

Eminent Baha'is in the Time of Baha'u'llah

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Eminent Baha'is in the Time of Baha'u'llah with Some Historical Background
by H.

M.

Balyuzi GEORGE RONALD OXFORD <pix> Foreword The passing of the Hand of
the Cause of God Hasan M.

Balyuzi was a great blow to the many people around the world who were
admirers of his writings.

At the time of his death, he was half-way through a monumental four-volume
study of the life and times of the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah.

He had intended the first volume in this series to contain the basic biography
of Baha'u'llah, together with some chapters on the history of
nineteenth-century Iran as a background for the events of Baha'i history.

As this volume grew in size, it was decided to transfer most of the
historical chapters to a later one.

The first volume, with the title Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, was published
shortly after Mr Balyuzi's passing and contained three of the historical
chapters (10, 14 and Appendix).

Mr Balyuzi had planned the second volume to consist principally of biographies
of a selection of the most important disciples of Baha'u'llah.

By the time of his death, he had completed fourteen of these, with a further
four partially written.

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, had included in The Baha'i
World, Vol.

III (pp.

80-81) the names of nineteen Baha'is whom he designated as 'Apostles of
Baha'u'llah'.

Mr Balyuzi intended to include all of these among his biographies. "The Story
of Badi", one of these, was told in the first volume (Chapter 33).

The life of Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim, the brother of Baha'u'llah, another of
the Apostles, was so inextricably bound up with that of Baha'u'llah Himself
that it was, in effect, also covered in the first volume.

The life of yet another, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani, Mr Balyuzi considered
so momentous that he felt he could not confine it to a mere chapter, and he
asked the present writer to prepare a separate book entirely on the life
of this notable figure.

For the remaining sixteen Apostles, Mr Balyuzi had, at the time of his passing, completed only three biographies and partially written three more.

In the last four months of his life, however, he had come to realize that to include biographies of all of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah, his second volume would itself have to become two separate volumes.

But his death supervened and the <px> projected chapters remained unwritten.

As a token of Mr Balyuzi's intentions, the present writer has contributed short accounts of the remaining Apostle of Baha'u'llah in Chapter 20, including Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, and has briefly completed the three unfinished biographies, as well as two other chapters.

These additions are clearly indicated in the text for Chapters 9, 13, 14, 17 and 18, where the added material follows a line of asterisks.

It had also been Mr Balyuzi's intention to write a brief account of Mirza Hasan, Mirzay-i-Shirazi, the greatest of the Shi'ih mujtahids of his age, who, as would appear from the account in this volume, bore secret allegiance to the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Since most of the text of this chapter was to have been a translation of Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan's account of his father's meeting with this famous cleric, a curtailed version is included as Chapter 19.

It is clear from statements made in some of the existing chapters, as well as from notes left among his papers, that a number of other chapters had been contemplated, such as one on the Seven Martyrs of Yazd and another on the Tihran persecutions of 1882-3.

For the third volume of this series, Mr Balyuzi had envisaged an ambitious project.

He would set Baha'u'llah's Tablets to the Kings and Rulers of the World against the history of nineteenth-century Europe.

And he would demonstrate how the three 'false gods', of which Shoghi Effendi had written in *The Promised Day is Come* (pp.

113-14), had led to the destruction of the once-mighty continent of Europe.

To this end, Mr Balyuzi had already completed some exhaustive research, had written an introduction, and had translated those parts of the *Suriy-i-Maluk* (Tablets to the Kings) as yet untranslated.

But this is as far as he had reached at the time of his death.

The fourth volume of the series was to have been a collection of documents, principally from non-Baha'i sources, relating to the life of Baha'u'llah.

Mr Balyuzi had asked the present writer to take responsibility for the collection of the material for this volume, and shortly before his passing I had presented him with a provisional list of contents which he had approved.

Thus, while the third volume must remain forever unwritten, it is hoped that the material for the fourth volume may eventually be gathered, translated and published.

The historical chapters omitted from the first volume also remain to be published.

Moojan Momen <pxi> Preface My father's death was announced to the Baha'i community, on 12 February 1980 by a cable from the Universal House of Justice, the text of which was later chosen by the House of Justice to be inscribed upon the stone erected over his grave.

He lies now within yards of the resting-place of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, Shoghi Effendi; and visitors to that revered and beautiful spot who chance upon his grave may read these lines: '...his outstanding scholarly pursuits will inspire many devoted workers among rising generations follow his glorious footsteps...' In her memorial article to my father, soon to be published in *The Baha'i World*, Vol.

XVIII, Mrs Marion Hofman writes of him: 'A student from his youth, he became in the last decade of his life and in the sight of all the Baha'i world its pre-eminent scholar, yielding place only to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, by whose learning Mr.

Balyuzi was himself astonished.' For all those who knew him, whether as friend, colleague, mentor, teacher, Baha'i co-worker, or as member of his family, each will have his own personal memory of him.

Removed now in time by five years from his physical presence, my own strongest memory is of his gentleness.

Yet I fancy that had I ever asked him how he would himself best wish to be remembered, then I think that it would have been his hope that his scholarship might endure.

His respect for learning was central to his faith; and although he was rarely given to anger, he could never accept calmly any abuse of scholarship, whether from deliberate falsification or from careless ignorance, whenever he encountered it.

The time will come, no doubt, when my father's writings will require revision.

The study of history is not a static discipline; continuing research in any field of enquiry is likely to continue to bring to light new information, and these hitherto hidden facts may lead in time to fresh interpretation and different perspectives.

Yet I believe <pxii> that his books will abide; for nothing false will ever be found in them, no half-truths, no distortions of available information carefully tailored to lend support to his conclusions.

Every fact that they contain, every source of information, every reference, will have been painstakingly and exhaustively checked and

researched, either by himself or by those whom he entrusted to assist him.

When a book was finally committed to print and publication, it left my father's pen with his absolute conviction that he had served truth to the fullest of his ability: for anything less would have been a denial of the strength and power of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, in which his belief was absolute and his faith never failed him.

In *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi*, written soon after his death in 1957, his widow, Amatu'l-Baha Ruhyyih Khanum, opens with these words: 'All those who were privileged to know the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi from the time of his childhood until his passing remember him as being incarnate with life; a dynamic, almost electric force seemed to radiate from him.' In November 1925, as a boy of seventeen, brought up in a Baha'i family but not yet with any commitment to the Faith, my father arrived to stay for one night in Haifa, en route to start his University life in Beirut.

He arrived there at a time of great preoccupation and personal sorrow for the Guardian, as Dr John Ebenezer Esslemont lay dying in the old Pilgrim House.

Yet despite his troubled mind--and my father has written how he sat up with Dr Esslemont through that night--Shoghi Effendi took time to greet this youth with great kindness, and stayed to talk with him and answer his questions for over an hour.

In my father's words: 'It was that bounty of meeting Shoghi Effendi and all that I saw in him, which confirmed me in the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

The course of my life was changed.' After that, my father was to meet Shoghi Effendi on various occasions during his student days, when holidays were spent in Haifa with other young Baha'i students, the last being in February 1932 before he left for England to continue his education there.

This proved to be his last ever meeting with the Guardian.

The nearly fifty years that remained of his life would be spent in the service of the Baha'i Cause: a service which was an eloquent testament to the 'dynamic, almost electric force' of the Guardian which had so charged and enthused his soul.

In 1938 my father wrote a short biography of Baha'u'llah, the <pxiii> Prophet Founder of the Baha'i Faith, and Shoghi Effendi acknowledged its publication by expressing the hope that he would complete the companion essays which he intended writing on the lives of the Bab, Who preceded Baha'u'llah and heralded His coming, and of Baha'u'llah's son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, as these, the Guardian felt, would be of valuable help in the teaching of the Cause.

It was to be another thirty-three years, through circumstances described in its Foreword, before 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, was published, with its dedication 'To the ever present spirit of the Guardian of the Cause of God'; and nine years later his book *Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory* was also dedicated to Shoghi Effendi.

I can still recall vividly that day in November 1957 when, as a child of thirteen, I stood on the graveside as Shoghi Effendi's coffin was lowered into the ground.

In that charged moment I can remember looking up at my father and marking how rigid and motionless he stood, his face almost devoid of expression.

When he came to speak the final prayer, the one of Baha'u'llah's which begins 'Glory be to Thee, O God, for Thy manifestation of love to mankind!', he did so almost in a monotone, his voice sounding to me drained of emotion.

I could not properly understand then, but believe now, in the knowledge of all that happened after, that at that moment his heart was broken.

The depth of his grieving was such that he was in a state of profound shock, in which his feelings were numbed so that emotion could find little outlet.

For six years after that he kept going, borne along by the force of events during a time of great crisis and momentous decisions, when the duties imposed upon him by his station as a Hand of the Cause had to be met.

But after the culminating events of this period, the election of the first Universal House of Justice and the Baha'i World Congress in London in 1963 the increasingly fragile prop of physical health finally collapsed, and he plunged into a dark and despairing retreat, punished by illness of the body and near mental breakdown.

In her memorial article Mrs Hofman has written of how his mind was filled with 'forebodings of guilt for his wasted days and abdication of his responsibilities as a Hand', but also she tells how, 'all unrecognized, another path was to open before him, another way of service as a Hand which the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha had delineated: to promote learning'.

For it was to his historical researches that he turned for a lifeline, and although he was to suffer <pxiv> from continually deteriorating health for the remainder of his days, he managed to summon together the spiritual strength and mental energy to embark upon a decade of writing that saw the publication of five major works of history: his biographies of the lives of the three Central Figures of the Baha'i Faith, his work entitled Edward Granville Brown and the Baha'i Faith, and Muhammad and the Course of Islam, this last book written out of his conviction that an objective evaluation of Islam is an essential prerequisite to an understanding of the origins of the Baha'i religion.

In his Foreword to this present volume, Dr Momen has explained how it came to be written, and how it fits into my father's plan for a four-volume study of the life and times of Baha'u'llah.

Those readers previously unfamiliar with Baha'i history will certainly encounter some difficulties, and for them some acquaintance with my father's earlier books will be found to be of assistance, particularly The Bab, which gives the background events to some of the biographies contained in

Part I, and also, of course, Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, intended as volume one of the four-part work.

Reference to Muhammad and the Course of Islam could be helpful for certain chapters of Part II.

The following brief explanation of the distinction between Babis and Baha'is may also assist the reader, since this was not generally understood in Iran during most of the period covered by this volume.

Babi is the name given to the followers of the Bab, the young merchant of Shiraz, Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, who in May 1844, at the age of 25 years, declared Himself to be the Bab, the Gate of God, the return of the hidden Imam-Mahdi, the Deliverer eagerly awaited by the world of Shi'ih Islam.

His Ministry was to last but six years, though in that short time He attracted thousands to accept His Cause, and in doing so inevitably provoked the most bitter enmity amongst those who did not believe in Him.

Supported by the State, the orthodox Persian clergy instigated a period of brutal and fanatical persecution, which not only brought the Bab before a firing-squad to meet His death in July 1850, but almost succeeded in obliterating the followers of the new religion.

During the few years of His Ministry, the Bab wrote frequently of the coming of another, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

In 1863, thirteen years after the martyrdom of the Bab, a nobleman of Mazindaran and a Babi, Mirza Husayn-'Ali, declared Himself to be <pxv> that One foretold by the Bab, the return of Christ to Earth to lead mankind into a new epoch of spiritual development.

He took the title Baha'u'llah--the Glory of God--a designation first mentioned by the Bab.

Before long the greater part of the surviving Babi community had accepted the leadership and the Message of Baha'u'llah, and they became known as Baha'is.

Some never did, however, and they remained Babis.

Baha'u'llah gave strength and courage back to the beleaguered and persecuted community of the Bab but, as will be learned from this volume, He was not able to put an end to the opposition of the Muslim clergy, and the hounding and sporadic butchering of His followers was to continue throughout His lifetime.

This book tells the stories of some of those followers.

Although references are given for quotations, and published books and documents are listed in the bibliography, it seems fitting to mention the names of those Iranian Baha'is whose writings were important sources for my father:

'Abdu'llah-i-Sahih-Furush, Haji Mirza; Abu'l-Fadl, Mirza;

'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhdhab, Aqa; Habibu'llah Afnan, Haji Mirza; Haydar-'Ali, Haji Mirza; Husayn-i-Zanjani, Mirza; Ibn-i-Asdaq (Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad);

Mahmud-i-Furughi, Mirza; Malik-Khusravi, Muhammad-'Ali; Nabil-i-Akbar (Aqa Muhammad-i-Qa'ini); Nabil-i-A'zam (Muhammad-i-Zarandi); Na'im (Mirza Muhammad); Nazimu'l-Hukama (Mirza Siyyid Muhammad); Samandar, Shaykh Kazim; Sina, Siyyid Isma'il; Sulaymani, 'Azizu'llah; Valiyu'llah Khan, Mirza.

On behalf of my father, most grateful thanks are extended to those who published several of these historic documents or made available others as yet unpublished, amongst whom he would have surely mentioned, as he had done in his previous books, his cousin, Abu'l-Qasim Afnan.

Finally, my father's own words intended for 'Azizu'llah Sulaymani should be quoted: 'The present writer is much indebted to the author of those eight volumes [Masabih-i-Hidayat], from which he has gleaned many of his facts.'

All translations from Persian and Arabic, unless otherwise attributed, were made by my father, including the many important Tablets by Baha'u'llah, the Bab and 'Abdu'l-Baha, whose translations have been approved at the Baha'i World Centre.

The unsparing assistance extended by the Research Department in connection with these Tablets, as well as that of the Audio-Visual Department in seeking <pxvi> out and reproducing the invaluable photographs of early believers, is acknowledged with deep gratitude.

I have left until last to write about the two people without whose efforts the publication of this book would not have been possible, Mrs Marion Hofman and Dr Moojan Momen, not because their contributions demote them to be considered after others, but because a proper recognition of their extraordinary service to my father makes a most fitting postlude at this ending of the road: the publication of his last major Baha'i history.

Dr Momen was first introduced to my father in January 1972 by his uncle, Dr Iraj Ayman.

He was at that time completing his medical studies in London, and in such free time as he had available was pursuing his interest in the history of the Faith by researches in the Public Record Office.

Dr Ayman was aware that my father was in great need of an assistant to aid him with research, and so effected the introduction.

There very quickly developed a bond between them, and a recognition on my father's part of Dr Momen's considerable ability as an historian, which allowed him to trust completely Dr Momen's judgement and correctness of method.

Although, at first, still heavily engaged in his studies and later having to cope with the demands on him as a full-time medical practitioner, Dr Momen gave unselfishly of his time in carrying out research for my father in the preparation of The Bab and, most importantly, Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory; in the Preface to this latter book my father expressed his profound gratitude to Dr Momen for his help 'of inestimable value'.

Not, however, until 1981 with the publication of Dr Momen's massive work, The

Babi and Baha'i Religions, 1844-1944, could the true measure of Momen's help to my father be realized.

For anyone familiar with that work will not fail to recognize the enormous volume of research that must have gone into its preparation.

Yet, it was while engaged upon that preparation, and also pursuing his career in medicine, that Dr Momen found the time to help my father to the degree and with the effect that he did.

My father loved Moojan as though he had been of his own family, and he was amongst the first that I telephoned with the news on the morning of my father's death.

He came at once to be with us and share in our grief.

On that same day we opened letters that my father had left to be read after his passing.

In these he appointed Dr Momen to be one of his three literary executors, together with my mother and <pxvii> myself; and he entrusted to his safekeeping the diaries and letter books of his father, Muvaqqari'd-Dawlih, which he treasured highly amongst his collected library.

Some time before he had spoken to Moojan of his dear wish to write a biography of his father, but he greatly doubted whether he had sufficient time left to him on earth to accomplish this task.

So instead, he enjoined Moojan to give thought to writing this book, that he himself would never write.

Mrs Marion Hofman first met my father on her wedding day, in October 1945 from when began a close friendship that endured to the end of his days, and has continued beyond the grave with her most moving and beautifully written memorial article for The Baha'i World, from which I have earlier quoted.

For my part, I must limit myself here to the bare statement that Marion has personally edited and prepared all of the seven books of my father published since 1970 including the present volume; that she prepared the indexes for Edward Granville Browne and The Baha'i Faith, for 'Abdu'l-Baha, for Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory and for this present book; and that in so doing she enjoyed his complete trust and confidence and, since his death, that of his family too.

When in August 1970 Marion sent to my father copies of the published Edward Granville Browne and The Baha'i Faith, after extensive correspondence and many meetings between them on its editing and production, he wrote to her: 'The production is excellent...

With warmest love ... and much grateful thanks'; and, three months earlier, when he saw the typescript of the Index, he had written to her: 'I am sure this index will serve as a model for future Baha'i books'.

He did not live to see a published copy of Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, but, had he done so, how delighted he would have been with it, and how much he would have appreciated the efforts of Marion to produce a book so fitting in its presentation to its subject-matter.

Now, for this present volume, with no one to confirm their decisions but themselves, Mrs Hofman and Dr Momen have taken the incomplete manuscript left by my father, and by their determination and consummate skills, and encouraged by their love for him, have given life to his book.

I, and my family, are deeply grateful to them both.

London - - - - - ROBERT BALYUZI 1 February 1985 <p1> Part I Thou hast made mention of the loved ones in those regions.

Praised be God, each one of them attained the honour of being remembered by the True One--exalted is His glory--and the names of them, one and all, flowed from the Tongue of Grandeur in the kingdom of utterance.

Great indeed is their blessedness and happiness, inasmuch as they have drunk the choice wine of revelation and inspiration from the hand of their Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Baha'u'llah <p2> <p3> Prologue Many, many years ago, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote in a tablet, addressed to a Baha'i of Iran, of an incident belonging to the days when Sultan Muhammad-i-Fatih (the Conqueror), the celebrated Ottoman ruler, had laid siege to the proud Constantinople; and that great centre of learning, the world-famed metropolis of the Eastern Roman Empire (once overwhelmingly rich, but shamelessly despoiled as early as 1205 by uncouth, greedy Crusaders) was, at last, about to fall before the mighty arms of Islam.

At such a moment of destiny a Byzantine nobleman, convinced that fate had brought Byzantium to its end, went to visit a prelate, and found that worthy divine busy in his sanctum, scribbling fast. 'What are you composing so hurriedly, at a time so precarious?' the nobleman asked. 'Oh, I'm writing a treatise against Muhammad,' replied the prelate.

Hearing that, the sorely-tried and desperate nobleman exploded. 'You utter, utter fool,' he exclaimed. 'Can you not see that you are late, by far too late!

The time for writing a refutation of the Prophet of Arabia is long, long past.

Look out there, over the ramparts of our city.

What do you see?

There, look well.

There are rank upon rank of the soldiers of Islam.

There are the waving banners of Islam triumphant.

When the Faith of Muhammad was confined to the wastelands of Arabia, that was the time to write your silly refutations; not today, not today.

We shall very soon be the vassals of the Great Turk!' From its inception the Faith of the Bab and Baha'u'llah has had its traducers.

Fierce persecutions--merciless and relentless--apart, many there have been, fanatic and shallow, unprincipled and vain, both in the East and the West, who have taken up their pens, oftentimes vicious and vitriolic, at times licentious, to refute that which the Lord of creation has purposed for this age, which is that Age of Fulfilment promised to Man from the dawn of historical times.

But none of these outbursts of human ingratitude have had the slightest effect on the onward march of the Faith of the Bab and <p4> Baha'u'llah from victory to victory.

These traducers, not having learned their lesson, are still writing tome after tome packed with falsehood to (as they imagine) besmirch the reputation of the Cause of God.

They are far too late.

The Faith of Baha'u'llah has encircled the globe.

Many they were who gave the most precious of all they possessed--their lives--that the Cause of God should live and flourish.

Their blood watered the plant which the hand of the Almighty had fashioned into existence; their constancy buttressed it against tempestuous winds; their unbreakable faith shielded it from the onrush of malice and evil intent.

And many they were, too, who toiled and laboured all their lives, to share with their fellow-men the inestimable bounty which was theirs: the recognition of Him Who shall lead Man to peace--peace with himself and his Creator.

Nothing daunted them, no blow ever swerved them from their straight path, no rancour embittered their lives.

Serving the Faith of Baha'u'llah was the only goal they knew.

This book is their story. <p7> 1 Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq A Notable Survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani, whom Baha'u'llah honoured with the designation Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq--The Name of God the Most Truthful--was a disciple of the Shaykhi leader, Haji Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti.

His master laid on him the mandate to reside in Isfahan, and pave the way, in that renowned city of 'Abbas the Great, for the Advent of the Qa'im.

Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i, the Babu'l-Bab, on his way with his unique and wondrous mission to Baha'u'llah in Tihiran, met Mulla Sadiq, a fellow-disciple and friend of old, in Isfahan, where he had been living for a while as directed by Siyyid Kazim, and gave him the tidings of the Advent of the Bab.[1] However, Mulla Husayn was not allowed to divulge the identity of the Heavenly Being, the near approach of Whose appearance had been emphatically asserted by Haji Siyyid Kazim. [1.

The Bab declared His Mission to Mulla Husayn on the night of 22 May 1844.]
Mulla Sadiq himself has told the story of how he came to know and recognize the Bab--and here it is:

I asked Mulla Husayn to divulge the name of Him who claimed to be the promised Manifestation.

He replied: 'To enquire about that name and to divulge it are alike forbidden.'
'Would it, then, be possible,' I asked, 'for me, even as the Letters of the Living, to seek independently the grace of the All-Merciful and, through prayer, to discover His identity?' 'The door of His grace,' he replied, 'is never closed before the face of him who seeks to find Him.' I immediately retired from his presence, and requested his host to allow me the privacy of a room in his house where, alone and undisturbed, I could commune with God.

In the midst of my contemplation, I suddenly remembered the face of a Youth whom I had often observed while in Karbila, standing in an attitude of prayer, with His face bathed in tears at the entrance of the shrine of the Imam Husayn.

That same countenance now reappeared before my eyes.

In my vision I seemed to behold that same face, <p8> those same features, expressive of such joy as I could never describe.

He smiled as He gazed at me.

I went towards Him, ready to throw myself at His feet.

I was bending towards the ground, when, lo! that radiant figure vanished from before me.

Overpowered with joy and gladness, I ran out to meet Mulla Husayn, who with transport received me and assured me that I had, at last, attained the object of my desire.

He bade me, however, repress my feelings. 'Declare not your vision to anyone,' he urged me; 'the time for it has not yet arrived.'

You have reaped the fruit of your patient waiting in Isfahan.

You should now proceed to Kirman, and there acquaint Haji Mirza Karim Khan with this Message.

From that place you should travel to Shiraz and endeavour to rouse the people of that city from their heedlessness.

I hope to join you in Shiraz and share with you the blessings of a joyous reunion with our Beloved.' (Nabil-i-A'zam, The Dawn-Breakers, pp.

100-101) Mulla Sadiq, enamoured as he was of the mien and the bearing of that young Siyyid, Whom he had encountered facing the Shrine of the Third Imam [Husayn], had, one day, ventured to speak to Him and invite Him to visit his house, where Siyyid Kazim was expected to attend a Rawdih-Khani, an assemblage

devoted to the recital of the sufferings of the House of the Prophet, and particularly the martyrdom of the Third Imam.

The young Siyyid had readily and graciously accepted the invitation.

When Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, that young Siyyid of Shiraz, arrived at Mulla Sadiq's house, Siyyid Kazim and his disciples were already there and seated.

On seeing the young Shirazi make His entrance, Siyyid Kazim immediately rose and asked Him to take a seat much higher in the room.

Those present were amazed and speechless because of the marked respect shown by Siyyid Kazim to this very young Siyyid, Who was unknown in their circles in Karbila.

And the preacher who occupied the pulpit was momentarily struck dumb.

He could not utter a word.

This preacher was none other than Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i, destined to be the first believer in the new Theophany, that faithful soul who had apprised Mulla Sadiq of the Advent of the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad.

Now, complete silence settled over that gathering, until Siyyid Kazim's voice was heard directing Mulla Husayn to recite some lines of a poem of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i, recalling the sufferings of the Third Imam.

The words which Mulla Husayn uttered caused the young Shirazi to weep so disconsolately and so bitterly that the entire congregation was deeply affected.

Later, when sherbet was served, Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad did not partake of it.
<p9> A few days later, Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad once again encountered Mulla Sadiq in the compound of the Shrine of the Third Imam.

He told him that His uncle had arrived from Shiraz and asked whether Mulla Sadiq wished to meet him.

That afternoon Mulla Sadiq visited the house where Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad lodged.

He found that His uncle had many visitors:

Persians of high rank, divines and merchants.

Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad Himself was busy dispensing tea and other refreshments.

Mulla Sadiq was soon expressing to the Shirazi merchant the unbounded admiration which he cherished for his Nephew, so unique in every way.

Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali was glad to hear a total stranger speak in such glowing terms of his Nephew and replied: 'In Shiraz all the members of our family are well known for their outstanding qualities, but my young Nephew is unique and excels them all.

But despite His high qualities, He falls short in one way.

He neglects His studies.' Mulla Sadiq responded that should the young man be kept in Karbila, he himself would undertake to supervise His studies, to which offer Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali readily agreed.

However, soon after, both he and his remarkable Nephew returned to Shiraz.

Mulla Sadiq was the son of a well-known man of Khurasan named Mirza Isma'il.

He had two brothers, one of whom, the twenty-two year-old Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, on hearing in 1848 that a number of Babis were on their way to Mazindaran, forwent his marriage on the eve of his wedding day and took the road with his fellow-believers to follow the standard raised by Mulla Husayn.

On the way to Shaykh Tabarsi he met martyrdom at the hands of the horsemen of Khusraw-i-Qadikala'i.

Mulla Sadiq was the eldest of the brothers.

He had sat at the feet of Haji Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti and had risen high in the circle of his disciples.

But when his teacher had directed his steps to Isfahan he had accepted the great responsibility laid upon him.

The Bab had told Mulla Husayn that Mulla Sadiq would unhesitatingly respond to His call and enrol himself under His banner, and it happened exactly as the Bab had foretold.

As soon as Mulla Sadiq realized that He, the tidings of Whose advent Mulla Husayn had given him, was none other than the same young Shirazi Siyyid Whom he had met, some years before, in Karbila, and Whom he had exceedingly admired, he threw all caution to the winds and rose up with all his vigour to serve Him and His Cause.

On the very morning after the night when the full light of truth dawned upon him, he left Isfahan on <p11> foot to walk all the way to Shiraz.

He took a path from which there could be no turning, a path which led away from pomp and power, from the fruits of worldly success.

He well knew what price he was paying for his devotion.

It took Mulla Sadiq twelve days to reach the abode of his Beloved.

But the Bab was not in Shiraz.

He had gone on pilgrimage to Mecca, accompanied by Quddus, who, before long, returned bearing a Tablet of the Bab.

Mulla Sadiq had, in the meantime, become a Pishnamaz (the cleric who leads the congregation in prayer in the mosque).

Reading in the Tablet of the Bab, with which Quddus had entrusted him, the instruction to add to the usual words of the adhan (call to prayer) the following: 'I bear witness that He whose name is 'Ali-Qabl-i-Muhammad [a

reference to the name of the Bab[1]] is the servant of the Baqiyyatu'llah [the Remnant of God, referring to Baha'u'llah]', Mulla Sadiq set out to give effect to that unmistakable command.

Let Nabil-i-A'zam describe that event and its aftermath: [1. 'Qabl' means 'before'.] ...he, one day as he was leading his congregation in prayer in the Masjid-i-Naw [New Mosque], suddenly proclaimed, as he was sounding the adhan, the additional words prescribed by the Bab.

The multitude that heard him was astounded by his cry.

Dismay and consternation seized the entire congregation.

The distinguished divines, who occupied the front seats and who were greatly revered for their pious orthodoxy, raised a clamour, loudly protesting: 'Woe betide us, the guardians and protectors of the Faith of God!

Behold, this man has hoisted the standard of heresy.

Down with this infamous traitor!

He has spoken blasphemy.

Arrest him, for he is a disgrace to our Faith.' 'Who,' they angrily exclaimed, 'dared authorise such grave departure from the established precepts of Islam?

Who has presumed to arrogate to himself this supreme prerogative?' The populace re-echoed the protestations of these divines, and arose to reinforce their clamour.

The whole city had been aroused, and public order was, as a result, seriously threatened.

The governor of the province of Fars, Husayn Khan-i-Iravani, surnamed Ajudan-Bashi, ... found it necessary to intervene and to enquire into the cause of this sudden commotion.

He was informed that a disciple [Quddus] of a young man named Siyyid-i-Bab, who had just returned from His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and was now living in Bushihr, had arrived in Shiraz and was propagating the teachings of his Master. 'This disciple,' Husayn Khan was further informed, 'claims that his teacher is the author of a new revelation and is the revealer of a book which he asserts is divinely inspired.

Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani has embraced that faith, and is fearlessly summoning the multitude to the acceptance of that message.

He declares its recognition to be the first obligation of every loyal and pious follower of shi'ah Islam.' <p12> Husayn Khan ordered the arrest of both Quddds and Mulla Sadiq.

The police authorities, to whom they were delivered, were instructed to bring them handcuffed into the presence of the governor.

The police also delivered into the hands of Husayn Khan the copy of

the Qayyumu'l-Asma', which they had seized from Mulla Sadiq while he was reading aloud its passages to an excited congregation.

Quddus, owing to his youthful appearance and unconventional dress, was at first ignored by Husayn Khan, who preferred to direct his remarks to his more dignified and elderly companion. 'Tell me,' angrily asked the governor, as he turned to Mulla Sadiq, 'if you are aware of the opening passage of the Qayyumu'l-Asma' wherein the Siyyid-i-Bab <p13> addresses the rulers and kings of the earth in these terms: "Divest yourselves of the robe of sovereignty, for He who is the King in truth, hath been made manifest!

The Kingdom is God's, the Most Exalted.

Thus hath the Pen of the Most High decreed!"

If this be true, it must necessarily apply to my sovereign, Muhammad Shah, of the Qajar dynasty, whom I represent as the chief magistrate of this province.

Must Muhammad Shah, according to this behest, lay down his crown and abandon his sovereignty?

Must I, too, abdicate my power and relinquish my position?' Mulla Sadiq unhesitatingly replied: 'When once the truth of the Revelation announced by the Author of these words shall have been definitely established, the truth of whatsoever has fallen from His lips will likewise be vindicated.

If these words be the Word of God, the abdication of Muhammad Shah and his like can matter but little.

It can in no wise turn aside the Divine purpose, nor alter the sovereignty of the almighty and eternal King.' That cruel and impious ruler was sorely displeased with such an answer.

He reviled and cursed him, ordered his attendants to strip him of his garments and to scourge him with a thousand lashes.

He then commanded that the beards of both Quddus and Mulla Sadiq should be burned, their noses be pierced, that through this incision a cord should be passed, and with this halter they should be led through the streets of the city. 'It will be an object lesson to the people of Shiraz,' Husayn Khan declared, 'who will know what the penalty of heresy will be.' Mulla Sadiq, calm and self-possessed and with eyes upraised to heaven, was heard reciting this prayer: 'O Lord, our God!

We have indeed heard the voice of One that called.

He called us to the Faith--"Believe ye on the Lord your God!"--and we have believed.

O God, our God!

Forgive us, then, our sins, and hide away from us our evil deeds, and cause us to die with the righteous.' [1] With magnificent fortitude both

resigned themselves to their fate.

Those who had been instructed to inflict this savage punishment performed their task with alacrity and vigour... [1.

Qur'an 3:190-91] An eye-witness of this revolting episode, an unbeliever residing in Shiraz, related to me the following: 'I was present when Mulla Sadiq was being scourged.

I watched his persecutors each in turn apply the lash to his bleeding shoulders, and continue the strokes until he became exhausted.

No one believed that Mulla Sadiq, so advanced in age and so frail in body, could possibly survive fifty such savage strokes.

We marvelled at his fortitude when we found that, although the number of the strokes of the scourge he had received had already exceeded nine hundred, his face still retained its original serenity and calm.

A smile was upon his face, as he held his hand before his mouth.

He seemed utterly indifferent to the blows that were being showered upon him.

When he was being expelled from the city, I succeeded in approaching him, and asked him why he held his hand before his mouth.

I expressed surprise at the smile upon his countenance.

He emphatically replied: "The first seven strokes were severely painful; to the rest I seemed to have grown indifferent.

I was wondering whether the strokes that followed were being actually applied to my own body.

A feeling of joyous exultation had invaded my soul.

I was trying to repress my feelings and to restrain my laughter.

I can now realise how the almighty Deliverer is able, in the twinkling of an eye, to turn pain into ease, and sorrow into gladness.

Immensely exalted is His power above and beyond the idle fancy of His mortal creatures." Mulla Sadiq, whom I met years after, confirmed every detail of this moving episode. (Nabil-i-A'zam, The Dawn-Breakers, pp.

144-8) Another Babi who shared the sufferings of Mulla Sadiq and Quddus was Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Ardistani.

The farrashes who were perpetrating these abominations were crying out to the populace: 'O Muslims!

These men have not committed murder, they are not thieves, they have not cheated anyone, they have not gone beyond the limits of the law; but they are clever and eloquent men of learning who want to rob you of your Faith.

Since we are parading these enemies of Religion, now captive and vanquished,

before you to behold, you must be most generous with your offerings and gifts to us.' A merchant, by whose place of business they were passing, stopped them in their tracks and told them: 'That being so, let me have a share of this righteous deed and inflict more pain on these men.' Having said this, he brought a long and stout piece of timber and put one end on the shoulder of Quddus and the other on the shoulder of Mulla Sadiq.

Next he attached a measuring device to the pole and had eighty bales of sugar weighed and placed on it.

It was a hot day.

Whenever Quddus and Mulla Sadiq, overcome by the heaviness of the load and the heat of the day, tried to shift their feet, their tormentors lashed them mercilessly.

At the end of this fiendish method of torture, the farrashes were suitably rewarded.

When these minions of the governor had done their worst, the three Babis, covered with wounds and sores, were led out of the city and told to take to the open road and never come back.[1] [1.

As I write these lines I have before me an account of the recent persecutions and terrible sufferings of the Baha'is of the tribe of Buwayr-Ahmadi in the province of Fars.

The heroism of these men and women of the present day matches the heroism of Quddus and Muqaddas and Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Ardistani.

The power of sacrifice and steadfastness conferred on them by Baha'u'llah was well evinced.] Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas wended his way to Yazd.

Along the route, whenever he came across anyone ready to listen, he told them of the advent of the Bab.

He stayed two months in Yazd and openly made his announcement.

Then he sent a herald to call out throughout the town: 'Whoever has not met the emissary of Babu'llahu'l-A'zam [the Most <p15> Great Bab] and has not heard him, let him come on Friday to the mosque of Musalla and listen to the tidings which he brings you.' On that Friday a huge crowd gathered at the mosque.

Mulla Sadiq ascended the pulpit and told the people, in no uncertain terms, that He Whose coming had been promised to them had indeed come.

He read them 'one of the best-known and most exquisitely written homilies of the Bab,' and then spoke to them: 'Render thanks to God, O people of learning, for, behold, the Gate of Divine Knowledge, which you deem to have been closed, is now wide open.

The River of everlasting life has streamed forth from the city of Shiraz, and is conferring untold blessings upon the people of this land.

Whoever has partaken of one drop from this Ocean of heavenly grace, no matter how humble and unlettered, has discovered in himself the power to unravel the profoundest mysteries, and has felt capable of expounding the most abstruse themes of ancient wisdom.

And whoever, though he be the most learned expounder of the Faith of Islam, has chosen to rely upon his own competence and power and has disdained the Message of God, has condemned himself to irretrievable degradation and loss.' (Nabil-i-A'zam, The Dawn-Breakers, p.

186) At first no one made any retort, no one raised objections or disputed with Mulla Sadiq.

But before long there arose a murmur of dissent.

Gradually it rose to a crescendo.

The fickle crowd rushed to the pulpit, intending to drag Mulla Sadiq down and murder him.

Let Nabil tell us what happened next: ...The masjid rang with cries of 'Blasphemy!' which an infuriated congregation shouted in horror against the speaker. 'Descend from the pulpit,' rose the voice of Siyyid Husayn[1] amid the clamour and tumult of the people, as he motioned to Mulla Sadiq to hold his peace and to retire.

No sooner had he regained the floor of the masjid than the whole company of the assembled worshippers rushed upon him and overwhelmed him with blows.

Siyyid Husayn immediately intervened, vigorously dispersed the crowd, and, seizing the hand of Mulla Sadiq, forcibly drew him to his side. 'Withhold your hands,' he appealed to the multitude; 'leave him in my custody.

I will take him to my home, and will closely investigate the matter.

A sudden fit of madness may have caused him to utter these words.

I will myself examine him.

If I find that his utterances are premeditated and that he himself firmly believes in the things which he has declared, I will, with my own hands, inflict upon him the punishment imposed by the law of Islam.' [1.

Siyyid Husayn-i-Azghandi, a very influential divine of Yazd, whose nephew, Mirza Ahmad-i-Azghandi, had embraced the Faith of the Bab and was also in Yazd at the time.

His uncle wished him to stay in that town and help him parry the pretences of the followers of Haji Karim Khan, the Shaykhi leader. (HMB)] By this solemn assurance, Mulla Sadiq was delivered from the savage attacks of his assailants.

Divested of his 'aba and turban, deprived of his sandals and staff, bruised and shaken by the injuries he had received, he was entrusted to the care of Siyyid Husayn's attendants, who, as they forced their passage among

the crowd, succeeded eventually in conducting him to the home of their master.

Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili,[1] likewise, was subjected in those days to a persecution fiercer and more determined than the savage onslaught which the people of Yazd had directed against Mulla Sadiq.

But for the intervention of Mirza Ahmad and the assistance of his uncle, he would have fallen a victim to the wrath of a ferocious enemy. [1.

One of the Huruf-i-Hayy (the Bab's Letters of the Living). (HMB)] When Mulla Sadiq and Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili arrived at Kirman, they again had to submit to similar indignities and to suffer similar afflictions at the hands of Haji Mirza Karim Khan and his associates.

Haji Siyyid Javad's[2] persistent exertions freed them eventually from the grasp of their persecutors, and enabled them to proceed to Kirman. (Nabil-i-A'zam, The Dawn-Breakers, pp.

186-7) [2.

The Imam-i-Jum'ih of Kirman.

He was a distant cousin of the Bab, and like another celebrated cousin, Haji Muhammad-Hasan, known as Mirzay-i-Shirazi (see chap.

19), was secretly a believer in Him.

Haji Siyyid Javad rescued Quddus, as well, from his adversaries. (HMB)] The governor of Kirman gave them an escort of horsemen to see them safely out of the province.

Everywhere, on his way to Khurasan, Mulla Sadiq gave all whom he met the tidings of the advent of the Bab.

Fear knew him not and nothing daunted him.

Eventually he reached the camp of Mulla Husayn, the Babu'l-Bab, who, on a memorable day in Isfahan, had told him that the New Day had dawned.

The destination of Mulla Husayn was Mazindaran.

Mulla Sadiq joined the small band of his fellow-believers, whose number increased as they went on.

In the heart of the forests of Mazindaran, within the fortress which they raised around the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi, these God-intoxicated men defied their adversaries for several months.

Their number was just over three hundred.

Apart from a few like Rida Khan-i-Turkaman (whose father was a courtier of high rank), the overwhelming majority of these Babis were clerics, students of theology, tradesmen, who had never wielded a sword in their lives.

Yet they put armies to flight.

Mulla Husayn led sortie after sortie until he was mortally wounded.

Finally, promises and vows that proved to be false caused the famished Babis to lay down their arms and abandon their fortress which harboured the remains of the Babu'l-Bab.

They were massacred treacherously, sanctifying with their blood the soil of Mazindaran, already honoured to have been the ancestral home of Baha'u'llah.

Only a few survived the holocaust, one of whom was Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas of Qurasan. <p17> Prince Mihdi-Quli Mirza, who commanded the royal troops, handed over Mulla Sadiq and Lutf-'Ali Mirza of Shiraz (an Afsharid prince) to a certain Husayn Khan who was a well-known person in Mazindaran, and whose father had met his death while fighting the besieged Babis of Shaykh Tabarsi, to take them home and kill them in the presence of his mother and sister to help assuage their grief.

It was agreed that should he fail to put them to death he would pay a thousand tumans to the prince.

Husayn Khan must have paid an equally large sum of money to Mihdi-Quli Mirza, to have the two Babis released to him.

As the Mazindarani grandee and his captives, chained and bound, went on their way towards his home, at every village and town he would call the divines to come and examine the Babis.

The divines everywhere, seated and with Mulla Sadiq in chains standing before them, put every question to him and were answered politely, clearly, convincingly, based on evidence culled from the Qur'an and Traditions.

And everywhere the divines gave the same answer to the grandee's question, who asked them time and again: 'Does this man merit death?' To which the answer came: 'No, never; we have never before met a man so learned, nor heard such masterly exposition.

Even if he be an infidel, he should not be put to death.' Thus they progressed through the province of Mazindaran.

Husayn Khan was captivated by the serenity and certitude of Mulla Sadiq, and came to the decision to spare their lives.

When he reached home he called in the members of his family and told them all that had happened. 'Everywhere the divines unitedly gave the verdict', he said, 'that these men do not merit death.' His relatives were also united in the same answer.

Husayn Khan, true to his word, informed Mihdi-Quli Mirza that he and his relatives would not be a party to the execution of the two Babis.

The prince wanted them to be sent to Tihran, there to be put to death.

During the time of their detention in the home of Husayn Khan, Mulla Sadiq and Lutf-'Ali Mirza had helped a shepherd of that neighbourhood named

'Avad-Muhammad to embrace the Faith of the Bab.

Being apprised of the prince's wish, he told the prisoners that their only hope lay in escaping.

Mulla Sadiq, enfeebled by the privations he had endured, was unwilling to undergo the hazards entailed.

But the insistence of the shepherd, who was willing to be privy to any scheme that would give them their freedom, overcame the reluctance of Mulla Sadiq. 'Avad-Muhammad helped them leave that neighbourhood through paths not usually frequented.

He also provided them with food.

They walked throughout the night in the thick forests that cover Mazindaran and sought refuge during the day in the dense parts of the forest.

After two weeks they reached Miyami with their feet sore and bruised.

There they recounted to the relatives of those heroic men the story of the thirty-three Babis of that locality who had fallen at Shaykh Tabarsi.

They had to rest for a while at Miyami to recuperate before taking the road to Mashhad.

Lutf-'Ali eventually reached Tihran where he was caught up by the upheavals of 1852 and lost his life.

For Mulla Sadiq life in Mashhad became impossible.

Around the year 1861 he said farewell to that city of renown and with a number of persons accompanying him travelled to Baghdad.

There he went into the presence of Baha'u'llah and recognized Him as the One in Whose path the Bab had sacrificed Himself--the Promised One of the Bayan.

For fourteen months he basked in the sunshine of the presence of Baha'u'llah, and then as directed by Him he returned to his native province of Khurasan.

Again he met bitter opposition from all sides.

Particularly vehement were the assaults made upon him by the followers of Haji Muhammad-Karim Khan-i-Kirmani.[1] But Mulla Sadiq held his ground, despite all the machinations of his adversaries.

Then, the headstrong governor-general of Khurasan, Sultan-Murad Mirza, the Hisamu's-Saltanah (an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah), fell in with the opponents of Mulla Sadiq and had him arrested.

A week later Mulla Sadiq was sent to Tihran, in the company of a large number of Turkaman prisoners.

In Tihran he was lodged in Siyah-Chal, the same prison where Baha'u'llah had been immured in 1852.

Even there Mulla Sadiq could not be silenced.

He brought a number of his fellow-prisoners to accept the Faith of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. [1.

He considered himself the successor to Siyyid Kazim, and fostered opposition to the Bab amongst the Shaykhis.] Among those he converted was Hakim Masih, a Jewish physician who was attending the prisoners.

He was the first Baha'i of Jewish background in Tihran and was the grandfather of Lutfu'llah Hakim who was in recent years elected to the first Universal House of Justice.

Many well-known men who were acquainted with him visited him in Siyah-Chal and tried hard to induce him to write a few lines which they could show to Nasiri'd-Din Shah and obtain his release.

But he consistently refused to comply with their wishes and make any appeal.

He wrote: <p19> 'It is shameful that a man in need should appeal to another one in need.' Thus he stayed for twenty-eight months in that prison.

Then Nasiri'd-Din Shah, of his own accord, ordered his release.

Mulla Sadiq refused to leave the dungeon without his fellow-prisoners.

He had pledged his word to them, he said, that they would leave Siyah-Chal together.

When the Shah learned of Mulla Sadiq's stand he was amazed, but asked for a list of all the inmates of Siyah-Chal.

Besides Mulla Sadiq, there were forty-three names in that list.

All but three were pardoned, and those three had been arrested only recently and were guilty men.

Mulla Sadiq's son, Ibn-i-Asdaq, who was named and appointed by Baha'u'llah a Hand of the Cause of God, states in a short biography of his father: 'Twice he was taken to the Inspectorate which was in the charge of 'Aynu'l-Mulk.

There he said: "Some of these men have been in this prison for seven years.

They have no clothing left, are bare <p20> and in utter misery.

They ought to be clad and allowed to go home in peace.

The authorities should provide them with suitable clothes and money and send them home, bring some joy into their miserable lives."

His praiseworthy initiative led to the introduction of the Faith of God in all the areas where these people lived.

Its abiding results will endure for ever.

The descendants and the clans of those men are within the fold of this Faith, ever ready to be of service to others.' After departing from the house of

'Aynu'l-Mulk, Mulla Sadiq stayed for three days in the mosque of Sipahsalar.

From there he moved to the house of Muhammad-Vali Mirza (a son of Fath-'Ali Shah), who was greatly attached to him.

His sojourn there lasted nineteen days, and there he came face to face with a number of very influential divines of Tihran, such as Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani and Siyyid Sadiq-i-Sanglaji.

These men had heard of the vast learning of Mulla Sadiq.

One after the other, in rapid succession, they asked him intricate questions and posed him many problems to resolve.

It must be said that none of those divines was favourably inclined towards the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Indeed, the two already named were bitterly hostile.

Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani was the man who, when given Baha'u'llah's Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah so that he might write an answer to it, treated the matter with great disdain.

Now, they all fell under the spell of the speech of Mulla Sadiq.

None of them, however hard he tried, could match, let alone surpass his deep knowledge, his eloquence, his logic and measured speech.

When these proceedings in the home of his relative were reported to Nasiri'd-Din Shah, he, of all the people, upbraided Hisamu's-Saltanih (his own uncle) for condemning such a man as Mulla Sadiq to imprisonment.

He ordered two of his best horses, richly saddled, to be given to Mulla Sadiq, as well as a gift of money.

The mother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who was present that day in the house of Muhammad-Vali Mirza and sitting with a number of other ladies of high rank behind a curtain, was listening to the trial of strength between Mulla Sadiq and the divines of Tihran; she presented him with rich, valuable clothes befitting his rank.

Mulla Sadiq courteously returned all the royal gifts and wrote a letter to the Shah expressing his gratitude.

Then he borrowed a sum of money from a fellow-believer in Tihran and took the road to Khurasan.

It was then that he helped Haji Mirza Muhammad-Rida, the Mu'taminu's-Saltanih, the future Vazir of Khurasan, to embrace the Faith of Baha'u'llah. (See chap.

5.) Three years later, Mulla Sadiq returned to Tihran and helped in changing the secret hiding-place of the remains of the Bab.

Having performed that service, urgently required, he left the capital once again and visited Kashan, Isfahan and Yazd.

Everywhere he went he fearlessly and energetically taught and propagated the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

But his most outstanding service was that which he rendered in Yazd.

There, some of the Afnans (relatives of the Bab) were still hesitant and uncommitted; Mulla Sadiq made them see and totally accept the truth of the new Theophany.

After this remarkable achievement, he returned to his native province of Khurasan where, for six years, he travelled throughout that province teaching, continuously teaching.

During that time he was constantly attacked, reviled and denounced by adversaries.

But he never faltered, although his sufferings as well as old age were telling upon him.

Finally, physical disabilities forced him to retire from the field.

Ill and exhausted, his dearest wish now was to attain, once again, the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Before long that wish was realized. <p22> Baha'u'llah summoned him to 'Akka.

When that call reached him he was revived.

He sent word that he desired the people to come and visit him.

They came, and to them, Baha'i or non-Baha'i alike, he gave such advice as would serve them well in days to come.

His visitors were greatly moved.

His words came from a heart pure and unsullied, from a soul brave and constant, leaving a deep impression on all who were privileged to hear him, and evoking a response commensurate with his earnestness.

A good many wished to accompany and serve him in his pilgrimage.

Baha'u'llah had, however, directed him to bring only one person with him, and those who wished to be with him vied for that honour.

Mirza Ja'far was the man who secured it.

His son, the future Hand of the Cause Ibn-i-Asdaq, accompanied them until they reached Sabzivar.

There he offered his father a small sum of money which he did not accept.

The route which Mulla Sadiq took was through Caucasia.

It was a long and tiring journey, but he stood up to its hardships.

And, at long last, he found himself in the presence of Baha'u'llah.

He had lived expectantly for that moment.

All his toils, his sufferings, spread over so many years were forgotten at that supreme moment, and for four months he had the bounty of living close to his Lord.

At the end of that period of untold bliss the Tongue of Grandeur thus addressed him:

O My name, the Asdaq! [1] Render thanks unto God that We called thee to appear before the Seat of Glory, to hear Us and to witness the Light of the Countenance of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Mighty, the Single, the Supreme; and We sent thee back to inform the people of what thou hast seen and understood, and to call them to the utmost constancy, lest their steps falter at the clamour of any corrupt pretender.

O My name! recall every day Our counsel to thee in Our Presence.

Verily, thy Lord is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. (Quoted in Sulaymani, Masabih-i-Hidayat, vol.

7, p.

408) [1. the most truthful] The time had come for parting from the presence of Baha'u'llah and he turned homewards by way of Mosul and Baghdad.

All along that route he gave the people he met the tidings of the advent of the Day of God.

Physically he was exhausted, but his spirit shone as bright as ever.

His dedicated soul knew no repose except in obeying the command of his Lord.

When he reached Hamadan, his physical strength had touched its nadir, but not the bravery of his soul.

He stayed for twelve days in Hamadan, never resting.

On the last day he told his servitors to bring him his best, his most costly clothes.

He put <p23> them on, using a good deal of rose-water and perfume.

Then he asked those who were with him to leave him alone for an hour.

