the owner of the house sold it, and Baha'u'llah then rented the house of 'Izzat Aqa in another quarter of the city--the last of His residences in Adrianople. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has described a decisive event which took place at this time:

..... It was in this house, in the month of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1284 AH (Sept. 1867) that an event of the utmost significance occurred, which completely discomfited Mirza Yahya and his supporters, and proclaimed to friend and foe alike Baha'u'llah's triumph over them. A certain Mir Muhammad,[1] a Babi of Shiraz, greatly resenting alike the claims and the cowardly seclusion of Mirza Yahya, succeeded in forcing Siyyid Muhammad to induce him to meet Baha'u'llah face to face, so that a discrimination might be publicly effected between the true and the false. Foolishly assuming that his illustrious Brother would never countenance such a proposition, Mirza Yahya appointed the mosque of Sultan Salim as the place for their encounter. No sooner had Baha'u'llah been informed of this arrangement than He set forth, on foot, in the heat of midday, and accompanied by this same Mir Muhammad,[2] for the aforementioned mosque, which was situated in a distant part of the city, reciting, as He walked, through the streets and markets, verses, in a voice and in a manner that greatly astonished those who saw and heard Him.

..... [1. This man, with his pack animals, was in the caravan of the exiles, from Baghdad to Samsun. (HMB)]

..... [2. Mirza Aqa Jan and Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir also accompanied Him. (HMB)]

..... 'O Muhammad!', are some of the words He uttered on that memorable occasion, as testified by Himself in a Tablet, 'He Who is the Spirit hath, verily, issued from His habitation, and with Him have come forth the souls of God's chosen ones and the realities of His Messengers. Behold, then, the [p. 240] dwellers of the realms on high above Mine head, and all the testimonies of the Prophets in My grasp. Say: Were all the divines, all the wise men, all the kings and rulers on earth to gather together, I, in very truth, would confront them, and would proclaim the verse of God, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the All-Wise. I am He Who feareth no one, though all who are in heaven and all who are on earth rise up against me.... This is Mine hand which God hath turned

white+F1 for all the worlds to behold. This is My staff;[1] were We to cast it down it would, of a truth, swallow up all created things.' Mir Muhammad, who had been sent ahead to announce Baha'u'llah's arrival, soon returned, and informed Him that he who had challenged His authority wished, owing to unforeseen circumstances, to postpone for a day or two the interview. Upon His return to His house Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet, wherein He recounted what had happened, fixed the time for the postponed interview, sealed the Tablet with His seal, entrusted it to Nabil,[2] and instructed him to deliver it to one of the new believers, Mulla Muhammad-i-Tabrizi, for the information of Siyyid Muhammad, who was in the habit of frequenting that believer's shop. It was arranged to demand from Siyyid Muhammad, ere the delivery of that Tablet, a sealed note pledging Mirza Yahya, in the event of failing to appear at the trysting-place, to affirm in writing that his claims were false. Siyyid Muhammad promised that he would produce the next day the document required, and though Nabil, for three successive days, waited in that shop for the reply, neither did the Siyyid appear, nor was such a note sent by him. That undelivered Tablet, Nabil, recording twenty-three years later this historic episode in his chronicle, affirms was still in his possession, 'as fresh as the day on which the Most Great Branch had penned it, and the seal of the Ancient Beauty had sealed and adorned it,' a tangible and irrefutable testimony to Baha'u'llah's established ascendancy over a routed opponent.

..... [1. References to Moses and His staff. (HMB)]

..... [2. Nabil. Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini and Mishkin-Qalam, the celebrated calligraphist, had come to Adrianople not long before and lodged with the companions. Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini had been arrested in Tabriz, at the same time as the three martyrs, but had effected his release. (HMB)]

..... Baha'u'llah's reaction to this most distressful episode in His ministry was, as already observed, characterized by acute anguish. 'He who for months and years,' He laments, 'I reared with the hand of loving-kindness hath risen to take My life.' 'The cruelties inflicted by My oppressors,' He wrote, in allusion to these perfidious enemies, 'have bowed Me down, and turned My hair white. Shouldst thou present thyself before My throne, thou wouldst fail to recognize the Ancient Beauty, for the freshness of His countenance is altered, and its brightness hath faded, by reason of the oppression of the infidels.' 'By God!' He cries out, 'No spot is left on My body that hath not been touched by the spears of thy machinations.' And again: 'Thou has perpetrated against thy Brother what no man hath perpetrated against another.' 'What hath proceeded from thy pen,' He, furthermore, has affirmed, [p. 241] 'hath caused the Countenances of Glory to be prostrated upon the dust, hath rent in twain the Veil of Grandeur in the Sublime Paradise, and lacerated the hearts of the favored ones established upon the loftiest seats.' And yet, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, a forgiving Lord assures this same brother, this 'source of perversion,' 'from whose own soul the winds of passion had risen and blown upon him,' to 'fear not because of thy deeds,' bids him 'return unto God, humble, submissive and lowly,' and affirms that 'He will put away from thee thy sins,'

and that 'thy Lord is the Forgiving, the Mighty, the All-Merciful.'...

..... A temporary breach had admittedly been made in the ranks of its [the Faith of God's] supporters. Its glory had been eclipsed, and its annals stained forever. Its name, however, could not be obliterated, its spirit was far from broken, nor could this so-called schism tear its fabric asunder. The Covenant of the Bab, to which reference has already been made, with its immutable truths, incontrovertible prophecies, and repeated warnings, stood guard over that Faith, insuring its integrity, demonstrating its incorruptibility, and perpetuating its influence.[27-8]

..... [27-8. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 168-70.]

Aqa Rida, writing of this episode, mentions a Persian tobacconist Hasan Aqay-i-Salmasi, who was not a believer but was well aware of the turn of events; he witnessed all that was happening, as Baha'u'llah passed by his shop. Yet, subsequently, Mirza Yahya had the temerity to write to his partisans that it was Baha'u'llah who did not come to meet him face to face, and that he himself had kept the trust; and for good measure, he added another untruth to his false statement, that none had seen him all the way from Baghdad to Adrianople, whereas from Mosul onwards he had travelled in the retinue of Baha'u'llah.

The house of 'Izzat Aqa was newly-built and possessed a fine view of the river and the southern orchards of the city. Its rooms were spacious, and although the biruni was smaller than the andaruni, both had ample space and large courtyards planted with a variety of trees. Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani did the gardening and kept the flower-beds well stocked. The companions moved to another house in the same neighbourhood, large enough for them all and provided with a Turkish bath. Visitors also lodged in this house, amongst them Mirza Baqir-i-Shirazi (see Addendum V), whose sister was married to Mirza Yahya. He arrived in the company of Aqa 'Abdu'llah-i-'Arab. Mirza Baqir deplored the insubordination and defection of Mirza Yahya and had written a treatise in refutation of his claims and vanities. He was an excellent calligraphist, and stayed for a time in Adrianople, copying and transcribing Tablets. [p. 242] [p. 243]

We have already noted the high esteem in which Khurshid Pasha, the Vali of Adrianople, held Baha'u'llah. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi relates that he was most eager to entertain Baha'u'llah at Government House, but at first He did not accept to call on Khurshid Pasha. But one day in the month of Ramadan, when the Governor had invited the divines and the leading men of the city to break their fast at his house, he entreated 'Abdu'l-Baha to beg Baha'u'llah to honour that great feast and glittering assemblage with His presence. Baha'u'llah accepted that invitation. Ashchi relates how the guests, amongst whom were both men of substance and men of high learning, sat spellbound, captivated and exhilarated by Baha'u'llah's utterance. Humbly and courteously they asked Him questions which He answered with overwhelming power and authority, to their marvel and complete satisfaction. And when, Ashchi remarks, the Sultan decreed

Baha'u'llah's removal from Adrianople, these men were sorely aggrieved and felt acutely their loss. Being signally honoured by Baha'u'llah, Khurshid Pasha requested 'Abdu'l-Baha to spend as many evenings as He could in Government House, during that month of Ramadan, which, Ashchi says, the Most Great Branch granted him.

More visitors were now coming to Adrianople. Two brothers, Aqa Muhammad-Isma'il and Aqa Nasru'llah came and stayed for a while. They were followed by Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahiji, Aqa Jamshid-i-Gurji (see Addendum V), Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah-i-Maraghi'i and Husayn-i-Baghdadi. They were lodged in the biruni of the house of 'Izzat Aqa. We have already noted the arrival of Nabil-i-A'zam, Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini and the renowned calligraphist, Mishkin-Qalam. Another visitor was Haji Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirazi, who came from Egypt. He was soon, because of his wealth, to be embroiled in the intrigues of Haji Mirza Hasan Khan, the Persian consul in Cairo. As before, meetings were held regularly in the house of the companions, for the recital of Tablets and verses, to which Baha'u'llah came many a time. Then a house was rented for Mishkin-Qalam so that he could practise his art unhindered. Nabil and Aqa Jamshid joined him there at a later date. This house too Baha'u'llah honoured several times with His visits. Aqay-i-Kalim also moved to a house near the house of 'Izzat Aqa.

The remaining months in the house of 'Izzat Aqa constituted the most fecund period in the whole course of the ministry of Baha'u'llah: [p. 244] Tablets and verses flowed continuously from His pen and His tongue. One day, Aqa Rida relates, Baha'u'llah said to His companions and the visitors, as He paced the courtyard of the biruni: 'Today in the bath We wrote something to Nasiri'd-Din Shah; it is not transcribed yet, but who will "bell the cat"?' There were many, Aqa Rida says, who coveted that distinction, but the great task, which would call forth such heroism and immolation, was specified, as we shall see, for a youth, as yet impervious to the power emanating from Baha'u'llah.

It was during His testing years in Adrianople that Baha'u'llah proclaimed the Revelation with which God had entrusted Him. No better description of those fruitful years could be given, than that from the pen of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, as he writes in *God Passes By*:

..... Though He Himself was bent with sorrow, and still suffered from the effects of the attempt on His life, and though He was well aware a further banishment was probably impending, yet, undaunted by the blow which His Cause had sustained, and the perils with which it was encompassed, Baha'u'llah arose with matchless power, even before the ordeal was overpast, to proclaim the Mission with which He had been entrusted to those who, in East and West, had the reins of supreme temporal authority in their grasp. The day-star of His Revelation was, through this very Proclamation, destined to shine in its meridian glory, and His Faith manifest the plenitude of its divine power.

..... A period of prodigious activity ensued which, in its repercussions, outshone the vernal years of Baha'u'llah's ministry. 'Day and night,' an

eye-witness has written, 'the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them. Mirza Aqa Jan wrote them as they were dictated, while the Most Great Branch was continually occupied in transcribing them. There was not a moment to spare.'... Baha'u'llah, Himself, referring to the verses revealed by Him, has written: 'Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.' 'So great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayan would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness.' 'I swear by God! He, in another connection has affirmed, 'In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed.' 'That which hath already been revealed in this land (Adrianople), 'He, furthermore, referring to the copiousness of His writings, has declared, 'secretaries are incapable of transcribing. It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed.'

..... Already in the very midst of that grievous crisis, and even before it came [p. 245] to a head, Tablets unnumbered were streaming from the pen of Baha'u'llah, in which the implications of His newly-asserted claims were fully expounded. The Suriy-i-Amr [Command], the Lawh-i-Nuqtih [Tablet of the Point], the Lawh-i-Ahmad [The Tablet of Ahmad], the Suriy-i-Ashab [The Tablet of the Companions], the Lawh-i-Sayyah, the Suriy-i-Damm [The Tablet of Blood], the Suriy-i-Hajj [The Tablet of Pilgrimage], the Lawhu'r-Ruh, [The Tablet of Spirit], the Lawhu'r-Ridvan [The Tablet of Ridvan], the Lawhu't-Tuqa [The Tablet of Piety or The Fear of God] were among the Tablets which His pen had already set down when He transferred His residence to the house of 'Izzat Aqa. Almost immediately after the 'Most Great Separation' had been effected, the weightiest Tablets associated with His sojourn in Adrianople were revealed. The Suriy-i-Muluk, the most momentous Tablet revealed by Baha'u'llah (Surih of Kings) in which He, for the first time, directs His words collectively to the entire company of the monarchs of East and West, and in which the Sultan of Turkey, and his ministers, the kings of Christendom, the French and Persian Ambassadors accredited to the Sublime Porte, the Muslim ecclesiastical leaders in Constantinople, its wise men and inhabitants, the people of Persia and the philosophers of the world are separately addressed, the Kitab-i-Badi', His apologia, written to refute the accusations levelled against Him by Mirza Mihdiy-i-Rashti,[1] corresponding to the Kitab-i-Iqan, revealed in defense of the Babi Revelation; the Munajathay-i-Siyam (Prayers for Fasting), written in anticipation of the Book of His Laws; the first Tablet to Napoleon III, in which the Emperor of the French is addressed and the sincerity of his professions put to the test, the Lawh-i-Sultan, His detailed epistle to Nasiri'd-Din Shah, in which the aims purposes and principles of His Faith are expounded and the validity of His Mission demonstrated; the Suriy-i-Ra'is [Chieftain], begun in the village of Kashanih on His way to Gallipoli, and completed shortly after at Gyawur-Kyuy--these may be regarded not only as the most outstanding among the innumerable Tablets revealed in Adrianople, but as occupying a foremost position among all the writings of the Author of the

Baha'i Revelation.[27-9]

..... [1. This man was a judge in Constantinople, Kitab-i-Badi' is written as though it were Aqa Muhammad-'Ali Tambaku-Furish-i-Isfahani who is replying to Mirza Mihidiy-i-Rashti. Badi' means 'Unique'.]

..... [27-9. *ibid.* pp. 170-72. (God Passes By)]

[p. 246]

28

Adrianople--the Last Years

AT the time when Mirza Yahya failed to abide by his promise and did not appear at the mosque to face Baha'u'llah, we learn from Aqa Rida that Baha'u'llah's faithful brother, Aqay-i-Kalim, was in Anatolia. By way of Salonica he had gone to Smyrna, to which town Mir Muhammad also repaired at a later date, relating to him the full account of Mirza Yahya's cowardice and failure to keep the tryst. After a while, Baha'u'llah sent Nabil-i-A'zam to ask Aqay-i-Kalim to return to Adrianople, and he instantly obeyed.

About this time (1867), a powerful Tablet, in which reference is made to a vision, was revealed for Siyyid Husayn-'Ali, a Babi who resided in Baghdad, and on that same night the Siyyid broke away completely from the company of the partisans of Mirza Yahya. When the Tablet reached Baghdad, and the circumstances became known, a number of other Babis did likewise. This Tablet is not the same as the Lawh-i-Ru'ya (The Tablet of the Vision) which was revealed, at a later date, in the Holy Land.

The Azalis who were in Baghdad now wished to have a confrontation and debate with the Baha'is, in the presence of Jewish, Christian and Muslim divines who were to act as arbiters. The Baha'is considered the proposal to be ludicrous, but finally it was agreed that a few from each side should meet with two men: Haji Muhammad-Husayn--Hakim-i-Qazvini (physician of Qazvin; see Addendum V)--and Aqa Mirza Ahmad-i-Hindi (the Indian), who had accepted neither the claim of Baha'u'llah, nor the position of Subh-i-Azal. Just about then, Lawh-i-Qamis (The Tablet of the Shirt or Robe) had reached them from Adrianople, and Mirza Mihidiy-i-Kashani read portions of it in that gathering. The partisans of Mirza Yahya totally ignored it. Instead, they produced the Dala'il-i-Sab'ih (The Seven Proofs) by the Bab, completely misinterpreting what they read, and [p. 247] the meeting broke up inconclusively. But the two arbiters, the physician of Qazvin and the Indian Babi, who had hitherto kept aloof and apart, became convinced of the truth of the claim of Baha'u'llah and gave Him their unreserved allegiance. At a later period, when troubles arose in Baghdad, Haji Muhammad-Husayn stepped forth to defend the Baha'is. A vociferous official of the Persian Consulate challenged him arrogantly: 'Who art thou?' to which he retorted, 'Who art thou?' 'I am the dragoman of the government', the official said. Unabashed, the physician replied boldly: 'And I am the dragoman of the nation.'

It was also in 1867 that Mirza Badi'u'llah, the youngest son of Baha'u'llah, was born.

Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah. (Mulla Adi Guzal), who had been the courier of the Bab and at one time His personal attendant, together with Mishkin-Qalam and Aqa Jamshid-i-Gurji (or Bukhara'i) left Adrianople and went to Istanbul. It is not known exactly why they did so. Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani seems to suggest that Mishkin-Qalam wished to earn money with his splendid and almost unrivalled (at the time) calligraphy and that Baha'u'llah was not pleased. Be that as it may, that journey had incalculable consequences for the three of them. About the same time, Haji 'Ali-'Askar (see Addendum V), who had attained the presence of the Bab in Tabriz, and his family took up residence in the house which Mishkin-Qalam and his two companions had vacated. Other arrivals included Aqa Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin, Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Bujnurdi and Abu'l-Qasim Khan (who came with a lady whom Aqa Rida calls the Princess). They had apparently first gone on pilgrimage to Mecca. Then, the arrival of the widow of Mirza Mustafay-i-Naraqi (who had recently been put to death in Tabriz) and her child, also named Mustafa, and Aqa Lutfu'llah together with his young son, further increased the number of the Baha'is in Adrianople. But Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahiji, honoured by Baha'u'llah with the designation Ismu'llahu'l-Mihdi'[1] (who, several decades later, broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah) left for Baghdad, and, on the road, encountered the Baha'is who had been rounded up in Baghdad and were being taken to Mosul. Baha'u'llah refers to this outrage perpetrated against His people, in His Letter to Nasiri'd-Din Shah. The arrest and transportation of these Baha'is was preceded by the brutal murder in Baghdad of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul-i-Qumi, whose task it was to carry [p. 248] water in sheepskins from the river to the house of Baha'u'llah. One morning, by the riverside, enemies were waiting for him. They set upon him and with daggers tore open his bowels. He staggered on, clinging with one hand to his load of water, holding back with the other his entrails, until he reached the house. Then he collapsed and died. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi gives a graphic and moving account of the day when the letter conveying the news of the martyrdom of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul reached Baha'u'llah. Those who were present and heard Baha'u'llah read the account wept unrestrainedly. Baha'u'llah assured them that they were lamenting the cruel death of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul, but he had attained what he had always desired--the station of martyrdom.

..... [1. 'The Name of God Who Guides Aright'.]

The increase in the number of Baha'is in Adrianople was apparently causing concern in the ranks of the Ottoman officials, especially since Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, who had also gone to Istanbul, together with Aqa Jan Big-i-Kaj-Kulah, like him a partisan of Mirza Yahya and a former officer in the Ottoman artillery, were constantly feeding false information to the authorities. Mishkin-Qalam, as expected, had obtained wide fame as a calligraphist and was close to the person of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Persian ambassador. Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah had, likewise, won the esteem of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan. But both of them, according to Aqa Rida (and Ustad

Muhammad-'Ali as well) were not sufficiently circumspect, talking unwisely in the circles to which they had found access, particularly in the presence of the Persian ambassador. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith refers thus to their overstepping of the bounds of wisdom: 'The indiscretion committed by some of its [the Faith of Baha'u'llah's] overzealous followers, who had arrived in Constantinople, no doubt, aggravated an already acute situation.'[28-1]

..... [28-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 179.]

Then came news of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali's detention and banishment to the Sudan, when he had gone to Egypt at the bidding of Baha'u'llah. However, the news reaching Adrianople was far from clear, and Baha'u'llah sent Nabil to Egypt to make proper enquiries. Nabil composed a poem in mathnavi style, addressed to Isma'il Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt, and sent a copy to Adrianople, but he too was detained and kept in prison in Alexandria. We shall come to the story of his Alexandrian imprisonment in the next chapter.

The outrages in Baghdad; the martyrdoms in Iran; the extortions of [p. 249] [p. 250] the Persian consul-general in Cairo which had led to the arrest, the barbarous treatment and the banishment of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and his companions to Khartum; the totally unexpected detention of Nabil-i-A'zam in Alexandria; the arrests and imprisonments in the capital of the moribund Ottoman Empire (which we are about to witness), were all preludes to a far greater denouement bringing to a close the episode of Adrianople. To this event Baha'u'llah alluded with increasing frequency, for it was near at hand.

The closing years at Adrianople were also marked by significant internal developments. The appellations 'Babi' and 'the people of the Bayan' gave way to 'Baha'i' and 'the people of Baha'; the greeting 'Allah-u-Akbar' (God is the (Greatest) was replaced by 'Allah-u-Abha' (God is the Most Glorious), although it ought to be noted that both of these greetings as well as another, 'Allah-u-Ajmal' (God is the Most Beauteous), were sanctioned by the Bab. The Suriy-i-Ghusn (The Tablet of the Branch),[28-2] revealed for Mirza 'Ali-Rida, a prominent Baha'i of Khurasan, envisaged the station of Ghusnu'llahu'l-A'zam (the Most Great, or Mighty, Branch), the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah, Who in future years, known by the name 'Abdu'l-Baha, was to be the Centre of Baha'u'llah's peerless Covenant. The significant journey of Nabil-i-A'zam to Shiraz and then to Baghdad--prior to his mission in Egypt--bearing with him the two Tablets of the Pilgrimage (Suriy-i-Hajj I and II) recently revealed, which he recited whilst visiting those hallowed cities, must be particularly noted. Nabil carried gifts with him, as well, for the wife of the Bab. Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi, one of the Bab's Letters of the Living, who had lived on into this seventh decade of the nineteenth century, and Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani,[28-3] on whom the honorific title of Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq (the Name of God the Most Truthful) was later conferred by Baha'u'llah, one of the very few survivors of the heroic company of Shaykh Tabarsi, gave their allegiance joyously to Baha'u'llah. A martyr of the same period, Aqa Najaf-'Ali, was also a survivor of a holocaust of the past: the episode of Zanzan;[28-4] at the moment of death, he gave his gold to the

executioner and died with the name of Baha'u'llah on his lips.

..... [28-2. See Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 22-3.]

..... [28-3. See Balyuzi, The Bab, pp. 51-2.]

..... [28-4. See *ibid.* pp. 185-8.]

Mirza Musay-i-Javahiri had sent three horses from Baghdad as a gift to Baha'u'llah. Feeling that the expense of keeping a stable was difficult to meet, He ordered their removal to Istanbul to be sold. Darvish Sidq-'Ali, Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi and Ustad [p. 251] [p. 252] Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani set out for the Ottoman capital with the horses. Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar had also gone on an errand to Istanbul (to sell some goods, according to Aqa Rida). No sooner had they set foot in the capital than they were detained. Their detention was preceded by the arrest of Mishkin-Qalam and his companions, whose outspokenness and the intrigues of their enemies had borne fruit. But, in the process, the mischief-makers, too, were entrapped. Both Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Aqa Jan Big-i-Kaj-Kulah were apprehended, and the latter was divested of his rank and Ottoman decorations. Aqa Rida relates that unsigned letters, purporting to have emanated, from the Baha'is and boasting of their numbers and their resolution, were thrown into the houses of the notable of Istanbul. This ploy (or something like it), which recoiled upon its perpetrators, was adopted in Tihran, decades later, with exactly similar results. Ustad Muhammad-'Ali writes of the interrogations to which they were subjected. Officials wanted to know whether Baha'u'llah had claimed to be the Mahdi. The Baha'is answered in the negative, which was of course true because that claim belonged to the Bab, but apparently this reply much dismayed the interrogators. Both Aqa Rida and Ustad Muhammad-'Ali mention that the officials impounded whatever they could find of books and papers in the possession of the prisoners, but did not find anything seditious. The head of the police was greatly impressed by the prayers which Aqa Muhammad-Baqir carried and made him recite them.

At first Mishkin-Qalam and his companions, and Ustad Muhammad-'Ali and his, were kept apart in separate prisons, neither group knowing of the detention of the other. But before long they were all brought together. Ustad Muhammad-'Ali relates that Mishkin-Qalam was particularly distraught, because he had no pen or paper with which to exercise his craft. But at last, the officials succumbed to his loud expostulations and, to obtain some peace, provided him with all the writing material he needed, which greatly pacified him. (Today those excellent specimens of calligraphy which his pen inscribed will fetch hundreds, if not thousands, in sale rooms.)

Meanwhile matters were coming to a head in Adrianople. Baha'is there were called several times to the administrative quarters of the government. They were counted one by one and their names were recorded, to their total puzzlement. Aqa Rida states that each time [p. 253] they were called away they had no hope of being returned to their houses. They did not know what was happening nor what was to happen. But Baha'u'llah knew. He told some of his

companions to leave Adrianople. 'Why should all be imprisoned,' He said, 'and no one be left to teach the Cause of God?' Haji Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Dhabih, brother of Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani, Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Naraqi and a siyyid from Shiraz all reached Adrianople as the storm broke. Baha'u'llah did not allow them to stay and bade them go to Gallipoli instantly.

When the ministers of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz decided to banish Baha'u'llah to 'Akka and Mirza Yahya to Cyprus, Khurshid Pasha, the Vali of Adrianople, who was devoted to the person of Baha'u'llah, refused to be associated in any way with the enforcement of the imperial rescript. He informed Baha'u'llah accordingly, expressed his regret and disgust, packed his bags, ostensibly to go to some distant place on urgent business, but moved quietly to a locality nearby to [p. 254] watch the course of events. Now it was the function of his deputy to carry out the odious task, which was done with utmost harshness and insensibility. It ought to be noted that Khurshid Pasha's predecessors, Muhammad Pashay-i-Qibrisi (the Cypriot), who had once been the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire, and Sulayman Pasha (a Sufi of the Qadiriyyih order) had evinced no less admiration and esteem for Baha'u'llah.[1]

..... [1. According to British consular records (FO 195 794), Muhammad Pashay-i-Qibrisi was Governor of Adrianople until April 1864, and was followed by Sulayman Pasha who died in December 1864; he was succeeded by 'Arif Pasha (d. December 1865).]

Ashchi maintains that 'Izzat Aqa, the Pasha who owned the house where Baha'u'llah resided, had become a government spy, dropping in at odd times to note who was there, and how many were the residents and visitors. As already mentioned, the arrival of a few Baha'is (their numbers greatly exaggerated by the mischief-makers) had caused alarm in high places. Those mischief-makers had implanted seeds of doubt in the besotted minds of the ministers of the Sultan; Fu'ad Pasha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was particularly alarmed by the suggestion of Baha'u'llah's possible entanglement with Bulgarian revolutionaries. It sounds laughable at this distance of time, but in its day the frightened Minister, already prejudiced, took it seriously.

Then the storm broke. [p. 255]

29

Banishment to 'Akka

ONE day, early in the morning, soldiers surrounded the house of Baha'u'llah, and would let no one enter or depart. Those Baha'is who kept shops or had trading centres were all arrested and removed to the Seraye.

Aqa Rida states that before nightfall they were called, one by one, to the presence of the Ottoman officials and were interrogated to make them admit that they were Baha'is. 'They were told that their goods would be sold or auctioned, which the officials proceeded to do the next day. Great commotion ensued amongst the populace, who were bewildered and aghast. 'What has happened', they queried, 'that these people are thus treated? We never saw anything in them but

truthfulness, trustworthiness and piety... Why should they be subjected such injustice and atrocity?' Some tried to console the Baha'is, to express their sympathy, Aqa Rida states, and some wept openly.

Then 'a number of the consuls of foreign powers came,' Aqa Rida writes, 'were admitted to the presence [of Baha'u'llah] and requested that He should bid them render Him the utmost of assistance. "We will then inform our governments and stop such behaviour." 'But Baha'u'llah replied, according to Aqa Rida, 'In such matters We have not turned, We will not turn, to anyone at all.' 'He was gracious to them,' Aqa Rida states, 'and they left.'

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi, recollecting those events many decades later, says exactly the same, that Baha'u'llah did not accept the offer of assistance and intervention by the consuls of the foreign powers. His account is more detailed since, being cook in the household, he was free to come and go as he liked, and could see at close quarters all that went on around Baha'u'llah. He relates the circumstances of the siege of the house of Baha'u'llah by the troops; the insistence of Khurshid Pasha's deputies that Baha'u'llah leave Adrianople at the earliest moment; and His refusal to do this and embark on yet another exile, because His steward owed a substantial sum of money in the bazars [p. 256] and could not pay these debts until His men in Istanbul were freed to sell their horses.

Ashchi continues his account: '...all of a sudden the consuls of the foreign powers became aware of what was happening and together they sought the presence of Baha'u'llah. The soldiers stationed around the house, blocking the way to everyone, could not prevent the consuls from entering. After paying their homage, they said they had come as a body, and any one of them whom Baha'u'llah might command would take up the issue with the Turks and ward off this evil.' Ashchi states 'that Baha'u'llah declined categorically their oft-repeated offer of assistance and intervention, saying: 'You wish me to give you the word to bring Me relief, but My relief lies in the hands of God. My focus is God, and to Him alone do I turn.' Then Ashchi relates that the consuls continued to call and no one was able to prevent them. He himself took them to the presence of the Most Great Branch. And he adds that some of the high Turkish officials were scandalized and infuriated by the preferential treatment of those foreign representatives. The easy access they had to the person of the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah riled them, particularly as the Ottoman officials were usually put off on some pretext. Aqa Husayn writes that when he heard the Big-Bashi threaten to punish the troops on the morrow, should they again fail to prevent the consuls entering the house, he reported this to Baha'u'llah, Who smiled and, turning to His eldest Son, asked, 'Did you hear what Husayn has said?' Nor did the matter rest there, Ashchi reports, for the following day the consuls came as usual, and the guards did not, could not stop them. The Most Great Branch told them of the Ottoman officer's threats, which highly amused them, and one jestingly suggested that they might ask the British consul to lead the way next time, to receive the beating from the Big-Bashi. As to the officer himself, Aqa Husayn says, his superiors were displeased when they heard of his

rash threats and reprimanded him, for they realized their impotence to prevent the visits of the foreign representatives, who continued to come and go whenever they wished.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith thus writes of the closing stage of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Adrianople:

..... Suddenly, one morning, the house of Baha'u'llah was surrounded by soldiers, sentinels were posted at its gates, His followers were again summoned by the authorities, interrogated, and ordered to make ready for their departure. 'The loved ones of God and His kindred,' is Baha'u'llah's [p. 257] testimony in the *Suriy-i-Ra'is*, 'were left on the first night without food... The people surrounded the house, and Muslims and Christians wept over Us... We perceived that the weeping of the people of the Son (Christians) exceeded the weeping of others--a sign for such as ponder.' 'A great tumult seized the people,' writes Aqa Rida, one of the stoutest supporters of Baha'u'llah, exiled with him all the way from Baghdad to 'Akka. 'All were perplexed and full of regret... Some expressed their sympathy, others consoled us, and wept over us... Most of our possessions were auctioned at half their value.' Some of the consuls of foreign powers called on Baha'u'llah, and expressed their readiness to intervene with their respective governments on His behalf--suggestions for which He expressed appreciation, but which He firmly declined. 'The consuls of that city (Adrianople) gathered in the presence of this Youth at the hour of His departure,' He Himself has written, 'and expressed their desire to aid Him. They, verily, evinced towards Us manifest affection.'

..... The Persian Ambassador promptly formed the Persian consuls in 'Iraq and Egypt that the Turkish government had withdrawn its protection from the Babis, and that they were free to treat them as they pleased.[29-1]

..... [29-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 179-80.]

The present writer is well aware of the existence in governmental archives of certain documents which suggest that Baha'u'llah Himself petitioned foreign consuls and asked for their aid and protection (see Addendum II). He cannot (at the moment) satisfactorily resolve and deal with this problem. But he must point out a number of valid facts in this respect. As we have seen, Baha'u'llah Himself and the people who were there at the time--Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi--recollecting, decades apart, the events of Adrianople, declare emphatically that the consuls themselves came with offers of aid and protection which were courteously and graciously declined. In the Ottoman Archives, there is a letter purportedly from Baha'u'llah, which is written in Persian, and yet the document in the French Archives is in Turkish, and in poor Turkish. How was it, one might ask, that Baha'u'llah would write to the Turks in Persian, and to the French in a language which was not His own? Expert opinion on documents in Turkish states that they 'were written by non-Turks and contain numerous mistakes of grammar and spelling. Some misspellings are of Arabic words, and this suggests that the scribes were non-Muslim, possibly Armenians.' Would such errors originate from the same Pen from which came the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, *The Hidden*

Words, The Seven Valleys, the Kitab-i-Badi' and numberless Tablets in Arabic?
It is impossible.

And the handwriting of the Turkish documents is certainly not that [p. 258] of Baha'u'llah, nor of any one of His amanuenses, from whom innumerable specimens exist.

..... Aqa Rida writes: 'In brief, there was tremendous commotion. Most of our goods were sold at half-price. The stock of tobacco belonging to Haji 'Ali-'Askar was purchased at a very low price. They gave a promissory note to pay the money within a few months, but eventually failed to make the payment. Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Jilawdar and Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani [see Addendum V], who were married, were forced to divorce their wives because relatives would not allow them to accompany their husbands... And it was rumoured in those days that whoever had his name recorded in a register would be allowed to go, but those whose names were not there would not be permitted to leave.

..... 'The two brothers, Haji Ja'far and Haji Taqi, resided in the inn. They were not molested nor imprisoned. It was therefore assumed that they would be left behind. But they were most of the time in the biruni, and they came and went without hindrance. One night after sunset, we were all in the biruni, and Haji Ja'far and his brother were both there. Haji Ja'far got up and went over to the window which overlooked the street. Soon, we heard a hissing noise and, going to investigate, we found that the Haji had cut his throat, and blood was gushing out. We were greatly perplexed. Should he die, we said, how could we prove that he had committed suicide? And so we hurried to convey the news to the Most Great Branch. He came out to the biruni, and since the house of the Cadi (Qadi) was near, He sent for him and also for a surgeon, named Muhammad Effendi, who lived in the neighbourhood. Then a crowd gathered. The surgeon took hold of the Haji's throat, cut as it was. This action revived the Haji, who began to speak. The Cadi asked him, "You did this to yourself?" "I myself", he replied. "But why?" the Cadi asked. "Because", he answered, "I saw that I was about to be deprived of accompanying my Lord, of the bounty of His presence. So I did not wish to live." "With what instrument did you cut your throat?" the Cadi asked. "With a razor, such as is used by barbers, which I bought in the bazar", the Haji replied. They instituted a search, found the razor [in the street] and brought it. The Haji was repeatedly questioned, and he stoutly stood by his answer that he found the thought of life unbearable in separation, and wished to die. All these questions and answers were put [p. 259] down in writing.'

The surgeon expertly attended to Haji Ja'far's self-inflicted wound and eventually he recovered. Aqa Rida comments on the astonishment of the onlookers, who said: 'These people know that banishment entails imprisonment and much hardship, yet they prefer it to being left behind, and choose death rather than separation; what is this evident attraction that has seized them?' Some of them, Aqa Rida says, burst into tears over Haji Ja'far's plight, and some tried to comfort him. Referring to this attempt at suicide by Haji Ja'far-i-Tabrizi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith comments that it was 'an act

which Baha'u'llah, in the Suriy-i-Ra'is, characterizes as "unheard of in bygone centuries," and which "God hath set apart for this Revelation, as an evidence of the power of His Might." [29-2] The Suriy-i-Ra'is was revealed at Kashanih on the way to Gallipoli.

..... [29-2. ibid. p. 180. (God Passes By)]

Haji Ja'far had to be put to bed in the biruni of the house of Baha'u'llah. There Baha'u'llah visited him, sat by his bedside, consoled him, and advised him: 'Look up to God and be content with His will.'

Aqa Rida writes: 'Then, all made ready for emigration. Firstly, they brought several carts for the transportation of the luggage, and a number of the companions went with them. On the same day, Mirza Yahya and his family, together with Siyyid Muhammad, were sent ahead. After a week, arrangements were completed for the journey of the Blessed Perfection. In the morning, horse-drawn wagons drew up, and by the time the remainder of the luggage was gathered and loaded, and the members of the family had taken their seats, it was about noon. Then the Blessed Perfection came out. Firstly, He showered His bounties on the Haji and his brother, and recommended them to the care of the landlord and Muhammad Effendi, the surgeon. Next, He turned to the neighbours and the people of the quarter, who had gathered to bid Him farewell. They came, one by one, sorrow-stricken, to kiss His hands and the hem of His garment, to express their grief at His departure and this deprivation. Indeed that day was a strange day. Methinks the city, its very walls and gates bemoaned their separation from Him. Close to noontide we were on our way. When night approached, we set up tents within three hours of Adrianople. We covered the distance between Adrianople and Gallipoli in five stages. The second stage was a place called Uzun-Kupri, and the next was Kashanih.' [p. 260]

It was on 12 August 1868 (22 Rabi'u'th-Thani AH 1285) that Baha'u'llah and His companions left the city which He had called 'the Remote Prison' and 'the Land of Mystery'. A Turkish captain named Hasan Effendi and a number of soldiers accompanied them. On the fifth day, Gallipoli was reached. A house had been appointed for their reception. Baha'u'llah and His family and the womenfolk took residence on the upper floor. Some of the companions were lodged on the floor below. Others were taken to a khan. Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah, Mishkin-Qalam, and other Baha'is brought from Istanbul, who had arrived the previous day, had been placed in the same inn. But Mirza Yahya and his dependents, as well as Siyyid Muhammad and Aqa Jan-i-Kaj-Kulah, had been housed in another khan. Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani and Aqa Jamshid-i-Gurji had been singled out by the authorities to be expelled to Iran. They were taken to the frontier and handed to the Kurds, who promptly set them free. Eventually, by different routes, they made their way to 'Akka.

Ustad Muhammad-'Ali has related their story in his short autobiography. Whilst in Iran Ustad Muhammad-'Ali met Haji Muhammad-Isma'il-i-Dhabih, whom Baha'u'llah refers to as Anis in the Suriy-i-Ra'is, and who attained His presence at Gallipoli. Two others, [p. 261] Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Naraq and his

friend (a Shirazi siyyid) also shared that bounty of reaching the presence of Baha'u'llah in the public bath Ustad Muhammad-'Ali has recorded how displeased and upset Haji Muhammad-Isma'il was, when told of the defection of his brother, the fickle Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani, who had been murdered in Baghdad; neither Ustad Muhammad-'Ali nor Haji Muhammad-Isma'il had until then any knowledge of it. Mirza Fath-'Ali of Ardistan (see Addendum V), whom Baha'u'llah had honoured with the surname Fath-i-A'zam (the Most Great Victory) was another prominent Baha'i whom Ustad Muhammad-'Ali met in his wanderings in Iran, before he reached the Holy Land. Mirza Fath-'Ali received Ustad Muhammad-'Ali with great kindness and took him to his home. Baha'u'llah has said of Fath-i-A'zam that, all the way from Baghdad to Constantinople, he was with Him in spirit, though not corporeally.

Aqa Rida writes of Gallipoli: 'We were there for a few days. God knows how we fared in that time. Once it was rumoured that the Blessed Perfection and His brothers would be sent to one place, and that others would be scattered and banished to a number of localities. Then it was said that all of the companions would be sent to Iran. There was also talk of extermination. It was the thought of separation and dispersal which caused us the most anxiety. The captain who had accompanied us from Adrianople came one night to take his leave. And as he stood humbly, expressing his regrets, the Blessed Perfection addressed him: "Tell the king that this territory will pass out of his hands, and his affairs will be thrown into confusion. Not I speak these words, but God speaketh them." In those moments He was uttering verses which we, who were downstairs, could overhear. They were spoken with such vehemence and power that, methinks, the foundations of the house itself trembled.[29-3] That man stood silent and submissive. Then the Blessed Perfection said to him: "It would have been meet for His Majesty the Sultan to have gathered an assembly and called Us to be present, that he should have investigated the matter, and had he then found any portent of sedition, any sign of anything contrary to the Will of God, to have meted out this treatment to which he hath now resorted. He should have asked Us to present him proofs of what We profess. Should he have found Us wanting, then he could have subjected Us to whatever he wished. He should not have allowed such wrong-doing, such enmity, such injuries, without [p. 262] reason, solely by following the behest of authors of mischief." The captain, listening intently, promised to report what he had heard.'

..... [29-3. Also quoted *ibid.* p. 181. (God Passes By)]

Indeed, as Aqa Rida remarks, all that Baha'u'llah foretold in the *Suriy-i-Ra'is* did come to pass, exactly as He said it would: 'The day is approaching when the Land of Mystery (Adrianople) and what is beside it shall be changed, and shall pass out of the hands of the king, and commotions shall appear, and the voice of lamentation shall be raised, and the evidences of mischief shall be revealed on all sides, and confusion shall spread by reason of that which hath befallen these captives at the hands of the hosts of oppression. The course of thing shall be altered, and conditions shall wax so grievous, that the very sands on the desolate hills will moan, and the trees on the mountain will weep, and

blood will flow out of all things. Then wilt thou behold the people in sore distress.'[29-4]

..... [29-4. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, p. 62.]

It took exactly a decade, but it came to pass. 'Ali Pasha, to whom the Suriy-i-Ra'is was addressed, was swept into oblivion within this decade. 'Abdu'l-'Aziz was toppled from his throne in 1876, losing not only his throne but his life as well. The disastrous war of 1877-8 with Russia followed, which brought the Russians and their Bulgarian allies to the gates of the city of Constantine the Great. Adrianople was occupied by a relentless enemy, and the sufferings of the people were great. Aqa Rida, writing as he did in later years, quotes a Turkish captain, who had been in the territory where battles had raged, and who described most vividly the magnitude of the calamity which overtook the Ottoman power. 'May God never again make it the lot of a people', the Turkish captain had said, 'to witness such times and such days. Truly, blood flowed beneath the trees and beneath the stones. The whole plain was bathed in blood, and consternation was such as no one had ever known.'[1]

..... [1. See Addendum III concerning the terrible retreat of Turkish troops after the siege of Plevna.]

In far-off Iran, there was one man, struggling to attain certitude, who waited, waited anxiously to see if Baha'u'llah's look into the future would come true. And when it happened and nemesis descended upon 'Abdu'l-'Aziz and his ramshackle realm, he made double sure that the report of the downfall of the Sultan was correct. Then he dedicated his life, his powerful pen and his vast, unsurpassed erudition to the service of Baha'u'llah. That man was Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan. [p. 263]

The siege of Plevna and the heroic stand of the Turkish commander, Osman ('Uthman) Pasha, against terrible odds, and the fall of that fortress which opened the gates of hell, so fired the zeal and evoked the sympathy of an English public-school boy, the son of a wealthy shipbuilder of Newcastle-on-Tyne, that he set his face towards the East and eventually attained high eminence as one of the greatest orientologists of all time. That young Etonian was Edward Granville Browne, whose oriental interest brought him at a later date into close contact with the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

After three harrowing days in Gallipoli, when all was uncertain, 'Umar Effendi, the Big-Bashi who had been sent from Constantinople to accompany the exiles, announced that they would be kept together and not dispersed, that they would all be sent to the same destination. However, he stated, only those whose names were on the register qualified for the sea journey at the government's expense; others would be voluntary exiles and would have to pay their own fares. To [p. 264] the amazement of 'Umar Effendi and other officials, Haji 'Ali-Askar, a veteran of the days of the Bab, and a few others who were not included in the list, joyfully bought their tickets for the steamship, an Austrian-Lloyd liner. What kind of people were these, the officials wondered, who would buy their own passages to be transported to an unknown prison in an unknown land?

At last the steamer arrived and dropped anchor. Aqa Rida writes: 'On an evening our luggage was taken to the ship, and the next morning boats took us aboard. The sea was very rough. In the same boat where the Blessed Perfection was to sit, I and another one of the companions had the bounty of being in His presence. Jinab-i-Anis and, his friends were at the quayside. Tears of deep sorrow welled from their eyes. The Blessed Perfection bade them farewell with great kindness, then took His seat in the boat and told us to be seated. Verse flowed from His lips, ... and He spoke to us words of consolation. He then said jestingly, "Would it not be a treat if the liner should sink?" but added with utmost power and authority, "But it will not sink, even if it is battered by all the waves." Thus He spoke to us until we reached the steamer, which was very crowded. Amongst the passengers was the Persian consul, newly-appointed to serve in Izmir (Smyrna), with his retinue. But the Blessed Perfection spoke to no one. He went to the upper deck, which was cloistered and very spacious. It was the second day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval AH 1285-21 August 1868.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... So grievous were the dangers and trials confronting Baha'u'llah at the hour of His departure from Gallipoli that He warned His companions that 'this journey will be unlike any of the previous journeys,' and that whoever did not feel himself 'man enough to face the future' had best 'depart to whatever place he pleaseth, and be preserved from tests, for hereafter he will find himself unable to leave'--a warning which His companions unanimously chose to disregard.[29-5]

..... [29-5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 182.]

Towards sunset of the first day of the journey, the liner appeared before Madelli, where she stopped for a few hours, and the same night proceeded to Smyrna, which she reached soon after sunrise. She remained anchored at Smyrna for two days. Persians resident there came on board to escort their Consul, and seemed to be unaware of the presence of the exiles. Here the grave illness of Mirza Aqay-i-Kashani (Jinab-i-Munir), whom Baha'u'llah had honoured with the surname [p. 265] Ismu'llahu'l-Munib (the Name of God, the Overlord), necessitated his removal to the local hospital, to his and everyone's distress. The Most Great Branch took him ashore, and stayed with him as long as was possible. He passed away very soon and lies buried in Izmir. Jinab-i-Munir it was who walked with a lantern, in front of Baha'u'llah's kajaviih or steed, all the way from Baghdad to the Black Sea. He was a comely youth, exceedingly handsome, with a sweet, enchanting voice. And he sang and chanted as he walked. When he became a Babi, his fanatical father took him out into the fields, threw him down and sat on his chest, prepared to cut his throat. But his life was saved to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah and serve Him with utter devotion. Aqa Rida writes: 'In truth, the very moment he threw himself at the feet of the Blessed Perfection, weeping at his separation, he had already yielded his life and was gazing at the horizon of separation.'

On the second night, the liner cast off anchor to continue the journey to

Alexandria, which she gained on a morning two days later. Here the exiles changed ship. This liner, set for Haifa, was also an Austrian-Lloyd. A number of Persians came aboard at Alexandria to pay their respects to Baha'u'llah. Among them was Haji Muhammad-'Ali Pirzadih (usually known as Haji Pirzadih), a celebrated Sufi seer. Unbeknown to the exiles, Nabil-i-A'zam was in the prison-house of Alexandria. He had been sent to Egypt by Baha'u'llah to appeal to the Khedive on behalf of Mirza Haydar-'Ali and six other believers. The fact of his detention in Egypt was known, but not the location of his imprisonment. Several of the exiles went ashore in Alexandria to make purchases; one of them, Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir (the steward) passed by the prison-house, and Nabil-i-A'zam, looking out, noticed him, and surprised, called him. But let Nabil himself, that excellent narrator, tell the circumstances of his arrest and imprisonment, and of his unexpected contact with Baha'u'llah and His party in Alexandria:

..... I went to Mansuriyyah by the railway [after arriving from Adrianople], searched for Aqa Siyyid Husayn [of Kashan], found him and told him why I was there. He said that Hasan Khan, the [Persian] Consul, from the day he managed to send those seven to the Sudan, feared for his life, and had placed spies everywhere that they might inform him whenever a stranger arrived in Egypt. 'It is best that you leave your Mathnavi with me, carry nothing of the sacred writings with you, and go to Cairo. There [p. 266] take lodgings at the Takyiy-i-Mawlavi with Shaykh Ibrahim-i-Hamadani, who receives a stipend from Isma'il Pasha, and stay until the Khedive returns, when we can find means to send him your Mathnavi. I went to Cairo, and lodged with Shaykh Ibrahim, not knowing that he was also a spy. One night, in the early hours of the morning, I saw the Blessed Perfection in the world of dreams. He said: 'Some people have come, asking for permission to harm Mirza Hasan Khan; what sayest thou?' When I awoke I knew that something would happen that day. I went to Sayyid-na Husayn Square, and walked about for an hour or two. Then I found myself surrounded by a number of people who said, 'They have asked for you at the Seraye.' But instead they took me to the house of Mirza Hasan Khan. Then I realized that they had duped me by mentioning the Seraye, so that I should give myself up, and not say that I was not a Persian subject. After long talks with the Consul, I was handed over to an official, who put me in chains. Several times they sent for me. At one time, a number of Persian merchants, such as Mirza Siyyid Javad-i-Shirazi, who was a British subject but presided over the Persians, Haji Muhammad-Taqiy-i-Namazi and Haji Muhammad-Hasan-i-Kaziruni, were there, seated on chairs, and they made me sit down with them. However, I was feverish and weakened. They brought a photograph of the Most Great Branch, and asked me whether I knew who He was. I said: 'Yes, that is the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah, Who is known as 'Abbas Effendi. I have seen Him many times in the drawing-room of Khurshid Pasha, the Vali of Adrianople.' They then produced the Kitab-i-Iqan and told me to read to them. I said, 'I have fever and I can't read.' The Consul said, 'He fears to be mocked, should he read.' I replied, 'Let someone else read and I shall have my share of the good deed of mocking.' The book was passed to Haji Muhammad-Taqiy-i-Namazi. He read the account of the detachment

and self-sacrifice of the followers of the Point of the Bayan [the Bab]; if they were not in the right [it asks], then by what proofs could one demonstrate the rightness of the cause of the people of Karbila. He read on and they kept laughing. Then Mirza Javad turned to me and asked, 'Why did you become a Babi? Had the Cause of the Bab been true, I should have become a Babi, because I am both a siyyid and a Shirazi.' I answered, 'But neither has it been proved that I am a Babi, nor that you are not one. As the poet, Hafiz has it:

..... From Basrah comes Hasan, from Habash comes Bilal,

..... From Sham comes Suhayb; but from the soil of Mecca

..... arises Abu-Jahl; how strange![1]

..... [1. The references in this sentence are to Hasan al-Basri, a leading seer and pietist of the early days of Islam (see Balyuzi, Muhammad and the Course of Islam, p. 227); Habash, or Ethiopia; Bilal Ibn Rabih, one of the early Muslims, the first Mu'adhhdhin (muezzin) of Islam, appointed by the Prophet; Sham, or Damascus; Suhayb, a companion of Muhammad, noted for his abstemiousness; and Abu-Jahl, arch-enemy of the Prophet. (HMB)] [p. 267]

..... At that all the people present burst out laughing, and Mirza Javad became crestfallen. The Consul noticed that the people there had no cause to rejoice, and sent me back to the prison. And I beseeched God never to see him again. That same day he was called to Alexandria on some business. And I had another dream, in which the Blessed Perfection was telling me: 'Within the next eighty-one days, to thee will come some cause of rejoicing.' Then Mirza Safa arrived from Mecca, and was told that Mirza Hasan Khan had imprisoned a traveller in a dark and dismal ... place. 'Tell him', they said, 'for God's sake to free this innocent man.' Mirza Safa expostulated with him, and telegraphed to have me handed over to the Egyptian authorities and sent to Alexandria. When I was taken there, the late Siyyid Husayn petitioned Sharif Pasha, and wrote that this traveller was an Ottoman subject whom the Persian consul had unlawfully imprisoned and tortured. Whereupon, I was transferred from the lower to the higher prison. And it was arranged to take the Persian consul to task. A physician was there in that prison. He tried to convert me to the Protestant Faith. We had long talks and he became a Baha'i.

