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A NOTE FROM THE TRANSLATOR

"Jinab-i-Khan", the title by which Dr. Youness Afroukhteh (Yunis Afrukhtih) was honoured by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was a writer, an interpreter, a wonderful poet, a

magnificent orator, a brilliant physician and an indefatigable teacher of the Faith of God. He was also a first class humourist. And it is this heavenly quality of wit and humour that infuses this volume with a mood rarely seen in similar literature and thus makes reading these pages such an interesting and delightful experience.

My father had been a patient of this beloved servant of Abdu'l-Bahá and used to tell me, in my youth, about him and the wonderful stories of his famous memoirs. Once, gazing at a portrait of the beloved Jinab-i-Khan which my father kept in his study, I remarked that he looked so radiant that it was almost as if the picture emitted light. The observation seemed to transport my father to another place and time. His eyes glazed over and remained fixed on a far-off point in space, as a wistful smile found play on his lips. After what seemed like a long pause he said, "That is the light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Jinab-i-Khan was at that Threshold for nine years. That is why the light is so intense." All this made my first reading of these memoirs much more meaningful. It was "light" writing about the "Sun"; a physician describing the true Healer; it was the utterly devoted lover writing about Love personified. Over those nine years (1900-1909), Jinab-i-Khan served Abdu'l-Bahá as secretary, translator, envoy and physician. His account of some of the most significant events of the period, his graphic and stirring depictions of the various attributes

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and moods of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the description of his own emotions-all expressed in a lively and at times mischievous language of humour and wit, and made ever more meaningful by the addition of the verses of poetry (including some of his own) interspersed throughout the book, make this volume uniquely memorable. On his return to Persia, as he began his brilliant career in medicine, Jinab-i-Khan continued to serve the Cause of God with ever-increasing passion. He describes in his memoirs in some detail the teaching firesides he held at his home in Tehran in times when such activities could have spelled doom. In 1925 he travelled to the United States where he spoke at large gatherings and imparted to the friends in that region the light of faith and certitude he had absorbed from the Master. A few years later he embarked on an extensive European tour where he not only introduced the life-giving principles of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to many a gathering, but also was a living demonstration to the friends of the spirit of love and fellowship which flows from the practice of those principles.

In a moving passage from his wonderful memoirs he recounts that once as he made his report to Abdu'l-Bahá of his visit to Paris, where he had been sent by the Master, he made mention of the fact that his appearance among the French believers and his words to them seemed to have a deeply profound effect on them.

Suddenly Abdu'l-Bahá halted, and turning His blessed face to me asked, "How many years have you been with us?" "Four years," I replied. "In these four years you don't know what I have given you; you have no idea what you have

absorbed from Me!"

In addition to his international teaching services, Jinab-i-Khan was also active in Bahá'í administration. He served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia as well as the Spiritual Assembly of Tehran for many years, until advanced age and the onset of a chronic illness deprived him of the energy

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to continue. His health deteriorated over time until on 28 November 1948 he left this earthly abode for his heavenly home, so that once again he might gain admittance to the heavenly threshold of his Beloved Master. His "In Memoriam" may be found in *The Bahá'í World*, volume 12, pages 679-681.

At each reading of Jinab-i-Khan's memoirs one tends to come away with a new impression, a fresh realization, a deeper understanding of the words of that heavenly Reality, Abdu'l-Bahá. In the course of my last reading of the book and as I replaced Persian words and concepts with their English equivalents, I caught something significant that had escaped me in previous readings. Absorbed and captivated by the warmth that radiated from these pages I began to visualize myself as a player in the story, an observer of the events, a resident of the pilgrim house. So I too began to experience, in a daydream state, the joy and thrill of nearness to the beloved Master, and as I pounded the computer keys I too basked in the sunshine of His love. Along with the rest of the friends, we seemed to be in the midst of Paradise while living in the Most Great Prison. No one wished for anything but to be near Him and to live out his life in a sort of spiritual ecstasy, as if there was nothing else to life.