At the end of that hour he called them back, and asked one of them to help him undress.

He had only one arm out of his sleeve when he said to the man who was helping him, 'That is enough'; the next moment he was gone--gone from this world.

Thus, calmly and serenely, death brought release to Mulla Sadiq, Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq, from untold tribulations which would have broken a lesser man, but were endured by him with radiant acquiescence in the path of his Lord.

His death occurred in the year 1889.

Some thirty years later, one evening in Haifa, 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the

Covenant of Baha'u'llah, spoke of Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq, describing him as a Hand of the Cause of God and 'truly a servant of the Lord from the beginning of life till his last breath'.

And then He recalled an incident of which He Himself was a witness, an incident of the far-off days of Baghdad: ...he [Mulla Sadiq] was seated one day in the courtyard of the men's apartments...

I was in one of the rooms just above...

At that moment ... a grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah, arrived at the house.

The prince said to him, 'Who are you?' Ismu'llah answered, 'I am a servant of this Threshold.

I am one of the keepers of this door.' And as I listened from above, he began to teach the Faith.

The prince at first objected violently; and yet, in a quarter of an hour, gently and benignly, Jinab-i-Ismu'llah had quieted him down.

After the prince had so sharply denied what was said, and his face had so clearly reflected his fury, now his wrath was changed to smiles and he expressed the greatest satisfaction at having encountered Ismu'llah and heard what he had to say.

He always taught cheerfully and with gaiety, and would respond gently and with good humor, no matter how much passionate anger might be turned against him by the one with whom he spoke.

His way of teaching was excellent...

He was a great personage, perfect in all things...

He was truly Ismu'llah, the Name of God.

Fortunate is the one who circumambulates that tomb, who blesses himself with the dust of that grave... (Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

5, 6, 8) <p24> 2 The Story of Two Ashrafs In the long and glory-studded roll of the Babi-Baha'i martyrs of Persia one encounters the names of two Ashrafs: the first hailed from Zanzan, the city of the heroic Hujjat; the second was a native of Bushruiyih who resided in Najafabad--townships from both of which many an intrepid martyr has stepped into the arena of history to mark the unshakeable resolve of the faithful and the eternal infamy of the persecutor.

Two eventful decades intervene between the immolation of the two Ashrafs.

The first--Ashraf of Zanzan--was a siyyid of noble birth in the full prime of his vigorous youth; the second was an eloquent and erudite guide and mentor of middle age.

The father of Ashraf of Zanzan had stood valiantly under the banner of Hujjat and had died in the ensuing holocaust.

So comely, so engaging, so handsome was his son that the adversaries were loth to hand him over to the executioner.

They led his mother to the prison-house that she might persuade him to deny his faith and thus obtain his freedom.

But that brave woman, who had but this one accomplished son of dazzling beauty, told him: 'Ashraf, my son!

Shouldst thou abjure thy faith, I shall renounce thee for ever.' Such was the mettle of those who had given their allegiance to Baha'u'llah.

Ashraf, whose full name was Siyyid 'Ali-Ashraf, and who came to be known as Ashafu'sh-Shuhada'--the Noblest of Martyrs--had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Adrianople, the renowned city of Hadrian which had fallen into disrepute, and which Baha'u'llah had termed the 'Remote Prison'.

That encounter and attainment had set his faith doubly ablaze.

On his return from Rumelia, in an orchard outside the city gates that belonged to him, he had a room built in which to praise his Lord and to transcribe the verses flowing from the Most Exalted Pen.

His fellow-believers would foregather there to benefit by his company.

The enemy was alert and watchful.

The young siyyid was seized and cast into prison.

With him into prison <p25> went another heroic youth, whose father had also died under the banner of Hujjat.

Naqd-'Ali was blind, but the Most Exalted Pen honoured him with the designation of Abu-Basir--the Father of Insight.

He too was determined to take the same road as his father, the road to martyrdom.

The resolve of these two young men could not be shaken, and the day came when they were led to the scaffold.

The Imam-Jum'ih of Zanjan, related as he was to Ashraf, was there to make a last effort to save him from death.

The mother of Ashraf was also there to see her son drink of the same cup as her glorious husband.

As the Imam-Jum'ih's importunities increased, urging Ashraf not to throw away his life, the plea and the injunction of Ashraf's mother was heard: 'Remember, my son: shouldst thou deny thy faith, the faith of thy father, I shall renounce thee for ever and ever!' Such were the circumstances of the death of two heroic men of Zanjan of imperishable memory, one of them in the very bloom of his youth.

When Ashraf was beheaded, in the presence of his implacable mother, he was

holding in his embrace the decapitated corpse of his companion.

And as Ashraf's mother saw her son die, she held back her tears and would not let a single one well from her eyes.

Her soul was agonized but happy, for her son's death was in the path of Baha'u'llah.[1] [1.

See Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, LXIX, for Baha'u'llah's account of Ashraf's death. (Ed.)] The other Ashraf, who hailed from Bushruih, the home of the Babu'l-Bab, but resided in Najafabad, and who quaffed the cup of martyrdom two decades later in 1888 was a man who once commanded a pulpit.

People were attracted to him despite their waywardness, because he was kind and wise and learned.

When he heard the call of the Lord of Hosts, the Master of the Day of Judgement, his pure soul responded to it.

Then, as it became known that he had embraced the new Faith, he had to leave Najafabad and seek refuge in a hamlet near the township of Abadih, where he spent his solitary days in communion with his Lord.

In those far-off days Abadih and its environs had no Baha'is.

It was to Abadih that the desecrated heads of the Babi martyrs of the second episode of Nayriz (1853) together with Babi prisoners in chains, had been brought on the way to Tihran.

The incident was highly reminiscent of what had occurred more than a millennium <p26> before, in the wake of the tragic deaths, on the bank of the river Euphrates, of the Imam Husayn, the Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada'--the Prince of Martyrs - and those courageous souls who fearlessly stood by him, faithful to the House of the Prophet.

Then, too, the wicked of this world had raised the severed heads of the martyrs on their lances and had herded prisoners--women and children--together, to parade them in the streets of Kufih and Damascus.

Amongst those remnants of the House of Muhammad there was one solitary youth--'Ali, now the Fourth Imam--who was too ill to raise himself from his couch on the day that his father and brother and cousins, together with the faithful, fell on the plains of 'Iraq.

He was the only male survivor of that dastardly massacre, and though still stricken by enervating fevers, was then the sole silver-tongued spokesman of his House.

To the unthinking, beguiled and jeering mob who had hurled their wild imprecations at them, accusing them of being seceders and traducers of the law, 'Ali II had replied: 'Nay, indeed, we are the preservers of the law, the trustees and the Guardian of the Faith of the Apostle of God'.

Now, in mid-nineteenth century, when the implacable enemy once again brought severed heads hoisted on lances and tortured prisoners to display before the mob, orders reached Abadih from higher authorities not to proceed further with the desecrated heads but to bury them in that township.

On a lonesome piece of barren earth, the heads of the martyrs of Nayriz were thrown into a pit. (Decades later, 'Abdu'l-Baha honoured that piece of wasteland, then turned into a garden, with the designation of Hadiqatu'r-Rahman--the Orchard of the Merciful.) A notable of the town of Abadih, Siyyid Muhammad-'Ali, known as Siyyid Mulla Aqa Jan, noticed amongst the prisoners who were to be taken to Tihran a young siyyid, twenty years old, named Siyyid Ghulam-'Ali.

He was of arresting beauty, but was desperately ill, hardly able to move.

His heart touched by the plight of this young man, Siyyid Muhammad-'Ali appealed to the commander of the troops in the name of their illustrious Ancestor, the Holy Prophet, to allow him to keep Siyyid Ghulam-'Ali in Abadih and have him nursed to health.

Lutf-'Ali Khan-i-Qashqa'i, a brigadier in charge of the prisoners, requested from the benevolent notable of Abadih the sum of ten tumans, before he would release Siyyid Ghulam-'Ali.

That kind-hearted man went about procuring the cash, and caught up with the troops, already on the move, at Shulgistan. <p27> Having at last obtained the release of that sick, emaciated youth, Siyyid Muhammad-'Ali put him on his own horse and himself led the animal and walked all the way back to Abadih.

There he called in Aqa Muhammad-Husayn, the Hakim-Bashi (Chief Physician), to restore that ailing youth to health.

But Siyyid Ghulam-'Ali had suffered much and did not recover.

He was buried in the cemetery of Abadih where his grave is unknown; only his memory remains and the memory of Siyyid Muhammad-'Ali, whose generous heart guided him to rescue that maltreated youth from the grasp of the foe, and afford him a few days of rest and peace before death took him away.

The son of Lutf-'Ali Khan, the Qashqa'i commandant who had maimed and murdered the Babis of Nayriz, in the course of time embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

He was Haji Muhammad-Sadiq Khan, and he became a devoted Baha'i, so conscious of the enormity of the cruelties of his father that he was certain their evil consequences would be visited on him.

Qabil, the celebrated Baha'i poet and teacher of Abadih, who, on Haji Muhammad-Sadiq Khan's own request, had retailed to him the story of his father's rapacity, was so greatly moved by the son's sense of shame and remorse that he wrote <p28> of it to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Here is 'Abdu'l-Baha's response, which He wished to be conveyed to Haji Muhammad-Sadiq Khan:

The true morn dawneth from the depths of a darksome night, and the world-illuminating light of day poureth forth from the canopy of a night of gloom.

The enchanting flower bloometh on a branch of thorns, and multitudinous plants grow out of the sad, sodden earth.

The delightful fruit sprouteth upon a piece of wood.

Thus is seen the truth of the words: 'Thou bringest the living out of the dead, and Thou bringest the dead out of the living.' [Qur'an 3:

271] The Commander of the Faithful[1] was wont to say to Muhammad the son of Abu-Bakr: 'Thou art my child.' Clear it is that physical fatherhood and sonship are not factors of true import.

Canaan was the son of Noah and Abraham was the son of Adhar.

One father was a Prophet, but His son was disowned and cut off.

Another father was an idolator, yet his Son was the great and exalted Friend[2]...

Therefore be not saddened.

Pray thou and supplicate at the threshold of the One True God, begging forgiveness for thine earthly father. 'Abdu'l-Baha will also, with utmost lowliness, implore at the threshold of God that perchance the musk-laden breeze of His forgiveness may waft over the Khan[3] and from the billowing sea of His grace a wave may pass over him and cleanse him of the defilement of sin and transgression.

This is not far removed from the ocean of the grace of Baha, His mercy, and His pardon (Unpublished) [1. 'Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, the first Imam.] [2.

A sincere friend.

Abraham is known as Khalilu'llah--the Friend of God.] [3.

The father of Haji Muhammad-Sadiq Khan.] Here, history repeats itself.

Lutf-'Ali Khan, the Qashqa'i commandant, comes to Abadih triumphant after the massacre of the innocent, with severed heads which he is told to part with, and a host of suffering captives whom he drives on to Shiraz.

His son, Haji Muhammad-Sadiq Khan, embraces the Faith of Baha'u'llah and makes donations to have an edifice raised at the place where the heads of his father's victims are consigned to earth.

This is what followed the second blood-stained episode of Nayriz.

While subsequent to the first episode of Nayriz (1850), when the valiant Vahid met a martyr's death, a grandson of one of the Nuri chiefs, responsible for much of the barbarities there, gave his allegiance to Baha'u'llah.

He was a colonel of artillery named Faraju'llah Khan who, in 1888, related to

Edward Granville Browne in the city of Yazd the story of how his own elders had behaved at Nayriz and how they had received their meed.[4] [4.

The Nuri chief was Mihr-'Ali Khan, the Shuja'u'l-Mulk.

The account is given by Browne in A Year Amongst the Persians. pp.

44~42. (This passage will be included in a forthcoming compilation of the works of E.

G.

Browne on the Baha'i Faith.)] But now, once more to the story of Abadih and the second Ashraf, <p29> who, as soon as that township became peopled with the followers of Baha'u'llah, abandoned his retreat in the village of Dih-Daq and established his residence in the town.

During the years that Mirza Ashraf had lived in the village, because of the fierce opposition he had encountered in Najafabad he had concealed his true allegiance from the notables of Abadih with whom he consorted.

So when he came out into the open in Abadih, the fanatics of that town were shocked and dismayed, shocked because they had known Aqa Mirza Ashraf as an erudite Shi'ih divine, and dismayed because they were well aware of his powers of speech and exposition.

In that year (1861) when the intrigues and agitations of Mirza Buzurg Khan-i-Qazvini, the Persian consul-general in Baghdad, and Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani, the Shaykhu'l-'Iraqayn, were nearing the end desired by them, the fame of the One so bitterly opposed by those two plotters was resounding all over Iran.

Three young men of Abadih, two of whom were sons of the Hakim-Bashi, the same physician who years before had attended Siyyid Ghulam-'Ali, were studying in Isfahan.

They heard of Mirza Husayn-'Ali (Baha'u'llah), Son of the Vazir-i-Nuri, and His achievements within the Babi community.

One of the sons, Mirza 'Ata'u'llah (later entitled Siraju'l-Hukama'--the Light of the Physicians), and his brother Mirza Ishaq, together with their compatriot, Mulla Muhammad-Husayn, became particularly interested in what had reached their hearing and in the rumours current amongst the habitues of the theological seminaries of Isfahan.

They told Mirza Asadu'llah (known in Isfahan as Hakim-Ilahi--the Divine Philosopher), who was a close friend of Mirza 'Ata'u'llah, of their newly-found interest.

Mirza Asadu'llah was a Babi and he, in his turn, informed Mirza Hasan (Sultanu'sh-Shuhada'--King of the Martyrs) of the interest aroused in the minds and hearts of the three young men of Abadih.

A meeting was arranged between them, and before long Mirza 'Ata'u'llah, his

brother and their companion gladly gave their allegiance to the New Theophany.

This Siraju'l-Hukama' of future years, who eventually became the leading physician of the town, proved to be a tower of strength in the Baha'i community which was emerging in Abadih.

Several decades later his uncle, Haji Muhammad-Sadiq, left the Shaykhi fold at the age of eighty-five and embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah, which he served devotedly till his death at the age of ninety. <p30> At the same time that Baha'u'llah was on the point of departing from Baghdad to Constantinople (1863), a number of notables of Abadih were in 'Iraq on pilgrimage to the holy shrines of the Imams, including Da'i Husayn, who was to become one of the most stalwart Baha'is of Abadih.

Hearing that Baha'u'llah was in the Najibiyyih Garden, just outside Baghdad, he thought seriously of going there himself, as many were doing, to discover what all that commotion was about, but fearing the consequences he did not venture out.

He was a friend of Mirza 'Ata'u'llah, the son of the Hakim-Bashi, and on his way back to his home town discovered at Isfahan that his friends there were nurturing a secret which surprised him.

They asked him: 'What is going on in Daru's-Salam? [Baghdad]' He told them all he knew.

His friends expressed great surprise but kept their secret to themselves.

Then, all together, they left Isfahan for Abadih.

Ensnconced in their home town they divulged their secret: they had embraced the Faith of the Bab.

So did Da'i Husayn with a devotion <p31> fortified by all that he had heard and witnessed in Baghdad, to be followed by others including his son, Karbila'i Hasan Khan.

It was then that Aqa Mirza Ashraf let it be known that he was a Baha'i.

Soon Abadih became a stronghold of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, and a number of its leading citizens came into the Baha'i fold.

Of course, as everywhere else in the storm-tossed Cradle of their Faith, these steadfast Baha'is had, from time to time, to face the venom and fury of their adversaries.

One such was Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, who was always alert to inflict some fresh injury upon them.

He stretched out his hand, already stained with the blood of the innocent, snatched Mirza Ashraf, and had him delivered to the executioner.

A letter written by the father of the present writer to Edward Granville Browne, on 3 July 1889 gives the full story of the martyrdom of the second

Ashraf--Ashraf of Abadih.

Browne published a partial translation of the letter in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society for October 1889 (pp.

998-9) prefaced by these lines:

Those who were present at the Meeting of the Society on April 15th, 1889 at which my first paper was read, will remember that in the discussion which followed it, General Houtum-Schindler stated that a Babi had been put to death at Isfahan in October, 1888.

In reply to inquiries which I made of my friends in Persia, I received a little time ago a letter containing an account of this event, of a portion of which I here give the translation: 'You wrote that you had heard from General Schindler of the martyrdom of one of this sect [the Persian word 'Tayifih' used in the letter means 'a people', 'nation', 'tribe'].

The details are these.

A child, who was one of the servants of the andarun (women's apartments) of the Prince Zill-es-Sultan, had become acquainted with several individuals of "the friends" (ahbab), and Aka Mirza Ashraf of Abade had apprized him of this Matter ['Amr': 'Cause'] (i.e. had converted him to Babiism).

News of this reaches the Prince Zill-es-Sultan.

They torment the child to make him tell the truth, but he in no wise discloses the matter.

Guile enters the hearts of the Prince's servants.

One of them goes and inquires of several of "the friends", "Where is Aka Mirza Ashraf?

I have a wife in Abade, and I desire to send her a letter and some money.

Since Aka Mirza Ashraf has acquaintances in Abade, I wish to send them by means of him."

These, believing this representation, point out to him the abode of Aka Mirza Ashraf.

When they recognize Aka Mirza Ashraf, they seize him and bring him into the presence of the Prince.

The Prince inquires of Aka Mirza Ashraf, "Art thou of this sect?"

He answers, "I am not."

He says, "If thou art not, curse" (them, or the Bab or Beha).

He replies, "Since their wickedness has not been made apparent to me, I will not curse" (them). [I have not seen anything bad from them, I will not curse.] <p32> Eventually the Prince obtains a decision from several of the 'Uluma, and telegraphs to Teheran, "If this person be not killed, the 'Uluma

and the populace will raise disturbance: the 'Ulama, moreover, have pronounced sentence: he himself, also, has confessed that he is of this sect, and it is necessary to kill him to quiet the people. "

The order comes from Teheran, "Do whatever appears desirable. "

Then the Prince orders the execution of Aka Mirza Ashraf.

According to the accounts I have heard, they cut off his head and then gibbet him.

Afterwards they set fire to his body.

I myself was acquainted with Aqa Mirza Ashraf. [Not translated by Browne: 'I met him in Bombay in the year 1884.

We oftentimes met each other there.'] His age seemed to be about sixty.

He was a man of understanding and education; a good calligraphist; and extremely courteous and amiable. [Not translated by Browne: 'In the year 1886, when I was coming from Tihiran to Shiraz, I met him again in Abaidih.'] In every way he was a most excellent man.' Edward Browne inserted the Persian text of this letter in Note Y of the Appendices to his translation of A Traveller's Narrative, and followed it by these lines:

On August 4th, the day after I received the above letter, I wrote to a friend at Isfahan, on whose kindness I felt sure I might rely, for information which no one was better qualified than himself to give.

On October 8th, just a year after Mirza Ashraf's martyrdom, I received his answer, which bore the date September 6th, 1889. 'Yes,' he wrote, 'it is quite true that Aga Mirza Ashraf of Abade was put to death for his religion in the most barbarous manner in Ispahan about October last.

The hatred of the Mullas was not satisfied with his murder, but they mutilated the poor body publicly in the maidan in the most savage manner, and then burnt what was left of it.' Thus died Aqa Mirza Ashraf of Abaidih, and that was what the rapacious enemy did to the 'mutilated' body of that 'most excellent man'. <p33> 3 Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn The Twin Shining Lights The Twin Shining Lights or The Twin Luminous Orbs, were two stalwart brothers, natives of Isfahan, whom the Pen of Baha'u'llah the Most Sublime Pen--extolled as Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' (the King of Martyrs) and Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada' (the Beloved of Martyrs).

Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, the King of Martyrs, was two years younger than his brother, Mirza Muhammad-Husayn, the Beloved of Martyrs.

They were beheaded in the city of 'Abbas the Great in the year 1879.

Their deaths were planned, decreed and encompassed by three persons:

Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan, stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as Raqsha'--the She-Serpent; Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, another influential divine of that city whom the Most Sublime Pen singled out as Dhi'b--the Wolf; and

Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, the avaricious, tyrannical son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah who governed that city of immortal memory.

It was the rapacity and the innate viciousness of those divines, combined with the greed and corruption of the Prince-Governor, which delivered those noble souls, whom all the inhabitants of Isfahan knew as selfless, upright and kindly men, into the hands of the executioner.

Decades later, in Paris, the Prince begged 'Abdu'l-Baha to believe that he was only carrying out the orders of his father, the monarch, who was goaded by those rascally men, Mir Muhammad-Husayn and Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, and that he himself was innocent of complicity in that crime.

But he was lying blatantly.

It is true that the murders of those two brothers were envisaged and planned at the beginning by the two divines, but the Prince-Governor's interest was aroused by the discovery that a large sum of money was involved.

Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn were both rich and highly endowed <p34> <p35> with trading acumen.

Following in the footsteps of their father, Mirza Ibrahim, a brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri and Mirza Hadiy-i-Nahri,[1] they had for years acted for the Imam-Jum'ih in the management of his property.

Due to their assiduous attention to the interests of the Imam-Jum'ih the estate of that unscrupulous divine prospered, but because of the payments they had to make on his behalf, Mir Muhammad-Husayn came to owe them the sum of eighteen thousand tumans, which was quite a substantial amount in those days.

The two brothers were merchants and as such always, naturally, had a number of creditors and debtors.

At a time when the Afnans (the relatives of the Bab) had vast and exceedingly profitable trading concerns stretching from Hong Kong to Tiflis (Tbilisi) in the Caucasus,[2] Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn, in Isfahan, acted commercially in concert with them.

And now, when the two brothers asked the Imam-Jum'ih for the money owed to them, he stalled, and made the payment dependent on a careful scrutiny of the books.

Even then he jibbed at clearing his debt and set about finding a way to evade payment.

One day in the public bath he happened to meet Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, who was a divine more influential than himself.

He told the latter of his plight (which was anything but sorrowful), his huge debt to Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn, and spoke at length of the riches of the two brothers.

Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, enticed by the wealth involved, promised the perfidious

Imam-Jum'ih his support and the two of them concocted a plan to destroy the two honest and upright merchants.

Next, they went to the Prince-Governor with their nefarious design.

As soon as he was apprised of considerable riches, he unhesitatingly agreed to have Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn detained. [1.

The reader is referred to Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, pp. 33-42. (Ed.)] [2.

Haji Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, cousin of the Bab (a son of His maternal uncle, Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad), had the virtual monopoly of trading in Chinese porcelain ware, and these goods were manufactured to his specifications for the nobility of Iran, even for Nasiri'd-Din Shah, with the names of the clients inscribed on them.

His own name: 'Muhammad-'Ali al-Husayni', was inscribed on some pieces which were ordered for himself or for members of his family and relatives.

Photographs exist of Nasiri'd-Din Shah sitting at his meal with such Chinese porcelain plates, bowls and dishes on his table.] On the 17th day of Rabi'u'l-Avval, which the Shi'ih's consider to have been the day of the Birth of the Prophet, those two intrepid men with a younger brother, Mirza Isma'il, called on the Imam-Jum'ih to offer him their felicitations.

Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Mudarris, who was a father-in-law of Zillu's-Sultan and a man free of guile and fanaticism, well aware of the intentions of the two plotting divines, advised <p36> Mirza Hasan to take himself away from that hostile assemblage as soon as he could.

Mirza Hasan left the house of the Imam-Jum'ih silently and quietly and repaired to the house of the man who had given him a friendly warning.

Shortly after, Mirza Husayn and the youthful Mirza Isma'il went to the Imam-Jum'ih, as it was customary to ask his permission to leave.

The Imam-Jum'ih told them to stay for a while longer, because he had some business to transact with them, and then, noticing that the other brother was not with them, enquired where Mirza Hasan was.

He became much agitated when he learned that Mirza Hasan had left, and immediately dispatched his men to seek him and bring him back.

They went in search of him to his house, only to be told that he was still with the Imam-Jum'ih and had not returned.

Infuriated, the minions of that unscrupulous divine broke brutally into the house of Mirza Hasan, even into rooms and apartments--the andaruni--where the ladies of the household lodged.

Neither in his house nor anywhere else could they find any trace of Mirza Hasan.

Then, a mischief-maker informed the Imam-Jum'ih that the man he was seeking was in the house of Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Mudarris and they, the two scheming divines, sent word to Zillu's-Sultan that Mirza Hasan had taken refuge there.

When the Prince-Governor, himself well involved in that diabolical plot, learned that his own father-in-law had given protection to Mirza Hasan, he demanded an explanation.

Aqa Muhammad-Baqir was angered, informed Mirza Hasan of Zillu's-Sultan's high-handed action and together they rode to the residence of the Prince.

In the meantime Mirza Husayn and Mirza Isma'il had both been put under arrest.

And Zillu's-Sultan, as soon as he set eyes on Mirza Hasan, began to upbraid him.

He grew violent in his denunciation, and seeing that Mirza Hasan would not yield an inch in renouncing his Faith, took that noble siyyid's firmness as a personal insult and struck Mirza Hasan's head and face with his cane, drawing blood.

Let the able and creative pen of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan tell the rest of the story of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn--the Twin Luminous Orbs:

During the days of their imprisonment, he [the Prince] sent for Jinab-i-Mirza [Mirza Hasan] several times and held parleys with him.

One day, he told Jinab-i-Mirza that the Imam-Jum'ih and others of the 'ulama of Isfahan were complaining that he had become a believer in this novel Cause.

The Mirza replied: 'That is true, but the reason that the Imam-Jum'ih is inimical <p37> towards me is this:

I have for several years defrayed all the expenses of his household, what they ate and what they wore.

He owes me a sum of money, and because I have lately asked him to settle his debt he has turned against me.' The Prince said: 'That is true, but now come and renounce this Faith, and curse its leaders.' Jinab-i-Mirza remained silent.

Zillu's-Sultan continued to press him, saying: 'I swear by the salt of His Majesty the monarch, and the pure soul of the Commander of the Faithful [Ali, the First Imam] that should you curse them, I would always give you help and support, get from the Imam-Jum'ih all that he owes you and make your enemies disappointed, make them abandon their hostility.' Again that manifestation of constancy said nothing.

In the end the Prince said: 'Come, by my life, and curse them.' But his insistence was of no avail.

Seeing that, the Prince was infuriated and shouted: 'Why don't you curse them?' Jinab-i-Mirza, at last, spoke: 'If Your Highness knew what I know, you would not order me to do any cursing.' Hearing this, the Prince became totally

a changed man, enraged, bestial, burning with fury, completely beside himself, his face alarmingly darkening, and his hand went several times to his sword, half unsheathing it.

Finally he took up his walking-stick and so pounded the head and face of that Rock of Constancy that the blessed visage was covered with wounds.

Then, before an examining body, Mirza Muhammad-Husayn, too, refused to renounce his Faith.

But being very young and tender in years, Mirza Isma'il did not follow the example of his two glorious brothers and took himself apart from the true Faith.

Thus he was freed.[1] However, the Imam-Jum'ih and others thought that the noble descent and the wealth of the Mirza might bring about his freedom and so, once again, they took counsel together.

There in that gathering they decided to present the case to the sovereign and obtain permission to have the Mirza executed.

Whereupon, they sent a telegram to Haji Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani, who is today the Chief of the jurists of Tihran, and asked him to inform His Majesty the monarch that the 'ulama of Isfahan had, in their concern for the security of the sovereign, detained and imprisoned two Babis, and now requested his permission to have them put to death, so that rendering him this service they should be considered as truly well-wishers of the State.

Having received that telegram, the Shah ordered Zillu's-Sultan to dispatch the two brothers in chains to Tihran.

Being thus commanded, Zillu's-Sultan paused and did not go ahead with the execution of the Mirza.

But the Imam-Jum'ih and Shaykh Baqir came to realize that the Shah would not involve himself in the death of those two innocent men, and their journey to Tihran would undoubtedly result in their release. [1.

It is said that the Imam-Jum'ih, for purposes of his own, gave out that Mirza Isma'il had renounced his Faith.

In any case, we find Mirza Isma'il, in later years, back in the Baha'i fold.]

So the two divines took counsel together a third time and decided to carry out their design through public rioting.

Therefore, on the 23rd day of Rabi'u'l-Avval 1296 [17 March 1879], they first ordered the tradesmen and the shopkeepers in the bazar to shut their shops.

Next, the 'ulama, such as the <p38> Imam-Jum'ih; Shaykh Baqir; Haji Mirza Hashim, who was a son of the previous Imam-Jum'ih; Mirza 'Abdu'l-Javad, son of Aqa Muhammad-Mihdiy-i-Kabbasi; Aqa Siyyid 'Aliy-i-Burujirdi, and others of the jurists of Isfahan, numbering more than fifty--each one accompanied by a huge crowd of rascals and rioters, tradesmen and people of the bazaar--rode in the

direction of the residence of the governor.

With shouts of 'Oh for our Religion!

Oh for our Faith!' they threw the whole city into uproar.

As related by a reliable man, their barbarous yells were heard as far away as Qal'iy-i-Gaz, which lies at a distance of nine miles from Isfahan.

While this tumult was going on Zillu's-Sultan was in his bath.

He was greatly alarmed by the shouts of the populace and enquired the reason for this gathering of the masses.

He was told that the host of the 'ulama and their followers had turned out, wishing to make it known that there should no longer be any delay in dealing with the case of the Mirza and demanding that His Highness put him to death; otherwise they themselves with the force at their command would have him executed.

Zillu's-Sultan, leaving his bath, called the 'ulama to his presence, and they made their demand.

The Prince told them that the two siyyids were not guilty of any treasonable act and had done nothing hostile to the State; that the quarrel of the 'ulama with them was totally of a religious and sectarian nature, and he himself could not intervene in matters of faith and belief; moreover, 'His Majesty, our sovereign Lord, has expressly commanded me to send them to the capital; therefore I cannot order their execution.' The 'ulama said: 'We will order their execution and will shoulder the responsibility, as far as His Majesty is concerned.' The Prince replied: 'But I shall not give orders to the executioner to carry out this deed.' Several of the 'ulama in that assemblage, one of whom was Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, a son of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir and known as Shaykh Najafi, rolled up their sleeves, declaring: 'With our own hands we shall slay them.' As the Prince noticed that those hard-hearted men were thus daring and emboldened in their wish to spill innocent blood, he told them: 'Write me an edict and state the necessity of putting them to death.

This is a document that I shall require.' The 'ulama, some sixty of them who were present, had such a document written, signed and witnessed, and then sent it to the Prince.

And as soon as he set eyes on that piece of paper, the Prince issued orders for the demolition of the edifice of sublimity and honour with the hatchet of tyranny, the cutting down of the spreading tree of generosity and beneficence with the axe of enmity and rebelliousness.

Thus, as orders were given for the downing of those twin resplendent stars of the firmament of noble descent, satanic brutes dragged them out of the prison-house, and by the side of Talar-i-Tavilih (one of the renowned buildings of Isfahan, reared by the Safavid kings) spilled their precious

blood, which was the very essence of purity, the repository of humaneness.

After they had quaffed the cup of martyrdom, ropes were fastened to their legs and their sanctified bodies were dragged to the foot of the gallows, where they lay throughout the day.

The Prince had sent a number of his footmen to keep watch around them and stop the people from throwing stones and heaping insults. <p39> <p40> At the close of the day, Shaykh Baqir ordered his own men to take the corpses to a place near the rivulet 'Niyasarm', where an archway was standing, place them under that arch, and bring it down over them.

Later, Zillu's-Sultan sent for Mirza Isma'il and told him to give a proper burial to those two sanctified bodies, and he committed them to earth in the Takht-i-Fulad cemetery. (Quoted in Ishraq-i-Khavari, Kitab-i-Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn, pp.

260-65) Exactly nine years later, early in 1888, Edward Granville Browne was in Isfahan.

He has told us in his immortal work, A Year Amongst the Persians, how in that city of 'Abbas the Great, after months of search and waiting, he met the followers of Baha'u'llah.

There it was that he had the privilege to converse, for an hour or two, with that celebrated veteran of the Faith, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, himself a native of Isfahan.

And he visited what was known to be the graves of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn in the vast cemetery of Takht-i-Fulad.

Let Browne himself, in his own inimitable way, tell us the story of his visit to that sacrosanct spot: ...I asked the dallal whether he knew where the two Siyyids who suffered martyrdom for the Babi faith about the year 1879 were buried. 'Yes,' he replied, 'I know the spot well, and will take you there if you wish it; but surely, Sahib, you who are so eager to obtain our books, who desire to visit the graves of our martyrs, must be prompted by some motive beyond mere curiosity.

You have been to Acre, you have been honoured by beholding the Blessed Countenance, you are yourself a Babi.

Say, is it not so?

There is no need to conceal anything from me.' 'My friend,' I answered, 'I am neither a Babi, nor have I been to Acre; yet I confess that I am actuated by something more than mere curiosity.

I cannot but feel that a religion which has produced examples of such heroic courage and fortitude as yours, merits a careful examination, since that must needs contain noble thoughts which can prompt to noble deeds.

In visiting the graves of your martyrs I would fain pay a tribute of respect

to those who gave up wealth, ease, and consideration, nay, even life itself, for the faith which they held dearer than all else.'...

Next day, early in the afternoon, my friend the dallal came to conduct me to the tombs of the martyrs.

After a walk of more than an hour in a blazing sun, we arrived at the vast cemetery called Takht-i-Fulad ('the Throne of Steel').

Threading our way through the wilderness of tombstones, my companion presently espied, and summoned to us, a poor grave-digger, also belonging to the persecuted sect, who accompanied us to a spot marked by two small mounds of stones and pebbles.

Here we halted, and the dallal, <p41> turning to me, said, 'These are the graves of the martyrs.

No stone marks the spot, because the Musulmans destroyed those which we placed here, and, indeed, it is perhaps as well that they have almost forgotten the resting-places of those they slew, lest, in their fanaticism, they should yet further desecrate them.

And now we will sit down for a while in this place, and I will tell you how the death of these men was brought about.

But first it is well that our friend should read the prayer appointed for the visitation of this holy spot.' The other thereupon produced a little book from under his cloak, and proceeded to read a prayer, partly in Arabic, partly in Persian.

When this was concluded, we seated ourselves by the graves, and the dallal commenced his narrative. 'This,' said he, pointing to the mound nearest to us, 'is the tomb of Haji Mirza Hasan, whom we call Sultanu'sh-Shuhada, "the King of Martyrs", and that yonder is the resting-place of his elder brother, Haji Mirza Huseyn, called Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada, "the Beloved of Martyrs".

They were Seyyids by birth, and merchants by profession; yet neither their descent from the Prophet, nor their rare integrity in business transactions and liberality to the poor, which were universally acknowledged, served to protect them from the wicked schemes of their enemies'... (Edward Granville Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians, pp.

227-8, 231-2) Edward Browne then proceeds to relate the circumstances of the martyrdom of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn, as he heard them that afternoon from Aqa Javad, the dallal of Isfahan, and later from the Baha'is of Shiraz.

Continuing with the narration of Aqa Javad, he records: ...'But we cannot mark the spot where they are buried with a stone, for when one was put up, the Musulmans, whose malignity towards us is unbounded, and who know very well that we pay visits to these graves in secret, overthrew it.

Our friend here' (pointing to his companion) 'was brought to believe by means of these martyrs.

Was it not so?' 'Yes,' answered the other, 'some time after their death I saw in a dream vast crowds of people visiting a certain spot in the cemetery.

I asked in my dream, "Whose are these graves?"

An answer came, "Those of the 'King of Martyrs' and the 'Beloved of Martyrs'."

Then I believed in that faith for which they had witnessed with their blood, seeing that it was accepted of God; and since then I visit them continually, and strive to keep them neat and orderly, and preserve the spot from oblivion by renewing the border of bricks and the heap of stones which is all that marks it.' 'He is a good man,' rejoined the dallal, 'and formerly those of the "Friends" who came to visit the graves used to rest for a while in the little house which he has near here, and partake of tea and, kalyans.

The Musulmans, however, found this out, made a raid on his house, abused and threatened him, and, before they departed, destroyed his tea-things and pipes.

He is very poor,' he added in a whisper, 'give him a kran [qiran] for his trouble; it is an action which has merit.' <p42> I accordingly gave a small present to our guide, who departed with expressions of gratitude.

After sitting a little while longer we too rose to go, and, taking a last look at the graves, from each of which I carried away a small stone as a memento, we once more turned our faces towards the city.

On our way towards the gate of the cemetery we again passed the poor grave-digger with his little boy, and he again greeted me with expressions of thankfulness and good wishes for my journey.

I was much touched by the kindness of these poor people, and communicated something of my thoughts to my companion. [As Edward Browne relates, Aqa Javad then told him:] '...we are taught to regard all good men as clean and pure, whatever their religion....

Has it not struck you how similar were the life and death of our Founder (whom, indeed, we believe to have been Christ Himself returned to earth) to those of the Founder of your faith?

Both were wise, even in their childhood, beyond the comprehension of those around them; both were pure and blameless in their lives; and both at last were done to death by a fanatical priesthood and a government alarmed at the love and devotion which they inspired in their disciples.[1] But besides this the ordinances enjoined upon us are in many respects like those which you follow.

We are recommended to take to our-selves only one wife, ... we believe that women ought to be allowed to mix more freely with men, and should not be compelled to wear the veil.' (Edward Granville Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians, pp.

234-6) [1.

The Babis for the most part, unlike the Muhammadans, believe that Christ was

actually crucified by the Jews, and not, as the latter assert, taken up into heaven miraculously, while another, resembling Him in appearance, was crucified in His stead.

But few of the Muhammadans are conversant with the Gospels, while the reverse holds good of the Babis, many of whom take pleasure in reading the accounts of the life and death of Jesus Christ. (EGB)] In suchwise the dallal of Isfahan went on to speak to Browne, on their walk back to Isfahan. 'Conversing thus,' Browne writes: ...we arrived at the side of the river, just where it is spanned by the bridge called Pul-i-Khaju, a much finer structure than even the bridge of thirty-three arches which I had admired so much on my entry into Julfa.

My companion suggested that we should sit here awhile on the lower terrace (for the bridge is built on two levels) and smoke a kalyan, and to this I readily consented. (Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p.

238) The final paragraph of the chapter on Isfahan in Edward Browne's imperishable book has no connection with the story of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn or the author's encounter with the followers of Baha'u'llah; but it is truly worth quoting in full because it well describes the depredations and the havoc wrought by the unholy hands of Zillu's-Sultan and his minions in the splendrous city of 'Abbas the Great: <p43> After admiring the massive piers and solid masonry of the bridge, and the wide sweep here made by the Zayanda-Rud, we resumed our way along the southern bank in the direction of Julfa.

On our way we visited the deserted palace called Haft-dast ('Seven Hands').

Here was visible the same neglected splendour and ruined magnificence which was discernible elsewhere.

One building, the Namak-dan ('Salt-cellar'), had just been pulled down by one of the ministers of the Zillu's-Sultan to afford material for a house which he was building for himself.

Another, called A'ine-khane ('the Chamber of Mirrors'), was nearly stripped of the ornaments which gave it its name, the remainder being for the most part broken and cracked.

Everywhere it was the same--crumbling walls, heaps of rubbish, and marred works of art, still beautiful in spite of injuries, due as much to wanton mischief as to mere neglect.

Would that some portion of that money which is spent in building new palaces in the capital, and constructing mihman-khanes [hotels, guesthouses] neither beautiful nor pleasant, were devoted to the preservation of the glorious relics of a past age!

That, however, is as a rule the last thing an Oriental monarch cares about.

To construct edifices which may perpetuate his own name is of far more

importance in his eyes than to protect from injury those built by his predecessors, which, indeed, he is perhaps not sorry to see crumbling away like the dynasties which reared them.

And so it goes on king succeeding king, dynasty overthrowing dynasty, ruin added to ruin; and through it all the mighty spirit of the people 'dreaming the dream of the soul's disentanglement', while the stony-eyed lions of Persepolis look forth in their endless watch over a nation which slumbers, but is not dead. (Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp.

238-9) Unfortunately, Consular Reports of Isfahan, for the period concerned, do not exist in the Public Record Office in London.

They seem to have been destroyed.

However, a dispatch dated June 1879 is extant, sent by Sir Ronald Thomson, the British Minister in Tihran, to Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, informing him of the execution of the two brothers of Isfahan and its circumstances.

Sir Ronald writes:

Several serious disturbances have lately occurred in Isfahan and unfortunately the governor of that province, being the Zil-i-Sultan a son of the Shah, instead of being censured or withdrawn was supported by the government.

The Imam-i-Joomeh, or Chief Priest, owed sum of Eighteen thousand Tomans (Ts. 18,000) to two respectable and wealthy Seyeds, and to avoid payment of the debt he accused them of being Babis and Socialists; they were accordingly seized, their property made away with by the authorities, and they themselves put to death.

This gave rise to great excitement in Isfahan and news of the occurrence having been telegraphed to me, I immediately made representations through the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Shah, and orders were sent down to Isfahan which resulted in putting a stop to further atrocities which were in contemplation. (Cited Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p.

277) <p44> Let it not be imagined that 'Raqsha'--the She-Serpent--that faithless Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan thus castigated and designated by the Most Exalted Pen, lightly escaped the consequences of his treachery to enjoy his ill-gotten gains.

At one time there was a moment when it seemed that wise counsels might prevail.

Some people were reluctant to allow the spilling of innocent blood.

These two brothers, they averred, were of impeccable record and conduct; they were noble scions of the noble House of Muhammad, distinguished descendants of Fatimih; why should their deaths be envisaged?

The unprincipled Imam-Jum'ih, sensing that he might lose his prey, struck his

neck and exclaimed: 'Their blood be on my neck [the same as 'be it on my head'], I accept full responsibility.' Thus he envisaged his own destruction, and that dastardly deed, the slaying of those two brothers, came to pass.

Hardly had a year elapsed since the martyrdom of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn, when on that very spot of the Imam-Jum'ih's neck which he had struck, in token of his acceptance of full responsibility for the spilling of innocent blood, there appeared a swelling which soon turned into a nasty and troublesome boil and the matter collecting in it was exceedingly unpleasant.

That wicked divine had to abandon Isfahan and his seat of authority, going from village to village, nowhere finding relief.

Finally his whole body became so malodorous that his own family could not bear to be anywhere near him.

And when he died after months of extreme misery, porters had to be brought to carry unceremoniously his corpse to an unknown grave.

And there is a strange sequel to the death of that Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan which took place on 21 June 1881.

The British Agent S.

P.

Aganoor, reporting to the Minister in Tihran, wrote on 4 July: '...people of Isfahan, in his honor [sic], shut the shops and Bazars, but the Prince Governor sent ferashes [farrshes] and ordered to open them.' (Public Record Office, FO 248/384) Years rolled on, decades passed, the graves of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn remained obscure and forlorn--but not forgotten by those who cherished their memory.

At the beginning of the second Baha'i century a beautiful monument was raised over their remains, and although it has in recent years been destroyed by the same fanatical spirit that encompassed their deaths and now rules over Iran, the time will come when the Baha'is of the world will honour these great heroes of their Faith in a manner befitting their courage, fidelity and sacrifice.

<p45> 4 Lamentation of the Most Exalted Pen Many and most poignant were the verses which flowed from the Most Exalted Pen in lamentation over the appalling tragedy, the cruel extinction of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn--the Twin Shining Lights of the city of 'Abbas the Great.

The heart-rending cry: 'O Land of Sad [Isfahan]...

Where is My Hasan!...

Where is My Husayn!...' was wrung from the lips of the Supreme Manifestation of God.

Addressing the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah wrote in the evening of His life:

O heedless one!

Rely not on thy glory, and thy power.

Thou art even as the last trace of sunlight upon the mountain-top.

Soon will it fade away as decreed by God, the All-Possessing, the Most High.

Thy glory and the glory of such as are like thee have been taken away, and this verily is what hath been ordained by the One with Whom is the Mother Tablet.

Where is he to be found who contended with God, and whither is gone he that gainsaid His signs, and turned aside from His sovereignty?

Where are they who have slain His chosen ones and spilt the blood of His holy ones?

Reflect, that haply thou mayest perceive the breaths of thine acts, O foolish doubter!

Because of you the Apostle [Muhammad] lamented, and the Chaste One [Fatimih] cried out, and the countries were laid waste, and darkness fell upon all regions.

O concourse of divines!

Because of you the people were abased, and the banner of Islam was hauled down, and its mighty throne subverted.

Every time a man of discernment hath sought to hold fast unto that which would exalt Islam, you raised a clamor, and thereby was he deterred from achieving his purpose, while the land remained fallen in clear ruin.

O My Supreme Pen!

Call Thou to remembrance the She-Serpent [Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan] whose cruelty hath caused all created things to groan, and the limbs of the holy ones to quake.

Thus biddeth Thee the Lord of all names, in this glorious station.

The Chaste One [Fatimih] hath cried out by reason of thine iniquity, and yet thou dost imagine thyself to be of the family of the Apostle of God!

Thus hath thy soul prompted thee, O thou who hast withdrawn thyself from God, the Lord of all that hath been and shall be.

Judge thou equitably, O She-Serpent!

For what crime didst thou sting the <p46> children of the Apostle of God [King of Martyrs and Beloved of Martyrs], and pillage their possessions?

Hast thou denied Him Who created thee by His command 'be, and it was'?

Thou hast dealt with the children of the Apostle of God as neither 'Ad hath dealt with Hud nor Thamud with Salih, nor the Jews with the Spirit of God [Jesus], the Lord of all being.

Gainsayest thou the signs of Thy Lord which no sooner were they sent own from

the heaven of His Cause than all the books of the world bowed down before them?

Meditate, that thou mayest be made aware of thine act, O heedless outcast!

Ere long will the breaths of chastisement seize thee, as they seized others before thee.

Wait, O thou who hast joined partners with God, the Lord of the visible and the invisible.

This is the day which God hath announced through the tongue of His Apostle.

Reflect, that thou mayest apprehend what the All-Merciful hath sent down in the Qur'an and in this inscribed Tablet.

This is the day whereon He Who is the Dayspring of Revelation hath come with clear tokens which none can number.

This is the day whereon every man endued with perception hath discovered the fragrance of the breeze of the All-Merciful in the world of creation, and every man of insight hastened unto the living waters of the mercy of His Lord, the King of Kings....

Didst thou imagine that martyrdom could abase this Cause?

Nay, by Him Whom God hath made to be the Repository of His Revelation, if thou be of them that comprehend.

Woe betide thee, O thou who hast joined partners with God, and woe betide them that have taken thee as their leader, without a clear token or a perspicuous Book.

How numerous the oppressors before thee, who have arisen to quench the light of God, and how many the impious who murdered and pillaged until the hearts and souls of men groaned by reason of their cruelty!

The sun of justice hath been obscured, inasmuch as the embodiment of tyranny hath been established upon the throne of hatred, and yet the people understand not.

O foolish one!

Thou hast slain the children of the Apostle and pillaged their possessions.

Say:

Was it, in thine estimation, their possessions or themselves that denied God?

Judge fairly, O ignorant one that hath been shut out as by a veil from God.

Thou hast clung to tyranny, and cast away justice; whereupon all created things have lamented, and still thou art among the wayward.

Thou hast put to death the aged, and plundered the young.

Thinkest thou that thou wilt consume that which thine iniquity hath amassed?

Nay, by Myself!

Thus informeth thee He Who is cognizant of all.

By God!

The things thou possessest shall profit thee not, nor what thou hast laid up through thy cruelty.

Unto this beareth witness Thy Lord, the All-Knowing.

Thou hast arisen to put out the light of this Cause; ere long will thine own fire be quenched, at His behest.

He, verily, is the Lord of strength and of might.

The changes and chances of the world, and the powers of the nations, cannot frustrate Him.

He doeth what He pleaseth, and ordaineth what He willeth through the power of His sovereignty.

Consider the she-camel.

Though but a beast, yet hath the All-Merciful exalted her to so high a station that the tongues of the earth made mention of her and celebrated her praise.

He, verily, overshadoweth all that is in the heavens, and on earth.

No God is <p47> there but Him, the Almighty, the Great.

Thus have We adorned the heaven of Our Tablet with the suns of Our words.

Blessed the man that hath attained thereunto, and been illumined with their light, and woe betide such as have turned aside, and denied Him, and strayed far from Him.

Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds! (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp.

99-103) And thus did the Most Exalted Pen[1] address Shaykh Kazim of Qazvin, whom Baha'u'llah had honoured with the designation of Samandar: [1.

Baha'u'llah] He is the Consoler in this sublime, supreme station.

O Samandar!

Verily, He, Who is the Supreme Ordainer, consoleth Himself for that which came upon Him from those who took to oppression and turned their backs on justice, following the path of satanic souls who aspire to evil ways.

Verily, the people of 'Ad and Thamud meted unto Salih and Hud that which caused the Sadratu'l-Muntaha to lament and the Concourse on high to wail.

Unto that beareth witness this Wronged One, sorrowful and exiled.

By God, they crucified the Spirit [Jesus], hamstrung the She-Camel [of Salih] and smashed the Ark of the Covenant.

Thy Lord well knoweth and expoundeth this unto <p48> thee.

He eulogizeth His chosen ones and consoleth His loved Ones on this affliction which hath caused justice to moan and the Faithful Spirit [Gabriel] to wail.

Verily, verily, they have slain My chosen ones and pillaged their property.

Thus hath the decree been fulfilled and yet most of the people are of the heedless.

O Samandar!

Verily, We have seen the beloved Joseph caught by the fangs of wolves, and Husayn captive in the claws of tyrants.

By God, this nation hath done what the Jews did not do to the Spirit [Jesus] nor Abu Jahl to Muhammad, My Apostle, Whom We adorned with the mantle of the 'Seal', and sent unto the denizens of heaven and earth.

They have, verily, committed that which no one in the world had committed, and to that beareth witness the Lord of Eternity from this Scene of transcendent glory.

After Hasan and Husayn had attained their station, and some days passed, We laid hands on the source of tyranny and oppression, through Our Sovereignty.

Verily, thy Lord is the All-Powerful, the Almighty.

Great is the blessedness of those who drew nigh unto them and visited their resting-places.

They are, verily, the people of God in the kingdom of creation.

Thus did the Most Exalted Pen decree in this glorious, incomparable Book.

Woe betide them who have cast the Tablet of God behind them and followed everyone who hath been a worker of iniquity and hath gone far astray.

Ponder, O My Samandar, My patience and forbearance notwithstanding My power and might, and My silence in spite of the penetrative influence of My word which standeth supreme over all the worlds.

Should We have wished We could have seized those who have wronged Us outwardly with the hand of one of the servants of God, or through the intervention of well-favoured angels.