..... On the eighty-first day of my dream, from the roof-top of the prison-house, I caught sight of Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir, passing through the street. I called out to him and he came up. I asked him what he was doing there, and he told me that the Blessed Perfection and the companions were being taken to 'Akka ... and that he had come ashore in the company of a policeman to make some purchases. The policeman, he said, 'will not allow me to stop here much longer. I will go and report your presence here to the Aqa [the Most Great Branch]. Should the ship stay here longer, I shall perhaps come and see you again.' He set my being on fire and went away. The physician was not there at the time. When he came, he found me shedding tears, and reciting these lines: 'The Beloved is by my side and I am far away from Him; I am on the shore of the waters of proximity and yet deprived I am. O Friend! Lift me, lift me to a seat

on the ship of nearness; I am helpless, I am vanquished, a prisoner am I.' It was in the evening that Faris (that was the name of the physician) came, and saw my distress. He said, 'You were telling me that on the eighty-first day of your dream, you must receive some cause of rejoicing, and that today was that eighty-first day. Now, on the contrary, I find you greatly disturbed.' I replied, 'Truly that cause for rejoicing has come, but alas! "The date is on the palm-tree and our hands cannot reach it"'. He said, 'Tell me what has happened, perhaps I could do something about it.' And so I told him that the Blessed Perfection was on that boat. He too, like me, was greatly disturbed, and said 'Were the next day not a Friday, and the Seraye closed, we could, both of us, have got permission to board the ship and attain His presence. But still, something can be done. You write whatever you wish. I will also write. Tomorrow, one of my acquaintances is coming here. We will get these letters to him to take to the liner.' I wrote my story and gathered together all the poems I had composed in the prison. Faris, the physician, [p. 268] also wrote a letter and stated his great sorrow. It was very touching. All of these he put in an envelope, which he gave to a young watch-maker named Constantine, to deliver early in the morning. I gave him the name of Khadim [Mirza Aqa Jan] and some others of the companions, told him how to identify them, and impressed on him not to deliver the envelope until he had found one of them. He went out in the morning. We were looking from the roof-top. We first heard the signal, and then the noise of the movement of the ship, and were perplexed, lest he had not made it. Then the ship stopped, and started again after a quarter of an hour. We were on tenterhooks, when suddenly Constantine arrived. He handed me an envelope and a package in a handkerchief, and exclaimed, 'By God! I saw the Father of Christ.' Faris, the physician, kissed his eyes and said, 'Our lot was the fire of separation, yours was the bounty of gazing upon the Beloved of the World.' In answer to our petitions, there was a Tablet, in the script[1] of Revelation, a Letter from the Most Great Branch, and a paper filled by almond nuql [a sweet] sent by the Purest Branch. In the Tablet, Faris, the physician, had been particularly honoured. One of the attendants had written: 'Several times I have witnessed evidences of power which I can never forget. And so it was today. The ship was on the move, when we saw a boat far away. The captain stopped the ship, and this young watch-maker reached us, and called aloud my name. We went to him and he gave us your envelope. All eyes were on us and we are exiles. Yet no one questioned the action of the captain.' [29-6]

..... [1. Mirza Aqa Jan's quick script to take down verses as Baha'u'llah spoke them.]

..... [29-6. From Nabil's unpublished history.]

The next port of call was Port Sa'id, which was reached the following morning. The liner anchored there the rest of the day, and at nightfall journeyed on. The next day, at sunset, she stood before Jaffa, and at midnight left for her destination--Haifa. [p. 269]

Arrival at 'Akka

WHEN the Austrian-Lloyd liner stood before Haifa, the authorities set about preparing for the journey of Mirza Yahya and his dependents to Cyprus. This move entailed the separation of the four Baha'is, whom they had decreed should accompany Mirza Yahya to his place of exile, from the compact body of the companions of Baha'u'llah. These four, all arrested at Constantinople, as we have seen, were Mishkin-Qalam, the noted calligraphist, Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah. (of Maraghih in Adharbayjan), Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi and Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar. Naturally, they and all the companions were greatly distressed when the hour of separation came. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... It was at the moment when Baha'u'llah had stepped into the boat which was to carry Him to the landing-stage in Haifa that 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar, ... whose 'detachment, love and trust in God' Baha'u'llah had greatly praised, cast himself, in his despair, into the sea, shouting 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha', and was subsequently rescued and resuscitated with the greatest difficulty, only to be forced by adamant officials to continue his voyage, with Mirza's Yahya's party, to the destination originally appointed for him.[30-1]

..... [30-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 182.]

Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar was saved from death, as Haji Ja'far-i-Tabrizi had been at Adrianople, and in the end they both attained their desideratum--nearness to Baha'u'llah. Haji Ja'far, when recovered from his self-inflicted wound, was taken to 'Akka, in the company of his brother. Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar managed to escape from Cyprus and reached Syria. He changed his name, and as Aqa 'Abdu'llah remained secure.

A sailing-boat took the exiles from Haifa, across the bay to 'Akka. Wild rumours had preceded them, and the inhabitants of the town were puzzled, curious, and certainly prejudiced, hostile and even contemptuous. Some of them were at the quayside to gape at 'The God of the Persians', and to jeer. It was the afternoon of 31 August 1868, [p. 270] [p. 271] corresponding to the twelfth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval AH 1285, that Baha'u'llah, with His family and companions, entered the 'Most Great Prison' and were incarcerated in the strongly-fortified citadel.

'Akka is one of the oldest continuously-inhabited cities in the world, as well as one of the most fought-over. This is not surprising considering that it is situated on the best natural harbour of the eastern Mediterranean coastline and on the route between Egypt and Mesopotamia, two cradles of civilization. It is first mentioned on two Egyptian figures, almost 4,000 years old. It was then a Canaanite/Phoenician city under Egyptian control, but it passed in and out of Egyptian control for several centuries, then passed successively to the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs and the Crusaders. During the thirteenth century, 'Akka became the capital of the Crusader kingdom and was the last significant stronghold to remain in the hands of the Crusaders, holding out until 1291 when it was taken by the Mamluk army and laid waste.

For a time 'Akka became an insignificant village under the control of the Turkish Empire. Then in the sixteenth century French merchants rediscovered its natural advantages. The Druse leader, Fakhru'd-Din, rebuilt a few of the Crusader ruins at the end of the sixteenth century; but the real revival of 'Akka's fortunes occurred under Zahiru'l-'Umar, a local notable of Tiberias who succeeded in carving a principality for himself out of the declining Turkish Empire and made 'Akka its capital in 1749. The Ottoman government recognized Zahiru'l-'Umar's de facto authority by making him governor of the province of 'Akka, but when he gave assistance to the rebellious 'Ali Bey of Egypt, a Turkish army was sent to besiege 'Akka in 1775. Through treachery the town was taken and Zahiru'l-'Umar killed. One of the leaders of the besieging army, Ahmad Pasha, al-Jazzar (the Butcher), an Albanian adventurer, was named the new governor in 1776.

The work that Zahiru'l-'Umar had begun in rebuilding and fortifying 'Akka was pursued energetically by Ahmad Pasha. Al-Jazzar's rule was severe and his influence was paramount in most of Syria and Palestine, and 'Akka prospered. In 1799, the city turned back the army of Napoleon Bonaparte and brought an end to his eastern adventure.

Al-Jazzar died in 1803 and was succeeded by his mamluk and adopted son Sulayman Pasha, who also built several important [p. 272] [p. 273] edifices in 'Akka. On his death in 1818 he was succeeded by 'Abdu'llah Pasha, the son of 'Ali Pasha, who had been another mamluk and adopted son of al-Jazzar.[1] 'Abdu'llah Pasha was the fourth successive governor of 'Akka to be a prolific builder both within and without the city. However, events were occurring in Egypt that were soon to have repercussions for 'Akka. Muhammad-'Ali Pasha, an Albanian adventurer who had seized control of Egypt, was in revolt against the Ottomans. 'Abdu'llah Pasha sided with the Sultan, and in 1831 an Egyptian army led by Muhammad-'Ali's son, Ibrahim Pasha, besieged 'Akka. The bombardment was severe and no help was forthcoming from Istanbul; so eventually 'Abdu'llah Pasha had no course but to surrender. He was treated generously and sent to Egypt where he was received with honour. He later proceeded to Istanbul and, after living there a while, he journeyed to Medina, where he spent the rest of his life and is buried. Ibrahim Pasha, foreseeing that the Egyptian presence in Syria would be challenged, rebuilt many of the edifices that had been damaged by his bombardment and strengthened 'Akka's defences so as to make it the Egyptian bulwark in Syria.

..... [1. A mamluk was a slave who was brought at young age and given military training. On completion of his training, he was usually given his freedom and became an adopted son of his master. Such persons frequently rose to high office, and indeed, Egypt was ruled for several centuries by a series of Mamluk Sultans.]

Following Ibrahim Pasha's spectacular successes in Syria and in Anatolia itself, the European powers, fearing the disintegration of the Turkish Empire, decided to intervene. In 1840, a predominantly British fleet appeared before 'Akka under Admiral Sir Robert Stopford and began a bombardment of the town.

After four and a half hours of bombardment, there was a sudden loud explosion and a thick pall of smoke arose from the town. The principal powder magazine had been hit and had exploded, killing two companies of Ibrahim Pasha's best soldiers. To this day, the effects of that explosion may be seen, in that the inner land wall (Zahiru'l-'Umar's wall) is missing on the eastern side of the site where the near-by explosion destroyed it. On the following day, the allied fleet found that Ibrahim Pasha had abandoned the town and was retreating to Egypt.

The departure of the Egyptians marks a turning point in 'Akka's fortunes. From being the capital of an important province it was henceforth reduced to being the administrative centre of a sub-province subordinate to Damascus and Beirut. Zahiru'l-'Umar, who [p. 274] had founded 'Akka's renewed prosperity, had also begun the process that would eventually lead to its decline. For he had re-sited and fortified the small town of Haifa across the bay from 'Akka. As the nineteenth century progressed, it became evident that 'Akka's port, which was silting in, could no longer cope with the larger draught of steamships. 'Akka's trade and prosperity declined, as much of its mercantile activity was transferred to Haifa.[1]

..... [1. In contrast to 'Akka's decline, Haifa's progress was uninterrupted. The German Templars, who arrived there a few months after Baha'u'llah Himself, added to the prosperity of the town by their industry and technical knowledge. By the end of the nineteenth century, Haifa was an important port with a large colony of merchants; it was connected to Damascus by railway and most of the important foreign powers had established consular representation there.]

By the time of Baha'u'llah's arrival, 'Akka's principal importance to the Turkish Empire was that it acted as a prison-city for criminals and political prisoners--the 'Bastille of the Middle East', as it is referred to by one writer. The citadel where Baha'u'llah was imprisoned is among the most interesting buildings in 'Akka. It occupies the site of the citadel or Grand Maneir of the Knights of St John of the Hospital. Their refectory ('the Crypt of St John') has been excavated almost intact beneath the present building, and Crusader masonry is evident in the lower courses of the building itself. When, in the sixteenth century, the Druse leader Fakhru'd-Din started to build on the Crusader ruins, he made the ruins of the Hospitaller's building the basis of his palace and citadel. Zahiru'l-'Umar and Ahmad al-Jazzar also built their palaces on this site, but the present building dates from al-Jazzar's successor, Sulayman Pasha, and was completed by [p. 275] 'Abdu'llah Pasha in 1819. It was used as both barracks and prison by the Turks and continued to serve the latter function during the British Mandate. The walls of the building have embedded in them cannonballs from the bombardment by the Allied fleet under Admiral Sir Robert Stopford in 1840.

Aqa Rida depicts 'Akka as 'a town, with narrow and mean streets, dark and dirty, gloomy and tortuous; without a single dwelling-place worth looking at.' He also describes the citadel:

..... 'It was built in the days of Jazzar Pasha for troops. It is very high and spacious, with a pool of water in the middle, and palms and fig-trees. To the north-west, the upper floor, well-built, contained four or five good rooms with an ayvan and there was also a biruni: one large room with verandah and other rooms. The Blessed Perfection and His family occupied that section. Aqa Mirza Muhammad-Quli and his family lodged on the lower floor. To the north, there were rooms on three floors. Haji 'Ali-'Askar, Amir and Aqa Muhammad-Javad occupied these rooms. In the north-west corner, there were rooms in which we lodged, ... to the west, there was a very good bath. And to the south and east, there was a set of good spacious rooms. One of them was occupied by Jinab-i-Kalim; in another, others of the companions were housed, and most of them remained empty. Siyyid Muhammad [p. 276] and Kaj-Kulah [Aqa-Jan Big] resided here for two or three days, and then asked the government to move them. They were given a room over the second city gate [of 'Akka].

..... 'The first night of our arrival we suffered because of lack of water. The water in the pool had become malodorous. We wanted to go out and procure fresh water, but they would not permit us. From the house of 'Abdu'l-Hadi Pasha, the Mutasarrif of 'Akka, they brought some cooked rice, but it was not enough. The next day, officials came to see what was happening to us. They went into the presence of the Blessed Perfection, and to them He spoke such words of knowledge and wisdom that, in that very first meeting, they realized that here were people endowed with erudition, wisdom and rare understanding. One of them had said, there and then, that never before had such pure and sanctified souls set foot in 'Akka. Some days later they brought Haji Ja'far and his brother, Haji Taqi.'

[p. 277]

The ration for each person, according to Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi, was three loaves of black bread, salty and inedible. So revolting was this ration that Aqa Husayn, young and headstrong as he was, made rude and insulting remarks about it in Turkish, directed to the Mutasarrif. This earned him a sharp slap in the face from the Most Great Branch. But it also caused the Mutasarrif, Aqa Husayn says, to take note of the situation. Soon the officials discontinued this ration; instead they gave the exiles a sum of money each day, which was shared by all the companions.

Before long, autumn set in with its attendant ailments and maladies, because of the insalubrious conditions of 'Akka. Within the prison walls, the exiles suffered greatly.

Here is a list of the exiles who entered the Most Great Prison on the afternoon of 31 August 1868. The list was originally compiled with the help of Mirza 'Abdu'r-Ra'uf, the son of Mirza Muhammad-Quli, brother of Baha'u'llah. But the present writer has made certain alterations where he found inaccuracies. For example, Mirza 'Abdu'r-Ra'uf had included in the list a number of people who reached 'Akka at a later date.

1. Baha'u'llah

2. Buyuk Khanum,[1] the mother of the Most Great Branch
..... [1. Asiyih Khanum]
3. 'Abdu'l-Baha (the Most Great Branch)
4. Baha'iyyih Khanum (the Greatest Holy Leaf)
5. Mirza Mihdi (the Purest Branch)
6. Mahd-i-'Ulya, the mother of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali
7. Mirza Muhammad-'Ali
8. Mirza Badi'u'llah, son of Mahd-i-'Ulya
9. Mirza Diya'u'llah, son of Mahd-i-'Ulya
10. Samadiyyih Khanum, sister of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and wife of Mirza Majdi'd-Din
11. Mirza Musa--Jinab-i-Kalim, brother of Baha'u'llah
12. Fatimih-Sultan Khanum, daughter of Shaykh Sultan-i-'Arab and wife of Mirza Musa
13. Havva Khanum, second wife of Mirza Musa
14. Mirza Majdi'd-Din, son of Mirza Musa and Fatimih-Sultan Khanum [p. 278]
15. Liqa Khanum, wife of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali
16. Mirza 'Ali-Rida, son of Mirza Musa
17. Mirza Muhammad-Quli, brother of Baha'u'llah
18. Khanum Jan, wife of Mirza Muhammad-Quli
19. Nash'ih Khanum, second wife of Mirza Muhammad-Quli
20. Mirza 'Abdu'r-Ra'uf, son of Mirza Muhammad-Quli
21. Mirza Dhikru'llah, son of Mirza Muhammad-Quli
22. Mirza Vahid, son of Mirza Muhammad-Quli
23. Qudsiyyih Khanum, daughter of Mirza Muhammad-Quli and Nash'ih Khanum
24. Abaji Qazvini, a maid-servant
25. Badri-Jan, wife of Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal
26. Mirza Rida-Quliy-i-Tafrishi, brother of Badri-Jan
27. Mirza Fadlu'llah, nephew of Mirza Rida-Quli, son of Mirza Nasru'llah (d. Adrianople)
28. Aqa 'Azim-i-Tafrishi, attendant to Mirza Nasru'llah and Mirza Rida-Quli
29. Aqa Riday-i-Shirazi, Qannad

30. Gawhar Khanum, wife of Aqa Rida, mother of 'Aynu'l-Mulk
31. Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani
32. Saltanat Khanum, wife of Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani, sister to Gawhar Khanum
33. Haji Aqay-i-Tabrizi, brother of Gawhar Khanum and Saltanat Khanum
34. Zahra Khanum, mother of Haji Aqay-i-Tabrizi
35. Aqa Rida, brother of Haji Aqa
36. Haji 'Ali-'Askar-i-Tabrizi
37. Husayn-Aqa Qahvih-chi, son of Haji 'Ali-'Askar
38. Khanum Jan, wife of Haji 'Ali-'Askar
39. Ma'sumih, daughter of Haji 'Ali-'Askar
40. Fatimih, daughter of Haji 'Ali-'Askar
41. Husniyyih, daughter of Haji 'Ali-'Askar and wife of Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini
42. Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini
43. Mashhadi Fattah, brother of Haji 'Ali-'Askar-i-Tabrizi
44. Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Yazdi
45. Aqa Abu'l-Qasim-i-Sultanabadi (d. in the citadel)
46. Aqa Faraj, cousin to Aqa Abu'l-Qasim [p. 279]
47. Aqa Muhammad-Isma'il[1] [-and-]
48. Aqa Muhammad-Baqir[1]
- [1. These two brothers died in the citadel; their brother Pahlavan Rida was a Babi of Kashan.]
49. Mirza Ja'far-i-Yazdi
50. Za'faran Khanum, wife of Mirza Ja'far
51. Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nayrizi, known as Amir; he was of the company of the Babis who were with Vahid at Nayriz
52. Habibih Khanum, wife of Amir and a maid-servant in the household of Baha'u'llah
53. Badi'ih Khanum, daughter of Amir and Habibih, married to Husayn Aqa Qahvih-chi
54. Sahib-Jan Khanum, a maid-servant
55. Mirza Mustafa, son of Sahib-Jan; he was known as Abu-Hurayrih
56. Darvish Sidq-'Ali

57. Mirza Aqa Jan, amanuensis and attendant to Baha'u'llah

58. Haji Faraju'llah-i-Tafrishi

59. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi

60. Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani

61. Ustad Ahmad-i-Najjar

62. Aqa Mirza Husayn-i-Najjar

63. Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir

64. Khayyat-Bashi

65. Mirza Asadu'llah

66. Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani[2] [-and-]

67. Aqa Jan Big, known as Kaj-Kulah[2]

..... [2. Azalis.] [p. 280]

31

The Lord of Hosts

..... Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.[31-1]

..... [31-1. The quotation at the head of the chapter is from Psalms 24:9-10.]

THE Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... 'The arrival of Baha'u'llah in 'Akka marks the opening of the last phase of His forty-year-long ministry, the final stage, and indeed the climax, of the banishment in which the whole of that ministry was spent. A banishment that had, at first, brought Him to the immediate vicinity of the strongholds of Shi'ah orthodoxy ... and which, at a later period, had carried Him to the capital of the Ottoman empire, and led Him to address His epoch-making pronouncements to the Sultan, to his ministers and to the ecclesiastical leaders of Sunni Islam, had now been instrumental in landing Him upon the shores of the Holy Land--the Land promised by God to Abraham, sanctified by the Revelation of Moses, honored by the lives and labors of the Hebrew patriarchs, judges, kings and prophets, revered as the cradle of Christianity, and as the place where Zoroaster, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha's testimony, had "held converse with some of the Prophets of Israel," and associated by Islam with the Apostle's night-journey, through the seven heavens, to the throne of the Almighty. Within the confines of his holy and enviable country, "the nest of all the Prophets of God," "the Vale of God's unsearchable Decree, the snow-white Spot, the Land of unfading splendor" was the Exile of Baghdad, of Constantinople and Adrianople, condemned to spend no less than a third of the

allotted span of His life, and over half of the total period of His Mission.[31-2]

..... [31-2. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 183.]

'Akka--Ptolemais of the ancient world, St Jean d'Acre of the Crusaders and their last stronghold, which refused to bow to the might [p. 281] of Napoleon, a city that gathered renown throughout the centuries--had indeed fallen into disrepute at this period of its chequered history. Its air and water were foul and pestilential. Proverb had it that a bird flying over 'Akka would fall dead. To its forbidding barracks were consigned the rebels, the desperadoes, the unredeemable criminals of the Ottoman domains--sent there to perish.

This was also the city of which David had spoken as 'The Strong City', which Hosea had extolled as a 'door of hope', of which Ezekiel had said, 'Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.... And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.'[31-3] And the Founder of Islam had thus eulogized this very city, 'Blessed the man that hath visited 'Akka, and blessed he that hath visited the visitor of 'Akka.... And he that raiseth therein the call to prayer, his voice will be lifted up unto Paradise.'[31-4]

..... [31-3. Ezek. 43:1-2, 4.]

..... [31-4. Quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 179.]

The 'Akka which opened its gates to receive as a Prisoner the Redeemer of the world, was a city that had fathomed the depths of misery. And Baha'u'llah's exile to the Holy Land, His incarceration in the grim citadel of 'Akka, was intended by His adversaries to be the final blow which, in their calculations, would shatter His Faith and fortune. How significant and momentous will this exile seem, if we recall certain prophecies uttered in the past. 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, and the Expounder of His Message, thus speaks of this stupendous event:

..... When Baha'u'llah came to this prison in the Holy Land, the wise men realized that the glad tidings which God gave through the tongue of the Prophets two or three thousand years before, were again manifested, and that God was faithful to His promise; for to some of the Prophets He had revealed and given the good news that 'The Lord of Hosts should be manifested in the Holy Land.' All these promises were fulfilled, and it is difficult to understand how Baha'u'llah could have been obliged to leave Persia, and to pitch His tent in this Holy Land, but for the persecution of His enemies, His banishment and exile.[31-5]

..... [31-5. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, chapter IX.]

David had so majestically announced: 'and the King of glory shall come in. Who

is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.' [p. 282]

..... 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them'
Isaiah had said, 'and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.'[31-6]

..... [31-6. Isa 35:1-2.]

..... 'The Lord will roar from Zion' had been Amos's testimony, 'and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.'[31-7]

..... [31-7. Amos 1:2.]

And Micah had thus foreseen,[31-8] '...from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain', he shall come.

..... [31-8. Mic. 7:12.] [p. 283]

32

Life in the Barracks

LIFE was indeed hard and onerous in the barracks of 'Akka, and particularly so when the exiles fell victim to maladies, such as malaria and dysentery, that the autumn brought in its wake. Aqa Rida says that they had never known such fevers as afflicted them, and states that the Most Great Branch, being very careful of what He ate or drank, did 'not go down' like the rest, but was always up and about, tending the sick and nursing them. Aqay-i-Kalim and Aqa Rida himself were able to help with the nursing. But three of the exiles died. Aqa Abu'l-Qasim-i-Sultanabadi was the first to go, and then Ustad Baqir and his brother Ustad Isma'il-i-Khayyat, who died the same night, in the words of Baha'u'llah, 'locked in each other's arms'. The guards would not allow the exiles to see to the funeral of their dead. Baha'u'llah had to give a carpet on which He Himself slept, to be sold to defray the expenses demanded by the guards. However, the guards pocketed the money, and had the corpses interred in their clothes--unwashed, unshrouded and without coffins. Baha'u'llah has attested that the money given to the guards was twice the amount normally required for a decent burial. Recounting His sufferings in this period, He has written regarding Himself: 'He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tried in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflictive Prison, into which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him.'[32-1]

..... [32-1. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 187.]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... Explicit orders had been issued by the Sultan and his ministers to subject the exiles, who were accused of having grievously erred and led others

far astray, to the strictest confinement. Hopes were confidently expressed that the sentence of life-long imprisonment pronounced against them would lead to their eventual extermination. The farman of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, dated the fifth of Rabi'u'th-Thani 1285 AH (July 26, 1868), not only condemned them to perpetual banishment, but stipulated [p. 284] [p. 285] their strict incarceration, and forbade them to associate either with each other or with the local inhabitants. The text of the farman itself was read publicly, soon after the arrival of the exiles, in the principal mosque of the city as a warning to the population.³²⁻²

..... [32-2. *ibid.* p. 186. (God Passes By)]

The Ottoman official archives reveal the fact that the promulgation of such a sentence was recommended and demanded by the officials in charge of the interrogation of the Baha'is and the two Azalis arrested in Istanbul. These documents also denote the fact that Khurshid Pasha, the Vali of Adrianople, had defended the Baha'is and repudiated the accusations levelled against them.

In a Tablet addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqay-i-Afnan, Nuri'd-Din, over the signature of Khadim (Mirza Aqa Jan, the amanuensis), Baha'u'llah recounts that such was the surveillance exercised by the authorities that even when a barber or bath-attendant was required, he was brought to the citadel accompanied by a member of the police force, who stood by all the time. For that reason Baha'u'llah did not use the bath for a while. It will be recalled that Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani, who had served Baha'u'llah as a bath-attendant (and would serve Him in that capacity in future), was at this date in Iran, having been expelled by the Ottoman authorities. This Tablet, revealed two decades later, particularly points out the change that had taken place over the years. At the beginning of their imprisonment in 'Akka the rules were harshly applied, whereas at the time this Tablet [p. 286] was revealed, anyone could go wherever he wished, in or out of 'Akka, without hindrance.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes further:

..... The Persian Ambassador, accredited to the Sublime Porte, had thus assured his government, in a letter, written a little over a year after their [the Baha'is] banishment to 'Akka: 'I have issued telegraphic and written instructions, forbidding that He (Baha'u'llah) associate with any one except His wives and children, or leave under any circumstances, the house wherein He is imprisoned. 'Abbas-Quli Khan, the Consul-General in Damascus... I have, three days ago, sent back, instructing him to proceed direct to 'Akka ... confer with its governor regarding all necessary measures for the strict maintenance of their imprisonment ... and appoint, before his return to Damascus, a representative on the spot to insure that the orders issued by the Sublime Porte will, in no wise, be disobeyed. I have, likewise, instructed him that once every three months he should proceed from Damascus to 'Akka, and personally watch over them, and submit his report to the Legation.' Such was the isolation imposed upon them that the Baha'is of Persia, perturbed by the rumors set afloat by the Azalis of Isfahan that Baha'u'llah had been drowned,

induced the British Telegraph Office in Julfa to ascertain on their behalf the truth of the matter.[32-3]

..... [32-3. *ibid.* (God Passes By, p. 186.)

[p. 287]

However, despite this high-handed action on the part of the Persian ambassador, more than a year after the arrival of the exiles in 'Akka which was tantamount to unabashed interference with the internal administration of the Turkish realm, and despite the fact that nothing had been changed by a jot or tittle in the original edict of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, the Ottoman officials on the spot, as we shall see, found themselves more and more disinclined, even unable, to resort to harsh measures in their treatment of the prisoners; and the townspeople, exceedingly hostile at the start, had been slowly and gradually won over to respect and reverence towards the inmates of the citadel. It was chiefly the mien and the bearing of Baha'u'llah's eldest Son that wrought his amazing transformation.

Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn have both put on record a short prayer, revealed by Baha'u'llah subsequent to the death of the three companions, which the exiles recited for their protection. Here is its text:

..... In the Name of God, the Forgiver! Although this evil state in which I am, O my God, maketh me deserving of Thy wrath and punishment, Thy good-pleasure and Thy bounties demand Thy forgiveness to encompass Thy servants and Thy good favour to reach them. I ask Thee by Thy Name which Thou hast made the King of all names to protect me by Thy power and Thine Omnipotence from all calamity and all that is repugnant to Thee and all that is contrary to Thy Will. Thou art Supreme over all things.[32-4]

..... [32-4. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

Although illness was still rife, there were no more fatalities. Aqa Rida states that for four months a huge cauldron of broth was prepared for the sick, and at night plain rice, which the Most Great Branch doled out personally for each, according to his needs. And then, Aqa Rida says, the Most Great Branch Himself fell sick, and so ill was He that the companions were greatly concerned and perturbed. But that passed too, and gradually all were restored to health.

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi gives more detail of the care and supervision which the Most Great Branch exercised in attending to the welfare and health of the companions. Every day He would stand by the gates of the citadel, awaiting the return of those who had gone into the town, accompanied by guards, to make necessary purchases, and would inspect all they had bought and even their pockets, to see that nothing injurious to the health of the inmates was brought in. Whatever He considered unsuitable for their consumption He would throw away.

There was one more case of very severe illness, then miraculous [p. 288] recovery. Mirza Ja'far-i-Yazdi was almost given up for dead. A Christian

physician, named Butrus (Peter), was called in. On feeling the pulse of the patient, he rose up angrily, protesting that he had been brought to attend a dead man. 'I am not Christ', he said and departed. Aqay-i-Kalim went to Baha'u'llah and reported Mirza Ja'far's plight. Baha'u'llah, Aqa Rida recounts, revealed a prayer and told Aqay-i Kalim not to give up hope but continue nursing him. As Aqa Rida puts it, a new life was breathed into Mirza Ja'far, and he recovered. Hence Baha'u'llah called him Badi'u'l-Hayat (Wondrous Life).

Baha'is in Iran had, at last, learned that Baha'u'llah was incarcerated in the citadel of 'Akka. A number of them came that perchance they might gain admittance to the presence of their Lord. However, the two Azalis, lodged as they were over the gateway, were keeping a keen watch and reporting to the authorities the arrival of any Baha'i whom they recognized. And the officials would immediately take action to expel the Baha'i who had managed to come within the city walls. There were some who had walked all the way, over the high mountains of western Iran and the deserts of 'Iraq and Syria, to reach 'Akka. Foiled, at the end, by the machinations of enemies, the only solace left for them was to stand beyond the second moat, facing the citadel, to obtain a momentary glimpse of the figure of their Lord, as He stood behind the bars. Only a wave of His blessed hand, from afar, was their reward after months of toil and travel. Then, most of them turned homewards, grateful for that bounty bestowed upon them. It was enough to kindle a more vigorous flame in their hearts, enough to intensify their dedication. Others came in their wake and took back the memory of that figure, appearing at the window behind iron bars--a memory which they treasured above everything else in their lives. However, there were some, such as Badi', whose story is told in the next chapter, and Nabil-i-A'zam (at the second attempt), who had the supreme bounty of attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... The very few who succeeded in penetrating into the city had, to their great distress, to retrace their steps without even beholding His countenance. The first among them, the self-denying Haji surnamed Amin-i-Ilahi (Trusted of God), to enter His presence was only able to do so in a public bath, where it had been arranged that he should see Baha'u'llah without approaching Him or giving any sign of recognition. [p. 289] [p. 290] Another pilgrim, Ustad Isma'il-i-Kashi, arriving from Mosul, posted himself on the far side of the moat, and, gazing for hours, in rapt adoration, at the window of his Beloved, failed in the end, owing to the feebleness of his sight, to discern His face, and had to turn back to the cave which served as his dwelling-place on Mt Carmel--an episode that moved to tears the Holy Family who had been anxiously watching from afar the frustration of his hopes.[32-5]

..... [32-5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 187-8.]

Ustad Isma'il was the maternal uncle of Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi. He had been a master-builder and had seen service with Farrukh Khan-i-Ghaffari, the Aminu'd-Dawlih[1] of Kashan, one of the first envoys ever appointed by the

Persian government to the courts of Europe, who had negotiated and signed the peace treaty of Paris, with Britain, in 1856.

..... [1. During the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha, a son of Aminu'd-Dawlih, Mihdi Khan-i-Ghaffari, the Vazir Humayun and Qa'im-Maqam, who had served under Nasiri'd-Din Shah, and had occupied ministerial posts in the early days of the constitution, became a Baha'i, much to the consternation of his family, and visited 'Abdu'l-Baha, at Ramlih, Alexandria, in Egypt.]

Aqa Husayn thus recalled his uncle's arrival and the months which followed: 'When he arrived by way of Mosul, and could not attain [the presence of Baha'u'llah], he went to stay in Haifa, with Khalil Mansur, the copper-smith of Kashan [see Addendum V]. Khalil Mansur was the first person [Baha'i] to settle down in Haifa. There, he looked after the pilgrims, who kept arriving from various places. Under instructions which he received from 'Akka and through secret intermediaries, he reported the case of each pilgrim. Then, they did as they were commanded. Khalil Mansur came, occasionally, into 'Akka, to sell copper ware, reported how the pilgrims fared, and took away letters to post from Haifa.'

Aqa Husayn was in the presence of Baha'u'llah the day his uncle came to keep vigil and failed to recognize the figure of his Lord. He recounts how bitterly he himself wept, and how kind and gracious Baha'u'llah was, as He spoke of the sorely disappointed master-builder of Kashan. And He said on that occasion, Aqa Husayn recalled, that soon, God willing, the gates would be opened to the faces of the pilgrims, and they would come, safe and secure, into His presence. According to Aqa Husayn, besides his uncle and Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Khalil-i-Mansur, Aqa 'Abdu'llah, a brother of the latter, and Pidar-Jan-i-Qazvini also dwelt in Haifa.

Nabil-i-A'zam, whom we last met in an Egyptian prison, was freed and banished to Anatolia, not long after the ship which carried [p. 291] Baha'u'llah left Alexandria for Haifa. Thence he went to Cyprus, learnt what was happening to the Baha'is there, and then made his way to 'Akka, but due to the machinations of the Azalis he was deprived of gaining admittance to the presence of Baha'u'llah. Aqa Husayn recounts that the first time Nabil made his way into 'Akka he was spotted, intercepted and hauled before the authorities, who wanted to know what he was doing there. He said that he had come to buy provisions. But the officials forbade him to make any purchases and expelled him from the city. However, outside the citadel, around the district of 'Izzi'd-Din, to the north of 'Akka, he stood one day gazing at the fortress. Baha'u'llah appeared at the window, behind the bars and with the movement of His hands recognized Nabil's presence there. The same day, a prayer was revealed by the Supreme Pen in his honour. Nabil, thereafter, spent his days roaming over Mount Carmel and the Galilee, alternating his residence between Haifa and Nazareth. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith mentions that he also lived for a while in Hebron. Then he was summoned to 'Akka and stayed eighty-one days in the citadel.

Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini was another who established his residence in

Nazareth. He was at one time a confidant of the Amir of Qa'inat in the province of Khurasan and frequently visited the capital. There he met Baha'u'llah in early days and they became friends. As soon as he heard of the claim of Baha'u'llah, he, without any hesitation, gave Him his allegiance, and became instrumental in leading a number of prominent people to the Faith which he himself had zealously and ardently embraced. Having become well known as a Babi he was forced to leave his native land and set out for the prison-city. Arriving there he succeeded in gaining admittance to the presence of Baha'u'llah. Thereafter, as Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi relates, he settled in Nazareth, where he guided a Christian youth, named 'Abdu'llah Effendi Marini, to become a Baha'i. This 'Abdu'llah Effendi, according to Aqa Husayn, rose high in the service of the government, and also compiled a book, based on Jewish and Christian Scriptures, portending the advent of Baha'u'llah, but during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha (the Most Great Branch), he was tempted by a malpractice, only too common amongst government officials, which caused 'Abdu'l-Baha great sorrow. Realizing that, 'Abdu'llah Effendi could not outlive his disgrace and took his own life. [p. 292]

Ashchi also relates that one day Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini went to the Most Great Branch and said that he wished to become a partner with Him, asking for a loan of seven paltry piastres. With these as his capital, he bought some reels of cotton and packets of needles and went about peddling in and around Nazareth. A man of consequence, who had known great luxury in the service of the Amir of Qa'inat, he was now happy to ply the trade of a poor peddler, because he was living in proximity to his Lord and was engaged in a trade.

The same was true of the uncle of Aqa Husayn, the master-builder, who had enjoyed prosperity in the employment of Aminu'd-Dawlih. He too had become a peddler, going about with a tray of small items, and making his home in a cave on Mount Carmel. [p. 293]

33

The Story of Badi'

FROM Adrianople, the Remote Prison, and later from 'Akka, the Most Great Prison, Baha'u'llah addressed the rulers of the world in a series of Letters. To them He declared His divine Mission, and called them to serve the cause of peace and justice and righteousness. The majestic sweep of His counsel and admonition, revealed in these Letters, arrests the deepest attention of every earnest student of the Baha'i Faith.

Here we see a Prisoner wronged by the world, judged and condemned by a conspiracy of tyrants, facing the concourse of sovereigns, nay, the generality of mankind. He stands in judgement upon the values of human society and, undaunted, throws a bold challenge, not alone to His oppressors, not alone to ephemeral shadows of earthly might and dominion, but principally to those dark passions and motives and imaginings which dare to intervene between man and the goal destined for him by his Maker. Here, the Exile rejected and betrayed, incarcerated and held in odium, is seen to be the true and only Judge--the King

of Glory.

'Never since the beginning of the world,' is Baha'u'llah's own testimony, 'hath the Message been so openly proclaimed.' 'Each one of them [the Tablets addressed by Him to the sovereigns of the earth] hath been designated by a special name. The first hath been named "The Rumbling," the second "The Blow," the third "The Inevitable," the fourth "The Plain," the fifth "The Catastrophe," and the others "The Stunning Trumpet-Blast," "The Near Event," "The Great Terror," "The Trumpet," "The Bugle," and the like, so that all the peoples of the earth may know, of a certainty, and may witness, with outward and inner eyes, that He Who is the Lord of Names hath prevailed, and will continue to prevail, under all conditions, over all men.' [33-1]

..... [33-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 212.]

One of the earliest of these momentous Letters was addressed to [p. 294] Nasiri'd-Din Shah. It was revealed in Adrianople, but its dispatch to the ruler of Iran had to await the lapse of some years. The story of the bearer of that Tablet, of how he carried it to Tihiran, and of what happened to him after he delivered his trust, is thrilling and soul-stirring, appalling as well. Here it is, together with extracts from that Tablet, translated by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith.

Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi, Nabil-i-A'zam, in the course of his travels (prior to his Egyptian episode, his imprisonment in Alexandria and his subsequent sojourn in the Holy Land) came to Nishapur (or Nishapur), in the province of Khurasan. There he met Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shalfurush (dealer in shawls), a noted merchant and a survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi, and as Nabil himself says, 'an old acquaintance'. Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid took him to his home. There, Nabil met Shaykh Muhammad-i-Ma'muri, the uncle of the martyr, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani, engaged in copying Tablets of Baha'u'llah. And to his surprise, Nabil found Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid attending personally to everything. He asked the Haji whether he did not have a son old enough to assist him. Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid replied that he had, but his son did not obey him. Indeed, his son, Aqa Buzurg, a youth in his teens, led a wild life, was unruly, and took no interest at all in his father's preoccupations; in a word, he was the despair of his family. To see what followed, let Nabil, that inimitable narrator, tell us himself:

..... 'I said, "Send for him to come, I wish to see him." He was sent for and he came. I saw a tall, gangling youth, who, instead of physical perfections, had merely a simple heart, and I told his father to make him my host and leave his case to God... Then, I mentioned matters, very moving, which would melt a heart of stone.' Nabil-i-A'zam here quotes a number of verses from the long poem by Baha'u'llah-Qasidiy-i-'Izz-i-Varqa'iyyih, which he composed in Sulaymaniyyih. In these verses quoted by Nabil, Baha'u'llah speaks of His own sufferings and tribulations.

..... 'Hearing these divine themes, the colour of the visage of that youth reddened, his eyes welled with tears, and the sound of his lamentation rose high. I calmed his agitation, but throughout that night, his enamourment and

attraction kept sleep away from the eyes of Shaykh Muhammad and myself. Until the light broke we read and recited from the holy script. In the morning, when he prepared the samovar [p. 295] [p. 296] for tea, and went out to fetch milk, his father came and said: "I had never heard my son weep. I thought that nothing could move him. Now, what is the spell cast on him to make his tears flow and to cause him to cry out, to make him afire with the love of God?" I said: "In any case he is no longer in command of himself, and you must give him up." And his father said: "This manner of losing one's self is exactly what I desired. If he remains firm in the Cause of God, I myself shall serve him."

..... 'Aqa Buzurg was insistent that he should accompany me to Mashhad. But his father said: "I brought Shaykh Muhammad here, specifically to be his tutor, so that he might learn reading and writing within a short time, and study the Iqan under Shaykh Muhammad's tuition, and make a copy of the book. Should he do these, then I undertake to provide him with a steed and all his expenses."

..... 'Subsequent to my departure from Khurasan and arrival at Tihran, Shaykh Fani[1] reached Nishabur and mentioned that he was on his way to Bandar-i-'Abbas, so as to go to Baghdad, and ultimately to the Land of Mystery [Adrianople], and was permitted to take one person with himself. Jinab-i-Aba-Badi' [the Father of Badi'] provided his dear son with a steed and money, so that he might catch up with me at Baghdad, and we might travel together to the abode of the Beloved.

..... [1. In one source he is identified as Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani, who met a martyr's death in Tabriz.]

..... 'Badi' had accompanied the Shaykh up to Yazd, and there had parted company with him, and giving the Shaykh all that he possessed, and all alone, had set out on foot to walk all the way to the Daru's-Salam--the Abode of Peace [Baghdad].

..... 'After his arrival at Baghdad, Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul was martyred, and he stepped in to replace the martyr, carrying Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul's water-skin over his shoulders, and served as the water-carrier of the companions there. And when the companions were rounded up, to be taken to Mosul, that illumined youth, although wounded in several places by rascally men, betook himself to Mosul, and reached that city before the arrival of the captives, where, once again, he engaged in carrying water for them. Later he set his steps towards the Holy Land, and attained the presence of the Abha Beauty.[33-2]

..... [33-2. From Nabil's unpublished history.]

The day had come in the life of this seventeen-year-old youth when he felt that he had to turn to Baha'u'llah. And he began to walk--to [p. 297] walk all the way from Mosul to the waters of the Mediterranean, to the foot of the citadel of 'Akka, where, he knew, his Lord was incarcerated.

He arrived in 'Akka early in 1869 and, since he was still wearing the garb of a simple water-carrier, he had no trouble slipping past the vigilant guards at

the city gates. Once inside the city, however, he was at a loss, for he had no idea how to contact his fellow-believers and could not risk betraying himself by making enquiries. Uncertain as to the course he should follow, he repaired to a mosque in order to pray. Towards evening, a group of Persians entered the mosque and, to his delight, Badi' recognized 'Abdu'l-Baha among them. He wrote a few words on a piece of paper and managed to slip this to 'Abdu'l-Baha. The same night, arrangements were made to enable him to enter the citadel and go into the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Badi' had the honour of two interviews with Baha'u'llah. During the course of these, Baha'u'llah made reference to the Tablet that He had already revealed, addressed to Nasiri'd-Din Shah--the Letter which opens thus:

..... 'O King of the Earth! Hearken to the call of this Vassal: verily, I am a Servant Who believed in God, and in His Signs and sacrificed Myself in His path. To this testifieth the calamity that surroundeth Me: such calamity as none of the creatures of God hath borne. My Lord, the All-Knowing, is witness unto what I say. I have summoned the people unto naught save Thy Lord and the Lord of the worlds, and for His love I have encountered that, the like of which the eyes of creation have not seen.'[33-3]

..... [33-3. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

Many were the men, veterans, who had longed for the honour to be entrusted with that Letter. But Baha'u'llah had made no move and waited. He had waited a long time until the forlorn, the weary youth, who had come to receive the gift of second birth from His hands, reached the gates of 'Akka, and entered the citadel. At those two interviews Aqa Buzurg of Khurasan came face to face with his Lord, and became Badi'--the Wonderful. Baha'u'llah wrote that in him 'the spirit of might and power was breathed'.[33-4]

..... [33-4. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 199 (for three references).

We know that to him was given the task which others, much older, much more tired and experienced than he, had hoped to perform, that Badi' asked for the honour of delivering the Tablet to the Shah and that it was bestowed upon him. Since it would have entailed risks to have carried the Tablet out of 'Akka, Badi' was instructed to go to [p. 298] Haifa and wait there, and that on his way back to Persia he must travel alone and not contact the believers.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has recorded in his history *Bihjatu's-Sudur* an account he heard from Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin: 'I was given a small box, the length of which was one and a half spans, its width was less than one span and its thickness was one-quarter of a span, and I was told to deliver it to him [Badi'] in Haifa together with a few pounds. I did not know what was in the box. I met him in Haifa and gave him the good news that a favour had been bestowed upon him and I was entrusted with its delivery. And so we went outside the town, onto Mount Carmel, and I delivered the box to him. He held it with both hands and kissed it, then he prostrated himself. There was also a sealed envelope for him which he took from me. He walked some twenty or thirty paces

away from me and, turning towards the place of Baha'u'llah's imprisonment, he sat down and read it. He then prostrated himself again and his face was radiant with joy and ecstasy. I asked him whether I could also have the honour of reading the Tablet which he had received but he replied: "There is no time." I understood that it was a matter which could not be divulged. What was it? I had no idea at all of the significance of what was happening, nor of the importance of the task with which he had been commissioned.

I said to him, "Come with me into Haifa for I have been instructed to deliver a sum of money to you." He replied, "I won't come into the town with you, you go and bring the money." I went and returned but could not find him anywhere--he had departed. I wrote to Beirut that they should give him the money there but they had not seen him. I had no further news of him until I heard reports of his martyrdom from Tihiran. Then I realized that in that box had been the Lawh-i-Sultan, and in the envelope had been a Tablet bearing tidings of the martyrdom of that essence of steadfastness and constancy.' [33-5]

..... [33-5. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

In one of the Appendices to A Traveller's Narrative, Edward Granville Browne has translated the words addressed to the bearer (Badi') of the Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah. The text of these words as well as the Tablet itself had been obtained by Russian consular officials in Persia and sent to St Petersburg, where they were deposited in the Collection of the Institute of Oriental Languages by the head of that Institute, Gamazov. Baron Rosen had sent Browne a copy of his catalogue of this Collection in which this Tablet is fully described. [p. 299]

These then are the words addressed by Baha'u'llah to Badi':

..... He is God, exalted is He.

..... We ask God to send one of His servants, and to detach him from Contingent Being, and to adorn his heart with the decoration of strength and composure, that he may help his Lord amidst the concourse of creatures, and, when he becometh aware of what hath been revealed for His Majesty the King, that he may arise and take the Letter, by the permission of his Lord, the Mighty, the Bounteous, and go with speed to the abode of the King. And when he shall arrive at the place of his throne let him alight in the inn, and let him hold converse with none till he goeth forth one day and standeth where he [i.e. the King] shall pass by. And when the Royal harbingers shall appear, let him raise up the Letter with the utmost humility and courtesy, and say, 'It hath been sent on the part of the Prisoner.' And it is incumbent upon him to be in such a mood that, should the King decree his death, he shall not be troubled within himself, and shall hasten to the place of sacrifice saying, 'O Lord, praise be to Thee because that Thou hast made me a helper to Thy religion, and hast decreed unto me martyrdom in Thy way! By Thy Glory, I would not exchange this cup for [all] the cups in the worlds, for Thou hast not ordained any equivalent to this, neither do Kawthar and Salsabil[1] rival it!' But if he [i.e. the King] letteth him [i.e. the messenger] go, and interfereth not with

him, let him say 'To Thee be praise, O Lord of the worlds! Verily I am content with Thy good pleasure and what Thou hast predestined unto me in Thy way, even though I did desire that the earth might be dyed with my blood for Thy love. But what Thou wilt is best for me: verily Thou knowest what is in my soul, while I know not what is in Thy soul; and Thou art the All-knowing, the Informed.'[33-6]

..... [1. The names of two rivers in Paradise. (EGB)]

..... [33-6. Quoted Browne, A Traveller's Narrative, vol. II, pp. 391-2.]

Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin has further related: 'The late Haji 'Ali, brother of Haji Ahmad of Port Sa'id, used to recount:[33-7] "From Trebizond to Tabriz I was in his [Badi's] company for some of the stages of the journey. He was full of joy, laughter, gratitude and forbearance. And I only knew that he had been in the presence of Baha'u'llah and was now returning to his home in Khurasan. Time and again I observed that, having walked a little more or less than one hundred paces, he would leave the road and, turning to face 'Akka, would prostrate himself and could be heard to say: 'O God, that which you have bestowed upon me through Your bounty, do not take back through Your justice; rather grant me strength to safeguard it.'"