Then one day quite suddenly, just after the dismantling of the Most Great Prison, the Master voiced his long-cherished desire: "I have to spread the teachings of God around the world." Before His re-incarceration in the city of 'Akka He had repeatedly mentioned the fact that, "Were it not for the safeguarding of the Most Holy Shrine, I would travel and teach the Faith." And now that He felt that the Shrines were safe He was making plans to do exactly that. For me, reading those words, came a sudden awakening-as if He seemed to be telling me that we have a duty in this world to perform. We are not here to simply enjoy each other's company and the comforts of life. It is not enough to remain good Bahá'ís and simply lead a passive life. We must follow Him and win the hearts of men by our conduct, actions and words.

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Jinab-i-Khan distinguished himself in following the Master's exhortations for the remaining days of his life. He himself became an unforgettable example of devotion, service and sacrifice for all the lovers of Abdu'l-Bahá the world over.

I began the translation of the 124 B.E. (1968), revised edition of the book in the summer of 1996 and gave to it my utmost effort, although there always remains room for improvement. I have translated much of the poetry and ha"

tried to keep intact the weight of the original verse and the beauty of the rhyme which are such indispensable features classical Persian poetry. My English translations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's unpublished Tablets and prayers, whether from Arabic or Persian, remain provisional and are so annotated (There is so much here that despite my best endeavours this translation can never hope to match the beauty and zest of the original. My hope is that English-speaking believers, no unlike myself, may take this spiritual journey with Jinab-i-Khan and in doing so enrich their lives, strengthen their resolve in service to the Cause and, God willing, share with him, in whatever may be their portion, the extraordinary joy of experiencing nearness to the magical presence of the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

I wish to thank my dear friend Mr. Adel Shafipour for his help in translating some of the Arabic Tablets and deciphering certain Arabic passages which escaped my level of competency but not his. I am indebted to Dr. Houshang Sharifi for his assistance with translation of further Arabic text. Mrs. May Hofman's editing of the manuscript was truly a service of love. With the precision and skill of a surgeon she performed the invaluable service of sorting out words, sentences and paragraphs and making sure that the outcome was an "English" document.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to my dear friend and colleague Dr. Ahang Rabbani, through whose suggestion I began the project and whose constant encouragement and invaluable assistance in reviewing and refining of the text enabled me to complete it.

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This translation is dedicated to my beloved wife Nazli Masrour, whose all-consuming devotion and constant care and attention spurred me on from beginning to end. I know of no other handmaiden of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who has happily accepted so many of the household burdens and responsibilities, given more of her time and industry, and generally fussed over her husband more intently and with more vigour and love in support of his pursuit of a goal. Without it this translation would have carried the name of another of Abdu'l-Bahá's servants than mine, and in recognition of her support my heart is filled with humility and gratitude.

Riaz Masrour
August 2003

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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Many people have assisted in making possible at last the full English translation of *Khatirat-i-Nuh-Saliy-i-'Akka*. In addition to those already mentioned by the translator, the publisher would like to thank the following: Nirvana Fahoumand Afroukhteh and Farzaneh Yazdani Afroukhteh, daughters of the author, and Minerva Douglas, his grand-daughter, for their interest and support; Saeed Khadivian, whose unpublished translation of these memoirs in the

early 1980s provided a useful point of reference to the non-Persian speaking editor of the present translation; Mr. Ali Nakhjavani for his continued encouragement; and the following for their technical help in providing information and materials: Laura Barnes, Arthur Lyon Dahl, Roger Dahl, Iraj Khodadoost, Diana Kitanova-Samii, Erica Leith, Minou Moarefi, Mahmud Samandari, Shapur Rassekh, Robert Stockman, and Mina Yazdani. We wish also to thank the staff at the Bahá'í World Centre who read and revised the provisional translations of writings by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The writing of 'Akka was finished in the year 99 B.E. (1942), but its first publication did not take place until ten years later in 109 B.E. (1952). A revised edition appeared in 124 B.E. (1967), and that edition, reprinted in 1983 by Kalimat Press, is the version used in this translation. The most recent Persian edition was published in Germany in 2003. To assist the reader, the publisher has added explanatory endnotes and a section of biographical notes on many of the people mentioned in the book. These do not form part of the original text.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1952

In the Name of God, the All-Glorious!