We act according to the dictates of wisdom which We have set to be a guiding light for My people and the denizens of My Kingdom.

Verily, thy Lord is the All-Knowing, the Wise.

Ere long We shall take hold of those who have acted with tyranny as We seized others before them.

Verily, thy Lord commandeth what He willeth. (Quoted in Ishraq-i-Khavari, Kitab-i-Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn, pp.

172-4) And the Tongue of Power and Might[1] thus spoke to the bereaved family of the Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn: [1.

Baha'u'llah] He is the Consoler 0 Scions of that House!

Verily, there hath come upon you in the path of God that which came upon the descendants of the Apostle and their women and children in the Land of Taff [Karbila] and elsewhere.

Be ye confident of the grace of God and of His mercy.

He is, verily, with you in every world of His worlds, and He is the Ever-Watchful, the Ever-Present, the All-Seeing.

Woe unto those who wronged you and slew you and pillaged your possessions.

By My life, they are in manifest loss.

Ere long the gales of chastisement will beat upon them from every side.

Verily, He is the All-Informed, the All-Knowing.

Put your trust in God and say: 'Well is it with us, and blessed are we <p49> for that which hath come upon us in His straight Path.

Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.' (Quoted in Ishraq-i-Khavari, Kitab-i-Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn, p.

172) The Most Exalted Pen was moved, once again, by the tragedy of Isfahan thus to inscribe:

In the Name of God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful Thy letter was received and studied.

Verily, that people hath been guilty of such oppression as hath cast gloom over the dominions of earth and heaven; those Twin Shining Lights were so wronged that the hosts of the Supreme Concourse have bewailed their plight.

Ponder the fate of the Son of Zechariah [John the Baptist]: his head was stricken from his body at the whim of the adulteress of that age; and ponder what befell the Scion of the Apostle of God [the Imam Husayn]: he was slain by order of the most debased man of his time.

Was it those who were martyred who found themselves in great loss, or was it the tyrants?

All created things have loudly proclaimed that it was the tyrants who went down into manifest perdition.

How burdensome was this affliction, and how profound the abasement that it caused, yet it was, by God, a supreme exaltation which but appeared in the guise of abasement.

Protect this sublime station and regard not that which is seen in this day.

Verily, God hath taken hold of these people in the past and will seize them

now and will cleanse the earth of the defilement of their presence.

And He will raise you to that station towards which all faces shall turn, and in the mention of which all the tongues in the world shall be moved.

Hearken to the call of this Wronged One and cling unto that which He hath mentioned.

Verily, He is a trusted Counsellor...

Comfort and console all the kindred on behalf of this Wronged One.

Verily, He is the Consoler, the All-Knowing . . .

That which is required of thee is to win the goodpleasure of the family of the Two Martyrs, upon whom be the Glory of God.

Shouldst thou ponder for a while thou wouldst come to know for a certainty that that which hath transpired is infinite exaltation now and in the future.

To this testifieth He with Whom is the knowledge of the Book.

Praise be to God, the Lord of Lords. (Quoted in Ishraq-i-Khavari, Kitab-i-Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn, pp.

182-3) And the Tongue of Might and Power thus addressed the eloquent poet, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, master of limpid verse, himself a glorious martyr of later years, whom Baha'u'llah had honoured and extolled with the designation of 'Varqa'--Nightingale:

He is the Most Holy, the Supreme O Varqa!

The Servant in Attendance[1] attained My presence and mentioned what thou hadst written and We found thy letter a mirror reflecting thy love for the Beloved of the world and thy turning towards Him.

Great is thy blessedness for having drawn nigh, for having drunk thy fill, and for having been caused to attain.

Verily, thy Lord is the Resplendent Expounder.

Verily, We witness the fire that hath encompassed thee in thy love for thy Lord, We see its flaring up and hear the crackling of its flames.

Exalted be He Who hath ignited it, He Who hath made its flames to leap high, He Who hath revealed it to all men.

He is that Almighty Lord before the evidence of Whose might the essence of power acknowledgeth its helplessness.

Verily, thy Lord is He who heareth and seeth, and is the All-Knowing.

Rejoice, for this Wronged One maketh mention of thee as He hath in the past, and even in this instant, as He paceth, He giveth utterance to these words: 'Verily, We have sensed the sweet scent of thy love, and have witnessed thy sincerity and thy humility, as thy heart was occupied with the mention of

Me and thy tongue with My wondrous praise.' Thus hath the Sea of life sprinkled its waters upon thee, that thou mayest rejoice in the days of thy glorious, incomparable Lord. [1.

Mirza Aqa Jan] O Varqa!

Thy call was heard and thy letter was presented before the Throne.

Praise be to God!

By it the fire of divine love blazed up...

Some of the believers are seen to be sorrowful, even fearful at the events in the Land of Sad [Isfahan]; whilst it was the Hand of Divine Might which graciously singled them out and, from the heaven of His mercy and the clouds of His generosity, caused the overflowing rains of affluence and abundance to shower upon them.

The consummate power of God adorned them with honour among the people, so that the tongues of the sincere who enjoyed near access unto Him spoke forth in their praise.

They reached such heights that their adversaries bore witness to the elevation of their high rank.

Then, at the end of their days, they attained the most exalted station which is that of supreme sacrifice; this is a station which God's chosen ones and His loved ones have at all times desired and everlastingly sought.

Notwithstanding, some are sad and sorrowful.

It is hoped that this grief hath appeared because of the love entertained for them.

I swear by the ocean of divine mysteries that should the station of but one of the servants now engaged in their service be made manifest, the people of the world would be shaken asunder.

Great is the blessedness of him who pondereth over that which hath transpired, that he may be informed of the greatness of this Cause and its sovereignty.

This station which they attained was that which they themselves implored God--exalted be His glory--to grant them, and which they wished and desired with the utmost eagerness.

Say:

O friends!

Ye have endured much in the path of your love for the Beloved of the worlds; ye have witnessed that which it was not seemly to behold, and have heard that which ill became your ears, and have endured such burdens in the path of the Friend as were truly heavier than mountains.

Great is the blessedness of your backs, your eyes and your ears, for that

which they bore and they saw and they heard.

Now ye should value this highly exalted station, and not allow it to be squandered.

In all cases this ephemeral world and all who are therein will suffer death, and all things therein will be caught in the claws of change.

At all times ask ye God--exalted be He--to keep you in His safekeeping, and to cause you to be constant in the path of His Cause.

Know ye well that whatever ye have endured or seen or <p51> heard for His sake hath been as a token of His special bounty unto you.

And among His eternal bestowals is the mention of you in His Tablets.

Verily, ye have tasted the cup of calamity in His path; now drink your fill of the purest elixir from the goblets of His remembrance of you and of His tender mercy unto you...

Be not saddened by what appeareth to be your weakness, your abasement and your distress.

I swear by the Sun of the Heaven of Independence that honour, wealth and affluence are revolving around you, are making mention of you and are turning towards you.

If, in accordance with the dictates of divine wisdom, their appearance is for some days as yet veiled, days will come when each and all of them will become evident and manifest as the sun.

We beseech God that men will partake of the sweetness of His divine Utterance. (Quoted in *Ishraq-i-Khavari, Kitab-i-Nurayn-i-Nayyirayn*, pp.

184-7) Let it be said unmistakably and unhesitatingly that, despite the fearfulness of a few mentioned in this Tablet, the vast majority of those who had given their allegiance to Baha'u'llah remained firm and steadfast as the immovable rock, happy and blissful to have entered His fold, and confident of that ultimate victory which the Bab promised to His Letters of the Living, when He bade farewell to them.

History bears ample witness to this. <p52> 5 The Vazir of Khurasan In Adrianople Baha'u'llah revealed one of His most momentous and most significant Tablets, the *Suriy-i-Ghusn* (The *Surih* of the Branch), and addressed it to Mirza 'Ali-Rida of Mashhad, known as Mustawfi.

The recipient, who came originally from the town of Sabzivar in the province of Khurasan, was a remarkable man, well-famed as a Baha'i, and high in the service of the government.

It was Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i, the Babu'l-Bab, who had guided him to range himself under the standard of the new Theophany.

He had remained true to that allegiance throughout all the storms and stresses

that followed.

When the Persians were beaten by the Turkamans and the renowned city of Marv was lost to them, one of the Persian officers who fell into the hands of the Turkamans was 'Abdu'l-'Ali Khan of Maraghih in the province of Adharbayjan, then a colonel in the Persian army.

As soon as Mirza 'Ali-Rida was apprised of the plight of his fellow-believer, he sent eight hundred tumans (a substantial sum in those days) through an intermediary to the Turkamans in Marv, and obtained the release of the colonel.

Thus, Mirza 'Ali-Riday-i-Mustawfi was always ready and well equipped with the riches he had, to serve the Cause which he had embraced so ardently.

And he never made it a secret that he had given his allegiance to the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

It is well to quote here the following lines from the Suriy-i-Ghusn with which Mirza 'Ali-Riday-i-Mustawfi was honoured:

There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntaha this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow.

Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation.

Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork!

O People!

Draw ye nigh unto Him and savour from Him the fruits of wisdom and knowledge which come from God, <p53> the Glorious, the All-Knowing.

Whosoever doth not taste thereof shall be deprived of the bounties of God, even if he should partake of all that is on earth, did ye but know.

Say:

A Word hath, as a token of Our grace, gone forth from the Most Great Tablet--a Word which God hath adorned with the ornament of His own Self, and made it sovereign over the earth and all that is therein, and a sign of His greatness and power among its people that thereby they would extol their Lord, the Lord of might and power and wisdom, praise their Creator, and exalt the sanctity of the Godhead, Who standeth supreme over all things.

This is naught but that which hath been revealed by Him, the All-Knowing, the Ancient of Days.

Say:

Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most

great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened.

Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me.

He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favoured servants...

We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple.

Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree.

They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish. (Quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p.

135, and *Ishraq-i-Khavari, Ayyam-i-Tis'ih*, p.

362) One cannot overrate the significance of the Suriy-Ghusn, for in it, in the very early years of His Ministry, Baha'u'llah indicated the powers given to His eldest Son, as well as the developments still in the womb of a distant future.

Mirza 'Ali-Riday-i-Mustawfi served the Cause of Baha'u'llah faithfully and fearlessly until old age overtook him and he became infirm.

His brother, younger than he, was there to take his place:

Mirza Muhammad-Rida, the Mustasharu'l-Mulk, later entitled Mu'taminu's-Saltanih.

Rising high in the service of the State, he became the Vazir of Khurasan, a post which he kept to the end of his days until Nasiri'd-Din Shah treacherously encompassed his death.

Like his illustrious brother he never concealed the fact that he was a follower of Baha'u'llah and totally dedicated to His Cause.

Because the State needed him, needed his profound knowledge of affairs, his integrity and unblemished honesty, he stayed firmly at the helm and prospered as the Vazir of Khurasan.

Just once in his remarkable career he ran into trouble with men standing above him, and that was due to the faithlessness and perjury on the part of his niece, a daughter of the late Mustawfi.

It was in the <p54> year 1883 and Nasiri'd-Din-Shah, on pilgrimage to the holy Shrine of Imam Rida (the Eighth Imam) in Mashhad, was presented with a petition by that lady, who was the wife of Haji Qavam, commander of the Sabzivar cavalry.

No doubt goaded by the adversaries of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, she claimed that her stepmother had left 80,000 ashrafis (gold coins), which belonged to her father, in the keeping of her uncle, the Vazir of Khurasan.

Being a Baha'i, her uncle was using that money, she alleged, to further the interests of his co-religionists who would soon be powerful enough to destroy the State.

Nasiri'd-Din Shah was naturally frightened by the tone and contents of that malicious petition; not only that, he scented a substantial amount of money to add to his own wealth.

So affrighted was the Shah that, on the day following the receipt of that document, he ordered four lines of armed soldiers to guard the route from the arg (citadel) to the Shrine of Imam Rida, before he would venture out to visit the Shrine.

Next, he ordered the confiscation of the estate of Mirza 'Ali-Riday-i-Mustawfi, and held a board of enquiry to ascertain the facts.

There, in <p55> the presence of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Karim (a noted divine of Mashhad), Mirza 'Ali-Asghar Khan (the Aminu's-Sultan) and the Vazir of Khurasan himself, it was proved conclusively that the claim of the vazir's niece was wholly false and that the vazir was not in possession of any sum of money which had belonged to his late brother.

In the course of this enquiry it came to light that Aqa 'Azizu'llah Jadhhab (see chap.

15) had been entrusted with six hundred ashrafis by the late Mustawfi.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah himself had declared this trust, although nobody else had any knowledge of it and there was no record in the Mustawfi's own ledgers and papers.

This fact greatly impressed Aminu's-Sultan, who declared that Aqa 'Azizu'llah was an angel, because of his transparent honesty.

The sum was paid to the progeny of the late Mustawfi, none of whom measured up to their father's calibre.

However, Nasiri'd-Din Shah, as was his wont, made good pickings from the riches of Mirza 'Ali-Rida.

The Vazir of Khurasan was utterly fearless.

One day during that same visit of Nasiri'd-Din Shah mention was made, in the court, of a <p56> poetess of Bushruih whose fame had reached the ears of the Shah.

He told Haji Muhammad-Baqir Khan, the 'Imadu'l-Mulk and governor of Tabas, that it seemed that the town of Bushruih still harboured some Babis. 'Imadu'l-Mulk tried to evade the issue, replying that there was a girl there with hallucinations for whom a husband had been found, and she was cured.

Of course the Shah knew how flimsy was the answer of the Governor of Tabas, and, trying to cajole the Vazir, commented: 'Oh! and we slew your Qa'im.' Then the Vazir spoke out: 'O Asylum of the Universe!

What did it matter!

The One Who is now sitting there in 'Akka is greater than the Qa'im; and do you know, Sire, He claims Divinity.' Nasiri'd-Din Shah was both abashed and frightened.

He determined to rid himself of the courageous Vazir of Khurasan.

But that was not an easy task.

Because of his fairness and his boundless generosity, the vazir had, to the chagrin of the Shah, become a well-loved figure in that vast province.

Another incident which occurred during that same visit of Nasiri'd-Din <p57> Shah served to arouse further the baseless fears of that highly suspicious potentate.

From Mashhad he went to the town of Bujnurd.

There it was arranged that he should meet all the khans and chieftains of Khurasan and watch a march past of the soldiery of that province.

Shuja'u'd-Dawlih of Quchan was one of those chieftains, a very powerful man.[1] Not only was he well disposed towards the followers of Baha'u'llah, but he had a son, Hasan-'Ali-Khan, who was devoted to the Baha'i Faith.

The soldiery of Khurasan were not alone in coming to Bujnurd to present arms to the monarch of Iran; General Kropotkin of Russia had also arrived with troops and a regimental band, to greet the Shah.

Nasiri'd-Din Shah took his position on a hillock, surrounded by spectators.

When Shuja'u'd-Dawlih appeared on the scene leading his celebrated and well-equipped cavalry, the Shah noticed that the Vazir of Khurasan was riding with him; he was not at all pleased by what he saw, although he could not help admiring the equipage of Shuja'u'd-Dawlih.

General Kropotkin also expressed his keen admiration.

Nasiri'd-Din Shah was thus even more alarmed by the position of the Vazir of Khurasan.

Then it fell to the vazir to present the khans and chieftains to the sovereign.

Amongst them was Sulayman Khan of Darjiz, a brave and courageous Baha'i who was very ugly in appearance.

The Shah asked him jokingly: 'Sulayman Khan!

Where were you on the day they were giving out jamal (beauty)?' Sulayman Khan replied: 'Sire!

I was going about looking for kamal (perfection). 'It was a perfect answer and even the vazir was taken aback by it. [1.

He was the hereditary chief of the Za'faranlu tribe.] Nasiri'd-Din Shah felt that a combination of the Vazir of Khurasan and Shuja'u'd-Dawlih would be ruinous for him, a sentiment totally false.

He took them both with him to Tihran, intending to destroy them.

However, Hasan-'Ali Khan, the son of Shuja'u'd-Dawlih, could not and would not sit idly by and see his father eliminated because of the misplaced fears of the Shah.

He kept sending threatening letters to Tihran, until Nasiri'd-Din Shah had to let his father return to Quchan.

But the Shah detained the Vazir of Khurasan in the capital, on the pretext of wishing to offer him a portfolio in his court.

Then he gave him the governorship of Kashan.

It seems that Kashan was the place to which the two Qajar monarchs, Nasiri'd-Din Shah and his father, consigned dignitaries who had fallen foul of them.

Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, a future Sadr-i-A'zam <p58> (prime minister), was sent there in the days of Muhammad Shah, when Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Antichrist of the Babi Revelation, held the reins of power.

And when Nasiri'd-Din Shah, the ingrate, dismissed Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir Kabir, he directed the unseated prime minister to go to Kashan, and there had him put to death. (See Balyuzi, Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, chap.

14.) That one year in Kashan, although he was the governor of the city, came very hard to the Vazir of Khurasan, but he faced his banishment bravely.

Then Nasiri'd-Din Shah relented, summoned him to Tihran, gave one of his sisters in marriage to him and conferred on him the <p59> title:

Mu'taminu's-Saltanih.

The Vazir went back to Mashhad to his old post, where he was badly needed.

Towards the end of the year 1890, Mu'taminu's-Saltanih was once again in Tihran, lodging in the house of Ruknu'd-Dawlih, a brother of the Shah, who was the governor-general of Khurasan.

In the last days of that year the Vazir died suddenly, poisoned by order of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

The poison was administered to him in a cup of what has gained notoriety as the 'Qajar coffee'.

The remains of the Vazir were taken to Mashhad and buried in a stone sarcophagus, which he himself had prepared some years before.

His eldest son, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad Khan, inherited his title.

With the premature death of the second Mu'taminu's-Saltanih, some fifteen years after his father's, the glory centred in the holy city of Mashhad for seven decades passed into history.

The Vazir of Khurasan resembled Baha'u'llah in his build and height.

In a Tablet revealed in his honour, Baha'u'llah thus addressed him: 'O thou whose temple beareth resemblance to Mine.' <p60> 6 The Nightingale The eminent British orientalist, Edward Granville Browne, was in Yazd as a young man in the spring of 1888.

He had letters of introduction, addressed to the Afnans (relatives of the Bab) living in that city, written by the father of the present writer.

Haji Siyyid Mirza--a son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, a brother-in-law of the Bab known as Afnan-i-Kabir (the Great Afnan)--sent a man to guide Edward Browne to his house on receiving one of these letters.

In his immortal book, A Year Amongst the Persians, Browne describes the discussion to which he listened:

On arriving at Haji Seyyid M--s' house, I was delighted to find a theological discussion in progress.

An attempt was evidently being made to convert an old mulla, of singularly attractive and engaging countenance, to the Babi faith. [It is strange that Edward Browne kept naming Baha'is as Babis.] Only one of the Babis was speaking, a man of about thirty-five years of age, whose eloquence filled me with admiration.

It was not till later that I learned that he was 'Andalib (the 'Nightingale'), one of the most distinguished of the poets who have consecrated their talents to the glory of the New Theophany. 'And so in every dispensation,' he resumed, as soon as I had received and returned the greetings of those present, 'the very men who professed to be awaiting the new Manifestation most eagerly were the first to deny it, abandoning the "Most Firm Handhold" of God's Truth to lay hold of the frail thread of their own imaginings.

You talk of miracles, but of what evidential value are miracles to me, unless I have seen them?

Has not every religion accounts of miracles, which had they ever taken place, must, one would have thought, have compelled all men to believe; for who would dare, however hard of heart he might be, to fight with a Power which he could not ignore or understand?

No, it is the Divine Word which is the token and sign of a prophet, the convincing proof to all men and all ages, the everlasting miracle.

Do not misunderstand the matter:

When the Prophet of God called his verses 'signs' (ayat), and declared the

Kur'an [Qur'an] to be his witness and proof, he did not intend to imply, as some vainly suppose, that the eloquence of the words was a proof.

How, for instance, can you or I, who are Persians, judge whether the eloquence of a book written in Arabic be supernatural or not? <p61> No: the essential characteristic of the Divine Word is the penetrative power (nufudh): it is not spoken in vain, it compels, it constrains, it creates, it rules, it works in men's hearts, it lives and dies not.

The Apostle of God said "in the month of Ramazan [Ramadan] men shall fast from sunrise[1] to sunset".

See how hard a thing this is; and yet here in Yezd there are thousands who, if you bade them break the fast or die, would prefer death to disobedience.

Wherever one arises speaking this Word, know him to be a Manifestation of the Divine Will, believe in him, and take his yoke upon you.' [1.

It is actually from the moment dawn appears in the sky, when a white thread can be distinguished from a black thread. (HMB)] 'But this claim,' said the old Mulla, 'this claim!

It is a hard word that He utters.

What can we do or say?' 'For the rest, He hath said it,' replied 'Andalib, 'and it is for us, who have seen that this Divine Word is His, to accept it.' There was silence for a little while, and then the old Mulla arose with a sigh, and repeating, 'It is difficult, very difficult,' departed from our midst. (Edward Granville Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians, pp.

401-2) Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf of Lahijan (of the Caspian province of Gilan), whose sobriquet, 'Andalib, was given to him by his tutor, wrote a <p62> booklet addressed to Edward Browne, but it is not certain that it ever reached him.

It is a lucid apologia, highly learned and concise.

Mirza 'Ali-Ashraf lost his father early in life.

However, he had as his mother a very remarkable woman named Khanum-Jan, who bravely faced the future and made every effort to give 'Ali-Ashraf and his sisters, Bilqis and Gawhar, a sound upbringing. 'Ali-Ashraf showed soon, in his early teens, that he had remarkable talents.

He excelled in calligraphy, and his poetic talent became evident before long.

His tutor felt very proud that he had a pupil so well endowed.

Not only was his intellectual achievement brilliant; his handiwork was superb, particularly with the production of papier mache pen-cases (an art in which the Persians excelled) and illuminated pages in manuscripts.

He could easily earn his living by practising these arts.

But he still craved for more knowledge and set out to learn Arabic.

His mastery of that rich language was equally noteworthy.

There lived in Shiraz an excellent calligraphist named Mirza 'Abdu'r-Rahman. 'Abdu'l-Baha instructed him to make two copies of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah, such as Tajalliyat (Effulgences), Tarazat (Ornaments) and Ishraqat (Splendours), and ask 'Andalib to illuminate the margins on every page.

These books He intended, He wrote, to donate to the British Museum in London and the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris.

Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf, apart from his accomplishments which made of him an outstanding person in Lahijan, was also a seeker of truth.

To begin with he followed the Shaykhi school.

Whatever the Shaykhis became and did under the leadership of Haji Karim Khan of Kirman, it should always be remembered that all those who set out in search of the promised Qa'im, and found Him in the person of the Bab, were disciples of Siyyid Kazim.

In the days of the Bab two brothers, merchants of Qazvin who had become Babis, went to Lahijan to engage there in trade.

One was named Haji Shaykh Muhammad--the father of Mulla Kazim-i-Samandar, a prominent Apostle of Baha'u'llah (see chap.

16)--and the other was Mashhadi Muhammad-Rahim.

Before long, the former went back to Qazvin, and the second made Lahijan his home.

There he married and settled down.

Although he exercised great caution in teaching the Faith, soon he became known as a Babi.

Time and again the rabble of the town pillaged his goods and knocked him about.

He was nearly beggared.

But his faith in the Bab was as firm as ever. <p63> Some time later, a number of Baha'is of Qazvin went to Lahijan, one of whom was Haji Nasir (to be martyred before long).

They were followed by still others seeking refuge there from the persecutions in Qazvin.

Mulla Ja'far, a very learned man, was one of the second group.

In Lahijan he became a tutor.

Then another citizen of Qazvin, named Siyyid Javad, arrived in their midst.

But he was a confirmed Azali (follower of Subh-i-Azal).

There were also many Shaykhis in Lahijan, from the governor and his entourage to smallholders.

Naturally, Siyyid Javad did not associate with the Baha'is, who were his compatriots.

But being surrounded by influential Shaykhis, and he himself being an agent for one of the wealthy landlords, Siyyid Javad had to watch his step.

As it happened, Siyyid Javad became friendly with a resident of Lahijan named Karbila'i Babay-i-Vakil.

This Karbila'i Baba was a just man and free of prejudice.

In his careless moments, Siyyid Javad had spoken such words as made his friend suspect him of being a Babi.

When Karbila'i Baba asked Siyyid Javad whether his guess was correct or not, the latter readily admitted that he was, and once the veil was drawn he spoke openly, until soon Karbila'i Baba embraced the Faith of the Bab.

And he, in his turn, aided by Siyyid Javad, led Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf to become a Babi.

Siyyid Javad, who was going away for a short while, told the two new Babis that they should eschew the company of the other men of Qazvin who were in Lahijan.

Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf was too intelligent not to try to find out why Siyyid Javad had banned associating with all those Qazvinis in the town.

And so Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf went to the trading-house of Mashhadi Muhammad-Rahim, whose reputation as a Babi was, as the Persian proverb has it, more widespread than the devilry of Satan, and put his question without any hedging: 'I know and everyone knows that you are a Babi.

Siyyid Javad, who is from your own home town, has made me see the truth and I have become a Babi.

But why did he warn me against you?

I must know.' Mashhadi Muhammad-Rahim was delighted and told him the reason.

Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf listened and when the truth dawned upon him, he, without any hesitation, became a Baha'i, to be followed by Karbila'i Baba.

When Siyyid Javad returned, these two made it known to him that they had found the truth: they were now followers of Baha'u'llah.

Then began a period of discussion and debate which ended six months later when Siyyid Javad also embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah. <p64> Now 'Andalib (whom henceforth we shall name as such, because soon it was his sobriquet that gained fame while his name 'Ali-Ashraf was almost forgotten), afire with the zeal of his newly-found faith, occupied a central position in the teaching field.

The former Azali, Siyyid Javad, was no less active in propagating the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

These two, newly enrolled, were joined by the veteran Haji Nasir, and the three

of them moved to Rasht--the seat of the governor of Gilan--a provincial capital where greater opportunities existed for making the Cause of Baha'u'llah known to the public.

As a result of their efforts five brothers, whose surname was Baqiroff, became interested and were to render outstanding services to the Faith of Baha'u'llah (as do their descendants today), particularly Siyyid Nasru'llah who lived in Tihran and offered the major share of the expenses of 'Abdu'l-Baha's travels in Europe and America.

Siyyid Ahmad, son of one of these brothers, travelled to Europe, attended 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris and travelled with Him in 1913 when He visited Stuttgart, Budapest and Vienna.

The descendants of those five brothers have chosen Sadat-i-uamsi as their surname, bestowed by Baha'u'llah. 'Khams' means 'five' in Arabic, and the five siyyid brothers were known as such.

Back in Lahijan, 'Andalib, who was still dressed in the garb of a student of theology, turned his attention to some of his fellow-students and brought two of them into the Faith.

One of these was to become in future years a pillar of the Faith in the capital, and found a family distinguished by outstanding Baha'i services.

He was Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, entitled Nazimu'l-Hukama, the father of the late General Shu'au'llah 'Ala'i, elevated by the Guardian of the Cause of God to the rank of Hand of the Cause.

Nazimu'l-Hukama writes this about the man who introduced him to the Faith of Baha'u'llah:

Gradually he became known as a Babi...

I stopped associating with him ... because keeping his company would cause accusations to be levelled against me...

Then the month of Ramadan arrived and the period of fasting.

He came during that month to the Jami' Mosque and engaged in prayer.

At the end of the ritual prayer, he began his devotionals silently, in deep meditation.

After an hour he left the mosque.

One of the people present commented after he had gone that he was a Babi. 'This is simulation' said another, adding that he had gone to buy a piece of cloth (Mahut) from him and found him finishing his lunch. ['Andalib had already quitted the circle of the theological college and had set himself up in business as a draper <p65> <p66> and cloth merchant.] Still another added: 'Yesterday, when he came out of his house I met him and we walked on together.

His hand smelt of fish.

He goes home to have his lunch, then comes to the mosque to say his prayers just to deceive the people, and goes to his shop to sell his goods.' All those who spoke were his friends as well as mine.

Not far from the place where we were sitting, there sat a number of divines.

Apparently the divines were also talking about 'Andalib in such vile terms that Nazimu'l-Hukama, overhearing them, resolved to go and have it out the same night with 'Andalib.

He has written fully about all that passed between him and 'Andalib during the next months.

It is a very stirring and exciting account, and it ended with the conversion of Nazimu'l-Hukama.

As he himself describes his spiritual odyssey: <p67> At last after a whole year of struggle, similar to being in the throes of death, I obtained a new lease of life.

I made my way out of the grave and beheld a new world.

I had tormented the soul of the Mirza ['Andalib].

It was again the month of Ramadan.

He told me reprovingly: 'What more do you want of me?

You have tired me out.

With all the proofs that I have given you, what more do you require?

Go away.

I have given you up.' I answered: 'Will declaring my faith suffice you or myself?

And if someone has truly come to believe, but does not speak of it, will you or he come to any harm?' Hearing me say that convinced the Mirza that I had reached the end of my quest, that it was all up with me now, that after a whole year's experience of the throes of death, I had been born again and had attained life eternal. 'Andalib had by this time become known all over the town as a 'Babi'.

When his mother became aware of it she was furious. 'Andalib had already, very quietly, led his sisters to give their allegiance to Baha'u'llah, but had left his mother alone.

However, the time had come to win her over to the Cause.

She resisted, just as Nazimu'l-Hukama had resisted for a year.

But like him, she too found it impossible to resist any longer.

The whole family was now united in one common allegiance.

Externally, however, pressures were mounting.

Men were heard denouncing 'Andalib from pulpits.

And then a dervish, who was also a siyyid, appeared on the scene.

In time past, dervishes were indeed men who deserved respect.

Certainly there were still dervishes about who were pious and unworldly.

But the vast numbers of them were parasites, greedy and ungodly.

They prospered on simple people's credulity.

The dervish now haunting the bazars of Lahijan was of the latter category.

And he made it a duty to pester 'Andalib.

Although 'Andalib paid him no attention, encouraged by the example of some of the divines, the dervish waxed bolder and bolder, until the climax was reached on a Friday.

Another Javad of Qazvin, who had come to replace the aforementioned Siyyid Javad, had on that Friday invited a number of the Baha'is, including 'Andalib, to lunch.

Before going to Mirza Javad's house, 'Andalib went to his shop on some errand.

Although it was a Friday and shops were shut, that dervish appeared outside 'Andalib's shop and began to taunt him, first with personal abuse and then with insults to his family.

All the while 'Andalib kept his peace and went on with what he had to do in the shop.

But when the dervish insulted the Bab and Baha'u'llah, 'Andalib could bear it no longer; he picked up his metal yardstick and brought it down with all his force on the head of that insolent man.

When he saw that the dervish was <p68> bleeding, he closed his shop and hurried to Mirza Javad's house.

There he found his companions talking of how to stop the impudence of the dervish.

There was no need to talk of him anymore, said 'Andalib, because he himself had hit him so hard with his metal yardstick that he would soon be dead. 'Andalib was still beside himself with rage, but his host immediately realized that the consequences of that attack, even were the dervish to live, would be dire.

He sent all the guests home at once, but kept 'Andalib and found him a hiding-place.

Sure enough, the whole town was now in uproar, and the populace demanded 'Andalib's blood.

Some had seen him entering the house of Mirza Javad, who, because of his

position as the agent of one of the wealthiest landlords of the district, connected with the Court of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, was treated with respect.

At last the tumult of the mob reached the ears of the Governor of Lahijan.

He asked to know the reason.

When told that Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf, the Babi, had grievously injured a dervish, and to compound his felony had failed to observe the respect due to a siyyid, a descendant of the Prophet, the Governor immediately ordered the arrest of the 'aggressive Babi'.

The officials, hearing that Aqa 'Ali-Ashraf had been seen that morning entering the house of Mirza Javad-i-Qazvini, hastened to it.

Mirza Javad invited them to search his house. 'Andalib was there but they could not find him.

He was hidden behind a huge cauldron.

The mob, however, convinced that 'Andalib was in Mirza Javad's house, continued to crowd the street, keeping watch.

As it happened, Mashhadi Husayn, an uncle of 'Andalib who had gone to Rasht, arrived back the same day.

Learning that the mob was seeking 'Andalib to kill him, he flew into a rage.

Then, taking with him a set of clothing, he first visited a bazar in the quarter where he lived, and where most of the shops belonged to 'Andalib's cousins and other relatives.

He denounced them as poltroons for not having gone to the aid of his nephew. 'I don't understand', he said, 'most of the things which 'Ali-Ashraf says, but I do know this, that he has time and again invited the 'ulama to meet him at their convenience and discuss the matter with which he is concerned; and I know this also, that they have declined to meet him, but are now inciting a vagabond to bring him to harm.

Had I not returned today 'Ali-Ashraf would have been in mortal danger.' Having castigated the members of his family for their lack of courage, Mashhadi Husayn went to Mirza Javad's house, <p69> gained admittance, made 'Andalib change his clothes and led him out of the house.

He had also brought two stout clubs with him.

Giving one of them to 'Andalib, he commanded him to use it if attacked. 'If you don't use it, I myself will beat you with this other club I am holding.' Mashhadi Husayn was indeed very angry.

His mien and the club in his hand struck terror in the hearts of the would-be assailants. 'Andalib reached home safely and, in order to let tempers cool down, kept to his house.

He had also to consider the perils which beset other Baha'is in Lahijan.

But the rabble kept on agitating; they were still after 'Andalib's blood.

The Governor of Lahijan wrote to him that although the dervish's wound had healed, people were restive; should he leave the town for a while, that episode would soon be forgotten. 'Andalib went to Qazvin.

A year later he returned to Lahijan for a short stay.

But soon we find him again in the provincial seat of government--Rasht.

Now that city became once more a scene of intense Baha'i activity.

The year 1882 (in which the fourteenth century of the Hejira [Hijrah], according to the lunar reckoning, was inaugurated) saw 'Andalib tirelessly at work.

That year also witnessed a reinvigorated persecution of the Baha'is, which had its beginning in Tihiran.

Soon a number of Baha'is were detained in Rasht, and the Governor of Lahijan, where 'Andalib had gone for a short visit, was directed to arrest 'Andalib and Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq, an uncle of the celebrated Samandar of Qazvin, and send them on to Rasht in the company of a few others.

The governor of the province of Gilan, in the year 1882, was the notorious 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Vali, who, as a grandson of Muhammad-Baqir Khan-i-Biglarbagi,[1] a maternal uncle of Muhammad Shah, was therefore one of the Qajars.

Fadlu'llah Khan, the brother of 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Vali, was the Governor of Lahijan, and, according to the Vali's decree, had 'Andalib arrested.

He was hauled before Fadlu'llah Khan with something like a hundred books, none of them related to the Baha'i Faith for he had succeeded in effectively concealing those.

Once 'Andalib was arrested, the Governor's men went to find other Baha'is in the town.

A few were detained, while others fled, making their way to Mazindaran where they found conditions to be even worse.

Some eventually managed to reach Mashhad, the holy city of Khurasan. [1.

In all probability Muhammad-Baqir Khan was on the same ship which the Bab boarded in Bushihr, on His pilgrimage to Mecca.] <p70> A few days after his arrest 'Andalib sent a message to the Governor, enquiring why he was arrested and what crime he had committed to earn this punishment.

If his detention was related to the Faith which he professed, that was a matter of one's conscience, a matter over which no court could exercise jurisdiction.

The right way of dealing with the problem would be to summon the divines of the town to debate the matter with him.

His wish was granted.

The divines of Lahijan were summoned and 'Andalib was brought out of gaol to meet them, but the confrontation proved to be a complete fiasco.

To begin with the divines started shouting all at once. 'Andalib courteously pointed out that that was not the proper procedure for holding a debate.

When the shouting had died down, one by one he was able to vanquish them all.

The last one of those distinguished divines was a certain Mirza Ibrahim, inordinately proud of his knowledge and attainment.

He tried very hard to get the better of 'Andalib, but when he realized it was impossible, he resorted to the usual device and declared that 'Andalib was a heretic meriting death.

By then, all their faces were glowing with anger and 'Andalib saw that nothing could be achieved by talking with men who were beside themselves with rage.

They had already condemned him to death.

And so he rose and walked out, first pointing out to the Governor the failure of the divines to conduct a proper investigation.

The Governor's next step was to send 'Andalib to Rasht.

Wherever he was seen by the public during that transfer from Lahijan to the provincial capital, he was jeered, mocked and reviled.

People spat on him, pelted him with eggs and threw missiles at him.

As he was being led out of Lahijan, his mother and sisters followed him, surrounded by the rabble of the town.

Although veiled, they were recognized and insulted.

But they continued to walk to the outskirts of the town until, without having had a chance to speak with 'Andalib, they had to turn back and go home.

Throughout that walk to the edge of the town, although tried beyond the limit of human endurance, 'Andalib never lost his composure, but trod the ground with firm gait, his armour never dented.

In the pestilential gaol of Rasht, 'Andalib found many of his compatriots.

Before long, two of them, Haji Nasir, a survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi, and Aqa Muhammad-Sadiq of Qazvin succumbed to the hardships constantly encountered in the prison of Rasht.

Even there, 'Andalib and his fellow-believers were unceasingly assailed by the abuse and reviling which not only the gaolers, but the other wretched inmates of that prison, hurled at them. 'Andalib languished there for more than two years.

A number of his compatriots were freed, but he and two others, Siyyid Mihdi of Isfahfan and Siyyid 'Abdu'llah of Burujird, were left to suffer.

He petitioned 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Vali in a fine poem.

These were its opening lines:

O thou of the arched eyebrows, didst thou take me to be the renowned Sam,[1] son of Nariman, That thou didst put me in chains, and send me to a horrid dungeon? [1.

Sam was the grandfather of Rustam, the legendary hero of Firdawsi's Shahnamih (The Book of Kings)].

But his cry went unanswered, save for a poem in rebuttal from the pen of a poet in the service of the vali.

Then release came in an unexpected way.

In all probability those who had put him in that gaol, and particularly the vali, became bored with keeping him and ordered him out.

The end of this notorious vali a decade later was to be sudden and miserably dramatic.

In the year AH 1310 (26 July 1892-14 July 1893) a cholera epidemic hit Iran, starting in Khurasan, and soon reaching Tihran.

Mirza 'Isa, the Vazir of Tihran, died at the time the epidemic invaded the capital, and 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Vali was appointed to his office.

He put on his <p72> robe of honour in a summer resort in Shimran (which these days adjoins Tihran), and mounted his horse to ride to the capital.

On the way cholera laid him low.

His attendants, seeing their master thus afflicted, fled in horror.

He was left alone, totally helpless, to die by the roadside, and his corpse was ravaged by beasts.[1] [1.

Haji Sayyah-i-Mahallaiti has given the above account of the death of 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Vali in his memoirs.

He had suffered at the hands of 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Vali who was instrumental in bringing about his imprisonment, together with a number of others.] After his release 'Andalib went back to his home town, but soon realized that after all that had happened, it would be impossible for him to live in Lahijan.

Samandar writes that he invited 'Andalib to come and make his home in Qazvin.

After a stay there of one year, 'Andalib went to Tihran and then to Yazd, where we found him with Edward Browne in the year 1888. (See p.

60.) In a letter dated 2 July 1889, the father of the present writer informed Edward Browne that 'Andalib had come to Shiraz:

A few nights ago we were together in our own garden.

We stayed there for two nights.

We talked much about your good self.

Indeed, we wished that you were with us.

He ['Andalib] is a very, very fine person, and has some sweet and excellent poems to his credit.

It is not decided where he should go from here.

I shall let you know where he goes next.

All the friends here send you their salaams.

As it happened, 'Andalib stayed in Shiraz for the rest of his life and made that city his permanent home.

He settled down, found the means of earning a living and married.

Before long, 'Andalib received all that his soul craved, permission to travel to the Holy Land and attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

There he found as a fellow-pilgrim the sixteen-year-old son of Samandar, the future Hand of the Cause of God, Tarazu'llah Samandari.

Both of them were there when the Ascension of Baha'u'llah immersed the Baha'is in a sea of grief.

The soul of the poet responded to this harrowing sorrow which wrung from his heart a dolorous song declaring that his eyes had witnessed the morn of the Day of Resurrection on the plain of 'Akka. 'Andalib was also there when the contents of the Kitab-i-'Ahdi--Baha'u'llah's Will and Testament--became known.

Although for many years past, Baha'is had come to see that the Most Great Branch was indeed that 'Mystery of God'--Sirru'llah, a designation which His Father had given Him--they now rejoiced to find that they would march on under His infallible <p73> guidance. 'Andalib and Varqa, the two most eloquent of Bahha'i poets, penned such lines in praise of the Most Great Branch as are the finest of their genre, rarely equalled in the whole range of Baha'i history. 'Abdu'l-Baha, while graciously and kindly accepting their offerings, administered a gentle rebuke to them for their extreme adulation, pointing out that such praise should only be uttered in homage to Baha'u'llah.

For Himself, He had chosen the name 'Abdu'l-Baha--the Servant of Baha--betokening the essence of His being. 'Andalib, on his return from the Holy Land, once more engaged in propagating and teaching the Faith.

Twenty-three years later, he was again given the bounty of visiting the Holy Land and sitting at the feet of the Master. 'Abdu'l-Baha had aged considerably in those years.

The faithlessness of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates--who included two

other sons of Baha'u'llah, the descendants of the loyal Mirza Musa (Aqay-i-Kalim), and a number of well-known teachers of the Faith--as well as the intrigues of the dwindling followers of Mirza Yahya, had left their mark on Him.

Apart from the obnoxious activities of the violators of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the <p74> misdeeds of the Azalis, 'Abdu'l-Baha had to meet other darts from enemies of old.

Even from Christian quarters voices of opposition and denigration were raised from time to time.

Indeed, the Centre of the Covenant had to face the whole concourse of mankind, as did His Father.

Having drunk his fill from the chalice of grace and knowledge proffered by the Master, 'Andalib returned to Iran by way of the Caucasus.

Reaching Rasht, he found many whom he had guided to embrace the Faith thirty years before rejoicing at his return.

Of course there were some who had departed from this world.

That homecoming must have been both happy and sad for 'Andalib.

In Lahijan, his mother, grieving for years at her separation from him, had passed away; and so had Mashhadi Ghulam-'Ali, the husband of one of his sisters, whose children were all active in the service of their Faith. 'Andalib stayed for a year in Lahijan, and his nephew, Mirza Kuchik, always stood ready to serve him.

Next, 'Andalib went to Qazvin, where his other sister lived with her husband, Aqa Muhammad-Taqi 'Amughli, staying at their home.

In Qazvin, too, there were many who remembered him of old and welcomed him most joyously.

He had been away from his family in Shiraz for more than two years.

At last, he bade farewell to his relatives in Qazvin and set his face towards Shiraz, where misfortune awaited him.

Shortly after his return his wife died, and in his declining years he was left alone to bring up his young children, with the help of his eldest daughter who was then old enough to share his responsibility.

His closing years brought him infirmities, as well, and he passed away in the early part of 1920.

He was buried in the vicinity of the tomb of the great poet and songster, Hafiz.

The passage of time has effaced his grave and the area where it was is now a public park. 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote a prayer of visitation for 'Andalib and directed that these words should be inscribed on his tombstone:

Verily, life in the nest of this world was too confined for 'Andalib, the beloved.

He winged his flight to the Supreme Concourse, to limitless heights, that he might rapturously sing melodious tunes on the branches of the blessed tree. (Unpublished) <p75> Varqa, The Silver Tongued Nightingale O Thou! whence God's Beauty shineth, I know Thee.

Would my being, my soul Thy ransom be, I know Thee.

Shouldst Thou behind a hundred-thousand veils cover seek, By God, O Thou, the Visage of God, I know Thee.

Shouldst Thou a King choose, or a Servant appear to be, Apart--at the crest of each Station--apart, I know Thee. ----- Varqa
Varqa's name was Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad.

His father was Haji Mulla Mihdi, a native of Yazd: a simple man, not of the rank of the mujtahids, but yet very learned.

Speaking of Varqa's father, 'Abdu'l-Baha said: ...he was an expert in the field of Muslim sacred traditions and an eloquent interpreter of orally transmitted texts...

He was one of those who penetrate mysteries, and was a confidant of the righteous.

As a teacher of the Faith he was never at a loss for words, forgetting, as he taught, all restraint, pouring forth one upon another sacred traditions and texts.

When news of him spread around the town and he was everywhere charged, by prince and pauper alike, with bearing this new name, he freely declared his adherence and on this account was publicly disgraced.

Then the evil 'ulamas of Yazd rose up, issuing a decree that he must die.

Since the mujtahid, Mulla Baqir of Ardikan, refused to confirm the sentence of those dark divines, Mulla Mihdi lived on, but was forced to leave his native home. ('Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

845) Driven to quit Yazd, Haji Mulla Mihdi, accompanied by two sons, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad and Mirza Husayn, set out for 'Akka.

It was a long, long way to go and much hardship awaited him on the road.

Let the Centre of the Covenant conclude this story: ...He was imprisoned along his way; and as he crossed the deserts and <p76> climbed and descended the mountain slopes he endured terrible, uncounted hardships.

But the light of faith shone from his brow and in his breast the longing was aflame, and thus he joyously, gladly passed over the frontiers until at last he came to Beirut.

In that city, ill, restive, his patience gone, he spent some days.

His yearning grew, and his agitation was such that weak and sick as he was, he could wait no more.

He set out on foot for the house of Baha'u'llah.

Because he lacked proper shoes for the journey, his feet were bruised and torn; his sickness worsened; he could hardly move, but still he went on; somehow he reached the village of Mazra'ih and here, close by the Mansion, he died.

His heart found his Well-Beloved One, when he could bear the separation no more.

Let lovers be warned by his story; let them know how he gambled away his life in his yearning after the Light of the World.

May God give him to drink of a brimming cup in the everlasting gardens; in the Supreme Assemblage, may God shed upon his face rays of light.

Upon him be the glory of the Lord.

His sanctified tomb is in Mazra'ih, beside 'Akka. ('Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

85-6) It is by his sobriquet that Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, the most accomplished son of Haji Mulla Mihdiy-i-Yazdi, eternally lives:

Varqa, the silver-tongued nightingale, who in dulcet and exultant tones sang, throughout his life, the praise of Baha'u'llah and His eldest Son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of His Covenant.

The lines which adorn the opening of this chapter were addressed to the Centre of the Covenant, and they have their own story to which we shall come in a later page.

Varqa was born and brought up in Yazd.

He was in his early twenties, when, in the company of his father, he had perforce to turn his back on his native town and seek other climes.

Haji Mulla Mihdi and his two sons reached Tabriz, where they tarried for a while.

Varqa must have had a good knowledge of the rudiments of medicine, for in Tabriz a well-known Baha'i of that city, Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri, who served as attendant to the Crown Prince, Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza, called him in for consultation.

The truth of the matter was that he was most eager to invite Haji Mulla Mihdi and his sons to his home and to entertain them, but his wife, a woman of the Shabsavan tribe, was exceedingly hostile towards the Faith of Baha'u'llah, and therefore Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan had to find ways and means to facilitate visits of these new arrivals from Yazd.

Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri and his wife, the Shabsavan lady, had only one daughter and they longed to have another child.

Various medicaments had so far been of no help.

Now Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan suggested to his wife that she let a physician who had recently come to <p77> Tabriz attend her.

She gladly accepted.

The medicine which Varqa prescribed proved effective, and before long she was with child, to her overwhelming delight.

Next, Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan, who had become greatly devoted to Varqa and wholly captivated by his accomplishments, proposed to his wife that they should wed their daughter to him.

At first she demurred, because he was an unknown young man from a far-off city while she was a person of consequence with high connections in Tabriz; but finally, overcoming her scruples, she agreed.

Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan was truly overjoyed.

The nuptials over, Haji Mulla Mihdi and his two sons continued their journey to the Holy Land.

As we have seen, just before reaching the presence of Baha'u'llah, Haji Mulla Mihdi succumbed to the rigours he had endured.

And Varqa, as soon as he attained and set eyes on His majestic mien and heavenly visage, was certain that he had seen them before--but where and how?

Then, as he himself has related, he recalled a dream he had had in childhood.

He had dreamt that he had been playing with his dolls, when God had come and, taking his dolls away from him, had thrown them onto the fire.

The next day he had spoken of this strange dream to his parents, who had upbraided him, telling him not to speak of it again as no one could possibly see God.

Now, because of words spoken to him by Baha'u'llah he recalled that childhood dream and realized that it had been the countenance of Baha'u'llah which appeared to him in his vision.

Here is Varqa's own recollection of the words spoken by Baha'u'llah: 'O Varqa!

Cast into fire idols of vain imaginings.' From the Holy Land Varqa returned to Tabriz, and made that city his home.

Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri took his son-in-law to the Court of the Crown Prince, and Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza was equally charmed by Varqa's attainments and qualities.

It is related that the Crown Prince oftentimes asked Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan to bring Varqa with him to the Court whenever there was to be an assemblage of learned men, that he might participate in their talks and discussions to everyone's delight.

And the young poet would always rise to the occasion.

Despite his years Varqa was a man of many parts.

He was very eloquent, not only as a composer of lucid verse but as a writer of excellent prose.

He had also a good hand at calligraphy and other arts which nimble fingers can perform.

Besides these, his knowledge of medicine, scriptures, and the history and literature of his country, made him an exceptional person. <p78> Varqa had his home in Tabriz and travelled a good deal throughout the expanse of the province of Amarbajjan, to teach and promote the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Here and there he met with bitter hostility and stern opposition; his life was even endangered and he was imprisoned.

But he always enjoyed the protection of his influential father-in-law and, in extremity, the helping hand of the Crown Prince of Iran.

In contradistinction to his two brothers, Zillu's-Sultan and Kamran Mirza (the Nayibu's-Saltanih), Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza never showed any ill will towards the followers of Baha'u'llah.

He had his faults but cruelty and avarice were not among them, whereas the other two powerful princes had major shares of both.

However, in that fateful year of AH 1300 (AD 1882-3), Varqa decided to visit after many years' absence his native town of Yazd, whose people were blindly fanatical and easily swayed by self-seeking divines.

Yazd was part of the domain of Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, which he governed most injudiciously.

Very soon, Varqa fell into the hands of his minions, and there in Yazd he languished for a whole year in its foul prison.

Then he was carried in chains from Yazd <p79> to Isfahan, where Mas'ud Mirza resided.

As it happened, another well-known Baha'i, also an accomplished poet with the sobriquet of Sina, had just been set free. (See chap.