..... [33-7. From Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, translated by H. M. Balyuzi.] [p. 300]

Badi' plodded on, a solitary figure, over deserts and mountain peaks, for four months, never seeking a companion, never choosing a friend with whom he could share his great secret. His father had no knowledge of his return. In Tihiran, as bidden by Baha'u'llah, Badi' did not go in search of his fellow Baha'is, but spent three days in fasting while he made certain where the Shah's summer camp was, and went straight there, sitting on a hillock, all day long, so that he might be seen and taken to the Shah. The hour came when the Shah set out on a hunting expedition; Badi' approached him calmly, addressing the monarch with respect: 'O King! I have come to thee from Sheba with a weighty message'.[33-4] Nasiri'd-Din Shah may have been taken aback, but the confident tone of that youth had already impressed on his consciousness that this message had come to him from Baha'u'llah. In the words of Shoghi Effendi, 'at the Sovereign's order, the Tablet was taken from him and delivered to the mujtahids of Tihiran who were commanded to reply to that Epistle--a command which they evaded, recommending instead that the messenger should be put to death. That Tablet was subsequently forwarded by the Shah to the Persian Ambassador in Constantinople, in the hope that its perusal by the Sultan's ministers might serve to further inflame their animosity.'[33-4]

..... [33-4. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 199 (for three references).

We have known that Badi' was tortured and that he remained undaunted and steadfast to the very end. We have known that the pen of Baha'u'llah, for the space of three years, lauded his valour and constancy. We have known that to him was given the title of Fakhru'sh-Shuhada--The Pride of Martyrs, and that

Baha'u'llah characterized His references to his 'sublime sacrifice' as 'the Salt of My Tablets'. But it was left to the strange ways of Providence to bring to light the full story of the last days of Badi', his ordeal and his immolation. It is a horrific story, but moving, a story of which every Baha'i cannot but be proud. The fiendish cruelty which it discloses, sickens, but the unassailable integrity, the never-wavering faith, the invincible courage of that wonderful youth of seventeen ennoble the soul.

To see how it happened, how Providence intervened, we have to move swiftly with the years--more than four decades--in fact, to the year 1913.

Early in 1913, Muhammad-Vali Khan-i-Tunukabuni, Nasru's-Saltanih and the Sipahdar-i-A'zam (later Sipahsalar-i-A'zam) was in [p. 301] Paris. Tunukabun, the home town of this grandee of Iran, of which he was himself the governor over a period of years, is situated in the province of Mazindaran. Nur and Kujur and Takur, where Baha'u'llah's forbears lived, also belong to this lush Caspian province. Sipahdar-i-A'zam was one of the two Nationalist leaders, who, in 1909, marched on Tihran, at the head of their men, to restore the Constitution which Muhammad-'Ali Shah had wantonly destroyed. He converged on the capital from the north, and the other leader, the Bakhtiyari chieftain Haji 'Ali-Quli Khan, the Sardar-i-As'ad, from the south.

When Muhammad-'Ali Shah had staged his coup, in June 1908, relying heavily on Russian support, and had sent his Cossack Brigade, under Colonel Liakhoff, to storm the Baharistan, the Parliament building, and arrest those deputies who had incurred his wrath, Sipahdar-i-A'zam not only did not challenge the autocracy of Muhammad-'Ali Shah, but gave him his active support and led the [p. 302] [p. 303] royal forces to invest the city of Tabriz that had risen in revolt. However, he was soon disillusioned and drifted away from the side of Muhammad-'Ali Shah to the ranks of his opponents. In Rasht, he became a member of the Revolutionary Council and there he planned his march on Tihran.

In the meantime, the powerful Bakhtiyari tribe, with a few dissidents, declared for the Constitution, and Haji 'Ali-Quli Khan, the Sardar-i-As'ad, whose father had died in the prison of the notorious Zillu's-Sultan,[1] hurried from Europe to assist his elder brother, Samsamu's-Saltanih, who had taken possession of Isfahan.

..... [1. Mas'uk Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, was the eldest surviving son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, but he could not come to the throne, because his mother was not of the royal family. His life was embittered and he was always intriguing to gain the throne, which he considered to be rightly his.]

Russian officials, in concert with the British, tried to dissuade Sipahdar-i-A'zam and Sardar-i-As'ad from carrying out their plans. They failed, the Nationalist forces occupied Tihran in mid-July, Muhammad-'Ali Shah took refuge in the Russian Legation and was deposed. His eldest son, Sultan-Ahmad Mirza, twelve years old, was put on the throne with a regent: the venerable 'Adudu'l-Mulk, chief of the Qajar notables; and Sipahdar-i-A'zam became the first prime minister of the restored constitutional regime. But despite his

signal service to the cause of the Constitution, Sipahdar-i-A'zam was suspected of being a reactionary at heart, sympathetic to the ex-Shah and Russian schemes. In truth, he was aloof and imperious, much of a grandee, totally lacking the arts of the demagogue. In the summer of 1911, while he was once again the Prime Minister, Muhammad-'Ali Shah made an abortive attempt to win back his throne, and Sipahdar-i-A'zam was forced to resign. It was thought that he would not act promptly and energetically to foil the designs of the ex-Shah. He has stated that he went to France, in 1913, for medical treatment. Howbeit, he was in Paris in March, at the time when 'Abdu'l-Baha was still visiting the French capital. Either then, or possibly sometime earlier, Mme Laura Dreyfus-Barney had presented to him a copy of the Persian version of Some Answered Questions[1] by 'Abdu'l-Baha. One day Sipahdar-i-A'zam opened the book to read the story of Badi', and as he read he recalled an incident of his early youth, and wrote his recollections in the margin. This is what he wrote:[2]

..... [1. For details regarding this remarkable book see Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 82-3.]

..... [2. The recollections are in Persian and are translated by the author.] [p. 304]

..... '6 Rabi'u'l-Avval 1331

..... 26 February AD 1913

..... Paris, Hotel d'Albe, Avenue Champs Elysee

..... "That year, when this letter [Baha'u'llah's Tablet] was sent, the messenger came to the Shah in the summer resort of Lar, and this is the full account of what happened.

..... "The late Nasiri'd-Din Shah was very fond of the summer resorts of Lar, Nur and Kujur. He ordered my father, Sa'idu'd-Dawlih the Sardar [Sirdar], and myself (then a youth with the rank of Sarhang [Colonel] to go to Kujur and find provisions and victuals for the royal camp. "I am coming", he said, "to the summer resort of Lar and from there to the resort of Baladih of Nur and thence to Kujur." These resorts adjoin each other and are contiguous. My father and I were in the environs of Manjil-i-Kujur when news reached us that the Shah had arrived at Lar, and that there he had put someone to death, by having him strangled. Then it was reported that this man [who was put to death] was a messenger of the Babis. At that time the word " Baha'i" was not known and we had never heard it. All the people rejoiced over the slaying of that messenger. Then the Shah came to Baladih of Nur. My father and I went forth to greet him. Near the village of Baladih, where a large river flows, they had set up the Shah's pavilion, but the Shah had not yet arrived. Kazim Khan-i-Turk, the Farrash-Bashi of the Shah, had brought the advance equipage. We wanted to pass by. My father, who had the rank of Mir-Panj [General] and had not yet received the title of Sa'idu'd-Dawlih, was acquainted with this Kazim Khan. He told me, "Let us go and visit this Farrash-Bashi." We rode up to the pavilion and dismounted. Kazim Khan was seated with much pomp in his tent. We entered the

tent. He received my father respectfully and showed me great kindness. We sat down and tea was served. The talk was about the journey. Then my father said, "Your Honour the Farrash-Bashi, who was this Babi and how was he put to death?" He replied, "O Mir-Panj! let me tell you a tale. This man was a strange creature. At Safid-Ab-i-Lar, the Shah mounted to go hunting. As it happened I had not mounted. Suddenly I saw two cavalymen galloping towards me. The Shah had sent for me. I immediately mounted, and when I reached the Shah, he told me that a Babi had brought a letter. 'I ordered his arrest,' the Shah said, 'and he is now in the custody of Kishikchi-Bashi [Head of the Sentries]. Go and take him [p. 305] to the Farrash-Khanih. Deal with him gently at first, but if not successful use every manner of force to make him confess and reveal who his friends are and where they are to be found--until I return from the hunt.' I went, took him from the Kishikchi-Bashi and brought him away, hands and arms tied. But let me tell you something of the sagacity and the alertness of the Shah. This man was unmounted in that plain and as soon as he raised his paper to say that he had a letter to deliver, the Shah sensed that he must be a Babi and ordered his arrest and the removal of any letter he had. He was then detained but had not given his letter to anyone and had it in his pocket. I took this messenger home. At first I spoke to him kindly and gently; 'Give me a full account of all this. Who gave you this letter? From where have you brought it? How long ago was it? Who are your comrades?' He said, 'This letter was given to me in 'Akka by Hadrat-i-Baha'u'llah.[1] He told me: "You will have to go to Iran, all alone, and somehow deliver this letter to the Shah of Iran. But your life may be endangered. If you accept that, go; otherwise I will send another messenger." I accepted the task. It is now three months since I left. I have been looking for an opportunity to give this letter into the hands of the Shah and bring it to his notice. And thanks be to God that today I rendered my service. If you want Baha'is, they are numerous in Iran, and if you want my comrades, I was all alone and have none. I pressed him to tell me the names of his comrades and the names of the Baha'is of Iran, particularly those of Tihran. And he persisted with his denial: 'I have no comrade and I do not know the Baha'is of Iran.' I swore to him: 'If you tell me these names I will obtain your release from the Shah and save you from death.' His reply to me was: 'I am longing to be put to death. Do you think that you frighten me?' Then I sent for the bastinado, and farrashes (six at a time) started to beat him. No matter how much he was beaten he never cried out, nor did he implore. When I saw how it was I had him released from the bastinado and brought him to sit beside me and told him once again: 'Give me the names of your comrades.' He did not answer me at all and began to laugh. It seemed as if all that beating had not harmed him in any way. This made me angry. I ordered a branding-iron to be brought and a lighted brazier. While they were preparing the brazier I said: 'Come and speak the truth, else I will have you branded'; and at that I noticed that his [p. 306] laughter increased. Then I had him bastinadoed again. Beating him that much tired out the farrashes. I myself was also tired out. So I had him untied and taken to the back of another tent, and told the farrashes that by dint of branding they ought to get a confession from him. They applied red-hot iron several times to his back and chest. I could hear the sizzling noise of the

burning flesh and smell it too. But no matter how hard we tried we could get nothing out of him. It was about sunset that the Shah returned from hunting and summoned me. I went to him and related all that had happened. The Shah insisted that I should make him confess and then put him to death. So I went back and had him branded once again. He laughed under the impact of the red-hot iron and never implored. I even consented that this fellow should say that what he had brought was a petition and make no mention of a letter. Even to that he did not consent. Then I lost my temper and ordered a plank to be brought. A farrash, who wielded a [p. 307] pounder used for ramming in iron pegs, put this man's head on the plank, and stood over him with the raised pounder. I told him: 'If you divulge the names of your comrades you will be released, otherwise I will order them to bring that pounder down on your head.' He began to laugh and give thanks for having gained his object. I consented that he should say it was a petition he had brought, not a letter. He even would not say that. And all those red-hot rods applied to his flesh caused him no anguish. So, in the end, I gave a sign to the farrash, and he brought down the pounder on this fellow's head. His skull was smashed and his brain oozed through his nostrils. Then I went myself and reported it all to the Shah."

..... [1. His Holiness Baha'u'llah. (HMB)]

..... "This Kazim Khan-i-Farrash-Bashi was astounded by that man's behaviour and endurance, astonished that all the beatings and application of red-hot metal to his body had no effect on him, causing him no distress. He said, "I went and told the Shah and was rewarded with a sardari [an outer garment], which was the Shah's own. We interred the corpse in the same place--Safid-Ab--and no one knows where it is." But now the Baha'is have discovered the place, and for them it is a place of pilgrimage.

..... "These utterances of Kazim Khan-i-Farrash-Bashi I heard with my own ears. He related it all to us. I was very young and I was astonished. That same letter the Shah sent to Tihran for Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani and other mullas to read and to answer. But they said that there was; nothing to answer; and Haji Mulla 'Ali wrote to Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik (who was the Premier at the time) to tell the Shah that, "If, God forbid, you should have any doubts regarding Islam and your belief is not firm enough, I ought to take action to dispel your doubts. Otherwise such letters have no answer. The answer was exactly what you did to his messenger. Now you must write to the Ottoman Sultan to be very strict with him and prevent all communications." Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz was living then. It was during his reign.'

..... '27 Rabi'u'l-Avval 1331, 2 March AD 1913

..... Written at the Hotel d'Albe in Paris.

..... "Tonight I could not sleep. Mme Dreyfus had sent me this book and I had not yet read it. It is early morning. I opened the book and read on till I reached the theme of Letters to the Kings, and to Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Because I had been there on that journey and had heard this [p. 308] [p. 309] account personally from Kazim Khan-i-Farrash-Bashi, I wrote it down.

..... 'A year and a half later, on the journey to Karbila, this Kazim Khan went mad. The Shah had him chained and he died miserably. The year I went to Tabriz, as the Governor-General of Adharbayjan, I found a grandson of his, begging. "Take heed, O people of insight and understanding".

..... Muhammad-Vali, Sipahdar-i-A'zam.'

The call of Baha'u'llah in the Tablet to the Qajar monarch resounds down the years:

..... O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me. Can any one speak forth of his own accord that for which all men, both high and low, will protest against him? Nay, by Him Who taught the Pen the eternal mysteries, save him whom the grace of the Almighty, the All-Powerful, hath strengthened....

..... I have seen, O Shah, in the path of God what eye hath not seen nor ear heard... How numerous the tribulations which have rained, and will soon rain, upon Me! I advance with My face set towards Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, whilst behind Me glideth the serpent. Mine eyes have rained down tears until My bed is drenched. I sorrow not for Myself, however. By God! Mine head yearneth for the spear out of love for its Lord. I never passed a tree, but Mine heart addressed it saying: 'O would that thou wert cut down in My name, and My body crucified upon thee, in the path of My Lord!'... By God! Though weariness lay Me low, and hunger consume Me, and the bare rock be My bed, and My fellows the beasts of the field, I will not complain, but will endure patiently as those endued with constancy and firmness have endured patiently, through the [p. 310] power of God, the Eternal King and Creator of the nations, and will render thanks unto God under all conditions. We pray that, out of His bounty--exalted be He--He may release, through this imprisonment, the necks of men from chains and fetters, and cause them to turn, with sincere faces, towards His Face, Who is the Mighty, the Bounteous. Ready is He to answer whosoever calleth upon Him, and nigh is He unto such as commune with Him.[33-8]

..... [33-8. Baha'u'llah, The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah, pp. 57, 59-60.]

This Letter, vibrant with power and endowed with authority, which the indomitable Badi' had brought and which he had stoutly refused to designate as a mere petition, was certainly disturbing to the capricious tyrant, who had banished Baha'u'llah from His native land and envisaged His further exile to far-off Rumelia. He was thus prompted to order the destruction of the fearless messenger. Yet, at least, he had the desire to have an answer sent to Baha'u'llah. But the spiritual mentors on whom Nasiri'd-Din Shah relied--Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani and his peers and associates--lacked the grace to acknowledge the challenge. And theirs were not those qualities of mind and spirit which would enable them to meet it. In the end theirs was the great loss and everlasting infamy, whilst the memory of the heroism and the sacrifice of that seventeen-year-old youth shines with fadeless splendour across the centuries, not to be obscured by the passage of time. [p. 311]

34

The Great Sacrifice

AND now occurred the great tragedy of the death of the Purest Branch--Mirza Mihdi, a son of Baha'u'llah. Mirza Mihdi, designated Ghosnu'llahu'l-Athar (The Purest Branch) by his Father, was the second surviving son of Baha'u'llah. He was the full brother of 'Abdu'l-Baha (Ghosnu'llahu'l-A'zam: The Most Great Branch) having the same mother, Navvabih Khanum. In 1870, he was twenty-two years old. It was his wont to go in the evening to the roof-top of the citadel to pray and meditate. There one gets a wonderful view of the pellucid blue of the Mediterranean, with the silhouette of Mount Carmel beyond the seascape; and to the other side lies stretched the plain of 'Akka with the majestic peak of Mount Hermon in the background. One evening, Mirza Mihdi, pacing up and down that roof-top engrossed with his thoughts and meditations, did not notice an open skylight and plunged through it to the floor below, falling upon a crate which pierced his chest. The injury proved fatal.

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi recalled that the sound of his fall and the rush of the companions towards him brought Baha'u'llah from His room. He anxiously enquired what had happened. The Purest Branch said that he had always counted his steps to that skylight but on that evening had forgotten to do so. An Italian physician was called in, but his treatment was of no avail. Although obviously suffering, the Purest Branch remained attentive to his visitors, the companions who came to stand or sit at his bedside and to attend to his needs. Aqa Husayn remembered that he would express his unease at having to lie down in their presence. Within twenty-two hours of his fall he breathed his last. Aqa Husayn recalled hearing Baha'u'llah lamenting aloud: 'Mihdi! O Mihdi!' He also recalled that before death overtook the Purest Branch, Baha'u'llah asked him: 'Aqa, what do you wish, tell Me', to which His son replied: 'I wish the people of Baha to be able to attain Your presence.' 'And so it shall be,' Baha'u'llah said; 'God will grant your [p. 312] [p. 313] wish.' The day of his death was 23 June 1870 (23 Rabi'u'l-Avval AH 1287).

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... His dying supplication to a grieving Father was that his life might be accepted as a ransom for those who were prevented from attaining the presence of their Beloved.

..... In a highly significant prayer, revealed by Baha'u'llah in memory of His son--a prayer that exalts his death to the rank of those great acts of atonement associated with Abraham's intended sacrifice of His son, with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn--we read the following: "I have, O my Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united.' And likewise, these prophetic words, addressed to His martyred son: 'Thou art the Trust of God and His Treasure in this Land. Erelong will God reveal through thee that which He hath desired.'[34-1]

..... [34-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 188.]

Aqa Husayn related that Shaykh Mahmud (whose wondrous story we shall shortly come by) told the Most Great Branch that he desired the honour of washing and shrouding the body of the Purest Branch, so that the guards should not lay their hands on that which was holy, and his offer was accepted; whereupon a tent was pitched in the yard, inside which the body of Mirza Mihdi was laid, and with the aid of some of the companions (one of whom was Ashchi himself), who brought water and other accessories, Shaykh Mahmud prepared the body of the martyred son of Baha'u'llah for interment. The Most Great Branch, sorely stricken by the death of His dearly-loved brother, His grief, Ashchi remarks, imprinted on His visage, was during that period walking outside the tent with rapid paces, keeping watch. And Aqa Rida says that the notables of 'Akka joined the funeral procession. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith further writes:

..... After he had been washed in the presence of Baha'u'llah, he 'that was created of the light of Baha', to whose 'meekness' the Supreme Pen had testified, and of the 'mysteries' of whose ascension that same Pen had made mention, was borne forth, escorted by the fortress guards, and laid to rest, beyond the city walls, in a spot adjacent to the shrine of Nabi Salih [the Prophet Salih], from whence, seventy years later, his remains, simultaneously with those of his illustrious mother, were to be translated [in December 1939] to the slopes of Mt Carmel, in the precincts of the grave of his sister, and under the shadow of the Bab's holy sepulcher.[33-2]

..... [33-2. *ibid.* pp. 188-9 (*God Passes By*). See also an account of this event by Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, *Baha'i World*, vol. VIII, pp. 253-8.]

During the few years of his adult life, Mirza Mihdi had acted as an amanuensis of his Father, and Baha'u'llah's Tablets in his distinguished handwriting are extant. According to Aqa Rida's testimony, who had seen him grow up to young manhood, he was a pillar of strength amongst the companions, from the days they came out of Baghdad to the day a tragic mishap brought his short and unsullied life to its conclusion, sitting with them at their gatherings, reading to them of that which flowed from the Supreme Pen, teaching them the lessons of courtesy and patience, of dignity and radiant submission to

the will of God. [p. 315]

35

The Gates Open

At last came a day, four months after the death of the Purest Branch, when the movement of troops in the Ottoman domain compelled the authorities to have access to and make use of the barracks of 'Akka. The gates were flung open and the exiles were sent to other accommodation within the city walls.

Baha'u'llah and His family were moved to the house of Malik, in the Fakhurah quarter, in the western part of the prison-city. The majority of the companions were lodged in a caravanserai, called Khan-i-'Avamid, close to the sea-shore. But a number of them found separate homes. Aqay-i-Kalim and his family went to live in a house within the compound of the caravanserai. The Khan-i-'Avamid or Khan al-'Umdan was built by Ahmad al-Jazzar using pillars brought from Caesarea. Its clock tower is a more modern structure, having been built to commemorate the jubilee of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid. It served as the first pilgrim house of the Holy Land and many eminent Baha'is, including Mishkin-Qalam, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, resided there. 'Abdu'l-Baha frequently entertained the pilgrims there and it is probable that Baha'u'llah also visited it.

Baha'u'llah's sojourn in the house of Malik lasted three months. Then He took residence in the house of Mansur Khavvam, which was situated opposite the previous house. Here too His stay was short. His next residence was the house of Rabi'ih. But after another four months He had to move once again, this time to the house of 'Udi Khammar, which in the words of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith 'was so insufficient to their needs that in one of its rooms no less than thirteen persons of both sexes had to accommodate themselves'. [35-1]

..... [35-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 189.]

'Udi Khammar was a notable of 'Akka, a Christian of the Roman Catholic (Maronite) denomination. He and his nephew, Ilyas 'Abbud, who was of the same persuasion and lived next door, were partners. 'Udi Khammar, in whose house Baha'u'llah and His family finally [p. 316] took their abode, was noted for his parsimony. However, about the time the exiles were condemned to banishment and incarceration in 'Akka, it was seen, to the astonishment of the populace, that he was planning to have a palatial home built for himself in the vicinity of Bahji, which was the palace[1] of 'Abdu'llah Pasha. Bahji was within half an hour's ride from the city; it was richly designed and equipped, surrounded by a delightful grove of lemon and orange trees, and with a large pond which was particularly inviting. With the passage of time 'Abdu'llah Pasha's palace passed into the possession of the Bayduns, a prominent Muslim family of 'Akka, who always remained antagonistic to the Faith of Baha'u'llah. In the opening years of this century, when a highly-placed commission of inquiry came from Istanbul with the sole aim of inculcating 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'Abdu'l-Ghani Baydun invited its members to stay in his mansion.

..... [1. Today it is a government centre for the handicapped.] [p. 317]

'Udi Khammar went ahead with the construction of his palace, but Ilyas 'Abbud considered it a madcap scheme and did not follow suit. However, some members of his family thought otherwise and had a number of houses built for themselves close to the mansion of 'Udi Khammar. When Khammar moved out of 'Akka to reside in his newly-built palace, he leased his house in the city to Baha'u'llah. Ilyas 'Abbud was greatly displeased and tried to prevent the transaction. He failed, but took steps to avoid all contact with the exiles, whom he reckoned to be in every way undesirable as neighbours. Then occurred a shameful and horrendous, but inevitable, event which outwardly justified Ilyas 'Abbud's worst fears. This was the murder of three Azalis at the hands of seven Baha'is, an appalling incident which added immeasurably to the rigours and burdens of Baha'u'llah's life, and wrung from His heart the cry:

..... My captivity cannot harm Me. That which can harm Me is the conduct of those who love Me, who claim to be related to Me, and yet perpetrate what causeth My heart and My pen to groan.... My captivity can bring on Me no shame. Nay, by My life, it conferreth on Me glory. That which can make Me ashamed is the conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the Evil One.[35-2]

..... [35-2. *ibid.* p. 190. (God Passes By)]

It will be recalled that two Azalis, partisans of Mirza Yahya, had been sent to 'Akka by the authorities to be confined there together with the Baha'is. Those two, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani (the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation) and Aqa Jan-i-Kaj-Kulah (of Salmas in Adharbayjan), on arrival at the citadel had asked to be accommodated elsewhere. Over the city gates and the jail, called Liman, into which desperadoes were cast, a room was found to suit them. It was a vantage-point from which they could spy and keep strict watch on all who came into 'Akka. Thus they reported immediately to the authorities the arrival of anyone whom they recognized as a follower of Baha'u'llah. Through their machinations Nabil-i-A'zam and Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini were expelled from 'Akka as soon as they passed through the gates. They even went further and beguiled a local man, who represented the Iranian consular service, with promises of rich rewards and decorations, should he join hands with them to foil and frustrate the Baha'is. This man was responsible for the immediate removal of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul-i-Zanjani and those who were with him. Then came Na'im Effendi from Cyprus. He had learned of the [p. 318] [p. 319] [p. 320] Baha'i Faith from the celebrated calligraphist, Mishkin-Qalam, who was exiled in that island. Na'im Effendi embraced the Faith zealously, attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, and was entrusted by the Most Great Branch with letters to take away with him. The Azalis and the Persian consular agent found out what had occurred and had Na'im Effendi detained when he was on his way to Haifa. The letters he had with him were confiscated and he himself was taken to Beirut and cast into prison, where he languished for six months. The Most Great Branch tried hard to dissuade the Persian agent from following his nefarious designs, but he had fallen too deeply under the influence of the Azalis.

According to Nabil-i-A'zam, even Caesar Catafago, who had become a follower of Baha'u'llah--and whose father, Khajih Louis, was the French consular agent in 'Akka[1] and had dispatched the Tablet addressed to Napoleon III--was for a while thoroughly beguiled by Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, although at a later date he saw the error of his ways and returned to his former allegiance. Na'im Effendi, when released, went back to Cyprus, where he prospered greatly and, according to Aqa Rida, after the annexation of that island by the British, was given a high position. Aqa Rida also relates that Na'im Effendi came to 'Akka a second time, with his two sons whom he was taking to Istanbul to receive higher education. On being asked whether he knew what had befallen the one who had once caused him so much suffering, he replied that he bore no grudge against him; the evil-doer, in truth, harms himself, he said, and God deals with him justly. That Persian consular agent had indeed fallen on evil days, for he had lost his family, his trade, his property, and almost his reason. Full of penitence, he would sometimes come to see the Baha'is to express his sorrow and remorse for the injuries he had, when at the height of power and influence, inflicted upon them.

..... [1. Louis Catafago was the French consular agent for 'Akka and Haifa for a number of years. Mary Rogers, in her book *Domestic Life in Palestine*, describes him as he appeared in 1858: 'One of our neighbours, Signor Luis Catafago, a widower, was the wealthiest and most influential of the Christian Arabs of Haifa, and more learned in Arabic literature than anyone in the Pashalic. He was well acquainted with Italian and French, and lived in semi-European style. His sons were brought up at college, and dressed like Europeans, though his little girls were quite Oriental.' (pp. 384-5)]

Siyyid Muhammad and Kaj-Kulah had, by the time the prison gates were opened to the exiles, been joined by Mirza Rida-Quli, the brother-in-law of Mirza Yahya, whom Baha'u'llah had expelled from the company of His followers for his oft-repeated misdeeds. Time and [p. 321] again, he had broken his solemn promises, until his actions could no longer be tolerated or condoned. With the addition of this recruit, the Azalis intensified their mischief-making. As they waxed bolder and bolder, Baha'u'llah increased His counsel to the companions to be patient and forbearing. On the other hand, with the freedom now gained, the Azalis were all the while seeking new allies to harm the Baha'is.

Then, Baha'u'llah revealed the Tablet which has become known in English as The Fire Tablet, so designated from its opening verse: 'Indeed the hearts of the sincere are consumed in the fire of separation'. This Tablet is unique amongst the Writings of the Author of the Baha'i Faith and immediately brings to mind that intense mystical communion which Jesus Christ experienced, during the last night of His life, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and also the cry which He [p. 322] uttered the next day on the Cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In reading The Fire Tablet one is moved to the depths of one's being by the agony of the Supreme Manifestation of God:

..... Baha is drowning in a sea of tribulation: Where is the Ark of Thy salvation, O Saviour of the worlds?... The branches of the Divine Lote-Tree lie

broken by the onrushing gales of destiny: Where are the banners of Thy succour, O Champion of the worlds?... The leaves are yellowed by the poisoning winds of sedition: Where is the downpour of the clouds of Thy bounty, O Giver of the worlds?...

And then comes the response:

..... O Supreme Pen, We have heard Thy most sweet call in the eternal realm: Give Thou ear unto what the Tongue of Grandeur uttereth, O Wronged One of the worlds! Were it not for the cold, How would the heat of Thy words prevail, O Expounder of the worlds? Were it not for calamity, How would the sun of Thy patience shine, O Light of the worlds? Lament not because of the wicked. Thou wert created to bear and endure, O Patience of the worlds.... By Thee the banner of independence was planted on the highest peaks, And the sea of bounty surged, O Rapture of the worlds. By Thine aloneness the Sun of Oneness shone, and by Thy banishment the land of Unity was adorned. Be patient, O Thou Exile of the worlds. We have made abasement the garment of glory, And affliction the adornment of Thy temple, O Pride of the worlds. Thou seest the hearts are filled with hate, And to overlook is Thine, O Thou Concealer of the sins of the worlds....

And then, once again, the Supreme Manifestation of Almighty God speaks:

..... Verily, I have heard Thy Call, O All-Glorious Beloved; And now is the face of Baha flaming with the heat of tribulation and with the fire of Thy shining word, and He hath risen up in faithfulness at the place of sacrifice looking toward Thy pleasure, O ordainer of the worlds.[35-3]

..... [35-3. A translation of the Fire Tablet revised 1979 by a committee of the Universal House of Justice.]

Let no one belittle and underestimate the dangers and hazards, the extreme gravity of the situation which the activities of the Azalis and their associates had engendered for the Baha'is within the enclave of 'Akka. Harassment was wearying, unbroken and ever-increasing. The life of Baha'u'llah was indeed imperilled by the venom of their hostility.

According to Aqa Rida, the fact that the views and attitudes of officials and notables, whose minds the Azalis had poisoned, were time and again changed by meeting the Most Great Branch, aroused in [p. 323] these evil-doers even more defiance and fury. Driven by boundless, consuming hate and jealousy, they strove the harder to injure Baha'u'llah and bring Him, His Cause and His followers into disrepute. Moreover, since their break with Mirza Yahya, we learn from Aqa Rida that Mirza Rida-Quli and his sister Badri-Jan expected to have their own way at all times and to receive the best of everything. Mirza Fadlu'llah, the son of Mirza Nasru'llah (who had died in Adrianople), and Aqa 'Azim-i-Tafrishi, who had come from Tihiran with the two brothers, Nasru'llah and Rida-Quli, as their servants, took themselves away and ceased to associate with Mirza Rida-Quli and Badri-Jan. This separation so incensed Mirza Rida-Quli that he went to the length of making a collection of some of the Writings of

Baha'u'llah, corrupting the text with alterations and interpolations to make them sound heretical, anti-social and provocative. These forgeries were widely circulated to incite the public.

It was then that some of the followers of Baha'u'llah began to think of putting an end to these activities. Apart from Aqa Husayn and Aqa Rida, whose accounts have frequently been referred to previously, our sources for this dire episode include two historical tracts, one by Mirza Aqa Jan, the amanuensis of Baha'u'llah, and the other by Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini. Both men were eye-witnesses and both broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah after His ascension.

An Arab believer named Nasir, who was also known as Haji 'Abbas, came to 'Akka from Beirut determined to silence the mischief-makers. In all probability, he was the same Nasir who was implicated in the murder of Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani, in Baghdad.[1] Once in 'Akka, his purpose was made clear, and not only would Baha'u'llah not countenance it, but He promptly ordered him to return to Beirut, which he did. Muhammad-Javad quotes a Tablet addressed to Nasir, which caused his return. The following is Professor Browne's translation of that Tablet:

..... [1. According to Nabil's Narrative, among the companions of Tahiri as she travelled from Baghdad towards Persia was a certain Abid and his son Nasir, who later was known as Haji 'Abbas. If this Nasir is the same man, and there seems little reason to doubt it, then his later actions would seem to reflect something of the fervour and impetuosity of those who surrounded that far-famed Babi heroine.]

..... HE is the Helper.

..... I bear witness that thou hast helped thy Lord, and art one of the helpers. To [the truth of] my testimony all things testify: this indeed is the root of [p. 324] [p. 325] the matter, if thou art of those who know. What thou dost by His command and approval is indeed the duty of help in the sight of thy Lord the All-knowing and All-understanding. Go hence and do not perpetrate that wherefrom mischief will result! Put thy trust in God: verily He will take whomsoever He will: verily He hath power over all things. Verily we have accepted what thou didst intend in the Way of God. Return to thy place: then commemorate thy Lord, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.[35-4]

..... [35-4. Browne, Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 53-4.]

After Nasir's departure, some of the companions, finding this highly-charged situation intolerable, went to Baha'u'llah to beg His permission to deal with the authors of mischief in their own way and bring their satanic activities to an end. Baha'u'llah, however, not only would not grant them the permission they sought, but counselled them most emphatically to shun all violence and retaliation. It seems that Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini, himself; was at first in league with those men, but withdrew from their company when bidden to do so by Baha'u'llah. Muhammad-Javad relates that he was present, when Aqa

Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Kashani was pleading with Baha'u'llah for permission to eliminate Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and his associates. Baha'u'llah directed Muhammad-Javad to go home and stay there, and commanded Mirza Muhammad-Quli, His brother, to eject Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim from His presence, which he did.

Seven of the companions, Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir, Mirza Husayn-i-Najjar (another native of Kashan), Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi (also of Kashan), Mirza Ja'far of Yazd, Ustad Ahmad-i-Najjar, Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani and Ustad 'Abdu'l-Karim-i-Kharrat, both of Isfahan, chose to disregard Baha'u'llah's strong injunction and began plotting to rid 'Akka and the exiles of the incubus of those evil men. There was such commotion afoot throughout the whole community that Baha'u'llah secluded Himself from all. He did what He had done in Adrianople at the time the rebellion of Mirza Yahya was about to come into the open, receiving no one, meeting no one.

Despite all this, these seven men persisted in their plans and committed those foul murders. Thus died Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation; the irredeemable Aqa Jan-i-Kaj-Kulah, the right-hand man of Siyyid Muhammad from the days of Adrianople; and the fickle Mirza Rida-Quliy-i-Tafrishi.

Let it be said at once that nothing condones murder. But the pressures to which the Baha'is were subjected can be measured by the fact that one of the seven men who murdered the Azalis was Aqa [p. 326] Husayn-i-Ashchi, whose recollections we have often quoted in these pages. Aqa Husayn, it is true, was headstrong and self-willed, even standing up to the highest among the authorities. But he had grown up in the household of Baha'u'llah from the early days in Baghdad, and his devotion was total and hard to match. Yet at this juncture he succumbed to the pressures inflicted on the Baha'is by their adversaries.

As it happened, the three Azalis were lodged in a house fronting the Seraye. The sound of pistol shots, and of shouts and yelling, brought Salih Pasha, the Mutasarrif, from his house. And then pandemonium broke out. Aqa Rida writes: 'All, young and old, notables and humble folk, the Governor, the Chief of Police, and troops rose up, as if a powerful state had made an attack on them. Armed with stones and sticks, swords and rifles, they set out towards the house of the Blessed Perfection and the houses of the companions, arresting whomever they met. The Mutasarrif and his retinue and troops gathered around the house of the Blessed Perfection. It was now late in the afternoon...'

As was His custom at this time of day, Baha'u'llah was absorbed in the revelation of verses: 'Verily, the sea of calamity hath surged, and gales have overtaken the Ark of God, the All-Encompassing, the Self-Subsistent. O Mariner! Be not daunted by gales, for He Who is the Breaker of Dawns is with Thee in this darkness which hath enveloped the worlds'. [35-5]

..... [35-5. Ishraq-Khavari, Rahiq-i-Makhtum, vol. II, p. 147, translated by H. M. Balyuzi.]

It was an hour after sunset that an army officer, an official whom Muhammad-Javad names as Sa'id Big, and Ilyas 'Abbud came into the biruni. The Most Great Branch, Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani, Husayn-Aqay-i-Tabrizi and Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini were there. They were asked by the officials to accompany them to the Seraye. Then they requested that Baha'u'llah should come as well. The Most Great Branch went into the inner quarters and presented their request to Baha'u'llah. He came out of the house, and, as it was quite dark, a man led the way with a lantern.

Aqa Rida tells us that all who encountered Him on that walk to the Government House marvelled at the power emanating from His person. One of the inhabitants of 'Akka, who saw Him on that day, instantly came to believe in Him and joined the ranks of the companions. [p. 327]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... The consternation that seized an already oppressed community was indescribable. Baha'u'llah's indignation knew no bounds. 'Were We,' He thus voices His emotions, in a Tablet revealed shortly after this act had been committed, 'to make mention of what befell Us, the heavens would be rent asunder and the mountains would crumble.' [35-6]

..... [35-6. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 189-90.]

When Baha'u'llah entered the Seraye, Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini writes, Salih Pasha, the Mutasarrif, Salim Mulki, the head of the secretariat, and other officials present stood up before Him. Baha'u'llah walked in and took a seat at the top end of the room. There was utter silence until, at last, the commandant of the garrison spoke: 'Is it meet that your men should commit such a heinous deed?' To which Baha'u'llah replied: 'Should a soldier under your command break a rule, would you be held responsible and punished for it?' Again there was total silence until Baha'u'llah rose up, according to Aqa Rida, and went into another room.

Then, officials went in search of other companions. Mirza Muhammad-Quli, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the second surviving son of Baha'u'llah, and Mirza Aqa Jan were brought in. But since Aqay-i-Kalim was indisposed they let him be. Throughout that night, Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini writes, the whole town was in great commotion. That same night a Russian steamer cast anchor before 'Akka, and immediately officials banned all entry to or exit from that ship.

Four hours after sunset, they took Baha'u'llah away from the office of the Mutasarrif and lodged him, together with His son, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, in a room in Khan-i-Shavirdi, while the Most Great Branch was led to the Liman (prison), and Aqa Mirza Muhammad-Quli was taken elsewhere. Mirza Aqa Jan was allowed to go home and bring all that Baha'u'llah required for the night. Then he was placed with a number of other companions in the gaol of the Seraye. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes of these events:

..... Baha'u'llah was ... kept in custody the first night, with one of His sons, in a chamber in the Khan-i-Shavirdi, [1] transferred for the following two

[p. 328] nights to better quarters in that neighbourhood, and allowed only after the lapse of seventy hours to regain His home. 'Abdu'l-Baha was thrown into prison and chained during the first night, after which He was permitted to join His Father. Twenty-five of the companions were cast into another prison and shackled...[35-7]

..... [1. Khan-i-Shavirdi is one of the caravanserais of 'Akka. Its date of construction is uncertain but it was probably built by al-Jazzar or Sulayman Pasha. In its south-eastern corner is the Burju's-Sultan, the only one still standing of the numerous Crusader towers that once surrounded 'Akka. The eastern wing of this khan is adjacent to the Liman and was used as an extension of it. Thus this is probably where Baha'u'llah and His son were imprisoned.]

..... [35-7. *ibid.* p. 190. (God Passes By)]

Aqa Rida relates the case of Haji 'Ali-'Askar, the same devoted soul who, at Adrianople, voluntarily accepted banishment to 'Akka and incarceration there. This veteran of the Faith had come face to face with the Bab, decades before, and had readily espoused His Cause. Now, not having been out of his house that day, he had not been arrested and taken away. But being informed of the detention of his fellow believers, he could not rest that night, and at dawn hurried to the Seraye and knocked at the gate. Although told to go away and not make a nuisance of himself, he continued to knock, insisting that he should share their fate. He would not hold his peace until he was pushed into prison with the rest of the companions. Aqa Rida also states that Mirza Muhammad-Quli was detained in the same room with Baha'u'llah.

Finally, the Mutasarrif cabled all that had occurred to Subhi [p. 329] Pasha,[1] the Vali of Syria, who took exception at once to the way Baha'u'llah had been treated and reprimanded the Mutasarrif. The next day, He was moved to the rooms above the Liman. In the afternoon of the third day, Muhammad-Javad writes, Baha'u'llah, the Most Great Branch, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Mirza Muhammad-Quli were led once again to the office of the Mutasarrif. Baha'u'llah had a slight fever that day, and when He told the Mutasarrif and the Mufti that they had not acted according to the edicts of God, the Mutasarrif informed Him that He was free to return home; as He rose to go, they all stood up and humbly apologized for their high-handed behaviour. Then He and the Most Great Branch, as well as Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, Mirza Muhammad-Quli and Mirza Aqa Jan, walked home.

..... [1. According to British consular records, Subhi Pasha arrived in Damascus 27 October 1871 to take up duties as Governor-General; he remained Governor until January 1873. (FO 195 976 and 1027)]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has thus described that occasion:

..... When interrogated, He was asked to state His name and that of the country from which He came. 'It is more manifest than the sun,' He [p. 330] answered. The same question was put to Him again, to which He gave the following reply: 'I deem it not proper to mention it. Refer to the farman of

the government which is in your possession.' Once again they, with marked deference, reiterated their request, whereupon Baha'u'llah spoke with majesty and power these words: 'My name is Baha'u'llah (Light of God), and My country is Nur (Light). Be ye apprized of it.' Turning then, to the Mufti, He addressed him words of veiled rebuke, after which He spoke to the entire gathering, in such vehement and exalted language that none made bold to answer Him. Having quoted verses from the Suriy-i-Muluk, He, afterwards, arose and left the gathering. The Governor, soon after, sent word that He was at liberty to return to His home, and apologized for what had occurred.[35-8]

..... [35-8. ibid. pp. 190-91. (God Passes By)]

The seven who were guilty of committing those murders were consigned to the Liman; their imprisonment lasted seven years. Sixteen others of the companions were moved after six days to Khan-i-Shavirdi, to the same room where Baha'u'llah had been held on the first night, and were confined there for six months.

Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini next records in his tract the murder of two other men, previous to the murder of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and his two accomplices. He names them as Husayn-'Ali of Kashan, known as Khayyat-Bashi, and Haji Ibrahim, also of Kashan; but he does not name those who murdered them. Apparently, these two men of Kashan, who had always been fickle, had been in communication with the Azalis, although they lived with the companions in Khan al-'Umdan. Muhammad-Javad writes that one day, in the bazar, Haji Ibrahim denounced Aqay-i-Kalim, in his presence, before the Mufti. This reprehensible behaviour roused the ire of the companions, and some of them (unnamed) murdered those two, and buried them in a room in the inn. This happened at a time when Baha'u'llah, because of the mounting animosity of the Azalis, had ceased admitting anyone into His presence. However, Siyyid Muhammad had noted their disappearance and had reported it to the authorities. But, at the time, there was no reason to suspect any crime. After the murder of the three Azalis, during the interrogation of the companions, the murder of the two Kashanis came to light. Again, Muhammad-Javad does not mention any names, but merely records that the authorities were told that the two had died of cholera, and lest all should be taken away and put into quarantine, they had been immediately and quietly interred in a room of the inn. The authorities exhumed their corpses and had them buried beside the Azalis. [p. 331]

Another point worth noting in the tract by Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini is that whereas the wife of Mirza Yahya, sister of Mirza Rida-Quliy-i-Tafrishi, has been named elsewhere as Badri-Jan, Muhammad-Javad calls her Badr-i-Jahan. And the sixteen men detained in the Khan-i-Shavirdi for six months are named as follows: Haji 'Ali-'Askar-i-Tabrizi, his son, Husayn-Aqa, and his brother, Mashhadi Fattah; Haji Ja'far and his brother, Haji Taqi; Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini, himself; Aqa Faraj-i-Sultanabadi; Aqa Riday-i-Shirazi; Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani; Haji Faraju'llah-i-Tafrishi; Aqa 'Azim-i-Tafrishi; Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani; Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Yazdi; Darvish Sidq-'Aliy-i-Qazvini; Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-Nayrizi, known as

Amir-i-Nayrizi; and Haji Aqay-i-Tabrizi.

Nabil-i-A'zam and Aqa Muhammad-Hasan, the son of Ustad Baqir-i-Kashani, were also detained for a few days, but since they were not of the company of the exiles they were sent to Tripoli, near Beirut.

The situation in which Baha'u'llah and His companions were now placed has been described by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith:

..... A population, already ill-disposed towards the exiles, was, after such an incident, fired with uncontrollable animosity for all those who bore the name of the Faith which those exiles professed. The charges of impiety, atheism, terrorism and heresy were openly and without restraint flung into their faces... Even the children of the imprisoned exiles, whenever they ventured to show themselves in the streets during those days, would be pursued, vilified and pelted with stones.

..... The cup of Baha'u'llah's tribulations was now filled to overflowing...[35-9]

..... [35-9. *ibid.* p. 191. (God Passes By)]

Even Ilyas 'Abbudwas so alarmed and terrified that he took steps to barricade his house against any access from the adjacent house of 'Udi Khammar, in which Baha'u'llah dwelt.

Aqa Rida gives a graphic account of the days of their detention in the Khan-i-Shavirdi. The artillerymen, stationed there to keep watch over them, were suspicious of any move they made, and treated them with great harshness. The exiles were constantly abused to their faces. However, their behaviour and their gentleness gradually broke down all barriers between them, until their gaolers confessed they had been misled by the lies fed to them. A day came at last, long before their release, when the exiles were allowed to visit other homes, as well as [p. 332] the house of Baha'u'llah. In the afternoon they entertained the artillerymen and the policemen to tea. They planted flowers in the yard and kept the old inn tidy. Each day one of them took charge of cooking and cleaning. Eventually their gaolers expressed their disgust at the attitude of those in high places, who remained adamant, refusing to let the exiles go home for good. But release was not far off. The Governor was dismissed, and Ahmad Big Tawfiq, appointed in his place, was a just man. [p. 333]

36

The Turn of the Tide

At last, Aqa Rida tells us, the men of the artillery revolted against the shilly-shallying of the authorities, took some of the exiles with them, and went to the Seraye, saying bluntly: 'We are soldiers, not gaolers. If these men are criminals then take them away and put them in prison. If not, let them go in peace to their homes. We refuse to act any longer as their keepers.'

Whereupon the authorities relented. Eventually, the newly-appointed Mutasarrif sent for the relevant papers and released the companions who had been confined

without cause in the Khan-i-Shavirdi.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... The gradual recognition by all elements of the population of Baha'u'llah's complete innocence; the slow penetration of the true spirit of His teachings through the hard crust of their indifference and bigotry, the substitution of the sagacious and humane governor, Ahmad Big Tawfiq, for one whose mind had been hopelessly poisoned against the Faith and its followers; the unremitting labors of 'Abdu'l-Baha, now in the full flower of His manhood, Who, through His contacts with the rank and file of the population, was increasingly demonstrating His capacity to act as the shield of His Father; the providential dismissal of the officials who had been instrumental in prolonging the confinement of the innocent companions--all paved the way for the reaction that was now setting in...[36-1]

..... [36-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 191.]

Indeed, Ahmad Big Tawfiq was so overwhelmed and captivated by the majesty of bearing, the charm of manners, the dignity of behaviour, and the vast knowledge of the Most Great Branch that, in order to show his reverence for Him, he would shed his shoes when in His presence. The writings of Baha'u'llah, which the antagonists had collected to turn the authorities against the Faith, also left a deep imprint on the mind of this just man, who was anxious to learn more. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith further writes:

..... It was even bruited about that his [Ahmad Big Tawfiq's] favored counselors were those very exiles who were the followers of the Prisoner in his [p. 334] custody. His own son he was wont to send to 'Abdu'l-Baha for instruction and enlightenment. It was on the occasion of a long-sought audience with Baha'u'llah that, in response to a request for permission to render Him some service, the suggestion was made to him to restore the aqueduct which for thirty years had been allowed to fall into disuse[1]--a suggestion which he immediately arose to carry out.[36-2]

..... [1. The aqueduct used to run from the spring at Kabri to the mansion of 'Abdu'llah Pasha at Mazra'ih, from there to Bahji and then to 'Akka, entering the city close to the Burj al-Kummandar. The first to build an aqueduct from Kabri to the city was al-Jazzar, but that aqueduct ran along a course to the east of the present one, which was built by Sulayman Pasha in 1814. It was improved by 'Abdu'llah Pasha who used it to supply his properties at Mazra'ih and Bahji. It had, however, evidently fallen into disrepair at the time of Baha'u'llah's arrival in 'Akka.]

..... [36-2. *ibid.* pp. 191-2. (*God Passes By*)]

Aqa Rida states that Ahmad Big Tawfiq met the Most Great Branch for the first time on the sea-shore, where 'Abdu'l-Baha had gone for a swim. The Mutasarrif came there too and sat down and listened to Him. He was led to seek 'Abdu'l-Baha's company by his perusal of the writings that had been handed over to the government in order to compromise the Faith. But reading them had the

opposite effect on him. He was greatly impressed and felt bewildered. So, finding that the Most Great Branch was by the sea, he went there, and all his doubts were dispelled. Subsequently he requested that all the writings of Baha'u'llah which were in his possession should be copied in the best calligraphic style for him.