Memories of Years in 'Akka, written by Dr. Youness Afroukhteh, is a remarkable book. Using delightful expressions and in the sweetest choice of words, the author records those momentous and horrifying events related to the uprising of the breakers of the Covenant and the sorrow and anguish of the Centre of the Covenant.

Among those works dealing with the history of Covenant-breaking, this book is pre-eminent in its clear establishment of truth from falsehood. It has been honoured by the approval and praise of the beloved Guardian and his explicit instruction, to this Assembly, that it should be published and disseminated. Its author was favoured after his passing by the following cable from the beloved Guardian, words of infinite bounty from the heaven of mercy and generosity:

HEARTS GRIEF-STRICKEN PASSING BELOVED YUNIS AFRUKHTIH DISTINGUISHED PROMOTER HOLY FAITH HERALD COVENANT TRUSTED SECRETARY BELOVED MASTER STAUNCH SUPPORT HIS TESTAMENT. HIS SERVICES ENRICH ANNALS BOTH HEROIC FORMATIVE AGES FAITH. INSTRUCT ASSEMBLIES ALL PROVINCES HOLD BEFITTING MEMORIAL GATHERINGS. INFORM VARQA ERECT MY BEHALF MONUMENT HIS GRAVE. ARDENTLY PRAYING ALMIGHTY'S INESTIMABLE BLESSING HIS SOUL.

Signature of the Guardian

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These words of the Guardian serve as a true indicator of the character of the esteemed author and eliminate the need for any further description of his praiseworthy qualities and virtues, or of the record of his services.

The publication of this book will no doubt bear many fruits. It will bring increased awareness to the friends of God of the significance of the divine Covenant, the necessity of eschewing Covenant-breakers, and the deceit and treachery of this loathsome group. Further, it will familiarize young Bahá'ís who have not personally witnessed the upheaval of Covenant-breaking and have not encountered the seditious and corrupting deeds of these destroyers of the foundation of the Faith of God, with their malicious actions. This Assembly recommends to all the friends the in-depth perusal of this wonderful book.

'Ali-Akbar Furutan

Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran

[page 1]

FOREWORD

Some thirty-seven years have passed since the occasion of my first pilgrimage to the threshold of the incomparable beloved, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is my purpose, therefore, to record for posterity the recollections of my three-month residence in the Most Great Prison city of 'AWL, and then to continue these reminiscences and share with the reader my memories of the nine years of my second pilgrimage, which took place thirty-four years ago.

It seems now as though I had a dream lasting three months some thirty-eight years ago, and another, nine years in duration, which began thirty-four years past and ended twenty-five years ago. I shall, therefore, set out to record under the title of Memories of Nine Years in 'Akka an account of my spiritual discoveries during those dream-like journeys. In so doing, I shall attempt to refrain from relating unsubstantiated tales and hearsay traditions, and shall leave the interpretation of these dreams to posterity. My hope is that future generations of believers may become acquainted with past events and, unlike the followers of other religions who have largely remained incognizant of the traits and attributes of past Manifestations, obtain an understanding of the character, personality, and manners of one such divinely-inspired Personage.

This account covers certain historically significant events, for the largest portion of these memoirs relates to the activities of the Covenant-breakers in the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

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Since Baghdad was the initial site of their rebellion, I shall begin the story with my journey to that city.

I should state at the outset that to remember events that took place a quarter of a century ago is no easy task, especially in my case, for I have always suffered from a pronounced frailty in this faculty. However, highlights of these events have left such an indelible impression on my mind that even if after thousands of years the minute particles of my remains-having since been cast into limitless space by the hand of nature-were to be recovered and analysed, the memories of those past events might yet be detected by any

attentive observer. It is this hidden power, residing in the recesses of my memory, which encourages and propels me to recount the events of the past for the generations of the future.

Having said this, in relating this story I still find myself unable to depend solely on those brain cells that house the record of my lifelong memories. Moreover, I do not intend to depend on any assistance from those unidentified microscopic beings. Instead I shall place my hope and trust in the divine assistance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My prayer is that His spirit may shine forth from the Concourse on High with the luminous light of His bounty and generosity, and aid the hosts of feeble and unlettered ones such as this servant. And so it is in that heavenly and holy Being that I place my wholehearted reliance, as I take up the pen and begin the story.

single page

chapter 1

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