11.) Having heard that a 'Babi' had been brought from Yazd, Sina was most eager to find out who his Yazdi co-religionist was, but was told that he could neither hear nor speak.

Sina was greatly astonished when he saw Varqa there in chains, but greater was the astonishment of the gaolers when their prisoner began to speak fluently.

The guards escorting him from Yazd to Isfahan had been so insolently abusive that to spare himself the taunts of those brutish men Varqa had pretended to be deaf and dumb.

After their joyous encounter, Sina, pained to see that Varqa was placed in a prison where the worst criminals were kept, tried, with the help of the Baha'is of Isfahan, to have him moved to a more salubrious gaol reserved for men of rank.

That end was achieved through the assistance of Haji Muhammad-'Ali, Sayyah-i-Mahallati, and here is how it happened.

This amazing man[1] was a confidant of Zillu's-Sultan, the eldest son of Naisiri'd-Din Shah, and made no secret of it.

We know now of a particular mission entrusted to him by the scheming and seditious Zillu's-Sultan, whose ardent but unfulfilled wish it was, throughout his plot-ridden and turbulent life, to supplant his younger brother, Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza, and obtain the throne of Iran.

This he could not achieve because his mother was not of the royal House of Qajar.

During one of his mysterious journeys to Adharbayjan, which may have been connected with Zillu's-Sultan's plots, Sayyah fell into the hands of Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza's men in Tabriz.

Having rightly or wrongly found him guilty, it was almost certain that they would have put him to death, had not Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri intervened to bring about his release.

Sayyah, a much chastened man, went back to Isfahan and was there at the time Varqa was brought from Yazd.

The Baha'is of Isfahan, knowing how it had fared with him in Tabriz, approached Sayyah and told him that the 'Babi' prisoner brought from Yazd was the son-in-law of that same Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri who had saved his own life, suggesting that he should use his influence to ease the circumstances of Varqa's imprisonment.

Sayyah persuaded Zillu's-Sultan to order the transfer of Varqa to the prison where distinguished men were detained. [1.

His autobiography and Book of Reminiscences has been published in recent years.

Therein he conceals much that is now common knowledge.] <p80> About that time, Zillu's-Sultan had treacherously put to death Husayn-Quli man, the Bakhtiyari chieftain.

Isfandiyar Khan, the son of the murdered chieftain, was still a prisoner of the Prince-Governor of Isfahan, and Varqa was sent to join him.

It is said that consorting with Varqa led Isfandiyar Khan to embrace the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Whatever the case, Varqa's poetic talent charmed the Bakhtiyari leader.

Even the boorish Zillu's-Sultan could not withhold his admiration, and before

long he set Varqa free, thinking it would be to his own advantage, as he was about to send Sayyah on a secret mission to 'Akka.[1] Varqa returned to Tabriz. [1.

Sayyah's mission was to win the support of Baha'u'llah for Zillu's-Sultan's plots against his father.

Of course Sayyah was sent away--a disappointed man.] The second time that Varqa attained the presence of Baha'u'llah was about a year before His Ascension.

Varqa was then accompanied by two of his sons: 'Azizu'llah and Ruhu'llah.

The heroic Ruhu'llah, who was destined to die a martyr's death together with his father, was then no more than seven years old, but at that tender age his pure soul responded, in all its intensity, to the truth and reality of God as revealed to the world in the human temple of Baha'u'llah.

He had <p81> inherited an ample share of his father's poetic talent, and thus he composed, when only two or three years older, his paeon of praise and adoration:

O the joy of that day, when eyes at me stare, As on gallows-tree, I the praise of the King of Glory declare.

In the course of this second visit to 'Akka, Varqa was summoned to attend Baha'u'llah as a physician, and, after prescribing some medicine which Baha'u'llah took, was sent for a second time for the same purpose.

Mirza Valiyu'llah Khan,[1] Varqa's third son, recalled decades later: [1.

Elevated to the rank of Hand of the Cause of God by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith.] My father was much with Baha'u'llah.

One night as He walked back and forth in His room [at the Mansion of Bahji], Baha'u'llah said to my father: 'At stated periods souls are sent to earth by the Mighty God with what we call the Power of the Great Ether.

And they who possess this power can do anything; they have all power...

Jesus Christ had this power.

People thought of Him as a poor young man Whom they had crucified; but He possessed the Power of the Great Ether.

Therefore He could not remain <p82> underground.

This ethereal Power arose and quickened the world.

And now look to the Master, for this power is His.' When Varqa heard these words from Baha'u'llah, he yearned to lay down his life in the path of the Master.

And that wish was granted him.

Varqa, once again, returned to Tabriz.

However, the hostility of his mother-in-law, the Shahsavan lady, allowed him no peace at home.

She had never reconciled herself to the fact that both her husband and her son-in-law were dedicated Baha'is.

Varqa had thought of divorcing his wife, to rid himself of the bane of his mother-in-law's constant opposition.

But Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan would not hear of it and advised him not to remain in Tabriz, but to travel throughout Adharbayjan to teach the Faith.

Then his mother-in-law sought an accomplice who would kill Varqa.

As it happened, some enemies who could sway the mind of the Crown Prince succeeded in making him suspicious of his faithful attendant, Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan, who had <p83> to leave Tabriz in haste because Muzaffari'd-Din Mirza, his mind totally poisoned, was on the point of ordering his arrest.

When his wife became certain that her husband could not and would not return to Tabriz, she planned the death of her son-in-law.

She told a servant in their house named Khalil, not knowing that he had been converted to the Faith of Baha'u'llah, that should he kill Varqa she would give him a horse and 250 tumans.

Instead, Khalil informed Varqa of the evil designs of his mother-in-law.

Then Varqa realized, at last, that the time had come for him to turn his back on Tabriz, the city hallowed by the blood of the Bab, wherein he had found refuge after abandoning his own native city of Yazd.

He left Tabriz and Adharbayjan with a heavy heart, as a letter which he wrote soon after his arrival at Zanjan amply testifies.

In it he quoted from the writings of Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, the Qa'im-Maqam, to draw a parallel between his own feeling and that of the great minister whom Muhammad Shah had treacherously put to death.

Varqa had to leave home and depart from Tabriz in such a way as to thwart any interference on the part of his mother-in-law.

In the dead of night, he threw his Tablets and all that appertained to his Faith from a window overlooking the street, left the house very quietly, collected all that he had thrown into the street, and then went to the home of a fellow-Baha'i who was also a native of Yazd.

When the inimical Shahsavan lady learned what had happened, Varqa was well beyond her reach.

Enraged, she sought the help of one of the mujtahids of Tabriz, related to herself, to obtain a death warrant from him. 'My son-in-law is a Babi', she roundly declared, 'and ought to be put to death.' The mujtahid refused to

comply with her demand and pleaded ignorance of the case; whereupon she rushed away and brought Ruhu'llah to him. 'I will prove to you through this child', she told the mujtahid, 'the apostasy of my son-in-law.' Ruhu'llah was then asked whether he could say his daily prayer.

The child made his ablutions and said the long Baha'i prayer, in a mellifluous voice.

Now it was the turn of the mujtahid, who was a just man, to expostulate.

He told the lady, in no uncertain terms, that what she had been trying to do, in obtaining the condemnation of a man who had reared such a wonderful child, was a deed heinous and unforgivable.

By now the breach between Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan, Varqa and their wives had so widened that no alternative but divorce was left.

Varqa took with him the two sons 'Azizu'llah and Ruhu'llah, but <p84> Valiyu'llah and the youngest Badi'u'llah had to be left with their mother because of their ages.

Badi'u'llah did not live long.

The Shahsavan lady and her daughter both married again, and their lives thereafter were anything but happy; at the end both had cause to rue their fates, which were of their own making, and to feel bitter remorse.

In Zanzan, Varqa married Liqa'iyiyh Khanum, a daughter of Haji Iman, and had both 'Azizu'llah and Ruhu'llah with him.

It was not long after the Ascension of Baha'u'llah that the perfidy of those who had resolved to break His Covenant came into the open.

Many were those, once shining lights, who became centres of darkness.

But Varqa never wavered.

He made his third and last pilgrimage to the Holy Land, again taking with him both 'Azizu'llah and Ruhu'llah.

He sang the praises of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the Covenant, as fervently as he had sung the praises of Baha'u'llah, and addressed a poem to 'Abdu'l-Baha, some lines of which appear at the head of this chapter.

Another line[1] of the same poem is this: [1.

One line in the original poem.] O Thou, the Root, Thou the Limb of Revelation, In any garb, any garment, with any mantle, I know Thee. 'Abdu'l-Baha gently reproved him because of the poem's extravagance.

Responding, Varqa composed another poem which begins thus:

Cease either, O shining Orb, shedding Thy rays on the world, to flare, Or strike blind the eyes of those of insight, who witness dare.

Having mentioned the excellence of the poetical work of 'Andalib (see chap.

6) and Varqa, it is meet to mention here too the achievement of a young Baha'i poet of these days, now in his thirties.

He also is a native of Iran.

His name is Baha'u'd-Din Muhammad. 'Abdi is both his surname and his sobriquet.

The depth of feeling and the mastery of the language which he shows, put him on a par with those veterans of the Faith, even surpassing them in his imagery and tenderness of expression.

Indeed, it can be said that he is the precursor of a new school of poetry in the domain of the Baha'i Faith.

Thus ends his eulogy of Varqa: <p85> My heart, aflame, sends forth from its narrow cage, Such fire as puts the rays of sun to shame.

From one drop of my tears that on this earth is shed, Tulips, red tulips grow from the martyred Varqa's grave.

In the same year that Nasiri'd-Din Shah was to meet his death at the hands of a disciple of Siyyid Jamal'u'd-Din-i-Asadabadi, circumstances impelled Varqa to move out of Zanjan.

He was most anxious to gain Tihiran.

In the first instance he wanted to carry out the oral instructions of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Who had advised him to take his Tablets and all his Baha'i archives away from Zanjan.

He also desired a reunion with Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri, the maternal grandfather of his sons, who had established himself in the capital.

Varqa asked Haji Iman, the father of his second wife, to hire a number of horses for travelling to Tihiran.

It was, however, winter time, there was a good deal of snow on the ground, and steeds were difficult to come by.

As days dragged on, Mirza 'Azizu'llah Khan, the eldest son of Varqa, became impatient, and without informing anyone of his intention took the road to Tihiran on foot.

When Varqa learned of his son's departure and took measures to bring him back, it was too late; 'Azizu'llah had put a good many miles between himself and Zanjan.

By the time that Mirza 'Azizu'llah Khan had got well away, pack animals had been procured.

Varqa put his Tablets and books in two trunks, well locked and secured.

The night before leaving Zanjan with Ruhu'llah and Haji Iman, Varqa, accompanied by a number of the Baha'is of that city, went to the Telegraph

Office to say farewell to Mirza 'Ali-Akbar Khan, the director, and to offer him condolences on the death of his mother which had occurred shortly before.

All went well, but on coming out of the Telegraph Office they ran into an ill-intentioned divine of Zanzan named Mulla 'Abdu'l-Wasi', who immediately reported what he had seen to the master of the curfew, and he, in turn, informed 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih, the newly-appointed governor, that a number of 'Babis' had been spotted coming out of the Telegraph Office.

Ahmad Khan, the 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih, was a Qajar, though not of the royal clan.

He was imperious, suspicious, unbearably autocratic; and some of his rash deeds, in future years, were highly questionable.

But it is not at all clear why the fact of a number of 'Babis' leaving the Telegraph Office should have irked him to such an extent as to order the arrest of Mirza Husayn and a few other local Baha'is, and direct <p86> his men to go outside the city and search for those who were believed to have left Zanzan.

Varqa, Ruhu'llah and Haji Iman, who were well on their way to the capital with a caravan, were thus intercepted and brought back to join the others in 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih's prison.

It may have been that this haughty grandee, suspicious by nature, had thought that the 'Babis' were hatching a plot against his own person.

In those days, and for many years after, a telegraph office was one of the places where people, who either had a grudge or a genuine complaint, rushed to take refuge--a 'bast', as it was called.

Whatever the case, Varqa was back in Zanzan and in its gaol, where the governor could interrogate him closely. 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih, though of a generation much younger than the old despotic Qajar princes--like Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih (Haji Farhad Mirza) and Hisamu's-Saltanih (Sultan-Murad Mirza), even younger than Zillu's-Sultan (Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza) and Nayibu's-Saltanih (Kamran Mirza)--proved no exception to them.

On his first encounter with Varqa, he began a harangue of abuse, to which Varqa replied that such language was demeaning and not meet for such an assemblage.

Whereupon Varqa was sent back to prison.

When Varqa was stopped on the road to Tihran, miraculously the pack animal that carried the two trunks of Tablets and books and other archival material was not halted, and it went all the way safely to Qazvin, where trusted hands received the trunks and preserved their contents.

But, alack, the personal property of Varqa fell into the hands of enemies.

Amongst all that rich material, rich both in worth and value, was a water-colour painting of the Bab.

And here is the place to record the marvellous story of that painting, told to the present writer by Mirza Valiyu'llah Khan Varqa, the Hand of the Cause of

God.

During his long sojourn in Adharbayjan, Varqa met an artist, a Naqqash-Bashi (Chief Painter) whom he guided into the fold of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

And this artist, Aqa-Bala Bag, a native of Shishvan (a village on the banks of Lake Urumiyyih), had a remarkable tale to tell.

He had in his possession a portrait of the Bab, the only one in existence, that he had done himself.

It happened when the Bab was on His way to Tabriz for cross-examination by the Court of the Crown Prince.

At Urumiyyih the governor, Malik-Qasim Mirza, who was a descendant of Fath-'Ali Shah, received the Bab with tokens of great respect but, at the same time, he worked out a scheme to test Him.

He owned a horse notorious for its unruliness, and on a Friday when the Bab was going to the public bath, Malik-Qasim Mirza ordered that charger to be brought for Him to ride.

Those who were in the know watched with trepidation as the Bab came out to mount, but to the astonishment of all the horse proved exceedingly docile.

The Bab mounted it with ease and rode to the public bath; the Prince-Governor, crestfallen and ashamed, followed Him all the way on foot.

Before reaching the bath, the Bab turned to Malik-Qasim Mirza, who was then walking beside him, to ask him not to come any further but return to his house.

When the Bab came out of the public bath, the horse was still there for Him to ride; and it behaved exactly as before.

As the news of this extraordinary incident spread like a bonfire throughout Urumiyyih, the populace broke into the public bath and carried away every drop of water they could find there.

The people of Urumiyyih were certain that a miracle had come to pass in their midst and they flocked, day after day, to the governor's residence to see the Bab.

One of them was Aqa-Bala, the Chief Painter.

He told Varqa, all those years later, that on his first visit, as soon as the Bab noticed him, He gathered His 'aba round Him, as if sitting for His portrait.

The next day He did the same.

It was then that Aqa-Bala Bag understood it to be a signal to him to draw His portrait.

On his third visit, he went to the residence of Malik-Qasim Mirza with the equipment of his art.

He made a rough sketch or two at the time, from which he later composed a full-scale portrait in black and white.

Varqa wrote and informed Baha'u'llah of this tremendous discovery.

And Baha'u'llah directed him to instruct Aqa-Bala Bag to make two copies of the portrait in water-colour, one to be dispatched to the Holy Land, and one for Varqa himself to keep.

The copy sent to the Holy Land is now preserved in the International Baha'i Archives on Mount Carmel, but the one which belonged to Varqa was amongst his possessions which were looted when he was arrested outside Zanzan.

The original portrait, in black and white, was found long after by Siyyid Asadu'llah-i-Qumi, who took it with him to the Holy Land and presented it to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

During the weeks that followed his detention, Varqa had, almost daily, to endure verbal assaults by the divines of Zanzan, and by the governor himself. 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih was a man of many moods.[1] It <p88> apparently amused him to sit day after day and listen to the devious arguments of the divines, making his own interjections every now and then.

Endless these futile argumentations seemed to be, and as endless were the brilliant retorts of Varqa. 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih, by all accounts, was trying in some tortuous way to entice Varqa to deny his faith in order to gain his release, while Varqa determinedly rejected those inducements. [1.

In the autumn of the year 1903, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, who had always been an advocate of a forward policy anywhere in Asia, sailed with an imposing escort into the Persian Gulf.

This official visit of the Viceroy, with the ostentatious showing of the flag, was meant not only to stamp on the minds of the rulers of lands bordering on the Gulf, large and small alike, the fact of the supremacy of Great Britain in those waters, but also to warn off any European Power, notably Russia and Germany, who might have had designs of their own in that inhospitable clime. 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih was then Governor-General of the province of Fars, and at loggerheads with Salar Mu'azzam (later Nizamu's-Saltanih the Second), the Governor of the Gulf Ports and Isles.

He was commissioned by the government of Iran to go to Bushihr and there receive the Viceroy ceremoniously.

But as 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih had no knowledge of English, he took with him from Shiraz the father of the present writer, who had received part of his education in Britain, and had served a term of office as the Consul-General of Iran in Bombay, where he had met Lord Curzon in the course of his duties.

My father's role was to assist in receiving the Viceroy, and to hold parleys as well with Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British minister in Tihnan who was coming to Bushihr to be there when the Viceroy arrived. 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih came out of

Shiraz with a large retinue and escort of soldiery, and spent a vast sum of money.

Unfortunately an idiotic misunderstanding--a rigid adherence to meaningless protocol and unbending stances shared by both sides (with Lord Curzon in the lead)--prevented the Viceroy leaving his boat in the harbour of Bushihr, and left 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih fuming on the shore.

And to add to his chagrin, his rival, Salar Mu'azzam, had stolen a march on him and had gone to Bandar 'Abbas to receive the Viceroy there, thus avoiding meeting 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih in Bushihr.

The present writer has gained the impression from his father's letters and diaries that 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih was, although capable and efficient, a grandee demanding obeisance, whose hauteur and air of superiority were hard to match and to bear, and who was easily swayed by his conflicting and fleeting emotions.] 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih, despairing of having any influence over Varqa, to bend his will told him that he and his son would be sent to Tihran, and Mirza Husayn, a fellow-Baha'i, would be blown from a cannon.

Varqa cautioned him not to act so impetuously where Mirza Husayn was concerned.

This co-religionist of his, he informed 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih, had come from 'Ishqabad at the behest of Nasiri'd-Din Shah and with the full knowledge of the Russian consul-general.

Moreover, his son-in-law was a dragoman in the service of the said consul.

It would be more prudent, he advised the haughty governor, to send Mirza Husayn away from Zanzan, and let his fate be decided by others. 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih came to his senses and ordered his farrash-bashi to arrange the transportation of Mirza Husayn, as well, to Tihran, and collect the cost of the hiring of a horse from his relatives.

They were to be escorted to the capital by the cavalry in the service of the family of a local grandee, Jahanshah Khan.

Moreover, the possessions of Varqa were to be sorted by himself, placed in boxes and trunks, and locked up to be taken with him, while the keys and a full list of the contents would be delivered in Tihran to Aminu's-Sultan, the Sadr-i-A'zam.

Mirza Husayn writes:

Government farrashes entered the prison, took away the chain on my neck and carried me to the house of the farrash-bashi.

I saw that Varqa's feet were heavily fettered ... he and Ruhu'llah both looked at me smilingly and Varqa said, 'See, what a difference there is.' But immediately a carpenter was brought in who put my feet also in heavy fetters.

Then they produced a long chain and attached it to my neck.

They wanted to attach the other end to Varqa's neck.

However, the guards would not have it, because of the difficulty of managing two men chained together.

That chain remained on my own neck, and I carried it all the way to Tihran.

Haji Iman had been taken away one day prior to us by the artillerymen, on a gun-carriage, who had tied his arms to the cannon.

He had suffered a great deal by being carried in that fashion to the capital.

But we were given pack horses to ride and were fully equipped.

This was the Jubilee year of Nasiri'd-Din Shah...

Jahanshah Khan's cavalry were going to Tihran to take part in the celebrations ... grooms were holding the halters of the horses, pulling us through the bazar.

Horsemen were surrounding us.

Crowds of the populace swirled around with people getting on each other's shoulders to have a good look.

We were taken to the caravanserai of Haji 'Ali-Naqi, and were made to dismount and wait for all the cavalry to foregather, so that all could march out of the city gate as one body.

Spectators kept increasing.

There was no passage left.

It was impossible to move.

In the end, they put us in a room and locked it.

We were left in peace and sat down to eat.

They had sent some dulmih (a Persian dish) from my home...

Ruhu'llah said: 'We have been starving since last night.

They would not give us anything to eat.' And Varqa added: 'The farrash-bashi displayed such miserliness ... gave us no supper last night.

We were very hungry.

Your bread and dulmih came to our rescue'...

He then observed: 'These horsemen, without knowing it, are giving victory to the Cause of God, taking us with such pomp to Tihran.

One does not know what is hidden behind the veil of the future.

Whatever it may be it will redound to the victory of the Cause.

We do not know, but He Who is the Master of Providence knows.' After a while they opened the door of the room and took us out.

The horses were all ready and we were made, one by one, to mount.

Ruhu'llah and I had little else on the saddle and had no difficulty in mounting, but Varqa had saddle-bags on his horse and found mounting it rather difficult.

The head horseman told one of the bystanders to help Varqa mount his horse.

That man, a Muslim, replied: 'Why should I defile my hands [by touching him]; let him mount by himself.' The sergeant-major was infuriated and dismounted.

First he whipped that man, then bent his own knee for Varqa to step on and reach the saddle.

While thus engaged, he was saying: 'Now I know. <p90> Aping and imitation cause a people to wither and die, May a hundred curses on that imitation lie.' [1]

[1.

Famous couplet from the Mathnavi of Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi.] When we were all mounted the pressure of the crowd and the rush of increasing numbers of people, milling around, blocked all the thoroughfares.

The horsemen of the government began beating back the crowds, who were like a billowing ocean.

A way was opened for the horses to gallop through, and thus we reached the city gate and went out of Zanjan.

It was almost a triumphal exit.

Within a few miles of the city, this cortege stopped at a village called Dizij.

Villagers were out to view the 'Babis', as if they were exotic animals taken around for exhibition.

The Sartip of Dizij had asked Jahanshah Khan's cavalry to be his guests.

Shortly after their arrival, one of the Sartip's servants came to conduct the prisoners to an assemblage of the notables and divines.

Soldiers with their rifles were well in evidence.

Mirza Husayn writes, 'I was sure they had brought us from Zanjan to this place to kill us.

Varqa had thought likewise.' They were made to sit on a dais, all eyes fixed on them.

Then they were collectively arraigned.

Varqa bravely withstood their assaults.

Having failed to shake him, their tormentors turned to Ruhu'llah, whose cryptic remarks made them hopeful at first.

But when the divines realized that Ruhu'llah was ingeniously holding them up to ridicule, their wrath knew no bounds. 'This child is insulting holy divines,'

they kept shouting, 'and why is he not fettered?

Send for the carpenter to come and put fetters on him.' Mirza Husayn writes: 'They went in search of the carpenter, and when he came he was so ebullient and elated that he hardly knew how to proceed.

It was as if he had been given the treasures of heaven and earth.

Blithely he fixed fetters on Aqa Ruhu'llah's feet.' However, the cavalrymen paid no attention to the ringing demands for slaughter.

From that village of ill renown, the cavalrymen made their way to Sultaniyyih, giving a wide berth to Khayrabad which was the district from which Mirza Husayn hailed.

Strangely, the people of Sultaniyyih received the 'Babis' with cordiality.

Learning that Varqa was a physician, they came to him asking for remedies.

The son of Jahanshah Khan treated the prisoners very well, providing them with good meals.

The sergeant-major who represented that chieftain was also very kind and considerate.

At the end of that journey to Tihran he became a convert to the Faith of the prisoners.

But there were two guardsmen who vied with each other in making life <p91> hard and unpleasant for the prisoners.

Varqa, in particular, was brutally made to bear much pain, riding as he was atop saddle-bags with his legs fettered.

The guardsmen would not relent to allow his impedimenta to be shifted.

And mulishly they turned a deaf ear to the sergeant-major's remonstrances.

To Atakishi, one of those two, the sergeant made the observation that indeed by the way he maltreated the prisoners he bore resemblance to Azraq the Syrian. (Azraq-i-Shami was a man notorious for causing the captive family of Imam Husayn to suffer gravely, after the tragedy of Karbila.) To that appropriate observation Atakishi had the temerity to retort: 'Not so, not so.

It is these people who are Azraqs of the present day.

Now we must take our revenge.

They think that they are the Imams and we are the Syrians (Shimrs), while it is we who are the Imams and they who are the Syrians.' Varqa was greatly pained when he heard that observation and this retort.

He told Atakishi, 'May God judge between us.

You have been very insolent.' Mirza Husayn writes that Varqa's remark greatly angered Atakishi, who galloped a long way ahead of the others, only to stop at

a spring to have a drink and smoke.

There, as he sat relaxing, unbearable pain gripped him.

Mirza Husayn writes:

Afar we could see someone writhing like a slaughtered cock.

He was shouting, 'My belly is on fire, I am dying, help me.' The horsemen came along and took him, somehow, off to the next stage which was Karaj.

Varqa was greatly distressed by his condition and prescribed a remedy for him.

But it did not cure him, and on reaching Tihran the man died.

His death invigorated the faith of the sergeant-major, but it made Varqa very unhappy.

He kept saying, 'I should not have put such an injunction upon him.

We should not heap curses on our enemies, who are ignorant, but pray for them.'

Fearing lest the Baha'is of Qazvin would make a bid to free the prisoners, the horsemen skirted that city.

Then, at long last, Tihran was gained, and the prisoners were taken to the stables of the house of Jahanshah Khan, the Zanzan magnate, where they were lodged for the night.

The next day they were visited by Mirza 'Azizu'llah Khan, the eldest son of Varqa who had separated himself from his father.

But Varqa bade him never to come near them again, because, should he be recognized, he would also be arrested and put in gaol; whereas outside the gaol he could be of help and service to them all.

Thus Mirza 'Azizullah Khan remained free, and in future years rendered outstanding service to the Cause of Baha'u'llah. <p92> Mirza Husayn gives a graphic account of their first days in Tihran.

The day after their arrival they were taken to the house of Husayn-'Ali Khan, the Mu'inu'd-Dawlih, brother of the Governor of Zanzan.

There they found Haji Iman, like themselves in chains.

It is not at all clear why they were taken to the house of Mu'inu'd-Dawlih.

On the third day another brutish official named Nayib (Deputy or Lieutenant) Nasru'llah descended upon them, to convey them to governmental quarters for interrogation.

Avenue 'Ala'u'd-Dawlih (later Avenue Firdawsi), Mirza Husayn writes, was teeming with bystanders, gathered to have a look at the 'Babis' as if they were a different species of men.

They were marched down that avenue, surrounded by farrashes and executioners dressed in red, to Maydan-i-Tupkhanih (Artillery Square)--later

Maydan-i-Sipah (Army Square)--dragging their chains with them.

There, governmental quarters were close by.

Proceedings in the Chamber of Justice (which Mirza Husayn called the 'Quintessence of Tyranny') were futile and inconsequential.

And from the first day, in the house of Mu'inu'd-Dawlih, the captors began their shameless spoliation of Varqa's very precious belongings.

High and low alike helped themselves to whatever they could.

Hajibu'd-Dawlih, the murderer-to-be, laid hands on the portrait of the Bab and took it to Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

The brutal Nayib Nasru'llah incessantly clamoured to take possession of a white robe which had been a garment belonging to Baha'u'llah.

Varqa's entreaty not to dispossess him of that robe, so highly prized, did not have the slightest effect on the hard-hearted Nayib, who took it away and appeared dressed in it, to taunt Varqa.

At the end, when all had gone, Varqa remarked that everything mulcted from him was of the very best, worthy to lose in the path of God.

Mirza Husayn writes: 'In short, they heaped injuries upon us.

They had fastened heavy chains on our necks to extort money from us.

We had no money to give them and those chains remained on our necks.' The gaolers also starved them.

Mirza Husayn mentions a grandee of Qazvin, entitled Ghiyath Nizam, who had fallen foul of the government and was pushed into prison.

But he was a man of substance, had plenty to spend and a servant to attend to his needs.

This servant informed his master of the plight of the Baha'i prisoners.

The grandee had it announced that on a certain night all the prisoners (numbering sixty, apart from the Baha'is) would be his guests for chilaw-kabab (a Persian rice dish with kebab and other ingredients). <p93> On that night, Mirza Husayn writes, every prisoner was given his portion, but it was denied to the Baha'is.

That had been the decision of the gaolers.

On being told by his servant that the Baha'is had been deprived of their share, Ghiyath Nizam flew into a rage and ordered that a fresh supply of chilaw-kabab, even better garnished, should be sent in immediately to the Baha'i prisoners.

The Nayib had tried to exonerate himself, saying that it was by the order of Hajibu'd-Dawlih that the 'Babis' had not been served with that favourite dish.

Now, Nasiri'd-Din Shah's jubilee was drawing near.

Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Nuri, the maternal grandfather of Varqa's children, sent him a message to compose an ode for that occasion that it might be presented to Nasiri'd-Din Shah and thus obtain his release.

Varqa's response was that a poetic talent that had been moved to render praise unto Baha'u'llah and His Son, could not be induced to utter the praise of any other.

And Varqa had no doubt that neither he nor his son would ever come out of that dungeon alive.

Then came that fatal Friday preceding the day of jubilee celebrations when Nasiri'd-Din Shah, proud and arrogant as ever, fell dead within the Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim, with a bullet in his heart.

Aminu's-Sultan, the Sadr-i-A'zam, by his presence of mind and <p94> sound tactics saved the day and prevented riots and worse.

But as soon as it became known that Nasiri'd-Din Shah had been assassinated, the generality of people accepted it as a fact that the deed had been committed by the 'Babis'.

But it was Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din working for a long time on the disordered mind of Mirza Riday-i-Kirman, smarting under injustices, who was responsible for placing that bullet in the chest of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, thus bringing to its end his inglorious and disastrous reign.[1] In the eyes of the people 'Babi' and 'Baha'i' were the same.

Varqa had tried in vain to make Hajibu'd-Dawlih aware of the difference.

However, no matter how much the Babis--the partisans and followers of Subh-i-Azal--might have wished to have a hand in destroying Nasiri'd-Din Shah, they too were not involved in regicide.

It was entirely the subtle work of Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din. [1.

He was assassinated on 1 May 1896.] Hajibu'd-Dawlih, beside himself with rage, on his own initiative and without informing either Aminu's-Sultan, the Sadr-i-A'zam, or Kamran Mirza, the Governor of Tihiran (who had cravenly gone into hiding, totally neglecting his urgent duties), rushed into the prison to avenge as he thought the death of his sovereign.

Stampeding, roaring and, as Mirza Husayn expresses it, behaving like a mad dog, he struck terror into the hearts of the inmates of the dismal dungeon of Tihiran.

It was a hideous scene.

Chains were strengthened, locks were fastened and made more secure, everything was done to impede the movement of the startled prisoners; but no one knew what had happened, no one had the slightest notion of what had put Hajibu'd-Dawlih into such a rage as to act like a man deranged.

And he had not come just by himself to display such antics.

He had brought a host of underlings, as if he expected a massive uprising on the part of those helpless and brutally chained men.

Mirza Husayn writes of roof-tops swarming with soldiers, their rifles trained on the prison yard where a row of executioners were standing, ready and alert, as if on the lookout for a signal to commence their gruesome task.

So it seemed that all the prisoners, Baha'i and non-Baha'i alike, were about to receive a new measure of chastisement.

But, on that day, the wrath of the ferocious Hajibu'd-Dawlih was focused on Varqa.

It was that silver-tongued poet whom he particularly intended to destroy.

He had already had his contretemps with the poet, at the time he sequestered the portrait of the Bab.

Varqa's respectful reference to the person of <p95> the Bab, which he had written to identify that portrait, had angered Hajibu'd-Dawlih, and driven that uncouth, brutish courtier to belabour the poet with his walking-stick.

The Baha'is were unchained and hauled out of the dungeon.

Hajibu'd-Dawlih ordered them to be brought, two by two, through a long corridor, which, Mirza Husayn writes, led from the prison yard to an inner room.

Varqa and Ruhu'llah were the first to go through that corridor, and as soon as they had gone the intervening door was shut in the faces of Mirza Husayn and Haji Iman.

Those two, left behind, were, as Mirza Husayn himself writes, both perplexed and distressed.

As they waited, they heard voices raised on the other side of the partition, and soon after, a farrash appeared to fetch the instrument of bastinado, followed in a little while by one of the gaolers carrying a dagger covered with blood, which he washed in the pool within the prison yard.

And before long, one of the executioners came through with Varqa's garments.

Then, to their mortification, Mirza Husayn and Haji Iman knew that the worst had happened.

But they had yet to learn of the heroism of Ruhu'llah.

Those two now prepared to go through the door to their inevitable fate, but suddenly the door was shut in their faces, and they could hear noises and voices beyond it which, in their state of affliction, they found hard to comprehend.

Then, as suddenly as the door had shut, it was flung open, and out rushed that

evil courtier, Hajibu'd-Dawlih, panic-stricken.

All that he could or would say was: 'Take these two back to the gaol, I will deal with them tomorrow.' But that morrow never came.

Haji Iman and Mirza Husayn were returned to the dungeon and, as the latter writes, they saw that all they had of quilts and bedding, clothing and rugs, had been taken away in their absence.

Mirza Husayn writes that they were too numbed to feel much and they sank down forlorn and dejected on the bare, damp floor of the dungeon.

There could be no doubt that the inimitable Varqa had been put to death, but where was Ruhullah, what had happened to him?

And what exactly had occurred behind that closed door?

Still more puzzling: what had caused Hajibu'd-Dawlih, a man bereft of common humanity, such distress and bewilderment as they had witnessed?

Not all the gaolers were as vindictive and hard-hearted as that brutish courtier and his minion, Nayib Nasrullah.

Some of them responded to the piteous entreaties of Haji Iman and Mirza Husayn and told them the full story of the martyrdom of Varqa and the immolation of <p96> Ruhullah.

This is the story they heard, to their horror and marvel--horror at the hideous cruelty of the deed, marvel at the unshakeable constancy of the fearless poet and his glorious son.

Brought face to face with Varqa in that inner room, Hajibu'd-Dawlih had gone immediately into a fierce tirade: 'You did at last what you did', he had shouted at Varqa, to which the poet had quietly answered that he was unaware of having done anything wrong.

Varqa's calm reply had added to the fury of Hajibu'd-Dawlih.

It had indeed maddened him.

Dragging his dagger out of its sheath, he had plunged it into the chest of Varqa, saying with great relish: 'How are you?' And Varqa had answered him thus: 'Feeling better than you.' 'Tell me,' said Hajibu'd-Dawlih, 'which one shall I slay first, you, or your son?' And quietly Varqa had replied, 'It is the same to me.' Then, having torn open Varqa's chest, Hajibu'd-Dawlih had handed him over to his executioners, whereupon four of them had fallen on the poet, tearing him apart, limb from limb.

As his blood kept flowing in profusion, Ruhullah was crying out: 'O dear father, father dear, take me, take me, take me with you.' Having destroyed Varqa, the unspeakable Hajibu'd-Dawlih had turned to Ruhullah, who had just witnessed the dismemberment and slaughter of his father: 'Do not weep.

I shall take you with myself, make you an allowance, obtain for you a post

from the Shah.' And bravely, Ruhullah had replied: 'I do not want you.

I do not want your allowance.

I do not want any post that you might obtain for me.

I want to join my father.' Then, he had begun weeping afresh.

Defied, balked, repelled, Hajibu'd-Dawlih had ordered his minions to bring a rope and strangle that brave boy.

No rope was available there, and so they had put Ruhullah's neck in the loop of the instrument of the bastinado.

When he had become still, they had dropped the senseless corpse on the floor.

Elated, Hajibu'd-Dawlih had told his minions to bring in the other two 'Babis'.

The moment they had opened the door, the corpse of Ruhullah had sprung up and come down with a thud, a yard away.

It was that which had terrified the blood-thirsty Hajibu'd-Dawlih, and made him flee away, exclaiming that he would deal with the other two on the morrow, a morrow which never came.

That was how Haji Iman and Mirza Husayn escaped from the clutches of Hajibu'd-Dawlih.

That was how Mirza Husayn lived to see another day, and to recall the story of the martyrdom of that father and his matchless son. <p97> In a dream, Mirza Husayn writes, he saw Ruhullah coming towards him, all smiles, saying: 'Mirza Husayn, did you see how I rode on the neck of the Emperor?' During their last pilgrimage to the Holy Land, 'Abdu'l-Baha had patted Ruhullah on his back and had said: 'Should God will it, He can make Ruhullah ride on the neck of an emperor to proclaim the Cause of God.' <p98> The Gourmet Who Was a Saint Mulla Muhammad-Riday-i-Muhammadabadi of Yazd is one of the most distinguished amongst the Baha'i martyrs.

He was a God-fearing man, whom nothing of this world ever daunted, outspoken, courageous to the extreme.

He went to prison and accepted its rigours blissfully, although he was a bon viveur; indeed a gourmet, a connoisseur of good food.

In his historical work, Samandar writes of him:

He himself has been heard to say: 'When Radiu'r-Ruh,[1] one of the most eminent divines to believe, came from Baghdad to Yazd, he had certain Writings with him, including Qasidiy-i-Izz-i-Vurqa'iyih. [Baha'u'llah composed this ode in Sulaymaniyyih.] As soon as I set eyes on it, I exclaimed spontaneously: "Man-Yuzhiruhu'llah[2] of the Bayan has come."

He said: "The One Whose words these are has not made such a claim."

I replied: "On the throne of these words I see the Promised One of the Bayan seated. "Then Radiu'r-Ruh said: "Henceforth it is difficult to consort with you."

Ere long, that same eminent man, subsequent to high endeavour, embraced the blessed Cause of Abha and served it for years, engaged in promoting the Word of God.

The Friends [Baha'is] of Manshad and its environs were led to the light of faith by him.

For a long time, because of the transgressions of the enemies, he had to spend both summers and winters in caves and on mountain-tops, suffering untold hardships, until the day of his death.

Upon him be the peace of God and His glory.' Mulla Muhammad-Rida himself, when detained in Tihran and summoned to the court of Kamran Mirza [the Nayibu's-Saltinih, son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah], where the most eminent of the princes and the high officials of the State had gathered for interrogation, fearlessly gave appropriate replies to any matter raised and any question asked.

And when Farhad Mirza, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih [uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah] made an abusive remark, he [Mulla Muhammad-Rida] gave an answer which so accorded with the law of religion that no one had any more to say and the session ended in deep silence. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

220-21) [1.

Mulla Muhammad-Riday-i-Manshadi. whom Baha'u'llah honoured with the designation:

Radiu'r-Ruh (Contented Spirit).

He was poisoned by a certain Haji Rasul-i-Mihri.] [2.

He Whom God shall manifest.] <p99> We shall presently see what Prince Farhad Mirza's remarks and Mulla Muhammad-Rida's comments were.

Samandar goes on to say:

After his release from that long detention, he [Mulla Muhammad-Rida] went to 'Akka and attained the presence [of Baha'u'llah].

Subsequently, by way of Qazvin, he gained Tihran.

Then, when Nasiri'd-Din Shah was assassinated, he was, once again arrested and thrown into prison.

He passed away while in gaol.

Upon him be the essence of God's mercy and His light. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

221-2) <p100> Mulla Muhammad-Rida was truly fearless.

Hearing, at the time of his sojourn in Yazd, that the merchants of that city

had come together to devise ways and means of improving trade and bringing more prosperity to their people, Mulla Muhammad-Rida unhesitatingly wrote them a memorandum, telling them that the surest way to gain their end was to accept and follow the polity of Baha'u'llah.

That confrontation with Haji Farhad Mirza, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, which Samandar has mentioned, occurred in the year AH 1300 (12 November 1882-1 November 1883).

In the course of his discussions with Mulla Muhammad-Rida, Prince Farhad Mirza said: 'O Akhund![1] You cannot push aside so lightly all the traditions and the sayings of the past.

We have most reliable and trustworthy traditions and references to the cities Jabulqa and Jabulsa.

It is not possible to ignore them all and uphold the belief that Siyyid-i-Bab, a young mercer of Shiraz, is the promised Qa'im.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida replied: 'Your Royal Highness!

You yourself have written a book on geography.

If such a city exists, a city which is claimed to have 70,000 gates, and according to others 100,000, please tell me in which part of the world you have placed it in your geography; show me where in your book you have referred to it and described it; then I shall accept all your arguments.' This retort went home and incensed the prince.

He kept hitting the ground with his walking-stick and shouted: 'Akhund!

Akhund!

Stop!

This Baha'u'llah to whom you have lost your heart, I know well.

Many a time he has been my companion in drinking bouts: he is a bibber of wine.' Mulla Muhammad-Rida kept his composure and replied: 'Your Royal Highness is, must be, well aware of the law of Islam: the testimony of a wrongdoer regarding another cannot be entertained.

You yourself have here owned to drinking wine; therefore, your testimony regarding Baha'u'llah is inadmissible.' Prince Farhad Mirza could bear it no longer, and angrily stamped out of the room.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida's repartee was truly brilliant and accorded with the prescriptions of Islam. [1.

Akhund is a term applied to the turbaned men of learning, particularly the divines.] Mulla Muhammad-Rida came out safely from that imprisonment.

Some thirteen years later Nasiri'd-Din Shah was assassinated [1 May 1896].

Mulla Muhammad-Rida was then in Qum.

He was present in a mosque, when one of the clergy ascended a pulpit and called to the people assembled: 'Look!

0 men, these detested Babis have murdered the sovereign.

He has fallen a martyr at their hands.

They are pestilential.

They ought to be crushed!' Amidst the hush of the people and the raging of the divine, Mulla Muhammad-Rida spoke out: 'Akhund!

Akhund!

You are mistaken: this is not the doing of these people.

They cannot have committed this crime.' The people were astounded and turned to Mulla Muhammad-Rida: 'Akhund!

How dare you defend these Babis?

Are you one of them?' Mulla Muhammad-Rida calmly replied: 'Of course I am one of them.' He was seized, sent to Tihran and thrown into the Siyah-Chal.

This second time he did not leave the prison alive.

The incomparable Baha'i scholar and teacher, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan, writes in his great work Kitab-i-Fara'id (pp.

110-14), a book unparalleled in both its range and depth:

In the year AH 1300, certain events came to pass in Iran.

In most of the cities they set upon these people [Baha'is].

Everywhere they seized a number of them, who were innocent of any wrongdoing, and put them in prison.

In Tihran too by the orders of Nayibu's-Saltinih, Prince Kamran Mirza who was the Minister of War as well as the Governor of the capital and the province of Mazindaran, a number were detained and gaoled.

Amongst <p102> these prisoners, four came from the ranks of the learned and the rest were tradesmen and merchants.

Mirza Muhammad-Riday-i-Muhammadabadi of Yazd was one of the four--a man distinguished by his old age and constancy.

Although, at the beginning, the aim of the Amir[1] was only to ease the situation and silence the mischief-makers; yet bit by bit, due to the uprising of the divines, the aiding and abetting of powerful men, the incitement of the high-positioned, and the promptings of self, views were greatly changed and the matter assumed considerable importance.

The flare-up of prejudices caused the authorities to overlook that which was for the good of the state and the nation, until most of the leading figures of the country became determined to destroy these greatly-wronged people.

To carry out their corrupt and impossible designs they resorted to all kinds of means and intrigues.

Briefly, in those days, time and time again, meetings were held for enquiry and argument in the governing circles.

All manner of debate and proof-seeking was introduced.

Evidently, with them, it is a canon of opposition to begin by resorting to that which they consider to be axioms of faith and belief.

And when they receive irrefutable answers and find themselves unable to pose any proof, they turn to miracle-seeking and the supernatural.

Having been worsted and brought to their knees in that arena as well, they resort to the last weapon of the transgressor and the evil-intentioned and that is slaying of the innocent and incarcerating the helpless.

Thus it was that in those meetings, after repeated argumentation and verbal assaults, lengthy and detailed, the end came with demanding miracles.

Those who were <p103> prominent amongst the friends, one and all, said: 'So be it: the way is clear, the post and the telegraph afford ample facility for presenting your request.

While the Sun of Truth is here effulgent, and the Most Sacred Person of the Manifestation of God is here unveiled, how good it would be if the holders of governmental authority and the learned of the land would combine and choose a miracle, a supernatural deed, decide on the day for its fulfilment, inform the inhabitants of Tihiran, and then cable their request to His Blessed Person; so that truth might be revealed and differences effaced from the midst of the nation.' [1.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl refers to Prince Kamran Mirza as Amir Kabir.] One day, the Amir summoned me to one of those assemblages already mentioned.

A number of the grandees and men holding positions of authority were present at that meeting.

The Amir, after bidding me sit down, turned to me and said: 'Abu'l-Fadl!

Mirza Muhammad-Riday-i-Yazdi says: "You choose whatever miracle you wish and cable your choice to the Most Sacred Presence, and declare it also; undoubtedly, God, great is His glory, will evince and grant that supernatural deed which you have asked for, and will reveal His power to the people.

But, were that to happen which I consider to be impossible, and that power should not be revealed, I would rise to assist you and would make public everywhere my repudiation of the Babis.'" I replied: 'Your Royal Highness well knows of the Mirza's veracity and constancy in the Cause of God.

Without the slightest doubt, he must have total assurance to make such a bold, emphatic assertion.' The Amir then said: 'What is your view and what do you think of it?' I replied: 'Why do you <p104> hesitate, why linger?

You who, in all of these gatherings, after resorting to every means, cling to miracles and constantly say that if this Advent is that Advent promised to us, why does He not bring forth miracles; now that the leading figures of this Cause show such constancy and promise you the working of miracles, why do you hesitate and who or what prevents making the request?

By God!

They have completed their proof and have with strength and assurance established their case.

Why do you not pay heed, but instead, for the sake of those who if closely looked at and investigated would be found to be the worst enemies of the State, do not follow the dictates of wisdom in such grave matters?' In these respects, such matters were discussed and presented as must engage the attention of those who are possessed of discernment and cause them wonderment.

However, to tabulate and marshal all the arguments here would unnecessarily lengthen this narrative.

But to cite a few examples, I said: 'My Lord!

Do not assume that slaying and imprisonment will stem the influence of this Cause, and do not think that faith and belief will alter by torment and suppression.

Rather, should the matter be viewed with a discerning eye, it could be plainly seen that putting people to death will tend to increase the worth of this Cause, and the harshness of injunction will serve to intensify the desire of the people to enquire and investigate.

If you desire your own good and the good of the nation you should resort to provisions of justice, and view this Cause with perception and not hostility, that perchance a good name, an admired name should become your legacy to posterity in books and written accounts; and whatever has been said regarding the deniers of past ages should not be said regarding you.' Much of this manner of advice, devoid of self-interest, was offered.

But jealousy prevailed.

The enmity of divines and the assault of vain imaginings stood in the way.

Advice was discarded.

Consequences were not taken into account, until the hands of the All-Powerful rolled up all the outspread circumstances and the hallucinations [of the adversary] did not materialize.

That which remained eminent and proven was that neither could the influence of the Cause of God be stemmed by oppression and suppression, nor could one wipe out the story of these events from the pages of history, as if they had never happened.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl has paid glowing tribute to the quality of

Mulla Muhammad-Rida's courage and his unswerving faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha mentions it, when He Himself was lauding Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's humility and selflessness. 'Abdu'l-Baha recounted in a meeting, held in His house in Haifa after the death of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, that despite his own brilliant contribution to the arguments conducted in the presence of Prince Kamran Mirza, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl always stoutly and meekly maintained that on those occasions the pride of place belonged to Mulla Muhammad-Rida and he outshone them all by his boldness, firmness and certitude. <p105> One night, it is related, Prince Kamran Mirza called Mulla Muhammad-Rida to his own private apartments to have dinner with him.

Dinner over, he suddenly turned to the prisoner with this abrupt question: 'Akhund!

Tell me: whom do you consider Baha'u'llah to be--an Imam or a Prophet?' Not at a loss for an answer, Mulla Muhammad-Rida replied: 'Your Royal Highness!

We recognize in Him the Ancient Beauty, the Manifestation of God, the Dawning-Place of the Sun of Divinity, the Horizon whereupon has appeared the Light of the Unseen Who is beyond all comprehension.

Should we do otherwise we would have denied all the Prophets Who came in past ages, and the Glad Tidings imparted by Them would have been made senseless, since They have foretold the Advent of the Lord of Hosts, the Heavenly Father, the day when men will come face to face with the Godhead.

We refer to Him by these names, which are not of our own invention.

Moreover, it is not names that we look up to, because Baha'u'llah is sanctified beyond all names, designations, appellation and description.

He is both the Lord of Names and independent of names.' Then Mulla Muhammad-R&la went on to present the Prince with proofs and pointers.

The next day the prisoners were, as usual, brought to the assemblage where the great and mighty of the land had gathered, although that whole pretence of investigation was a mockery of justice, as is seen elsewhere in this volume.

'Well,' said Prince Kamran Mirza, turning to Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, 'what is your view of Mulla Muhammad-Rida; do you consider him to be a truthful person, is he an honest man?' To which query Haji Akhund replied: 'Indeed and indeed, he is a truthful person; he never lies.' Now Kamran Mirza found his chance to score a decisive point. 'If that is so,' he said, 'then the rest of you are all liars and deceivers.

You have been telling me all along that in Baha'u'llah you witness the Return of Husayn [Rij'at-i-Husayni], whereas Mulla Muhammad-Rida tells me that the Light of the Invisible Godhead is shining in the Person of Baha'u'llah.' Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar was amazed and said mildly, 'Your Royal Highness!

Mulla Muhammad-Rida is the Sufi of the Babis, waxing extravagant.' Then, Mulla Muhammad-Rida himself intervened: 'Your Royal Highness!

You listen to me.

What I have said is the truth.

These are the samovar-centred Baha'is: when the samovar is boiling and they are seated somewhere safe and secure, they all say the same <p106> as I have told you.

That is the belief of all; but now, at the time of testing, they draw a veil over it all and follow the dictates of circumspection.' After that there was only silence.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida's courage and outspokenness contributed in no small measure to the eventual release of all the Baha'is.

This erstwhile divine of Yazd was a man of great vision.

He had a clear picture in his mind of a vast and magnificent town with a splendid House of Worship (Mashriqu'l-Adhkar) dedicated to the glory of Baha'u'llah.