Even Ilyas 'Abbud, who had been horrified to find himself a neighbour [p. 335] of Baha'u'llah, was now so subdued, so won over, and eventually, so devoted to Baha'u'llah and His eldest Son, that he knocked down the barriers he had erected between their two houses, and at last put his own house at the disposal of Baha'u'llah. It will be recalled that when 'Udi Khammar moved to his new mansion outside 'Akka, his house became available to Baha'u'llah and His family (see p. 317). This was the rear house, away from the sea-front, and Baha'u'llah took a room overlooking an open space at the back (the Sahatu'l-'Abbud). When, after a few years, Ilyas 'Abbud made his own house available to Baha'u'llah, He moved into a room looking on the sea, and the cramped conditions in which the family had lived were much relieved. Today that whole complex of houses in which Baha'u'llah and His family dwelt for six years is named after him alone: Bayt 'Abbud. It was through his intercession, repeated several times, that Baha'u'llah finally agreed to receive the Mutasarrif. As Aqa Rida puts it, one day, late in the afternoon, he went into the presence of the Blessed Perfection 'humbly and silently'. Ilyas 'Abbud was beckoning to others who were present to bring a qalyan (hookah or water-pipe) for the Governor, but Ahmad Big motioned them not to do so, for he [p. 336] would not indulge himself in the presence of his Prisoner, Baha'u'llah, Aqa Rida states, requested him to review the cases of all who had been detained. This the Mutasarrif proceeded to do at once, reviewing each case with care and equity, including the cases of the seven who were incarcerated in the dreaded Liman. Those who knew that the authorities had, in the past, asked for 300 pounds before allowing anyone to leave the Khan-i-Shavirdi, were amazed when he permitted the companions, who had been in custody there for several months, to return to their homes in the other caravanserai. The seven guilty of murder were not released, however, as we have heard.

But Badri-Jan was still agitating, complaining that her life was in danger, and that the companions would kill her as they had killed her brother, Mirza Rida-Quli. Therefore, Ahmad Big Tawfiq decided that she should rejoin her husband, Mirza Yahya, but she would not consent to go peaceably and had to be taken away forcibly by the police. Once in Cyprus, she again demonstrated her aversion to Mirza Yahya by giving wide berth to Famagusta and choosing to live instead in another city, apparently Nicosia. From Cyprus, after a year or two, she went to Izmir (Smyrna), and thence to Istanbul, where she dwelt in [p. 337] the house of a Persian dealer in tobacco. We know that her daughters were married to Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmani.[36-3] Six years later, hearing that the wife of Mirza Yahya, who was the mother of Mirza Ahmad, had died, she returned to Cyprus and joined her husband.

..... [36-3. See Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith,

pp. 21-3.]

Thus the two years of Ahmad Big Tawfiq's governorship passed, until he was recalled for another post. During those years no special favour was shown to him by Baha'u'llah and His eldest Son. But as soon as it became known that he was to go away, he was offered such hospitality as astonished the populace, until they learned that this could have been misconstrued while he held the reins of power in 'Akka. On the tower by the seaside, close to Bayt 'Abbud, the Greatest Branch had a tent set up for him, to receive his guests and those coming to bid him farewell. Luncheons and dinners were provided for all during the days that he tarried there, preparing to leave. He asked for a copy of the Greatest Name, which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the son of Baha'u'llah, who was truly a master of calligraphy, penned for him. Until the day of his departure from 'Akka, Ahmad Big Tawfiq continued to express his sorrow at his coming separation from Baha'u'llah and His eldest Son.

Thus did the tide turn, until no less a person than Shaykh Mahmud, the Mufti of 'Akka, gave his allegiance to the Prisoner, Who, according to the rescript of the Sultan, the Caliph of the House of Ottoman, was still to be kept in close confinement. But no one could ever dream now of enforcing that decree.

And now to the story of Shaykh Mahmud. He was a man well known in 'Akka, extremely fanatical, and, to begin with, extremely hostile to the exiles. Years later, after he had given his allegiance to Baha'u'llah, he recounted his spiritual odyssey. When he first heard the farman[1] of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz read in the mosque, he recalled, he boiled with rage and, not being able to contain himself, went to the gate of the citadel and demanded entry. He being a prominent figure amongst the citizens of 'Akka, the guards could not refuse his demand and allowed him to enter, but told him that he needed permission to go into the presence of Baha'u'llah. He asked for that permission, and the [p. 338] answer which came from Baha'u'llah was to the effect that he should first change his intent (which was to be abusive and insulting) before seeking a meeting. This reply shook him considerably but did not abate his hostility and ire. After a while, he made a second attempt to reach the presence of Baha'u'llah. This time he had a weapon hidden about him, intending to use it. Now the answer which came was: let him first divest himself of that which he is carrying. Shaykh Mahmud was truly astounded. Who is this man, he asked himself, who knows the secrets of hearts? At his third attempt he was a changed man, and was taken to Baha'u'llah's chamber. There and then he threw himself at the feet of Baha'u'llah, and declared his belief in Him, whoever He was.

..... [1. This farman was supposed to have been lost, at a time when the Seraye was burnt down, but it survived the disaster, and, many years later, it miraculously came into the hands of 'Abdu'l-Baha.]

Thus, Shaykh Mahmud, the erstwhile bitter foe, became a Baha'i, ever ready to be of service to his Lord.

Mirza Nuri'd-Din-i-Zayn (Zeine) states in his most valuable memoirs that Shaykh Mahmud used to go out into the countryside at night with a lantern and,

whenever he encountered a Baha'i come from afar and unable to gain entry into the city, he gave him the lantern to carry in front of him, as his servant; and thus he took the pilgrim into 'Akka, and into the citadel. And in the same way he would lead the pilgrim back to the safety of the countryside. And again, according to Mirza Nuri'd-Din's memoirs, after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, until the outer wall of the shrine-chamber was reinforced and strengthened, Shaykh Mahmud kept watch in a tent set up next to the wall. That construction work took about a week to complete. [p. 339]

37

The Marriage of the Most Great Branch

TWO brothers, natives of Isfahan, Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri and Mirza Hadiy-i-Nahri, were guided by the Babu'l-Bab to espouse most ardently the new Faith which had dawned at Shiraz. A third brother, Mirza Ibrahim, whose name is immortalized not because of his own attainments, but because of the achievements and the supreme sacrifice of his two sons,[1] did not go their way and not only held himself aloof, but helped to deprive his brothers of a good share of their patrimony because of their recognition of the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad when He shed His light upon the world.

..... [1. These sons were Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn, who gained the crown of martyrdom, and on whom the Most Exalted Pen conferred the designations Sultanu'sh-Shuhada (the King of the Martyrs) and Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada (the Beloved of the Martyrs).]

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Mirza Hadi were the sons of Mirza Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Nahri, a man of great wealth, whose father, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Hindi (the Indian), a native of Zavarih (a small town close to Isfahan), had acquired his vast riches in India by marriage to a daughter of an Indian royal house. During his sojourn in India, Siyyid Muhammad had been assured by a seer that his descendants would, before long, come to witness the advent of the Qa'im; thus he had specified in his will that the bulk of his wealth should be laid at the feet of that 'Lord of the Age'.

After the death of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Hindi, his son, Haji Siyyid Mihdi, migrated to 'Iraq and resided in Najaf. Both there and in Karbila he had shops and caravanserais built for the convenience of the public, and a rivulet (canal) dug which greatly benefited the people; hence he came to be known as Nahri (of the river).

In the days of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Mirza Hadi had seen a young Siyyid of Shiraz in Karbila, to whom they were greatly attracted by His demeanour, His devotion and His courtesy. And so, when first they heard of the dawning Light in Shiraz, [p. 340] their thoughts went back to the memory of that encounter with the young Shirazi Siyyid. They were not mistaken, for He was no other than Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad--the Bab.

It is related that the wife of Haji Siyyid Mihdi was a woman known for her piety and her observance of the devotions of her Faith. Prior to the birth of

her two sons, she dreamt one night that two moons, in the fulness of their splendour, came out of the well in the courtyard of their house and sought repose in the shelter of her garments. So thrilled was she by her dream that the next day at the hour of dawn she betook herself to the house of the celebrated mujtahid, Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Baqir-i-Shafti, to ask his interpretation. He told her to be well assured, for her dream denoted that two of her offspring would become shining lights, whose eclat would illumine the annals of their family. Soon after, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and, fifteen months later, Mirza Hadi were born. As they grew up, the elder showed talent and inclination for theological studies, and the younger chose to seclude himself from the mart, where his father engaged in buying and selling, to devote himself to a life of prayer and meditation. So impressed by his mien and attitude was that same mujtahid that he gave Mirza Hadi his own niece to be his wire. This lady, who eventually became the mother-in-law of the King of the Martyrs, was honoured by the title of Shamsu'd-Duha (the Luminous Orb) from the Most Sublime Pen (Baha'u'llah).

After the espousal of the Cause of the Bab by these two brothers, other sons of Haji Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Nahri rose up to oppose them and mulcted them of the major share of their inheritance. These two presented a box of jewels to Tahirih in Karbila, which had belonged to their father, Haji Siyyid Mihdi. From the proceeds of their sale, Tahirih was enabled to defray her expenses. Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was in Isfahan and lived in the theological college, Madrisiy-i-Kasihgaran, while his wife, their marriage being childless, lived and died in Karbila. It was then that Haji Aqa Muhammad-i-Nafaqih-Furush, another Babi of Isfahan, suggested to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to move from the Madrisih to his house and be wedded to his sister, with which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali complied. But this marriage too was childless, until the time when the Bab reached Isfahan.

The Governor of Isfahan, Manuchihr Khan, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, had asked Mir Siyyid Muhammad, the Imam-Jum'ih of that [p. 341] city, to receive and lodge the Bab; and the Imam-Jum'ih had appointed Mirza Ibrahim, the brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, who worked for the Imam in the management of his properties, to act as host to the Bab. One night, a number of people were invited to dine with the Bab, and Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri was one of the guests. The Bab asked him if he had any children, and on hearing that although married twice he had remained childless, the Bab offered a spoonful of His own sweet to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, who ate some and kept the rest for his wife. Not long after, she found herself with child.

But much had happened since those days of the Bab's sojourn in Isfahan, and He was now a prisoner in the castle of Mah-Ku in Adharbayjan, while His followers were experiencing fierce opposition and persecution. In response to the call of the Bab, Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, together with twenty-five Babis of Isfahan and its environs, set out for Khurasan, as did many other followers of the Bab, where they gathered in the hamlet of Badasht to take counsel together. Before leaving, he advised his wife, who was expecting their child, that should

a daughter be born to them she should be called Fatimih. It was this child, the first-born of the marriage of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri and the sister of Aqa Muhammad-i-Nafaqih-Furush, who was destined to become the wife of the Most Great Branch, the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali has recounted that when the Conference of Badasht had ended, and its participants were set upon by the people of Niyala, he and his brother, Mirza Hadi, together with other Babis, took a particular road to escape their tormentors. Mirza Hadi was much fatigued and faint and, happening upon an old ruined caravanserai, they all took refuge. In the course of the night Mirza Hadi died; when morning came, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali found that his companions had already gone. His plight seemed hopeless, for how could he find assistance to inter his dead brother? As he stood outside the gates of the caravanserai, gazing blankly at the waste around him, a woman appeared who stopped to ask; who he was and what he was doing there. Mirza Muhammad-'Ali replied that his dead brother lay within, and that he required help to consign him to his grave. To his amazement and relief the woman replied: 'Have no worry on that account. Last night I dreamt of the Lady, Fatimih. She told me, "One [p. 342] of my descendants has just died in that caravanserai; go and help with his interment." That is why I am here.' The woman went back to her village and presently returned with some men. They washed and shrouded the body of Mirza Hadi, and laid him to rest by the roadside. Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, utterly weary, his brother dead and all traces of his sister lost after Badasht, took the road back to Isfahan.

Years rolled by. Holocausts decimated the ranks of the Babis. The Bab, Himself, suffered martyrdom. Then came the attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, and many more of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's co-religionists' met the death of martyrs. Jinab-i-Baha, Whom Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had come to know at Badasht, was banished to 'Iraq. And in the meantime, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's nephews, Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn, had embraced the new Faith.

The fame of Jinab-i-Baha (Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nuri) was spreading far and wide. The uncle and his nephews decided to travel to 'Iraq to meet Him. On the way the nephews often besought their uncle to be their spokesman when they reached 'Iraq, and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali would assure them: 'Do not feel so anxious. At Badasht, Jinab-i-Baha and myself became great friends. I know Him very well.'

But as soon as they went into the presence of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri became almost tongue-tied, and his deference knew no bounds. On leaving the presence of Baha'u'llah, the nephews were insistent to know what had happened to their uncle, after all his claims of close friendship with Baha'u'llah. He could only reply: 'But this is not that Jinab-i-Baha whom I came to know at Badasht. I swear by the Almighty God that He is no other than the Promised One of the Bayan; this is "He Whom God shall make manifest".'

For His part, Baha'u'llah poured out His Divine love abundantly on these dedicated, self-effacing believers from Isfahan. And He, Himself, reminded

Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri: 'We, you must remember, were close companions and great friends at Badasht.'

Baha'u'llah intended to give His niece, Shahr-Banu Khanum, the daughter of Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, in marriage to His eldest Son. That was also the great hope of Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, who hurried to Baghdad and pleaded with Baha'u'llah to bring about this union. But he passed away before the Most Great Branch came of age. [p. 343] And when Baha'u'llah sent Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Kashani (the father of Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi) with a ring and a cashmere shawl (as was the custom of the day) to Tihran, to ask the hand of Shahr-Banu Khanum for 'Abbas, the Most Great Branch, both Shah-Sultan Khanum (known as Khanum Buzurg--the Great Lady), His half-sister who eventually sided with Mirza Yahya, and His half-brother, Haji Mirza Rida-Quli, who after the death of Mirza Muhammad-Hasan stood as father to Shahr-Banu, refused to allow her to go to 'Iraq to be wedded to the Most Great Branch. She was eventually married to Mirza 'Ali Khan, a son of the Grand Vizier, Mirza Aqa Khan. As her brother, Mirza Fadlu'llah, the Nizamu'l-Mamalik, a devout follower of Baha'u'llah, has recorded, Shahr-Banu Khanum was never reconciled to this marriage forced upon her by her aunt and uncle and pined all the rest of her young life, until consumption took her away. Haji Mirza Rida-Quli, it has been said, stood out against the marriage of Shahr-Banu and the Most Great Branch because he was [p. 344] afraid that Nasiri'd-Din Shah and his ministers would frown on this marriage and take him to task.

Naturally, speculation was rife as to whom the Most Great Branch would marry. It is reported that one day Baha'u'llah told Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahiji of a dream He had had. 'We dreamt', He said, 'that the face of the winsome girl, the daughter of Our brother Mirza Hasan, whom We had asked to be married to the Most Great Branch, became gradually darker and darker, until it vanished, and there appeared another girl, whose face was luminous and whose heart was luminous, and We chose her for the wife of the Most Great Branch.'

In the meantime, in Isfahan, Fatimih Khanum, the daughter of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, was wedded to her cousin, a younger brother of the King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of the Martyrs. Fatimih Khanum consented to this marriage, although she had not wished it. But strangely, on their wedding night, the bride-groom kept apart from the bride, to the utter astonishment of their relatives, and not long after, the young man suddenly passed away. Before long a Tablet addressed to the King of the Martyrs (Sultanu'sh-Shuhada') reached Isfahan, in which Baha'u'llah told him: 'We have considered you as related to Us', which rather made him wonder whether one of his relatives had sent a supplication to Baha'u'llah. He made enquiries and was assured that no one had. He advised them all not to breathe a word to anyone, but await what might follow that blessed Tablet. A few months passed, until Shaykh Salman, the courier, came to Isfahan. He told Sultanu'sh-Shuhada': 'I have brought you tidings of a wonderful bounty. I am commissioned to take your cousin, the daughter of the late Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, to the Holy Land, going by way of Mecca as pilgrims on hajj. You must make arrangements for us to leave Isfahan

in time for the pilgrimage, to travel to Shiraz and Bushihr. These preparations must be done quietly, and no one should know of our journey until a few days before our departure.' When the time came, Fatimih Khanum and her brother, Siyyid Yahya, accompanied by Shaykh Salman and a servant, left for Shiraz. On arrival there, they first took lodgings in a caravanserai, but the Afnans came soon and led them to the house of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, the maternal uncle of the Bab. This was in the year 1872.

The next day, Khadijih-Bigum, the wife of the Bab, called on Fatimih Khanum, and took her to the house of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, [p. 345] [p. 346] the martyred uncle of the Bab, where Khadijih-Bigum herself lived. These houses were close to each other. Fatimih Khanum, herself, writes in her short autobiography:[37-1]

..... [37-1. The author has made considerable use of this autobiography in this chapter, as source material and with quotations. The translation is his.]

..... The wife of the uncle [of the Bab] was a lady of great probity, always occupied with her devotions, but she was not confirmed in this wondrous Cause. [She was a half-sister of the wife of the Bab.] She used to say: 'What an uproar did this Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad of ours cause in this world! How many precious souls perished! How much blood was shed!' I would tell her politely: 'My dear Lady, this Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad of yours was the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad, the Promised One of all the Scriptures. Every time and in every age when the Call of God was sounded, the same uproar was caused in this world, and streams of blood flowed. It has ever been the same. You read the Qur'an, by day and by night. Do you not read there these verses: "...and whensoever there came to you a Messenger with that your souls had not desire for, did you become arrogant, and some cry lies to, and some slay?" and "Ah, woe for those servants! Never comes unto them a Messenger, but they mock at Him." [37-2] Then I read a few more verses from the Qur'an. She said: 'No one knows the true meaning of what is in the Qur'an, except God, and the people confirmed in learning.' I said 'Very well, be it so, with your view and your inclination! We will leave the Qur'an aside, and read from the Mathnavi [the great poetical work of Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi]. What did Pharaoh do with Moses? What did the people of Palestine do with Jesus? What did the people of Hijaz do with the Messenger of God?' ...We spent a good deal of time reading from the Mathnavi.... After our departure from Shiraz, she accepted the Faith.

..... [37-2. Qur'an 2:81 and 36:29; from Arberry, The Koran Interpreted.]

Fatimih Khanum, whom we shall soon know as Munirih Khanum, the name given to her by Baha'u'llah, then relates in her autobiography some of what she heard from the wife of the Bab about herself. Khadijih-Bigum told her:

..... One night, I dreamt that Fatimih [the daughter of the Prophet] had come to our house, to ask for my hand. My sisters and I went to her presence with great joy and eagerness. She rose up and kissed me on my forehead. In my dream, I felt that she had approved of me. In the morning, I got up very elated, but modesty stopped me telling anyone of my dream. The same day, in the

afternoon, the mother of that Blessed Being [the Bab] came to our house. My sister and myself went to meet her, and exactly as I had seen in my dream she rose up and, embracing me, kissed me on my forehead. When she had gone, I was told by my elder sister that she had come to ask for my hand. I said: 'How fortunate I am', and then, I related my dream of the previous night...

[p. 347]

The stay in Shiraz greatly delighted Fatimih Khanum, particularly by reason of consorting with the wife of the Bab. But, too soon for her, the time came when Shaykh Salman expedited departure on the next stage of their journey. He told Fatimih Khanum and Siyyid Yahya that Baha'u'llah specifically wanted them to travel with the caravan of pilgrims going to Mecca. They were eighteen days at sea before reaching Jiddah (Jaddih), and then went on to Mecca to perform the rites of the pilgrimage, in February 1873. There they met Siyyid 'Ali-Akbar-i-Dahiji (nephew of Siyyid Mihdi) and his wife, who had come from the Holy Land to perform the hajj. From them they learned to their consternation that, because of certain recent events (the murder of the Azalis), the companions had been, once again, thrown into gaol, and no one was allowed to enter 'Akka. But Shaykh Salman was certain that because it had been the wish of Baha'u'llah, a way would be found for them to go into 'Akka. Returning from Mecca, they found at Jiddah a letter from Mirza Aqa Jan awaiting them. It instructed them to remain in that sea-town until all the pilgrims had gone home, and then proceed to Alexandria and await there a cable from the Holy Land. Fatimih Khanum writes that there were seventeen of them (Baha'is) thus gathered in Alexandria. At last, a cable came from Baha'u'llah, directing them all to disperse except their party of four--Fatimih Khanum, Siyyid Yahya, Shaykh Salman and their servant--who were to take the Austrian boat to 'Akka, where they would be met by 'Abdu'l-Ahad. This 'Abdu'l-Ahad, a native of Shiraz, had been directed by Baha'u'llah, when it had become apparent that He would be banished to 'Akka, to go there and establish himself. Being free and under no restraint, 'Abdu'l-Ahad could thus be of service to the companions, who did as they were bidden; but when the steamer anchored before 'Akka, there was no sign of 'Abdu'l-Ahad. All the passengers disembarked, the ship was emptied, night came on, and the gangway was raised. Shaykh Salman was calling aloud, all the while, Fatimih Khanum recalls, until, at the very last minute, 'Abdu'l-Ahad came in a boat; once again the steps were lowered and they left the steamer. It was very dark, Fatimih Khanum writes, and she saw no one on the landing-stage except Aqay-i-Kalim and Ilyas 'Abbud. But later the Greatest Holy Leaf told her that the Most Great Branch had also been on the quayside, at the behest of Baha'u'llah, although she had failed to see Him. Aqay-i-Kalim took [p. 348] them to the Khan-i-Jurayni (also known as Khan al-'Umdan), where he and his family lodged. The next day, members of the family of Baha'u'llah called to conduct those who had newly arrived to His presence. Fatimih Khanum writes, 'His very first words were: "We brought you into the prison-city, at a time when the prison-gates were closed in the face of all, to make clear and evident to all the power of God.'" Fatimih Khanum lived for five months in the home of Aqay-i-Kalim. She attained the presence of Baha'u'llah every now and then, and

whenever Aqay-i-Kalim came from the presence of Baha'u'llah, he had with him a gift for her. And then, she writes:

..... One day, Aqay-i-Kalim told me: 'I have brought you a wonderful gift from the Blessed Perfection. He has given you a new name: Munirih [Luminous].'
Hearing that, I immediately recalled the dream of which the Blessed Perfection had spoken to Aqa Siyyid Mihdi, who had related it to us: 'In the world of dreams, I saw that the daughter of My brother, Mirza Hasan, fell ill, the colour of her visage changed, and gradually she became more and more slender and weak, until she departed from this world; and in her place stood a girl with a luminous face and a luminous heart, and We chose her for the Most Great Branch.' Because of the lack of a house, I lived in the house of Aqay-i-Kalim, and whenever Khajih 'Abbud, the landlord, asked the reason, no definite answer was given to him, until he himself realized that it was the lack of space. Thereupon, he immediately opened up a room in his own house to the quarters where the members of the Holy Family lived, and had it beautifully decorated.

Khajih 'Abbud presented this room to Baha'u'llah, saying, 'I have had this room prepared for the Master.' Baha'u'llah accepted it, and there was no longer any hindrance to the wedding of the Most Great Branch. Baha'iyyih Khanum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, gave Munirih Khanum a white dress to wear, and at three hours after sunset she was led into the presence of Baha'u'llah, Who was then resting, as Munirih Khanum writes, under a mosquito net. Then the Tongue of Grandeur thus addressed her:

..... O My Leaf and My Handmaiden, verily We chose thee and accepted thee to serve My Most Great Branch, and this is by My grace which is not equalled by all the treasures of Earth and Heaven. Many maidens, in Baghdad, in Adirnih, in this Most Great Prison, hoped for this bounty, but it was not given to them. You must render thanks unto God for this great bounty, and this exalted bestowal given unto you. May God be with you.

[p. 349] [p. 350] [p. 351]

38

Last Years within the City Walls

IT was in Bayt 'Abbud, in the year 1873, during the governorship of Ahmad Big Tawfiq, that Baha'u'llah completed the revelation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas--the Most Holy Book--containing the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, and much else besides. He had but recently taken His residence in this house belonging to 'Udi Khammar, and the troubles inflicted upon Him by enemies and even His own companions still surged about Him. The Kitab-i-Aqdas superseded the Kitab-i-Bayan revealed by the Bab, and its 'promulgation', in the words of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, 'may well rank as the most signal act of His ministry...'

In his exposition of the range and significance of this unique Book, some lines of which are quoted below, the Guardian discloses a vision of the central and majestic part the Kitab-i-Aqdas is destined to take in the unfoldment of world

society.

..... Alluded to in the Kitab-i-Iqan; the principal repository of that Law which the Prophet Isaiah had anticipated, and which the writer of the Apocalypse had described as the 'new heaven' and the 'new earth,' as 'the Tabernacle of God,' as the 'Holy City,' as the 'Bride,' the 'New Jerusalem coming down from God,' this 'Most Holy Book,' whose provisions must remain inviolate for no less than a thousand years, and whose system will embrace the entire planet, may well be regarded as the brightest emanation of the mind of Baha'u'llah, as the Mother Book or His Dispensation, and the Charter of His New World order.

..... ...this Book, this treasury enshrining the priceless gems of His Revelation, stands out, by virtue of the principles it inculcates, the administrative institutions it ordains and the function with which it invests the appointed Successor of its Author, unique and incomparable among the world's sacred Scriptures. ...the Kitab-i-Aqdas, revealed from first to last by the Author of the Dispensation Himself, not only preserves for posterity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest, but ordains, in addition to the function of interpretation [p. 352] which it confers upon His Successor, the necessary institutions through which the integrity and unity of His Faith can alone be safeguarded.

..... In this Charter of the future world civilization its Author--at once the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of mankind--announces to the kings of the earth the promulgation of the 'Most Great Law'; pronounces them to be His vassals; proclaims Himself the 'King of Kings'; disclaims any intention of laying hands on their kingdoms; reserves for Himself the right to 'seize and possess the hearts of men'; warns the world's ecclesiastical leaders not to weigh the 'Book of God' with such standards as are current amongst them; and affirms that the Book itself is the 'Unerring Balance' established amongst men. In it He formally ordains the institution of the 'House of Justice,' defines its functions, fixes its revenues, and designates its members as the 'Men of Justice,' the 'Deputies of God,' the 'Trustees of the All-Merciful,' alludes to the future Center of His Covenant, and invests Him with the right of interpreting His holy Writ; anticipates by implication the institution of Guardianship; bears witness to the revolutionizing effect of His World Order; enunciates the doctrine of the 'Most Great Infallibility' of the Manifestation of God; asserts this infallibility to be the inherent and exclusive right of the Prophet; and rules out the possibility of the appearance of another Manifestation ere the lapse of at least one thousand years...

..... The significant summons issued to the Presidents of the Republics of the American continent to seize their opportunity in the Day of God and to champion the cause of justice; the injunction to the members of parliaments throughout the world, urging the adoption of a universal script and language; His warnings to William I, the conqueror of Napoleon III; the reproof He administers to Francis Joseph, the Emperor of Austria; His reference to 'the lamentations of Berlin' in His apostrophe to 'the banks of the Rhine'; His

condemnation of 'the throne of tyranny' established in Constantinople, and His prediction of the extinction of its 'outward splendor' and of the tribulations destined to overtake its inhabitants; the words of cheer and comfort He addresses to His native city, assuring her that God had chosen her to be 'the source of the joy of all mankind'; His prophecy that 'the voice of the heroes of Khurasan' will be raised in glorification of their Lord; His assertion that men 'endued with mighty valor' will be raised up in Kirman who will make mention of Him; and finally, His magnanimous assurance to a perfidious brother who had afflicted Him with such anguish, that an 'ever-forgiving, all-bounteous' God would forgive him his iniquities were he only to repent--all these further enrich the contents of a Book designated by its Author as 'the source of true felicity,' as the 'Unerring Balance,' as the 'Straight Path' and as the 'quickener of mankind.' [38-1]

..... [38-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 213-15.]

'So vast is its range', was Baha'u'llah's own testimony, 'that it encompassed all men ere their recognition of it. Ere long will its sovereign [p. 353] power, its pervasive influence and the greatness of its might be manifested on earth.' [38-2]

..... [38-2. Quoted in *A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 3.]

Ahmad Big Tawfiq, the benevolent governor, was succeeded by 'Abdu'r-Rahman Pasha, a man double-faced, who began his game of duplicity soon after his arrival. Outwardly, he was all friendliness, and when meeting the Most Great Branch on several occasions, he would display both amity and respect. But, in stealth, he was keeping in close touch with the adversaries of the Faith amongst the inhabitants of 'Akka. Together they planned a systematic campaign against the Baha'is. Report after report to higher authorities pressed the complaint that these exiles, who had been sent to 'Akka to be segregated lest they contaminate others, had gained a high measure of freedom, met with anyone they liked, went unhindered wherever they pleased, had profitable shops, conducted remunerative businesses. At last, an order came, stating that as the Baha'is were prisoners they had no right to keep shops and engage in business. 'Abdu'r-Rahman Pasha was greatly delighted with these fresh instructions from his superiors and decided to put them into effect in a dramatic way. As it was the month of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, he planned to walk into the bazar with his men, and order the Baha'is to close and abandon their shops. Such a public act by the governor of the city would, undoubtedly, have been highly damaging to the reputation of the Baha'is.

The Most Great Branch was cognizant of these trickeries of the Mutasarrif, and Baha'u'llah instructed the companions to keep their shops closed. When the day came and 'Abdu'r-Rahman Pasha walked into the bazar, all haughtiness and pomposity, attended by a circle of fawning officials as well as some of the adversaries of the Faith, he found the first shop owned by a companion shut, then the next, the third, and the fourth. 'It is the month of Ramadan,' he

commented, 'and they have not opened their shops early. But they are certain to come before long and open them.' So he waited in the house of the sentry for an hour or two, but still there Was no sign of any Baha'i coming to open his shop. Just then, into the midst of that company walked the Mufti, an expression of concern on his face and holding a sheet of paper which he passed to the Governor. It was a cable from Raf'at Big, in Damascus, announcing the dismissal of 'Abdu'r-Rahman Pasha, and the temporary appointment of As'ad Effendi in [p. 354] his place; he also asked that his greetings be conveyed to His Eminence 'Abbas Effendi. 'Abdu'r-Rahman Pasha was aghast, and the adversaries of the Faith dumbfounded. In the meantime, the head of the telegraph office had hurried with a copy of the cable to show it to 'Abdu'l-Baha. Had 'Abbas Effendi, an official queried, been in communication with high authorities? No, the Most Great Branch replied, He had not made any complaint to anyone; He had only turned to the Concourse on high. The official, Aqa Rida tells us, affirmed that what had occurred was unprecedented, indeed, a miracle.

As'ad Effendi had been commissioned to investigate in 'Akka the reports concerning the Baha'is, prior to the appointment of another governor. The well-wishers of the Faith had warned him against hasty action or any display of power; these exiles, they had told him, were people who should receive every consideration. He had well understood the situation, and when he reached 'Akka all he said was that his superiors had laid on him the duty of investigation. That was why he wished to go into the presence of Baha'u'llah. Although informed that Baha'u'llah did not receive visitors, he repeated his request, for it had been stated in the reports drawn up by the adversaries of the Faith that Baha'u'llah could not be seen because He was not there; He had managed to take Himself away. Once again Ilyas 'Abbudinterceded, Baha'u'llah granted the request, and As'ad Effendi came. He entered the presence of Baha'u'llah with humility and reverence, knelt down and kissed the hem of His garment, and begged for His blessings and confirmation.

As'ad Effendi remained acting mutasarrif for a time, until Faydi Pasha came. During the new Governor's short tenure of office he did a great deal to further the cause of education in 'Akka, and also to secure for the city a good supply of fresh water. Towards the exiles he displayed a very friendly manner. And now another miracle was witnessed by all in 'Akka, when, from deep wells that had carried only brackish water, fresh water suitable for human consumption gushed out. Describing this period, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has written:

..... Though Baha'u'llah Himself practically never granted personal interviews, as He had been used to do in Baghdad, yet such was the influence He now wielded that the inhabitants openly asserted that the noticeable improvement in the climate and water of their city was directly attributable to [p. 355] His continued presence in their midst. The very designations by which they chose to refer to him, such as the 'august leader,' and 'his highness' bespoke the reverence with which He inspired them.[38-3]

..... [38-3. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 192.]

After nearly two months Faydi Pasha was called back to Istanbul, and was replaced by Ibrahim Pasha Haqqi, who also acted with great rectitude and friendliness. Mustafa Diya Pasha, who followed him, and stayed as Mutasarrif of 'Akka for some years, showed even more goodwill than his predecessors and went so far as to indicate that Baha'u'llah could at any time leave the boundary of the city walls and establish His residence in the countryside; but Baha'u'llah did not accede to that invitation. Indeed, we are told by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, 'for almost a decade, [Baha'u'llah] had not set foot beyond the city walls, and [His] sole exercise had been to pace, in monotonous repetition, the floor of His bed-chamber.' [38-4]

..... [38-4. ibid. p. 193. (God Passes By)]

But now, let us read in the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha how it happened that His Father left for ever the confines of the city walls. [p. 356]

[p. 357]

..... Baha'u'llah loved the beauty and verdure of the country. One day He passed the remark: 'I have not gazed on verdure for nine years. The country is the world of the soul, the city is the world of bodies.' When I heard indirectly of this saying I realized that He was longing for the country, and I was sure that whatever I could do towards the carrying out of His wish would be successful. There was in 'Akka at that time a man called Muhammad Pasha Safwat [a great-nephew of 'Abdu'llah Pasha], who was very much opposed to us. He had a palace called Mazra'ih, about four miles north of the city, a lovely place, surrounded by gardens and with a stream of running water. I went and called on this Pasha at his home. I said: 'Pasha, you have left the palace empty, and are living in 'Akka.' He replied: 'I am an invalid and cannot leave the city. If I go there it is lonely and I am cut off from my friends.' I said: 'While you are not living there and the place is empty, let it to us ' He was amazed at the proposal, but soon consented. I got the house at a very low rent, about five pounds per annum, paid him for five years and made a contract. I sent laborers to repair the place and put the garden in order and had a bath built. I also had a carriage prepared for the use of the Blessed Beauty [Jamal-i-Mubarak]. One day I determined to go and see the place for myself. Notwithstanding the repeated injunctions given in successive firmans that we were on no account to pass the limits of the city walls, I walked out through the City [p. 358] Gate. Gendarmes were on guard, but they made no objection, so I proceeded straight to the palace. The next day I again went out, with some friends and officials, unmolested and unopposed, although the guards and sentinels stood on both sides of the city gates. Another day I arranged a banquet, spread a table under the pine trees of Bahji, and gathered round it the notables and officials of the town. In the evening we all returned to the town together.

..... One day I went to the Holy Presence of the Blessed Beauty and said: 'The palace at Mazra'ih is ready for You, and a carriage to drive You there.' (At that time there were no carriages in 'Akka or Haifa.) He refused to go, saying: 'I am a prisoner.' Later I requested Him again, but got the same

answer. I went so far as to ask Him a third time, but He still said 'No!' and I did not dare to insist further. There was, however, in 'Akka a certain Muhammadan Shaykh, a well-known man with considerable influence, who loved Baha'u'llah and was greatly favored by Him. I called this Shaykh and explained the position to him. I said, 'You are daring. Go tonight to His Holy Presence, fall on your knees before Him, take hold of His hands and do not let go until He promises to leave the city!' He was an Arab.... He went directly to Baha'u'llah and sat down close to His knees. He took hold of the hands of the Blessed Beauty and kissed them and asked: 'Why do you not leave the city?' He said: 'I am a prisoner.' The Shaykh replied: 'God forbid! Who has the power to make you a prisoner? You have kept yourself in prison. It was your own will to be imprisoned, [p. 359] and now I beg you to come out and go to the palace. It is beautiful and verdant. The trees are lovely, and the oranges like balls of fire!' As often as the Blessed Beauty said: 'I am a prisoner, it cannot be,' the Shaykh took His hands and kissed them. For a whole hour he kept on pleading. At last Baha'u'llah said, 'Khayli khub (very good)' and the Shaykh's patience and persistence were rewarded....[1] In spite of the strict firman of 'Abdu'l-'Aziz which prohibited my meeting or having any intercourse with the Blessed Perfection, I took the carriage the next day and drove with Him to the palace. No one made any objection. I left Him there and returned myself to the city.[38-5]

..... [1. 'Khayli khub' is Persian. Shaykh 'Aliy-i-Miri was Mufti of 'Akka. (HMB)]

..... [38-5. Esslemont, Baha'u'llah and the New Era, chapter 3.]

Mazra'ih was a very pleasant place, far away from the turmoil of 'Akka. It had been the property of 'Abdu'llah Pasha, a summer lodge which he had built on land owned by his father. A complex of houses inside 'Akka, where, in later times, 'Abdu'l-Baha resided for a number of years, and where Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, was born, had likewise belonged to 'Abdu'llah Pasha. Today, apart from his palace at Bahji (which has considerably changed its character [p. 360] and has lost its old designation), all the other residences of 'Abdu'llah Pasha, both inside and outside 'Akka, are in the possession of the World Centre of the Baha'i Faith.

Now, at long last, Baha'u'llah was freed from the oppressive atmosphere of 'Akka and of those who still opposed Him, and Mazra'ih, set in such charming countryside, with its eastern view of valley and near hills, the sea not far to the west, offered Him the first surcease for many a year from the constant assaults to eye and ear of His confinement within the crowded city walls. In the words of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, this residence and the 'garden of Na'mayn, a small island, situated in the middle of a river to the east of the city, honoured with the appellation of Ridvan, and designated by Him the "New Jerusalem" and "Our Verdant Isle", became His 'favourite retreats'. [38-6]

..... [38-6. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 193.]

At the height of the stringencies of incarceration, Baha'u'llah had written:

'Fear not. These doors shall be opened, My tent shall be pitched on Mount Carmel, and the utmost joy shall be realized.'[38-7]

..... [38-7. Esslemont, idem. (Baha'u'llah and the New Era, ch. 3.)

Viewing the circumstances of the exile and the imprisonment of Baha'u'llah--the strict and harsh edicts of the Sultan of Turkey, who [p. 361] was also recognized as the Caliph, the supreme Pontiff of Islam; the character, the deviousness, and the vagaries of the Ottoman despotism and its officialdom; the relentless persecution engineered by the Iranian authorities, dogging the footsteps of the exiles right into the prison-city and its grim citadel; and the added tribulations caused by the foul murder of the partisans of Mirza Yahya--who would have thought that within only nine years of the arrival of the exiles in 'Akka, no less a person than Shaykh 'Aliy-i-Miri, the mufti of that city, would go down on his knees before Baha'u'llah, to beg Him to leave the confines of the city walls and establish His residence in the countryside?

And yet all that Baha'u'llah had foretold in the darkest days had come to pass; all the gates were opened, He had moved out of 'Akka, unhindered, and His tent would be raised on Mount Carmel. [p. 362]

39

The Years at Bahji

TWO years after Baha'u'llah took His residence in Mazra'ih, the mansion which today is known as Bahji (Delight), and which 'Udi Khammar had built for himself and his family in proximity to 'Abdu'llah Pasha's old palace, fell vacant. An epidemic raged in the countryside, people fled, 'Udi Khammar died in 1879 and was buried by the wall of his mansion. Then, the Most Great Branch moved to secure the mansion of 'Udi Khammar for His Father. It was rented at first and then purchased, and Baha'u'llah moved there in September 1879. This majestic Mansion of Bahji remained the residence of Baha'u'llah for the rest of His life, and it was here that His ascension occurred in 1892. Bahji was not far from the seashore, but it was far enough from the bleak and drab surroundings of 'Akka to possess rural beauty, the charm of the countryside. The pine trees that grew close to it, and can be seen there right to the present day, added to its charm. From the windows of His room Baha'u'llah could see the blue waters of the Mediterranean, the high minarets of 'Akka, and, beyond the bay, the dim outline of the gentle slope of Mount Carmel. The Mansion, in all its beauty and splendour, stands guard today over the adjoining Shrine, which for the Baha'is is the most sacred spot on the face of the earth, for it harbours the mortal remains of Baha'u'llah. In its radius one can experience that peace for which one's soul has ever yearned.[1] [1. Bahji is the name of a beautiful garden planted by Sulayman Pasha for his daughter, Fatimih. 'Abdu'llah Pasha, whose father, 'Ali Pasha, had owned the area, further beautified it and built a mansion on the site for his harem. When Ibrahim Pasha besieged 'Akka in 1831, he used this mansion as his headquarters. The property, which had become famous for its beautiful gardens and cool, refreshing pond fed by the water of the aqueduct, passed in Baha'u'llah's time into the possession of the al-Jamals, a

Christian family who were later to become enemies of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Later still, it came into the possession of the Baydun family, who were also enemies of the Faith. The mansion is now a government institution for the handicapped. The Mansion of Baha'u'llah at Bahji was built by 'Udi Khammar, close to 'Abdu'llah Pasha's mansion and on land bought from the Jamals. Old accounts and maps indicate that a building existed on this site, on the foundations of which 'Udi Khammar built; according to the inscription on the Mansion, it was completed in 1870. Presumably, it was 'Udi Khammar's son, Andravis Khammar, who later rented it to 'Abdu'l-Baha for Baha'u'llah's residence.] [p. 363]

Dr J. E. Esslemont, the immortal author of Baha'u'llah and the New Era, thus describes the life at Bahji:

..... Having in His earlier years of hardship shown how to glorify God in a state of poverty and ignominy, Baha'u'llah in His later years at Bahji showed how to glorify God in a state of honour and affluence. The offerings of hundreds of thousands of devoted followers placed at His disposal large funds which He was called upon to administer. Although His life at Bahji has been described as truly regal, in the highest sense of the word, yet it must not be imagined that it was characterized by material splendour or extravagance. The Blessed Perfection and His family lived in very simple and modest fashion, and expenditure on selfish luxury was a thing unknown in that household. Near His home the believers prepared a beautiful garden called Ridvan, in which He often spent many consecutive days or even weeks, sleeping at night in a little cottage in the garden. Occasionally He went further afield. He made several visits to 'Akka and Haifa, and on more than one occasion pitched His tent on Mount Carmel as He had predicted when imprisoned in the barracks at 'Akka....[39-1]

..... [39-1. Esslemont, Baha'u'llah and the New Era, chapter 3.]

Baha'u'llah visited the homes of the companions in 'Akka from time to time, and frequently went over, by day and night, to the homes of His two brothers: Mirza Muhammad-Quli, who had lodgings overlooking Khan-i-Shavirdi, and Aqay-i-Kalim, who once lodged in Khan al-Umdan and then in premises above Khan-i-Pahlavan, which was on the right of the entrance of the Suq al-Abyad (oriental market). There were several gardens in the vicinity of Mazra'ih and the Mansion of Bahji, such as the Garden of Ridvan, the garden of Firdaws, the gardens of Junaynih and Bustan-i-Kabir at Mazra'ih. He also [p. 364] visited nearby villages, such as Yirkih and Abu-Sinan. At Yirkih, He had His tent pitched on the top of a hill, spending the day in the tent and the night in the village itself. Then there were hills nearer to 'Akka, such as Tall-i-Fakhkhar, which is also known as Napoleon's Hill, and is situated near the Garden of Ridvan; recent archeological work has demonstrated that it is the site of the ancient Phoenician/Canaanite city of 'Akka. And the hill named Samariyyih, which overlooks Bahji, and where red flowers grew in abundance, was called Buq'atu'l-Hamra'--the Crimson Spot; today it is occupied by the army. In the springtime when the hill was verdant and covered with red flowers such as poppies and anemones, Baha'u'llah would have His tent pitched there. Many years

later, when 'Abdu'l-Baha was again incarcerated within the city walls of 'Akka, He would wistfully ask those who had gone to visit the Shrine of His Father: 'Were red, red flowers blooming on Buq'atu'l-Hamra'?'

Although from time to time there came to 'Akka and its environs governors, deputies and officials of various ranks, who were either malevolent and avaricious, or highly fanatical and therefore unfriendly towards the Faith of Baha'u'llah, gone for good were the days when all officialdom opposed and denigrated the Faith; and after the storms and stresses of earlier years, the years at Bahji were calm and peaceful.

Mention was made earlier of Mustafa Diya Pasha, the Mutasarrif of 'Akka, who had made it known that should Baha'u'llah wish to leave the confines of the city walls of 'Akka, He would not be prevented. Aqa Rida states that this just and benevolent Governor, throughout his time in 'Akka, evinced the utmost goodwill and, when sent to occupy the post of Governor in Tripoli, continued to write and express his warm sentiment. And any Baha'i whom he met he treated with the utmost consideration. When 'Abdu'l-Baha visited Beirut, Mustafa Diya Pasha was there and put himself at His service.

After him, Zivar Pasha came to govern 'Akka. He was an Istanbuli and very proud, keeping himself to himself. None of the notables dared approach him without his prior permission. But, meeting the Most Great Branch just once, he became so devoted to Him that for most of the time he consorted with no one else. His governorship lasted a year. Aqa Rida states that during his period of office, the Khavvam, in their entirety; rose up to oppose the Faith and the [p. 365] [p. 366] Baha'is. Mansur, the head of that family, was a member of the town council and a man of great influence, who always received much kindness at the hands of the Most Great Branch. He became, however, vainglorious and proud. One day he and his friends visited Bahji and were most hospitably welcomed. They then retired to the shade of the pine trees, in pursuit of their own pleasures. There they set upon an Arab, who had gone near them while engaged in carrying water for the Mansion. A Baha'i went to rescue the poor water-carrier from their clutches. Him they castigated too, beating him mercilessly. But realizing the enormity of their deed, they went to the Mansion to apologize. Once back in 'Akka, they changed their tune and went about claiming that they had been attacked at Bahji with daggers and swords. It all recoiled on them, for Mansur lost his official position and, despite every effort, never regained the position and respect that he had erstwhile enjoyed. He had to go into the market-place to ply the trade of a money-changer.

It was during the governorship of Zivar Pasha that Furughiyyih Khanum, a daughter of Baha'u'llah, was given in marriage to Siyyid 'Ali Afnan. Aqa Rida has recorded that the Mutasarrif and all the high officials and notables of 'Akka attended the wedding feast. This was in the year 1885. And when Zivar Pasha was recalled he left with great regret, and his letters came without fail after his departure, indicating the measure of his devotion.

General Gordon of Khartum fame was in the Holy Land throughout 1883 (see

Addendum IV). He certainly knew Laurence Oliphant and visited him, the latter a noted figure of his time who lived on Mount Carmel, where his first wife is buried. (He himself died in London.) Gordon also certainly knew of the Baha'i Faith. He it was who had liberated Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and his companion from detention in Khartum, in the year 1877, and for whom Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali had done some etching on glass. It is known that a European general visited Baha'u'llah, but his name is not recorded. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has thus written of him: 'On one occasion, a European general who, together with the governor, was granted an audience by Him, was so impressed that he "remained kneeling on the ground near the door."' [39-2] Could Gordon have been that general? This is just a conjecture, but it is possible. Both Laurence Oliphant and Sir Valentine Chirol wrote about Gordon's visits to [p. 367] Haifa and 'Akka (see Addendum IV). In the year 1885, Chirol--a celebrated publicist and correspondent of The Times of London--was in the Holy Land. He had become an authority on the affairs of the Middle East and Central Asia, wrote extensively on them, and was a confidant of Lord Curzon. In a chapter headed 'The Revival of Babiism', in his book The Middle Eastern Question and Some Political Problems of Indian Defence, he wrote: 'It was as Oliphant's guest that in 1885 I enjoyed the favour of Beha'ullah's hospitality...' (p.122)

..... [39-2. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 192.]

As it happened, after the departure of Zivar Pasha, a mutasarrif was sent to 'Akka who had been there previously, and he was both avaricious and fanatical. He was a Kurd, named Muhammad-Yusuf, a pasha of Damascus, who had, on the previous occasion, cause to learn of the erudition and immensity of knowledge of the Most Great Branch, and he was full of admiration. One evening during his earlier tenure of office, a number of Christians were having a parley, in his presence, with a number of Muslims. All were learned men. The Christian side was gaining ground, and the Kurdish mutasarrif felt distressed that his fellow Muslims were unable to cope with them. Knowing of the intellectual brilliance of the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah, he quietly sent word and requested Him to come. At this time the Most Great Branch was still within the citadel. When He arrived at the Governor's residence, the latter greeted Him warmly, but as if he had no idea that He would be calling. Once coffee was served the arguments were resumed. 'Abdu'l-Baha dealt with them all authoritatively and convincingly. Then He posed a question to the Christians which they were reluctant to answer, nor would they commit themselves in any way, until one of them, a man very acute, named As'ad Sayqal, said: 'You know what this city is like, and you know what Damascus is like--yet we prefer to live in this city.' He implied that their Christian Faith was like their native town, no matter what the glories and splendours of Islam might be, which he compared to Damascus. Then the Most Great Branch said, 'After your statement I have no more to say.' The Mutasarrif and his friends were greatly impressed.

The second time that the Kurdish pasha came to 'Akka, he found himself without a residence. The Government had sold the spacious governor's residence to the Shadhili Order to pull down, and build for themselves a takyih in its place. As

soon as Zivar Pasha had gone, the Shadhilis claimed the governor's residence and proceeded with their [p. 368] project. The new mutasarrif had perforce to rent a house near Bayt 'Abbud.

Baha'u'llah was then residing at Bahji, but the Most Great Branch and His family lived in 'Akka. Just at this time, the Vali[1] came for a visit from Damascus and stayed with the Mutasarrif. As it happened, Shaykh Yusuf, the Mufti of Nazareth, a man highly esteemed both because of his office and his personal merits, had come to 'Akka shortly before the arrival of the Kurdish mutasarrif. He had been received and lodged by the Most Great Branch in Bayt 'Abbud. Close by were other good houses occupied by the Baha'is. The hospitality extended to Shaykh Yusuf was particularly galling to the adversaries of the Faith. In the future, so they reasoned, nothing they might do would have any eclat, as compared with the treatment that the Mufti of Nazareth was receiving from the Baha'is. They were beside themselves with jealousy, and began to work on the fickle mind of the new mutasarrif. Why should these people have the use of some of the best houses in the town, they asked him, while you must content yourself with an insignificant rented house?

..... [1. Probably he was Nashid Pasha who, according to British consular records, was Governor-General of Damascus from October 1885 until 1888. (FO 195 1510 and 1613.)]