His notion of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar was one constructed with translucent crystal.

In the vicinity of Kirman he came upon a lake which was fed with melting snow and rainwater, and below the lake <p107> there was an extensive area of barren land.

All by himself, he set about working on that land.

Here he was going to have his dream realized.

But it was not to be.

He was arrested, taken to the city and put into gaol.

When he was taken away, some five hundred digging tools of various kind were left around that wasteland.

His labour was necessarily slow because of his advanced age, and when he was arrested and his work was halted he said that there would be another day.

Then people from neighbouring villages came and helped themselves to the tools which Mulla Muhammad-Rida had gathered in that desolate spot.

And yet this saintly and selfless man was a bon vivant.

The life he lived was a testimony to the fact that detachment and monasticism are poles apart.

Detachment is not denying oneself all the good things that this world has to offer; but disallowing anything, abstract or material, to pose a barrier between oneself and the recognition and acceptance of Truth, however hard and exacting it might be to take and tread that shining path.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida always stood fearlessly by the side of the Truth which he

professed.

And he lived well and ate very well, for he was a keen connoisseur, in fact an unashamed gourmet.

He chose his lamb while still a suckling, and fed it with delicious sweets, with nuts and spices, such as cardamom and cloves.

Frequently he had guests to share with him his repast.

The tidiness of his mien and manners was extraordinary.

Once, in his native city of Yazd, the divines vented their rage on him and caused the governor to have him bastinadoed in public.

That was done in seven thoroughfares.

In each spot Mulla Muhammad-Rida would neatly divest himself of his turban, his 'aba and his socks, place them in an orderly fashion on a handkerchief and stretch out his feet, inviting his tormentors to do their caning.

And he never flinched, never uttered a cry of pain, to the amazement of the passers-by and the discomfiture of those who wanted to humiliate and torture him.

In the course of his first imprisonment in Tihiran, Mulla Muhammad-Rida's frankness so aroused the ire of Mashhadi 'Ali, the gaoler, that he took him out into the prison yard, stripped him of his clothes and lashed him so hard on his bare skin that soon his back became a mass of weals and wounds.

Siyyid Asadu'llah-i-Qumi, who shared his chain with him at night, wished to smear that lacerated back with yolks of eggs, to bring the saintly sufferer some relief.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida told him: 'Aqa Siyyid Asadu'llah!

Do you think <p108> that when they were punishing me, I was aware of what they were doing?

O Siyyid!

I was in the presence of the Blessed Perfection, speaking with Him!' A certain Ghulam-Rida Khan, one of the notables of Tihiran, also happened to be incarcerated at this very time.

He particularly noticed the heroism and endurance of Mulla Muhammad-Rida.

And that led him to give his allegiance to Baha'u'llah.

Whenever asked what it was that made him a Baha'i, he always said 'lashing', and would quickly add: 'Nothing but what I saw of the blissful constancy of that man under the impact of those lashes could have ever induced me to turn to the Faith of Baha'u'llah.' Another fellow-prisoner was a poor Jew--sad, forlorn, helpless and shunned.

He was not allowed into the bath, and he had no change of clothing.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida watched the miserable plight of that solitary figure with increasing concern, until he could stand it no longer.

He proposed to Siyyid Asadu'llah that together they should give that poor Jew a decent wash in the pool of the prison yard and provide him with a clean shirt, which they proceeded to do.

The Jew was overwhelmed and wished to know why they were so kind and considerate to him.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida told him that it was the command and counsel of his Heavenly Father which made him do what he was doing.

He, the Father of them all, had made it a duty to consort with the followers of all religions in perfect harmony.

During his second imprisonment in Tihiran two of his fellow-Baha'is chained with him were Haji Iman and Mirza Husayn, both natives of Zanjan.

Mirza Husayn has bequeathed to posterity the story of that time, and particularly of Mulla Muhammad-Rida.

He witnessed also and has described the martyrdom in that prison of the noble poet Varqa together with his heroic young son, Ruhu'llah, at the hands of the brutal Hajibu'd-Dawlih (see chap.

7).

And it was to Mirza Husayn that 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed these lines, after his release from prison:

O thou imprisoned for the sake of the Ancient of Days!

Don a pilgrim's garb, and then give Me My fill to drink and tell Me:

Lo, this is wine.

O Cup-bearer!

When thou givest Me that wine to drink, tell Me:

Lo, this is wine, so that My ears too may take delight.

In numerous letters we have read the astounding story of Varqa and Ruhu'llah, yet I desire to hear it with Mine Own ears as well. (Quoted in Sulaymani, vol.

I, pp.

210-11) Aqa Mirza Husayn relates that one day they brought in a young man named 'Ali, a native of Hamadan, and chained him with them.

He had been accused of robbery. <p109> [He] had no shirt.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida said to me: 'Mirza Husayn!

This man too is a servant of the Blessed Beauty, although he does not know his Master.

He is bare and we have an extra shirt between us; let us give it to him.' I replied: 'I have just washed that shirt; I will give it to you to wear, and you give the shirt that you are wearing now to this young man.' At that, Mulla Muhammad-Rida flared up: 'Do you know what you are saying, Mirza Husayn?

Are you not a Baha'i?

I would be ashamed to offer my dirty shirt to the Blessed Beauty.' I gave the clean shirt to 'Ali, who gratefully wore it.

And that was a lesson to me.

Mirza Husayn writes that he prayed to be granted the same degree of certitude which Mulla Muhammad-Rida had attained; and says that whatever was given to him Mulla Muhammad-Rida considered to be a bounty from Baha'u'llah, and whatever he, himself, gave to others, he considered to be an offering to Baha'u'llah.

By now the nightmarish reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah had reached its end and Muzaffari'd-Din Shah was the ruler of Iran.

He was not vindictive and erratic, but weak, kind-hearted and vacillating.

A number of Baha'i ladies sent him a cable from Shah-'Abdu'l-'Azim, begging him to set the Baha'is free.

The capable but devious Aminu's-Sulan had fallen from power, and in his place as Prime Minister sat Mirza 'Ali Khan, the Aminu'd-Dawlih, a disciple and friend of Prince (or Mirza) Malkam Khan.

Muzaffari'd-Din Shah gave him the telegram he had received from the Baha'i ladies, and asked him to investigate the matter.

It was decided to take the five prisoners to the house of Aminu'd-Dawlih.

Aqa Muhammad-Quliy-i-'Attar (the Druggist), Siyyid Fattah, Haji Iman and Mirza Husayn tied by one chain, and Mulla Muhammad-Rida tied by a smaller one, were moved out of the prison and, escorted by soldiers, were paraded in the streets amidst a gaping, jeering populace, all the way to the home of the Prime Minister.

Their progress was slow, both because of the press of people, and their own inability to keep a steady pace after sixteen months of little exercise in gaol.

The four managed to go ahead, but Mulla Muhammad-Rida a much older man, collapsed.

Porters had to be forced into service to carry him.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida jested so much with the sergeant in charge about the quality of his 'steed', to the annoyance of the porters, the amusement of the public and the consternation of the Baha'i ladies who moved with them mixed with the crowd, that the porter carrying him on his back nearly dropped him in the middle of the road.

Then one of the ladies went near him and whispered: <p110> 'Akhund, for God's sake, keep quiet.' Mulla Muhammad-Rida replied: 'I shall obey!

I am both deaf and dumb.' Mirza Husayn says that it took them nearly two hours to reach the house of Aminu'd-Dawlih, who was at the door to meet them.

To his query, Mulla Muhammad-Rida made no answer, pretending now that he could neither hear nor speak.

The people were now doubled up with laughter.

The crowd was thickening outside the house of Aminu'd-Dawlih as the prisoners were led to the house of his farrash-bashi.

There they were relieved of their chains, given a decent meal sent from the kitchen of the Prime Minister, and had a good night's rest, after languishing for all that long time in prison.

The farrash-bashi was awaiting the arrival of the royal rescript to let the prisoners go, but Aminu'd-Dawlih himself, without any further ado, ordered their release.

However, at this critical juncture, as the prisoners were about to leave, a divine, who was a siyyid as well, accompanied by a number of theological students, came riding by as they returned from the house of the Prime Minister.

It was raining and the farrash-bashi invited them to take shelter in his house while the rain lasted.

Learning that the Baha'i prisoners were there and would shortly be going to their homes, the siyyid expressed his desire to meet them.

But all refused to see him, saying that they were not well enough, except <p111> for Mulla Muhammad-Rida.

The other four begged him to desist and not to put his neck into a noose, but he was adamant and would not listen to them: he would not run away, he stoutly asserted.

Aqa Muhammad-Quli, Mirza Husayn writes, exclaimed in anguish: 'May God preserve us from the ill-advised actions of this Akhund and that Siyyid.' The four sat in trepidation as Mulla Muhammad-Rida went into another room to meet the siyyid.

Within fifteen minutes, according to Mirza Husayn, pandemonium broke loose in the other room: the theological students were beating Mulla Muhammad-Rida and he was shouting at the top of his voice to the siyyid: 'You who could not prove the truth of the Faith of your forefathers, how dare you tell me to curse Subh-i-Azal?

You who do not know who Subh-i-Azal is and why he should be cursed, are trying to make me soil my tongue.' Then Mulla Muhammad-Rida rejoined his fellow-believers, who admonished him, but he was unrepentant and replied: 'I did well to go...

I put him in his place.' The siyyid must have been terribly confused, taking Mulla Muhammad-Rida to be a follower of Azal.

He immediately wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, saying: 'It will be most injudicious to set this old, insolent Babi free.' On receipt of that letter, Aminu'd-Dawlih ordered the release of the four Zanjanis and further detention of Mulla Muhammad-Rida, whose case he would personally investigate at a later date.

Now it became obvious that Mulla Muhammad-Rida was not reprieved, at least for the time being.

Mirza Husayn, in despair, appealed to the sergeant not to return the old man to the prison, as he had no one there to look after him, and promised the sergeant seven tumans, in consideration of his kind-heartedness.

Hearing this, Mulla Muhammad-Rida said laughingly that it reminded him of the story of Shaykh Faridi'd-Din-i-'Attar and his Mongol captor.

He told the sergeant: 'You are offered seven tumans, but I am not worth it.

Give me two tumans, and I will walk straight back to the prison.' However, the sergeant promised not to put Mulla Muhammad-Rida once again in the gaol, but he did not keep his word.

Haji Iman visited that noble man in the dreary gaol the next day.

Mulla Muhammad-Rida asked for some kind of broth.

Haji Iman took it to him, and left him some money as well.

Being left alone, Mulla Muhammad-Rida soon succumbed to the rigours of prison life.

Within ten days he passed out of this world; at peace with himself, with his fellow-men and with his Maker. <p112> 9 Nabli-Akbar 'There was, in the city of Najaf,' 'Abdu'l-Baha has recounted, among the disciples of the widely known mujtahid, Shaykh Murtada,[1] a man without likeness or peer.

His name was Aqa Muhammad-i-Qa'ini, and later on he would receive, from the Manifestation, the title of Nabil-i-Akbar.

This eminent soul became the leading member of the mujtahid's company of disciples.

Singled out from among them all, he alone was given the rank of mujtahid--for the late Shaykh Murtada was never wont to confer this degree. [1.

When at the instigation of the cleric, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani, Shi'ih divines gathered together to concert plans against Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, Shaykh Murtaday-i-Ansari refused to associate himself with their aims and objects. (See Balyuzi, Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, pp.

142-3.) He excelled not only theology but in other branches of knowledge, such as the humanities, the philosophy of the Illuminati, the

teachings of the mystics and of the Shaykhi School.

He was a universal man, in himself alone a convincing proof.

When his eyes were opened to the light of Divine guidance, and he breathed in the fragrances of Heaven, he became a flame of God.

Then his heart leapt within him, and in an ecstasy of joy and love, he roared out like leviathan in the deep. (Memorials of the Faithful, p.

1) Indeed, Aqa Muhammad-i-Qa'ini, Nabil-i-Akbar, also known as Fadil-i-Qa'ini (the Learned One of Qa'in), was a man of great knowledge.

It has been claimed that no one within the enclave of the Baha'i Faith has ever surpassed the profundity of his erudition.

As far as the accomplishment demanded of a Shi'ih mujtahid is concerned, his attainment was superb, but naturally he had little knowledge of the lore and the scholarship of the West.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan, on the other hand, was well versed in Islamic studies and had a wide and comprehensive knowledge of Western thought as well.

This comment is just a diversion, and certainly is not meant to cast a slur on the intellectual eminence of Nabil-i-Akbar, the learned sage of Qa'in.

When Aqa Muhammad of Qa'in had completed his studentship under Shaykh Murtaday-i-Ansari, and had obtained his sanction and blessing, he moved from Najaf to Baghdad.

Here, in the city of the <p113> 'Abbasids, he found himself in the presence of Baha'u'llah.

As Aqa Muhammad himself has related, having received him most graciously, Baha'u'llah asked him smilingly and in a light vein: 'Do you not know that we are offenders in the eyes of the government and have been cast out?

People, too, regard us as outlaws and spurn us.

You are a learned man, a mujtahid, and highly respected.

Whoever comes to meet us and consorts with us, he too becomes suspect and blameworthy in the eyes of the public.

How then did you dare to come to us, not sparing yourself and without concern for your own position and status?'[1] Then, very kindly, Baha'u'llah invited Aqa Muhammad to stay as His guest, instructing Mirza Aqa Jan to act as host and see to the comfort of that distinguished pupil of Shaykh Murtada. [1.

The above are reported words of Baha'u'llah, not to be equated with His writings.] * * * * * [Electronic editor's note:

In the Foreward to this book, p. x, Moojan Momen writes: '...the present writer has contributed short accounts... [The] additions are clearly indicated

in the text ... where the added material follows a line of asterisks.']

Nabil-i-Akbar was born in a village, Naw-Firist, near Birjand in the district of Qa'in, on 29 March 1829.

He came from a family of eminent clerics and received the usual religious education, going first to Mashhad to study under the distinguished divines of that town.

While there, he became interested in the study of philosophy and so he travelled to Sabzivar where Haji Mulla Hadi, the most eminent Persian philosopher of the nineteenth century, was delivering classes.

After five years of study, Nabil set out for the Holy Shrines of Najaf and Karbala in order to complete his education.

It was the year 1852 and the persecutions of the Babis following the attempt on the life of the Shah were at their height as Nabil entered Tihran.

Through the instrument of certain ill-disposed persons Nabil found himself arrested as a Babi.

He protested his innocence and obtained his freedom but the incident set him thinking, and later when he had an opportunity he studied the writings of the Bab and became a believer.

In 'Iraq, Nabil attended the classes of the eminent mujtahids there and, in particular, those of Shaykh Murtaday-i-Ansari, obtaining the rank of mujtahid.

On his way back to Iran, Nabil stayed in Baghdad for a time where he met Baha'u'llah.

Nabil himself has written how at first he was blind to Baha'u'llah's station and would always take the most prominent position at the meetings of the Babis and deliver an address.

Then one day Baha'u'llah began to discourse on a point and resolved the matter in such a manner that Nabil realized his own ignorance in comparison.

<p114> Having returned to his home town, Nabil began to teach the Faith.

Although he was received at first with great honour and distinction, opposition began to mount.

Eventually he was arrested and after a period of imprisonment in Birjand he was sent to Mashhad.

The governor there, Sultan-Murad Mirza, Hisamu's-Saltanih, released Nabil, but on his return to Qa'in, he was again arrested and taken to Tihran in 1869.

The 'ulama of Tihran plotted to kill Nabil and he had to flee.

He proceeded to 'Akka where he remained a short time before being instructed by Baha'u'llah to return to Iran to teach the Faith.

Nabil travelled through all parts of Iran and was soon being hunted by <p115> the authorities as a believer.

He was eventually arrested in Sabzivar but so impressed the governor of that town that he enabled Nabil to slip away to 'Ishqabad.

From 'Ishqabad, he proceeded with Mirza Abu'l-Fadl to Bukhara.

There Nabil fell ill and died on 6 July 1892. 'Abdu'l-Baha designated Nabil-i-Akbar a Hand of the Cause of God, the Guardian of the Faith included him among the Apostles of Baha'u'llah, and it was to him that the Lawh-i-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom) was addressed.

In the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, '...because he stood steadfast in this holy Faith, because he guided souls and served this Cause and spread its fame, that star, Nabil, will shine forever from the horizon of abiding light.'[1] [1.

The reader is referred to the inspiring description of Nabil-i-Akbar's life and achievement in Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

1-5] <p116> 10 The Nobleman of Tunukabun Conqueror of India One of the Bab's Letters of the Living was an Indian:

Shaykh Sa'id-i-Hindi.

Almost nothing is known about him except that he was a disciple of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti.

His end is also shrouded in total obscurity.

It is certain that he left almost no imprint in the annals of the Faith.

Then, at the time the Bab was incarcerated in Chihriq, an Indian dervish arrived there.

His identity was known to no one, and to this day no one knows who that dervish was.

The Bab named him Qahru'llah (The Wrath of God).

And all that Qahru'llah would say about himself was this:

In the days when I occupied the exalted position of a navvab in India, the Bab appeared to me in a vision.

He gazed at me and won my heart completely.

I arose, and had started to follow Him, when He looked at me intently and said: 'Divest yourself of your gorgeous attire, depart from your native land, and hasten on foot to meet Me in Adhirbayjan.

In Chihriq you will attain your heart's desire.' I followed His directions and have now reached my goal. (Nabil-i-A'zam, The Dawn-Breakers, p.

305) The Bab told Qahru'llah to go back to India, in the same garb and by the same way he had come.

Then, this strange dervish passed as swiftly out of the arena of history as he had entered it.

Who he was and what happened to him remain mysterious.

The next man from India who comes into view in Babi-Baha'i history is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, named Siyyid Basir, who was devoid of sight but possessed of a keen mind and remarkable spiritual susceptibilities.

Nabil-i-A'zam maintains that it was Shaykh Sa'id-i-Hindi who, in the town of Mooltan (Multan), met Siyyid Basir and gave him the tidings of the Advent of the Bab.

But Mirza Husayn-i-Hamadani records this of him in his *Tarikh-i-Jadid* (New History): <p117> ...at the age of twenty-one, he set out with great pomp and state (for he had much wealth in India) to perform the pilgrimage; and, on reaching Persia, began to associate with every sect and party (for he was well acquainted with the doctrines and tenets of all), and to give away large sums of money in charity to the poor, submitting himself the while to the most rigorous religious discipline.

And since his ancestors had foretold that in those days a Perfect Man should appear in Persia, he was continually engaged in making enquiries.

He visited Mecca, and, after performing the rites of the pilgrimage, proceeded to the holy shrines of Karbila and Najaf, where he met the late Haji Siyyid Kazim, for whom he conceived a sincere friendship.

He then returned to India; but, on reaching Bombay, he heard that one claiming to be the Bab had appeared in Persia, whereupon he at once turned back thither. (Quoted in Nabil-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp.

588-9n) Let the inimitable Nabil relate the rest of the story of this Indian scion of the Prophet Muhammad. 'Casting behind him the trappings of leadership, and severing himself from his friends and kinsmen, he arose with a fixed resolve to render his share of service to the Cause he had embraced.' (Nabil-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p.

589) Siyyid Basir first visited Shiraz, but to his great disappointment found that the Bab was not there.

So despondently he took the road to Tihiran and from Tihiran he went to Nur.

Nabil writes that in Nur Siyyid Basir 'met Baha'u'llah'.

He goes on to say:

This meeting relieved his heart from the burden of sorrow caused by his failure to meet his Master.

To those he subsequently met, of whatever class or creed, he imparted the joys and blessings he had so abundantly received from the hands of Baha'u'llah, and was able to endow them with a measure of the power with which his intercourse with Him had invested his innermost being.

I have heard Shaykh Shahid-i-Mazkan relate the following: 'I was privileged to meet Siyyid Basir ... during his passage through Qamsar...

Day and night, I found him engaged in arguing with the leading 'ulamas who had congregated in that village.

With ability and insight, he discussed with them the subtleties of their Faith, expounded without fear or reservation the fundamental teachings of the Cause, and absolutely confuted their arguments...

Such were his insight and his knowledge of the teachings and ordinances of Islam that his adversaries conceived him to be a sorcerer, whose baneful influence they feared would ere long rob them of their position.' I have similarly heard Mulla Ibrahim, surnamed Mulla Bashi, who was martyred in Sultanabad [present-day Arak], thus recount his impression of Siyyid Basir: 'Towards the end of his life, Siyyid Basir passed through Sultanabad, where I was able to meet him.

He was continually associated with the leading 'ulamas.

No one could surpass his knowledge of the Qur'an <p118> and his mastery of the traditions ascribed to Muhammad.

He displayed an understanding which made him the terror of his adversaries...

He stood unrivalled alike in the fluency of his argument and the facility with which he brought out the most incontrovertible proofs in support of his theme.' (Nabil-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp.

589-90) Next, according to Nabil-i-A'zam, Siyyid Basir journeyed to Luristan and visited Ildirim Mirza, a brother of Muhammad Shah, who received him with honours due to him, as a nobleman from India and a descendant of the Prophet.

However, one day Siyyid Basir spoke of Muhammad Shah in a way that aroused the ire of the prince.

Nabil writes: 'He was furious at the tone and vehemence of his remarks, and ordered that his tongue be pulled out through the back of his neck.' This savage treatment, which Siyyid Basir patiently endured, led to his death.

Nabil goes on to say:

The same week a letter, in which Ildirim Mirza had abused his brother, Khanlar Mirza, was discovered by the latter, who immediately obtained the consent of his sovereign [Nasiri'd-Din Shah] to treat him in whatever way he pleased.

Khanlar Mirza, who entertained an implacable hatred for his brother, ordered that he be stripped of his clothes and conducted, naked and in chains, to Ardibil, where he was imprisoned and where eventually he died. (Nabil-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p.

590) Nabil-i-A'zam had some time before, at the request of Mirza Ahmad-i-Katib, taken a copy of the *Dala'il-i-Sab'ih*, one of the well-known works of the Bab, to Ildirim Mirza.

Apparently the Qajar prince had been glad to receive it and had told Nabil that

he was devoted to the Bab.

He had also written a letter to Mirza Ahmad and given it to Nabil to deliver to that amanuensis of the Bab.

When Nabil returned from the prince's camp, he heard from Mirza Ahmad at Kirmanshah that Baha'u'llah was in that town, on His way to Karbila.

Going into His presence in the company of Mirza Ahmad, Nabil spoke of the mission he had fulfilled on behalf of his companion and of Ildirim Mirza's response.

Baha'u'llah had observed: 'The faith which a member of the Qajar dynasty professes cannot be depended upon.

His declarations are insincere.

Expecting that the Babis will one day assassinate the sovereign, he harbours in his heart the hope of being acclaimed by them the successor.

The love he professes for the Bab is actuated by that motive.' (Nabil-i-A'zam, The Dawn-Breakers, p.

588) And to bring to its end the story of that wonderful and courageous nobleman from India, it ought to be noted that Siyyid Basir was one of <p119> the first to see the hollowness of the contentions of Subh-i-Azal.

Neither Shaykh Sa'id, nor Qahrullah, nor Siyyid Basir left a permanent trace of their work in the land of their birth.

The man whom Providence had destined to become the spiritual father of the subcontinent and of Burma was a nobleman of the same province of Iran which had been the home of the ancestors of Baha'u'llah.

His name was Sulayman Khan and he was a native of Tunukabun.

But when he set out in the world to serve the Cause of Baha'u'llah, he left behind the garb of a nobleman and attired in the garment of a humble man of the cloister travelled far and wide. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that he 'was given the title of Jamali'd-Din'.

He became known as Jamal Effendi. <p120> Jamal Effendi Sulayman Khan was the son of 'Isa Khan-i-Tunukabuni. 'Isa Khan was a man of substance and influence in his area of Mazindaran.

But his son decided to try his luck in Tihran.

It was in the capital city of Iran, the city in which Baha'u'llah was born, that Sulayman Khan had his tryst with fate.

There he met his destiny, which was not to rise to high position in the temporal realm, but to scale spiritual heights.

He gave his allegiance to Baha'u'llah, donned the garb of a dervish and took to

the road.

Forsaking his wealth, his earthly attachments, his position and station in life, and possessing an Ottoman passport, he roamed for a long time over the Ottoman domains, making his way to the Holy Land. 'Abdu'l-Baha says:

Here for a time he rested, under the protection of the Ancient Beauty; here he gained the honor of entering the presence of Baha'u'llah, and listened to momentous teachings from His holy lips.

When he had breathed the scented air, when his eyes were illumined and his ears attuned to the words of the Lord, he was permitted to make a journey to India, and bidden to teach the true seekers after truth.

Resting his heart on God, in love with the sweet savors of God, on fire with the love of God, he left for India.

There he wandered, and whenever he came to a city he raised the call of the Great Kingdom and delivered the good news that the Speaker of the Mount had come.

He became one of God's farmers, <p121> scattering the holy seed of the Teachings.

The sowing was fruitful.

Through him a considerable number found their way into the Ark of Salvation...

To this day, in India, the results of his auspicious presence are clear to see, and those whom he taught are now, in their turn, guiding others to the Faith. (Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

135-6) The Afnans in Bombay In the course of the nineteenth century Bombay had developed into a thriving commercial centre.

The Afnans, relatives of the Bab, had gradually built up what amounted to a trading empire, stretching from Hong Kong to Baku.

They had a branch in Bombay, where a number of them resided.

Mirza Ibrahim, a son of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, one of the two brothers of the wife of the Bab, established a printing-press and publishing house in Bombay.

Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim lived in Shiraz, but the other brother, Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, known as Afnan-i-Kabir--the Great Afnan--lived in Beirut, until he retired to 'Akka, where Edward Granville Browne met him with obvious delight in the year 1890.

A son of the Great Afnan, Haji Siyyid Mirza, had a long sojourn in Bombay, later to be replaced by one of his brothers named Haji Siyyid Muhammad.

Another of the Afnans, Aqa Mirza Aqa Nuri'd-Din, also resided in Bombay for a while, but he soon moved to Port Sa'id.

Haji Mirza Mahmud, a grandson of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad (the maternal

uncle of the Bab, in answer to whose questions Baha'u'llah revealed the Kitab-i-Iqan--The Book of Certitude), also took part for a while in the affairs of the Bombay branch.

It was in the printing-press and by the publishing house, named Nasiri, which the Afnans owned in Bombay, that the Writings of Baha'u'llah were printed for the first time.

The eminent calligraphist, Miskin-Qalam, went to Bombay for the purpose of writing copies to be lithographed.

And so too did Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the second son of Baha'u'llah who was also a distinguished calligraphist, as well as Muhammad-Husayn Khartumi.

The Afnans in Bombay had a few other Persian Baha'is with them, similarly engaged.

With them also was Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Afshar of Yazd, a learned man who wrote the book entitled Dala'ilu'l-'Irfan (Proofs of Knowledge), a polemical work setting forth proofs gleaned from Scriptures and Traditions sustaining the truth of the Baha'i Faith.

That book was printed in Bombay, three to <p122> four years after the Ascension of Baha'u'llah.

Despite this gathering of a number of Persian Baha'is in Bombay, no effort had been made to bring the Faith of Baha'u'llah to the notice of the Indian people.

The Afnans and others became acutely aware of the fact that they needed a teacher and sent a petition to Baha'u'llah, stating their case.

They undertook to meet all the expenses.

Thus it was that Baha'u'llah directed Sulayman Khan, now generally spoken of as Jamal Effendi, to India.

And thus it was that the nobleman of Tunukabun became the spiritual father of the subcontinent.

Jamal Effendi in India and Beyond In the year 1878, Jamal Effendi, accompanied by Mirza Husayn, a relative, reached Bombay.

There he began his sojourn and travelling in the subcontinent, which lasted for eleven years.

Dressed as a dervish he lived the simple, dedicated life of a true darvish.

He met people from all walks of life, fearing nothing, asking no favour.

He became known as Darvish Jamalu'd-Din, the Babi.

He had some of <p123> the Writings of Baha'u'llah printed and widely circulated.

Thus he guided a considerable number, here and there in the subcontinent, to

embrace the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

He visited Ceylon (Sri Lanka of today), which was known to the Persians as the island of Sarandib.

In Colombo, Sulayman Khan met strong opposition from some of the leaders of the Buddhists and suffered much hardship.

Mirza Husayn was taken ill in Ceylon and died there: the first Baha'i to be buried in that delectable island, where, as legend had it, Adam, the first man, came down upon the Earth.

Jamal Effendi visited Burma as well, but did not prolong his sojourn there.

After more than a decade of constant travelling and teaching, Jamal Effendi asked two of the newly-converted Baha'is of the subcontinent--one an engraver and the other a hatter--to accompany him, and also he took with him a lad named Bashir whom he had chosen for service in the household of Baha'u'llah.

The four of them sailed for Egypt, whence they went to the Holy Land.

But soon after reaching the presence of Baha'u'llah, Jamal Effendi was directed by Him to return to India and continue the excellent pioneering work he had begun.

Thus we find him once again in the subcontinent, in the year 1888, accompanied by Haji Faraju'llah-i-Tafrishi, one of the 'Akka exiles. <p124> Now, he spent a period of time in Burma and went beyond the subcontinent east to Java, Siam (Thailand) and Singapore; and in the north from Kashmir to Tibet, from Tibet to Yarqand and Khuqand (in Chinese Turkistan), then to Badakhshan and Balkh (in Afghanistan).

Amir 'Abdu'r-Rahman Khan of Afghanistan, ruthless and harsh, refused to allow Jamal Effendi to visit Kabul.

In reply to his letter, written from Yarqand, in which he had mentioned wounds afflicting his feet, the Amir threatened him that should he come to Kabul, his hands would go the way of his feet.

At Badakhshan and Balu the semi-barbaric people of those regions acted so abominably that he was forced to fall back on Ladakh (Laddakh) where there was a British commissioner.

Ahmadu'd-Din, employed as chief secretary by the British official, had been converted to the Faith of Baha'u'llah by Jamal Effendi himself.

There, supported by Ahmadu'd-Din, he found a safe place to rest awhile and recuperate, before going on to the eastern areas of Transoxania.

He was still travelling when the news reached him of the Ascension of Baha'u'llah. 'Abdu'l-Baha instructed him to stay in the field, which he did for another five years.

Now, old age was creeping on him.

For almost twenty years he had been traversing, back and forth, vast tracts of the Asian mainland, and visiting islands of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

He had suffered grave hardships at the hands of opponents and adversaries, apart from the toils of the road.

Now, he took with him two of the outstanding Baha'is of Rangoon, Haji Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Shirazi and Dr Khabiru'd-Din, and set out once more for the Holy Land.

His companions had been brought into the orbit of the Baha'i Faith by himself.

Shortly after his arrival in 'Akka, 'Abdu'l-Baha chose Jamal Effendi to carry out a delicate mission, which Baha'u'llah had desired to be undertaken by one of His followers.

And that was to deliver a message to Mirza 'Ali-Asghar Khan, the Aminu's-Sultan.

The message which Baha'u'llah had wished to be given to the Grand Vizier of Nasiri'd-Din Shah was this:

You took steps to help the prisoners; you freely rendered them a befitting service; this service will not be forgotten.

Rest assured that it will bring you honor and call down a blessing upon all your affairs.

O Aminu's-Sultan!

Every house that is raised up will one day fall to ruin, except the house of God; that will grow more massive and be better guarded day by day.

Then serve the Court of God with all your might, that you may discover the way to a home in Heaven, and found an edifice that will endure forever. (Quoted in 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, p.

136) <p125> 'Abdu'l-Baha explains the nature of the service rendered by Aminu's-Sultan:

In Adhirbayjan the Turkish clerics had brought down Aqa Siyyid Asadu'llah, hunted him down in Ardabil and plotted to shed his blood; but the Governor, by a ruse, managed to save him from being physically beaten and then murdered: he sent the victim to Tabriz in chains, and from there had him conducted to Tihran.

Aminu's-Sultan came to the prisoner's assistance and, in his own office, provided Asadu'llah with a sanctuary.

One day when the Prime Minister was ill, Nasiri'd-Din Shah arrived to visit him.

The Minister then explained the situation, and lavished praise upon his captive; so much so that the Shah, as he left, showed great kindness to Asadu'llah, and spoke words of consolation.

This, when at an earlier time, the captive would have been strung up at once to adorn some gallows-tree, and shot down with a gun. ('Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

136-7) The day Nasiri'd-Din Shah was assassinated, Aminu's-Sultan displayed a high measure of sagacity and competence, and saved Iran from potential disturbances.

The next Shah, Muzaffari'd-Din, confirmed Aminu's-Sultan in his post, but intrigues by the Shah's favourites, and the conflicting policies of Russia and Britain, forced him out.

He was replaced by Mirza 'Ali Khan, the Aminu'd-Dawlih, who was a friend and collaborator of Prince (or Mirza) Malkam Khan. <p126> Aminu's-Sultan was sent in disgrace to reside in Qum.

And as 'Abdu'l-Baha further relates:

Thereupon this servant dispatched Sulayman Khan to Persia, carrying a prayer and a missive written by me.

The prayer besought God's aid and bounty and succor for the fallen Minister, so that he might, from that corner of oblivion, be recalled to favor.

In the letter we clearly stated: 'Prepare to return to Tihran.

Soon will God's help arrive; the light of grace will shine on you again; with full authority again, you will find yourself free, and Prime Minister.

This is your reward for the efforts you exerted on behalf of a man who was oppressed.' That letter and that prayer are today in the possession of the family of Aminu's-Sultan.

From Tihran, Sulayman Khan journeyed to Qum, and according to his instructions went to live in a cell in the shrine of the Immaculate [Fatimih, the sister of the eighth Imam:

Imam Rida]. ('Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, p.

137) Sulaymhn Khan, then, met Aminu's-Sultan and delivered to him 'Abdu'l-Baha's letter.

He received it with great respect and told Sulayman Khan: 'I had given up hope.

If this longing is fulfilled, I will arise to serve; I will preserve and uphold the friends of God..

Praise be to God, I hope again; I feel that by His aid, my dream will come true.' 'Abdu'l-Baha says that Aminu's-Sultan was joyous and grateful.

The rest is well known to history.

Aminu'd-Dawlih's premiership did not last long.

His fall was swift.

And Muzaffari'd-Din Shah summoned Aminu's-Sultan from Qum and installed him once again in the office of Sadr-i-A'zam.

In the words again of 'Abdu'l-Baha: 'He assumed the position and functioned with full authority; and at first he did indeed support the believers, but toward the end, in the case of the Yazd martyrdoms, he was neglectful.

He neither helped nor protected the sufferers in any way, nor would he listen to their repeated pleas...

Accordingly he too was dismissed, a ruined man; that flag which had flown so proudly was reversed...' ('Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, p.

138) Aminu's-Sultan had a third period of office in the first year of the Constitutional period, but it was only for a brief space of time.

He was assassinated in August 1907, sharing the fate of his monarch:

Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

Many are the stories related about the twenty-year odyssey of Jamal Effendi, Sulayman Khan, the nobleman of Tunukabun, who was destined to be the spiritual conqueror of the Indian subcontinent and Burma.

His first companion, Mirza Husayn, laid down his bones in <p127> <p128> the island of Sarandib (Sri Lanka) and the second, Haji Farajullah-i-Tafrishi, passed away in Bombay, in April 1894.

Another eminent associate of Jamal Effendi was Siyyid Mustafa Rumi, whom he converted in Madras and took with him to Burma.

Siyyid Mustafa stayed on to build the Burmese Baha'i community and on his death in 1945 was named a Hand of the Cause of God by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith.

He is buried in Burma.

As for Jamal Effendi himself, he passed away on 20 August 1898 in 'Akka. <p129> 11 Na'im of Sidih, a Poet Superb Mirza Muhammad, who adopted Na'im (Blissful) as his sobriquet, was a poet of the first rank.

His poems mainly touch themes pertaining to the Baha'i Faith.

Yet their fame has reached circles well beyond the Community of Baha'u'llah.

Their lambent, persuasive quality always enchants.

He was born in the village of Furushan, in the spring of 1856.

Furushan, one of the three villages that constituted a larger unit, Sidih of Isfahan, had never known the burgeoning of such remarkable talent as Na'im's within its confines.

Haji 'Abdu'l-Karim, his father, had no other son.

That made him particularly devoted to Mirza Muhammad, giving priority to his

education.

But Muhammad had not gone very far with his studies when his father decided that it was time for him to get married and settle down to earn a living.

Na'im (as we shall henceforth call him) was then only sixteen years old.

His father was a farmer and that was the only occupation which was open to Na'im.

So he put aside his studies and became a worker on the land.

However, he had a cousin, named Haji Mulla Hasan, who was a prosperous merchant in Isfahan.

As Na'im was a sturdy, hard-working, trustworthy young man, this cousin took him on to manage his substantial farming and commercial interests in the district of Sidih and its environs.

In a poem which is autobiographical, Na'im describes how it was that he had to abandon his studies and adopt a business career.

Compelled by his talent he sought the company of poets and cultivated the friendship of two brothers, both poets of note whose sobriquets were Nayyir and Sina.

These three found that they had much in common; they would spend hours reciting their poems, and proposing and selecting new themes as subjects.

And as Muhsin-i-Na'imi, the Dabir-Mu'ayyid and husband of the daughter of the poet, comments, these three founded a literary circle in that lowly village.

.|bEMINENT_BAHA'IS <p130> Nayyir and Sina were, a good deal of the time, travelling about in search of their livelihood.

In October 1880, Sina was in Tabriz and there he met a stranger.

That very remarkable man, famed for his humour and jest, whose name was Mirza 'Inayatu'llah 'Aliyabadi, is today very little known, even in his native land and in the memory of his co-religionists.

But there was a time when his pranks and wisecracks were often told and retold with glee.

Sina has thus related the story of his encounter with 'Aliyabadi:

We were seated in our chamber in the caravanserai of Tabriz, when Mirza 'Inayat came riding in.

He stopped in front of our chamber, dismounted, and having exchanged greetings, entered and sat down.

Then he asked one of those present to go and fetch him a nargileh.

To another he gave the task of tending his horse.

When he had cleared the room of the two who lacked capacity and

understanding, he paused awhile to rest, and then addressed us: 'O descendants of the Rasul! [Messenger, i.e. the Prophet Muhammad] I bring you tidings of the rise of two great Luminaries in the world of humanity.

The first was the Orb of the Qa'im, rising in the year 1260.

Then after nine years came the effulgence of "Husayn Returned" and the world was illumined.' Sina went on to recount how 'Aliyabadi proceeded to adduce proof after proof in substantiating his theme.

Later, he brought out of his pocket the Tablet of Naqus (The Clarion Bell), chanted it with great fervour, and followed it by reciting a verse from the Qur'an (from the 36th surih: 'Ya Sin'). 'Afterwards he kissed the Tablet,' Sina related, 'put it on his head, made a present of it to us and departed.' All that narrative Na'im has put into a gripping and translucent poem.

This entry, declaration and exit of Mirza 'Inayatu'llah 'Aliyabadi caused consternation as well as disputation.

There and then, Siyyid Mirza, a companion of Sina, left to go to 'Akka and investigate the truth of what they had heard.

Sina, telling Na'im of that strange experience in Tabriz, could not add much more to it, and soon after he went on another journey, this time to Rasht.

Na'im's interest had been greatly aroused.

He craved to know more, and fate threw him into the company of an Azali, Isma'il-i-Sabbagh (Dyer), who was also a native of Sidih.

This Isma'il in later years changed his name to Mirza Mustafa, migrated to Tihran and became a scribe.

He provided Edward Granville Browne with many Babi and Azali manuscripts.

Na'im met others as well who were confirmed Baha'is.

They met surreptitiously; the books lent to Na'im <p131> had to be taken away with great caution and kept well hidden.

In the dead of night Na'im would take out the books he had borrowed and, at a time when all others were fast asleep, would concentrate on reading and studying, and sometimes he copied them.

Thus he became well versed in his study of the Bayan.

One day the dyer spoke to him of Azal and his successorship to the Bab.

Na'im had learnt from the Bayan that there could be no successor to the Bab.

However, he took with him one of Azal's works:

Jadhbiyyih (Attraction).

That night he had to wait impatiently for a long while, sitting through dinner until everyone had retired.

At last all was quiet.

Na'im gathered together his writing material, brought out the book hidden in his pocket, and sat down to read it, prepared to copy it by candlelight.

But soon he was bitterly disappointed.

Azal's composition was a mockery of authorship.

Na'im had wasted his time, denied himself sleep and was deeply disappointed.

Soon he fell into meditation.

Three points stood out before him in prominent relief.

Firstly, he saw and admitted that the Bayan was divine script, come from God.

And the Bayan was only the prelude to an Advent greater than the Advent of the Bab.

This he came to believe truly without a shadow of doubt.

Secondly, he saw that the Bab had divided the Bayan into nineteen <p132> unities (wahids).

But what He had revealed consisted only of nine unities and ten chapters (Babs).

This fact was indicative of the nearness of the Advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', because God never leaves His Revelation incomplete.

The Manifestation promised by the Bayan, he realized, must come very soon to complete the unfinished task.

The third point of truth which confronted Na'im was the fact that the laws and ordinances prescribed in the Bayan were so onerous and difficult to observe that a very rapid renewal of the Law was imperative.

In other words, Na'im came to believe in Baha'u'llah before he had seen any of His Writings.

He had already rejected Azal's pretensions as he had recognized his words to be fatuous and ignorant.

That was how Na'im found his spiritual home in the Community of Baha'u'llah.

By then the circle of poets in Sidih had three more members, namely Mirza Manzar, Muhammad-Taqi and Siyyid Muhammad.

Gradually people became aware that a group of Baha'i poets was meeting regularly in their midst.

Tongues wagged and the rabble decided to make life impossible for those six men, who had been brought together by literary concerns.

They became almost housebound, except that Sina and Nayyir were most of the time on the road, and therefore spared a good deal of the hatred.

They also managed to obtain from Prince Zillu's-Sultan a decree forbidding the people to molest them.

Na'im's father, in order to rescue his son from persecution, advised Na'im to take himself away to the holy cities of 'Iraq.

But when he returned, after an absence of several months, he found that the situation had not altered.

Na'im, by then, was so afire with his love for the Cause of Baha'u'llah that he could not refrain from preaching and teaching it, although he did not abandon all discretion.

Haji Mulla Kazim, a local divine, brought together a number of his leading colleagues to investigate this Faith, including Haji Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi of Isfahan, well known as Aqa Najafi, whom Baha'u'llah has stigmatized as Ibn-i-Dhi'b (the Son of the Wolf).

Naturally, Na'im came too, and wisely and discreetly carried on a dialogue with the host and the other notables present.

This debate became very prolonged, and it is said that Haji Mulla Kazim found himself so cornered by Na'im's eloquent dissertation that thrice he retired to his private chamber to change his shirt which was drenched with perspiration.

And he surrounded <p133> himself with such an enormous pile of books (for reference in search of proofs and arguments to buttress his contentions) that in the end only his huge turban and the upper part of his face could be seen.

Meanwhile Na'im calmly and quietly used the same material, which that divine was digging out of his books, to substantiate his own case.

The most crushing testimony to Na'im's amazing knowledge and debating skill came from no less a person than Aqa Najafi, never a friend of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, who told the divines of Sidih: 'This young man today scored a triumph over you and divested you of your honours as men of learning'.

Haji Mulla Kazim, himself, remained silent and later avowed his own conversion, but alleged that he could not come into the open and declare himself a Baha'i due to old age and the lack of any other means of support.

After that gathering in the home of Haji Mulla Kazim, the fame of Na'im, in the villages of Sidih, became more pronounced and more widespread.

And the malice of adversaries was correspondingly intensified.

Let us learn his story from his own words:

I embraced the Faith in the year 1298 (4 December 1880-22 November 1881).

Previously I used to visit Mulla Isma'il [the Azali dyer of Sidih] and <p134> some people became suspicious.

Sina had described to Mirza Ja'far [a crony of the dyer] the experience he had

had in Tabriz (see p.

130).

Mirza Ja'far and I resolved not to visit Sina again.

But I knew that he kept visiting Sina.

One night 'Ali Abu'l and myself were at Sina's, and he related the story of the martyrdom of the Bab. 'Ali said: 'Whoever rides a donkey, and thus comes to Isfahan, cannot be the Qa'im.

I said: 'The Prophet also rode a donkey'...

Then I became known in Sidih as a Babi, the butt of insults.

Gradually it became impossible to leave the house, because of the abuse hurled by the people and their insolence.

Mosques and gatherings buzzed with talk, hearts brimmed with hate, they wished to kill or eject us.

Thus, we lived a whole year in utmost deprivation and abasement and had to bear countless afflictions, until the siyyids [the two brothers:

Sina and Nayyir] returned from their travels.

Taqi Abu'l went to visit them.

In the mosque, Bahru'l-'Ulum asked him: 'Why do you go to the home of these siyyids and cause mischief?' Taqi answered back rudely: 'Zillu's-Sultan has given them a letter, forbidding the people to trouble them, and I am seeking an opponent like you.' At that, Bahru'l-'Ulum, enraged, rushed up the minaret, screaming: 'The Faith is in mortal peril!

The Faith is in mortal peril.' His shouts brought the people out, who seized Taqi and trounced him.

They were about to kill him when Haji Amin Khan-i-Yavar [the Major] threw himself upon him and prevented his murder.

The [two] divines of Furushan--Mir Siyyid 'Ali, the Imam-i-Jum'ih, and Bahru'l-'Ulum--complained to Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, the Dhi'b [the Wolf], who told Ruknu'l-Mulk, the deputy-governor, to put matters right.

He sent two farrashs to Sidih to take Taqi to Isfahan.

When the news came that farrashes were on their way, I was sent for before their arrival and taken to the house of Bahru'l-'Ulum.

Taqi was there, bound up.

I was told that Taqi had said: 'Na'im has made me wayward.' I commented: 'He has said that under duress.' They replied that they had found a letter in his pocket, written by Mirza Asadu'llah-i-Isfahani, addressed to me. 'If the letter was written to me,' I asked, 'what was it doing in his pocket?' We

were thus engaged in conversation when the farrashes arrived.

They said that this man [Na'im] and Taqi and some others ought to be sent to the city [Isfahan].

A farrash tied up my arms and, together with Taqi, I was marched off to my own house, which was some distance away, and a number of spectators surrounded us.

Next, they sought out Nayyir, Sina and Siyyid Muhammad.

They were also tied up and brought to our house.

My late father was detained too.

He was dragged by his beard to a butcher's shop where they purchased a quantity of meat, and then brought to join us.

In the meantime, a man sent by Haji Mirza Asadu'llah, the Kad-khuda [the Magistrate] came and ordered us to have ready a suitable tip for the farrashes, and to start right away for the city.

Bahru'l-Uhim also sent his man to have us moved.

They had made everything ready for our departure.

About a hundred men, each holding a cane in his hand and shouting, preceded our procession.

They had tied the five of us together in such a way that we were forced to walk, step by step, in line.

That day was Friday when crowds of people were free to gather, and <p135> spectators had swarmed in from all the neighbouring villages.

We were led on, in that strange way, bare-headed and barefooted.

Streets and roof-tops were so crowded with people that one could not see where a street opened and where it ended.

They took us round the village, and in the midst of a spacious carrefour we were ushered into the upper room of a building overlooking the square.

There they tied us to the door-frames, and the farrashes fell upon us with their canes.

We were beaten for two hours.

Next, around sunset, they took us, half alive, to the house of Aqa Muhammad-Taqi where the farrashes kept beating us throughout the night.

During the fourteen hours of that night, only while the other four were undergoing beating could one of us have a chance for some rest.

As morning came, with snow lying on the ground, they took us barefooted to the gate of the mosque, to be beaten there too.

Later they pushed us into our house, took up their rifles and shot five hens

that were running about in the courtyard.

While they were roasting the birds they kept bastinadoing me, leaving the others alone because they knew that no tips could be forthcoming from them.

In the afternoon, word came from Ruknu'l-Mulk that the guilty men should be taken to Isfahan. [Elsewhere, Na'im reverts to these same events:] During those days, when the five of us were tied together, more than six thousand spectators were around us, pelting us with stones, throwing ashes and refuse over us from roof-tops, abusing and cursing us.

Yet we were laughing as we walked through that crowd.

One of my companions commented: 'God has tied our hands and brought us amongst these people to complete His proofs.' A few <p136> steps further, he said, 'We have become the evidence of "Believers are together one personality"', and still further on, he said, 'This pomp and magnificence He has ordained for us' and again, 'this being cursed and spat upon--this affliction God sends only to His loved ones' ... and we laughed all the way.

Hours on end we suffered from the lashes of the footmen until, chained, we were thrown into a prison and sat there awaiting the descent of the sword.

Na'im has related orally that when he was under those lashes his sister, although not a believer, was so overcome by the piteous sight which her brother presented that she pulled off her ear-ring so forcefully as to tear open the ear itself, throwing it to the farrashes in the hope that it would make them relent.

His aged father, holding his beard, was imploring that heartless crew to show mercy to his only son, but with no effect.

To compound their villainy they took off the clothes of those five innocent men, exposed them to the bitter cold of winter and painted their bodies with different colours to amuse the gaping, swearing crowd.

Of course there were some here and there who took pity, who questioned it all, but they were a small minority.

The majority were purblind and motivated only by animal instincts.

Such is the mob.

Such will always be the mob.

Na'im also spoke of his body being very swollen because of the blows he had received and of his shirt being soaked with blood and sticking to his body.

Later, it was impossible to pull off his shirt and scissors had to be used to cut it open. <p137> With bare heads and bare feet, in the heart of winter, the five Baha'is were marched off to Isfahan and gaoled.

After a time Zillu's-Sultan ordered the release of Nayyir.

Then Ruknu'l-Mulk sent for the other four to tell them that he had summoned

their opponents to come and sit with them, to resolve the issue.

He meant to set them free.

When the others arrived, Ruknu'l-Mulk informed them that the prisoners had said 'We are not Babis'. 'In that case, they should curse the Bab,' they replied. 'How can they?' Ruknu'l-Mulk retorted. 'They do not know Him.' The Law does not permit a Muslim to curse someone not known to him, but the adversaries were persistent. 'In their homes', they declared, 'the writings of the Bab have been discovered.' Ruknu'l-Mulk called in his attendant, gave him his keys and told him to fetch a certain box, from which he extracted diverse books about a variety of Faiths.

Showing the books, Ruknu'l-Mulk told them: 'These books are mine; the follower of which of these religions do you consider me to be?' Thus silenced they went away, and Ruknu'l-Mulk had the prisoners freed and instructed them to leave Isfahan that very night.