The Mufti of Nazareth had visited 'Akka previously, and it was then that he had fallen under the spell of the wonderful charm, knowledge, eloquence, and the majestic mien of the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah. Since then he had kept up a correspondence with 'Abdu'l-Baha, sent Him as a gift a noble horse, and invited Him to visit Nazareth. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes about this visit, and the succeeding visit of Shaykh Yusuf to 'Akka:

..... The splendid welcome accorded him by ... Shaykh Yusuf, the Mufti of Nazareth, who acted as host to the valis of Beirut, and who had despatched all the notables of the community several miles on the road to meet Him as He approached the town, accompanied by His brother and the Mufti of 'Akka, as well as the magnificent reception given by 'Abdu'l-Baha to that same Shaykh Yusuf when the latter visited Him in 'Akka, were such as to arouse the envy of those who, only a few years before, had treated Him and His fellow-exiles with feelings compounded of condescension and scorn.[39-3]

..... [39-3. *ibid.* p. 193. (God Passes By)]

Now, Muhammad-Yusuf Pasha, under the baneful influence of men hostile to Baha'u'llah and His followers, began to make incessant demands. He wanted to take possession of the house in which the [p. 369] Most Great Branch and His family resided. He pretended that the Vali required it, but when the Vali was apprised of the approaches made by the Mutasarrif, he strongly denied that he was in any way connected with the demand, nor had he any need of a house. However this statement did not daunt the avaricious Governor, who continued his demand, and this at a time when the mother of 'Abdu'l-Baha, who was living in 'Akka, was desperately ill.

Nonetheless, the Most Great Branch said that as soon as He had found another house, He would let the Mutasarrif have the large house he claimed to require. All through this time when 'Abdu'l-Baha was much concerned and occupied with the worsening condition of His mother, Muhammad-Yusuf Pasha was constantly demanding the occupation of Bayt 'Abbud. Then, in 1886, Asiyih Khanum passed away. Notables of 'Akka, as well as Muslim and Christian divines, came to follow the funeral cortege which was preceded by muezzins and reciters of the Qur'an. Schoolchildren joined the procession chanting verses and poems expressing their grief. Overwhelming was the sorrow of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and yet the Mutasarrif lacked the grace to desist from pressing his demand. As soon as He could, the Most Great Branch vacated the house and handed it over to him. The following year, the Baha'i community sustained a great loss in the death of Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim. He had been indeed a pillar of the Faith, always standing ready to serve his Brother, in any capacity.

The avarice of Muhammad-Yusuf was not easily abated, however. In the face of his demands and aggressive attitude, 'Abdu'l-Baha remained calm and composed, did not utter a word of complaint and secluded Himself from the people. In the meantime, the Mutasarrif, with the aid of a few accomplices as corrupt as himself, was busy with embezzlement. A certain As'ad Effendi, the Qa'im-Maqam of Nazareth, was, however, keeping a watchful eye on all that was happening in 'Akka and recording it to send to higher authorities. There was in 'Akka a merchant who presided over the Chamber of Commerce, outwardly a friend of the exiles but in truth double-faced, who assured the Most Great Branch that he knew how to deal with the Mutasarrif. Hypocritically sympathizing, talking with scorn of the infidelity and avarice of men like the Mutasarrif, he stated at last that with the gift of a sum of money Muhammad-Yusuf Pasha could be made to behave in a friendly way in future. [p. 370]

Aqa Rida writes that the Most Great Branch replied that if it were only the matter of a gift it could be arranged, and left the hypocrite. He retired to pray. The merchant sat waiting and hoping that at any moment purses laden with coins would be brought to him. When 'Abdu'l-Baha returned, He said only that all that was required had been sent and that the merchant should go and find out for himself. At the Seraye he found only profound gloom, and learned to his amazement that a cable had just arrived, announcing the dismissal of the Kurdish Pasha and his accomplices, because of their embezzlement of government funds. A board of investigators was already on its way. Then the merchant understood what 'Abdu'l-Baha had meant, and astonishment was written large on his face.

The crestfallen Muhammad-Yusuf felt pangs of remorse when he learned what had occurred, and he assured the merchant that the exiles were in no way involved or concerned with the action of his superiors. It was their prayer which had brought about his downfall. After writing a letter, he rode out next day to the Garden of Ridvan, hoping to find 'Abdu'l-Baha there to offer his apologies. But 'Abdu'l-Baha was not there. The dismissed mutasarrif then appealed to Aqa Rida to convey to the Most Great Branch the expression of his regret and remorse.

Within a few days the officials appointed to investigate the malefactions of Muhammad-Yusuf Pasha arrived from Beirut. One of them was Ahmad Fa'iq Effendi. Both he and his brother were followers of Baha'u'llah. Those who knew this wondered why a Baha'i had been commissioned to investigate the misdeeds of persons so unfriendly to the exiles. The head of the secretariat at the Seraye in 'Akka had, in particular, shown extreme malevolence. He, and others like him, now turned to Baha'u'llah and His eldest Son for help and forgiveness. And while Ahmad Fa'iq was engaged in examining the irregularities in the administration of government funds, Baha'u'llah and the Most Great Branch would not receive him.

To the amazement of the inhabitants of 'Akka, the malefactors, who had through their own deeds fallen on evil days, received from Baha'u'llah and His Son a full share of Their liberal generosity. The head of the secretariat had fled to Damascus and left his family behind. 'Abdu'l-Baha provided them with all their needs and sent them away in the safe company of two Baha'is. Baha'u'llah, in a [p. 371] Tablet addressed to Haji Mirza Buzurg-i-Afnan, a cousin of the Bab, who lived and traded in Hong Kong, mentions this Kurdish pasha, his hostility and his downfall. In the same Tablet, He instructed the Afnan to send Him a few pairs of good spectacles mounted in silver or gold and in suitable cases, which He wished to send as gifts to the valis of Beirut and Damascus.

Ahmad Pasha was the next mutasarrif of 'Akka. He had been particularly instructed to show due respect and consideration towards Baha'u'llah. For some two years he governed 'Akka well, and spent his time often in the company of 'Abdu'l-Baha. During his tenure of office, the Vali of Beirut^[1] came by boat to Haifa, and all the high officials went there to meet him. 'Abdu'l-Baha did likewise. The Vali especially requested Him to offer Baha'u'llah his respects and beg for His blessings and bounteous regard. And he gave a melon (rare at the time in those parts), which was brought from his cabin, to an official Nusuhi Big, to present to Baha'u'llah.

..... [1. The Vilayat of Beirut was separated from the Vilayat of Damascus in March 1888, chiefly through the efforts of the Grand Vizier Kiyamil Pasha, who had formerly been Mutasarrif of Beirut, according to British consular records. (FO 195 1613)]

The next Mutasarrif of 'Akka was 'Arif Effendi. His father had come to know the Most Great Branch in Adrianople and had learned to hold Him in high esteem. During 'Arif Effendi's governorship Baha'u'llah visited Haifa, and stayed there for nearly three months.

In the spring of 1890, Edward Granville Browne, Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and the eminent orientalist of future years, reached 'Akka. He had come to visit Baha'u'llah. For the full story of that truly historic visit, the reader is directed to the book, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith (by the present writer). But this work will be incomplete without the inclusion of the unique, unparalleled pen-portrait of Baha'u'llah, which Edward Browne has bequeathed to posterity. Indeed, it is the only one of its kind in

existence. Today a visitor to Bahji may read this document, affixed to the wall, before venturing into Baha'u'llah's chamber, and thus try to re-create in imagination the interview granted to the English orientalist:

..... my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the [p. 372] upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called taj by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

..... A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued:--'Praise be to God that thou hast attained! ...Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile... We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of [p. 373] bondage and banishment... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled--what harm is there in this? ...Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come... Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold?... Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...'

..... Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words which, besides many others, I heard from Beha. Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion.[39-4]

..... [39-4. Browne, A Traveller's Narrative, vol. II, XXXIX-XL.]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith states that Baha'u'llah visited Haifa four times. The first visit was of short duration, when He disembarked in 1868 from

the Lloyd-Triestino steamer. The second [p. 374] visit was for just a few days, and He stayed in Bayt-i-Fanduq, a house in the German colony, part of which still stands today. There is a dated Tablet, in the handwriting of Mirza Aqa Jan, which indicates that Baha'u'llah was in Haifa in August 1883, probably the date of this second visit. The third visit was in 1890, and when Edward Granville Browne reached 'Akka, Baha'u'llah was in Haifa. In the course of this visit, He stayed, at first, near Bayt-i-Zahlan, near the town, and then He moved to a house in the German colony which was known as the Oliphant house. His tent was pitched on a piece of land opposite that house. His fourth and last visit was in the year 1891. This sojourn was the longest, and it was here in Haifa that members of the Afnan family met him when they came in July, as described in a later chapter. Baha'u'llah was then in Haifa for three months, staying in the house of Ilyas Abyad near the German colony, and His tent stood near by.

One day, when standing by the side of some lone cypress trees nearly half-way up the slopes of Mount Carmel, Baha'u'llah pointed to an expanse of rock immediately below Him, telling His eldest Son that on that spot should be built the mausoleum to enshrine the remains of the Martyr-Prophet, the glorious Herald of His own advent: remains that had been kept in hiding and moved from place to place, since the second night after 9 July 1850, the day on which the Bab was shot in the public square of Tabriz. More than a decade had to elapse before [p. 375] 'Abdu'l-Baha could carry through the mandate laid upon Him by His Father. Today, on the very spot indicated by Baha'u'llah, stands a mausoleum of entrancing beauty, surmounted by a golden dome reflecting many hues of the sea and sky, and surrounded by gardens of inexpressible beauty that ravish the eyes and enchant the soul. Within that mausoleum, reared with tender care by 'Abdu'l-Baha and His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, the mangled remains of the Martyr-Prophet and of His disciple, Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Zunuzi, inseparable in death, are laid to rest. That Mausoleum, the Queen of Carmel, conveys the message to the concourse of mankind that evil can never achieve the ultimate victory.

It was also in the course of this three-month-long visit that Baha'u'llah went to the cave of Elijah, over which a Christian monastery stands. On a promontory near by, where in years to come a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar--House of Worship--will be raised in its full majesty, He revealed a momentous Tablet: Lawh-i-Karmil--the Tablet of Carmel. This is its text, as translated by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith: [p. 376]

..... All glory be to this Day, the Day in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat. Thereupon the voices of all created things, and beyond them those of the Concourse on high, were heard calling aloud: 'Haste thee, O Carmel, for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of the heavens, hath been lifted upon thee.'

..... Seized with transports of joy, and raising high her voice, she thus exclaimed: 'May my life be a sacrifice to Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast fixed Thy gaze upon me, hast bestowed upon me Thy bounty, and hast directed towards me Thy steps. Separation from Thee, O Thou Source of everlasting life, hath well nigh consumed me, and my remoteness from Thy presence hath burned away my soul. All praise be to Thee for having enabled me to hearken to Thy call, for having honoured me with Thy footsteps, and for having quickened my soul through the vitalizing fragrance of Thy Day and the shrilling voice of Thy Pen, a voice Thou didst ordain as Thy trumpet-call amidst Thy people. And when the hour at which Thy resistless Faith was to be made manifest did strike, Thou didst breathe a breath of Thy spirit into Thy Pen, and lo, the entire creation [p. 377] shook to its very foundations, unveiling to mankind such mysteries as lay hidden within the treasuries of Him Who is the Possessor of all created things.'

..... No sooner had her voice reached that most exalted Spot than We made reply: 'Render thanks unto Thy Lord, O Carmel. The fire of thy separation from Me was fast consuming thee, when the ocean of My presence

surged before thy race, cheering thine eyes and those of all creation, and filling with delight all things visible and invisible. Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the day spring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory, and recounteth that which the bounty of the Lord thy God hath showered upon thee. Seize thou the Chalice of Immortality in the name of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, and give thanks unto Him, inasmuch as He, in token of His mercy unto thee, hath turned thy sorrow into gladness, and transmuted thy grief into blissful joy. He, verily, loveth the spot which hath been made the seat of His throne, which His footsteps have trodden, which hath been honoured by His presence, from which He raised His call, and upon which He shed His tears.

..... 'Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendour is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favoured of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels. Oh, how I long to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation--a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: "Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven." Verily this is the Day in which both land and sea rejoice at this announcement, the Day for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation. Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.'

..... Sanctified be the Lord of all mankind, at the mention of Whose name

all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might. He verily, through the potency of His name, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the Most High, is the ruler of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.[39-5]

..... [39-5. Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, section XI.]

It was also during the last years at Bahji that the range of powers and abilities of 'Abdu'l-Baha--the Most Great Branch--became [p. 378] evident for all, friend and foe, to see. He stood as the shield of His Father against the pressures of the outside world--a fact to which Baha'u'llah has testified. For that very purpose the Most Great Branch lived in 'Akka.

Sometime in 1879, 'Abdu'l-Baha travelled to Beirut at the invitation of Midhat Pasha, the vali of the province of Syria, who is hailed and revered by the people of Turkey as the 'Father of the Constitution'.^[1] It was a historic journey, unparalleled in the religious annals of mankind, and was thus immortalized by the Most Sublime Pen:

..... [1. According to British consular records, Midhat Pasha was Governor-General in Damascus from November 1878 to August 1880. He visited Haifa and 'Akka in May 1880. (FO 195 1201 and 1306) (See p. 476)]

..... Praise be to Him Who hath honoured the Land of Ba [Beirut] through the presence of Him round Whom all names revolve. All the atoms of the earth have announced unto all created things that from behind the gate of the Prison-city there hath appeared and above its horizon there hath shone forth the orb of the beauty of the great, the Most Mighty Branch of God--His ancient and immutable Mystery--proceeding on its way to another land. Sorrow, thereby, hath enveloped this Prison-city, whilst another land rejoiceth. Exalted, immeasurably exalted is our Lord, the Fashioner of the heavens and the Creator of all things, He through Whose sovereignty the [p. 379] doors of the prison were opened, thereby causing what was promised aforetime in the Tablets to be fulfilled. He is verily potent over what He willeth, and in His grasp is the dominion of the entire creation. He is the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

..... Blessed, doubly blessed, is the ground which His footsteps have trodden, the eye that hath been cheered by the beauty of His countenance, the ear that hath been honoured by hearkening to His call, the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love, the breast that hath dilated through His remembrance, the pen that hath voiced His praise, the scroll that hath borne the testimony of His writings. We beseech God--blessed and exalted be He--that He may honour us with meeting Him soon. He is, in truth, the All-Hearing, the All-Powerful, He Who is ready to answer.[39-6]

..... [39-6. Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 225-6.]

'Abdu'l-Baha's journey to Beirut had a special significance, because it was

undertaken at the invitation of the Vali of the province of Syria, at a time when He was still a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire. The edict of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, deposed some three years before, which had consigned Baha'u'llah and His family to the grim citadel of 'Akka, had never been revoked.

In Beirut, apart from meeting the illustrious Vali, who had played a major part in deposing Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, the Most Great Branch met a number of men eminent in various walks of life, one of whom was Shaykh Muhammad-'Abduh, the future Grand Mufti of Egypt. This good and righteous man was so thoroughly captivated by the profundity of 'Abdu'l-Baha's knowledge, by His charm of mien and manner, that he intended to follow Him to 'Akka, but the Most Great Branch stopped him from taking such an irrevocable step. His letters which reached 'Abdu'l-Baha afterwards, as well as the letters of other outstanding men of the region of Syria, testified to that 'influence and esteem' to which Edward Granville Browne bore witness in the following lines, describing the Most Great Branch as he found Him in April 1890:

..... Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more. A tall strongly-built man holding himself straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad powerful forehead indicating a strong intellect combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk's, and strongly-marked but pleasing features--such was my first impression of 'Abbas Effendi, 'the master' (Aka)[1] as he par excellence is called by the Babis. Subsequent conversation with him [p. 380] served only to heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more ready of argument, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muhammadans, could, I should think, scarcely be found even amongst the eloquent, ready, and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father's followers. About the greatness of this man and his power no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt.[39-7]

..... [1. Aqa. (HMB)]

..... [39-7. Browne, idem, (A Traveller's Narrative, vol. II) XXXVI.]

'Abdu'l-Baha was then in the prime of His manhood. After the ascension of His Father, when the mantle of authority came to rest on His shoulders, the treachery of His half-brothers aged Him too soon.

The last years of Baha'u'llah's life were devoted to writing and revealing innumerable Tablets, Epistles and Treatises on many and varied subjects of spiritual and educative purport. He was relieved of such cares as His supreme station entailed by the able and unsurpassed administration of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Who shielded Him from the interference of the outside world and met and conversed with the officials [p. 381] of the government, enquirers and the learned, admitting into the presence of Baha'u'llah only those who had genuine problems to resolve.

On the revelations that constantly came from the Most Sublime Pen, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith thus comments:

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

..... The tempestuous winds that swept the Faith at the inception of His ministry and the wintry desolation that marked the beginnings of His prophetic career, soon after His banishment from Tihiran, were followed during the latter part of His sojourn in Baghdad, by what may be described as the vernal years of His Mission--years which witnessed the bursting into visible activity of the forces inherent in that Divine Seed that had lain dormant since the tragic removal of His Forerunner. With His arrival in Adrianople and the proclamation of His Mission the Orb of His Revelation climbed as it were to its zenith, and shone, as witnessed by the style and tone of His writings, in the plenitude of its summer glory. The period of His incarceration in 'Akka brought with it the ripening of a slowly [p. 382] maturing process, and was a period during which the choicest fruits of that mission were ultimately garnered.

..... The writings of Baha'u'llah during this period, as we survey the vast field which they embrace, seem to fall into three distinct categories. The first comprises those writings which constitute the sequel to the proclamation of His Mission in Adrianople. The second includes the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, which, for the most part, have been recorded in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His Most Holy Book. To the third must be assigned those Tablets which partly enunciate and partly reaffirm the fundamental tenets and principles underlying that Dispensation.[39-8]

..... [39-8. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 205-6.]

Within the extensive range of this third category, mentioned by Guardian, came such Tablets as Lawh-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Tablet), particularly addressed to those professing the Christian Faith; Bisharat (Glad Tidings); Tarazat (Ornaments); Tajalliyat (Effulgences); Ishraqat (Splendours); Lawh-i-Burhan (Tablet of the Proof), addressed to Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir of Isfahan, one of the divines responsible for the martyrdom of Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' (King of the Martyrs) and Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada' (Beloved of the Martyrs); Lawh-i-Dunya (Tablet of the World), revealed in honour of Aqa Mirza Aqa Afnan, subsequent to the martyrdom of the Seven Martyrs of Yazd, who were put to death by the orders of Sultan-Husayn Mirza, Jalalu'd-Dawlih, the son of Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, Zillu's-Sultan; Lawh-i-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom), revealed in honour of Aqa Muhammad, known as Nabil-i-Akbar or Nabil-i-Qa'ini, who had been a pupil of the celebrated Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari; and Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih (Words of Paradise).

The last book which flowed from the creative pen of Baha'u'llah was the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. It was revealed in the year 1891 and is addressed to

Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, commonly known as Shaykh Najafi, or Aqa Najafi, the son of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, a clergyman of Isfahan who was stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as 'Dhi'b' (Wolf). Together with Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imam-Jum'ih of that city, Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir had conspired with Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, and brought about the martyrdom of the two brothers, Mirza Hasan, Sultanu'sh-Shuhada', and Mirza Husayn, Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada'. Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imam-Jum'ih, stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as 'Raqsah' (She-Serpent), died a horrible death in 1881. The disease which took him away caused his body to become so loathsome that no one would go near him. A few [p. 383] porters buried him in all haste in an unknown grave. His accomplice, 'The Wolf', died some three years later in 'Iraq, abandoned and deserted by all. In the Epistle, addressed to his son, who was also an inveterate and notorious enemy of the Faith and whose greed and schemings resulted in murder and cruel persecution, Baha'u'llah reiterates His challenge to His detractors. His call is from God, His trust is in God, and no earthly power can deter Him in His purpose. In this book, His 'last outstanding Tablet', [39-9] is also a representative selection from the vast volume of His Writings, culled and presented by Himself. An important aspect of the Epistle is Baha'u'llah's own narration of the dire events engineered by the supporters of Mirza Yahya, which [p. 384] occurred in Constantinople, and which had a most tragic outcome. To the details of these events and Baha'u'llah's statements about them in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, the next chapter is devoted, for these unhappy events cast a dark shadow over Baha'u'llah's closing years.

..... [39-9. ibid. p. 219. (God Passes By)]

In their range, their scope and their depth, the Writings of Baha'u'llah remain unequalled and unmatched amongst the Scriptures of mankind. That erudite Baha'i teacher and scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan, classifies them into four categories, namely: laws and ordinances; meditations, communes and prayers; interpretations of the sacred Scriptures of the past; and discourses and exordiums. Of the first category he writes: 'Some of them contain laws and regulations whereby the rights and interests of all the nations of the world can be perpetuated, for these statutes are so enacted that they meet the necessities of every land and country and are acceptable to every man of intelligence. In this universality they resemble the laws of Nature, which secure the progress and development of all peoples; and they will bring about universal union and harmony.' [39-10]

..... [39-10. Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, The Baha'i Proofs, pp. 70-72.]

Baha'u'llah states that the volume of His revealed Word totals the Scriptures of the Manifestations of God preceding Him. We ought to remember the incalculable advantage which the Writings of Baha'u'llah possess in relation to the Holy Books of former times. Their originals are extant and well preserved, and future generations will be spared the crushing responsibility of deciding the authenticity of the Works ascribed to the Prophet. Oral tradition finds no place in the Scriptures of the Baha'i Faith. [p. 385]

The Activities of the Azalis in Constantinople

IN the late eighties and the early nineties of the nineteenth century Constantinople had become a centre of activity for the followers of Mirza Yahya. They were doing their utmost to inflict as much harm and injury as they could on the Baha'is. Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi and 'Abdu'l-Husayn Khan-i-Bardsiri, generally known as Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmani, both married to daughters of Subh-i-Azal, lived at Constantinople. They were men accomplished in many respects, who wielded fluent pens. And both were inveterate enemies of Baha'u'llah. That stormy petrel of Eastern politics and exponent of Pan-Islamism, Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din-i-Asadabadi,[1] known as Afghani, who was also hostile to the Faith proclaimed by Baha'u'llah, was in Istanbul as well. Shaykh Ahmad and Mirza Aqa Khan attached themselves to Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din, although that subtle schemer's hostility had the Faith of the Bab also within its orbit. When Mirza Aqa Khan had visited 'Akka, ostensibly to investigate truth, Baha'u'llah had remarked that his purpose was not to discover what was true, but solely to cause confusion and mischief. And it happened exactly as Baha'u'llah had stated, for Mirza Aqa Khan gave out, on leaving 'Akka, that what he had found there was duplicity and falsehood.

..... [1. Asadabad is in the environs of Hamadan, in western Iran.]

Aqa Muhammad-Tahir of Tabriz had established in 1875 a newspaper in Constantinople, bearing the title of Akhtar (Star), which was published for twenty years and was looked upon with great disfavour by Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Before long it fell under the influence of the supporters of Mirza Yahya, and particularly of Mirza Aqa Khan, who regularly contributed to it. In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah refers to the activities of the Azalis in Istanbul: [p. 386]

..... In the Great City (Constantinople) they have roused a considerable number of people to oppose this Wronged One. Things have come to such a pass that the officials in that city have acted in a manner which hath brought shame to both the government and the people. A distinguished siyyid,[1] whose well-known integrity, acceptable conduct, and commercial reputation, were recognized by the majority of fair-minded men, and who was regarded by all as a highly honored merchant, once visited Beirut. In view of his friendship for this Wronged One they telegraphed the Persian Dragoman informing him that this siyyid, assisted by his servant, had stolen a sum of money and other things and gone to 'Akka. Their design in this matter was to dishonor this Wronged One.

..... [1. Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, Afnan-i-Kabir (the Great Afnan), a brother of the wife of the Bab. (HMB)]

..... ...Briefly, they have incited a great many such as Akhtar [the newspaper] and others, and are busying themselves in spreading calumnies. It is clear and evident that they will surround with their swords of hatred and their shafts of enmity the one whom they knew to be an outcast among men [p. 387] and

to have been banished from one country to another. This is not the first time that such iniquity hath been perpetrated, nor the first goblet that hath been dashed to the ground, nor the first veil that hath been rent in twain in the path of God, the Lord of the worlds. This Wronged One however, remained calm and silent in the Most Great Prison, busying Himself with His own affairs, and completely detached from all else but God. Iniquity waxed so grievous that the pens of the world are powerless to record it.

..... In this connection it is necessary to mention the following occurrence, that haply men may take fast hold of the cord of justice and truthfulness. Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali--upon him be the glory of God, the Ever-Abiding--was a merchant of high repute, well-known unto most of the inhabitants of the Great City (Constantinople). Not long ago, when the Persian Embassy in Constantinople was secretly engaged in stirring up mischief, it was noticed that this believing and sincere soul was greatly distressed. Finally, one night he threw himself into the sea, but was rescued by some passers-by who chanced to come upon him at that moment. His act was widely commented upon and given varied interpretations by different people. Following this, one night he repaired to a mosque, and, as reported by the guardian of that place, kept vigil the whole night, and was occupied until the morning in offering, ardently and with tearful eyes, his prayers and supplications. Upon hearing him suddenly cease his devotions, the guardian went to him, and found that he had already surrendered his soul. An empty bottle was found by his side, indicating that he had poisoned himself. Briefly, the guardian, while greatly astonished, broke the news to the people. It was found out that he had left two testaments. In the first he recognized and confessed the unity of God, that His Exalted Being had neither peer nor equal, and that His Essence was exalted above all praise, all glorification and description. He also testified to the Revelation of the Prophets and the holy ones, and recognized what had been written down in the Books of God, the Lord of all men. On another page, in which he had set down a prayer, he wrote these words in conclusion: "This servant and the loved ones of God are perplexed. On the one hand the Pen of the Most High hath forbidden all men to engage in sedition, contention or conflict, and on the other that same Pen hath sent down these most sublime words: "Should anyone, in the presence of the Manifestation, discover an evil intention on the part of any soul, he must not oppose him, but must leave him to God." Considering that on the one hand this binding command is clear and firmly established, and that on the other calumnies beyond human strength to bear or endure, have been uttered, this servant hath chosen to commit this most grievous sin. I turn suppliantly unto the ocean of God's bounty and the heaven of Divine mercy, and hope that He will blot out with the pen of His grace and bounteousness the misdeeds of this servant. Though my transgressions be manifold, and unnumbered my evil-doings, yet do I cleave tenaciously to the cord of His bounty, and cling [p. 388] unto the hem of His generosity. God is witness, and they that are nigh unto His Threshold know full well, that this servant could not bear to hear the tales related by the perfidious. I, therefore, have committed this act. If He chastise me, He verily is to be praised for what He doeth; and if He forgive

me, His behest shall be obeyed.'

..... We beseech God--blessed and glorified be He--to forgive the
aforementioned person (Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali), and change his evil deeds
into good ones. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the
All-Bounteous.[40-1]

..... [40-1. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 106,
108-11.]

Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, known as Nabil Ibn Nabil, was a brother of Shaykh
Kazim of Qazvin, to whom Baha'u'llah gave the surname Samandar (Salamander).
Both brothers were merchants of high repute. Their father, Shaykh Muhammad,
known as Nabil, espoused the Faith of the Bab in early days, and passed away in
Baghdad, one year before the Declaration of Baha'u'llah. What caused Haji
Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, Nabil Ibn Nabil, to commit suicide were the intrigues of
the followers of Mirza Yahya in Constantinople, and here is the story (as much
as the present writer has been able, with documentary evidence, to construct
it) of their disgraceful proceedings.

The Afnans, relatives of the Bab, had extensive commercial interests. Haji
Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, a son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad (a maternal uncle of
the Bab), was resident in Hong Kong; his brother, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, the
Vakilu'd-Dawlih, resided in Yazd (later in 'Ishqabad). There were also always
one or two of the Afnans in Bombay, where they managed a prosperous publishing
house and printing press, from which the first Baha'i books ever to be printed
were issued, such as *Kitab-i-Iqtidarat*[1] and *Kitab-i-Mubin*,[1] in the
handwriting of Mishkin-Qalam. Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, was in Port Sa'id,
trading under the name of Nuri'd-Din Hasan; Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan,
Afnan-i-Kabir (the Great Afnan), a brother of the wife of the Bab, and his son
Haji Siyyid 'Ali, married to Furughiyyih Khanum, a daughter of Baha'u'llah,
were in Beirut.

..... [1. The contents of these books were Tablets of Baha'u'llah.]

In addition, the Afnans had partners or agents in a number of other commercial
centres. Aqa 'Ali-Haydar-i-Shirvani (before he moved to Tihiran) was a partner
in Caucasia; Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, [p. 389] another partner in Istanbul. A
third partner in the Ottoman capital was Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani. This
man gradually fell under the influence of the supporters of Subh-i-Azal. Shaykh
Ahmad-i-Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmanli were the most prominent of these
followers of Mirza Yahya. But there were others, equally as active and
mischief-making, such as Shaykh Muhammad-i-Yazdi, Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tabrizi
(who had been expelled by Baha'u'llah, because of his continuously-repeated
misdeeds), and Najaf-'Ali Khan, who had connections with the Persian Embassy.
Allied with Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmanli, in furthering the
aims of Siyyid Jamalud-Din-i-Asadabadi (Afghani), was Haji Mirza Hasan Khan,
the Khabiru'l-Mulk (sometime the Persian consul-general in Istanbul), but it
cannot be ascertained whether he too was an Azali or not. Eventually all the
three suffered the same fate together. They were beheaded in Tabriz, in the

year 1896, in the presence and on the orders of Muhammad-'Ali Mirza (later Shah), the Crown-Prince of Persia. [p. 390]

Although, before long, there came a break between Mirza Aqa Khan and Aqa Muhammad-Tahir, the founder and owner of the newspaper Akhtar, at the height of the crisis resulting from the activities of the Azalis this paper was completely dominated by Mirza Aqa Khan and his associates. Strangely enough, it seems that the break was caused by the marriage of a daughter of Aqa Muhammad-Tahir with Mirza Husayn-i-Sharif-i-Kashani, a son of Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Naraqi, one of the ardent supporters of Subh-i-Azal in earlier times, Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far (author of a book entitled Tadhkiratu'l-Ghafilin--A Reminder to the Heedless--which he wrote in refutation of Baha'u'llah), after roving round 'Iraq in search of Mirza Yahya, who had not bothered to inform his zealous champion of his departure, had taken refuge in Kazimayn. But this township, adjacent to Baghdad, was always teeming with pilgrims, and because Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far was known to be a Babi, Kazimayn was not, in the estimation of Mirza Buzurg Khan, the Persian consul-general, a safe place for Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far. Therefore, in the year 1869, when Mirza Buzurg Khan was returning to Iran, he took with him Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far together with his son, Mirza Husayn, then a boy young in years, as well as Mirza Nuru'llah,[1] a son of Mirza Yahya then stranded in 'Iraq. In Kirmanshah, Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far fell ill and was unable to travel. Mirza Buzurg Khan was forced to abandon him and the two boys, and leave them in charge of Prince Imam-Quli Mirza, the 'Imadu'd-Dawlih, Governor of Kirmanshah. When Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far had recovered, 'Imadu'd-Dawlih sent the three, under escort, to Tihiran, where they were taken to the Siyah-Chal. Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far was poisoned in the gaol and the boys were set free. Later we shall return to the story of Haji Mirza Husayn-i-Sharif-i-Kashani, this son of Mulla Muhammad-Ja'far.

..... [1. Mirza Nuru'llah became, eventually, a physician, resident in Rasht, in the Caspian province of Gilan.]

In the thirty-sixth issue of the newspaper Akhtar, dated 12 August 1886, a letter appeared over the signature of Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani, accusing Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, the Afnan-i-Kabir, and his sons of double dealing, of conspiracy to mulct him of his riches, and almost of theft. His sweeping statement imputed trickery, treachery, bad faith, and duplicity to all the co-religionists of Afnan-i-Kabir. [p. 391] His purpose at the moment, he wrote, was to expose falsehoods as a warning to his compatriots, and to declare as null and void some documents which, he alleged, Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan had obtained from him by misrepresentation. He had, he stated, broken away from Afnan-i-Kabir and his sons, the partnership had ended, and they owed him a huge sum of money. Later, he wrote, he would take his case, supported by ample evidence, to the Persian Consulate-General in Constantinople; and the evidence which he had, he affirmed, included writings of the Spiritual Guide of Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan.

Baha'u'llah states categorically, in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, that:

..... For years no untoward incident hath occurred in Persia. The reins of the stirrers of sedition among various sects were held firmly in the grasp of power. None hath transgressed his limits. By God! This people have never been, nor are they now, inclined to mischief. Their hearts are illumined with the light of the fear of God, and adorned with the adornment of His love. Their concern hath ever been and now is for the betterment of the world....

..... On the other hand, the officials of the Persian Embassy in the Great City (Constantinople) are energetically and assiduously seeking to exterminate these wronged ones. They desire one thing, and God desireth another. Consider now what hath befallen the trusted ones of God in every land. At one time they have been accused of theft and larceny; at another they have been calumniated in a manner without parallel in this world. Answer thou fairly. What could be the results and consequences, in foreign countries, of the accusation of theft brought by the Persian Embassy against its own subjects? If this Wronged One was ashamed, it was not because of the humiliation it brought this servant, but rather because of the shame of its becoming known to the Ambassadors of foreign countries how incompetent and lacking in understanding are several eminent officials of the Persian Embassy.... Briefly, instead of seeking, as they should, through Him Who occupieth this sublime station, to attain unto the most exalted ranks, and to obtain His advice, they have exerted themselves and are striving their utmost to put out His light. However, according to what hath been reported, His Excellency the Ambassador Mu'inu'l-Mulk, Mirza Muhsin Khan[1]--may God assist him--was, at that time, absent from Constantinople. Such things have happened because it was believed that His Majesty the Shah of Persia--may the All-Merciful assist him--was angry with them that have attained and revolve round the Sanctuary of Wisdom. God well knoweth and testifieth that this Wronged One hath, at [p. 392] all times, been cleaving fast unto whatever would be conducive to the glory of both the government and the people. God, verily, is sufficient Witness.

..... [1. Later, Mushiru'd-Dawlih and the Foreign Minister of Iran. (HMB)]

..... Describing the people of Baha, the Most Sublime Pen hath sent down these words: 'These, verily, are men who if they come to cities of pure gold will consider them not; and if they meet the fairest and most comely of women will turn aside.' Thus hath it been sent down by the Most Sublime Pen for the people of Baha, on the part of Him Who is the Counsellor, the Omniscient. In the concluding passages of the Tablet to His Majesty the Emperor of Paris (Napoleon III) these exalted words have been revealed: 'Exultest thou over the treasures thou dost possess, knowing they shall perish? Rejoicest thou in that thou rulest a span of earth, when the whole world, in the estimation of the people of Baha, is worth as much as the black in the eye of a dead ant? Abandon it unto such as have set their affections upon it, and turn thou unto Him Who is the Desire of the world.'

..... God alone--exalted be His glory--is cognizant of the things which befell this Wronged One. Every day bringeth a fresh report of stories current against Us at the Embassy in Constantinople. Gracious God! The sole aim of

their machinations is to bring about the extermination of this servant. They are, however, oblivious of the fact that abasement in the path of God is My true glory. In the newspapers the following hath been recorded: 'Touching the fraudulent dealings of some of the exiles of 'Akka, and the excesses committed by them against several people, etc....' Unto them who are the exponents of justice and the daysprings of equity the intention of the writer is evident and his purpose clear. Briefly, he arose and inflicted upon Me divers tribulations, and treated Me with injustice and cruelty. By God! This Wronged One would not barter this place of exile for the Most Sublime Habitation. In the estimation of men of insight whatsoever befalleth in the path of God is manifest glory and a supreme attainment....

..... This Wronged One, however, cleaveth to seemly patience. Would that His Majesty the Shah of Persia would ask for a report of the things which befell Us in Constantinople, that he might become fully acquainted with the true facts.... Is there to be found a just man who will judge in this day according to that which God hath sent down in His Book? Where is the fair-minded person who will equitably consider what hath been perpetrated against Us without any clear token or proof?[40-2]

..... [40-2. *ibid.* pp. 122-6. (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf)]

In other Tablets, such as one addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, and another addressed to Karbila'i Haji-Baba, a Baha'i of Zarqan (in the province of Fars, near Shiraz), Baha'u'llah speaks in particular of the accusations levelled against Afnan-i-Kabir. Unfortunately, the present writer could find no access anywhere to a complete set of the newspaper Akhtar, and the issues of this paper that belonged to Edward Granville Browne, and are deposited in the University [p. 393] Library at Cambridge, do not carry any reference to the intrigues of the Azalis in Constantinople. Perhaps there nowhere exists a complete set of Akhtar. At the time, when it was strongly under the influence of Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmani, Nasiri'd-Din Shah had banned its circulation in Iran. However, a time came when Mirza Aqa Khan was estranged from Aqa Muhammad-Tahir, and the latter found it more and more difficult to go on producing his newspaper, in great measure because of financial stringency. 'Ala'u'l-Mulk, the Persian ambassador in Constantinople, then intervened and requested his government for a subsidy, to be given to Aqa Muhammad-Tahir so that he could continue to publish Akhtar, as a counterweight to the newspaper, Qanun, which Mirza Malkam Khan, the Nazimu'd-Dawlih, was editing and publishing in London, severely criticizing the Government of Iran, and mounting vicious attacks, in particular, on Mirza 'Ali-Asghar Khan, the Aminu's-Sultan,[1] Nasiri'd-Din Shah's capable and astute, if unscrupulous, Sadr-i-A'zam. A document exists, bearing the [p. 394] Shah's own handwriting, which gives approval to subsidizing Aqa Muhammad-Tahir and his newspaper. However, the eclat of previous years could not be retrieved and Akhtar died out.

..... [1. At the time of the assassination of Nasiri'd-Din Shah in 1896, Aminu's-Sultan was the Sadr-i-A'zam or Grand Vizier. It was his stratagem which saved the day and prevented the outbreak of disorder. Some modern writers have

made the ridiculous suggestion that Aminu's-Sultan himself, was implicated in the murder of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. In the year 1898, Sulayman Khan, known as Jamal Effendi, came from 'Akka. It was part of his mission to meet Aminu's-Sultan in the city of Qum, to which he had retired after his dismissal by Muzaffari'd-Din Shah. The fallen Minister had once spoken in favour of the oppressed Baha'is. But, restored to office again, he soon forgot his promises.]

The story of the intrigues in Istanbul is rather complicated as all plottings are. It can be divided into several episodes. That which concerns Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, Nabil Ibn Nabil, is fully described in a tract written by his nephew, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn, a son of Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar. But, unfortunately, that which concerns the Afnans is nowhere put into a continuous narrative. There are gaps which require bridging.

As stated before, the Afnans had a string of commercial interests which stretched from Hong Kong to Istanbul. About the year 1882, Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali of Qazvin, who had for years been engaged in trade in his native land, moved to Istanbul at the bidding of Baha'u'llah. He was there for seven years, until 1889, managing a trading-house. Whether he began outright in partnership with the Afnans, or that partnership came about later, is not known. Neither is it known which of the sons of Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, the Afnan-i-Kabir, was in Istanbul for any length of time, during those seven years. But it is certain that Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali was personally directing and managing a trading-house there for the whole of those seven years. Thus, he became a well-known figure in the Ottoman capital, dealing equally with people of all Faiths: Jewish, Christian and Muslim. Pilgrims too, of all Faiths, bound for Mecca, Jerusalem, or 'Akka, called on Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali to obtain advice, guidance or assistance. However, his well-deserved fame caused the supporters of Subh-i-Azal in Constantinople--men such as Shaykh Muhammad-i-Yazdi, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmani--to mark him for close observation. On the other hand, the Most Great Branch maintained communications with eminent Ottoman officials, such as Nuri Big, through Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali and, probably, Azalis became aware of this fact.

Now, Mirza Aqa Khan began to frequent the business premises of Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, coming every day with a fresh lot of questions, and eventually expressing his desire to embrace the Baha'i Faith. But he wished first, he said, to visit 'Akka and witness the truth of what he had been told. He asked Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali to obtain permission for him, from Baha'u'llah, to go to 'Akka. Two [p. 395] years before, Mirza Yahya of Qazvin, whose father was a supporter of Subh-i-Azal, had been guided to see the error of his ways and became a confirmed believer in the Faith of Baha'u'llah. Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali hoped that Mirza Aqa Khan would go the same way. But it was not to be; Mirza Aqa Khan was a dissembler, a fact which soon became apparent.

Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani had also been in Constantinople for a number of years. Nothing has been recorded of his antecedents, at least not to the knowledge of the present writer. He traded on a small scale, and took

commissions on deals which he put through. Although receiving nothing but kindness from Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, he was moved by jealousy of the unqualified success of the Qazvini merchant to send adverse reports regarding him to some of his clients, and to spread false rumours about him. Then it was that Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali thought of a plan to counter the malevolence of Aqa Muhammad-'Ali. He proposed a business partnership between the Afnans, himself and this Isfahani, to which the Afnans agreed. This partnership, which lasted several years, flourished and the Isfahani gained huge profits by it. But gradually he fell under the spell of Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tabrizi (whom Baha'u'llah had expelled), and the supporters of Subh-i-Azal. In point of time that was also the period when Mirza Aqa Khan had established ascendancy over Aqa Muhammad-Tahir, the founder and editor of Akhtar. So persistent became the malicious rumours spread by the two Muhammad-'Alis, one of Tabriz and the other of Isfahan, that Baha'u'llah sent Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Yazdi to investigate and find out the truth of the matter. That venerable siyyid stayed for a while in Istanbul and realized what a pack of calculated lies the adversaries of the Faith were concocting in the Ottoman capital. However, a time came when Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali could no longer bear the weight of false rumours, libels and innuendoes. Apart from his nephew, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn, who was very young, he was all alone. One night, he threw himself into the sea, but was rescued by some boatmen. The customs officials and others around, who knew him well, were astounded by what they witnessed. Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali lived to see another day, but the thought of having attempted suicide, and the reporting of his attempt by newspapers, particularly Akhtar, weighed heavily on his mind. [p. 396]

In the midst of it all, Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Nazir, a native of Isfahan, reached Constantinople from the Holy Land, bound for 'Ishqabad. Aqa Muhammad-'Ali had not yet come out in the open, and since he too was a native of Isfahan, for his own nefarious ends he prevailed on Nazir to stay in Constantinople. But before long, he was convinced that Nazir would not lend him support and become a tool in his hands. Then it came to his ears that some of the Afnans would shortly be visiting Istanbul, and that they might possibly effect some changes in the trading-house, owned jointly by all of them. So, one day, he gave out that there had been a theft of 400 pounds from their coffers in the trading-house, and he acted the part of accuser so well that his false assertion was believed. He had a poor siyyid, also an Isfahani, in his service, to whom he owed 60 pounds in unpaid wages, and suspicion rested on him. Through the influence of the Persian Consulate-General, where the Azalis could exert some pressure, this Siyyid Muhammad, who was a Muslim and an honest man, was turned over to the police, and remained chained in custody for two months. But in the end he managed to clear himself, and stated truthfully that Aqa Muhammad-'Ali was a liar and a cheat, who owed him 60 pounds, and, having heard of the coming of the Shirazi siyyids (the Afnans), had resorted to this ruse to help himself to 400 pounds of their money.

In the meantime, the news of Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali's attempted suicide having reached the Holy Land, Baha'u'llah bade him leave Constantinople after

his seven years there, and come to 'Akka. Mirza Muhsin, a younger son of Afnan-i-Kabir, was directed by Baha'u'llah to Constantinople to relieve him of his onerous duties. It was also arranged that his nephew, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn, who knew the ins and outs of the trading-concern, should remain to help Mirza Muhsin. Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali left the Ottoman capital in March 1889, recording in his notebook his happiness at being relieved at last of all the cares and anxieties which enemies had inflicted upon him in that city.

On the eve of Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali's departure, Nazir had found, in a public lavatory in Qarshi, the sum of 125 pounds secreted away, and to Haji Shaykh's regret he mentioned this to Aqa Muhammad-'Ali. The supporters of Mirza Yahya in Istanbul joined forces and invited Aqa Muhammad-'Ali to build a case against Nazir. Despite [p. 397] the fact that it was Aqa Muhammad-'Ali himself who had begged Nazir to stay in Istanbul, and although it was fully two months after Nazir had discovered the money and had made no attempt to conceal the fact, Aqa Muhammad-'Ali pointed a finger at him and shamelessly accused him of stealing the 400 pounds from the coffers of the trading-house. He had also the temerity to pen a supplication to Baha'u'llah, defaming Nazir. An answer came from the Holy Land, over the signature of Khadimu'llah, to the effect that should Aqa Muhammad-'Ali be able to prove his charge against Nazir, he should receive from Aqa Mirza Muhsin-i-Afnan the sum he claimed had been stolen, together with the interest due.

Apart from Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tabrizi and the prominent Azalis of Constantinople, a son of Mirza Yahya was also at that time in the Ottoman capital. From them, and from Akhtar, then a tool in the hands of Mirza Aqa Khan, went up a chorus of condemnation. When he had embarked on his journey to 'Ishqabad, Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Nazir had left his family in the Holy Land, and his sojourn in Istanbul having lengthened, and because he had permission from Baha'u'llah to go back to the Holy Land to see his family, faced now with Aqa Muhammad-'Ali's monstrous slander he decided to leave at once. But he was brought back. In the Persian Embassy, Mu'inu'l-Mulk, the Ambassador, who knew him personally, conducted the case brought against him, found in his favour, and completely exonerated him. Notwithstanding that clear verdict, Aqa Muhammad-'Ali, goaded by his Tabrizi namesake and by Shaykh Muhammad-i-Yazdi, dragged Nazir to the Ottoman courts, where once again his innocence was irrefutably established.

Then it was that Aqa Muhammad-'Ali, smarting under the defeat he had suffered in the presence of Shaykh Muhsin Khan, the Mu'inu'l-Mulk, as well as in the Ottoman courts, threw all pretence aside and showed his true colours by writing the notorious letter to the newspaper Akhtar (already cited), in which he maliciously accused Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan the Afnan-i-Kabir, his sons, and by implication all his co-religionists, of duplicity and crooked practices. He even dared to make mention of Baha'u'llah. In the meantime, Mirza Muhsin-i-Afnan and Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn had wound up the affairs of the trading-house in Constantinople, even to selling the office furniture, and had left for the Holy Land. [p. 398]

The present writer has in his possession a letter written by Aqa Mirza Muhsin,

in which he states that Baha'u'llah had bidden Aqa Siyyid Ahmad, another son of the Afnan-i-Kabir, to go to Istanbul and rebut the serious and impudent charges made by Aqa Muhammad-'Ali of Isfahan. Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Nazir and Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin were also directed to proceed to the Ottoman capital: the former, to settle his own affairs; the latter, to lend a hand to Aqa Siyyid Ahmad. Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn states that, as a matter of fact, Aqa Muhammad-'Ali owed the Afnans and Haji Amin a considerable sum of money. Despite his behaviour, Aqa Siyyid Ahmad and Haji Amin tried to come to terms with him amicably, but it was of no avail. Once again, the presence in Istanbul of Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali became urgently necessary. In September 1889, accompanied by his nephew and Aqa Muhammad, their servant, he sailed for Istanbul with a heavy heart. He had been instructed by Baha'u'llah not to prolong his stay there, and to go on to Persia. But that was not to be.

As Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn and Fadil-i-Mazindarani have both recorded, Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, with the evidence based on ledgers and account books, proved in the Ottoman courts of law and also before the Persian ambassador the total falsity of the claims of Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani. Leading merchants of Constantinople, Persian and non-Persian alike, readily signed a document stating their conviction that the Isfahani, who had maligned his erstwhile partners, had lied, grossly misled others, and, in fact, owed the Baha'is a considerable sum of money.

Despite this outstanding success achieved by Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali and the rout of the Isfahani renegade, the adversaries of the Baha'i Faith in Constantinople waxed bolder in manufacturing fresh lies and giving them wide currency. They gave out as a fact that the Ottoman authorities had decided to set fire to the Mansion of Bahji, and to destroy the very source and centre of the new Faith. Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali, while doing his duty loyally and faithfully, was constantly subjected to the grinding effect of such falsehoods and to the jibes of the ignorant, until he could bear it no longer. And so he committed suicide. Aqa Siyyid Ahmad held a memorial meeting for him which was attended by Mu'inu'l-Mulk, the Persian ambassador, who had been greatly moved by the tragic death of Haji Shaykh, and [p. 399] was seen to shed tears. He is reported to have said: 'We had one merchant, wise, sagacious, a man of high integrity; and now we have lost him.'

Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali had gone from the reach of plotters and ill-wishers, but the story of the intrigues against the Baha'is in Constantinople does not end with his decease. Aqa Siyyid Ahmad-i-Afnan was still there, the very sight of whom was hated by the two Muhammad-'Alis: the Isfahani and the Tabrizi. But he was much needed elsewhere, and Baha'u'llah bade Aqa 'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhdhab, a convert from the Jewish fold in Mashhad, to go to Constantinople and expedite Aqa Siyyid Ahmad's departure. Moreover, he was to take charge of the Afnans' commercial interests. Haji Siyyid Mirza, an elder brother of Siyyid Ahmad, who resided in Yazd, owed 12,000 tumans to Aqa 'Ali-Haydar-i-Shirvani, a merchant of high repute who attended to the transference of Huququ'llah[1] from Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin to the Holy Land. Aqa 'Ali-Haydar had, at one time, been an

agent for the Afnans in the Caucasus, but had now resided for some years in Tihiran, where Edward Granville Browne met him in 1888. In the mid-eighties of the nineteenth century, there were those who, having failed commercially, were dogging the steps of some of the Afnans. It appears that Haji Siyyid Mirza was somewhat dilatory in the matter of settling his debts. In a Tablet addressed to him, Baha'u'llah tells him sternly to pay his debts and not to delay longer.