In Furushan, the cleric, Bahru'l-'Ulum, declared that Na'im being an apostate, his wife should consider herself divorced from him.

That pitiless woman took possession of all that Na'im had, and would not give him even a small sum of money to take him to Tihiran.

Penniless, Na'im, Sina, Muhammad-Taqi and Mirza Manzar took the road into the wilderness, their destination Tihiran.

They depended on the charity and hospitality of Baha'is on the long road to the capital.

Day by day they trudged on, occasionally stopping to rest wherever a Baha'i home offered them shelter.

When, after weeks of trekking, they reached 'Aliyabad (a stage between Qum and Tihiran), they had nothing left and they were hungry.

There they came upon a dervish who lent them one qiran.

On that paltry sum, the four travel-weary men subsisted until they reached Tihiran.

When, after a long search in the capital, they found the whereabouts of that dervish, to return the money he had lent them, they also gave him the tidings of the Advent of Baha'u'llah, and he became a Baha'i.

But there is more to relate about that walk to Tihiran.

One day, on the road to Qum, the travellers found themselves without water, having drained their vessel.

Seized by thirst with no source of water in sight, and hardly able to walk on, they joyously noticed a traveller (riding, of course) coming towards them.

When he reached them, <p138> they implored his help.

Could he point out to them any source of water in that expanse of barren ground?

He could and did.

Na'im, stronger than the rest, took their water vessel and set out in the direction given by the stranger.

He found the place, filled the vessel and started back to his companions.

But, although his thirst had been allayed, his strength was sapped.

As he drew near to his companions, he found that he could not take one further step.

And they were begging him to hurry, as they too had collapsed and were unable to move.

In his own parlous state, Na'im finally managed by almost crawling to get close to them.

With life at a low ebb the four men entered Tihran, and by following directions given to them, they found the orchard in the street, in a poor quarter of the city, where Baha'is had their gatherings.

It is still called the street of the Babis.

That orchard had to be their home for they had nowhere else to go.

Shorn of all material possessions, they had, first of all, to find means of livelihood.

Na'im chose the only occupation he was capable of following: to do the work of a scribe and make copies of Tablets for the Baha'is of Tihran.

That brought him a little money.

Later he was paid fifteen qirans a month to teach Baha'i children. (In those days there were no schools as we know them in Tihran.) It was hardly a living wage.

Na'im and his companions had to burn dead branches of trees at night, both for warmth and light.

They could not afford candles.

When Na'im found a room of his own, it had no rug to cover the floor.

For fuel, he had to go out early in the morning and collect the dung he could find in the streets.

His small tin samovar was heated with dung.

It all took a long time before he could have a sip of tea in the morning.

When winter came again, it was only that dung-fuelled tin samovar which could give him some heat.

Yet living out this life of penury never made him complain.

And he served the Cause of Baha'u'llah to the utmost of his ability.

Whenever he could afford to buy charcoal and a few pieces of white wood, he would invite the Baha'is in his neighbourhood to come to tea on a Friday, and join him in reading and reciting Tablets and verses.

Years and years later, when Na'im prospered, one day a Baha'i came to his home and found him supervising masons and builders.

Seeing workmen busy at one side making mud bricks, and at the other end of the compound a mason raising a wall, he reminded Na'im jestingly of a couplet from one of his poems: 'The mud and brick of <p139> <p140> this abode so fleeting, / We used to raise our home everlasting'. 'How can you square all this building activity with the sentiment you expressed in those lines?' asked Siyyid Mustafay-i-Simnani.

Na'im's answer was: 'The construction of this house itself is preparation for that "home everlasting", because here believers will come together and remember their Lord.' Na'im, an undoubted master of verse, of a poetic ability rarely matched in his days, was a very unassuming man.

The renowned Haji Amin describes a meeting addressed by Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Rafsanjani[1] which was attended by a knowledgeable man newly introduced to the Faith.

Na'im was also present, listening attentively and not saying a word.

The newcomer was greatly impressed by all he heard, and was particularly delighted by some lines of Na'im's poem which closed the talk.

Eagerly he asked the name and identity of the poet and, if he were living, where he could be found.

When hearing that the poet was there in that very room, and Na'im was pointed out to him, that discerning man was truly astonished that one who could write such poetry was so modest! [1.

Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Rafsanjani was an eminent teacher of the Baha'i Faith.

He and Tarazu'llah Samandari (in later years a Hand of the Cause of God) travelled together a good deal.

Rafsanjani visited London at the bidding of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1914.] Na'im, despite all he had suffered and despite the grinding poverty of his early years in Tihiran, always presented a cheerful face, and his humour never deserted him.

One day in Tihiran, one of the minions of the Court ran into him in the street.

The man was haughty and insolent; using an insulting epithet, and a very common mode of <p141> threat, he said to Na'im: 'Do you want me to burn your father?' Na'im smilingly replied: 'No sir, by God, oh no sir.' The self-satisfied official was very pleased, and thought that he had nonplussed

Na'im.

There lived in Tihran a physician of note, Dr Sa'id Khan-i-Kurdistani.

He had, justly, a high reputation for honesty and integrity, and was a good and competent physician, a man of profound learning.

However, he had abandoned Islam in favour of Christianity, for which he was an ardent proselytizer.

On one occasion Na'im and Dr Sa'id Khan chanced to meet in a street of Tihran.

They were not total strangers.

Na'im, very solemnly, asked the doctor whether he thought it possible that Christ could have come once again.

Immediately and emphatically, Dr Sa'id Khan said: 'Never'.

To which Na'im retorted: "Then know for certain that Christ said: "I come at a time when you know not".

He did come a while ago.' Dr Sa'id Khan, it is reported by Na'im himself, was dumbfounded, but he said nothing except goodbye and departed.

Hard times were at last over for Na'im.

Baha'u'llah had assured him in a Tablet that, before long, far more than had been harshly taken from him would be granted to him.

He found employment teaching Persian in the British Legation, and he prospered.

But poverty and wealth were alike to Na'im.

His one goal, whatever his material condition, his heart's desire at all times, was service to the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Not only was his poetic talent put brilliantly into the service of the Faith, but his eloquent tongue made many a soul realize that the Day of God had indeed dawned.

Na'im married again in the same year that witnessed the Ascension of Baha'u'llah.

His wife, Ruqayyih Sultan, a native of Isfahan, proved a true helpmate to her husband, always supporting him loyally through thick and thin.

They had one son and one daughter.

The son, 'Abdu'l-Husayn Na'imi, whose great service besides many others was to publish the invaluable poetical work of his father, lies buried in the New Southgate Cemetery, close to the grave of the Guardian of the Faith.

The daughter was married to Muhsin-i-Na'imi, the Dabir-Mu'ayyid, biographer of his father-in-law, and a devout teacher of the Baha'i Faith.

Indeed, Na'im the lucid poet, Na'im the eloquent teacher, Na'im the servant of Baha'u'llah, has left a heritage of praise, fidelity and selflessness whose fame will only brighten more and more as the years roll by.

And one day the whole world will bow to it. <p142> 12 An Eminent Grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah Shaykhu'r-Ra'is had been the designation of the great Avicenna.

It was also the designation of Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, a grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah; his father Muhammad-Taqi Mirza, the Hisamu's-Saltanih, was the seventh son of that uxorious monarch.

Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was born in Tabriz in the year 1847.

His father, who had been the governor of Luristan, was one of the several princes who had either rebelled and risen up to resist the accession of Muhammad Shah to the throne or had shown overt displeasure.

Eleven of these princes were sent to Adharbayjan to be detained in the citadel of Ardibil.

Muhammad-Taqi Mirza was one of them.

Four of the princes, one of whom was 'Ali Shah, the Zillu's-Sultan, dug a tunnel and escaped.

They gained safety outside Iran.

Then it was that the other seven were moved to Tabriz and kept there, but not in gaol.

Throughout the rest of Muhammad Shah's reign, Tabriz was the home of Muhammad-Taqi Mirza and his family.

Later, Nasiri'd-Din Shah restored his freedom.

One report has it that he died soon after, because his title Hisamu's-Saltanih was given to Sultan-Murad Mirza, uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah and conqueror of Hirat.

But there are other instances of two men receiving the same title; it is confidently related that Muhammad-Taqi Mirza was still living well beyond the date when Sultan-Murad Mirza came to be known as Hisamu's-Saltanih.

According to Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza's own evidence, his devotion to the Babi-Baha'i Faith was a precious gift, in his childhood, from his mother, which was later reinforced by the wise guidance of the great Hujjatu'l-Islam, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, generally known as Mirzay-i-Shirazi. (See chap.

19.) His mother was Khurshid Bagum, daughter of Suhrab Khan, a Georgian and grandee of Caucasia, who was taken prisoner when Agha Muhammad Khan, the eunuch king, stormed the city of Tiflis <p143> (Tbilisi).

Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was a sickly child.

Very early in life, he lost the sight of one eye through smallpox but it was miraculously restored before long.

When a cholera epidemic reached Tabriz, his parents, despairing of the child's life, left him with a wet nurse and hurried to the safety of the countryside.

But Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was destined to live on and become distinguished as the Baha'i grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah.

Cholera did not touch him.

At the age of six, Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was sent for tuition by Mulla 'Abdu'l-'Ali, who had as pupils many of the scions of the nobility of Tabriz.

When he was eleven, it is stated, he accompanied his father to Tihran, and there attended the classes of Mulla 'Aliy-i-Nuri, a divine who taught in the Madrisiy-i-Mulla Aqa Rida.

Under him Abu'l-Hasan Mirza studied logic and syntax, and made rapid progress in mastering the intricacies of Arabic, arousing the jealousy of his brothers.

Three years later we find him again with his father in Mashhad, where Muhammad-Taqi Mirza was taken ill and died.

His last word to Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was to go on with such studies as would entitle him to become a cleric.

After the death of his father, Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza returned to <p144> Tihran, where, against the wishes of both his mother and himself, his brothers sent him to the military academy.

Yet he managed to attend daily the classes of Shaykh Ja'far-i-Turk, where again he made rapid progress in his study of literary subjects.

Two years later he was able to leave the military academy and was freed from that oppressive environment.

Now, he and his mother moved to Mashhad and made that holy city their home.

This happened at the time when Haji Mirza 'Ali-Akbar, the first Qavamu'l-Mulk of Shiraz (son of Haji Ibrahim Khan, the king-maker) had been directed by Nasiri'd-Din Shah to Mashhad and appointed custodian of the sacred Shrine of the Eighth Imam.

Haji Qavamu'l-Mulk was well disposed towards Khurshid Bagum and her sons.

He organized a great fete to celebrate the entry of Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, who must have been about seventeen years of age, into the ranks of the clerics.

His cap was changed to a turban, the garb of a prince was shed, and he put on the long robe of learned men.

Even at that early age Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza had shown poetic talent of a high order and the mastery of a fluent pen.

And at that fete, encouraged by Haji Qavamu'l-Mulk, he adopted the sobriquet

of Hayrat.

Now he was qualified to follow the advice of his late father, and became a theological student.

His studies, to which he applied himself assiduously, were varied and fundamental.

With Mulla Muhammad-Taqi-i-Mazniyani, an accomplished teacher, he continued with literary subjects.

He followed courses in mathematics with Mirza Nasru'llah-i-Shirazi.

<p145> Philosophy and scholastic theology were pursued with Mulla Ibrahim-i-Sabzivari, considered to be one of the most learned men of his age.

Three of the leading divines of Mashhad--Mulla Muhammad-Riday-i-Sabzivari, the mujtahid, Mirza Nasru'llah, and Haji Mulla 'Abdu'llah, the mujtahid of Kashan--gave him lessons and directed his studies of jurisprudence and theology.

As soon as opportune, he was resolved to go to the holy cities of 'Iraq to sit at the feet of the great divines there and obtain from them the writ which would entitle him to Ijtihad.[1] He stayed six months in Karbila and four months in Najaf, adding all the time to his knowledge.

Thus, at last, he reached at Samarra the circle of the greatest Shi'ih divine of his age, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, Mirzay-i-Shirazi, who was a second cousin of the glorious Bab.

For two years Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza attended eagerly upon him, until at the end of that time Mirzay-i-Shirazi gave him the certificate of Ijtihad.

Even more, from that unmatched divine he received further incentive to strengthen his faith in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

We cannot be certain that Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza then knew that Mirzay-i-Shirazi was related to the Bab.

One day he asked the Mirza: 'What do these Baha'is say?' and was answered: 'Go and investigate'. [1.

The power of the Shi'ih divine to issue ex cathedra decrees and judgments.]

Having received his writ from Mirzay-i-Shirazi, Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza went on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

From Hijaz he returned to 'Iraq, and stayed another year in Samarra.

Then he turned homewards, a mujtahid given his authority to practise by no less a person than the great Hujjatu'l-Islam, and a man of profound learning, possessed of a remarkable poetic talent, a fiery and eloquent speech, and an able pen.

He had also the advantage of royal descent, and enough of this world's riches to dress resplendently.

He had already been noted with great reverence by Muhammad Ibn ar-Rashid, the Emir of Jabal, while a pilgrim to Mecca, and had composed a poem in Arabic praising the emir.

Now, in Mashhad, Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza soon made his mark in the pulpit.

People flocked to hear him preach.

The governors of Khurasan held him in high respect and he had the support of Mu'taminu's-Saltanih, the Vazir of Khurasan.

All went well, until Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Khan, the Asafu'd-Dawlih of Shiraz, was appointed the Vali of the province.

Gradually, relations between Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza and the haughty grandee of Shiraz became strained, until it became impossible for the prince to stay any longer in Mashhad.

He fled to Quchan, where he found a haven with Husayn-Quli Khan, the Shuja'u'd-Dawlih, hereditary chief of Quchan, who had also lately given his allegiance to Baha'u'llah, and his protection saved Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza from the evil designs of Asafu'd-Dawlih.

Shuja'u'd-Dawlih was not only powerful; he was, as well, a man of iron will and action, who would not suffer fools gladly.

His character is portrayed in an incident involving the celebrated Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali (the 'Angel of Mount Carmel') and two companions, who were once set upon by a mob of some two thousand, incited by a divine named Mulla Kazim whom Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali had worsted in debate in the presence of Shuja'u'd-Dawlih.

Mirza Haydar-'Ali suffered grave injuries.

With his clothes tattered and blood-stained, bare-headed, shoeless, bleeding from wounds, he just managed to stagger into a village.

The people there took pity on him and made him comfortable. (Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes that Baha'u'llah had foretold what would befall him.) When Shuja'u'd-Dawlih learned of this event in his own territory he flew into a terrible rage and ordered condign punishment for all the culprits amongst whom were theological students.

He had their school closed.

Even Mulla Kazim, who was an influential man in his own sphere, was not spared the lashing of his tongue.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was brought into Quchan, where, he writes, he was besieged by some three to four hundred weeping women and children begging him to intercede for their menfolk whom Shuja'u'd-Dawlih had punished and detained.

Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza stayed for one year in Quchan.

But a man of his talents and accomplishment, if he was to reach the

public, required a much wider field than was afforded by a small township in a corner of Khurasan.

He first wrote to Mirza 'Ali-Asghar Khan, the Aminu's Sultan and grand vizier of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, and put his case before him.

He also sent to Kamran Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih, son of Nasiri'd-Din, a couplet which has gained fame, and took the road to 'Ishqabad.

And this is that well-famed couplet,[1] the last line of which is borrowed from a ghazal of Hafiz: [1.

The original poetic line is longer than a line in translation. (Ed.) 0
Nayibu's-Saltanih, tell the sovereign, good and true, to note That a man of
Khurasn to him this letter wrote: <p147> Asaf and the land of Khurasan be thine
to boot, We took the road to Love, mosque or temple is of little note.

Nasiri'd-Din Shah also used a couplet to reply, taking his last line too from the same ghazal of Hafiz:

Nayibu's-Saltanih!

Tell the Khurasani, a man of spite, Thus did the Shahanshah to thee this
letter indite, Asaf, good or bad, thine own steps thou watch, For no one
will, in thy account, the sins of others write.

It should be noted that the name of 'Ishqabad, the city to which Prince
Abu'l-Hasan Mirza went from Quchan, means the 'City of Love'.

The Prince's arrival at that city, the home of a considerable number of
Baha'is, caused a sensation.

However, he did not stop there for long, and was soon on his way to Istanbul,
whence he embarked on a second pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

On his return, he stayed for two years in the Ottoman capital--the metropolis
which Baha'u'llah had designated as 'Madiniy-i-Kabirih' (the Great
City)--commanding the respect of high and low alike.

His profundity of knowledge, mastery of language and lucidity of both tongue
and pen, made him an outstanding, highly respected figure in the leading
circles of the Turkish capital.

Even Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirman, who could not have been unaware of his
allegiance to the Cause of Baha'u'llah, could not but praise him.

The Persian ambassador, Shaykh Muhsin Khan, the Mu'inu'l-Mulk, whom Baha'u'llah
commends in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf for his sense of justice,
encouraged the prince to return to Persia, saying the authorities would make
amends for the past.

Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was almost certain that these promises would remain
unfulfilled.

Yet he went back.

Aminu's-Sultan received him with due consideration, presented him with a diamond ring, and wrote to Ruknu'd-Dawlih, a brother of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who was, by then, the governor-general of Khurasan, to treat him with respect.

It was rumoured that the Sadr-i-A'zam had promised the prince the custodianship of the sacred Shrine at Mashhad.

This rumour made Ruknu'd-Dawlih so jealous that he joined hands with the old enemies of Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, and had him detained and banished to Kalat-i-Nadiri.

There Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza suffered hardships.

As soon as he was freed, he went back to Mashhad, collected his family, and <p148> once again took the road to 'Ishqabad in the spring of 1892.

Then he began a tour of the renowned cities of Transoxania, such as Samarqand and Bukhara.

From Transoxania he passed on to Caucasia, and in that area, too, the Persian residents gathered round him with expressions of reverence and goodwill.

Next, we find him again in Istanbul and once again embarking on a pilgrimage to Hijaz, after which he returned to Istanbul and stayed for nearly a year.

He was received by Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, which aroused suspicion at the Persian Embassy that, because of his shabby treatment at home, he might plot with 'Abdu'l-Hamid against Iran.

Finding it best to leave the Ottoman metropolis, he went to take his leave from the Sultan, who presented him with a jewelled snuff-box.

Now, at long last, Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza set his face towards the Holy Land.

He reached Beirut, Jerusalem, and then the city of 'Akka.

Abu'l-Hasan Mirza was a confirmed Baha'i and, by his own admission, while at Quchhan he had been honoured by a Tablet from Baha'u'llah which had set him afire, evoking from his superb poetic talent one of his finest odes.

He arrived at 'Akka as a guest of the Mutasarrif.

The notables of the city, hearing that a distinguished member of the Royal House of Iran was staying in the residence of their governor, called on him to pay their respects. 'Abdu'l-Baha also visited him in the house of the Mutasarrif.

It was a brief visit.

Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, although a Baha'i, had not fully comprehended the station of the Centre of the Covenant.

He spoke boldly in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha and continued smoking a water-pipe.

A few days later he returned 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit.

A number of Baha'is were present when he arrived and they witnessed 'Abdu'l-Baha walking with him slowly and speaking to him--words which they did not hear.

Then all of a sudden the whole mien of the prince changed.

He had been walking shoulder to shoulder with 'Abdu'l-Baha; now he drew back to follow Him.

He became far more attentive.

When he left, it was seen that tears had reddened his eyes.

When Abu'l-Hasan Mirza (whom we shall henceforth call Shaykhu'r-Ra'is) came to depart, 'Abdu'l-Baha told him to teach the Faith, but with great circumspection.

The Master knew that should the prince become too well known as a Baha'i, both his enemies and the adversaries of the Faith would be so infuriated that their show of hostility and acts of hostility would be redoubled.

In a Tablet <p149> <p150> addressed to the Hand of the Cause Ibn-i-Abhar, 'Abdu'l-Baha laid particular stress on this fact: the imperativeness of not allowing the true allegiance of such eminent men to become common knowledge.

He did not even mention Shaykhu'r-Ra'is by name in that Tablet, and referred to him as 'the illustrious man of Khurashan'.

We do not know how and when it was that Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza received his designation of Shaykhu'r-Ra'is.

But gradually, he came to be called by that renowned title, and hardly ever Abu'l-Hasan Mirza.

From the Holy Land he went to India.

Bombay was his first port of call, which he reached early in 1894.

In Poona, Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III (then seventeen years old) offered him hospitality in his palace at Yevorda with signal honours.

They were related.

The mother of the Aga Khan, Lady 'Ali Shah (Shams'ul-Muluk) was a granddaughter of Fath-'Ali Shah.

Even more, the mother of 'Ali Shah, Aga Khan II, was Sarv-Jahan Khanum, the twenty-third daughter of the same Qajar monarch, a paternal aunt of Shaykhu'r-Ra'is. <p151> Then Shaykhu'r-Ra'is made a tour of the subcontinent, and about a year before the assassination of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, he returned to Iran and resided for a long time in Shiraz.

The fact that he was a dedicated follower of Baha'u'llah had become well known.

It is related that at one time, when he came face to face with Nasiri'd-Din Shah, that capricious monarch remarked that Shaykhu'r-Ra'is had brought shame

both to his status as mujtahid, and to his position as a Qajar prince.

In Shiraz, Shaykhu'r-Ra'is continued to make use of the pulpit.

His powers of speech and his eloquence were such that, despite the overt displeasure of some of the divines, people flocked to hear him.

However, Haji Shaykh Yahya, the illustrious Imam-Jum'ih of Shiraz, was very friendly.

Finally, opposition to him mounted high and he took the road to Isfahan, where he met open hostility from Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, known as Aqa Najafi.

One reason apparently for the departure of Shaykhu'r-Ra'is from Shiraz was the altercation between Muhammad-Rida Khan, Qavamu'l-Mulk III, and Malik Mansur Mirza, the Shu'a'u's-Saltanih, Governor-General of the province of Fars, who was a son of the reigning monarch, Muzaffari'd-Din Shah.

Shaykhu'r-Ra'is took the side of the Prince-Governor.

Added to the ill-will of powerful divines, Shaykhu'r-Ra'is had also to contend with the opposition of the <p152> imperious and powerful Qavamu'l-Mulk.

So he was forced to quit Shiraz.

Shu'a'u's-Saltanih was also forced to leave his post.

According to a remarkable book by Majdu'l-Islam of Kirman, which bears the title *Tarikh-i-Inhilal-i-Majlis--The History of the Dissolution of the Majlis (Parliament)--*both Zillu's-Sultan (Mas'ud Mirza) and Aqa Najafi were displeased by Shaykhu'r-Ra'is's intention to visit Isfahan.

Zillu's-Sultan took himself away for the time being; thus he evaded offering hospitality to the visitor.

Shaykhu'r-Ra'is cabled Mu'ayyidu's-Saltanih, the head of the Telegraph Office in Isfahan, to rent a house for him.

Mu'ayyidu's-Saltanih was also a prince of the Qajars, as well as a Baha'i.

Observing the attitude of the Governor of Isfahan and Aqa Najafi (whom Baha'u'llah referred to as the 'Son of the Wolf'), Shaykhu'r-Ra'is decided to prolong his visit.

Anything else would have been an admission of defeat.

Within the spacious house rented for him, he made arrangements to make use of the pulpit.

Here too his eloquence attracted large crowds which further infuriated the jealous Aqa Najafi.

Prominent Baha'is of Isfahan, such <p153> as Mirza 'Ali Khan-i-Sarrafi (Money-changer) and Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Sarrafi, were to be seen oftentimes serving and supporting Shaykhu'r-Ra'is.

All these happenings were noted by Aqa Najafi and his men, who were biding their time to strike, and strike hard, at the Baha'is of the city of 'Abbas the Great.

They could not touch Shaykhu'r-Ra'is: for one thing, he was a very distinguished member of the Royal House; for another, the public was enchanted by him.

At last Shaykhu'r-Ra'is, having successfully defied both Zillu's-Sultan and Aqa Najafi, left for Tihran.

Soon after, Iran was plunged into the revolution which led to the establishment of constitutional government.

Shaykhu'r-Ra'is chose to play a leading and conspicuous part in that revolution.

His intervention was contrary to the clear advice given by 'Abdu'l-Baha that Baha'is should keep out of that struggle, although it ought to be said that Shaykhu'r-Ra'is had involved himself at an early date. 'Abdu'l-Baha, learning of the involvement of Shaykhu'r-Ra'is, wrote that Baha'is should keep silent in regard to him.

Then came the coup d-e'tat of Muhammad-'Ali Shah in June 1908 and the bombardment of Baharistan, the seat of the Majlis (Parliament), together with the arrest of a sizeable number of the leaders of the Constitutional Movement and the execution of <p154> some of them.

Shaykhu'r-Ra'is was amongst those detained and chained.

Take away this chain from my neck, O Shah!

And make a chain of people to thee indebted, O Shah.

Thus did Shaykhu'r-Ra'is now petition the stubborn monarch who had thrown his country into chaos and confusion, breaking his oath into the bargain.

Shaykhu'r-Ra'is was pardoned and set free.

He admitted that he had reaped the harvest of disobedience. 'I failed to obey my Master', he said, 'and I had to pay the penalty.' Whatever penalty he paid was through action by forces of despotism. 'Abdu'l-Baha never reproached him.

Now, Shaykhu'r-Ra'is gradually retired from public life.

He once again visited 'Ishqabad.

In Mashhad, he had to meet the challenge of the newly-formed Democratic party, led by Mirza Muhammad, known as Aqa-Zadih, son of Mulla Muhammad-Kazim-i-Khurasani, the celebrated pro-Constitutionalists divine who was resident in 'Iraq.

A famous ode composed by Shaykhu'r-Ra'is was printed, and thousands of copies were widely distributed to prove to the public that the veteran prince was a

Baha'i.

One day a number of theological students stopped Shaykhu'r-Ra'is, as he was about to enter the Shrine of Imam Rida, telling him that as he was a 'Babi', he could not be allowed to enter the sacred precincts.

Their action was instigated by the Aqa-Zadih, supported by the Governor--Nayyiru'd-Dawlih, himself a Qajar prince--who sided with him.

And Shaykhu'r-Ra'is had to take once more the road to 'Ishqabad.

At last old age was telling on Shaykhu'r-Ra'is and he became a recluse.

He died in the year AH 1336 (17 October 1917-6 October 1918) and was buried in a room next to that which harbours the grave of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, within the precincts of the Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim.

The Aqa-Zadih, in Mashhad, carried his vendetta beyond the grave; he declared openly that should the remains of Shaykhu'r-Ra'is be brought for interment in the holy city, he would consign them to flames.

Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, the Shaykhu'r-Ra'is, bore proudly a title which had belonged to one of the greatest savants of all time.

By his indirect method and his most effective use of the pulpit he guided many a soul to the truth of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

His poetic talent produced a long and wondrous ode on the Advent of <p155> Baha'u'llah, with its refrain, 'tamashshi kun, tamasha kun'--'walk on and witness'.

Here are two of its lines:

The One, by all beloved, stepped out of the Realm Unseen, On His visage, indeed, the Light of Truth can be seen.

Captivated is the world by His beauty rare!

Walk on and witness.

Lo, by bounty and grace is the Earth replete, Lo, the Effulgent Light of the Godhead From a Human Temple shines!

Walk on and witness.

Similarly striking is the ghazal which Shaykhu'r-Ra'is composed in praise of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

The King whose crown 'Him Whom God hath purposed' doth proclaim withal, After the Ancient Beauty is Sovereign unto all.[1] [1.

Baha'u'llah refers to 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Kitab-i-Aqdas as 'Him Whom God hath purposed'.] His poem in Arabic, commemorating the construction of the Shrine of the Bab, remains unmatched.

His rejection of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's pretensions is emphatically, powerfully

and eloquently worded.

To him 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed the following Tablet:

The Lamp of the Assemblage of the high-minded, the Prince of the enlightened,
Shaykhur-Ra'is:

May he be a ray of God, and a dazzling moon!

O kind Friend!

What thy musk-laden pen hath inscribed bestowed joy and brought delight.

It was not a dew-drop, but an ocean; not a lamp, but a beam of sunlight.

Praise and glory be to God, Who hath endowed Creation with such beatitude and conferred such tranquillity upon the hearts, and by imparting heavenly knowledge made the friends stars of the East, brilliant moons, so that they would enkindle the Light of Understanding, and with the showers of the rain of their utterance make human hearts the envy of meadows and rose-gardens.

O kind Friend!

The All-Bountiful God guided thee and led thee to traverse mountains and deserts to reach the City of thine ancestors.

That Land stood in great need of one mighty soul like that loving friend to enter therein, engage in discussion, show the Way of God, embellish the assemblage of men with mysteries unveiled, and watch over their spiritual lives so that they might abide under the shade of the tree of hope.

Thou shouldst speak forth, wax eloquent, divulge the hidden secrets, share the Word of God, inaugurate a school of the Kingdom and give instruction in heavenly Books, ignite a shining lamp and burn down the veils of the imaginings of the ignorant.

May thy soul be joined to the Beloved. (Unpublished) <p156> 13 A Stalwart Teacher of the Faith As far as the records of history show, Mirza Mahmud-i-Furughi is the only Iranian Baha'i teacher who was given the chance to meet face to face a Shah of the Qajars, for the purpose of making him comprehend the nature and the aim of the Baha'i Faith, and to set his mind at rest by assuring him that Baha'is are not anarchists, that they do not wish to jeopardize the tranquillity of the realm and foment rebellion and contention.

That monarch was Muzaffari'd-Din Shah, the ruler whose edict terminated autocracy in Iran.

The meeting of Mirza Mahmud with Muzaffari'd-Din Shah lasted <p157> more than two hours and the details of that historic encounter are given by Mirza Mahmud in a short autobiography which he, at last, consented to write.

It is a very precious document.

Later, we shall note the circumstances in which he wrote it, after having

resisted for long the demand for a comprehensive autobiography.

'Abdu'l-Baha, commenting on the meeting between Muzaffari'd-Din Shah and Mirza Mahmud, wrote: 'Consider how a servant of the Abha Beauty, all alone, outwardly bereft of all aid and assistance, converseth in the way he did with such a person, proveth equal to the task, and causeth wonder.' (Quoted in Sulaymani, vol.

3, p.

456) Mirza Mahmud came from a remote village in Khurasan named Dughabad, which was situated in the environs of Turbat-i-Haydariyyih.

Baha'u'llah honoured that village with the designation of Furugh (Splendour, Light).

That is why Mirza Mahmud is known as Furughi.

Fadil-i-Furughi--the Savant of Furugh--is also an appellation by which he is remembered.

Mirza Mahmud had as his father a distinguished survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi:

Mulla Mirza Muhammad, who, prior to his conversion to the Faith of the Bab, was a highly-respected and influential Shi'ih divine.

Mulla Mirza Muhammad's grandfather was a man of Isfahan, but it was in Khurasan that his grandson, the great cleric who was destined to become a devoted follower of the Bab, had his fulcrum of power.

Whenever people had a grievance or had actually been wronged by a government official, they appealed to Mulla Mirza Muhammad.

He always thoroughly investigated any case brought before him, and if his findings showed that an official had been guilty of a misdeed he would personally take action to redress the wrong.

No matter how highly placed the malefactor was, he could not escape the sentence decreed by the cleric of Dughabad, who would even send a deputy-governor to gaol.

Then came the Call of the Bab.

There were genuine seekers in the area of Turbat-i-Haydariyyih, but there were also quite a number seeking only their own gain and concerned only with lining their pockets.

These hypocrites simulated great interest and told Mulla Mirza Muhammad that they wished him, in whom they placed their trust, to investigate the claim of the Bab for them.

That was the way to get rid of the 'meddlesome' cleric, they thought.

And so they provided him with a horse and offered him the expenses of his journey.

A few men volunteered to accompany him.

Mulla Mirza Muhammad set out on his quest and hearing that Mulla Husayn had gone towards Mazindaran, he took the same direction.

Of those who had accompanied him, some, finding it toilsome to cover vast distances, and also being unsure of their motives, turned back.

But five brave and sincere men stayed with him and went with him into the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsi.

Their names ought not to be forgotten.

They were Shaykh 'Ali of the village of Faydabad, Mulla Muhammad of Mahnih, Aqa Ahmad and Mirza Hasan Khan of 'Abdu'llahabad, and Mulla 'Abdu'llah of Dughabad.

Meeting Quddus and Mulla Husayn left them in no doubt that the Call of the Bab was not of human invention, that it was indeed divine.

Thus the renowned and just cleric of Dughabad became one of the heroic defenders of Shaykh Tabarsi.

As he had no desire for martyrdom, Quddus assured him that he would leave Shaykh Tabarsi with his life spared.

Now we see a man who had never had to wield a sword or a dagger, who would have been mightily astonished, a year before, if someone had put a sword in his hand and totally at a loss as to how to use the unfamiliar weapon, one who knew only the law, its intricacies and its applications, for whom fortifications and battlements and trenches were phantasmagoria removed from the world of reality, going out of Shaykh Tabarsi, sword in hand, to drive away the relentless enemy.

He was wounded five times by bullets or sword; but as promised by Quddus he came through.

Triumphantly he returned to Dughabad to inform those ringleaders, who had sent him to Mazindaran in search of truth, that he had indeed found it.

A few accepted his testimony and embraced the Faith of the Bab.

But the hard of heart, desirous only of material gain, with little concern for justice and truth, leagued together to rid themselves, once for all, of this troublesome cleric who had dared much and come home with laurels of faith and certitude.

Mulla Mirza Muhammad was ordered by the authorities to go to Tihran.

He obeyed, but once again returned to Dughabad.

Further incensed, his adversaries planned afresh to have him cast out of Dughabad.

Their intrigues bore fruit.

Mulla Mirza Muhammad was arrested and put in chains.

Mirza Ahmad-i-Azghandi and twenty-two others from Azghand were also chained and taken to Mashhad in the company of the undaunted survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi.

Their internment in the citadel of Mashhad lasted a long while, but when release came Mulla Mirza Muhammad, now a devoted follower of <p159> Baha'u'llah, went back for the third time to his village.

He was old and frail and infirm, but he had testified to truth to his last breath, and he had a son of the stature of Mirza Mahmud to don his mantle. 'Azizu'llah Sulaymani, the biographer of many of the prominent teachers of the Faith, recalls the person and the personality of Furughi, a memory of the days of his childhood in 'Ishqabad.

Of middle height, he was a dignified figure possessed of an attractive and handsome face, a thick beard which was dyed and a commanding voice.

Dressed in the garb of the divines, his speech and his demeanour reflected his inner strength.

One particular distinction of this man was the fact that he never, never engaged in backbiting, and no one in his presence ever committed backbiting, so much was he held in high respect.

And if anyone wanted to break the code, he was denied the chance to proceed, for in whatever meeting Furughi was present, from start to finish, he kept people entranced by the recital of scriptures, the narration of the services and sufferings of early believers, and by relating something of his own life. (Sulaymani, Masabih-i-Hidayat, vol.

3, pp.

420-21) Such a man was the son of Mulla Mirza Muhammad.

A Baha'i of 'Ishqabad has recalled a particular occasion, a Friday <p160> evening, when believers had gathered in that part of the Mahriqul-Adhkar specified for meetings and a booklet had reached them from the Baha'is of the United States, conveying the news of fresh victories.

One of the young men asked Mirza Mahmud whether he might read from that booklet for all to hear.

As the young man began reading, it was 'Allahu-Abha' that came first.

Immediately Furughi stopped him and, turning to the audience, said: 'Your brethren in America have greeted you.

Let us make our response.' They all stood up, as Furughi had done, and their voices rang out: 'Allahu-Abha'.

They could be heard several streets away.

Thus did the Baha'is of 'Ishqabad reciprocate, at Furughi's bidding, the greetings sent them by American Baha'is.

Furughi always paid particular attention to the welfare of the youth: not only their upbringing in the spirit of the Faith, but also their civilized behaviour.

But he was never impatient, never autocratic.

Kind and considerate, he led the youth gently to better manners, better understanding, better conduct.

And he was exceedingly modest.

Time and again he had been asked to write his autobiography.

He would have had a rich tale to tell.

What he considered important, however, was not the record of his own person, but the record of the victories of the Faith.

It was only when he was assured that the Greatest Holy Leaf, with the approval of the Guardian of the Faith, was eager that he should write the story of his life, and he was given a note-book in Haifa to fill, that he took up his pen and wrote, regrettably not at length, but long enough to make the reader see the mettle and the true greatness of this dedicated Baha'i.

When, in his early youth, he went with a fellow-believer on his first teaching trip, visiting a number of localities in his native province of Khurasan, he presented an account of his journey to Baha'u'llah.

In response a Tablet was revealed in his honour:

Verily, We were with thee when thou didst journey away from home, and didst travel in the land to propagate the Cause of thy Lord, the Ruler of this world and the Kingdom.

We heard thy call giving the Most Great Announcement, and thy words regarding this wronged Exile. (Quoted in Sulaymani, *Masabih-i-Hidayat*, vol.

3, p.

431) Before long Furughi's zeal and eloquence roused the fury of the divines of Dughabad.

Their clamour caused the Governor of the district, who was a grandson of Fath-'Ali Shah, to send Furughi to Mashhad.

From his prison-cell there, he managed secretly to send out <p161> a petition to Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

His appeal was so worded that it touched the heart of that cruel monarch who issued orders for the release of Furughi.

As it became known that Furughi would be set free, the clerics of Mashhad began agitating.

The Governor-General of Khurasan yielded to their demands and banished Furughi to Kalat, a corner of Khurasan which has seen scores of exiles.

Such were the qualities of Furughi that the Governor of Kalat fell under his spell.

And one day that benevolent man gave him the shattering news of the Ascension of Baha'u'llah.

Furughi was so grief-stricken that it seemed his senses would part from him.

He began a three-day fast, breaking it each sunset with only a drink of water, and prayed throughout the night.

On the fourth night, Baha'u'llah appeared in his dreams.

The consolation which that dream imparted to Furughi gave him new life.

Now, the Governor of Kalat asked him to occupy the pulpit every day, recite the sufferings of the House of Muhammad, and give the people good advice in the ways of faith.

Furughi did as he was bidden.

The power of his speech, once again, caused the clerics to league themselves in opposition to him.

They took their case to the Governor-General of Khurasan, alleging that Mirza Mahmud had robbed half of the inhabitants of Kalat of their true faith, had led them astray.

The Governor-General, a weak man, was frightened, and ordered the good Governor of Kalat to send Furughi away to Bajgiran, which was a frontier post.

The Governor was naturally very annoyed, but Furughi remained calm and composed and left the safety of Kalat with confidence.

Bajgiran was close to 'Ishqabad, and the Baha'is of that renowned city came and took Furughi away.

He was a free man at last.

That was his first journey outside his country.

After a short sojourn in 'Ishqabad, Furughi went on to the Holy Land: his first pilgrimage. 'Abdu'l-Baha took him to Bahji, to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

Furughi, after many a month of tests and hardship, had found his paradise on earth.

A few yards away from the Shrine stands the stately Mansion where Baha'u'llah lived and where He ascended to His Kingdom.

And at this point of time, when Furughi experienced the supreme thrill of lowering his brow on the threshold of the Shrine, in the presence of the beloved Master, there lived in the Mansion that infamous band of men and women who had the temerity to violate the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.[1] They had been conspiring for long to undermine the position of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He, <p162> <p163> the forgiving Master, had tried to protect them from the consequences of their devilish designs.

The more assiduously He endeavoured to save them and protect them, the more blatant became their impertinence; until a time came when 'Abdu'l-Baha, compelled by the demands of the trust reposed in Him, had to take measures to cleanse the Community of the Most Great Name of the poison which the violators of the Covenant were instilling into it.

During this first pilgrimage of Furughi still only a few of the Baha'is had come to know of the treachery of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Furughi, amazingly perspicacious, was one of them.

The warning imparted by a tradition of Islam had found its verification in the spiritual susceptibilities of this very gifted man of Khurasan: 'Beware of the perspicacity of the believer, because he observes with the light of God.' [1.

See Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, chap.

5.] One day, a son of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali came in with a dish of tangerines and laid it before Furughi. 'Sarkar-i-Aqa' (His Excellency the Master), he said, 'asks you to distribute this dish of fruit amongst the friends.' 'And who is Sarkar-i-Aqa?' Furughi asked. 'Why, of course,' replied the son of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, 'it is Aqay-i-Ghusnu'llahi'l-Akbar' (the Greater Branch, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali).

Furughi shook his head. 'No!' he exclaimed. 'The only Sarkar-i-Aqa is Hadrat-i-Ghusnu'llahi'l-A'zam' (the Most Great Branch).

Many years before, Mirza Diya'u'llah, a full brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, had presented a request to Baha'u'llah on behalf of 'Aqa'.

He was asked, 'Who is Aqa?' Mirza Diya'u'llah replied, 'Aqay-i-Ghusn-i-Akbar'.

And Baha'u'llah very sternly reminded him that there is only one 'Aqa' (one Master); others have names--but He who is totally 'Aqa' is 'Ghusn-i-A'zam' ('Abdu'l-Baha).

Furughi did not stop at telling the son of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali that there was only one 'Master'.

He made it clear that anyone who broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and waxed proud before the Most Great Branch would forfeit any title or station he had.

A branch which is dried only serves as fuel: no more, no less.

And then he instructed the son of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to take the dish of fruit away.

But, it is related, because the Covenant-breakers had not, as yet, come into the open, Furughi was apprehensive.

Had he overstepped the mark and talked out of turn?

It was not his, he pondered, to make public the defection of the members of the family of Baha'u'llah.

But when he was once again in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the smile of the <p164> beloved Master reassured him that all was well.

On a table he saw a dish piled up with tangerines. 'Abdu'l-Baha picked up one, peeled it Himself and offered it to Furghi.

He knew then that indeed he had acted rightly, that the beloved Master had approved what he had done.

Next, we find Furughi in Cairo, where the matchless Mirza Abu'l-Fadl was, at that time, resident.

At a large gathering of the Baha'is, Furughi took up the theme of- the Covenant and the necessity of <p165> obedience, unreserved and unqualified, to Him Who was the Centre, the Pivot of the Covenant: the Most Great Branch.

Once again Furughi was very outspoken.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl intervened to ask Furughi to exercise a measure of restraint.

Furughi retorted at once that in the field of oratory he had not become so unsaddled as to have to call out, 'O Abu'l-Fadl!

Rescue me.[1] Besides,' he continued, 'do you not know that the Master, in a Tablet with which He has honoured me, has said: "be a leader of this legion"?' As soon as Mirza Abu'l-Fadl heard this reference to the Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, he stood up, went close to Furughi and said, 'I am the very first person to kiss the knee of this commander!' Furughi, too, was immediately on his feet.

Those two men, both truly great, embraced each other and kissed each other's cheeks.

The union of the fidelity and constancy of these spiritual giants galvanized the faith of all who witnessed it.

The shafts of hate and malice flung by the faithless could never pierce the armour thus forged. [1.

Abu'l-Fadl was the patronymic of 'Abbas, a brother of Husayn, the third Imam, who suffered martyrdom with him at Karbila.

He is always invoked by the Shi'ites for help.] The Egyptian journey over, Furughi set out for home.

His arrival at Tihran caused a great stir.

Baha'is gathered in their hundreds to hear him speak of the beloved Master, of His all-encompassing love, of the treachery of the Covenant-breakers, of the triumphs of the Covenant.

The news of these gatherings reached the ears of Nayibu's-Saltanih (Kamran

Mirza, governor of Tihran).

And he was alarmed.

Are the Babis hatching a plot to seize power, was his immediate reaction, fantastic as it sounds!

He set spies to find out who the newcomer was, and how many these 'Babis' were.

At one gathering, his minions counted nine hundred pairs of shoes shed outside the room.

Then Nayibu's-Saltanih ordered the detention of Mirza Mahmud.

Officials went in search of him, discovered his house, and not finding him at home laid hold of his servant, a Baha'i named Siyyid 'Ali, who readily confessed his faith and marshalled arguments to prove the truth of his beliefs.

Nayibu's-Saltanih listened to Siyyid 'Ali and then told him to go home and inform his master that Nayibu's-Saltanih desired to meet him.

As soon as Furughi received that message, he wrote a letter to the prince, intimating that he would keep a tryst the next day.

He had no fear, although his fellow-believers thought that he would be walking into the lion's mouth.

However, Furughi could not be persuaded to <p166> change his mind.

Moreover, he had made a solemn promise which he could not, would not revoke.

A man notorious for his wild ways had only recently embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah, bidding farewell to his indulgences.

His name was Abu'l-Qasim, his nickname Khammar (Vintner).

Furughi asked Khammar whether he would be prepared to hold the reins and lead his horse to the gates of the palace.

Khammar was delighted and felt proud to serve Furughi in that manner.

But arriving at the prince's residence, Furughi was informed that Nayibu's-Saltanih was too busy to receive him that day; would he come on the morrow?

The following day, once again, Nayibu's-Saltanih was said to be much occupied.

It was on the third day that Furughi was admitted to see the prince.

Nayibu's-Saltanih expressed astonishment at Furughi's fearlessness.

He had had full opportunity to take himself to a place of safety; instead he had kept his tryst.

In a corner, away from others, a rug was spread for the two of them to sit and talk.

Some lettuce and a bowl of syrup was brought to them for refreshment.

A knife was there too for cutting the lettuce.

At that moment the Prince referred to Baha'u'llah as Mirza Husayn-'Ali.

Furughi was greatly angered.

Upbraiding the Prince for his display of irreverence, he asked for the knife. 'What do you want it for?' Nayibu's-Saltanih remarked. 'To cut my throat, that you may drink my blood' was Furughi's answer. 'It seems that your thirst has not been slaked; perchance, drinking my blood may give you satisfaction.' Seeing Furughi thus enraged, Nayibu's-Saltanih made an attempt to pacify him and asked, 'Tell me, what is your view of Him?' Furughi replied: 'He [Baha'u'llah] lives on two planes; one is the human plane which is common to all; that is the plane alluded to in the Qur'an: "I am a human being like you, to whom Revelation comes." [1] Then there is the Divine plane, the plane of Lordship, which lies beyond human understanding.

The Prophet [Muhammad] has thus spoken of it: "For me, in relation to God, there are various stages: once He is I and I am He." [2] [1.

18:110.] [2.

Paraphrase of an Islamic tradition on the authority of the Prophet, quoted in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, XXVII.] Next Nayibu's-Saltanih put this question to Furughi, 'I am told that you are convening many meetings; do you intend to cause mischief?' Furughi knew that Nayibu's-Saltanih would ask him something on those lines and was prepared. 'Your Royal Highness,' he said, 'our <p167> books are in your possession; you can easily verify what they teach.

Moreover, our community is composed of all sorts of people.

Within every community you find both good men and bad men.

We hold our meetings to warn the wayward, to still uncontrolled passions, to help the people distinguish clearly that which is right from that which is wrong.

These are our reasons for holding meetings, for bringing men together, and not to foment discontent and disorder.

Holding these meetings is also to your advantage.

In the early years of this Faith, some of its followers, because of their ignorance of the true purport of the teachings of the Bab, made an attempt on the life of the sovereign which led to great upheavals and suffering.

That event was never repeated, because at our meetings we help the people to be on their guard and not to slip into negligence and waywardness.'

Nayibu's-Saltanih was greatly pleased to hear all this and replied to Furughi: 'Now I am assured.

I am satisfied and know that Baha'is mean no harm.

Go, and hold your meetings.

No one will try to stop you.' As Furughi came out of the orchard, he noticed Abu'l-Qasim, the vintner, disengaging himself from the shelter of a tree.

Very astonished, he asked Abu'l-Qasim what he was doing there in the prince's orchard.

Khammar replied that, knowing the precarious situation in which Furughi had been placed, he had stealthily come into the orchard with a revolver, intending to use it were the prince found to have devilish designs.

He definitely meant to shoot the prince.

Now, he asked, in such a case would he have been forgiven, or would he only have added one more transgression to all the rest?

Furughi told him that it was a question not at all easy to answer, but at the earliest opportunity he would present it to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Time passed.

One day, Aqa Jamal-i-Burujirdi, still ensconced within the ramparts of the Faith, made a remark which was obviously impertinent.

He faulted 'Abdu'l-Baha regarding an opinion which He had expressed.

It so incensed Furughi that he immediately jumped up and pulled the cushion on which Aqa Jamal was sitting away from him, saying, 'You have waxed so insolent as to match the perspicuous text with your puny understanding.' Before long Furughi returned to 'Ishqabad.

In that city, now teeming with Baha'is, a young man had been guilty of an offence, and the believers asked Furughi to teach him a lesson.

So when this young man approached Furughi he slapped him hard in the face.

The offender realized immediately what that slapping was meant to convey. 'I am sincerely sorry' he said, 'and I regret what I have done.' The next day he brought a bag of silver and gave it to Furughi, to give a Feast on his behalf when in the Holy Land.

When Furughi found himself in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha, he was moved to offer his life as a ransom, so grievous were the Master's sufferings at the hands of the Covenant-breakers. 'You wish to be relieved of this world and repair at the earliest to the presence of Baha'u'llah,' observed 'Abdu'l-Baha. 'But, no, you must live.

And the Covenant-breakers will soon receive their desserts.' One day 'Abdu'l-Baha pointed out to him a ship which was about to depart and worked out his itinerary for him.

Then Furughi, remembering all that he had missed or forgotten, the questions

that he had not asked, felt at a loss, wondering what he could do.

As he was pondering the matter, 'Abdu'l-Baha got up to walk away and told Furughi to follow Him.

When He had gone a little way ahead, He turned to Furughi and said, 'There is little time left.

Tell me, what did you say to Abu'l-Qasim-i-Khammar, outside the Amiriyyih garden?' Furughi was taken aback and tried to explain it implicitly, but 'Abdu'l-Baha said, 'Tell me in your own words'.

Furughi replied, 'I made it all dependent on the bounty of the Master.' Then 'Abdu'l-Baha replied: 'Do you not know your Qur'an?

Is it not written there that "Good deeds blot out misdeeds?"[1] Give him my greetings and tell him that his transgressions committed previously are forgiven, but leave those ways alone in future.' [1.

An Arabic proverb.

Next, 'Abdu'l-Baha asked him what he had done to Jamal-i-Burujirdi.

Furughi said that because he matched the text with his own verdict, 'I pulled away the cushion on which he was sitting'. 'The Blessed Perfection inspired you to do what you did,' 'Abdu'l-Baha said. 'He has joined the Covenant-breakers.