..... [1. The 'Right of God'--a payment by believers instituted in the Kitab-i-Aqdas.]

Now it was Baha'u'llah's wish that Aqa Siyyid Ahmad should first visit the Holy Land, then go to 'Ishqabad and sell some of the land which the Afnans had purchased in earlier years, to settle their accounts with Aqa 'Ali-Haydar. By this time, Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin, together with Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi--a Hand of the Cause of God who was known as Haji Akhund--were languishing in the prison of Qazvin. (Baha'u'llah refers to this in the Tablet of the World-Lawh-i-Dunya--revealed in honour of Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din.) Baha'u'llah requested Aqa 'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhdhab to convey this message to Aqa Siyyid Ahmad: We command you not to tarry any longer in Constantinople, not for a moment, and to leave at once. Jadhdhab, who had been trailing for a time in Transcaucasia and held a passport from the Emir (Amir) of Bukhara--which was tantamount to a Russian passport--travelled in a Khedival steamer and [p. 400] betook himself to Constantinople as quickly as possible. When he reached the Ottoman capital in the opening days of August 1891, the sacred month of Muharram had come on, and Aqa Siyyid Ahmad was delaying his departure. But Jadhdhab, carrying as he did a command of Baha'u'llah, pressed on Aqa Siyyid Ahmad the urgency of his departure until it was arranged that he should leave in the afternoon of 'Ashura (the tenth of Muharram), the very day of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. There was in Istanbul at this time a merchant, native of Isfahan, named Aqa Husayn-'Ali, who consorted with Muslims, Baha'is and Azalis alike. On the eve of 'Ashura he invited Aqa Siyyid Ahmad, Aqa 'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhdhab, and many others to a meeting in the inn of Khan-i-Validih, in commemoration of the martyrdom of the third Imam, after which, as was customary, dinner was to be served. Khan-i-Validih was well known as a haunt of the Persians, and many Persians had offices and homes in that inn. When they sat down to dinner, it was seen that Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi, Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tabrizi and Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani were also present. They kept stealthily eyeing Aqa Siyyid Ahmad and Aqa 'Azizu'llah. Later, these two, accompanied by Mirza Isma'il Khan, the official in charge of passports in the Persian Embassy (a native of Rasht), and a broker named Haji Muhammad-Javad-i-Isfahani, both of whom were Baha'is, repaired to the home and office of Afnan in the inn of Ayinih-Li. In the vestibule which led into the inn they came upon Aqa Nasru'llah-i-Ardakani, the servant of Aqa Siyyid Ahmad, seated there with the caretaker of the caravanserai and a number of porters. The Afnan enquired of his servant, 'Why didn't you come to Khan-i-Validih as I told you?' to which Nasru'llah replied that the police had prevented his entering. The following morning early, Jadhdhab, with Aqa Nasru'llah as guide, visited the grave of Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali. Baha'u'llah had bidden him have

that grave repaired and a marble tombstone laid upon it. Nasru'llah, having taken Jadhhab to the spot where Haji Shaykh was buried, left him to his task and quickly returned to the city. At midday of 'Ashura, having finished the work entrusted to him, Jadhhab also returned, to find Siyyid Ahmad, Mirza Isma'il Khan and Haji Muhammad-Javad sunk in gloom. That morning, after he had gone, the police had arrived with information from the Persian Embassy concerning a case lodged by the two Muhammad-'Alis--the Tabrizi and the Isfahani. It was to the effect [p. 401] that the previous night, whilst they were guests of Aqa Husayn-'Aliy-i-Isfahani in the inn of Khan-i-Validih, the servant of Siyyid Ahmad, whom they named as Aqa Nasru'llah-i-Ardakani, had broken into their premises, smashed the lock of their iron safe, and stolen several thousand pounds and all documents pertaining to the sums which Baha'is owed them; and now this thief, in the company of his master, was about to escape to 'Akka and should be stopped. Jadhhab reminded Aqa Siyyid Ahmad that he had been warned to quit the Ottoman capital without delay and should leave at once. Within hours he and his servant were on board an Austrian steamer.

When Jadhhab, having seen them off, came back, he was faced with a summons to the Persian Embassy. As it happened, neither Mu'inu'l-Mulk, the Ambassador, nor Haji Mirza Najaf-'Ali Khan, his deputy, both of whom had friendly relations with Jadhhab, was in Constantinople. The Consul was an Armenian, Ovanes (Uvanis) Khan--in later years, Ovanes Khan Musa'id, the Persian minister in Tokyo--who was not well acquainted with all that had taken place in Istanbul. He was very angry because Aqa Siyyid Ahmad and Aqa Nasru'llah had been spirited away. But Jadhhab stood up to him, convinced him that the plaintiffs had acted out of malice, and that there was no case to answer.

Mention was made earlier in this chapter of the strained relations between Mirza Aqa Khan and Aqa Muhammad-Tahir due to the marriage of the latter's daughter to Mirza Husayn-i-Sharif-i-Kashani. In the archives of Mirza Malkam Khan, presented to the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris by his widow, there are many letters written to Malkam by Mirza Aqa Khan. These letters are indeed astonishing. Apart from the reviling of Mirza Husayn-i-Sharif, and the denigration of Aqa Muhammad-Tahir, they include such incredible statements as that the Babis in Constantinople believed Malkam to be the Christ descended from Heaven, whose second advent must follow the advent of the Mahdi: the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad. Mirza Aqa Khan so overreaches the limits of credibility as to say that these Babis (he must have had Azalis in mind) must have had an intimation to this effect from their leader, and in another letter he actually asserts that this fantastic pronouncement had been made by the leader of the Babis. Who could this leader have been but Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal? But is it possible that Mirza Yahya, no matter how stupid, [p. 402] would have made so ridiculous a statement? Did Mirza Aqa Khan astute as he was, not know Mirza Malkam Khan better, when he wrote in that vein to him to ingratiate himself? Again, to blacken the name of Mirza Husayn-i-Sharif, Mirza Aqa Khan tells Malkam that this 'bestly' son-in-law of Aqa Muhammad-Tahir had asked him to compose a book about the Bab and the Babis, since he had extensive knowledge of them, promising in return a not inconsiderable remuneration. He

had taken great pains and written the book,[1] Mirza Aqa Khan writes, but Mirza Husayn not only did not pay for it, but was showing it to all and sundry in Istanbul as proof that Mirza Aqa Khan was a Babi. (It was, of course, well known that Mirza Aqa Khan and Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi had married daughters of Subh-i-Azal.) These letters of Mirza Aqa Khan to Mirza Malkam Khan indicate clearly his scheming nature.

..... [1. This must have been the tome entitled *Khulasatu'l-Bayan*--Summary of the *Bayan*.]

As to Mirza Husayn-i-Sharif, he entered the service of the government of India, retired as a very rich man, and was knighted. Sir Mirza Husayn ended his days in Cairo, where he lived in noteworthy affluence. He died without issue; and when his brother, Shaykh Mihdiy-i-Sharif-i-Kashani, who was a schoolmaster in Tihiran, hurried to Cairo he found to his chagrin that the Persian Consulate-General in Egypt had appropriated all the wealth of Sir Mirza Husayn.

The eventual fate of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirman is known--they were imprisoned and executed in 1896[1]--but of what happened to the two treacherous Muhammad-'Alis, one of Tabriz and the other of Isfahan, nothing is known. The intrigues and the mischief-making of the supporters of Subh-i-Azal in Constantinople brought much sorrow to Baha'u'llah in His closing years, resulted in the destruction of a precious life, held up to ridicule and contempt, although only for a while, men of high integrity whose probity and trustworthiness were widely and generally acknowledged. But they left no indelible mark in the annals of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. That Ark of Salvation surmounted all the storms and the stresses of the time.

..... [1. See p. 389. Their story is more fully told in Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith.] [p. 403]

41

Pages of an Autobiography

..... [Note: All extracts from this autobiography are translated by H. M. Balyuzi.]

THESE are some pages of the autobiography of Haji Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan. He was a son of Aqa Mirza Aqa, whom Baha'u'llah honoured with the designation of Nuri'd-Din--the Light of Faith. Aqa Mirza Aqa's father was Haji Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin, a cousin of Siyyid Muhammad-Rida, the father of the Bab. Another cousin of the Bab's father was Mirza Mahmud-i-Khushnvis (Calligraphist), whose son, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Hasan (1815-95), generally known as Mirzay-i-Shirazi, became the most eminent Shi'ih mujtahid of his day. Haji Siyyid Javad, the Imam-Jum'ih of Kirman, also a distinguished personage of his day, was another cousin of the father of the Bab. Both he and Mirzay-i-Shirazi were secretly believers in the Faith of their glorious Kinsman, Whom they believed to be the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad. No one ever heard from their mouths one word condemnatory of the Faith of the Bab, and they gave protection, whenever possible, to the followers of that Faith. The

most signal example was the respect and consideration which Quddus received from the Imam-Jum'ih of Kirman.

Aqa Mirza Aqa's mother, named Zahra Bigum, was a sister of Khadijih Bigum, the wife of the Bab, both being daughters of Mirza 'Ali, a merchant of Shiraz. And the mother of Haji Mirza Habibu'llah (see Addendum V) was Maryam-Sultan Bigum, a daughter of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, one of the two brothers of the wife of the Bab. The other brother was Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, known as Afnan-i-Kabir--the Great Afnan.

The first member of the family to espouse zealously the Cause of their Kinsman, the Bab, was His wife, and the second was Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, a maternal uncle known as Khal-i-A'zam--the Most Great Uncle--who had become His guardian when He was orphaned, and was one of the Seven Martyrs of Tihiran. Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, was the third member of the family to do so. It was his maternal aunt, [p. 404] [p. 405] the wife of the Bab, who led him to the Faith of the Bab and helped him to understand and accept it. And Aqa Mirza Aqa, in his turn, persuaded Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, known as Khal-i-Akbar--the Greater Uncle, another maternal uncle of the Bab--to travel to 'Iraq as a pilgrim to the holy cities there, in order to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, became so well known as a faithful and fervent follower of Baha'u'llah, throughout the city of Shiraz and beyond, that his life was in jeopardy, and particularly so in the wake of the martyrdoms, in Isfahan, of the King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of the Martyrs (Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' and Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada').[1] The older members of the family, headed by Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the father-in-law of Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, thought it advisable that he should leave Shiraz at once. As his son, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah, records, within twenty-four hours he was out of Shiraz and on his way to Bombay, where he established himself for a [p. 406] time. Later, he moved to Port Sa'id, where his trading-house was known as Nuri'd-Din Hasan.

..... [1. The full story of their martyrdom and the part played by Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, will be featured in a forthcoming volume.]

Zahra Bigum, the mother of Aqa Mirza Aqa, passed away in October 1889, and within a few months, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes, Baha'u'llah called the whole family of Aqa Mirza Aqa to visit the Holy Land. Mirza Jalal, the eldest son, was left in Shiraz as custodian of the House of the Bab. Haji Mirza Habibu'llah was then fourteen years old. He, together with his mother, Maryam-Sultan Bigum, his sister, Tuba Khanum, his brothers, Mirza Buzurg and Mirza Diya'u'llah, and a servant (a Baha'i of Kashan), accompanied also by Zivar-Sultan Khanum--whose son, Aqa Mirza Hadi, was to become the father of Shoghi Effendi, the future Guardian of the Baha'i Faith--left Shiraz bound for the Holy Land. Their journey over the mountain passes on the road to Bushihr--the very road which the Bab had traversed four times--was exceedingly

toilsome. Bushihr was extremely hot, and all suffered illness. 'In Bushihr,' Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes, 'we stayed in the house of Haji Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan, uncle of Muvaqqari'd-Dawlih, who was related to us. At the time when Muhammad Khan-i-Baluch was detained in Shiraz, he managed to have him freed.... I met this Muhammad Khan, in the days of the Blessed Perfection, in 'Akka. He had become a shepherd.'

After a sojourn in Bushihr of more than a month, the party continued by sea, through the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, a journey not without its hazards. Near the town of Lingih, around Aden, the ship was battered by a terrific storm, a hole appeared in the hulk, and further on in the Red Sea the engine caught fire. After these frightening adventures they reached Port Sa'id, where they were greeted by their father, Aqa Siyyid Aqa, and an elder brother. 'We stayed in Port Sa'id for seven months,' writes Haji Mirza Habibu'llah, 'and then my father supplicated the Blessed Perfection to permit us to attain His presence. Permission was granted.'

Travelling by boat, they reached Haifa at the end of July 1891, where Baha'u'llah was then staying. 'The late Jinab-i-Manshadi', writes Haji Mirza Habibu'llah, 'met us on the boat, on the instructions of the Blessed Perfection, arranged for our landing, took us through the customs, and led us to the tent of Baha'u'llah which was pitched at the foot of Mount Carmel. I well remember that day. It was early morning, the sun was not yet well up over the crest of the mountain, and [p. 407] [p. 408] the air was very fresh and truly vivifying. Within the tent, Jinab-i-Manshadi was talking to us, enquiring after the Friends in Shiraz, when suddenly Mirza Mustafa--known as Abu-Hurayrih (after a fickle follower of Muhammad)--who was an attendant of the Blessed Perfection, and in later years broke the Covenant, entered and led us to the house and the presence of the Blessed Perfection.[1] He held aside the curtain. All our hopes and earnest wishes were now fulfilled. The Abha Beauty was standing in the middle of the room. Beholding His blessed Figure and His luminous Visage overwhelmed us.... Our tears were out of control. As they flowed, we were circumambulating His blessed Person. He sat down on the divan and invited us to sit. We four brothers sat on the floor. On our right, Mirza Aqa Jan was seated with the samovar and tea things in front of him. The Blessed Perfection said: "Pour tea for the young Afnans; they have just come ashore"; and then He spoke to us: "O flowers of the rose-garden of his honour the Afnan! You are welcome, you are welcome. Your departure from Shiraz was very difficult and toilsome. The will of God and the resolution of Jinab-i-Afnan brought you to this sacred threshold. During your sea journey dangers beset you and God protected you. Consider, this very day several thousand are treading the ground between Safa and Marwih [on one foot].[2] The Beloved of the world of being resides in this Land, but they are all negligent; all are heedless, all unaware, all uninformed. You are the real pilgrims." Thrice He said: "You are the real hajis [pilgrims]." At that moment, when I was lost in wonderment and hearkening to the words of the Beloved of the worlds, these lines of Mawlavis[3] came to my mind:[41-1]

..... [1. Baha'u'llah had His tent pitched on the slopes of Mount Carmel. The exact position is known and has, for years, been in the possession of the World Centre of the Baha'i Faith. But during these sojourns in Haifa, He rented houses in the neighbouring German colony. As to Mirza Mustafa, whose father died a martyr in Tabriz (see index concerning Mirza Mustafa-i-Naraqi), he became a follower of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and lived towards the end of his life near Tiberias, on property belonging to Mirza Majudi'd-Din.]

..... [2. The tenth day of Dhu'l-Hijjih-'Id al-Adha or id-i-Qurban (The Festival of Sacrifice)--the day of pilgrimage at Mecca. Part of the rites of pilgrimage include traversing seven times the distance between these two mounds where, according to tradition, Hagar ran back and forth seven times, seeking a spring to quench her son's thirst.]

..... [3. Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi, the greatest of all the mystic poets of Persia.]

..... [41-1. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... O Hajis! Ye who have performed the hajj, where are ye, where are ye?

..... The Beloved is here, come hither ye, come hither ye. [p. 409]

..... The Beloved is your neighbour, wall by wall;

..... Why in the wilderness lost are ye all?

And at that very moment, the Blessed Perfection turned to me and said: "The mystics had something to say on this account." Then He asked Mirza Aqa Jan to pour us tea again. After that, we left His presence.

'The house next door to His was rented for us. We dwelt in close proximity to the abode of the Abha Beauty. Attaining His blessed threshold, meeting the veterans of the Faith and those resident in the Holy Land had blotted everything else from our minds. The sweetness of living and the spiritual ecstasies that we experienced in those days lie beyond description.... Haifa was hot during this period and we, who were unaccustomed to it, oftentimes fell ill. But the bounties of our beloved Lord were measureless. The sea of His grace and bounty was ever billowing. I remember well one day when we were summoned to His presence, at three o'clock in the afternoon.' Mirza Habibu'llah was very feverish that day and his eldest brother tried to stop him from accompanying them, but he went just the same. He writes; 'The Blessed Perfection, turning to me, said: "You are with fever," at which I bowed my head, and He continued: "Fever is a product of this land. Whoever comes here must have it." Then He ordered tea to be given to us. Immediately I started to perspire, so much so that my clothes were drenched. Then the Blessed Perfection said: "Go and change your clothes. Fever will not trouble you again." During the rest of the nine months we spent in the Holy Land I did not suffer from fever at all.'

After fifteen days, the eldest of the four brothers returned to Port Sa'id, and their father came to the Holy Land. When news of the death of the Seven Martyrs

of Yazd reached them,+F1 it brought great sorrow to Baha'u'llah. Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes that for nine days all revelation ceased and no one was admitted into His presence, until on the ninth day they were all summoned. The deep sorrow that surrounded Him, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah says, was indescribable. 'He spoke extensively about the Qajars and their deeds. Afterwards, He mentioned the events of Yazd; thus sternly did the Tongue of Grandeur speak of Jalalu'd-Dawlih and Zillu's-Sultan: " Zillu's-Sultan [p. 410] wrote Me a letter which was in his own handwriting, and gave it to Haji Sayyah [Haji Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Sayyah] to bring. He requested Me to aid him with the Babis to destroy his Shah-Baba [his father, the Shah]. Should You do this, he wrote, 'I will give you freedom, I will give you official recognition, I will help and support you, I will make amends for the past; whatever Shah-Baba did, I will do just the opposite.' The entire letter is full of such statements. The answer which was given to him was this: 'Praying for the Shah is obligatory for both: you and Us. Never again write in this vein to Us. Never again put such requests to this Wronged One. We have arisen to improve the morals of a number of people, wronged in this world. Were we after leadership, what leadership could have been better than occupying the post of a vizier in Iran?' Having received this answer from Us, he has despaired of Us, and is now behaving in this manner. Were We to send his letter to Nasiri'd-Din Shah, he would skin him alive. But God is the Veiler, He draws veils over the deeds of His servants." Then He said: "Do not be sad, do not be downcast, do not let your hearts bleed. The sacred tree of the Cause of God is watered by the blood of the martyrs. A tree, unless watered, does not grow and bear fruit. Before long, you will see the name of the Qajars obliterated, and the land of Iran cleansed of them." Regarding Jalalu'd-Dawlih, the Blessed Perfection said: "This ingrate has done what has caused the eyes of the denizens of the Supreme Concourse to shed tears of blood." Only thirty-two years from that date, the rule of the Qajars came to an end and they were overthrown.' The first Tablet revealed after nine days, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes, was Lawh-i-Dunya (Tablet of the World), with which Aqa Mirza Aqa was honoured. That reference to Jalalu'd-Dawlih can be read also in this Tablet: 'The tyrant of the land of Ya [Yazd], committed that which hath caused the Concourse on high to shed tears of blood.' [41-2] A copy of the Tablet of the World, in the handwriting of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, was given by Baha'u'llah, Himself, to Haji Mirza Buzurg, an elder brother of Haji Mirza Habibu'llah.

..... [1. The full story of this tragic event, brought about by Zillu's-Sultan and his son, Jalalu'd-Dawlih, which occurred in the spring of 1891, will be related in a forthcoming volume.]

..... [41-2. Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 85.]

The writer continues: 'Fifteen days had passed since the arrival of my father, and the days of our attainment were drawing to their close, when an epidemic of cholera broke out in Syria and Lebanon. The government set up quarantine around the frontiers. My father asked for permission to leave, but it was not granted; not while the epidemic [p. 411] raged. For us this was supreme felicity. Autumn

came on, the air of Haifa and 'Akka improved. The Blessed Perfection moved from Haifa to the Mansion of Bahji. We were provided with a small house, next to the Mansion.... Our house was so situated that we could see from it His blessed chamber. Getting up at dawn to say our prayers, we could see most of the time that His chamber was lighted, and Tablets were being revealed. The Blessed Perfection was pacing in the room and the amanuensis was busy writing. I do not remember anyone other than Mirza Aqa Jan taking down the revealed Word. In those days the late Mirza Yusuf Khan-i-Vujdani and the late Aqa Siyyid Asadu'llah-i-Qumi were tutoring the Branches in the Mansion. The Blessed Perfection instructed my brothers, Haji Mirza Buzurg, Haji Mirza Diya, and myself to attend their lessons. Every day we went to the room, in the ground floor of the Mansion, set aside as a classroom, to receive tuition. The late Mishkin-Qalam taught us calligraphy...

'On the first day of Muharram 1309 [7 August 1891],[1] the Blessed Perfection was celebrating the festival. My father was corpulent and [p. 412] suffered from rheumatism. He could not sit on the floor. The Blessed Perfection said: "Bring a chair for the Afnan," and then: " Bring chairs for his sons as well," and so we all were seated on chairs.... The Blessed Perfection, Himself, distributed baqlava [a sweetmeat] to the believers present. Then He said: "This is the day on which Hadrat-i-Mubashshir [the Herald] set foot in this world and illumined it with His light. There is every reason for rejoicing...." The next day, the second day of Muharram, was the day of the birth of the Master of Days and of the World of Being [Baha'u'llah]. In the morning, all of the pilgrims and residents were summoned to His blessed Presence. He spoke about the sublimity of His advent, the power of the Most Exalted Pen, the circumstances of His exile, and the arrival at the Most Great Prison. Then He spoke extensively about the aggression and transgressions on the part of the tyrants and divines. He said, " Nasiri'd-Din Shah and 'Abdu'l-'Aziz both transgressed against Us and harmed the body of the Cause of God, but the tyranny of 'Abdu'l-'Aziz was by far the more severe, because he banished, without any reason, the Wronged One of the worlds to the Most Great Prison. But, Nasiri'd-Din Shah, because of the ill-advised action of the believers in the early days of the Cause, whenever he stroked his limbs and felt the pellets under his [p. 413] skin, would be roused in anger to commit these harsh deeds and adopt tyrannical measures against the believers, spilling the blood of innocent people. Notwithstanding all these injuries inflicted upon them by the Shah and the Government, the friends do not cease to demonstrate their Faith openly and do not observe caution. You cannot blame them, because two great festivals have been joined into one, auguring a brilliant future." Then the Blessed Perfection spoke these two lines [which are by Hafiz]:[41-3]

..... [1. The anniversary of the birth of the Bab. Because of the lunar calendar, the Christian date varies.]

..... [41-3. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... These times more bitter than venom shall pass away,

..... And once again, times as sweet as sugar shall come this way.

He then gave us sweetmeats and we left His presence.

'...I have already mentioned that our house was adjacent to the Mansion. We usually got up at dawn to engage in our devotionals. One morning, before sunrise, an attendant came with the tidings that the Blessed Perfection was coming to our house. He placed this crown of honour everlasting upon the heads of these servants. This tidings given to us made us weep with joy and we hastened out. His blessed Person we beheld, coming with all power and glory towards our house. We all prostrated ourselves and kissed His feet. We made the earth trodden by His blessed feet the kohl of our eyes.... He entered our house and conferred on us this ever-abiding honour. I offered Him a cup of tea. He drank half of it and gave the rest back to me. He also gave me a black rosary, made of olive wood, which He was carrying. I kissed His hands. That rosary, which was as dear to me as life, is now placed in the archives of the House in Shiraz [The House of the Bab].

'Again, I have mentioned that His blessed chamber was visible from our house. We saw Him several times at dawn and early morning, while He was speaking the revealed Word and Mirza Aqa Jan was writing it down as He spoke it. Mirza Aqa Jan used to have several pens [reed pens they would be] well cut and pointed, with ink and paper ready. The flow of verses from the heaven of Revelation was swift. It was indeed like unto a fast-billowing ocean. Mirza Aqa Jan wrote as quickly as he could--so quickly that the pen at times jumped out of his hand. He would immediately take up another pen. There were times when he could not keep up and would say: "I am incapable of writing." Then the Blessed Perfection would repeat what He had spoken.' [p. 414] [p. 415]

Haji Mirza Habibu'llah relates that Baha'u'llah instructed Haji Mirza Buzurg to make a copy of Qasidiy-i-'Izz-i-Varqa'iyyih, the poem which He Himself had composed in Sulaymaniyyih. When Haji Mirza Buzurg had finished the task allotted to him, Baha'u'llah gave him a pen-case made in Isfahan which held a silver ink-stand. That pen-case is now deposited in the archives of the House of the Bab. On another occasion, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah relates, Baha'u'llah summoned him and said that He had bidden Mirza Yusuf Khan and Aqa Siyyid Asadu'llah to pay particular attention to his instruction, and then gave him a bottle of rose-water, saying: 'This rose-water comes from Qamsar of Kashan. It has taken forty days for it to reach this land. God has created this rose-water for such a day as this, which is the Lord of days.' Haji Mirza Habibu'llah regrets that he did not keep some of that rose-water but let it go, over the years, to friends who used it.

Then, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah gives a graphic description of a day in the Garden of Junaynih, in the presence of Baha'u'llah. Abu-Hurayrih, he writes, came one evening to announce that the next day Baha'u'llah would be visiting Junaynih, and had bidden all, pilgrims and residents, to be there. That night, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah says, the joy of anticipating a whole day spent in the presence of the Blessed Perfection kept them awake. Before sunrise, they were all gathered

outside the gates of the Mansion. All hour later, Baha'u'llah came out. A white donkey was brought for Him to ride. This donkey was the offering of Aqa Ghulam-'Ali and Aqa Muhammad-Hashim, both natives of Kashan. It was a beautiful morning, says Haji Mirza Habibu'llah; the air was fresh and invigorating, as they walked to the Garden of Junaynih, where all had been made ready for the arrival of Baha'u'llah. Haji Khavar, a resident for years in the Holy Land, who was fairly tall, held an umbrella over the head of Baha'u'llah, against the sun. Thus they reached the garden. Following the luncheon, 'Abdu'l-Baha arrived from 'Akka. Baha'u'llah told them all: 'Aqa is coming; hasten to attend Him.' Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes that he was present on several occasions when, as 'Abdu'l-Baha approached the place where people were gathered in the presence of Baha'u'llah, He would say: 'Aqa is coming; hasten to attend Him.' And now, 'Abdu'l-Baha, attended by all, came with great humility into the presence of the Blessed Perfection, reports Haji Mirza Habibu'llah, [p. 416] and Baha'u'llah said: 'The garden was not pleasant enough this morning, but now with the arrival of Aqa it has become most pleasant.' Then turning towards 'Abdu'l-Baha, He observed: 'It would have been so good, if you had come this morning', and 'Abdu'l-Baha replied: 'The Mutasarrif and a number of others had sent word that they were coming. I had to receive them and offer them hospitality.' Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes, 'the Blessed Perfection smiled, and said: " Aqa is Our shield and the shield of everyone else; all live at ease, all know utmost comfort and tranquillity. Consorting with men such as these is very, very difficult. It is Aqa who stands up to everything and supplies the means for the well-being and peace of all. May God preserve Him from the evil of all the envious and the inimical." "One day in Baghdad," Baha'u'llah continued, "a beggar asked for alms. One majidi was given to him, and he told Me: 'Go in peace, young man; may Hadrat-i-'Abbas[1] give you support.' He prayed for Us--it was a good prayer." Haji Mirza Habibu'llah continues: 'About an hour before sunset, the Blessed Perfection rode back to the Mansion, and, as in the morning, we all walked there and at the gates we left His presence.'

..... [1. 'Abbas, a brother of Imam Husayn, the third Imam, suffered martyrdom with him at Karbila; he is greatly revered and extolled by the Shi'ih. 'Abdu'l-Baha was named 'Abbas.] [p. 417]

Another incident is related in this autobiography: 'The Garden of Jamal is one of the gardens [see p. 363], remote from 'Akka, but near the Mansion of Bahji. Passing by this garden, one comes within full view of the Mansion. The door of the chamber of the Blessed Perfection opened this way, and whenever 'Abdu'l-Baha approached by this route, as soon as the Mansion became visible, He would dismount and walk the rest of the way with utmost humility and reverence. One day which I well remember, we were in the presence of the Blessed Perfection. The Aghsan were there, and among others also the following: Nabil-i-A'zam, Afnan-i-Kabir, Aqa Riday-i-Shirazi, Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani, Mishkin-Qalam, my father, and Aqa Muhammad-Hasan of the Pilgrim House. Suddenly, the Blessed Perfection turned round to look at the plain, and seeing 'Abdu'l-Baha approaching the Mansion, He said: " Aqa is

coming, go and attend Him." We all hastened out, and with "Him round Whom all Names revolve" ['Abdu'l-Baha] went back to the presence of the Blessed Perfection.[1] Haji Mirza Habibu'llah mentions also a number of others who were there that day and witnessed all that happened, and yet, in later years, broke the Covenant. The writer stresses particularly the fact that in those days Baha'u'llah oftentimes warned the believers to remain steadfast and loyal to the Covenant. Once, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah tells us, He pointed to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, Mirza Diya'u'llah and Mirza Badi'u'llah and said: 'Should one of our Aghsan ever for a moment pass out from the shadow of the Cause he shall cease to be of any consequence.' On another occasion, when they were in the presence of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Diya'u'llah came in to say: 'Aqa supplicates for permission that we all may go with the Friends to the Garden of Junaynih.' 'Who has said so?' Baha'u'llah enquired, to which Mirza Diya'u'llah replied: 'Aqay-i-Ghusn-i-Akbar' (the Greater Branch). Angrily, Baha'u'llah spoke: 'There is only one Aqa [Master, without specification], all the others have names; that one Aqa is "He round Whom all Names revolve", the Ghusn-i-A'zam' (the Most Great Branch).

..... [1. See Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 43-4, for a similar incident.]

Haji Mirza Habibu'llah recalls one late afternoon in the Garden of Ridvan, when they were there in the presence of Baha'u'llah. The air was fresh, pure and redolent, he writes, and it was raining slightly. [p. 418] Baha'u'llah spoke to them on that day about Mirza Yahya and his crew, during the Baghdad period; how Mirza Yahya took as his wife the sister of Mulla Rajab-'Ali, the second wife of the Bab, and then gave her to Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, despite the injunction of the Bab. This shameful deed, Baha'u'llah said, had prevented the mother of the Bab from giving her allegiance to the Faith. Haji Mirza Habibu'llah states that traces of sorrow appeared on the face of Baha'u'llah, as He spoke of those days in Baghdad. His father, Aqa Mirza Aqa, was greatly affected, but Baha'u'llah said, 'Do not grieve. Praise be to God, the mother of that Blessed Being came to believe, at the end.' That same afternoon in the Garden of Ridvan, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah records, Baha'u'llah spoke about some of the Shi'ih divines of Nasiri'd-Din Shah and Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, of their total failure, despite their great exertions, to extinguish the light of the Faith of God. 'Before long,' He said, 'you shall see people of all the nations of the world gathered under the shade of the tent of the Cause of God.'

On another day, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah recalls, Baha'u'llah spoke of Mulla 'Aliy-i-Sabzivari, the martyr. He it was who, when led to the scaffold, instructed the executioner to open one of his veins, and, when a bit of his throat was cut, filled his hand with his blood and dyed his white beard red with it. Then, turning to the crowd, he called out: 'O people! On the day of his martyrdom, Husayn Ibn 'Ali [the third Imam, martyred at Karbila] uttered these words: "Is there anyone, truly capable of dispensing victory, to come to aid me?" and I say to you, O people, is there anyone truly capable of beholding, to come to behold me?' Haji Mirza Habibu'llah records that Baha'u'llah, in relating this story, several times repeated: 'What weighty

words did that man speak, and how, with his precious blood, did he bear witness to the truth of his faith! People witnessed it, but were not moved, and heartlessly put to death that innocent soul. All these strange events support the greatness of this blessed Cause. They will all be recorded in the pages of history and future generations will feel proud of them.'

One of those present that day, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah writes, was Haji Abu'-Hasan of Shiraz, the father of Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan Dihqan (usually written as Dehkan). He had travelled on the same boat with the Bab, when both were going as pilgrims to Mecca, and now asked Baha'u'llah: 'How was it that all those long years after the martyrdom of the Primal Point, Nasiri'd-Din Shah was still ruling [p. 419] the land with full powers, inflicting so much injury on the Faith and the believers, and God spared him, whereas, after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, Yazid had no more than three years given to him?' Baha'u'llah replied: 'Because of the wrong action of some of the believers in the early days, and their attempt on his life, God has given him this grace; but he too will have his day, you shall see.'

Nine months had now passed since the arrival of the party from Egypt, the cholera epidemic was over, and the hour for their departure had come. The autobiography of Haji Mirza Habibu'llah poignantly describes that last time when they entered the presence of Baha'u'llah. It was after this that, at the bidding of Baha'u'llah, his mother received from Baha'iyyih Khanum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, a ring that Baha'u'llah had worn. Today that ring is preserved in the archives of the House of the Bab. [p. 420]

42

The Ascension of Baha'u'llah

IT was only a few brief weeks after the departure of the Afnans that Baha'u'llah left His human temple in the early hours of the morning of 29th of May 1892. A telegram bore the news to Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, the despot of Turkey: 'The Sun of Baha has set.' It was sent by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

'Abdu'l-Hamid of Turkey and Nasiri'd-Din Shah of Iran were jubilant, unmindful of the fact that the Sun of Baha will continue to shine dazzlingly in the full meridian. Its energizing and life-bestowing rays will continue to revivify the hearts and minds of men, to penetrate the dark and dense clouds of superstition, bigotry and prejudice, to disperse the heavy and oppressive fogs of despair and disillusionment, to shed revealing light upon the baffling problems which bewilder a wayward, fatigued and storm-tossed humanity. Man--ungrateful Man--has essayed to dim Its brilliance, to deny Its potency, to abjure Its gifts, to disparage Its claims--futile and bootless attempts, for the signal proof of the Sun remains the Sun itself.

Almost a century separates us from the days when Baha'u'llah lived amongst men. The Faith which He proclaimed has encircled the globe and marches from triumph to triumph, and the resplendent edifice which He raised stands to offer certitude and peace to a disordered world.

In His Will and Testament, Baha'u'llah appointed His eldest Son--Whom we know as 'Abdu'l-Baha (the Servant of Glory)--the Centre of His Covenant with all men, and the sole Expounder of His revealed Word. His name was 'Abbas. His Father referred to Him as Ghusnu'llahu'l-A'zam--the Greatest Branch, and spoke of Him as Sirru'llah--the Mystery of God. Baha'u'llah referred to Him also as Aqa--the Master, and so did the Baha'is. 'Abdu'l-Baha was the designation which He, the Mystery of God, chose for Himself after His Father's ascension. [p. 421]

[p. 422]

The Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah is indeed a unique document. Never before had a Manifestation of God so explicitly established a Covenant to be the shield and the buttress of His Faith, or so clearly and indubitably named Him Who was to be His authorized successor with power to ward off the machinations of self-seekers, to keep pure and unsullied His Word, to preserve and watch over the unity of His followers, to bar sectarianism and banish corruption. Indeed, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah is, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'the "Sure Handle" mentioned from the foundation of the world in the Books, the Tablets and the Scriptures of old.' '...the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.' Furthermore, 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated, 'The lamp of the Covenant is the light of the world, and the words traced by the Pen of the Most High a limitless ocean.' And again, 'The power of the Covenant is as the heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men.' [42-1]

..... [42-1. The words of 'Abdu'l-Baha are quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 238-9.]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes: 'Extolled by the writer of the Apocalypse as "the Ark of His (God's) Testament"; associated with the gathering beneath the "Tree of Anisa" (Tree of Life) mentioned by Baha'u'llah in the Hidden Words; glorified by Him, in other passages of His writings, as the "Ark of Salvation" and as "the Cord stretched betwixt the earth and the Abha Kingdom", this Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament which, together with the Kitab-i-Aqdas and several Tablets, in which the rank and station of 'Abdu'l-Baha are unequivocally disclosed, constitute the chief buttresses designed by the Lord of the Covenant Himself to shield and support, after His ascension, the appointed Center of His Faith... [42-2]

..... [42-2. *ibid.* p. 239. (*God Passes By*)]

It is on this rock--the rock of the Covenant--that the edifice of the World order is built. It is this ark, the ark of the Covenant, that has brought the Cause of Baha'u'llah safely through storms and hurricanes of unsurpassed intensity. Many a Judas has tried to pierce this shield, the shield of the Covenant, only to find himself in grievous loss.

Baha'u'llah wrote in His Will and Testament:[1]

..... [1. Kitab-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant).]

..... Although the Realm of Glory hath none of the vanities of the world, [p. 423] within the treasury of trust and resignation we have bequeathed to Our heirs an excellent and priceless heritage. Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail....

..... The aim of this Wronged One in sustaining woes and tribulations, in revealing the Holy Verses and in demonstrating proofs hath been naught but to quench the flame of hate and enmity, that the horizon of the hearts of men may be illumined with the light of concord and attain real peace and tranquillity.... Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk.... Lofty is the station of man! ...Great and blessed is this Day--the Day in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest. Lofty is the station of man, were he to hold fast to righteousness and truth and to remain firm and steadfast in the Cause....

..... O ye that dwell on earth! The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the cause of enmity or dissension. In the eyes of men of insight and the beholders of the Most Sublime Vision, whatsoever are the effective means for safeguarding and promoting the happiness and welfare of the children of men hath already been revealed by the Pen of Glory....

..... ...Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord. We fain would hope that the people of Baha may be guided by the blessed words: 'Say: all things are of God.' This exalted utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true unity. Verily He speaketh the truth and leadeth the way. He is the All-Powerful, the Exalted, the Gracious.[42-3]

..... [42-3. Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 219-22.]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes:

..... 'In this weighty and incomparable Document its Author discloses the character of that "excellent and priceless heritage" bequeathed by Him to His "heirs"; proclaims afresh the fundamental purpose of His Revelation; enjoins the "peoples of the world" to hold fast to that which will "elevate" their "station"; announces to them that "God hath forgiven what is past"; stresses the sublimity of man's station; discloses the primary aim of the Faith of God; directs the faithful to pray for the welfare of the kings of the earth, "the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God"; invests them with the rulership of the earth; singles out as His special domain the hearts of men; forbids categorically strife and contention; commands His followers to aid those rulers who are "adorned with the ornament of equity and justice"; and directs, in particular, the Aghsan (His sons) to ponder the "mighty force and the consummate power that lieth concealed in the world of

being". He bids them, moreover, together [p. 424] [p. 425] with the Afnan (the Bab's kindred) and His own relatives, to "turn, one and all, unto the Most Great Branch ('Abdu'l-Baha)"; identifies Him with "the One Whom God hath purposed", "Who hath branched from this pre-existent Root", referred to in the Kitab-i-Aqdas; ordains the station of the "Greater Branch" (Mirza Muhammad-'Ali) to be beneath that of the "Most Great Branch" ('Abdu'l-Baha); exhorts the believers to treat the Aghsan with consideration and affection; counsels them to respect His family and relatives, as well as the kindred of the Bab; denies His sons "any right to the property of others"; enjoins on them, on His kindred and on that of the Bab to "fear God, to do that which is meet and seemly" and to follow the things that will "exalt" their station; warns all men not to allow "the means of order to be made the cause confusion, and the instrument of union an occasion for discord"; and concludes with an exhortation calling upon the faithful to "serve all nations", and to strive for the "betterment of the world".[42-4]

..... [42-4. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 239-40.]

Baha'u'llah had left the mortal plane. Many there were who came to mourn Him. They did not bear allegiance to Him, they could not see in Him the Redeemer of Mankind, yet they knew that a great Being had gone from their midst. They were from diverse backgrounds and sects and Faiths and nations--officials and leading figures and priests, learned men and poets and men of letters, rich and poor, Druses, Sunni and Shi'ih Muslims, Christians of diverse denominations, and Jews. From other cities renowned in the history of the world, such as Damascus and Aleppo and Cairo, they sent their eulogies and poems and panegyrics and tributes. And Baha'u'llah, at the time of His ascension, was still a prisoner of the Turkish government. No imperial edict of the Sultan had set Him free.

How different was this day of His ascension, when the plain stretching between the city of 'Akka and the Mansion of Bahji teemed with crowds who came to pay Him homage and lament their loss, from that far-off day nearly twenty-four summers before when hordes of misinformed people had gathered at the sea-shore of 'Akka, awaiting His arrival to deride and insult Him. Total, unrelieved, unmitigated defeat seemed to be His fate then, and now all triumph was His.

How strange, indeed, and awe-inspiring had been the contrasts of His sojourn among men, particularly in the Holy Land.

Brutally insulted in His native province, shorn of all earthly possessions, [p. 426] which He had in abundance, twice consigned to a foul prison of thieves and desperadoes, four times set on the road to exile, basely betrayed by a brother whom He had endeavoured to protect, forced to seek the solitude of bare and bleak mountains, venomously and ferociously assailed and denounced and opposed by hosts of the mighty and the powerful and hordes of the insignificant alike, He had stood His ground with a certitude and a constancy which no adversity could shake and no cataclysm could thwart. And upon a swelling number of faithful adherents. He conferred that supreme gift which Jesus had spoken of to

Nicodemus when the Jewish nobleman sought Him in the dead of night--the gift of second birth. He touched the hearts of men, and He won their allegiance by His Divine power. His followers were not alone in feeling its sweep and its command. Many who had denied Him and reviled Him and openly contended with Him, were eventually subdued by the charm, the majesty, the kindness, the radiance of His Being. Indeed there were many amongst those erstwhile adversaries who, without enrolling in the ranks of His followers, bore testimony to His supremacy, and lent their support to His defence.

And on this summer's day where was the proud 'Abdu'l-'Aziz of Turkey, the Sultan who had decreed His exile and incarceration? Where was the overbearing Napoleon, Emperor of the French who had disdained His summons? Beaten, forgotten, Nasiri'd-Din, the 'tyrant' of Persia, who had cast Him out of His native land and forced Him to take the road to exile twice, fell only four years after the ascension of Baha'u'llah before the bullets of an avenger, on the very eve of his golden jubilee. The records of history amply show that great was the fall of anyone, mighty or low alike, who dared to challenge Baha'u'llah and gainsay His sovereignty. Mirza Yahya, the brother who repudiated His authority and plotted His death, died in the obscurity of Cyprus, more than three decades after regaining his freedom in 1878. In all those forlorn years, although free to act and to move, he remained a man incapable of exercising his freedom. He was so abandoned by all at the end that, according to the written testimony of his son, at his death in 1912, there was no one of the 'people of the Bayan' near him to consign him to his grave according to the prescriptions of the Babi Faith.

No one has opposed Baha'u'llah and raised his hand to injure His [p. 427] Cause and His followers, and has escaped shame, doom and degradation.

The same cable which bore the news of the ascension of Baha'u'llah, also informed the Sultan that His earthly temple would be laid to rest in a house next to the Mansion of Bahji. 'Abdu'l-Hamid gave his consent.

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith writes: 'Baha'u'llah was accordingly laid to rest in the northernmost room of the house which served as a dwelling-place for His son-in-law,[1] the most northerly of the three houses laying to the west of, and adjacent to, the Mansion. His interment took place shortly after sunset, on the very day of His ascension.

'The inconsolable Nabil, who had the privilege of a private audience with Baha'u'llah during the days of His illness; whom 'Abdu'l-Baha had chosen to select those passages which constitute the text of the Tablet of Visitation now recited in the Most Holy Tomb; and who, in his uncontrollable grief, drowned himself in the sea [p. 428] shortly after the passing of his Beloved, thus describes the agony of those days: "Methinks, the spiritual commotion set up in the world of dust had caused all the worlds of God to tremble.... My inner and outer tongue are powerless to portray the condition we were in.... In the midst of the prevailing confusion a multitude of the inhabitants of 'Akka and of neighboring villages, that had thronged the fields surrounding the Mansion,

could be seen weeping, beating upon their heads, and crying aloud their grief."

..... [1. Haji Siyyid 'Ali Afnan, a son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan--
Afnan-i-Kabir (the Great Afnan).]

'For a full week a vast number of mourners, rich and poor alike, tarried to grieve with the bereaved family, partaking day and night of the food that was lavishly dispensed by its members....

'...these effusive manifestations of sorrow and expressions of praise and of admiration, which the ascension of Baha'u'llah had spontaneously evoked among the unbelievers in the Holy Land and the adjoining countries, were but a drop when compared with the ocean of grief and the innumerable evidences of unbounded devotion which, at the hour of the setting of the Sun of Truth, poured forth from the hearts of the countless thousands who had espoused His Cause, and were determined to carry aloft its banner in Persia, India, Russia, 'Iraq, Turkey, Palestine, Egypt and Syria.

'With the ascension of Baha'u'llah draws to a close a period which, in many ways, is unparalleled in the world's religious history. The first century of the Baha'i Era had by now run half its course. An epoch, unsurpassed in its sublimity, its fecundity and duration by any previous Dispensation, and characterized, except for a short interval of three years, by half a century of continuous and progressive Revelation, had terminated. The Message proclaimed by the Bab had yielded its golden fruit....'[42-5]

..... [42-5. *ibid.* pp. 222-3. (God Passes By)]

This book is an attempt to catch the ocean in a diminutive cup, to gaze at the orb through plain glass. Far, very far from man's effort must be an adequate portrayal of a Manifestation of the qualities and attributes of Almighty God. And here we deal with the life of One Whose advent implies the 'coming of age of the entire human race', and under Whose dominion the earth will become one fatherland. [p. 429] [p. 430]

Addendum I

The Disastrous Reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah

QAJARS were the Umayyads of Iran. They were usurpers. They were treacherous. They did not, would not keep their word.

By the year 1795, when the revolutionary ardour of France had subsided, Robespierre and his works and the rump of the National Convention were all of the past, and Catherine the Great, the Tsarina of Russia, had only one more year to live, the founder of the Qajar dynasty, the despicable Agha Muhammad Khan, was well established as the undisputed monarch of Iran. And thus began for Iran a long nightmare, a period of unmitigated disaster. The Qajars were in turn cruel, sensuous, spineless, obscurantist and tyrannical. Under their yoke, Iran steadily declined from one infamy to another.

Iran has had a past--a brilliant past--of which she can justly be proud. She

has had great kings, outstanding ministers and administrators; great divines and mystics; great poets and men of letters; great and eminent men of arts and builders. But, under the Qajars she touched the very depths of degradation in the course of the disastrous reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah (1848-96), which brought to Iran misery upon misery and shame upon shame. Corruption crept into her vitals: intellectually starved, spiritually moribund, morally decrepit, she ceased to be of any consequence in the counsels of the nations. The rapid fall of a nation that has known high pinnacles of achievement is always most piteous, noticeable, and tragic.

'Abbas Mirza, the Mulk-Ara, the half-brother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who, throughout his life, suffered greatly at the hands of this avaricious, vindictive monarch, writes this epitaph on him in his autobiography:

..... Better is it for a man to leave a good name behind:

..... (Living is the happy name of Nushiravan[1] with justice coupled,

..... Though long years have gone with no Nushiravan in the world)

..... [1. Chosroes I, the Sasanid monarch. These lines are Sa'di's. (HMB)]
[p. 431]

..... Unlike Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who in the course of forty-nine years of reign [lunar years] left no trace behind, save ignorance, folly, ruination of the land, no care for the proper education of the official and the subject, who ruined and despoiled Iran beyond the possibility of reform and redemption; who displayed folly to such a high degree as both the tongue and the pen are unable adequately to describe.[A1-1]

..... [A1-1. Mulk-Ara, Sharh-Hal-i-'Abbas Mirza Mulk-Ara, pp. 62-5.]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith thus refers to this ruler, who brought Iran so low:

..... Nasiri'd-Din Shah, stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as the 'Prince of Oppressors,' as one who had 'perpetrated what hath caused the denizens of the cities of justice and equity to lament,' was, during the period under review, in the full tide of his manhood and had reached the plenitude of his despotic power. The sole arbiter of the fortunes of a country 'firmly stereotyped in the immemorial traditions of the East'; ... the head of an administration in which 'every actor was, in different aspects, both the briber and the bribed'; allied, in his opposition to the Faith, with a sacerdotal order which constituted a veritable 'church-state', ... this capricious monarch, no longer able to lay hands upon the person of Baha'u'llah, had to content himself with the task of attempting to stamp out in his own dominions the remnants of a much-feared and newly resuscitated community. Next to him in rank and power were his three eldest sons, to whom, for purposes of internal administration, he had practically delegated his authority, and in whom he had invested the governorship of all the provinces of his kingdom. The province of Adhirbayjan he had entrusted to the weak and timid Mirza Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza, the heir to

his throne, who had fallen under the influence of the Shaykhi sect, and was showing a marked respect to the Mullas. To the stern and savage rule of the astute Mas'ud Mirza, commonly known as Zillu's-Sultan, his eldest surviving son, whose mother had been of plebeian origin, he had committed over two-fifths of his kingdom, including the provinces of Yazd and Isfahan, whilst upon Kamran Mirza, his favorite son, commonly called by his title the Nayibu's-Saltanih, he had bestowed the rulership of Gilan and Mazindaran, and made him governor of Tihiran, his minister of war and the commander-in-chief of his army. Such was the rivalry between the last two princes,[1] who vied with each other in courting the favor of their father that each endeavored, with the support of the leading mujtahids within his [p. 432] jurisdiction, outshine the other in meritorious task of hunting, plundering and exterminating the members of a defenseless community, who, at the bidding of Baha'u'llah, had ceased to offer armed resistance even in self-defense, and were carrying out His injunction that 'it is better to be killed than kill.' Nor were the clerical firebrands, Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani and Siyyid Sadiq-i-Tabataba'i, the two leading mujtahids of Tihiran, together with Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, their colleague in Isfahan, and Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imam-Jum'ih of that city, willing to allow the slightest opportunity to pass without striking, with all the force and authority they wielded, at an adversary whose liberalizing influences they had even more reason to fear than the sovereign himself.[A1-2]

..... [1. On the day that Nasiri'd-Din Shah was assassinated, Zillu's-Sultan was at Isfahan; he immediately offered his submission and loyalty to the brother whome he despised an in the past had attempted to supplant, knowing that he had no chance whatsoever of gaining the throne. Kamran Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih, was in Tihiran. But he, the Minister of War and the Governor of the capital, was such a coward that he went into hiding and nothing could persuade him to come out and attend to his duties. He was not present at the ceremony of preparing the corpse of his father for interment. (HMB)]

..... [A1-2. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 197-8.]

The same 'Abbas Mirza, the Mulk-Ara, relates how appalled he was by what he saw and experienced when he was sent, against his own wishes, to govern the city of Zanjan and its environs. Three decades after the holocaust which enveloped the intrepid Hujjat and his brave companions, large areas of the city still lay devastated; the city swarmed with plaintiffs, carrying contradictory edicts and judicial rulings issued by various officials and divines; governmental finances were in total disarray; tribal heads and chieftains were laws unto themselves; the common people had no one to whom they could turn to seek redress against extortions which weighed so heavily upon them. Mulk-Ara had been an exile for twenty-seven years in 'Iraq. Because of what he had suffered himself at the hands of Nasiri'd-Din Shah his criticisms could not be totally disinterested. But no matter how uncharitable his sentiments might have been regarding Nasiri'd-Din Shah and the ramshackle government of Iran, his observations receive ample confirmation from other sources. Muhammad-Hasan Khan, a son of

Haji 'Ali Khan, the Hajibu'd-Dawlih--who had at first the title of Sani'u'd-Dawlih, and then of I'timadu's-Saltanih, and served faithfully at the court of Nasiri'd-Din Shah for many years, ending his days as the Minister of Publications--left behind a voluminous diary. A cursory glance through this diary, which covers nearly two decades, suffices to show the basic corruption of Nasiri'd-Din Shah and of many of those who were near and dear to him, the restlessness which pervaded his daily life, the detestable and even horrific practices which flourished under his rule. Muhammad-Hasan Khan, who knew French, was well acquainted with the ways and thoughts of Europeans, and is credited with a variety of translations as well as original writings, died only shortly before the assassination of [p. 433] his royal master. We shall come back to his remarkably frank diary later on.

But let us at first turn to the evidence provided by Valentine Chirol (later knighted), a noted journalist of Victorian and Edwardian times, who visited Persia in 1884 on behalf of Nordenfelt, a Swede resident in Britain, who had put a new type of machine-gun on the market, and wished to do business with the government of Iran. Nordenfelt at first approached Mirza Malkam Khan, the Nazimu'd-Dawlih, the Persian minister in London, who 'gave him every encouragement' and advised him to pave the way with the presentation of a model to the person of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, 'so as to enlist His Majesty's personal interest in the matter'.

Valentine Chirol writes:[A1-3]

..... [A1-3. Chirol, *Fifty Years in a Changing World*, pp. 144-58, for the extracts which follow.]

'Nordenfelt, knowing my Wanderlust and trusting to the experience I had already gained of Eastern ways and customs, asked me whether I would undertake that mission. Persia was still for me a name to conjure with, and I accepted the offer. The first question was how to convey the gun to Teheran. The shortest and most convenient route in those days would have been through Russia and across the Caspian to the Persian port of Enzeli [Anzali] and thence by road, if it could be called a road, to the Persian capital. But the Russian Government, being unwilling to encourage the introduction of modern weapons of war into Persia, the only available route was by the Persian Gulf to Bushire, where I was to take charge of it and see to its safe conveyance by land through Shiraz and Isfahan to Teheran.'

Chirol describes graphically the ascent on to the Iranian Plateau, through the most difficult mountain passes between Bushihr and Shiraz, which today can be done through long tunnels that are marvels of engineering. In Isfahan, Zillu's-Sultan insisted on having a look at the machine-gun and seeing it at practice, which rather disconcerted Chirol. But there was no way out, and it had to be done. Zillu's-Sultan was greatly pleased. Chirol goes on to say:

'Once on a particularly desolate stage with the sun beating down out of a cloudless sky, I happened on to one of the sights which bring home to one the primitive methods by which law and order are apt to be maintained in truly

oriental countries. Some way ahead on the broad level track worn by countless caravans, which had of course no milestones or signposts, I descried a big post about man high, and as I [p. 434] rode up to it I saw what had been a human face and shoulders rising out of it. The wretched man, who may or may not have been, as I was afterwards told, a notorious brigand, had been forced down into a hollow column built up of closely-piled stones into which cement had been afterwards poured up to nearly his shoulders. There he had been left to live for another few hours, until myriads of flies settling down upon his face or the swifter mercies of birds of prey put an end to his torture....

'Meanwhile I had plenty of time to explore the sights of Isfahan itself, though of the splendid city which excited the wonder and admiration of European travellers in the days when Elizabeth reigned in England and Akbar at Delhi only enough had survived to mark the contrast between the Persia of the sixteenth and of the nineteenth century. Whole quarters of the city were deserted and in ruins; of the bazaars, which were once the finest and most thriving marts of Western Asia, many were entirely abandoned, and but few more than partially tenanted. The Chehar Bagh [Chihar Bagh] still existed, but its avenues of giant plane trees had been grievously thinned; water no longer flowed down them through a succession of marble channels and ornamental basins. In spite of the neglect with which the Kajar [Qajar] dynasty seemed deliberately to treat every remainder of the greatness of their Sefavi [Safavi] predecessors, the superb mosque erected by Shah 'Abbas on the Meidan [Maydan] still remained unique, but not unscathed, in the glory of its green-and-blue tiles, but in the ancient palace of the Sefavi princes, where the Zill-es-Sultan resided as Prince-Governor, some clumsy attempts at restoration had done more to mar the artistic beauty of the building than the ravages of deliberate vandalism. The entire population of the city, with the villages of the surrounding plains, was not reckoned at more than a quarter of a million, whereas two and a half centuries ago the estimates for the city alone varied between 600,000 and 1,000,000, and within ten leagues of its walls Chardin counted 1,500 villages. The days are indeed past when it was the proud boast of its people that Isfahan was half the world-Isfahan nusr-el-jehan [Nisf-i-Jahan]....

'...Then I went on to Sultanabad [Sultanabad], the centre of the carpet-making industry, where I had an entertaining illustration of the huge sham that called itself a Government. On the doors of the chief workshop in which the best craftsmen were employed on the merest [p. 435] pittance weaving carpets for the Shah himself, a Royal ordinance was nailed up conspicuously, forbidding under the severest penalties the use of all aniline dyes which 'wicked people were trying to import from the land of the Infidels.' But inside scarcely a single carpet for the Shah's palaces was shown me for which aniline dyes had not been used. During the rest of my slow and rather wearisome journey to Teheran, I continued to meet with the same contrast between profession and observance in the slipshod methods of government, between the abject misery of the many and the unwholesome luxury of the few, between small oases of fertile vegetation and vast waste spaces of untenanted desert.

'It was high summer before I reached Teheran, and I was thankful to accept the friendly hospitality of the French Minister, M. de Ballois, in his summer retreat at Tejrish [Tajrish]... The Russian Legation was near by, and the British Legation not much farther off in another direction at Gulahek [Qulhak]. Germany was not even represented,[1] as Bismarck had no desire to launch out into a 'world-policy.' England and Russia were the only powers that counted, and British ascendancy in Teheran itself was for the time being scarcely challenged. For five and twenty years Great Britain had been represented by three Ministers[2] in succession whose diplomatic experience had been chiefly confined to Persia, and for whom Teheran had become the Hub of the Universe, and the Shah the one potentate that mattered in their narrow world.... I have never seen pettier jealousies and more storms in a teacup than those that then raged between the different European Legations at Teheran, and sometimes within the walls of each Legation.... In Persia itself Anglo-Russian antagonism was for the moment quiescent. It was the year after Russian troops had occupied Merv, and Russia was busy consolidating the new position she had just acquired on the road to Herat, and pushing her frontier forward along the borders of Afghanistan. Nasr-ed-Din Shah had twice visited Europe, and had imported a few Europeans who were supposed to be engaged on administrative reforms. Of these General Schindler, an Austrian by birth, alone did any lasting work, mainly in the fields of [p. 436] science and natural history, which lay outside his official functions, whilst the others merely excited general hilarity by the splendour of their uniforms and their adroitness in playing upon the weaknesses of their Persian employers. One of them who was organizing an international postal service was wont when warmed with wine to talk of the King of Kings familiarly as Ma vache a lait, and he was credited with having invented a practice afterwards widely adopted in the Central American Republics for adding to his official stipend, by making fresh issues of postage stamps almost at once withdrawn from circulation and then sold with great profit to European philatelists. The scandals of the Shah's own court and his immense anderouns [andaruns]--the Persian equivalent of the harem--were only less disreputable than those of his sons' and other relatives who filled the highest offices of state. The most notorious was Naib-es-Sultaneh [Nayibu's-Saltanih], who was Minister of War, and was said to 'eat a hundred rations,' i.e. their equivalent in cash, for every ration that reached the tattered rabble which did duty for the Persian army.

..... [1. During his second visit to Europe, Nasiri'd-Din Shah had talks with Kaiser Wilhelm I and Prince Bismarck. That was in 1878. In 1883 he approached Bismarck for an exchange of envoys. In 1885, Mirza Rida Khan Giranmayih, the mu'ayyidu's-Saltanih, was appointed the Persian envoy in Berlin and Bismarck sent Graf von Braunschweig to Tihiran. (HMB)]

..... [2. Charles Alison (died in Tihiran), W. Taylour Thomson, Sir Ronald Thomson. (HMB)]

'Corruption was rampant everywhere, as I soon discovered to my own cost. For though my Nordenfelt gun arrived in due course safely and I at first received

affable messages from the Shah promising to fix a day for its presentation, I never had occasion to unpack it, but ultimately sent it off on its long homeward journey again via Bushire, as I found that the road for it to the Palace would have had to be paved with gold tomans to satisfy the greed of a whole chain of officials great and small, with no prospect of any serious business at the end of it. The British Minister was far too Olympian to concern himself with my affairs, and the French Minister could obviously not give me any official assistance.

'As France had few political interests in Persia, M. de Ballois was a detached and somewhat cynical observer of Persian ways, and soon after my arrival, he had warned me that *'dans ce pays-ci il n'y a rien a faire pour les honnetes gens'*. Nordenfelt with his unfailing good humour was even more amused than disgusted, and rather enjoyed cabling me to come home and send the Shah to Jericho. The Zill would have liked to detain the gun at Isfahan on its way back to Bushire, but was afraid of giving offence to his father who, I was told, flew into a passion when he ultimately learnt that I had left--but it was too late.'

Chirol returned home by way of Russia. He had hoped, as any [p. 437] journalist would, to see something of the Trans-Caspian railway which the Russians had begun laying in Central Asia. The Russian Legation gave him support and 'letters of recommendation' from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, when he reached Khrasnovodsk, on the eastern shores of the Caspian, a young ADC of the Governor came aboard the ship and conducted him to Government House, where he was held, virtually a prisoner, for thirty-six hours, and then conducted back to the same ship to go to the opposite shore of the Caspian. The Governor told him in plain language that he could not be allowed to go anywhere near the railway, and that he would be his guest, until the boat was ready to sail away. Chirol writes: 'My host, who was himself, of course, a general, explained to me as the evening advanced and an abundant consumption of vodka loosened his tongue, that only the consciousness of the tremendous responsibility vested in him as Warden of the Central Asian Marches for his august master, the Tsar, made it possible for him to endure so morne a place of residence, after having enjoyed for many years the amenities of court life in the capital. I learned, it is true, from the captain of my steamer that the pickings of the office were more than commensurate with its responsibilities. But in any case I had seen enough to convince me that a far-reaching policy of Central Asian expansion which would sooner or later spell Russian domination at Teheran could alone account for the secrecy with which Russia was pushing on in so desolate a region the construction of a great railway along the whole Russo-Persian borderline east of the Caspian.'

Russians first descended in force upon Khrasnovodosk in 1869, and moved on, shortly after, to Chikishliyar, close to the mouth of the River Atrak. It evoked strong protest from Persia which Russians did not heed. The predatory Turkomans had been a thorn in the flesh, both of Iran and Russia. From time to time they would venture deep into Persian territory and carry off men and women

and children whom they sold in their slave-markets. Russians received the same treatment. Persian efforts to subdue the Turkomans failed, but the Russian efforts succeeded.

Sultan-Murad Mirza, the Hisamu's-Saltanih, the Governor-General of Khurasan who had captured Hirat, subsequent to the unhappy settlement of affairs in the eastern part of the territory which he [p. 438] governed, then turned to the north. In 1857 he asked eighty prominent Turkomans to visit him in Mashhad; whereupon, true to form, this double-dealing uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah arrested them and threw them into his gaol. Having momentarily overcome the Turkomans in this dastardly manner, Hisamu's-Saltanih next led an army to Marv which he easily occupied. Marv, like Hirat, had always been an integral part of Khurasan. But alas, three years later, the next Governor-General of Khurasan, Hamzih Mirza, the Hishmatu'd-Dawlih--also an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah--although able to recapture Hirat, was soundly beaten, indeed ignominiously, by the Turkomans, and Marv was lost, to fall prey to the Russians. Poor Hamzih Mirza had no luck. At one time he was worsted by Salar, at another, by the Turkomans. It should be said to his credit that, when Governor-General of Adharbayjan, he bravely defied the orders received from Tihran, telling him to have the Bab executed, and Mirza Taqi Khan had to hand over the arrangement and supervision of that unjust task to his own brother, Vazir-Nizam.

Hishmatu'd-Dawlih's rout took place in the battle with the Takkih Turkomans, close to Marv. He even lost his guns to the victorious Turkomans. Of course he also lost his governorship. So disgusted was Nasiri'd-Din Shah by his uncle's failure (which to a considerable extent was due to the incompetence of the Vizier of Khurasan) that on a photograph of that hapless uncle he wrote the word 'najis'--the foul Hishmatu'd-Dawlih. Some of the guns that had fallen to the Turkomans were later recaptured when another expedition was sent against them from Sarakhs, which became a frontier post. Incidentally, the victorious Turkomans took so many prisoners that their victory was followed by a serious slump in the prices of their slave markets.

Next, Russia commenced its advance into Transoxania. The Khanate of Khivih, over which Iran had a just claim but was unable to exercise authority, was easily overrun and the Yamut Turkomans were decisively subdued. But General Lomakin's move against the Takkih Turkomans was foredoomed to failure, because of lack of sufficient preparations. Although the Turkomans were glaringly savaged by the Russian artillery at Gi'uk Tappih (Geok Tepe)--the Blue Hill--it was the failure of the Russians to dislodge and bring them to their knees which stood out prominently in General Lomakin's campaign. And this was a terrible blow to Russian prestige. Very soon, General [p. 439] Skobelev took over from General Lomakin and in January 1881, despite the desperate resistance offered by the Turkomans, their position at the Blue Hill was overwhelmed and, as a consequence, the historic city of Marv, an undoubted adjunct of Khurasan, passed into the possession of Russia. True, the victory of the Russians brought relief to Persia from the depredations of the Turkomans (the Gawkalans, the

Yamuts and the Tikkihs), but it was sad and humiliating for her to lose the city of Marv.

Another loss which Persia incurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, was in the area of Baluchistan. That province had suffered from disorder for a long time. Sir Frederic Goldsmid, the first Director of Telegraphs in Persia, came up against seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the year 1864, in Baluchistan, as there was no one west of Gwadar (Guwadar), a small sea-town on the Gulf of Oman (Umman), whom he could confidently deal with. The Khan of Kalat exercised only a shadowy authority.

..... Persia had lately been pursuing a forward policy in Makran and Baluchistan, which had probably been in contemplation in 1856, when the treaty with Muscat [Masqat] was concluded, and which accounted for inclusion in the treaty of the article requiring the Sultan to assist the passage of Persian troops eastwards through Bandar 'Abbas and its districts. From the Sudaj River eastwards to Chahbar [Chahbahar], about 150 miles, the land was ruled by a powerful Baluchi chieftain, Mir Abdullah ibn Murad Muhammad. Twelve years previously he had acknowledged Persian suzerainty, but according to some Baluchi chiefs ... he would welcome an opportunity to shake off that allegiance. The dilemma ... was to judge whether Mir Abdullah could act on his own authority, under his obligations to Persia, or whether it would be unfair to him and to other Baluchi chiefs similarly placed, to apply to Persia for permission to construct the telegraph through territory which they considered their own, although control of it had been temporarily wrested from them by Persia. Further, if Persian sovereignty over the coast were recognized, the local chiefs might retaliate by impeding the construction of the telegraph.

..... Chahbar was a small coastal town subject to Muscat, whose jurisdiction extended along the coast eastwards to Gwatar [Guwatar]. Gwatar town and Jiwani, on the other side of Gwatar Bay, were ruled by independent, petty Baluchi chiefs. Beyond Jiwani lay Gwadar, which ... had been given to Saiyid Sultan ibn Ahmad of Muscat by a former Khan of Kalat in perpetuity... The Khan of Kalat already controlled the coast for eighty miles [p. 440] to the east of Gwadar, and from that point to the Sind frontier the land was under the authority of the Jam of Las Bailah, who was both related to the Khan and subject to him. Neither of them ... would object to the laying of the telegraph through his territory, and both were capable of protecting it.[A1-4]

..... [A1-4. Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, pp. 557-8.]

The lonely, barren and inhospitable wastelands of the Makran coast, where the army of Alexander of Macedonia suffered incredibly when returning from India, were not worth concern and contention, had it not been for their strategic position and the fact that their fortunes were linked with the fortunes of the hinterland of Baluchistan and Sistan. Considerable headway had been made in extending the area of Iranian jurisdiction over the Makran coast, during the reign of Muhammad Shah, but when the time came for the construction of the

telegraph line, troubles and disputes arose, culminating in the appointment of a commission to draw a frontier line. This commission itself ran into difficulties. Then, Goldsmid went on to Gwadar (Guwadar) and Major Lovett, who, according to Sir Percy Sykes, 'had made a survey of the proposed frontier line and was able to complete the information previously collected' (p. 361), met him there, and the British commissioner opted for a frontier line east of Guwatar, which was finally accepted by Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Sykes comments that although the Qajar monarch would, at first, have none of it, the decision was favourable to Iran.

Next came the thorny problem of Sistan, to be settled between Iran and Afghanistan. The latter was in a chronic state of disorder, fomented partly by the fears of Britain. That was prior to the well-ordered times of Amir 'Abdu'r-Rahman Khan. In any case, not without reason, the Persian authorities entertained the notion that Britain could, if she wished, put an end to the inroads made by the Afghans within the area which was undoubtedly Persian. Sir Frederic Goldsmid together with General Pollock--delegated by the Viceroy, Lord Mayo--and Dr Bellew, an orientalist of note, worked out a settlement between Iran and Afghanistan. Mir 'Alam Khan, the Amir of Qa'inat, was not at all co-operative, as his domain was contiguous to Sistan. But Nasiri'd-Din Shah agreed to the settlement made by Goldsmid.

The frontier line between Iran and the Ottoman Empire remained in the arena of conflict and contention until the very eve of the entry of Turkey into the First World War. However, in 1851, Lord Palmerston [p. 441] made an effort to bring matters to a conclusion.

In the year 1870, Nasiri'd-Din Shah decided to visit the holy cities of 'Iraq. To make the requisite arrangements, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, was summoned from Istanbul. Nasiri'd-Din Shah was the first monarch to go to Karbila and Najaf and the other shrines in 'Iraq as a pilgrim. His predecessors had made the journey always as warriors and conquerors, while he himself wrote a journal of his pilgrimage which was published in his lifetime.

The Vali of Baghdad, during Nasiri'd-Din Shah's pilgrimage, was Midhat Pasha, the celebrated Turkish Constitutionalist and reformer. He journeyed as far as Khaniqayn to receive and bid welcome to the Shah. Almost a decade later, when Vali of Beirut, at his invitation the Most Great Branch, 'Abdu'l-Baha, visited that city.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, the veteran teacher and promulgator of the Faith, who in his declining years was known to Baha'i pilgrims from the West as the Angel of Mount Carmel, writes, in his unpublished biography of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan, about Mushiru'd-Dawlih and events at this time:[A1-5]

..... [A1-5. Translation by H. M. Balyuzi.]

..... 'When ... Nasiri'd-Din Shah left Tihiran, on pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines, [Mushiru'd-Dawlih] engineered the banishment of the Baha'is to Mosul.

The Ambassador had left Istanbul, by way of Aleppo, to be in Baghdad for the reception of the royalty. In Aleppo he put Shaykh Salman, who was well known, and had two to three hundred petitions [to Baha'u'llah] with him, under arrest. He also confiscated all the goods and offerings that Shaykh Salman had with him, and had the Shaykh locked up in a derelict room in the same house where he [Mushiru'd-Dawlih] lodged. I was told by Shaykh Salman: "On an evening, he [Mushiru'd-Dawlih] and the consuls with their entourage were pacing up and down the courtyard. I saw him and heard him say: 'We believed and were certain that the Cause of Baha'u'llah was a political cause, and that His aim was to obtain power and sovereignty and amass riches to make a name for Himself. Therefore we tried hard to put Him down and made plans accordingly. No matter how much we harmed Him, no matter how many times we banished Him--and we contended with Him backed by the full powers of two states--indeed, no matter what we did, His power and authority and fame, His greatness and grandeur were enhanced. We were much amazed, lost in [p. 442] wonderment trying to find the reason. Now I see that this man [Salman] has something like three hundred petitions with him. In these, there is no mention at all of politics, government, state and nation. Notwithstanding all the injuries, notwithstanding imprisonments, banishments, executions, and pillages inflicted on the Baha'is all this time, no mention is made of them and there is no complaint. These petitions he carries all consist of supplications, and are confined entirely to spiritual matters such as: "O God! keep me safe from the evil of selfish and carnal desires, give me constancy, make me steadfast in Thy love, bestow on me the bounty of servitude, confirm me in service to Thy Cause, make me free of all else save Thee, confirm us that we may serve the people of all the world, kiss the hand of the executioner and hands clapping, feet dancing, hurry to the scaffold.'" Then he called for two or three of those petitions, and had them read aloud. They all admired the eloquence and the excellence of style and composition. Then he [Mushiru'd-Dawlih] said: 'Why should we repress such people who love God, seek God and speak of God? In His Book, the Qur'an, God has related the story of the believer in the household of Pharaoh, so as to warn us, remind us, and make us remember that should there be falsehood, the one who is false will not endure, but if the one whom we are contending with is the bearer of truth, it will all rebound upon us and will finish us; we shall be the losers and pay a heavy penalty. Nothing detrimental to the nation and to the state has been witnessed in their deeds, or reflected in their words. Whatever has been heard has come either from their enemies, from those who deny them, or from those bereft of knowledge. Moreover, we have all seen, and it has been our experience, that the more we tried to repress them, the more we insulted and denigrated them, the more we encompassed their death and extermination, the greater became their number, and the more their strength and power, their might and fame. Now they are living in the utmost of health, of glory, Or bliss.' Mushiru'd-Dawlih was speaking in this manner, and others were saying that they agreed with him, quoting instances. The next morning he sent for me, apologized to me, and said: 'We had been misled. I am very grateful to you, because you have made me see the truth of the matter. Government ought not to interfere in spiritual affairs, in matters connected with faith and conscience.' He restored to me all

the petitions, and told his men to bring all the merchandise and [p. 443] other articles which had been confiscated, and in his own presence they were given back to me. And he wrote a letter of recommendation to the vice-consul in Beirut, telling him: 'Give the Shaykh the utmost consideration and protection, and see that he reaches 'Akka with all that he has with him, to the presence of Hadrat-i-'Abbas Effendi.' Then he said to me: 'Kiss His hands on my behalf, offer Him my apologies, ask for His forgiveness, and beg for confirmation that I may be enabled to make redress for the past.'"

And Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali continues:

..... 'And so, when he [Mushiru'd-Dawlih] went to Tihran, and ministers, grandees and notables came to visit him, amongst them was the late Haji Mirza Rida-Quli ... half-brother of the Blessed Perfection. Someone introduced [this visitor] as the brother of Baha'u'llah. This introduction frightened him and he protested: "I have had a well-known father, why do you not introduce me as his son?" That remark angered Mushiru'd-Dawlih. He reprimanded [Haji Mirza Rida-Quli], saying: "You ought to be proud of being the brother of Hadrat-i-Baha'u'llah, and glory in it. It is much, very much, the cause of pride for Iran and the Iranians and to their honour that Baha'u'llah is Irani. Any prince or vizier or amir who ever came to Istanbul, on many accounts, brought abasement and belittlement to the people and the government of Iran. Day after day, they went a-begging, abjectly and full of flattery, to the house of this vizier or that Pasha, to complain of and abuse the Shah of Iran and the notables of Iran, asking for allowances and annuities. As exponents of the characteristics of the people of this land, they displayed barbarism, bestiality, venality and impoverishment. Whereas, Baha'u'llah, although exiled by the State bore Himself with such constancy, repose, assurance and dignity, with such sublimity and detachment, as to revivify Iran and the Iranians and gladden their eyes. He did not frequent anyone's house, He did not seek to meet anyone. Whoever went to visit Him was received with the utmost kindness. He spoke to them of the ancient civilization of Iran, and of the better ways and the humanity of her people. He behaved in such a way that all bore witness to His greatness and nobility. They came to see and understand that Iran has men, cultured, civilized and humane.'"

Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, had left Istanbul for good, and soon accompanied Nasiri'd-Din Shah back to Tihran, [p. 444] where they arrived in the first days of February 1871. In November of the same year, he was elevated to the position of Sadr-i-A'zam (Grand Vizier), which had remained vacant since the downfall and dismissal of Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, on the last day of August 1858. (Incidentally, the fall from office of Mirza Aqa Khan was followed by the disgrace of his relatives in Shiraz: men who had been responsible for the atrocities in Nayriz--his cousins, Mirza Na'im and Shuja'u'l-Mulk, whose name was Mihr-'Ali Khan, as well as Haji Hashim Khan, an official hitherto highly respected as the Head of the Department of Justice.)

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali goes on to say of Mushiru'd-Dawlih:

..... "Time and again, in many a gathering where notables and grandees were present, he would say: "With the power of two states, with the political planning of two governments, I tried to withstand Baha'u'llah and to contend with Him; the more I tried, the greater became His power and authority." And he would relate that story of the detention of Shaykh Salman and his own perusal of the petitions that the Shaykh carried with him, by which "I came to realize that the powers of this world are unable to withstand this Cause". He also made the Shah see that opposing these people was greatly to the detriment of the state. On many occasions when, in various towns and cities of Persia, at the instigation of evil men, or because of the avarice of the authorities, the friends had been seized, this outstanding, wise, just and kindly man brought about their release. In the Council of the State, he declared that the Government of Iran committed a gross error by encompassing the expulsion and banishment of Baha'u'llah, since His Cause was all-conquering and would spread over the world. Were He a Prisoner in Iran, people would in future have come from all parts on pilgrimage to His Shrine, and that would have added to the wealth of the nation. Just as now Persians spend their money going on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and the Holy Shrines outside Iran, hereafter people would have spent their money to visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah and the tombs Or His companions and those banished from this country.

..... 'This man [Mushiru'd-Dawlih] served the people and the government of Persia with utter truthfulness and perspicacity, and after the untold harm and oppression he inflicted on this Cause, he came to judge the matter rightly and justly, and rendered services as much as he could.'

Soon Mushiru'd-Dawlih persuaded Nasiri'd-Din Shah to visit [p. 445] Europe. He wanted his sovereign to see for himself the advances that Europe and the Europeans had made. This tour took place in the spring of 1873. At Windsor, Queen Victoria invested the Shah with the Order of the Garter. It was a signal gesture of amicable relations.

The previous year, on 25 July, Nasiri'd-Din Shah had granted to Baron Julius de Reuter, the founder of the world-famed news agency, a concession which had many ramifications. This significant step was taken as planned and directed by the new Grand Vizier. The Reuter Concession included such projects as the construction of a railway line from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, a tramway line in Tihran, and the working of all the mineral resources of the country. Reuter had by this time taken British nationality; therefore Russia became apprehensive. But despite these rears and suspicions, Nasiri'd-Din Shah was given a warm reception in St Petersburg by Tsar Alexander II (1855-81).

In the absence of the Shah, one of his uncles, Haji Farhad Mirza, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, was acting as regent, and a court party had been formed, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mirza Sa'id Khan, the Mu'taminu'l-Mulk, in opposition to the Sadr-i-A'zam. So strong had grown this opposition that on reaching Persian soil, at the port of Anzali, Nasiri'd-Din Shah was constrained to take away the office of Grand Vizier from Mushiru'd-Dawlih. It has been claimed that Russians acted in concert with Mirza

Sa'id Khan to bring about the dismissal of Mushiru'd-Dawlih, who had now the additional title of Sipahsalar-i-A'zam. Whatever the case, Nasiri'd-Din Shah was now in one of his very angry moods, and as soon as he gained his capital he went into action, broke up the court party, and dispersed all those who were in the plot. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was taken away from Mirza Sa'id Khan and given to Mushiru'd-Dawlih, and Mirza Sa'id Khan was sent away to Mashhad to be custodian of the Shrine of Imam Rida. But the office of the Sadr-i-A'zam remained, once again, unfilled until it was forced on Mirza Yusuf, the Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik, in June 1884. And the Reuter Concession died a natural death.[1] Also involved in that plot against Mushiru'd-Dawlih were Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani and Siyyid Salih-i-'Arab, two of the most influential divines of the capital, who, in their obscurantism, denounced [p. 446] and castigated the Sadr-i-A'zam as a renegade and irreligious. Some writers have alleged that Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, the Shah's uncle, was the prime mover in that plot.

..... [1. For details and the eventual fate of this Concession which opened a new epoch, the reader is referred to Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914*, pp. 100-147.]

Mirza Sa'id Khan had been an old hand at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and had stepped into that office after the death of its previous occupant, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali Khan-i-Shirazi, in February 1852, first as deputy and then as full Minister. He and Mirza Kazim Khan the Nizamul-Mulk, the eldest son of the Nuri Sadr-i-A'zam, took part in the execution of the Babis in 1852. They fired the first shots at Mulla Husayn-i-Khurasani. He also bore a considerable measure of responsibility for the banishment of Baha'u'llah from 'Iraq, urging Mushiru'd-Dawlih in Istanbul to persuade the Ottoman authorities to remove Baha'u'llah from the vicinity of the Iranian territories. At times, however, Mirza Sa'id Khan had made friendly gestures towards the Baha'is, so much so that for a long time they believed that the Tablet known as Shikkar-Shikan Shavand was addressed to him. (See p. 149n.) In May 1880, Mirza Sa'id Khan was brought back from Mashhad and installed once again in the Foreign Office. He died in the spring of 1884.

Mirza Yusuf, the Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik, whose grand-vizierate was of short duration--he died within two years of his appointment--was one of the most remarkable men of his day. Thoroughly upright, incorruptible, fearless, he was generally called 'Aqa' or 'Jinab-i-Aqa', even by Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Although it was imputed to him that he had participated in the execution of the Babis in 1852, having been first to fire at Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin-i-Yazdi, he stoutly denied it and sent a message to this effect to Baha'u'llah, Who favoured him with a gracious reply. (See Addendum V)

Although no longer the Sadr-i-A'zam, Mushiru'd-Dawlih prevailed on Nasiri'd-Din Shah to visit Europe once again. This second visit took place in 1878. It was the year of the Congress of Berlin, and Europe was in an unsettled state. Russia, despite being directly involved in the conflict, again accorded Nasiri'd-Din Shah a warm reception. A military manoeuvre on a grand scale was held in his honour, and he became so enamoured of the uniform, arms and bearing

of the Russian Cossacks that he asked Tsar Alexander to make available to him the services of a number of Russian officers and instructors, that they might organize for him a similar force. Such were [p. 447] the beginnings of the Persian Cossack Brigade (later, Division), a military unit which was to play a significant part in the destinies of Iran and remained under Russian command until the autumn of 1920. Colonel de Mantovitch (the first commander and organizer of this unit) and his staff reached Tihran in January 1879. In Vienna, too, Nasiri'd-Din Shah engaged a number of Austrian officers, who arrived at the Persian capital a month earlier than the Russians. At their head was also a colonel, named Schynovsky. However, theirs was a hopeless task, faced as they were with Russian rivalry. It is alleged that the restoration of Mirza Sa'id Khan to his former post was done under pressure from Russia, which looked askance at the policies of Mushiru'd-Dawlih. In December 1881, Mirza Sa'id Khan signed with the Russian envoy a treaty known as the Treaty of Akhal, by virtue of which Iran forewent all her frontier claims regarding Transoxania. Mushiru'd-Dawlih was first given the governorship of his native city, Qazvin, and next, subsequent to the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, he was sent at the head of a mission to St Petersburg to convey the [p. 448] condolences of Nasiri'd-Din Shah to Alexander III. On his return, he was sent to Mashhad to assume the custodianship of the Shrine of Imam Rida and govern the province of Khurasan as well. There he died in November 1881. It is generally agreed that he was poisoned on the order of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

I'timadu's-Saltanih, in his diary, writes that the Shah was openly displaying his delight on hearing that Mushiru'd-Dawlih was dead, as were also the uncles of the Shah: Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih and Hisamu's-Saltanih. It had become Nasiri'd-Din Shah's wont to help himself liberally to the riches of any notable and well-known person in his realm who died a wealthy man. Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Sipahsalar-i-A'zam, was no exception, although his wife was a daughter of Fath-'Ali Shah. According to the diary of I'timadu's-Saltanih: 'Within the last two days, all the ministers have been busy, in the Council, preparing a list of the writings and the jewelry of the late Sipahsalar. His will and bank statements have not been produced as yet.' Another entry in the same diary reads: 'Hakimu'l-Mulk [Mirza 'Ali-Naqi] has been commissioned by the Shah to negotiate with Qamaru's-Saltanih, the widow of the late Sipahsalar, and obtain cash for the Shah from the estate...' [1] [A1-6]

..... [1. A similar case was that of 'Imadu'd-Dawlih, a Qajar prince and Governor of Kirmanshah. When he died, it was mooted that I'timadu's-Saltanih, who was his son-in-law, should hasten to that city to collect jewelry and other riches left by him, chiefly for the benefit of Nasiri'd-Din Shah--an honour which he declined.]

..... [A1-6. I'timadu's-Saltanih, Ruznamiy-i-Khatirat, pp. 129, 136, 143, 145.]

The title of Mushiru'd-Dawlih was now given to Yahya Khan, the Mu'tamidu'l-Mulk, the brother of Mirza Husayn Khan, who is also generally known as Sipahsalar. That is the name applied to the magnificent mosque and

theological college which he had built in Tihran and richly endowed. Both the mosque and the college (which owns and houses one of the best libraries in Persia) feature largely in the subsequent history of the nation. Adjacent to the mosque is Baharistan, the seat of the Persian Lower House of Parliament, a building which (although rebuilt after being bombarded to ruins, as a result of Muhammad-'Ali Shah's coup d'etat[A1-7] in 1908) shows well its original splendour. Baharistan was also a creation of Sipahsalar-i-A'zam, which Nasiri'd-Din Shah had purloined. It was given to the nation to be the home of its Parliament, by Muzaffari'd-Din Shah, the son of Nasiri'd-Din, when a constitution was promulgated.

..... [A1-7. See Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith, pp. 89, 93-4.] [p. 449]

The new Mushiru'd-Dawlih also held the portfolio of foreign affairs, for a while, and it was during his tenure of office that, in the winter of 1882-3, S. G. W. Benjamin was appointed by President Arthur to represent the United States in Tihran: the first American envoy to Persia. In January 1885, Nasiri'd-Din Shah purchased a 600-ton vessel from Germany, which he named Persepolis, for service in the Persian Gulf, as well as a smaller vessel, named Shush. Both were navigated by Germans. The first German minister, Graf von Braunschweig, established a German school in Tihran and students were sent for higher studies to Germany. It was rumoured that a concession for the construction of a railway line was to be given to the Germans. Navigation by Germans in the Persian Gulf alarmed Britain, and the construction of a railway line in the north alarmed Russia. Nasiri'd-Din Shah found himself forced, in the year 1887, to promise Russia that under no circumstances would he ever grant concessions for the construction of railway lines to any foreigner without the consent of the government of the Tsar. A year later, because of the insistence of the British, free passage for all foreign merchantmen along the river Karun, in the (now oil-producing) province of Khuzistan, was officially notified to the diplomatic representatives in Tihran. Immediately in the wake of this announcement a British firm, Lynch Brothers, started operating on the Karun. Russia had to be compensated for what it considered to be a British victory, and was given the right to make use of the coastal waters at the port of Anzali on the Caspian Sea.

In that same year 1888, Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who had left the office of Sadar-i-A'zam vacant after the death of Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik, elevated Mirza 'Ali-Asghar Khan, the Aminu's-Sultan, to that exalted office. Aminu's-Sultan, like his opponent, Mirza Malkam Khan, the Nazimu'd-Dawlih, who was at the time the Persian envoy at the Court of St James's, is a controversial figure in the history of Persia. He has had his admirers and violent detractors. There is no doubt that he was astute and capable, as his prompt action at the moment of the assassination of Nasiri'd-Din Shah amply proved. But he was a totally different man from Sipahsalar and Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik. It was he who now persuaded Nasiri'd-Din Shah to visit Europe a third time. The Shah and his large entourage--which included both the Sadr-i-A'zam and our diarist,

I'timadu's-Saltanih (bitterly opposed to and [p. 450] [p. 451] critical of Aminu's-Sultan)--left Tihran in April 1889, and via Caucasia travelled to St Petersburg, where Tsar Alexander III, like his predecessor, gave Nasiri'd-Din Shah an impressive welcome. Britain had also extended a specific invitation to Nasiri'd-Din Shah. Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), and Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, offered the Shah a remarkably friendly reception. He stayed in Britain for a month, but this long visit which was seemingly eminently successful bore bitter fruits which we shall presently see. Another outcome of this third European tour was a meeting in Munich with Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din-i-Asadabadi (reputed as Afghani), and an invitation to him to visit the country of his forefathers for a second time. His previous visit in 1886 had ended in near disaster; this time it ended in total disaster.

Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din was truly the stormy petrel of Eastern politics, and was the supreme advocate of Pan-Islamism. And let it be said, at once, that he was by no means friendly towards the Faith of Baha'u'llah.[A1-8] But, undoubtedly, Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din was a very remarkable man, highly talented, eloquent, learned, possessed of both a fiery [p. 452] tongue and a fiery pen. He could be both gentle[1] and unswerving. Professor Elie Kedourie, of the London School of Economics and Political Science, writes of him: 'The actual career of the Sage of the East is then seen to be quite unlike his legend. What this career portended, political activism and the transformation of religion into a political ideology, has now come to pass and its consequences are visible all around us. What is also worth noticing is that this man and his followers who, on any reckoning, must be considered subverters of Islam as the orthodox have considered and practised it, have seldom if at all had their doctrines criticized, let alone refuted, by the representatives of orthodoxy.'[A1-9] A discerning, well-informed Persian biographer of Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din writes: 'One point should be brought up, in this preface, which will help to understand Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din and his thought: whoever and whatever Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din was, he strongly believed in what he knew and did, and he was a strong man of action. More than anyone else he detested the tyrant. One of his bright ideas which he always mentioned was this: "I am opposed to both the tyrant, and to the subject of tyranny. The tyrant, I hold as an enemy, because he commits tyranny, and the subject of tyranny, I dislike, because he allows it, thus making the tyrant wax bold."'[A1-10] Mr Halabi also draws a very interesting parallel between Midhat Pasha and Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din. Both suffered greatly at the hands of two implacable tyrants. The former was gravely wronged by Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, and the latter by Nasiri'd-Din Shah. When Midhat Pasha was released and reached Europe, he did not engage in violent abuse of the Sultan; whereas Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din, as soon as he was free of Persian soil, opened a vituperative campaign against the Shah which, in the end, destroyed that wilful monarch. The Siyyid was in full cry when Edward Browne encountered him in London. Browne writes: '...I met him by invitation of the late Prince Malkom Khan at the house in Holland Park, which until that eminent diplomatist's quarrel with the Shah in 1889, was the Persian Legation.... During his stay in London [p. 453] he addressed several meetings and wrote sundry articles on "The

Reign of Terror in Persia," attacking the Shah's character, and even his sanity, with great violence.'[A1-11]

..... [A1-8. See *ibid.*, (Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith) Index entries for Jamalud-Din al-Afghani, Siyyid.]

..... [1. The diary of the father of the present writer reads, under the date, Sunday, 3 October 1886: 'Went to visit Siyyid Jamalud-Din this morning. He has lodged near us. He is a man, very meek and kind, dressed in Arab garments, a small black turban would round his head. He is corpulent, olive-skinned. May be he is more than fifty years old, has a black, closely-cropped beard. He told me that though he signs his name as Afghani, he is a native of Hamadan. Early in his life he had gone to further his studies in the holy cities of 'Iraq. Thither he had gone to Afghanistan. It is now nearly thirty years later. He has been travelling here and there, all this while, residing for a while in Egypt. He is a very erudite, talented man. I enjoyed his talk.']

..... [A1-9. Kedourie, Afghani and Abduh, p. 63.]

..... [A1-10. Halabi, *Zindigi va Safarhay-i-Siyyid Jamalud-Din-i-Asadabadi*, p. 8 of Preface.]

..... [A1-11. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p. 11.]

The alienation of Mirza (or Prince) Malkam Khan was another direct result of the Shah's third visit to Europe. In a dubious deal of concession-snatching, regarding a state lottery, Malkam (who like Siyyid Jamalud-Din commanded a very fluent pen) felt that he had been badly let down and humiliated by Nasiri'd-Din Shah and his Sadr-i-A'zam; and the avaricious monarch felt that he had been tricked. Consequently relations between them became strained and finally snapped. Malkam had been a protege of Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, who rescued him from the political wilderness when he first fell foul of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. It will also be recalled that Baha'u'llah saved him in Baghdad from the clutches of Mirza Buzurg Khan. [p. 454]

Now, Malkam instituted a journal in London, which he named *Qanun (Law)*, publishing forty-one issues all told. And this organ of attack was apart from political and social tracts which constantly flowed from Malkam's pen. Aminu's-Sultan was the particular butt of Malkam's fierce criticism. The entry of *Qanun* into Iran was prohibited by royal edict, but it reached many highly influential people despite the ban. And Nasiri'd-Din Shah, led and guided by Aminu's-Sultan, continued giving concessions which had vast repercussions. In December 1889 Reuter obtained the concession to establish a bank and issue bank notes; thus the Imperial Bank of Persia came into being. In January 1890, the Russian government was given the concession to construct roads and railways in the north, and in March of the same year, Major Gerald F. Talbot won the concession to institute a monopoly of the tobacco trade in Persia.[1] This concession, which came to be known as the Tobacco Regie, aroused the landlords who cultivated tobacco and the large number of merchants whose trade was the

buying and selling of tobacco, to such a degree that a public outcry led to the intervention of Mirzay-i-Shirazi, the most influential divine of the time. He totally interdicted the use of tobacco. And Nasiri'd-Din Shah was baffled to see that in his own harem, the hubble-bubble or qalyan was cast aside. Only one powerful divine in Tihran, Siyyid 'Abdu'llah-i-Bihbahani (who played a major part in the Constitutional Movement in later years), dared to defy the ban, and took his qalyan with him to the pulpit. In April 1892, Nasiri'd-Din Shah had to borrow 500,000 against the southern customs from the newly-instituted Imperial Bank, pay it as compensation to the British company, and cancel the Regie Concession.

..... [1. For the full story of this and other concessions, the reader is directed to Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britian in Persia, 1864-1914.*]

Nasiri'd-Din Shah had already begun to seek out and imprison the partisans of Mirza Malkam Khan and Siyyid Jamalud-Din. The man before whose bullet he eventually fell, went to prison, with many others, on this occasion. Two prominent Baha'is, Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardakani, known as Haji Amin, and Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, were also detained and imprisoned. (Their story will feature in a forthcoming volume.) Subsequently, Baha'u'llah revealed the Lawh-i-Dunya (Tablet of the World). [p. 455]

Nasiri'd-Din Shah, after the cancellation of the Regie, had another four years to live. On the eve of his jubilee celebrations, on 19 April 1896, in the innermost shrine of Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-'Azim, a bullet fired by Mirza Riday-i-Kirmani, who was a devotee of Siyyid Jamalud-Din, tore open his heart, and he died on the spot. And only the sagacity of Aminu's-Sultan and his prompt action, successfully concealing the fact of the assassination of the Shah, saved the day and prevented the capital from plunging into chaos.

At his interrogation, the assassin, when asked why he had struck down the monarch and not any of the men in high places, including Kamran Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih, a son of the Shah, at whose hands he had personally suffered, this disciple of Siyyid Jamalud-Din answered with a line from Mathnavi; the immortal work of Mawlana Jalali'd Din-i-Rumi: 'A fish goes putrid at its head, not at its tail'. [p. 456]

Addendum II

Representations to Consuls at the Time of Baha'u'llah's Banishment to 'Akka

HEREWITH is a brief resume of the facts relating to certain documents in government archives; the reader should refer to pp. 257-8. The author plans to give a fuller account of these documents in a subsequent volume.

On 6 August 1868, Mr John E. Blunt, British consul at Adrianople, sent to Mr Elliot, the British minister at Istanbul, the following dispatch:

..... 'I have the honor to transmit herewith inclosed to Your Excellency the copy of a letter which the Reverend Mr Rosenberg Protestant missionary at this place has addressed to me respecting a certain Shek [Shaykh] Mirza Hussein

'Ali Effendi [Baha'u'llah], chief of a Persian sect called "Babee" who with a party of 40 of his adherents has been undergoing exile at Adrianople during the last six years, and is about to be deported to Gallipoli and thence to the interior of Africa, I believe.

..... 'Yesterday before this letter was addressed to me the Reverend Mr Rosenberg and Boghos Agha, chief of the native protestant community called on me and requested me to endeavour to persuade the local Ottoman authorities not to deport from here this Shek and his adherents, but as they also told me that the measure complained of by the Shek has not originated with these authorities but that it is the result of an imperative order addressed to them by the Sublime Porte, I respectfully declined to comply with their request.

..... 'Mr Rosenberg then said that he should address to me the letter I have inclosed and expressed the hope that I would report the subject to Your Excellency.

..... 'I do not know what the tenets of this "Babee" sect are. The [p. 457] Reverend Mr Rosenberg and Boghos Agha believe that they are adopted from the Holy Scripture, and this belief has naturally excited their sympathy and zeal on behalf of the Shek.

..... 'All I can say is that the Shek in question has led a most exemplary life in this city; that he is regarded with sympathy, mingled with respect and esteem, by the native Mahomedans and has received good treatment at the hands of the Ottoman authorities; and that the general impression here is that the persecution he is now made the object originates with the Persian Government and the Legation at Constantinople.' (FO 195 901)

The Rev. Rosenberg referred to in this dispatch was a missionary of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews. As indicated, it was he who had drawn Blunt's attention to the situation that threatened Baha'u'llah. A few days later, on 10 August 1868, Blunt sent a further dispatch relative to an appeal that he states had been made to him by Baha'u'llah:

..... 'With reference to my despatch No. 54 of the 6 instant relative to the case of Shek Hussein 'Ali Effendi chief of the Persian sect called "Babee" I Have the honor to further report to Your Excellency that I received this morning from the Shek in question the inclosed paper written in Turkish in which he appeals for protection to this Consulate. A similar appeal has been addressed by the Shek to my colleagues in this city.

..... 'Shortly after the appeal in question was put in my hands my Austrian colleague called on me and asked me what I proposed doing in the matter. I replied that in my humble opinion it was not a case in which I could in any way officially interfere on the spot without instructions from the Embassy, and that I had already reported the subject to Your Excellency. Monsieur de Camerloher appeared to be entirely of the same opinion and told me that he had also submitted the case to Baron Prokesh.

..... 'But as Monsieur de Camerloher has strong reasons to think that the

Shek and his party are about to be delivered by the Ottoman Government into the power of the Persian authorities; and that by so doing the Ottoman Government will be guilty of a breach of faith towards this unfortunate people dangerous to their lives and at the [p. 458] same time hurtful to its credit, we agreed to address to our respective Embassies the telegram we despatched this morning and of which the following is a copy:

..... "Hussein 'Ali Effendi with seventy others will be sent today to Gallipoli there to be made over to an agent of the Shah. He has addressed a written appeal for protection to Foreign Consular Corps. Undersigned decided to solicit instructions from their respective embassies before acting. My colleague begs present may be communicated to Baron Prokesh."

..... 'I beg leave also to add that my Austrian colleague told me that Baron Prokesh is personally acquainted with the Shek and wrote to the Austrian Consulate here very strongly on his behalf.

..... 'I regret that the early departure of today's mail leaves me no time to to prepare a translation of the paper I have inclosed herein.' (FO 195 901)

Unfortunately, the enclosure in Blunt's dispatch is missing from the files of the British Public Record Office. Since, however, Blunt had stated that a similar appeal had been addressed to the other consuls in Adrianople, a search was made through the French Foreign Office Archives. It was found that the acting French consul, Ferdinand Ronzevalle, had indeed, on 14 August 1868, forwarded such an appeal to the French minister, Nicolas Bouree. The text of this appeal consists of eight lines written in Turkish with a signature and seal both reading 'Husayn-'Ali'.

Thus there were at least three ministers of foreign powers making enquiries about Baha'u'llah at Istanbul. They all received the same answer from either 'Ali-Pasha or Fu'ad-Pasha: that this further exile was brought about by the fact that the followers of Baha'u'llah were trying to bring about dissension among Muslims by converting them to a new religion, and that the Persian Legation was in no way involved.