Tell the friends to beware of him and not to be beguiled by him.' Then 'Abdu'l-Baha asked him, 'What did you do to that young man in 'Ishqabad?

Furughi replied: 'I punished him in front of the people.' 'What you did was wrong,' said 'Abdu'l-Baha. * * * * * [Electronic editor's note:

In the Foreward to this book, p. x, Moojan Momen writes: '...the present writer has contributed short accounts... [The] additions are clearly indicated in the text ... where the added material follows a line of asterisks.']

'This type of person should be chastised in private.

But God has forgiven both your wrong and his.' Furughi returned to Iran by the route that 'Abdu'l-Baha had <p169> indicated, visiting a number of towns and encouraging the believers.

In Tihran, he delivered 'Abdu'l-Baha's reply to the overjoyed Abu'l-Qasim-i-Khammar.

Then a few years later he returned to the Holy Land.

Here 'Abdu'l-Baha indicated to him that he would be beaten and persecuted for the sake of the Faith; He also foretold the assassination of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, instructing Furughi to warn the believers in Iran to be on their guard.

And so it occurred.

On the way back, Furughi visited the Baha'is of Abadih.

While there he was set upon by an angry mob and severely beaten.

He only just escaped death in that town.

Later in Tihran, Nasiri'd-Din Shah died at the hand of one of the disciples of Siyyid Jamal'u'd-Din-i-Afghani, and although there was an attempt to lay the blame at the door of the Baha'is this was thwarted.

It was shortly after this that Furughi was given an opportunity of meeting the new Shah, Muzaffari'd-Din, and of apprising him of the tenets of the Faith of Baha'u'llah in such a manner that the Shah was induced to look favourably upon it.

At this time Furughi fell ill and a physician pronounced his case to be beyond hope.

But undaunted, Furughi asked permission to go to the Holy Land.

Although very ill by the time he arrived there, he was brought back to complete health by 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministrations.

He returned to Tihran and went from there to Yazd in order to answer a challenge by the mujtahid Siyyid 'Aliy-i-Hayiri to an open debate.

But on Furughi's arrival, Hayiri pleaded ill-health and would not come forward.[1] [1].

It should be noted that although there were frequent persecutions of the Baha'is in Yazd at this time, Hayiri never participated in these.] From Yazd, Furughi proceeded to Khurasan and his home village of Dughabad.

He had been there but a short while when he was set upon by a mob, beaten and forced to leave the village.

He retired to 'Ishqabad for a time before returning to Mashhad.

It was in Mashhad in October 1910 that two men attempted to assassinate Furughi.

But although they discharged their pistols at his chest at close range, Furughi survived this attack.

He returned to Dughabad for a short time before setting out once more for 'Ishqabad and Egypt where 'Abdu'l-Baha was at that time resident, following His strenuous travels in Europe and America.

Furughi was sent to Haifa to announce 'Abdu'l-Baha's return in December 1913 after an absence of more than three years from the Holy Land. <p170> On his return to Iran, Furughi again survived an attempted assassination in Mashhad and retired to Dughabad where he was frequently under attack from the enemies of the Faith.

His last pilgrimage to Haifa was in the time of Shoghi Effendi, and it was shortly after his return to Dughabad that he was invited to a feast by one who pretended to be his friend, but who administered poison to him during the meal.

The poison caused a severe illness that Furughi's advanced age could not withstand.

Within a short while he passed away, in AH 1346 (AD 1 July 1927 -- 19 June 1928). <p171> 14 Ibn-i-Asdaq Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, known as Ibn-i-Asdaq, whom the Exalted Pen (Baha'u'llah) addressed as Shahid Ibn-i-Shahid (Martyr, son of the Martyr), was the distinguished son of that great veteran of the Babi Faith, Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani, who, haltered and in the company of the incomparable Quddus was paraded in the streets of Shiraz; fought on the battlements of Shaykh Tabarsi under the banner of Quddus, and came safely through the holocaust; attained the Day of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', gave Him his whole-hearted allegiance, served Him with exemplary devotion, and was honoured by Him with the designation of Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq. (See p.

7.) Ibn-i-Asdaq was the son of such a father.

He was a boy of tender years when, together with his saintly father, he was consigned to the dungeon of Tihiran.

And he was still in his teens when, in the company of his father, he travelled to Baghdad, and into the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Not only did he have that supreme bounty, but the Most Exalted Pen moved to reveal a prayer for him, in which we read these very significant words: 'I ask Thee, O my God! to give him to drink of the milk of Thy bounty so that he may raise the standards of victory through Me,--a victory which is Thine--and arise to serve Thy Cause, when he groweth up, just as, when a youth, he hath arisen at Thy Command.' (Unpublished) Indeed, Baha'u'llah chose the son of Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq to be a promoter of His Cause, a faithful servant at His threshold, when that future Hand of the Cause of God was still a child.

And he was still a child when the hands of the ungodly brought lashes to bear on his flesh.

Ibn-i-Asdaq craved martyrdom in the path of his Lord.

In the Most Great Prison ('Akka) he attained once again the presence of Baha'u'llah. 'We testify that thou didst enter the prison, that thou <p172> didst present thyself and didst stand at the door, and thou didst hear the words of this Wronged One by Whom all lamps are ignited.' (Unpublished) Thus again the Most Exalted Pen moved to address him.

Then he supplicated Baha'u'llah to grant him the station of martyrdom.

In January 1880 his supplication was answered.

Thou didst beg the Supreme Lord ... to bestow upon thee a station whereat in the path of His love thou wouldst give up everything: thy life, thy spirit, thy reputation, thine existence, all in all.

All of these behests were submitted in the most sanctified, most exalted Presence of the Abha Beauty.

Thus did the Tongue of the Merciful speak in the Kingdom of Utterance: 'God willing, he shall be seen in utmost purity and saintliness, as befitteth the Day of God, and attain the station of the most great martyrdom.

Today, the greatest of all deeds is service to the Cause.

Souls that are well assured should with utmost discretion teach the Faith, so that the sweet fragrances of the Divine Garment will waft from all directions.

This martyrdom is not confined to the destruction of life and the shedding of blood.

A person enjoying the bounty of life may yet be recorded a martyr in the Book of the Sovereign Lord.

Well is it with thee that thou hast wished to offer whatsoever is thine, and all that is of thee and with thee in My path.' (Baha'u'llah, through His amanuensis, Mirza Aqa Jan; unpublished) <p173> Later, we find Mirza Aqa Jan writing again on the same theme, bringing to Ibn-i-Asdaq the life-imparting words of Baha'u'llah:

What thou hadst written regarding martyrdom in the path of God, was presented and He spoke thus, supreme is His Power: 'We, verily, have ordained for him this exalted station, this high designation.

Well it is with him that he attained this station prior to its appearance, and We accepted from him that which he intended in the path of God, the One, the Single, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.' (Unpublished) In such manner was Ibn-i-Asdaq honoured with the designation Shahid Ibn-i-Shahid in the year 1882.

It was then that Ibn-i-Asdaq took to the road, moving from town to town, city to city, visiting large centres of population as well as rural areas, teaching with all his ardour the Faith of his Lord, in the path of which he had begged for martyrdom. 'The movement itself from place to place,' the Most Exalted Pen instructed him, 'when undertaken for the sake of God, hath always exerted, and can now exert, its influence in the world.

In the Books of old the station of them that have voyaged far and near in order to guide the servants of God hath been set forth and written down.' (Quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp.

70-71) The first time in the Writings of Baha'u'llah that we encounter the mention and concept of Hand of the Cause of God is within a Tablet which He revealed through His amanuensis in honour of Ibn-i-Asdaq, dated April 1887.

'This evanescent Khadim [Mirza Aqa Jan was called Khadimu'llah:

Servant of God] beseecheth the All-Abiding Lord to confirm the chosen ones, that is those souls who are Hands of the Cause, who are adorned with the robe of teaching, and have arisen to serve the Cause, to be enabled to exalt the Word of God.' (Unpublished) Ibn-i-Asdaq's marriage brought him close to men of high rank, associated with royalty.

His wife, 'Udhra Khanum, entitled Diyau'l-Hajiyyih, was a great-granddaughter of Muhammad Shah.

A sister of the wife of Ibn-i-Asdaq was married to Intizamu's-Saltanih, who had entree in the circles of the nobility, and had already become a stalwart Baha'i.

Ibn-i-Asdaq's marriage took place in Khurasan, the ancestral home of his father, Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq; and when the newly-married couple moved to Tihran, they found a home made ready for them by Intizamu's-Saltanih and his wife, in one of the best residential quarters of the capital.

<p174> Ibn-i-Asdaq was thus well placed, well prepared and well equipped to meet and talk with people who had a hand in guiding the destinies of the nation: royalty, nobility, priesthood, men of letters, devotees of learning.

It is related that Ibn-i-Asdaq himself referred time and again to 'hunting the lion rather than the fox'. 'Abdu'l-Baha, in later years, directed him, in particular, to stay with the course he had taken: give the message of Baha'u'llah to those who were at the helm.

Whilst holding converse with the prominent men in the capital, Ibn-i-Asdaq was also undertaking journeys far and wide to teach the Faith.

His travels were not confined to Persia.

He visited India and Russian Turkistan wherein 'Ishqabad was situated.

In the historical city of Marv, Ibn-i-Asdaq began preliminary work for the construction of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar; the land for the temple was donated by the government, and an architectural plan was drawn up which was sent to the Holy Land.

Moreover, he founded a hospice and a junior school in Marv.

In India, Ibn-i-Asdaq visited Bombay, Lahore and Delhi.

In Burma, he visited Rangoon and Mandalay, and everywhere he met and talked with men occupying positions of responsibility.

At home Ibn-i-Asdaq pioneered the establishment of teaching classes for the Baha'i women of Tihran. * * * * * [Electronic editor's note:

In the Foreward to this book, p. x, Moojan Momen writes: '...the present writer has contributed short accounts... [The] additions are clearly indicated in the text ... where the added material follows a line of asterisks.']

<p175> The years immediately following the passing of Baha'u'llah were difficult years for the Baha'i community.

The breakers of Baha'u'llah's Covenant were active in Iran, spreading their claims and causing agitation and bewilderment.

Ibn-i-Asdaq, in conjunction with the other Hands of the Cause, countered the activities of the enemies of the Faith, travelling throughout Persia to explain to the believers the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and confirm them in

it. 'Abdu'l-Baha instructed the Hands of the Cause to establish in Tihran a Spiritual Assembly to administer the affairs of the Faith.

The Hands of the Cause were appointed permanent members of this body that <p176> eventually evolved to become the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran.

Ibn-i-Asdaq was the instrument whereby 'Abdu'l-Baha's Treatise on Politics (Risaliy-i-Siyasiyyih) was presented to the Shah and distributed among the notables of Iran. 'Abdu'l-Baha also made him responsible, with Ahmad Yazdani, for delivering in person the Tablet addressed to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace at the Hague, in 1919.

Ibn-i-Asdaq was fortunate to be in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha on several occasions as a pilgrim.

On the last of his pilgrimages, he was in Haifa for some thirty months and left shortly before 'Abdu'l-Baha's ascension.

Back in Iran, Ibn-i-Asdaq continued to travel and serve the Faith until his death in 1928 in Tihran. <p177> 15 The Honest Merchant of Mashhad Aqa 'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhhab, the merchant, whose honesty so surprised Mirza 'Ali-Asghar Khan, the Aminu's-Sultan, as to declare him to be an angel, came from the Jewish fold. (See p.

55.) Mashhad is a holy city and it had had a sizeable Jewish population.

They suffered considerably at the hands of unruly fanatics.

As happened in Europe in medieval times, when Jews were forced to renounce their faith although many of them whilst ostensibly professing Christianity kept to their old allegiance, so it happened in Mashhad in recent times.

Let Lord Curzon tell us what occurred in Mashhad, during the reign of Muhammad Shah:

There still exists a considerable number of Jewish families in Meshed, although the practice of their own worship is strictly forbidden, and is only pursued in secret.

The story of their enforced conversion to Mohammedanism[1] in the year 1838 is well known, and has been repeated by more than one traveller.

Dr.

Wolff,[2] who was twice at Meshed, both before and after the incident, described it in these terms: [1.

It is both incorrect and insulting to speak of Islam as Mohammedanism.

Fortunately the use of that designation has been largely abandoned. (HMB)] [2.

Dr Joseph Wolff (father of the British diplomat, Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff) himself came from the Jewish fold but had converted to Christianity.

He was highly polemical. (HMB)] The occasion was as follows:

A poor woman had a sore hand.

A Mussulman [Muslim] physician advised her to kill a dog and put her hand in the blood of it.

She did so; when suddenly the whole population rose and said that they had done it in derision of their prophet.

Thirty-five Jews were killed in a few minutes; the rest, struck with terror, became Mohammedans.

They are now more zealous Jews in secret than ever, but call themselves Anusim, the Compelled Ones. [Narrative of Mission to Bokhara in 1843-1845, vol i p.

239, and vol. ii p.

72] Wolff does not add--what is necessary to explain the sudden outburst--that the incidents of the Jewess and the slaughtered dog unfortunately occurred on the very day when the Mohammedans were celebrating the annual Feast of Sacrifice.[3] Superstition and malice very easily aggravated an innocent act into a deliberate insult to the national faith; and hence the <p178> outbreak that ensued.

There is much less fanaticism now than in those days; but it still behoves a Yehudi [Yahudi], or Jew, to conduct himself circumspectly and to walk with a modest air in Meshed. (Persia and the Persian Question, vol.

1, pp.

165-6) [3.

The tenth day of Dhu'l-Hijjah: 'Id al-Adha or 'Id-i-Qurban. (HMB)] It must also be added that the poor Jewess could not bring herself to slaughter the stray dog they had cornered.

A Muslim was asked to do it for her, and it was this man, perhaps out of fear, who dashed about shouting that the Jews were guilty of insolence and deliberate affront, offering for sacrifice a dog on the day when sheep or camels are sacrificed in memory of the act of Abraham.

Whatever the case, the Jews of Mashhad, dwelling in the quarter of the city called the 'Idgah, paid heavily in human lives on that tenth day of Dhu'l-Hijjah.

Some fifty of them suffered death, their synagogue was demolished, their Torahs consigned to the fire.

It is reported that only one Torah remained; it had been secreted in a safe place.

Then, as that forcible conversion took shape, the holy city came to have a Jadid-Khanih (New House): the quarter of the Jadidu'l-Islam (newly converted to Islam).

Of course it is impossible to say how many of those repressed Jews genuinely became Muslims and how many remained attached to their old faith.

But there was one Jew in Mashhad of whose true allegiance we have ample evidence; he was Mulla Hizqil (Ezekiel), known as Namdar, the father of Aqa 'Azizu'llah.

Mulla Hizqil was a merchant, but he was also very learned, and held classes to teach his pupils the Torah, the Talmud and other religious works.

Even more, he had a copy of the Mathnavi of Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi, written in Hebrew characters, from which he taught his favourite pupils.

Some twelve years prior to that episode of forcible conversion, Mulla Hizqil invited Mirza 'Askari, an eminent Muslim divine of Mashhad whom he knew personally, to give him the word of testifying to utter.

He told Mirza 'Askari that studying Torah and other holy scriptures had convinced him of the truth of Islam.

So, years before the tumult of 1838, Mulla Hizqil had, of his own accord, become a Muslim, but no one in his family other than his wife, and certainly none of his pupils, knew of it.

Then one day, when engaged in reading from Rumi's Mathnavi, he turned to his eldest son and said: 'Shamuyil [Samuel]!

Holy scriptures indicate that today is the day of the Advent of that greatest Manifestation of Yahweh [Jehovah], Who is the Redeemer of all.

I shall be leaving this world, but beware lest you all remain heedless.'

<p179> Aqa 'Azizu'llah was two years old when his father died, and under his mother's care he grew up mindful of his religious duties.

However, when he was eight years of age, and attending a Muslim school in their quarter, one day a boy tried to cheat him, not giving back to him some of his writing materials which he had purloined.

Another boy intervened and ordered the cheat: 'Give it back to him; these people are still Jewish.' Aqa 'Azizu'llah, not being cognizant of his own origins, was terribly hurt; he told his mother, 'I will never go again to that place for my lessons; today, a boy insulted me and called me "Yahudi" [Jewish].' His mother explained their situation to him, of which the boy had been totally ignorant, and it revolted him.

At that early age, he decided to revert to the Faith of his forefathers.

His mother had said to him: 'Being Yahudi meant that we are descendants of Yahuda, the son of Jacob.

We have been forcibly converted to Islam; but your own father had, years before that forced conversion, by his own free will come into the Islamic fold.

During that awful night of massacre and murder, at the instance of Mirza

'Askari, who himself had given your father the word of Shahadat [testifying] to utter, we were all taken to the house of Aqa Rajab, who was called Rajab Bahadur.

We ourselves remained safe, but all that we possessed was pillaged.' Horrified, Aqa 'Azizu'llah ceased going to that Muslim school for his lessons, and at a tender age started trading.

And he became a master in his work.

Now, the divines of Mashhad had appointed one among themselves to keep a close watch over the Jadid-Khanih.

All the Jadids, even old ones over seventy, were expected to attend congregational prayers, and no kosher meat was allowed.

Despite all these pressures Aqa 'Azizu'llah was determined to take up the Jewish Faith.

He asked a cousin to teach him the Torah in secrecy, and he never left his home on a Saturday to avoid setting his eyes on the face of a Muslim on the Sabbath.

Thus the matter stood with Aqa 'Azizu'llah until the martyrdom of Badi', who was a youth of Khurasan.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah had a half-brother named Aqa Shahvirdi, who had already, unbeknown to all, embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

One day Aqa Shahvirdi came to speak of the courage of that youth and of his glorious martyrdom.

It was the first time that Aqa 'Azizu'llah had heard the name 'Baha'i' and wanted to know more, but his brother, well aware of fanaticism all around him, was very circumspect and kept silent.

Two other brothers <p180> of Aqa 'Azizu'llah, named Aqa Asadu'llah and Aqa Rahmatu'llah, resided and traded in the town of Turbat-i-Haydari, whilst he and Aqa Shahvirdi lived in Mashhad.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah's merchandise consisted mainly of goods in silk and most of his customers were Turkamans who frequented Mashhad in search of trade.

One day in the year AH 1291 (18 February 1874 -- 6 February 1875), when Aqa 'Azizullah was newly married, Aqa Shahvirdi came to him with a proposal: 'I have a very large quantity of damask, the price has fallen by two-thirds in Mashhad, and more than that there is no ready cash; if I sell it will have to be against future payment.

But I am told that the market for this fabric is very good at Badkubih.

Should I go there alone and die on the way all will be lost.

Would you accompany me for a month to put this deal through?' Ties of kinship were too strong and Aqa 'Azizu'llah could not refuse his brother's request.

He gave the charge of his own trading-house to Aqa Yusuf, one of the Jadids of Mashhad, and the two brothers set out for the Caucasus.

When they reached Nishapur, Baha'is, such as Shaykh Muhammad-i-Ma'muri (uncle of the martyr, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani) and Shaykh Mustafa, came to visit Aqa Shahvirdi.

By then, Aqa 'Azizu'llah was certain that his brother had become a follower of the new Faith, but, although much disturbed, he kept his peace.

In every town and city they passed through, there were Baha'is whom Aqa Shahvirdi wished to meet and so he did: in Sabzivar there was Haji Muhammad-Rida (martyred some years later in 'Ishqabad); in Kushkbagh lived Mulla Muhammad-i-Kushkbaghi; in Shahrud, Mulla Ghulam-Riday-i-Hirati; in Badkubih itself (their destination), Mirza 'Abdu'l-Mu'min and Mulla Abu-Talib; in Shirvan, Karbila'i Isma'il and the family of Samadov.

But everywhere Aqa Shahvirdi would ask the Baha'is not to speak to his brother of their Faith. 'He is a zealot for our old Faith,' Aqa Shahvirdi would tell them, 'and he will not listen to you.' For his part Aqa 'Azizu'llah kept silent, and in the homes of his brother's co-religionists would not touch their cooked food, taking only cups of tea and boiled eggs offered to him.

Thus the two brothers went about in Caucasia.

Badkubih did not provide, after all, a good and profitable market for damask, and Aqa Shahvirdi thought that he should try their luck in Tiflis (Tbilisi).

He went there by himself, leaving Aqa 'Azizu'llah behind in the town of Shaki, with most of their merchandise.

The peregrinations of the two brothers in the Caucasus had taken several months and nowhere had they been able to dispose of their goods profitably.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah then decided to go on alone to the renowned and historic city of Gandzha (now Kirovabad) where there were better prospects.

Taking his seat in a four-horse carriage (with his goods) at Shaki, Aqa 'Azizu'llah was put on the alert by the looks of his fellow-passengers.

Had it not been for his sagacity, he would not have lived to see another day.

Although he had learned some Turkish, he pretended to have no knowledge at all of that language, and thus, listening to the cartman and the other passengers talking in Turkish, he realized that they were plotting to murder him and steal his goods.

Reaching Gandzha, he sought out Mashhadi Muhammad-Ja'far, the rentier of a well-known caravanserai of that city, to whom he had a letter of introduction from Haji 'Ali-Akbar, a Persian merchant of Shaki.

Through his host he was rescued from the clutches of the villainous cartman and his passengers.

But being on his own in Gandzha, he apparently did not take full advantage of the favourable market.

Later, it was seen that a temporary situation created by a Christian festival had limited his sales.

From Caucasia, the two brothers made their way to Istanbul.

It took them fourteen months in the Ottoman capital to sell all their silken goods.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah, who had abandoned his schooling at an early age, was most anxious to improve his knowledge.

During those months of travelling he brought his mind to it, and being well endowed with a high intellect, he made rapid progress.

His brother, Aqa Shahvirdi, had a case with him which contained books and papers.

These he would take out, from time to time, and peruse.

This had not escaped Aqa 'Azizu'llah's notice.

One day, when Aqa Shahvirdi had gone to the bazar, Aqa 'Azizu'llah opened that case and came upon writings which he realized appertained to the Baha'i Faith, and they appealed to him, although he could not fully understand them.

Then he had a dream.

Let him recount it in his own words:

In my dream I saw it announced that it was the day of the Advent of Yahveh of the Torah, the Promise of all the Scriptures:

God watching the march past of all the Prophets and their adherents, examining their deeds and achievements.

I went immediately to the direction indicated, and I saw a vast plain.

As far as the eye could see people were ranged, rank upon rank.

Every Prophet with His followers was seated facing the Qiblih.

I marvelled how my eyes were empowered to see them all.

Facing all these ranks and ranges of people, a Blessed Being was seated on a two-tiered chair, speaking.

I was standing at the end of these ranks and ranges.

That Blessed Being was more than fifty years of age, and had a long, black beard and a green taj on His head, made of green silk.

He beckoned to me with His hand to go to His presence.

With both hands I pointed to the people, meaning to say, how could I get through?

He beckoned with His blessed hands to all those ranks of people, and they, one and all, prostrated themselves.

Then, once again, He beckoned to me to come.

I was hesitant, lest He was summoning someone else.

Then, when He beckoned a third time, I started to move, walking over the people who were prostrated, one foot on a back, another on a head, until I reached Him, threw myself at His feet and kissed them.

He raised me with His blessed hand and said: 'Praise be to God, the best of all creators'.

This dream had a profound effect on Aqa 'Azizu'llah, but he still remained rooted in his previous beliefs, until he and his brother reached Istanbul and lodged in Khan-i-Yusufiyan.

Whilst there Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid-i-Nishapuri, the father of the glorious Badi', and a sister of Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi also arrived at the Turkish metropolis and took lodgings in the same inn.

One day, when his brother was absent, Aqa 'Azizu'llah sat down with Aba-Badi' (the Father of Badi') to talk of the Baha'i Faith and he opened his heart to him.

And soon whatever doubts he had were dispelled.

There and then he gave his total, unhedged allegiance to Baha'u'llah, Whose Cause he served with distinction to the end of his days.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah said that he thanked God for the long delay in selling their merchandise.

That delay had kept them in Istanbul and had made possible the encounter leading him to Truth.

Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid was on his way to the Holy Land.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah requested him not to inform Aqa Shahvirdi, but to mention him in the presence of Baha'u'llah and beg for His bounties. <p183> On his return, Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid brought a Tablet addressed to Aqa 'Azizu'llah and permission for the two brothers to go to 'Akka.

When later the hand of the implacable enemy seized Aba-Badi' and he too drank his fill of the same cup which his son had so heroically quaffed, it was the destiny of Aqa 'Azizu'llah to give the remains of that stalwart veteran of the Faith a suitable burial.

Before the two brothers departed from Istanbul they heard the commotion which preceded the deposition of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, saw the tumult in the Ottoman metropolis, and heard the news of the overthrow of 'Abdu'l-'Aziz and of his death a few days later.

Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid had told them that these events would come to pass, as

Baha'u'llah had presaged them.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah, young as he was and elated as he was by his newly-found faith and the news of the permission to go to the presence of Baha'u'llah, did not at first notice that he had badly injured his hand while using a knife.

The night when Istanbul was thrown into disarray, the injured hand was so troubling him that he could not sleep.

Awake and tossing in his bed, he noticed that the military were on the move, and the warships in the straits had all their lights on.

And as dawn came cannons roared: 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, the Sultan who had decreed the banishment of Baha'u'llah, had fallen.

That was the first intimation which Aqa 'Azizu'llah had of the might of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

And when he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, he went down on his knees to kiss His feet.

Baha'u'llah raised him up and said: 'Praise be to God, the best of all creators'--the very words which Aqa 'Azizu'llah had heard in his dream.

As he looked up, he saw that Baha'u'llah was wearing a green taj.

That too he had seen in his dream.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah had unreservedly embraced the Baha'i Faith, but still certain likes and dislikes of the past persisted.

He could not help preferring kosher meat.

On the first day of his arrival at 'Akka, Haji 'Aliy-i-Malmiri took him to the market-place and pointed out a butcher's shop to him.

Baha'u'llah had instructed Haji 'Ali to show Aqa 'Azizu'llah the shop where he could obtain the kind of meat he still preferred.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah bowed his head in wonderment.

While in 'Akka he came to realize, even more than before, his disadvantage because of his neglect of his education in childhood.

Appealing to a fellow-believer to teach him some Arabic every day, he found that a start was made with instruction in rudiments of Arabic grammar, which further dismayed him.

And he longed for that knowledge of Arabic which would enable him to understand what flowed from the Most Exalted Pen.

He prayed for that knowledge, particularly on those evenings when, admitted to the presence of Baha'u'llah, he would have the superb honour of hearing Him dictate His verses to Mirza Aqa Jan.

Later on, in Cairo, he discovered to his own astonishment that he had gained

that knowledge.

At last, back in Mashhad after a long absence, Aqa 'Azizu'llah, because of his fervour and his total dedication to his newly-found Faith, became a cynosure and widely known as a 'Babi'.

He was most generous and hospitable.

Baha'is from far and wide frequented his home.

Then, through a mishap, a Tablet revealed by Baha'u'llah in honour of a Baha'i of Mashhad fell into the hands of this Baha'i's namesake.

The incident led to unrest.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah's relatives, particularly some of his nephews, fearing an assault on their homes, took precipitate action to forestall any untoward event.

They seized him, tied his hands and urged him to recant, which he refused to do despite the persistence of their urging and pleading.

At this juncture, Mirza Aqa Jan Mihdizadih, one of the favourite pupils of Aqa 'Azizu'llah's father, recalled what that sage had said regarding the Advent of that Supreme Manifestation of God Who is the Redeemer of all.

Thus reminded, the relatives of Aqa 'Azizu'llah released him, set about investigating and finally did as he had done: they ranged themselves under the standard of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

However, a number of the Jadids, moved by fear and jealousy, drew up a statement to the effect that Aqa 'Azizu'llah was now similar to gangrene at the heart of the Jadid-Khanih and his baneful influence would, ere long, totally destroy its life.

That malicious statement was presented to the elders, who, together with Karbila'i Muhammad-Safi, the man placed at the head of Jadid-Khanih by the government, went up to the trading-house of Aqa 'Azizu'llah in the caravanserai of Nasiriyyih.

They ordered him to accompany them to the house of a divine and publicly recant.

Should he not do so, he was told, they would hand him over to the authorities to deal with and punish as it pleased them.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah retorted that he would gladly accompany them to the presence of the divines, but then he would tell the clergy that these Jadids, who more than forty years before were forced to profess Islam, had remained Jewish, both in their beliefs and in their practices, whereas he, by embracing the Faith of Baha'u'llah, had truly recognized the station of the Prophet, and had come to <p185> accept the Qur'an as a holy Book descended from God.

Those hypocrites saw that should they persist in persecuting Aqa 'Azizu'llah,

they themselves would be the losers, and crestfallen they departed and took with them the Head of the Jadid-Khanih.

Henceforth, Aqa 'Azizu'llah began to teach openly and soon the number of Baha'is in the Jadid-Khanih rapidly increased.

Some sixty men enlisted in the community of the Most Great Name, as did the wives and children of most of them. 'The Most Exalted Pen addressed them as the children of Khalil [The Friend, Abraham] and the heirs of Kalim [The Interlocutor, Moses].' (Unpublished Tablet by Baha'u'llah) Aqa 'Azizu'llah, (whom we shall henceforth sometimes call Jadhhab, as this was the surname which he adopted in later years), now went travelling about in pursuit of his trading activities. 'Ishqabad (which had a large Baha'i community) he visited many a time, he traded in Bukhara long enough for the Amir of that once noble city of Transoxania to give him a passport, he went as far as Tashkand (Tashkent) and stayed there for a while.

Marv was another historic city where he lived and traded.

Wherever he was, he served the Cause of Baha'u'llah and the interests of his fellow-believers assiduously and meritoriously.

On his third visit to the Holy Land, in the year AH 1308 (17 August 1890 -- 6 August 1891), Baha'u'llah entrusted to him a particular task to carry out in Istanbul. (See Baha'u'llah, *The King of Glory*, pp.

399-401.) It was a delicate task, requiring firmness and sagacity.

Jadhhab performed it superbly, to the total discomfiture of the Azalis of Istanbul.

He corresponded with Edward Granville Browne and even more significantly with Tolstoy.

In his *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (p.

237), Professor Browne lists three letters which he had received 'From 'Azizu'llah, a Baha'i Jew of Bukhara. (1) May 24, 1892. (2) May 25, 1892. (3) June 24, 1892.' It was from Jadhhab that Edward Browne learned of the authorship of A Traveller's Narrative.

In a letter dated 21 May 1892, written from Shiraz, the father of the present writer told Edward Browne: 'The other day a man called Agha Azizullah of Bukhara called on me and asked for your address saying he wanted to communicate with you about some important matter--I hope I haven't done wrong in complying with his request.' It was at the bidding of 'Abdu'l-Baha that Aqa 'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhhab set out to visit Count Leo Tolstoy.

Here is his own account of that unforgettable visit to the great Russian humanist and writer: <p186> After hearing the instructions of 'Abdul-Baha, and returning from the Holy Land, left Odessa, on Sunday [sic], 1st Ramadan 1320, AD 14th September 1902, in order to visit Graf Tolstoy: ticket to Tula, 11 manat and 60 kopek, hiring a phaeton:

7 manat and 60 kopek, driver's tip. [He goes on thus recording his expenses, until the morning of Thursday:] I started for Yasnaya Polyana, where Graf Lif [Leo] Ivan Nikolaevich Tolstoy lives (expenses 1 manat).

On the way, the conductors said: 'They will not let you enter Yasnaya Polyana, because the government has expressly forbidden the entry of any visitors; even his disciples are forbidden.

At the railway station, only a one-minute stop is allowed, and no one is permitted to leave the train.' I said: 'I am a Persian Baha'i.

I have come specially from 'Akka to visit him, and it is necessary to see him for some spiritual enquiry.' The two conductors, both of whom were his friends and pupils, consulted together and decided thus after some thought: 'There is no alternative', they told me, 'but for us to let you alight at the signal box, and after passing through the station tell one or <p187> two people to seek you and take you away.' I accepted their offer and thanked them.

It was a very cold night, very dark and it was snowing.

At the signal box where I was let out, it was so dark that had anyone taken my bedding and valise, by my side, I would not have noticed and it was so cold that despite wearing a sable overcoat I was shivering.

After the lapse of half-an-hour or more, two men appeared and very kindly took up my bedding and my valise.

We walked to the station at Nikharnik, where we came upon the friends of the Graf.

They had sent these two men to look for me.

The stove was lighted which well heated the room, and by its heat we dried our clothes.

In the morning, after partaking of tea, trusting in God, I left my chattels behind and in a droshky drove to Yasnaya Polyana, where the Graf Lif lived.

On the road, I met a number of his disciples coming away, some riding in carriages and some on foot.

They advised me: 'Do not go any further.

The gendarmes will not permit you to proceed.' But I went ahead, and stepping out of the droshky at the entrance to the house I met a gendarme, whom I saluted in Russian.

He asked me: 'Why have you come here?' I said in reply: 'I am a Persian, a Baha'i.

There are some spiritual, mystic matters which I would like to discuss with the Count.' He said: 'It is forbidden.

I am not permitted to allow anyone to visit him. ' I said: 'May I request to ask someone to come to take a message from me?' To this they agreed.

A few minutes later someone came.

After preliminaries I was informed that he was Chertkov, a philosopher, who had been banished for two years, and had recently returned to Russia to visit Graf Tolstoy.

Subsequent to our pourparlers, when he realized that I had come from 'Akka, bearing messages from 'Abdu'l-Baha, he went back to the house to put the situation to the Graf; and when he returned he told the gendarme, on behalf of the Graf: 'This man has come from 'Akka, a long way.

He has not met me before.

He is not one of my disciples and he is not a Christian.

He is a Baha'i, wishing to discuss some spiritual matters.

Let him in to visit me.

He will return.' The gendarme agreed.

Chertkov became my guide and led me into a room specified for visitors.

The Graf had instructed him to let me rest in that room till lunch-time, since I would be tired, having travelled a distance.

Then we were to meet at lunch-time, to have our talk.

I said: 'Although I have not studied Russian, I have been for years trading in Transcaspian areas, and have become acquainted with Russian works and press; so I wish to request the perusal of the book which he [Tolstoy] has recently written, and against which the Christian clergy of Russia have risen in protest, leading to the present restrictions.' He [Chertkov] went and fetched me a copy of the book.

After having a wash, I was offered tea. 'I have already had my tea,' I said.

Then I rested for a while.

It was Friday [sic], 17 September 1902.

From 9 a.m. till noon, I busied myself with the perusal of the book.

Despite my poor knowledge, I understood the Count's intention.

He wanted to say:

What harm is there in this should we, like the Mosaic people and the people of Islam, own that Christ, similar to other Prophets, was chosen and sent down by God, yet refrain from injecting the story of the dove and other imaginings into the <p188> minds of the common people, thus making ourselves the laughing-stock of others.

It was just this point which had caused the clergy to denounce him and had led to his house arrest.

At 1 p.m.

I was called to meet him.

As it happened, that very day they had taken away his secretary and put him in the gaol at Tula, so as to stop his correspondence, because the Graf himself did not write letters; and his younger daughter had gone to Tula to obtain the release of the secretary.

To meet him, we directed our steps to a building which stood about three arshins[1] above the ground level.

He was seated on a chair-it was a special chair on which he could stretch his legs because of pain.

After the encounter and mutual greetings a special table was made ready for Chertkov and myself to serve us our lunch.

On my side, glasses for beverages and plates had been arranged according to the present usage.

Before the food was brought in, I stated that I did not take alcoholic beverages, and it was now more than three years that I had ceased eating meat.

He smiled and said, 'I too do not eat meat, but your avoidance of meat seems to be connected with new teachings.' I replied: 'Nothing is forbidden, but in a Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha has written that meat is not the natural food for man, and God has not given man the fangs and the claws for eating meat.

How very many are the Buddhists and the Brahmins who do not eat meat and their olfactory sense excels others.'...

He [Tolstoy] then instructed that an egg dish be brought for me like his own... [1.

Cubits; a cubit is approximately the length of a forearm.] <p189> He then said: 'I do not trust newspapers.

Some give praise, some become abusive.

Three times I wanted to find out facts about the Babis and Baha'is and write truthfully about them in my books, after proper investigation.

The last time, twelve days ago, I was talking with Chertkov over this very matter.' I replied: 'Three times I set out according to the instructions given to me.

The first time I had messages regarding world peace to deliver to the High Minister and Commander, Kropotkin.

Meeting you and him were both forbidden.

The second time, I had a letter to deliver to General Kamarov, after which I had to return.

And now, this third time, today is exactly twelve days since I left the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 'Akka.' Then he began to ask me questions.

'Whom do you consider the Bab to have been,' he asked first; 'when did He appear and what was His claim?' I replied that the Bab was a young Man and His name was Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad...

Then he asked what the state of the Cause was after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, and I replied that it was ever progressing.

Next, his query was about the claim of the Blessed Perfection, and I answered that He was 'the Speaker on Sinai', 'the Everlasting Father', 'the Spirit of Truth', 'the Heavenly Father' Whom the Sons of Israel and the Christians expect; the Return or Advent of Husayn, according to the beliefs of Shi'ih Islam; and according to the views of the Sunnis the Advent of the Bab was the Advent of the Mahdi (Mihdi), the Advent of Baha'u'llah was the Second Coming of the Christ; and according to the beliefs of the Zoroastrians, it was the Advent of Shah Bahram.

Briefly, His Advent accords with the prophecy of Isaiah and Daniel...

He has come to rescue all the peoples of the world from vain imaginings.

To summarize the other queries of Tolstoy and Aqa 'Azizu'llah's replies.

He told Tolstoy of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, its laws and ordinances and the legislative powers given to the Universal House of Justice, some of the underlying principles of the Faith, such as equality of men and women, abandonment of all prejudices, the oneness of religion.

Tolstoy also wished to know whether people of Faiths other than Islam had embraced the Baha'i Faith in noticeable numbers.

Jadhdhab gave him a satisfactory answer, adding that he himself had come from the Jewish fold.

He also told Tolstoy of the Baha'i School in 'Ishqabad and how it worked.

Tolstoy's next query was concerned with the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha, to which Jadhdhab replied that 'Abdu'l-Baha was the Expounder of the Book, and His station was that of total 'Servitude'.

He also spoke of the rebellion of 'Abdu'l-Baha's half-brothers, to which Tolstoy commented: 'It should have been so, that opposition should have come from the members of the family of Baha'u'llah Himself.

This is what has happened to me.

I rose up to educate a limited number of people, and my own son is <p190> constantly active in Petersburg, day and night, in and out of the Court, to bring about my death.' With these remarks Tolstoy's queries seem to have ended, and the time had come to give him the message from 'Abdu'l-Baha, of which Aqa 'Azizu'llah was the bearer. 'Abdu'l-Baha wished Tolstoy to leave an indelible mark in the annals of religion.

There have been many philosophers who have raised their banners high; Tolstoy could raise his, as a philosopher, even higher, but as a unifier in the sphere

of religion, he could leave a greater mark.

Then, it seems, Aqa 'Azizu'llah asked Tolstoy what he thought of Baha'u'llah, after all he had heard.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah writes: 'He raised both his hands and said, "How can I deny the One who calls out to the whole of mankind?'

I tried to educate a limited number of people in Russia, and you have seen how I have been prevented by the gendarmerie.'" Tolstoy seems to have promised Aqa 'Azizu'llah to write about the Baha'i Faith, and had presented him with a number of his books and photographs.

The rest of the day Aqa 'Azizu'llah spent in the company of Tolstoy's daughter, his secretary (who had been released), his physician, and Chertkov Zhukovsky.

Towards sunset, he writes, he bade them all farewell and left for Badkubih.

Jadhdhab had lived also in Bombay for a while.

He was always at the service of the Baha'is, and travelled a good deal to teach and make the Faith widespread.

His home was always open to all.

Whenever travelling teachers came to his home, he not only provided hospitality and afforded them every facility, but would always, unbeknown to them, put some cash in their saddle-bag, that they should not find themselves wanting anywhere.

His brothers Aqa Shahviridi, Aqa Rahmatu'llah and Aqa Asadu'llah were equally active in the service of the Faith, but he excelled them all.

Aqa Asadu'llah met the death of a martyr in Marv.

Aqa 'Azizu'llah was living and trading in Bayram 'Ali, in the vicinity of Marv, when the Bolshevik Revolution overtook him.

His factory was seized and so was his trading-house.

Then he retired to Mashhad, his home town.

He was now an old man, well-tried and well-tested.

He lived on until the summer of 1935 and passed away in Mashhad, at the age of ninety-four. <p191> 16 Samandar He Who Lived in Fire and Was Not Consumed by It Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar, designated by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith an 'Apostle of Baha'u'llah', was born in the month of Muharram AH 1260--that same auspicious year which witnessed the dawn of the Day of God.

He was the eldest son of Haji Shaykh Muhammad, entitled Nabil-i-Akbar, a well-known and highly-respected merchant of Qazvin, and one of the stalwart men of that city--the city of Tahirih the Pure--who, from earliest times, recognized the Manifestation of God and paid homage to him.

But let Samandar himself relate his story:

The late Nabil was the son of Haji Rasul, and a grandson of Haji Rida, famed as Juvayni.

Of the public buildings raised by Haji Rida, only a caravanserai and a wall remain...

Haji Rasul was a merchant.

Towards the end of his life he chose to be a resident of Karbila, where he spent his last twenty-two years, engaged in visitation and devotions.

My late father joyfully sent him, all those years, all the money he required for his sustenance.

Twice he came home for a short visit.

The second time he came, I was a child and I remember him.

He was a pious man, and one of the Shaykhis.

Although he was a contemporary of Haji Siyyid Kazim, he did not associate with him.

But as it happened, when the Exalted One [the Bab] went to Karbila he met Him oftentimes in the Shrine of Imam Husayn and was greatly attracted by His mien and devotion.

Such a spark was lighted in the heart of Haji Rasul that it blazed in His remembrance.

Although he had no knowledge of that which had come to pass, he came to love His blessed Being and felt submissive towards Him, confessing His superiority.

The best proof of this is the fact that when he came on his last visit to Iran, my father had become enrolled, a servant in the Court of the Exalted One.

His brother [Samandar's uncle] complained to their father, saying, 'My brother has joined these people.' The father was alarmed. 'Why should it be so?' he asked.

Then they talked about the One Who had put forth a claim, <p192> and the identity of the Founder of the Babi Faith.

When all was explained to him, he said: 'The One Whom you name and describe is a merchant, a turbaned Siyyid of Shiraz, Whom I met many a time when he came on pilgrimage to Karbila.

In all these years that I have resided in that holy city, I have come across pilgrims of all sorts and of many a land: siyyids, learned men, mystics, murshids, noblemen, grandees, commonalty, merchants--all sorts of men.

And I have never met any blessed Being possessed of such humility and such nobility.

Firstly, I do not believe that He has come forth with such a claim.

And secondly, if it were proved to me that that heavenly Siyyid had indeed made that claim, I cannot consider Him a man of falsehood.

That visage and that brow would never, never reflect anything but conspicuous truth...' (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

15-17)[1] [1.

All quotations from Samandar are from this book unless otherwise attributed.]

Samandar states that because his father was a man deeply devoted to the practices of his Faith, his compatriots had come to call him Shaykh Muhammad, although he was a merchant.

And Shaykh Muhammad gave his allegiance to Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i, then to Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti (after the passing of the former).

Because his male issue did not live long, Shaykh Muhammad appealed to Siyyid Kazim and begged his prayers that he might have a son to survive him.

His wish was granted, and the son who was born next was given the same name as the Teacher in Karbila; he grew up to be an Apostle of Baha'u'llah.

Samandar did not know where and how his father received the tidings of the Advent of the Bab.

But he remembered hearing of such great personages as the Babu'l-Bab, Vahid of Darab, Mulla Jalil-i-Urumi and Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qazvini (both Letters of the Living), whom he did not meet.

But those whom he did meet in his father's house make a very impressive list:

Mulla Yusuf-'Aliy-i-Ardibili (another Letter of the Living), Shaykh 'Aliy-i-'Azim, Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali (uncle of the Bab), Mirza Asadu'llah-i-Dayyan, Mirza 'Aliy-i-Sayyah, and the heroic Haji Sulayman Khan.

Samandar writes:

Because the year of my birth was the same as the year of the Advent [of the Bab], I being born on the 17th day of Muharram [7 February 1844], ... the sires I have named used to hold me, a little boy, in their arms and show great kindness .

After attaining the honour of belief, my father repeatedly gained the further honour of attaining the presence of the Exalted One: in Tabriz, in Maku, in Chihriq.

During his visit to Maku, he received a Tablet from the Exalted One, in the handwriting of Aqa Siyyid Husayn, the amanuensis [also a Letter of the Living], which was revealed in answer to a question presented by him...

<p193> Of the various episodes and happenings [writes Samandar] which touched my late father and about which I heard him speak (others also having knowledge of them), the event of the assassination of Haji Mulla Taqi[1] is particularly

noteworthy.

When Haji Mulla Taqi was murdered in Qazvin, my father was in Tabriz.

Soon, however, he left to return to Qazvin.

It was in Miyanj that he heard the news of the assassination of a divine of his native town.

In Zanjan, he found out who the murdered divine was.

It occurred to him that men who were makers of mischief might point the finger of accusation at him and cause great trouble.

Upon thinking further, he reached the conclusion that the date of his departure from Tabriz was known to a number of men in high position, obtaining their witness by correspondence would be feasible and easy, and people would have the perception to distinguish between fact and fiction.

On reaching Qazvin and riding through several quarters, he came upon an acquaintance who showed great surprise and astonishment at seeing him at such a time.

Out of kindness, he made my father dismount and walk by paths less frequented to his home.

He said, 'I myself will bring your goods and effects.

Part of the wall of your house is in ruins; reach your home by that way.' My father did as he was told, and through bypaths and the fallen wall he gained his home.

And his acquaintance brought the luggage and took the goods to the owner named by my father. [1.

The uncle and father-in-law of Tahirih. (HMB)] <p194> I myself was a young boy at the time, but was aware of what was happening.

I was not allowed to see my father, but I did notice the disposal of the chattels of travel.

Witnessing the state my mother was in, I realized that my father had come home.

But instead of joy, sorrow and lamentation prevailed.

My mother was bemoaning the return of my father.

My late aunt kept striking her head and breast, telling my father: 'Why did you return at such a time?' My father retorted: 'If you wish, I shall go in these travel-stained clothes to the governor's house and ask him to write to Tabriz and make enquiries from a number of well-known merchants who were my neighbours there in the same caravanserai.' My mother and aunt replied: 'Alas! it is too late; the time for making such distinctions has passed.

They have put your name at the top of the list of wanted men and are all looking for you.

So demanding are they that even your brother, who does not share your beliefs and for that reason is hostile towards you, has found living so constricted that, terror-stricken, he has gone into hiding in a subterranean place.

Make haste; there is no time to tarry.' He consented, and was taken to the home of Mashhadi Baqir-i-Sabbagh (the dyer), who was the husband of the daughter of my aunt.

Only one house separated his house from ours.

In it they had a subterranean room ... which could be reached only in the centre of an upper room.

A plank was placed over the entrance.

My uncle, Aqa Muhammad-Rida, had also been lodged there.

Within two hours a number of farrashes, accompanied by an executioner and a certain Siyyid Muhsin, appeared outside our house, knocking furiously at the gate which was not opened to them.

Then they brought a ladder, stormed the house, poured over the wall and the roof, searched everywhere, and found no one.

When they came over the wall and the roof, I, a little boy, was in the courtyard, trembling from head to foot. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

19-24) Samandar goes on to say that a woman, a neighbour of theirs, told the murderous crew that a short while before she had seen the man whom they were seeking, being taken to the other house.

That house too was stormed, but despite a thorough search no one was found there either.

The entrance to the secret subterranean room was well concealed by the carpet covering the floor.

Moreover, the cradle of a child had been placed over the spot where the entrance might have been discovered.

At last the tension was eased.

Tahirih was taken to Tihiran, a move planned and directed by Baha'u'llah.

And innocent blood was shed because of the vindictiveness of the clerics.

Shaykh Muhammad could leave his hiding-place and ride once again to Tabriz, where he set up his trading-post, as before.

Of course the merchants and traders, with whom he had dealings, wished to know the truth of what had happened in Qazvin.

He related the whole story of the murder of Haji Mulla Taqi and the confession of the assassin, who was a native of Shiraz in no way connected with anyone in Qazvin.

A few days later, some men came to the mart seeking him.

He was told that Aqa Mirza Ahmad, the mujtahid, wished to see him.

Never having met that divine, Shaykh Muhammad was rather perturbed by this summons.

Then those emissaries of the mujtahid got hold of his shawl and dragged him out.

A number of muleteers, who hailed from a district close to Qazvin and knew Shaykh Muhammad personally, came to his rescue, and in the melee that ensued the Shaykh was severely beaten.

But that was nothing compared with what came next.

On arriving at the abode of the mujtahid, Shaykh Muhammad uttered the words of attestation: 'I bear witness that there is no God save God; I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.' The overbearing divine had a few words with him, and then ordered his minions to bastinado him, a man totally innocent and without any guile or deception.

It was a cold day in the heart of winter.

The minions of the mujtahid threw him on the ground and began beating him.

Spectators crowded round, spitting on his face.

Some of them carried stones and bricks to hurl at him.

Still others, adept at uttering coarse words, began abusing him.

Appealing to men with hearts of stone was useless.

His thoughts and his words were directed to the Primal Point, the glorious Bab.

But his eyes could see the strokes descending upon him, and he noticed a nail getting looser and looser, about to fall off.

That brought a smile to his lips.

At that moment the superintendent or chief constable (darughih) arrived and immediately noticed that smile.

Astonished, he said to the Shaykh: 'They are killing you and you are smiling!' It was the darughih's intervention which saved Shaykh Muhammad.

He himself estimated later that he had suffered two thousand strokes.

Now, the mujtahid ordered the chief constable to expel Shaykh Muhammad from Tabriz.

That official managed to move the Shaykh to his own home, got him a hat to wear, and brought a physician to see to his lacerated feet.

And Shaykh Muhammad answered his questions, told him who he was and what had

brought him to Tabriz.

Shaykh Muhammad knew for certain that if he were publicly expelled from Tabriz, it would make it impossible for him to carry on trading even in his own native city.

Some of his compatriots, whenever they came to visit him (which was not often), urged him to take himself away; one of them in particular was very insistent, because he had his greedy eyes on the bales of silk which Shaykh Muhammad possessed.