On 13 August 1868, Blunt reported:

..... 'I beg leave to report that I have acted in this business in conformity with your Excellency's order.

..... 'Before I received this order Mirza Hussein 'Ali ... requested me through the Revd Mr Rosenberg to call on him, but I respectfully [p. 459] declined doing so, as he was confined to his house and vigilantly watched by the police...

..... 'The Mirza and his adherents were sent from here to Gallipoli on Monday evening last...' (FO 195 901)

Rev. Rosenburg, however, continued his efforts on behalf of Baha'u'llah. On 15 August 1868, he sent to Blunt a copy of what is stated to be a letter from Baha'u'llah to the Evangelical Alliance of London asking them to intervene with

the Ottoman authorities so that religious toleration may be extended to the Baha'is. The Evangelical Alliance specialized in obtaining religious toleration for Christians throughout the world. [p. 460]

Addendum III

The Aftermath of the Siege of Plevna

THESE extracts from The Balkan Volunteers,[A3-1] a book about the doctors and assistance sent from Britain, during the war of 1877-8, amply bear out the story of the Turkish captain who spoke of 'blood' flowing 'beneath the trees and beneath the stones.' (See p.262)

..... [A3-1. Anderson, The Balkan Volunteers, pp. 148-52, 181-2.]

..... "The condition of the wounded in the Plevna hospitals was more dreadful than anything they [the British doctors] had hitherto witnessed. Ryan, the only British doctor in the besieged fortress, conducted them through the rooms of wounded where he had struggled on with no drugs other than chloroform, no antiseptic dressings, no stores, no soups. Bandages had been made out of the coloured prints from the bazaar, and the dye had been poisonous. Wounds had been plugged with cotton wool. There were cases of smallpox, gangrene, typhoid; and all had lice. The state of the hospitals, claimed The Times correspondent, "would dwarf Defoe's description of the lazar house of The Plague"

..... 'Plevna fell and the great retreat began: Turkish troops withdrawing through mud, snow and ice, ... to Philippopolis, ... to Varna, ... from the Serbian border to Gallipoli, to Salonica. With them, trudging along the same bullock tracks, crawling over the same hillsides came the refugees: the trickle of six months earlier had become a torrent, all the Mussulman population of Bulgaria and Roumelia falling before the avenging Muscovites.... The retreat became a rout....

..... '...At the Adrianople hospital when the order for evacuation was given, the Turkish populace and the Turkish staff fled, and the Stafford House doctors [British] "went into the fields, caught the oxen, yoked them up, and then carried down the wounded from the wards themselves." At Philippopolis, eight hundred and fifty wounded were placed in empty warehouses alongside the station to await trains that never came. There was panic and uproar in the town, buildings ablaze ... two days later the Russians entered; by then the number of living [p. 461] wounded in the warehouses had dwindled to one hundred and twenty....

..... 'At Rustchuk the ending was more dramatic. A Russian shell fell on the hospital on 29 December 1877, and even though the two doctors, Stiven and Beresford, rushed out and waved the Red Crescent flag vigorously up and down, more shells followed. The doctors spent the night moving their patients from the destroyed wards into the others. Next day shelling began again. Terrified, all the patients who could walk and all the domestic staff rushed out of the buildings into the snow and so, reported Stiven, "Dr Beresford and myself were quite alone with some eighty patients to do what best we could for their

safety." By nightfall some thirty to forty shells had fallen on the hospital; then firing ceased, and the two doctors transported their patients from the ruined building into the town. Next day they took them on by rail to Varna and the hospital there....

..... 'Young Sandwith ... and Hume, both veterans of the Serbian campaign, joined Baker Pasha's division in the retreat from Tatar Bazardijk to Philippopolis and then over the Rhodope mountains. The telegraph and the railway had ceased to function, and Sandwith was caught up in a precipitous route over icy roads. Hume arrived at Philippopolis more rapidly if no less dangerously, having made the journey down the railway line, first in an engine he had commandeered and then on a trolley manipulated by hand. The retreat south over the mountains was a grim journey: "On every side, upon the ice and in the snow, struggling and falling horses, soldiers and wounded mixed in frightful confusion with women and children fleeing from their burnt houses, all toiling wearily upwards. In the plain below, could be seen the Cossacks advancing to the foot of the hill, and as from there, they fired on the struggling masses...."

..... '...At the railway station at Tatar Bazardijk thousands massed daily in the open wagons, "frozen white, black, and blue," and Bartlett did what he could--there was no means of organizing a system--to bring food and warmth to them. Then the railway line lower down was cut and the waiting had been in vain. He and the thousands were forced to retreat over the Rhodope mountains to the sea.

..... 'Master[1] had been more fortunate. He had been in Sofia for a [p. 462] month prior to the fall of the town to the Russians. At the cost of 1 d. per day per person he had kept a soup kitchen going for twenty-five thousand refugees, "each person receiving a pint and a half of good strong soup, and enough firewood to keep them warm." He left by train before the Russians entered, a slow journey of mounting horror. Three days the train took to travel from Adrianople to Constantinople, the open wagons packed tight with women and children and soldiers, huddled together without shelter, warmth or food; many died, some gave birth, others despairing of any future "almost mad with grief, horror and hunger, flinging their children over the bridges as they pass along in the train..." At one station between Adrianople and Constantinople Blunt worked without ceasing, handing out bread and clothing; but the numbers were too great, and all that he could do seemed as nothing. Master, sent up from Constantinople with a railway wagon of food, found Blunt exhausted and ill. He took over: "I just managed to feed the people, but I could not keep the cold away. Corpse after corpse came out of the trucks, and was carried away and buried ... it was an awful sight, and yet how quietly the refugees behaved. I hardly heard a murmur except from the Circassians who threatened to burn the station if the station master did not send on the train at once. These gentlemen also attacked my bread van with knives, but I managed to close the van in time."

..... [1. Robert E. Master, assisting the Turkish Compassionate Fund

distribution. (HMB)]

..... 'Down the line at Constantinople they waited: for the soldiers, for the wounded, for the refugees, for the Russian army; for England to come to the help of Turkey.'

[p. 463]

Addendum IV

General Gordon in Haifa and 'Akka

LAURENCE Oliphant, under the heading 'General Gordon's Last Visit to Haifa', writes:

..... 'It was just twenty-nine years ago since I first met him in the trenches before Sebastopol. He was quite a young and unknown officer at that time, and I should have forgotten the circumstance had we not again come across each other three years afterwards in China... I left China before he entered the Chinese service... Still, I had seen enough to make me watch his subsequent career with great interest, but our paths had not again crossed until one day, about two years ago [written 10 May 1885], I received a letter from Jaffa signed C. G. Gordon, asking for information in regard to Haifa as a residence, and expressing his intention of possibly paying me a visit. As I have many friends of the name I was puzzled for the moment.... It was only accidentally that the same afternoon the vice-consul here asked me if I knew anything of a General Gordon, as some letters had arrived to his care for an individual of that name. I at once perceived who my correspondent must be. I immediately addressed him a cordial invitation to pay me a visit, which he promptly responded to, and we spent a few very pleasant days together....

..... 'General Gordon, after spending a few days at Haifa, returned to Jerusalem, promising to bring his tents two months later and pitch them next to mine at Esfia on the summit of Carmel. I was eagerly looking forward to his companionship in the delightful wilderness of this mountain, and had even marked out in my own mind a spot for his camping-ground within fifty yards of my own, when, to my great disappointment, I received a letter from him saying that he was so deeply interested in biblical studies at the Holy City that he felt it his duty to change his mind, as he might never again have an opportunity of verifying the correctness of the views he entertained in regard to the typical nature of its configuration.... [p. 464]

..... 'Towards the end of the year he wrote, saying that he was suddenly summoned to the Congo, and bidding me adieu. Curiously enough, in my reply I said that I did not say good-bye, as I felt sure I should see him again before he left the country. A few days afterwards he once more turned up at Haifa. He had embarked at Jaffa for Port Said in a country sailing craft, and he had been driven by stress of weather so far out of his course that his crew finally ran in here for shelter.... He was detained here a week... One day I observed him writing notes on a slip of paper. He asked me the Christian names of two friends who were staying with me. I told him, and feeling, I suppose, that my

curiosity ought to be gratified, he said, "I am writing them down on my prayer list." Another day, after using some very strong language in regard to a very high personage who shall be nameless, he added quickly, "but I pray for him regularly." All this without a vestige of cant. If there was a thing he detested it was hypocrisy... He was full of fun and a most cheery companion with those he knew intimately. He never forced a conversation into a religious channel.... He left here on the 18th or 19th of December, 1883, and walked to Acre, twelve miles, to meet the steamer that was to take him direct to Marseilles. He sent his luggage in a carriage.

..... 'His last words as we parted were that he felt sure we should never meet again. I said he had been wrong once when he told me that he should not see me again, and I hoped he was wrong now. He said no, he felt that he had no more work to do for God on this earth, and that he should never return from the Congo. Within a month he was in Upper Egypt.

..... 'It was characteristic of the man that scarcely anyone in Haifa knew who he was. Seeing a very handsome garden belonging to a rich Syrian, near Acre, he strolled into it, and was accosted by the proprietor, who asked him who he was. He replied, "Gordon Pasha," on which my Syrian friend, who told me the story, laughed incredulously, and politely showed him out. Gordon meekly departed without attempting to insist on his identity. The proprietor told me that he felt convinced that he was being imposed upon, because Gordon, when spoken to in English, would answer in bad Arabic, and because, when asked his name, he took his card-case half out of his pocket, as though to give his card, and then, on second thought, put it back again and answered verbally. So my friend lost his chance of entertaining an [p. 465] angel unawares, which he has never ceased to regret, the more especially as his friends take a pleasure in teasing him about it.

..... 'My last letter from Gordon is dated Khartoum, the 6th of March.'
(See below for a note on General Gordon's life.) [A4-1]

..... [A4-1. Oliphant, Haifa or Life in Modern Palestine, pp. 274-80.]

Sir Valentine Chirol writes, in *Fifty Years in a Changing World*:

..... 'More to the point is my recollection of my meeting with Gordon a few months before his forlorn hope in the Sudan at Laurence Oliphant's house on Mount Carmel. Gordon was at that time living in Jerusalem entirely absorbed in the study of Biblical topography. The French, more than usually jealous and suspicious of all British activities in those parts since our occupation of Egypt, could not for a moment believe that for an Englishman and a General with Gordon's world-wide reputation Biblical topography was anything but a cloak for sinister political activities, and the French Consulate at Jerusalem watched all his movements. He had set out, he told us, on the previous day for one of his usual long walks in the country, and he had soon observed that he was being followed, as was also quite usual, by a Syrian whom he believed to be specially employed by the French to shadow him. So instead of turning back after a few miles' stretch he determined to go on and see how soon he would tire the man

out. He walked on for many miles before he did so, and then, as it was getting too late for him to be back in Jerusalem before dark, he decided to push on to Nablous for the night--a matter of 35 or 40 miles--and having slept there he had thought he might as well push on next day to Haifa; and so there he was, and would the Oliphants give him another night's lodging?' (p. 42)

..... Note

Charles George Gordon (1833-85) was an Englishman who served in the Royal Engineers during the siege of Sebastopol and in the capture of Peking. Later (1863-4), in command of a Chinese force, he crushed a formidable rebellion and was recognized as one of the foremost soldiers of his day. After six years in England, during which he gave his spare time to relief of the poor, feeding and clothing homeless children, and visiting the sick, he accepted employment under the Khedive [p. 466] of Egypt and opened up additional regions of the equatorial Nile. In 1877 he became Governor of Sudan, reconnoitred a vast territory, and gained a world reputation by his achievements in government and engineering. He resigned in 1880 because of poor health, and spent nearly a year in Palestine, after which, at the request of the British government, he undertook to relieve garrisons in rebel territory in Egypt. He reached Khartum, but within a month the Mahdi began a siege which continued for five months. A relief force from England, arriving in January 1885, found Khartum captured and Gordon murdered on the palace steps. [p. 467]

Addendum V

Biographical Notes

THE following brief notes concern some of the persons mentioned in this book, whether followers of Baha'u'llah or others. Certain major figures have not been included, since information about them is readily available in various standard works in print, and it is also the author's intention to write more fully about a number of them in a forthcoming volume.

The notes have been written by Dr Moojan Momen, and those about the Baha'is have been based, in part, on 'Abdu'l-Baha's Memorials of the Faithful, to which page references are given. The assistance of Mr Sami Doktoroglu, in contributing information about some of the Turkish pashas, is gratefully acknowledged.

'Abdu'l-Ghaffar-i-Isfahani, Aqa

Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar was a trader of Isfahan who became a believer whilst on a journey to Baghdad. He was one of the companions of Baha'u'llah in His exile to Adrianople. He was sent by Baha'u'llah to Istanbul, where he was arrested and sentenced to exile in Cyprus. When the ship carrying Baha'u'llah and His fellow-exiles reached Haifa, he threw himself into the sea, unable to bear separation from Baha'u'llah, but was rescued and sent on to Cyprus. However, he succeeded in escaping from the island on 29 September 1870 and rejoined Baha'u'llah in 'Akka, where he settled down in the Khan-i-Afranj. In order to conceal his presence from the authorities he changed his name to Aqa

'Abdu'llah. After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, he went to live in Damascus where he died. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 59-61.)

'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani, Shaykh

Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani, known as Shaykhu'l-'Iraqayn, [p. 468] was the son of 'Aliy-i-Tihrani. He obtained the usual religious education and studied under Haji Siyyid Shafiy-i-Burujirdi. He lived in Tihran and was a close associate of Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir Kabir. Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn was named the Amir Kabir's executor and, from the money of this will, he built in Tihran a mosque and a madrisihof which he was director. In 1858, Nasiri'd-Din Shah put him in charge of a mission to 'Iraq to regild the dome of the tomb of Husayn at Karbila. When he had finished this, he was put in charge of the gilding of the dome of the Askariyayn shrine at Samarra. He fell ill at Kazimayn, died 16 December 1869, and is buried at Karbila.

Adi Guzal, Mulla ('Aliy-i-Sayyah, Mirza)

Mulla Adi Guzal of Maraghih, better known as Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah, became a Babi in the very earliest days of the Faith, and was the trustee and courier of the Bab during the days of His imprisonment in Mah-Ku and Chihriq. He was sent by the Bab on several important missions; he was the first to visit the scene of the Shaykh Tabarsi upheaval and recite prayers of visitation for the martyrs. During the severest of the Babi persecutions, Mirza 'Ali fled to 'Iraq and lived in Karbila. During Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Adrianople, Mirza 'Ali came to that city and was sent by Baha'u'llah to Istanbul. Here he was arrested and interrogated and, when Baha'u'llah was exiled from Adrianople to 'Akka in 1868, he was one of His followers who was sent to Cyprus with Mirza Yahya. He died in Famagusta on 4 August 1871.

'Ali Khan, Haji, Hajibu'd-Dawlih

Haji 'Ali Khan was a native of Maraghih. He had entered the service of Muhammad Shah when the latter had been Governor of Maraghih, at a time when his father was Governor of Adharbayjan. Later, when Muhammad Shah acceded to the throne, Haji 'Ali Khan was made Steward of the Household. He fell from favour and was exiled to 'Iraq following rumours of an unsavory affair between him and Mahd-'Ulya, the wife of the Shah. However, through Mahd-'Ulya's influence, he was able to regain his position, and on Muhammad Shah's death resumed his post as Steward of the Royal Household. Early in 1849 Mirza Taqi Khan appointed him Farrash-Bashi. It was Haji 'Ali [p. 469] Khan who repaid Mirza Taqi Khan for this favour by encompassing his death early in 1852. As a reward, he was given the title Hajibu'd-Dawlih. He went on to have a chequered career, falling out of favour once again at the time of Mirza Aqa Khan's downfall and being restored yet again through the intervention of Mahd-'Ulya. He died in 1867. His son was Muhammad-Hasan Khan, I'timadu's-Saltanih. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith has written of him:

..... Hajibu'd-Dawlih, that bloodthirsty fiend, who had strenuously hounded down so many innocent and defenseless Baha'is, fell in his turn a

victim to the fury of the turbulent Lurs, who, after despoiling him of his property, cut off his beard, and forced him to eat it, saddled and bridled him, and rode him before the eyes of the people, after which they inflicted under his very eyes shameful atrocities upon his womenfolk and children.[A5-1]

..... [A5-1. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 83.]

'Ali Pasha, Muhammad Amin

Muhammad Amin 'Ali Pasha was born in Istanbul in February 1815, the son of a shopkeeper. Because he had acquired a knowledge of French, he was able to obtain a post in the translation bureau of the Ottoman government in 1833. He was sent on several foreign missions and was the Turkish ambassador in London, 1838-9. In 1840, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs for a short time and returned to this position in 1846 under Rashid Pasha. In 1852 he became Grand Vizier for a few months and then, in 1854, he was again appointed Foreign Minister and, in 1855, Grand Vizier (until the following year). He continued in high office for most of the rest of his life, being Foreign Minister in 1857-8, July 1861 and November 1861 to 1867, and Grand Vizier in 1858-9, 1861 and 1867-71. After Fu'ad Pasha's death in 1869, he combined the posts of Foreign Minister and Grand Vizier. He was a successful diplomat and one of a small group of Turkish statesmen determined to steer Turkey into the nineteenth century, but he tended to be authoritarian and overbearing in his personal manner. He died on 7 September 1871 after three months of illness.

'Ali-'Askar-i-Tabrizi, Haji

Haji 'Ali-'Askar was one of the notable merchants of Tabriz, and a believer from the time of the Bab. At last the persecutions forced him [p. 470] to leave his home town and he emigrated with his brother and family to Adrianople, where he settled down and made a living by peddling small wares. He was arrested and sent with Baha'u'llah to 'Akka, where he passed away in AH 1291 (AD 1874). (See *Memorials of the Faithful*, pp. 161-4.)

'Ali-Shah, Zillu's-Sultan

'Ali-Shah was the tenth son of Fath-'Ali Shah and a consanguineous brother of 'Abbas Mirza, Muhammad Shah's father. He was made Governor of Tihran and, on Fath-'Ali Shah's death in 1834, made a bid for the throne, styling himself 'Adil Shah. Within a short reign of forty days, in an effort to buy himself support, he succeeded in almost emptying the treasury of the hoards amassed by his miserly father. But it proved of no avail and he was brushed aside when Muhammad Shah reached Tihran. He was at first imprisoned but managed to escape to Russia; he finally settled down in exile in Baghdad, where he was living when Baha'u'llah arrived there. He died in AH 1271 (AD 1854-5).

Ashraf, Aqa Siyyid

Aqa Siyyid Ashraf's father, Mir Jalil, was one of the companions of Hujjat. He married in the early days of the Zanjan upheaval, and Aqa Siyyid Ashraf was born during this episode. At its close, Mir Jalil was taken to Tihran and

executed, leaving Umm-i-Ashraf (the mother of Ashraf) to bring up her children alone. In his early twenties, Aqa Siyyid Ashraf came twice to Adrianople and entered the presence of Baha'u'llah. Shortly after returning from the second of these journeys, he was arrested and condemned to death as a Babi. The manner in which he steadfastly refused to renounce his Faith, and the way in which his mother--although brought to him with the idea that she would induce him to recant--urged him to remain firm, were praised in many passages from the pen of Baha'u'llah. Siyyid Ashraf's martyrdom occurred in 1870.

Baqir-i-Shirazi, Mirza

Mirza Baqir remained in Adrianople for a while before returning to Shiraz. There he began to teach the Faith and journeyed from town to town in order to do so. He lived for a while in Hindiyān, then returned [p. 471] to Shiraz. In AH 1288 (AD 1871-2) he was imprisoned with some of the other believers for four months, and then expelled from the town. He went to Kirman and began to teach the Faith there, until he was expelled from that town also. He then lived in Sirjan, but was arrested again by the Governor of Kirman and spent another four months in prison, after which he was strangled and his body was thrown outside the city walls.

Fath-'Ali, Mirza, Fath-i-A'zam

Mirza Fath-'Ali, surnamed Fath-i-A'zam by Baha'u'llah, was one of the leading Baha'is of Ardistan, near Isfahan. He had accepted the Bab, with others in Ardistan, when Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Ardistani and Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas passed through the town after their persecution in 1845, with Quddus, in Shiraz. (See Balyuzi, *The Bab*, pp. 76-8.) Later, he was one of the Babis who early recognized the station of Baha'u'llah. The horse on which Baha'u'llah was mounted as He set off for Constantinople (see p. 175) was a gift from Mirza Fath-'Ali, who was not among those accompanying Him. He returned to Ardistan where he served Baha'u'llah as a point of contact for the distribution of Tablets to believers in Iran, often having to use his own judgement as to the intended recipient when no names were given on the Tablets. His son was married to the daughter of Mulla 'Ali-Akbar. He died shortly before the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Who revealed two Tablets of Visitation in his honour.

Fu'ad Pasha (Kececi-Zadīh Muhammad)

Fu'ad Pasha was born in Istanbul in 1815, the son of a famous poet and scholar, 'Izzat Mulla. He studied at the Medical School where he learnt French. He spent three years as an army doctor and then switched to the Translation Bureau in 1837. He was sent on several important diplomatic missions until, in 1852, he was appointed Foreign Minister under 'Ali Pasha. He again served as Foreign Minister in 1855-6, 1858-60, 1861 and 1867, and as Grand Vizier in 1861-3 and 1863-6, alternating with 'Ali Pasha in these important posts. Fu'ad advocated the modernization of the Ottoman state and was also influential in the development of the Turkish language. He died on 12 February 1869 in Nice, France, of a heart condition. [p. 472]

Habibu'llah Afnan, Haji Mirza

Haji Mirza Habibu'llah was born in Shiraz on 7 February 1875. He was called Muhammad-'Ali at birth, but his father later changed his name to Habibu'llah out of respect for the fact that one of Baha'u'llah's children was named Muhammad-'Ali. Haji Mirza Habibu'llah grew up in Shiraz in constant contact with the wife of the Bab, who was his aunt. In September 1890, he set out with his mother, brothers and sister to join his father in Egypt. From there they proceeded to Haifa where they remained for nine months in the presence of Baha'u'llah. The family then returned to Port Sa'id, where they had a trading establishment. After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Habibu'llah's father left for Iran, while he himself remained in Egypt. He was often at this time in the company of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl who was also then residing in Egypt. He visited 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land on several occasions. Then in 1900, he was instructed by 'Abdu'l-Baha to return to Shiraz to assist with the repair of the House of the Bab, and he was appointed Custodian of that House by 'Abdu'l-Baha. He died in 1951.

Hamzih Mirza, Hishmatu'd-Dawlih

Hamzih Mirza was the twenty-first son of 'Abbas Mirza, and thus an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. In 1847, he was appointed Governor of Khurasan but, due to the revolt of the Salar there, he could exert no authority and, on the death of Muhammad Shah, when the Salar's rebellion became more intense, he was forced to flee to Afghanistan. In 1849, he was appointed Governor of Adharbayjan, and when in 1850 the order for the Bab's execution came to him, he refused to be associated with it. He was later reappointed Governor of Khurasan, and his forces suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Turkomans in 1860-61. After holding several more governorships, he died while campaigning against the rebel Shaykh 'Ubaydu'llah in 1880.

Husayn Khan, Haji Mirza, Mushiru'd-Dawlih

Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih and Sipahsalar-i-A'zam, eldest son of Mirza Nabi Khan-i-Qazvini, was born in AH 1243 (1827-8). He was sent to Europe for his education but did not stay [p. 473] there long. In 1266 (1849-50) he was appointed Persian consul at Bombay by Mirza Taqi Khan, and in 1271 (1854-5) became Consul-General at Tiflis. He was promoted to Minister at Istanbul in 1275 (1858-9), given the title Mushiru'd-Dawlih in 1282 (1865-6), and raised to the rank of Ambassador in June 1869. In November-December 1870, Nasiri'd-Din Shah performed a pilgrimage to the sacred shrines at Karbila and Najaf. Mirza Husayn Khan, as Persian ambassador in Turkey, made all the preparations for this journey and proceeded from Istanbul to meet the Shah. The Shah was very favourably impressed by his Ambassador, instructed him to accompany the royal party back to Tihran, and not long after, in September 1871 made him Minister of War with the title Sipahsalar-i-A'zam. In November 1871 he was formally appointed Prime Minister. His ministry was marked by a number of reforms but is chiefly remembered for the granting of the Reuter Concession in July 1872. He arranged for and accompanied the Shah on, his first European tour

in 1873. During their absence, however, opposition to Mirza Husayn Khan mounted and when the Shah landed at Anzali on his return to Persia, he was met by a deluge of demands for Mirza Husayn Khan's dismissal. The Shah although at first inclined to resist this, was eventually forced to relieve Mirza Husayn Khan of his position in December 1873. He was made Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in the following year Minister for War as well. He accompanied the Shah on his second European tour in 1878. In 1880, he became Governor of Qazvin and in the following year was sent as the Shah's personal representative to the coronation of Tsar Alexander III. In 1881, he became Governor of Khurasan, but after only a little more than two months died suddenly on 14 November 1881. It is usually stated that he was poisoned.

Husayn-i-Ashchi, Aqa

Aqa Husayn was a native of Kashan. During the Bab's stay in Kashan, Aqa Husayn's father, Aqa Muhammad-Javad, had met Him at the house of his uncle, Haji Mirza Jani, and had become a believer. When Baha'u'llah was in Baghdad, Aqa Muhammad-Javad emigrated to Baghdad and settled there with his son. He was entrusted by Baha'u'llah with the mission of going to Tihiran to ask for the hand of the daughter of His brother, Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, in marriage to 'Abdu'l-Baha. It was as he was returning from his mission that he fell [p. 474] ill at Kirmanshah, and he died as he reached Baghdad. Aqa Husayn was raised for a time in the care of his uncle, Ustad Isma'il, but when Baha'u'llah was about to leave Baghdad, Aqa Husayn was honoured by being accepted into His household, initially to serve the womenfolk and later as cook. (Ashchi means cook or maker of broth.) He accompanied Baha'u'llah at all stages of His exile until 'Akka was reached. He was involved in the murder of the Azalis and served a term of imprisonment. After this he opened a small shop in 'Akka. He lived throughout the period of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry and into that of the Guardian of the Faith, and died in AH 1346 (1927-8).

Ja'far-i-Tabrizi, Haji, and Taqi-i-Tabrizi, Haji

There were three brothers of Tabriz, pedlars by trade, who had become believers in the time of the Bab. The eldest, Haji Hasan, had met Baha'u'llah in Baghdad. He became so well known as a believer, and so open in his teaching, that the enemies of the Faith lured him into a garden and killed him. Haji Ja'far and his brother Haji Taqi journeyed to Adrianople and settled there. At the time of Baha'u'llah's departure from Adrianople, unable to bear separation from Him, Haji Ja'far cut his throat. Therefore, he and his brother remained there until the wound was healed, when, by Baha'u'llah's direction, they proceeded to 'Akka and arrived some two months later. One night, Haji Ja'far fell from the roof of the caravanserai and died. Similarly, his brother Haji Taqi died after a fall from the roof while chanting prayers. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 122-5.) Haji Taqi is also referred to in some sources as Karbila'i Taqi and Mashhadi Taqi.

Jamshid-i-Gurji, Aqa

Aqa Jamshid-i-Gurji was, as his name implies, from Georgia, but he grew up in

Kashan and it was there that he became a believer. He journeyed to Adrianople to meet Baha'u'llah, Who, after a time, instructed him to proceed to Istanbul. While there he was arrested through the efforts of the Persian Embassy and sent with Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani to Persia, travelling under very harsh conditions. At the Persian frontier they were handed over to Kurdish tribal leaders who freed them, and they were able to make their way to 'Akka and rejoin Baha'u'llah. Aqa Jamshid remained in 'Akka until his death. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 120-2.) [p. 475]

Khalil Mansur and 'Abdu'llah, Aqa

Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim, Khalil Mansur, of Kashan was a young man when he first heard of the Bab and became a believer. He succeeded in converting his mother and brothers to the Faith. He travelled to Baghdad and came into the presence of Baha'u'llah there. And after a while, he returned to Kashan and brought his family to Baghdad, where they settled. After the departure of Baha'u'llah, he and his family were among those exiled to Mosul. But during Baha'u'llah's second year of imprisonment in the citadel of 'Akka, he, together with his brother, Aqa 'Abdu'llah, travelled to the Holy Land and established themselves as copper-smiths in Haifa. Thus these two brothers were able to render many services to the pilgrims who arrived there, as well as purchasing the requisites of the Holy Family in Haifa (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 81-2, and Blomfield, The Chosen Highway, pp. 119-28.)

Khurshid Pasha, see Muhammad Khurshid Pasha

Mahmud-i-Kashani, Mirza

Mirza Mahmud became a believer as a young man in Kashan and emigrated to Baghdad. Here he became a partner in Aqa Muhammad-Rida's confectioner's shop and the two became like brothers, sharing everything. When Baha'u'llah left Baghdad, they accompanied Him and continued in His company to 'Akka. After the passing of Baha'u'llah they continued to serve 'Abdu'l-Baha until they died within a short time of each other in about 1912. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 39-41.)

Midhat Pasha

Midhat Pasha was born in Istanbul in October 1822, the son of a Turkish judge. He held several government appointments before becoming governor of the Danube districts. When in 1864 the decree for the reorganization of the vilayats was issued, he was given the task of implementing this for the first time in his area. He was extremely successful and raised the prosperity of the province, administering strict justice among its Muslim and Christian inhabitants. In 1869, he was sent to Baghdad where he once again began to pursue his policies [p. 476] of reform and modernization vigorously, much impressing Nasiri'd-Din Shah who visited the province. In 1872, he was made Grand Vizier, but was soon dismissed. He used his enforced retirement to draw up his plans for a Turkish constitution and, on the accession of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid in 1876, he succeeded in having the constitution proclaimed. He himself became Grand

Vizier. However, the reactionary and arrogant 'Abdu'l-Hamid could brook no limitations on his power and in 1877 Midhat was dismissed and exiled. On British insistence he was brought back as Governor of Syria in 1878 and was transferred to Smyrna in 1880. But 'Abdu'l-Hamid could not forgive him; in 1881 he was arrested and charged with the murder of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz. Although the charge was patently false, he was found guilty and the death sentence was only commuted to exile in Ta'if in Arabia after much pressure from the European powers. However, 'Abdu'l-Hamid was not to be balked and managed to have his enemy secretly put to death in Ta'if on 10 April 1883. He was perhaps the most able administrator of nineteenth-century Turkey.

Muhammad Khurshid Pasha (Mehmed Hourshid Pasa)

Muhammad Khurshid Pasha was a minister and provincial governor during the reign of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz and the early days of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid's reign. He had been a slave of Yahya Pasha and had been trained in the secretariat of the Turkish Foreign Office. He served under Fu'ad Pasha in Syria. He was made Governor of Sidon and then of Erzerum. In 1863 he became Minister of Finance. During his term as Governor of Edirne (Adirnih), he was also Minister of Religious Endowments. He later spent periods of time as Governor of Ma'muratu'l-'Aziz and Sivas, and as Minister of Finance. He died 1878 in Ankara while he was governor of that city.

Muhammad-'Ally-i-Isfahani, Aqa

Aqa Muhammad-'Ali was a close relative of the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan and had become a believer at the time of the Bab's sojourn in that city. Later he moved to Baghdad, and was one of the companions of Baha'u'llah until he died in 'Akka in AH 1305 (AD 1887-8). (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 23-5.) [p. 477]

Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Jilawdar-i-Yazdi, Aqa

This man, who was also known as Sabbagh-i-Yazdi, had become a believer in Baghdad and accompanied Baha'u'llah to Istanbul. When Baha'u'llah was exiled to Adrianople, Aqa Muhammad-'Ali was left in Istanbul to assist the pilgrims on their way to Adrianople. Later he joined Baha'u'llah and was exiled with Him to 'Akka. After a time he settled in Sidon where he engaged in trade. After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, he returned to 'Akka where he lived until his death. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 57-9.)

Muhammad-Husayn, Haji, Hakim-i-Qazvini

Haji Muhammad-Husayn, a physician of Qazvin, was a resident of Baghdad. He was one of the believers, and was frequently in Baha'u'llah's presence until the latter's departure from Baghdad. In 1868, with others of the Baha'is, he was exiled to Mosul. After a few years he went to 'Akka and lived there for a time, until going to Persia to teach the Cause. He was arrested in Tihiran and spent some time in prison. Upon his release, he left for Baghdad, but here he was again arrested. He was sentenced again to exile in Mosul, but Mirza Musa Javahiri interceded on his behalf and he was allowed to live out the remainder of his days in Baghdad.

Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Amir-i-Nayrizi, Aqa

Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim was a native of Nayriz, who accepted the Faith of the Bab in his youth. Together with his two brothers, he participated in both the first and second Nayriz upheavals; they managed to escape from the general massacre that followed the second upheaval and, although arrested by several soldiers, Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim managed to burst his bonds and release his brothers. He then went to Baghdad and settled there. He accompanied Baha'u'llah on each stage of His exile from Baghdad to 'Akka and settled in the latter city. He married Habibih who was a servant in the household of Baha'u'llah. After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, he was for a time the teacher of the Baha'i children in 'Akka, but his health declined, he died and is buried in 'Akka. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 94-5.) [p. 478]

Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Nazir-i-Kashani, Aqa

Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim emigrated from Kashan to Baghdad, and then accompanied Baha'u'llah on each stage of His exile to Adrianople and 'Akka. He earned his living as a weaver and carpenter. Later, in the 'Akka period, he undertook to guard the house of Baha'u'llah, and he was also a bath attendant to Baha'u'llah. He died in about 1920, and is buried in 'Akka.

Muhammad-Riday-i-Qannad-i-Shirazi, Aqa

Aqa Rida was a native of Shiraz, but was living in Baghdad when he first heard of the Faith and became a believer. He was the owner of a small confectionery shop, and Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani became his partner. The two are described by 'Abdu'l-Baha as having become like brothers. He accompanied Baha'u'llah in all stages of His exile and served both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha as steward until his death in about 1912. He is buried in 'Akka. (See Memorials of the Faithful, PP- 39-41.)

Muhammad-Sadiq-i-Isfahani, Aqa

Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq was one of four brothers who, together with their uncle, lived close by the house of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad. Thus it was that they came to know of the Faith and became believers. When Baha'u'llah set out from Baghdad, Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq accompanied Him as far as Adrianople, when he received permission to rejoin his family in Baghdad. He was one of the Baha'is exiled to Mosul where he died.

Muhammad-Taqi, Shaykh, Allamiy-i-Nuri

Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, known as Allamiy-i-Nuri, was born in Nur in AD 1787, the son of Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad-i-Mustawfi. After completing his religious studies in Karbila and Najaf, he returned to Nur, where he became one of the eminent mujtahids of his age and the foremost religious authority in Mazindaran. He held his classes at Yalrud and Sa'adat-Abad; a mosque was named for him in the latter place. Mirza Buzurg, the father of Baha'u'llah, made him the executor and trustee of his will. Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi died in AH 1259 (1843-4). [p. 479]

Munir, Mirza Aqay-i-Jinab-i-Munib

Mirza Aqay-i-Munir was a native of Kashan. His father was a merchant, bitterly opposed to the Faith of the Bab. Mirza Aqa came into contact with the Babis shortly after the martyrdom of the Bab and became a believer. At first he kept his new belief hidden from his father, but eventually the fact of his being a Babi became well known. The 'ulama of Kashan declared him an unbeliever, and clamoured for his blood. His father, fearing for his own wealth and safety, determined to be rid of this troublesome son and, together with a number of accomplices, captured and bound Mirza Aqa and took him out of the town, intending to kill him. But Mirza Aqa managed to escape and fled to Baghdad. Here he settled, occupying himself with transcribing the Holy Writings. Then he undertook a journey on foot throughout Iran, visiting Tihran, Qazvin, Nayriz and other places in order to distribute these texts to the believers. In the journey from Baghdad to Istanbul, he walked before the howdah of Baha'u'llah carrying a lantern. From Istanbul, Baha'u'llah instructed him to return to 'Iraq and Iran to teach the Cause and confirm the believers. And it was while Mirza Aqa was in Iran that a Tablet reached him from Baha'u'llah in Adrianople, instructing him to inform the Babis of Iran of His claim to be 'He Whom God will make manifest', the Promised One of the Bab. Thus he was the first to announce this to the Babis of Tihran and other places. He journeyed to Adrianople shortly before Baha'u'llah's further exile to 'Akka. Although he was already ill at the time that the decree of exile came, he insisted on accompanying the exiles. But on board the boat, his condition grew steadily worse until the captain of the boat insisted that he be put ashore at Smyrna. He was taken to the hospital in Smyrna by 'Abdu'l-Baha, where he died shortly afterwards. Baha'u'llah honoured him with the designation *Ismu'llahu'l-Munib*--The Name of God, the Overlord. (See *Memorials of the Faithful*, pp. 145-7.)

Murtiday-i-Ansari, Shaykh

Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari was born at Dizful in south-western Iran about 1799. He studied under the greatest mujtahids of the Shi'ih world in 'Iraq and travelled widely through Iran, finally settling in Najaf in 1833. By about 1850, with the death of other prominent mujtahids, he had become recognized as the leading Shi'ih mujtahid, [p. 480] acknowledged throughout 'Iraq, Iran and India. He was famed for his memory, his speedy resolution of difficult problems, and the loftiness of his motives. At the time of his death he is reported to have possessed but seventeen tumans which exactly equalled his debts. This was in marked contrast to other mujtahids such as Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, the 'Wolf', and Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani, who became extremely wealthy during their lives. He died in Najaf on 18 November 1864.

Mustafa Nuri Pasha

Mustafa Nuri Pasha was the son of Hasan Agha, a resident of Qandili. His father died when he was young, and he was brought up by Ja'far Agha, his grandmothers's husband. In 1813 he began employment at the royal Court, and

went on to the Treasury. He became Katib-i-Sirr, Private Secretary to the Sultan. He held several governorships, including that of Baghdad from 1860 to 1861. He died in 1879, at which time he was one of the oldest of the Pashas.

Namiq Pasha (Mehmed Namik Pasa)

Namiq Pasha was born in 1804 in Konya. He entered the new-style army pioneered by the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II and was sent to Paris for training. When he returned, he was quickly promoted to the rank of General and later sent as ambassador to London (1834). He was promoted to the rank of Mushir (marshal), and he and Ahmed Fevzi Pasha established the first military academy in the Ottoman Empire. He subsequently held many important offices including Governor of Baghdad (1851-2), Mushir of the Tupkhanih (1852), Governor of Basrah (1854-7), Governor of Arabia (1857-8) and again Governor of Baghdad (1861-8). He then returned for a time to Paris, after which he achieved the highest rank in the army (Saraskar). He also held ministerial posts including that of Minister without Portfolio in Muhammad Rushdi's Government in 1876. He spoke French and English as well as Arabic and, although known as a liberal in his youth, became more conservative in his advanced years. He was one of the oldest Pashas of the empire when he died in 1892.

Nazar-'Ali, Mirza, Hakim-Bashi

Mirza Nazar-'Ali was a native of Qazvin who was practising medicine [p. 481] in Hamadan at a time when Muhammad Mirza (later Muhammad Shah) became governor of that town. He came to Muhammad Mirza's attention when he was able to cure an attack of gout which had afflicted the prince after other physicians had failed. Knowing of the prince's proclivity to Sufism, Mirza Nazar-'Ali quickly gave himself the trappings of a Sufi in order to strengthen his influence over the heir-apparent. When the prince became Shah, Mirza Nazar-'Ali was made Hakim-Bashi and continued to be very influential, even contesting the premiership with Haji Mirza Aqasi. The enmity between these two reached great proportions, until finally the latter succeeded in having Mirza Nazar-'Ali exiled (after a plot against the Prime Minister was discovered). Mirza Nazar-'Ali took refuge in Qum and remained there until Muhammad Shah's death. At that time he made another attempt to obtain the premiership, but he was sent back to Qum where he died.

Rida, Aqa, see Muhammad-Riday-i-Qannad-i-Shirazi, Aqa

Rida, Shatir-

Shatir-Rida was a native of Ardikan. He became a believer in the early days of the Babi Faith and was soon well known as a Babi. As a result, he met increasing persecution in his home town and was arrested on a number of occasions. Soon he had to leave Ardikan and lived for a while in the wilderness, until eventually making his way to Baghdad. Here he opened a bakery near Baha'u'llah's house and supplied the Holy Family and the believers. Following Baha'u'llah's departure from Baghdad, he returned to Ardikan where he continued to bake bread for a living. Opposition forced him to move to Yazd for

a time; eventually he died in Ardikan at an advanced age.

Safa Haji Mirza

Rida-Quli, also called Qanbar-'Ali and best known as Haji Mirza Safa, came from the family of Savad-Kuh in Mazindaran. He was born in AH 1212 (AD 1797-8) and, after studying under the great mujtahids of 'Iraq, donned the garb of a darvish of the Ni'matu'llahi Order and travelled throughout the Middle East and North Africa, performing the pilgrimage to Mecca during the course of his wanderings. His travels took him to Istanbul where he became the murshid [p. 482] (spiritual guide) of Mirza Husayn Khan (then Persian ambassador at Istanbul). Later, when Mirza Husayn Khan became Prime Minister, Haji Mirza Safa came to Tihiran and stayed in his house, continuing to exert a powerful influence over the Prime Minister. He died in 1874 and Mirza Husayn Khan caused a shrine and gardens to be built around his grave.

Sa'id Khan-i-Ansari; Mirza, Mu'taminu'l-Mulk

Mirza Sa'id Khan-i-Ansari was born in AH 1231 (AD 1815-16), the son of the Shaykhu'l-Islam of Garmrud. He himself was educated as one of the 'ulama, and would probably have remained thus were it not for a meeting with Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir-Nizam. Mirza Taqi Khan took Mirza Sa'id Khan as his private secretary and in early 1852 he was made Foreign Minister. He remained in this post until 1873 when he was succeeded by Mirza Husayn Khan, and was then appointed Mutavalli-Bashi of the Shrine of Imam Rida in Mashhad. In 1880, he returned as Foreign Minister and retained this post until his death on 5 March 1884. Some three years after his death, his son brought to the Court about one thousand letters sent to his father over the years, from various Persian diplomats abroad and European diplomats in Tihiran, all unopened and unread. Thus was Persia's Foreign Ministry administered over a quarter of a century.

Sidq-'Aliy-i-Qazvini, Darvish

Darvish Sidq-'Ali was a resident of Qazvin when he heard of the Faith and left Persia to visit Baghdad. He became one of the companions of Baha'u'llah and accompanied Him in all stages of His exile. Baha'u'llah honoured him by setting aside a special day every year, dedicated to him, on which all dervishes should gather. He died in AH 1299 (AD 1880-81) and is buried in 'Akka. (See Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 36-8.)

'Umar Lutfi Pasha

'Umar Lutfi Pasha was an Austrian Croat, born in Plaski in 1806. His name was originally Michel Lattas. Following political upheavals in Hungary, he fled to Turkey in 1828, and having adopted Islam and changed his name, he went on to become one of the principal [p. 483] dignitaries of the Ottoman Empire. He became Sardar Akram, Commander-in-Chief of Turkish armies, in 1855, and was Governor-General of 'Iraq, 1858-9. His period of governorship in Baghdad was marked by severe treatment of dissident tribesmen, and is described by Dr Josef Koetschet, a Swiss physician who accompanied him (Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des Serdar Ekrem Omer Pascha (Michael Lattas), Sarajevo, 1885). He died in

Istanbul, in 1871.

Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani

Ustad Muhammad-'Ali had been a believer from the time of the Bab, and in the persecution of 1852 his ear was cut off. After this he came to Baghdad and was a companion of Baha'u'llah on the way from Baghdad to Adrianople. The events that befell him in Adrianople, his arrest and deportation to Iran, his release from captivity by the Kurds, and his return to 'Akka are dealt with in this book. (See Index.) In 'Akka, he would carry water to the town in waterskins from a good distance away so that the Holy Family and the companions would not have to drink the dirty, unhealthy water of 'Akka. He was involved in the episode of the murder of the Azalis and, after his release from prison, set up a small shop in the bazar of the town where he would perform minor surgical procedures. After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, he proceeded to 'Ishqabad where he lived for a time until his death.

Yusuf-i-Ashtiyani, Mirza, Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik

Mirza Yusuf-i-Ashtiyani was born in 1812. His father, Mirza Hasan, the Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik, was in charge of the Treasury and, on his father's death in 1845, Mirza Yusuf inherited his father's position and title. He held great enmity towards Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri and, during the latter's premiership, Mirza Yusuf was out of office and in retirement at Ashtiyani. After Mirza Aqa Khan's fall, however, he resumed his position and over the ensuing years held many important government positions, although always retaining the prestigious and lucrative post of being in charge of the Treasury. From 1867 to 1871, he was the Shah's principal minister, but when Mirza Husayn Khan came to power in 1871, he retired once more and did not re-emerge until Mirza Husayn Khan's downfall in 1873, when he took up his [p. 484] former post. In 1877, he was given the title Vazir-i-A'zam and was in effect Prime Minister, although he did not in fact receive the designation of Sadr-i-A'zam until 1881. He died in 1886.

Yusuf Kamal Pasha

Yusuf Kamal Pasha was born in the year AD 1808 (AH 1223). He was orphaned at an early age, and was brought up under the care of his uncle 'Uthman Pasha, one of the renowned ministers of his time. Yusuf Kamal entered the service of the state as a secretary in 1829. He gradually progressed to higher positions and duties, held ministerial posts on several occasions, and became a member of the Council of State. In the year 1861, he was appointed deputy to Fu'ad Pasha, the Grand Vizier, and took the place of Fu'ad Pasha when the latter resigned. Kamal Pasha died in Istanbul, in the year AD 1876 (AH 1293). [p. 485]

Glossary

Aba -- Cloak or mantle.

Aghsan -- 'Branches'. Sons and male descendants of Baha'u'llah.

Ajudan-Bashi -- Chief Adjutant.

Amir-i-Divan -- Head of the Court.

Andaruni -- Inner or ladies' quarters.

Ayvan -- Verandah, portico.

Azali -- Follower of Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal.

Baba -- Father.

Bast -- Sanctuary. A basti is one who takes refuge.

Big-Bashi -- Major in the Turkish army.

Biruni -- Outer or men's quarters.

Cadi (Qadi) -- Judge.

Caravanserai -- Inn for caravans.

Darvish - Dervish. A Sufi vowed to poverty.

Farman -- Order or royal decree.

Farman-Farma -- Commander.

Farrash -- Footman, lictor or attendant.

Farrash-Bashi -- Head footman or chamberlain.

Farrash-Khanih -- Establishment of the Farrash-Bashi.

Ghusnu'llahu'l-A'zam (Ghusn-i-A'zam) -- The Most Great Branch.

Haji -- Muslim who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj.

Huququ'llah -- 'Right of God', payment by believers instituted in the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

Ijtihad -- The power of the Shi'ih divine to issue ex cathedra decrees and judgments.

Ilkhani -- Chief of the Clans.

Imam -- Applied particularly by Shi'ih to one of the twelve Apostolic successors of Muhammad. An imam is also one who leads a congregation in prayer.

Imam-Jum'ih -- Member of the 'ulama who leads the Friday prayers. [p. 486]

Jihad -- Holy War.

Kad-khuda -- Headman of a village or a quarter of a town.

Kajavih A kind of pannier, howdah, or litter.

Kalantar -- Mayor.

Kashku'l -- Begging-bowl used by dervishes.

Khan -- Prince or chieftain. A Khan is also an inn.

Liman -- Prison.

Madrisih -- School or religious college.

Mahdi -- The Manifestation expected by the Muslims at the end of time.

Mir-Alay -- Colonel in the Turkish army.

Mirza -- Prince when after a name, or simply 'mister' when prefixed to a name.

Mu'adhdhin -- Muezzin, one who sounds the call to prayer.

Mudir -- Local governor, under the Qa'im-Maqam.

Mujtahid -- Doctor of Law.

Mulla -- One who has had a theological education.

Murshid -- Sufi spiritual guide.

Mutasarrif -- Governor, under the Vali.

Mutavalli -- Custodian of a religious foundation.

Pasha -- Honorary title given to provincial governors, ministers and military officers of high rank in Turkey.

Qadi -- See Cadi.

Qa'im -- 'He Who shall arise', the Promised One of Shi'ih Islam.

Qa'im-Maqam -- Local governor, under the Mutasarrif.

Qalyan -- Water-pipe.

Quffih -- Rounded, hooded boat.

Sadr-i-A'zam -- Grand Vizier, Prime Minister.

Sardar -- Sirdar, military commander.

Seraye -- Government House, administrative headquarters of the government.

Shatir-Bashi -- Chief courier.

Shaykh -- Elder, teacher, master of a dervish order, etc.

Shaykhi -- Member of the school founded by Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i.

Shi'ih(s) -- Followers of the first Imam, 'Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, and of his eleven hereditary successors; in contrast to the more numerous Sunnis, who uphold the line of elected Caliphs beginning with Abu-Bakr.

Siyyid -- Descendant of Muhammad, entitled to wear the green turban.

Sufi -- Muslim mystic.

Surih -- Chapter of the Qur'an. [p. 487]

Taj -- 'Crown', a felt head-dress.

Takyih -- Seminary for Sufis.

Tuman -- Unit of Iranian currency.

'Ulama '-- Those who know', the religiously learned.

Vali -- Governor-General, governor of a Turkish province.

Vazir (Vizir) -- Vizier, minister of state.

Vazir-Nizam -- Minister of the Army.

Vilayat -- Turkish province.

Yuz-Bashi -- Centurion, head of a hundred men. [p. 488]

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