Then a certain Haji Siyyid Mihdi, also a native of Qazvin, who, having gone bankrupt, was then engaged in brokerage, found a way to rescue the Shaykh from his dilemma.

He took the case to Haji Mir Muhammad-Husayn-i-Isfahani, a well-known merchant who was famed for his benevolence and good deeds.

Having heard the story of Shaykh Muhammad, this merchant sent for the chief constable and instructed him to have all the merchandise belonging to Shaykh Muhammad moved to the caravanserai known as Tabataba'i, which he owned.

Although all the rooms there were occupied, they managed to have an upper room prepared for Shaykh Muhammad.

Under the protection of the Isfahani merchant, the Shaykh found calmness and was freed of interference by ill-wishers.

Next, that same kind and God-fearing Isfahani merchant interceded with the despotic divine, and obtained permission for Shaykh Muhammad of Qazvin to stay in Tabriz.

For years, the say& had his trading-house in that caravanserai, enjoying the sincere friendship of the Isfahani merchant.

And Haji Mir Muhammad-Husayn often visited Shaykh Muhammad, sometimes twice a week.

When Shaykh Muhammad attained the presence of the glorious Bab, it is said, he was told by Him: 'They scourged you and you suffered for My sake; in truth, it was I Who was scourged.' (Tarikh-i-Samandar, p.

30) Not long after, the Bab and His faithful disciple were shot in the public square of Tabriz.

And within two years of that dire deed, Iran touched the nadir of inhumanity.

In the blood-bath of August 1852, two more of the Bab's Letters of the Living were made to drink the cup of martyrdom:

Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi, His amanuensis, and the incomparable Tahirih, while in Tabriz they were about to snatch away Shaykh Muhammad, but the Isfahani merchant once again delivered him from the fury of the foe.

Shaykh Muhammad was further honoured by attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah

in Baghdad at the time when Mirza Yahya was also in that city.

The Shaykh had received a piece of writing from Mirza Yahya in which he had clearly shown what a poltroon he was.

Trying to hide from all in order to save his life, he had written: 'Whosoever claims to have seen me is an infidel, and whosoever states that he has heard my voice is one who joins partners with God.' Samandar writes:

My father intended to retire to Baghdad.

He ended his trading connections in Tabriz, came to Qazvin, and tried to settle his accounts with his partner by <p198> correspondence and close down the partnership.

He told me: 'I have written several times to my partner to send his account, but he has not done so, and time is getting short for travelling.' I said in answer to him: 'You see that the soreness of my eyes has greatly increased; otherwise I would have gone with your permission and settled the whole affair.'

Now I fear that because of his procrastination the time for travelling will lapse and winter will set in.

Therefore I feel that you yourself should go to Lahijan for a few days, settle your accounts with your partner and, God willing, return soon.' He replied: 'Yes, I myself would like to go to Lahijan to see my brother, Mashhadi Muhammad-Rahim, and my partner, having shared so many years of our lives together, now that I have reached the end of my journeys and the end of my days.' Divination was also favourable, and the day after that very night he made his preparations, bought a horse, and left for Lahijan.

A few days after his arrival there he was taken ill, and departed from this world soon after.

That was in the year AH 1278 [9 July 1861 -- 28 June 1862]. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

32-3) Samandar thus continues his narrative:

It is a known fact that in Iran, the children of those who bear this name [Baha'i] are oftentimes not immune [from opposition] in bazars and streets.

Youngsters and the ignorant often make verbal attacks on them, particularly at times of perturbation...

I myself have from the days of my childhood suffered hearing such ridicule, and even to this day such words reach my ears.

I wish to record the account of one of these incidents which has a tale to tell, a memory for generations to come.

I well remember a time when I was very young, not yet adolescent, and my father was away.

I went to make some purchases from a grocer's shop at the end of our lane.

A few men were idling their time around that shop.

They saw me approaching from afar, and decided amongst themselves to do me some harm.

As I neared the shop, one of them who was a well-built man, to do a good deed approached me and, without saying a word, slapped me hard on the face.

I remember that the grocer, knowing that I had come to make purchases at his shop, stopped them and told them to leave me alone.

Since I had gone to buy some provisions from him, I went forward and gave him the money.

Whilst he was weighing the things, I could hear those men talking about me.

I heard one of them say, 'Is he a bastard or not?' Another said in reply: 'If he was conceived prior to his father's raving and becoming a Babi, then he is not a bastard; but he is one if his conception took place when his father had already become a Babi.' (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

34-5) Samandar goes on to say:

Most of the people, high and low, who caused harm to this sacred Cause had no profit from it, and before long went down in ignominy.

Should I put on paper the full story of all, everything we have heard and seen, these pages would not suffice.

In brief, some of them were seen fallen on evil days, dying in utmost misery.

My father told me this: 'A good while after the episode of <p199> Tabriz and the beating I received there, I found myself in an assemblage, seated in a place of honour, and noticed a man sitting in a lowly place whose whole mien and bearing spoke of misery.

That man turned to me and said: "I beseech your forgiveness." "What for?"

I asked. "At one time", he said, "I brought upon you great suffering."

I answered: "If you did what you say you have done, in the path of God, do not ask for forgiveness; and if you did it out of selfish desire, turn to God and beseech His forgiveness."

Then he replied: "I and two or three others were the men who caused your afflictions.

We went to the mujtahid and incited him to have you beaten.

They and I were seized by miseries in diverse ways.

Forgive us.'" (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

35-6) The son of such a father as Shaykh Muhammad could not but become in his turn a pillar of the Faith of Baha'u'llah in his native city of Qazvin.

Throughout his life he followed in the footsteps of his father, engaged in

trade.

The glorious Bab had been the son of a merchant, and had uncles similarly earning their livings.

He Himself <p200> began trading at the tender age of fifteen.

The Prophet of Arabia traded as the agent of a rich widow of Mecca whom He eventually married, leading caravans with merchandise along the barren wastes of Arabia to the fertile lands of the north.

Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar excelled both in trade and in learning.

One of his teachers was Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, an uncle of Baha'u'llah.

This notable of Nur accompanied his nephew, Mirza Yahya, when the latter hurriedly fled from Iran in a desperate attempt to save his own life, after having endangered the lives of the members of his family and the people close to them, in the province of Mazindaran.

On his return from Baghdad, Samandar writes, 'my father kept him [Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin] in our house, ostensibly to teach me'.

Another tutor of Samandar was Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Ardistani.

He was the one who in very early days suffered indignities in Shiraz, together with Quddus and Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani.

They were flogged, a noose was fastened through their nostrils, and thus they were paraded in the streets of Shiraz.

Samandar writes:

In the days of my father, in Tabriz, I studied under him [Mulla 'Ali-Akbar] for two years.

Then with my father's permission I accompanied him to Qazvin, whence he went to Ardistan.

After the declaration of the Abha Beauty, he became hesitant for a while, sunk in his own thoughts.

Even in a Tablet, He [Baha'u'llah] commanded me to bear a message to him, this great teacher of mine.

But before long the Will of God prevailed, and that sagacious, acute and subtle man, subsequent to deep investigation, came through the test and attained the highest degree of certitude and knowledge, and engaged in glorifying his Lord and teaching His Faith until he passed away.
(Tarikh-i-Samandar, p.

172) Following his trade, Samandar was oftentimes travelling to Tabriz, to Rasht and Lahijan, to Tihran.

And as soon as Baha'u'llah made known His Mission, Samandar gave Him his fealty.

He was already familiar with the follies of Mirza Yahya, but as he puts it himself:

I did not know the extent of his folly.

A certain Mulla 'Abdu'r-Rahim, a believer of early days, had written a letter to Mirza Yahya, and he had answered him in his own handwriting, with which I was familiar.

One of the questions which he [Mulla 'Abdu'r-Rahim] had asked was this: some physicians prepare pills with the flesh of serpents, and sometimes they mix it with other ingredients and make an electuary.

At other times they prescribe the cooked meat of a serpent to cure certain ailments.

Is it lawful to partake of such flesh?

That man, Azal, had written an answer in Arabic.

These were his words: 'Is there a dearth of things to eat, that you wish to eat serpents and scorpions?' Yes, that answer made me see that that man was more stupid than I had ever thought him.

His answer showed that he had not understood the question. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

138-9) Samandar was always engaged in search of knowledge.

At the same time as he diligently attended to his business transactions, he was continuously delving into his books, making a thorough study of all the Scriptures of the past, learning all the time.

Samandar has left his own testimony indicating his unceasing effort to find truth and investigate it with an open mind.

He writes of his studies of the Old and New Testaments, of the text of the holy Qur'an, of traditions of Islam.

He takes his stand on the exhortation of Baha'u'llah to consort with all peoples, with men of all Faiths, in peace and in harmony.

According to his own admission, he even tried to apply the test of independent investigation to the writings of Azal, Mirza Yahya, whom he calls 'Mir'at' (Mirror). (He had been designated thus by the Bab.) Samandar writes: 'I did whatever was in my power to investigate, to discover, to evaluate.

Not a whiff of truth did I ever find coming from the direction of the Mir'at.

On the contrary, malodorous is all that is wafted from his bourne...'
(Tarikh-i-Samandar, p.

144) In the year AH 1291 (AD 18 February 1874 -- February 1875) Samandar, in the company of Haji Nasir (one of the survivors of Shaykh Tabarsi), attained the presence of Baha'u'llah.

That pilgrimage inspired Samandar to start on the road to his destiny: to become a pillar of the Faith, an Apostle of Baha'u'llah.

Nine years later, that year when the rage of Nasiri'd-Din Shah and his two unprincipled, avaricious sons--Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, and Kamran Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih--exploded into wholesale arrests and imprisonment of the followers of Baha'u'llah, Samandar had to clear the hurdle of mischievous misrepresentation by a man who, in later years, came to see the enormity of his deed.

There was in Qazvin a Mulla 'Ali, a man of many talents.

The present writer remembers the praises spoken of him by the Hand of the Cause of God, Tarazu'llah Samandari, who had received tuition from him.

Samandar (Tarazu'llah's father), having found Mulla 'Ali to be receptive and willing to listen, had led him to full recognition of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, and afterwards had provided him with a home in his own house where he became a tutor to his son.

He was called Mu'allim (Teacher) par excellence. <p202> Mulla 'Ali had a nephew who was hostile towards the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

In the first instance, he showed his displeasure at the arrangement which resulted in his uncle's change of residence.

He did not wish him to live in the house of a Babi!

Having failed to prevent it, he went about telling tales and bringing grave accusations against Samandar.

As Samandar himself writes:

He carried on his vendetta to such an extent that the government became really suspicious. 'My uncle', he said, 'has been kept a prisoner by this Babi.

He does not allow him to leave the house.' Therefore the governor sent his farrash-bashi and a number of farrashes, together with the plaintiff himself, to put the matter right.

As it happened, the Mu'allim had gone on a journey with Aqa Muhammad-i-Qa'ini, known as Fadil, to accompany him part of the way, leave him at a certain spot, and return [to Qazvin]. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

44-5) Then Samandar refers to the events in the capital, the arrests made there and the possibility of the unrest spreading to other places.

He goes on to say:

I had come home from the market-place.

My son came with a letter from <p203> Tabriz bearing the news at the end of it that 'This very minute a telegram arrived from Yazd to the effect that Varqa has been accused and detained'.

My son went back to the bazar, and I was sitting sunk in my thoughts when a hard knock was heard on the gate.

It was the second gate.

And soon the farrashes poured in, saying that they had come to release Mulla 'Ali.

I thought they had come to get me. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, p.

45) Samandar tried then to rescue his papers, but they espied him and held fast to him.

He was carried out of his house and subjected to close questioning.

All that while the nephew of Mulla 'Ali was lashing him with his waspish tongue.

But Samandar kept calm and told his tormentors that they could search everywhere in the house for Mulla 'Ali, but they would be wasting their time because the Mu'allim was not there; he had been there, but had gone away.

He was returned to his home, while the search went on, which was in vain.

Samandar's household was naturally alarmed, the women and children distressed, but he asked for a hubble-bubble to be brought for him and the farrash-bashi.

They sat down quietly by the flower-bed and had a smoke together, while the intense search continued for Mulla 'Ali.

Once the farrashes were satisfied that the man whom they sought was indeed not in that house, they prepared to leave, taking Samandar with them.

They realized they had made a great mistake, but no one was prepared to admit it.

In the meantime the rabble was growing in number, and the ill-intentioned nephew of Mulla 'Ali was becoming louder with his denunciations.

Samandar was threatened with death, but as dignified as ever he kept calm and unruffled.

While the mob was thickening and chaos increased, the deputy-governor made his appearance.

He and the farrash-bashi took counsel together and came to the conclusion that Samandar was telling the truth and others were prevaricating.

He was allowed to return home accompanied by farrashes who were suitably compensated.

Now, back at home, Samandar was given letters that had come from Tihiran.

They all conveyed the news that Baha'is were being arrested, and more of them would certainly soon be seized.

For the time being, however, there was a pause, because Sultan-Murad Mirza, the

Hisamu's-Saltanih, had died.

This despotic and self-willed uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah had in his time caused misery and hardship in the realm.

Baha'is too had suffered at his hands.

Samandar and his compatriots in Qazvin had been warned to take precautionary measures before they were engulfed.

Samandar writes: <p204> This matter caused fresh alarm.

It was decided that I should leave that night and go to a place not well known, and see what the unknown morrow would bring.

I told my cousin, who, in those days, was with me in the trading-house, to send a number of sugar-cones as a gift to the farrash-bashi...

In the darkness of the night, I gained the residence which was in an obscure quarter.

Within two days, a telegram came from Rasht announcing that my cheque had not been met.

The owner of the goods concerned had rushed to my house and to my place of trading, demanding his money.

But I had no ready money available. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp.

48-50) Then Samandar proceeds to explain that it was obvious that adversaries were at work; otherwise there was no reason for dishonouring his cheque.

Next he moved to another house, more distant than the previous one.

The owner of this second house, in Samandar's own words, was of the 'people of the Evangel' (the New Testament: i.e.

Christian). 'He showed the utmost kindness,' Samandar writes. 'He even told me that whatever money I required to go away he would put at my disposal.' But Samandar had sixty tumans brought from his own trading-house, which he left in the care of his host.

Samandar had decided to leave because all the news coming from Rasht was bad.

The Baha'is in charge of his trading-house--Haji Nasir and his son--had been detained.

He was on the point of leaving his home town when he received a message from a relative, advising him to consult with a few others before taking an irrevocable step.

So, Samandar tells us, he rode the following night to the home of that relative, where two other Baha'is had been called to meet him.

The man who was owed one hundred tumans had called several times demanding his

money.

Samandar, as he states himself, had intended to pay him in kind from the goods in his warehouse.

One of those present offered to lend Samandar five hundred tumans right away, which he was reluctant to accept.

But the host, a very wise man, intervened to persuade Samandar to accept the loan.

Thus the creditor was paid the next day.

Samandar states that when he came to pay back the loan, the lender refused to charge him any interest.

Samandar had to stay nearly three weeks in the house of this relative, and then a well-known siyyid, also a merchant, who was highly esteemed in Qazvin and was not a Baha'i, escorted him to his own home; and no one dared to lift a finger against him.

Samandar's own deliverance from grave dangers was dramatic, but he had soon to mourn the cruel loss of a dear and close friend: no less <p205> a person than Haji, the survivor of the holocaust of Shaykh Tabarsi, in whose company he had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Haji Nasir was thrown into prison, as was his eldest son, Aqa 'Ali.

As a result, Samandar's business activities in Rasht were totally halted.

Considerable effort was required to prove to the authorities that the prisoners were agents for Samandar and did not own the trading-house in Rasht.

In the meantime, Haji Nasir, now advanced in years, could not withstand the rigours of incarceration and passed away, a martyr in the path of Baha'u'llah.

When his corpse was brought out of the prison the rabble of the town assaulted it, tore his eyes out of their sockets, cut off his nose, and subjected the lifeless body to divers insults.

A decent burial was denied to it.

It was dragged to a ruined spot and there pelted with stones until well covered.

The Mu'allim, Mulla 'Ali, when he returned to Qazvin sought out a friend in the service of the government, and presented his case proving the falsehood of the accusations brought against Samandar.

The governor intended to arrest Mulla 'Ali's nephew, who had been the cause of all the mischief.

But the young man fled the town, only to come back, years later, apologetic and remorseful.

And Mulla 'Ali returned to his post, tutoring the sons of Samandar.

In appreciation of the services of Mulla 'Ali, Baha'u'llah instructed Haji Amin[1] to present to him an 'aba on behalf of Himself.

The Mu'allim, as Samandar himself has written, lived for nearly thirty-six years in the home of that incomparable promoter of the Faith.

Such are the words of Baha'u'llah, immortalizing the life-long service of Mulla 'Ali: [1.

Haji Abu-l-Hasan-i-Amin-i-Ardikani, the Trustee of the Huququ'llah.] We have accepted that which he hath achieved in the path of God, the Lord of all the worlds.

Say:

O Mu'allim!

Thou art the first teacher who hast attained the good-pleasure of God and hast been mentioned by Him in His conspicuous Book.

We bear witness that thou hast attained that which was sent down from My holy Kingdom and recorded in My Most Holy Book, and thou didst observe that which thou wert commanded by thy Lord, the Supreme, the All-Powerful.

Verily We have ordained these verses to be thy recompense for that which thou didst accomplish in the path of God, and have sent them unto thee that thou mayest render thanks unto thy Lord, the All-Commanding, the All-Knowing.

Thereby have We immortalized thy name and made it to be remembered in all of the centres of learning in the world.

Verily, thy Lord is the Omnipotent, the Almighty.

Rejoice by reason of what hath flowed from My Most Exalted Pen in the prison of 'Akka, as a token of Our grace unto thee and unto all who have held firmly to the Cord <p206> that no man can sever.

Glory be unto thee and unto all learned men who have come to recognize this mighty Cause.

O Samandar!

Convey to him that which hath been revealed for him.

God willing yet another revelation of loving kindness will reach him.

A garment of honour will also be bestowed on him, though it be only a robe.

But that robe is, in the sight of God, more valued than that which the kings and rulers possess.

O Samandar!

The Mu'allim hath attained unto that which most of the people are unable to comprehend.

Verily thy Lord is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. (Quoted in

Ishraq-i-Khavari, Ma'idiy-i-Asmani, vol.

8, p.

193) Samandar attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in 'Akka twice, and went for a third time on pilgrimage to the Holy Land during the early years of the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Of his first pilgrimage to 'Akka he writes:

In the month of Sha'ban AH 1290 [October 1873] this servant, with bales of merchandise consisting of silk and coarse silken material, left Qazvin for Rasht, accompanied by Haji Muhammad-Hasan, the goldsmith, my own maternal uncle (who had his wife and mother-in-law with him), Haji Mulla <p207> Baba, Kallih-Darri'i, and Aqa 'Abdu'llah, the son of the late Mulla Malik-Muhammad-i-Qazvini.

There we attended to our business concerns, and took with us Haji Muhammad-Nasir [the martyr][1] who was in charge of the trading-house in Rasht, and went on our way.

In those days there was as yet no railway between Badkubih and Tiflis.

We travelled by commercial cart.

The late Haji Nasir and I stayed in Istanbul for trading purposes.

Others in our company went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, while we two asked once again for permission.

When it came, we left Istanbul with Mansur-i-Usku'i.

We reached 'Akka on 11 Muharram 1291 coinciding with the period of fasting [March 1874].

We were in His sacred presence throughout Naw-Ruz and Ridvan.

Another pilgrim at the time was Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq [Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani].

He spoke to us about what they had experienced in Mazindaran.

Haji Nasir [another survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi] was there too. (Quoted in Sulaymani, vol.

7, pp.

32-3) [1.

This pilgrimage occurred a year or so before the death of Haji Nasir, described a few paragraphs earlier.] The encounter of those two veterans of the Faith, who had known Mulla Husayn and Quddus, had campaigned together under their command and had then come into each other's company~, once again, under the shadow of the Supreme Manifestation of God, must have been for those who witnessed their reunion an occasion hard to match.

Samandar goes on to say:

One day the Blessed Perfection, Who was staying in the house of Aqay-i-Kalim at the Khan-i-Jurayni,[2] addressed Haji Nasir in words such as these, as far as I can remember: 'Jinab-i-Haji!

You have toiled much and suffered much in the path of God.

If you yourself have forgotten what you have done and endured, God has not.

But the worlds of God are not confined to this world.

Were it so the Exalted Prophets would not have consented to bear such adversities wrought by men; the Manifestation who preceded Me would not have consented to be suspended and martyred with volleys of malice and malignity; and I would not have consented to be dragged, bare-headed and barefooted, in utmost degradation, from Niyavaran to Tihran to bear untold blows.' In brief, He expounded this theme in most excellent words.

He was telling the Haji that he will be recompensed in the worlds to come. (Quoted in Sulaymani, vol.

7, pp.

33-4) [2.

Better known as Khan-i-'Avamid.] Then Samandar takes care to explain that he is not reporting the exact words of Baha'u'llah, but the purport of His utterance.

Samandar has also recorded what he heard about Napoleon III.

It was while Samandar was in Istanbul that the fallen French Emperor died.

He says that he intended, when in the presence of Baha'u'llah, to ask Him why it was that those who had persecuted the Faith, its <p208> Founders and followers were still enjoying power while Napoleon III had gone the way predicted in the Tablet addressed to him.

But when he went into the presence of Baha'u'llah, such were the bounties of that attainment that he gave no more thought to Napoleon; until one day, unrequested, Baha'u'llah Himself spoke about the French Emperor, and the enormities committed by the rulers of Persia and Turkey.

Napoleon, Baha'u'llah said, was godless.

Intellect was his god, and he believed that he himself was the wisest of all men.

As soon as he was challenged and found wanting, the hand of God seized him and struck him down.

Then He spoke of developments in Persia and Turkey and told Samandar that the oppressors of these lands would also, in due time, receive their deserts.

Two years later, 'Abdu'l-'Aziz of Turkey met his doom, and in 1896,

Nasiri'd-Din of Iran, on the very eve of his Jubilee celebrations, fell before the bullet of an assassin.

Samandar attained the presence of Baha'u'llah once again, a year before His ascension.

He writes: 'In the year 1308 [17 August 1890 -- 6 August 1891], in his company [Mu'allim's] I travelled to 'Akka by way <p209> of Istanbul and Alexandria, and together we attained the presence of Baha'u'llah' (Tarikh-i-Samandar, pp. 204-5).

One day when Samandar had just left Baha'u'llah's room at Bahji and was still standing by the curtained doorway, his ears caught these words of Baha'u'llah, Who was pacing within; they were uttered most firmly, most emphatically Samandar relates: 'You are going to 'Akka'; go into the presence of Sarkar-i-Aqa.' And who could Aqa--Sarkar-i-Aqa--be but the Most Great Branch, 'Abdu'l-Baha?

Samandar, who always sought the presence of the Most Great Branch in 'Akka, was greatly surprised, he writes, by Baha'u'llah's emphatic command.

It was only in after years, when the Covenant-breakers rose in rebellion, that the full purport of those words of Baha'u'llah dawned upon him.

And Samandar had reason to remember particularly, to the end of his days, the malice of those who had known Light and had called upon Darkness to guide them, those who had sinned against the Holy Ghost, in the judgement of Jesus Christ.

Samandar's account of his return from this pilgrimage with the Mu'allim continues:

After two months we were permitted to leave.

On the way home, Varqa [the martyr] and two of his sons, also Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Khunsari (who was one of the mujtahids, a divine) were our fellow-travellers as far as Rasht and Qazvin.

Thereafter, he [the Mu'allim] was always in attendance upon the Friends, in their meetings and gatherings, reciting verses and prayers, until his passing from this temporary phase to the world eternal. (Tarikh-i-Samandar, p.

205) Mulla 'Ali died towards the end of November 1913.

In the year AH 1317 (AD 12 May 1899 -- 30 April 1900), accompanied by his wife, his son Aqa Ghulam-'Ali, the widow of his brother Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali (he who committed suicide in Istanbul because of the base intrigues of the partisans of Mirza Yahya),[1] and Aqa 'Aliy-i-Arbab (the son of the martyred Haji Nasir), Samandar again went on pilgrimage to 'Akka.

His daughter Thurayya had been married to Mirza Diya'u'llah, the third surviving son of Baha'u'llah and a breaker of His Covenant.

By this time Mirza Diya'u'llah was dead and his widow had her home in the

Mansion of Bahji with other Covenant-breakers.

Samandar sought a meeting with her and they met within the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

Samandar himself has written the full account of all that happened on this occasion, which was <p210> published in Egypt shortly afterwards.

It is a sorry tale and reveals the lowest depths of human degradation.

The infamous crew, entrenched in the Mansion of Bahji, made this meeting after long years between a distraught, uncertain, grief-stricken woman and her caring, sorrowing parents, a scene of sordid revenge and conflict.

Thurayya, her tears flowing, complained bitterly that they had unjustly neglected her.

Samandar tried gently to reason with her and asked her to come away with them, but Thurayya refused: she would never depart from the vicinity of her husband's grave.

Diya'u'llah was buried in a room next to the inner Shrine of Baha'u'llah.[2] An old hag had been sent to watch the meeting between Thurayya and her parents.

As soon as Mirza Ghulam-'Ali caught hold of his sister's hand to lead her to the Pilgrim House nearby, the old woman shouted horribly at Thurayya, who screamed in return.

At that, a number of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's partisans rushed in and dragged Samandar and those who were with him into the Mansion, cursing and beating him all the while.

There they were detained, howled at and jeered by a mob.

Mirza Aqa Jan, the faithless amanuensis of Baha'u'llah, and Javad-i-Qazvini were foremost amongst them.

And in the meantime, the fickle Mirza Badi'u'llah, the youngest son of Baha'u'llah, and Mirza Husayn-i-Khartumi, who had had the honour of being Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali's companion in captivity but had gravitated towards the arch-breaker of the Covenant, hastened to the Seraye [Government House] in 'Akka, shamelessly reporting to the authorities that a group of people had come ostensibly to visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah and had stayed on till nightfall, in order to kidnap a woman.

The Mutasarrif sent an interrogator with a number of horsemen to Bahji.

They put Samandar, his wife, son and two others who were with them in a carriage and took them to 'Akka.

There they were driven straight to the Master's house and left.

When informed of the base behaviour of the Covenant-breakers, 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself went to see the Mutasarrif and informed that official of the truth of

the matter.

The Mutasarrif said that Thurayya should be brought out of the Mansion and united with her parents, but 'Abdu'l-Baha forbade it.

Upon Samandar, who intended to take his case to the courts, He laid the same injunction.

He, the very manifestation of mercy, told Samandar that any action to retrieve Thurayya would <p211> greatly sadden Mirza Diya'u'llah's mother, who was still grieving over his death.

The interrogator who had gone out to Bahji, when apprised of the facts of the case advised strongly that Samandar should take action, but again 'Abdu'l-Baha would not allow it.

They had been vindictive and foolish, He said, but we should be forgiving.
[1.

See Baha'u'llah, the King of Glory, pp.

387-8, for Baha'u'llah's account of his suicide.(Ed.)] [2.

In recent years. the heirs of the Covenant-breakers moved the remains of Mirza Diya'u'llah to a building they had erected over the grave of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, in the vicinity of Bahji.] An incalculable service rendered by Samandar to future generations is his meticulous recording of events and conversations pertaining to the Faith of Baha'u'llah. 'Abdu'l-Baha's pronouncement on the waywardness of Lisanu'l-Mulk-i-Sipihr, the author of Nasikhu't-Tavarikh (a massive several-volumed world history), which Samandar has put down on paper, is particularly important.

Sipihr has commented, in common with many others, that if the Bab had stood where He was when the first volley only severed the ropes suspending Him, and had told the spectators to behold that rifle shots could not harm Him, He would have scored an immediate triumph and people, there and then, would have given Him their allegiance.

Sipihr expresses, furthermore, his glee and gratitude that the Bab took refuge in a chamber nearby.

Samandar asked 'Abdu'l-Baha to explain to him the reason for the Bab's action.

The Master, he records, felt very strongly the presentation of this reference to the martyrdom of the Bab; His visage changed colour, and He said most emphatically that it was decreed by God as an incontrovertible sign to arouse the people out of their negligence.

Had the Bab not retired to that chamber, the adversaries would not have allowed Him to live a minute longer, and thus would have prevented people from realizing what had happened.

Samandar was indeed both a keen observer and a keen recorder.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan apart, there is no one else amongst the learned men within the Baha'i fold to match him in those respects.

In one of his works, he tabulates and describes his journeys, thirty-one in number, which he undertook from the year AH 1271, at the age of eleven, to the year 1334, when he had reached the seventy-fourth year of his life.

These journeys were made either for trading purposes, or for the promotion of the interests of the Faith.

Sometimes the two were combined.

Here are some of his journeys, presented and described by himself:

Seventh journey, to Tihran:

Because the Tablets and communications <p212> showed evidences of a fresh outpouring of Light causing surprise, I set out for Tihran, accompanied by my brother, the late Haji Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali.

We stayed at Saray-i-Amir [a well-known caravanserai].

We met the late Haji Mirza Rida-Quli [brother of Baha'u'llah].

As it happened, Aqa Mirza Hadi, the son of Azal, was also in Tihran.

We met him as well...

Sixteenth journey, to Tihran:

I believe it was towards the end of the year 1312.

The rebellion of the Covenant-breakers was being intensified, and coming more into the open.

In this journey, Haji Muhammad Isma'il, the son of the late Haji Khalil, accompanied me.

We stayed with Mashhadi 'Ibad Bag-i-Shirvani, the Qavamu't-Tujjar (because at that time we had trading ties).

We met all of the prominent Friends.

In Tihran, I answered Khartumi's[1] letter.

Aqa Jamal[2] wanted to meet me.

I refused to go to his house, and said that he should come where I was.

He did not.

After some twenty days or more and meeting the Friends, we returned to Qazvin... [1.

See p.

210.] [2.

Aqa Jamal-i-Burujirdi, one of the foremost Covenant-breakers.] Twentieth

journey, to Tabriz: 'Abdu'l-Baha had sanctioned a journey to Zanjan and Adharbayjan.

Developments had delayed this journey.

In the year 1321 I embarked upon it. [Here Samandar details the marriages of two of his daughters, taking place at this time.] We [Samandar had taken his nephew, Shaykh Ahmad, with him] stayed nine days in Zanjan, at the house of Ustad Hasan, the son-in-law of Haji Iman.

Thence we went to Tabriz, staying for nearly seventy days at the home of Haji Muhammad-'Ali Aqa, meeting the Friends. (Quoted in Sulaymani, vol.

7, pp.

43-4.

The following details of journeys are also from this source.) Together with his host, Samandar visited Milan, attending the marriage festivities of Aqa Asadu'llah, the nephew of the host.

Then on his way back to Qazvin, he once again visited Zanjan to meet the Baha'is there.

His twenty-fifth journey was to Rasht. 'This journey was undertaken at the request of the Friends of that city, to teach the Faith.' He stayed at the homes of Aqa 'Aliy-i-Arbab and his own son, Mirza Ghulam-'Ali.

He was in Rasht for three months, and held a special class to teach the Bayan.

Samandar's twenty-sixth journey, sanctioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha, was to Tihiran.

He writes that one of the sons of Siyyid Nasru'llah Baqiroff, together with a son of the martyred Varqa, took him from Qazvin to Tihiran, again to teach the Faith and particularly the contents of the Bayan.

This stay in Tihiran lasted for two-and-a-half months.

The twenty-seventh journey was to Rasht. 'The members of the Spiritual Assembly of Rasht, once again, asked me, through Mirza <p213> Musa Khan, Hakim Bashi, to visit Rasht.

Although I had just returned from Tihiran, I complied.' Accompanied by his wife, the mother of Aqa Mirza Tarazu'llah (the future Hand of the Cause of God), he left for Rasht.

At the request of Haji Yusuf-i-'Attar, he also took Mirza 'Abdu'l-Ghani, the son of that Baha'i friend, with him.

They travelled by carriage to Rasht.

But, before long, a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, sent from Tihiran by the Hand of the Cause of God, Ibn-i-Abhar, directed him to co-operate with Aqa Mirza Na'im (the celebrated Baha'i poet) and Ibn-i-Abhar, in the writing of a book in refutation of Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf.[1] This book had just been published by

Edward Granville Browne, under his own name as editor, in the Gibb Memorial Series.

It carried two misleading introductions, one in Persian and the other in English.

Decades later, the Persian savant, Mirza Muhammad Khan-i-Qazvini, confessed in writing that he personally had composed the Persian Introduction to the Nuqtatu'l-Kaf.

The English Introduction, of course, must have been written by Edward Browne. [1.

See H.

M.

Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Bahha'i Faith.

The present writer has no knowledge of what happened to the book written by Na'im, Samandar and Ibn-i-Abhar.

It certainly was not published.

Shortly after, the great scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, began writing such a refutation.

But he had not gone far when his death put an end to it.

His nephew, Siyyid Mihdi, finished the book.

It was published in 'Ishqabad under the title of 'Kashfu'l-Ghita' (Rending the Veil of Error).

But, because of its intemperate language and certain inaccuracies 'Abdu'l-Baha stopped its circulation.] To go back to Samandar's account, he states that after a stay of only three weeks in Rasht he returned to Qazvin, and then within a week in the company of Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikani (Haji Amin: the Trustee of Huququ'llah) he and his wife left for Tihran.

There he stayed in the house of Aqa Siyyid Hashim, his brother-in-law and son of one of the five Baqiroff brothers.

It took them, Samandar writes, about two months and a half to complete the book.

Whilst busy with writing, Samandar says, he was meeting the Baha'is of Tihran.

The task finished, Samandar went back to Qazvin in the company of Ibn-i-Asdaq, a Hand of the Cause of God and the son of Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas-i-Khurasani, entitled Ismullahu'l-Asdaq.

Samandar's twenty-ninth journey was to Tihran.

On the 13th day of Dhu'l-Hijjah 1332 (2 November 1914), he received a visit from Mirza Musa Khan, the Hakim-Bashi, another stalwart Baha'i of Qazvin.

The evening of this Friday was closing in, Samandar writes, as the lamps were being lighted.

Hakim-Bashi came in with an envelope in his hand, addressed to the two of them.

It was from the Master, <p214> instructing them to go to Tihran and help in reconciling the members of that Spiritual Assembly, who apparently had been at loggerheads.

The next day they were on the road, and a carriage took them quickly to Tihran where they lodged with Haji Ghulam-Riday-i-Isfahani.

Their host, whom the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith appointed the Trustee of Huququ'llah after the death of Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin, eventually adopted the surname of Amin-i-Amin.

Samandar and Hakim-Bashi (who defrayed all the expenses of the journey, returning the money which Samandar had paid) stayed for fifteen days in Tihran.

Their mission, carried out with tact and understanding, was successful.

The thirtieth journey of Samandar was again to Tihran, to assist Siyyid Mihdi of Gulpaygan, in co-operation with a number of other distinguished Baha'is, with the task of bringing to completion the work begun by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl.

The way Samandar refers to the course of this task makes it abundantly clear that, at the time he was writing, the work was far from finished.

<p215> Samandar's last journey, his thirty-first, took place in September 1915.

It was to Rasht.

His companion in the carriage which set out from Qazvin was Ibtihaju'l-Mulk, whose home was in Rasht.

And there lived Samandar's son, Aqa Ghulam-'Ali, who by then had a grown-up family.

Samandar's wish was to meet all the Baha'is of Rasht, but particularly Aqa 'Aliy-i-Arbab and Aqa 'Ali's brother.

His distinguished companion on that journey was to meet a martyr's death within a few short years of those very happy days which these two devoted servants of Baha'u'llah spent together in that waning summer of 1915.

In Rasht, Samandar spent most of his time meeting enquirers in the home of a physician, Mirza Mihdi Khan.

This zealous Baha'i, a native of Hamadan of Jewish background, has written an absorbing autobiography, which unfortunately has not seen the light of day.

Those were indeed joyous days for Samandar.

More members of his family came over from Qazvin.

He stayed in Rasht till 20 March 1916.

Old age had brought infirmities, but despite his failing sight and increasing weakness, Samandar was tireless in serving the Cause of his Lord.

Right to the end he was active in the teaching field.

Early in 1918, in the midst of winter, Samandar winged his flight to realms beyond.

He was truly an 'Apostle of Baha'u'llah'.

He was both a man of the world, very successful as a merchant, and a saint, the soul of rectitude and integrity.

Tablets revealed in his honour by Baha'u'llah were legion.

Baha'u'llah Himself has borne witness to this bounty bestowed on Samandar: 'Were one to collect together all that hath been sent down unto thee of the verses of thy Lord, he would witness a mighty book, greater than other Tablets.

This is of the grace of thy Lord.

He is sufficient unto thee, by virtue of His truth.

No God is there but Him, the Glorious, the Bestower.' (Quoted in Sulaymani, vol.

7, pp.

50-51) Many, also, are the Tablets which 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed to Samandar.

All of them, Tablets of Baha'u'llah and Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, are mirrors of the station attained by Shaykh Kazzim-i-Samandar. <p216> 17 Nuri'd-Din The Most Exalted Pen addressed Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, the son of Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin, a close relative of the glorious Bab, as Nuri'd-Din: the Light of Faith.

He was born in Shiraz, in the year 1842, and from his infancy was called Mirza Aqa, as a letter of the Bab to His wife indicates.

At the age of four the child was stricken by smallpox and was so ill that no recovery seemed at all possible.

He had a brother, three years his senior, named Mirza 'Ali-Rida who also contracted smallpox, but his malady seemed not so severe.

At this time, in September 1846, the Bab was quietly preparing to leave Shiraz to turn to other climes, away from the domain of the Ajudan-Bashi, the governor-general of Fars.

Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin was a paternal cousin of the father of the Bab, and his wife, Zahra Bigum, was a sister of the wife of the Bab.

Shortly before His departure the Bab went to bid farewell to them.

The two children, both very ill, were asleep on a couch in the courtyard.

The Bab lifted the sheet on the bed of Mirza Aqa and prayed over him, but He paid no attention to the elder brother.

That child, seven years old, died the same night but Mirza Aqa recovered.

He was the only surviving child of Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin and Zahra Bigum.

Khadijih Bigum, the wife of the Bab, was particularly attached to this nephew and that tender feeling was much enhanced by the content of a letter which reached her from her glorious Husband, then cruelly incarcerated in the mountain-fortress of Maku:

Do not expect any assistance from thy brothers.

They will not help, it is enough that they refrain from insults.

Overlook their faults.

Even Our enemies have not caused the like of what resulted from the acts of Siyyid 118[1] in Isfahan.

God grant that when the light of thine eyes Mirza <p217> Aqa reacheth maturity, he will be thy help and support.

O God!

Preserve him from all the evil of the envious and the contumacious. [1.

118 is the numerical equivalent of Hasan.

Siyyid Hasan was one of the two brothers of Khadijih Bigum.

He is the Afnan-i-Kab'ir (the Great Afnan) of future years.] What the Bab had said of Mirza Aqa made Khadijih Bigum give special attention to the education and upbringing of the young boy.

And Mirza Aqa was destined to have the distinction of being the third member of the family of the Bab to believe in him.

Then came in rapid succession the triple tragedy of the martyrdom of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali (the uncle of the Bab), followed by the martyrdom of the glorious Bab Himself, and soon the death of the nineteen-year-old Haji Mirza Javad, the son of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, far away from home at Jiddah.

The relatives of the Bab: two other maternal uncles and in particular the two brothers-in-law, were naturally grief-stricken and, although not believers as yet, were known to a hostile public as men related to the Bab and therefore suspect.

No matter how hard they tried to dissociate themselves from the newly-proclaimed Faith and to show themselves as staunch Muslims, currying favour with the Shi'ih priesthood, they were regarded with suspicion.

Two brothers of the wife of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, one of the maternal uncles of the Bab--Haji 'Abdu'l-Husayn and Haji Muhammad-Khalil--were viciously inimical, shouting abuse and defamation in public and making the

life of their sister unbearable.

Many a time it was mooted to declare these relatives of the Bab apostate, but they managed to ride the storm although suffering in the process, both mentally and materially.

Two of the well-known divines of the day, both related to the Bab and secretly believers in Him, would, as far as it was feasible for them, provide protection for any believer under the scrutiny of public gaze.

And yet tongues wagged.

Immunity from the effects of the poison constantly instilled into the body politic was not possible.

Those mujtahids were Haji Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, the Hujjatu'l-Islam, soon to be famed as Mirzay-i-Shirazi, and Haji Mirza Javad, the Imam-Jum'ih of Kirman.

The sorrows of the wife of the Bab, very evident and hard to conceal; the presence of the widow and daughters of Hujjat of Zanjaan in the house where Khadijih Bigum lived; the occasional visits of the destitute and pitiable captives brought from Nayriz and the reluctance of the elders of the family to become involved, all gave the young Mirza Aqa cause to think and investigate.

But these were matters that his mind could not unravel, and he found himself asking his aunt to throw light upon them.

Although he was no more than thirteen years old, his questing mind convinced Khadijih Bigum that the time had come to acquaint him with the story of the glorious Bab.

And the young soul of Mirza Aqa responded with its full ardour to the tidings given him by his aunt.

The Qa'im of the House of Muhammad had come in the Person of his own kinsman, Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, the Bab, Whom a wayward generation had rejected and put to death.

Love for Him--the glorious Bab, the martyred Qa'im--invaded and conquered completely the heart of the young boy.

He desired intensely to quaff of the same cup, to give his life that the Cause of the Bab might live and flourish.

Khadijih Bigum saw unmistakably the fulfilment of the promise which years ago her Husband had imparted to her from the fortress wherein He was incarcerated.

And now Khadijih Bigum realized that her lion-hearted nephew was truly destined to be a distinguished and faithful servitor of the Cause of God.

Every day Mirza Aqa would present himself before his bereaved aunts, Khadijih Bigum and the widow of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, to carry out their wishes, and would from time to time take them to visit orchards and sanctuaries outside the city, amongst them the mausoleums of the two great poets, Sa'di and Hafiz, and

a famous orchard named Pudunak.[1] [1.

The Bab Himself oftentimes visited these mausoleums. known as Haft-Tanrin (Seven Men) and Chihil-Tanan (Forty Men), which are resting-places of a number of saintly figures.] Before long the father of Mirza Aqa retired from his trading pursuits and confined himself to farming.

Mirza Aqa, now adolescent, formed a partnership with Haji Mirza Buzurg, the youngest son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad (an uncle of the Bab), who was of the same age as himself.

They entered the world of commerce under the supervision of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim (the brother of Khadijih Bigum) and Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad.

Each of them had a capital of seven-hundred-and-fifty tumans to start with.

Mirza Aqa, whilst embarking on a business career, was also quietly nurturing relationships with a few other Babis who lived in Shiraz.

Then it was that he determinedly turned his attention to his own parents to help them embrace the Faith revealed by their Kinsman.

In this he succeeded and they gave their allegiance unreservedly to the Bab.

His next spiritual undertaking was not at all easy to achieve.

He <p219> <p220> challenged boldly no less a person than Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, the uncle of the Bab.

This highly revered merchant, whose brothers-in-law were in the forefront of the bitter adversaries of the Bab, had, as far as discretion allowed, tried to shield those who were associated with his Nephew.

He would have gone to any length to save his Nephew from the malevolence of His foes, but to give Him his allegiance he decidedly would not.

From the very beginning Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad had refused to take the path which his martyred younger brother had taken.

Now, faced with a determined young man, only seventeen years old, he hedged himself with traditions, both genuine and of doubtful authenticity.

To fend off the persistent appeals of his enthusiastic young relative, Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad used every armour of the orthodox.

Haji Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan, the distinguished son of Aqa Mirza Aqa, has put on paper his father's reminiscences of that spiritual struggle between himself, a boy of seventeen, and the venerable uncle of the Bab:

At the beginning when I broached the subject the uncle expressed total refusal.

I went on presenting proofs supporting my argument.

We went through several meetings until one day, when I was strenuously following my line, he said with great amazement: 'Mirza Aqa!

Do you mean to say that the son of my sister is the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad?' I replied: 'Why not?' Then he showed still more amazement and said: 'It is strange, very strange.' I replied: 'There is nothing strange about it!' Then he became very pensive.

That made me smile.

He asked me: 'Why do you smile?' I answered: 'It will not be polite if I say why.' He said: 'Do not be shy, tell me.' I replied: 'Now that you allow me I will say it.'

What you said just now is exactly what Abu-Lahab[1] exclaimed: "Is it possible for my nephew to be a Prophet!"

Indeed it was possible, and the Nephew of Abu-Lahab was the Messenger of God.

Now, would you investigate and find out for yourself?

This Sun has arisen from your house, this Light has shone from your abode; you must feel proud.

Don't be amazed, don't seek avoidance.

God the Almighty has the power to have made the Son of your sister the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad.

The hand of God is not tied.

As the Qur'an declares:

His hand is free!' Then he [the uncle of the Bab] said: 'Nur-i-Chashm, you gave me an answer which is unanswerable!

What can I say and what should I do now?' I replied: 'Firstly, it is necessary that you go on pilgrimage to 'Iraq and meet your sister who is there [the mother of the Bab].

Secondly, Ishan [the Blessed Beauty] is in Baghdad.

Stop there for a few days.

Present your difficulties to Him.

Try, endeavour, put your trust in God.

Let us hope that you shall attain and reach faith.

Man has to strive [a reference to a Qur'anic verse]. Having <p221> listened to me, he commented: 'It is good what you say.

It touched my heart.' (pp.

157-60 of unpublished memoirs written by Haji Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan of his father's [Aqa Mirza Aqa] reminiscences) [1.

An uncle of Muhammad who rejected and opposed His Mission. (Ed.) Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, we know, went to the holy cities of 'Iraq having his

younger brother, Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali, with him; went into the presence of Baha'u'llah without his brother; and presented his questions--questions which evoked from the pen of Baha'u'llah the Book of Certitude (Kitab-i-Iqan).[1]
[1.

The gist of the questions presented to Baha'u'llah by Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, found amongst his papers in his own handwriting, is given in Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, pp.

163-5 (Ed.)] Haji Mirza Habibu'llah has further written:

Having received and read the Kitab-i-Iqan, which contained answers to his questions, and having attained faith and assurance, he [Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad] visited the holy cities, and after meeting his sister, the mother of the Bab, returned to Shiraz.

Believers came to visit him and received spiritual sustenance from him.

He [Aqa Mirza Aqa] used to say: 'After attaining his presence he thanked me most profoundly and told me: "Although considering age you are as my own son, but in the realm of the Spirit you are as my father, because if it were not for your insistence I would never have attained the measure of faith which is the utmost desideratum of those who seek nearness to God."

He then prayed for me with his whole heart.' (Unpublished memoirs written by Haji Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan of his father's [Aqa Mirza Aqa] reminiscences, pp.

165-6) Baha'u'llah, in those days, had not as yet declared His Mission, but from Baghdad He was addressing Tablets to the wife of the Bab, and to a number of devout Babis such as Mirza 'Abdu'l-Karim, Shaykh-'Ali Mirza and Haji Abu'l-Hasan.

His signature read as 152, equivalent to Baha.

The wife of the Bab always turned to Baha'u'llah.

Subsequent to the return of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad from 'Iraq, Mirza Aqa and his father, Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin, wrote and asked permission to travel to Baghdad and visit Baha'u'llah.

Khadijih Bigum, in order to introduce her nephew, sent to Baha'u'llah the Letter of the Bab, the Letter already mentioned in these pages.

Both father and son were honoured with an answer, and the letters were in the handwriting of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In the Tablet addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqa, the receipt of the Letter of the Bab to Khadijih Bigum is acknowledged in these words:

Then, know thou that the Letter that was of God hath reached Us, and this is loved by Me more than anything else in heaven and on earth, and more than aught that was or shall be.

We ask of God to bestow on thee the best of all rewards and to raise thee to an exalted and glorious station. (Unpublished) <p222> Time passed, Baha'u'llah was called to Istanbul, and on the twelfth day of Ridvan, as He was about to leave the Garden of Najibiyyah and take the road to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, He revealed a Tablet which exists in His own handwriting addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqa, reading thus:

Aqa in Shin[1] [1.

Sh, the 15th letter of the Persian alphabet, is pronounced Shin.

Here the city of Shiraz is indicated.] He is the Glorious!

Hearken to what the departing Dove revealeth unto thee, as He prepareth to leave the realm of 'Iraq--such are the methods of God decreed for His Messengers.

Let this not cause thee sorrow.

Put thy trust in thy Lord and the Lord of thy forefathers...

Those who are endowed with the insight of the spirit are independent of all that was and shall be created, and are able to behold the mysteries of the Cause behind the thickest veils.

Say, O beloved of God!

Fear none and let nothing grieve thee; be steadfast in the Cause.

By God, those who have drunk of the love of God, the Glorious, the Effulgent, have no fear of anyone, and show patience in calamity, like unto the patience of the lover toward the good-pleasure of the beloved.

With them affliction ranketh greater than that which the lovers perceive in the countenance of the beloved.

Say, O concourse of evil-doers!

Ere long the Cause of God will, in truth, be exalted, and the standards of those who join partners with God will perish, and the people shall enter the Faith of God, the Sovereign, the Supreme, the Ancient of Days.

Well is it with those who have now hastened forth in the love of God and received the tidings of the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Glory be unto you, O concourse of believers in the unity of God.

Know then that thy letter hath reached Us, and We have given this reply to create in thy heart the warmth of yearning, to cause thee to turn to the paradise of this resplendent Name, to make thee detached from all, and to enable thee to soar to such heights as have not been attained by the wings of the worldly-wise who are not under the shadow of God's countenance and who are indeed of the perplexed. (Unpublished) The news of the departure of Baha'u'llah from Baghdad, and of the hostile behaviour of the governments and the high officials of the two empires, Persian and Ottoman, trickled through to

Persia and caused consternation amongst the Babis.

But when the Tablet addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqa reached Shiraz, it brought not only relief from anxiety, but great happiness.

The promise of the Bab had been fulfilled: 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' had come forth.

Now, at least for the time being, joy and exhilaration prevailed.

Although sorrow, much sorrow, was to come; the Manifestation of God was to suffer and suffer grievously; yet the very fact of His <p223> Advent reanimated the community of the Bab and gave the Babis, hereafter to be known as Baha'is, vigour renewed.

In Shiraz Aqa Mirza Aqa, the recipient of such a powerful Tablet in the handwriting of Baha'u'llah Himself, stepped into the arena of teaching, more than ever determined to serve his Lord, to make his fellow-citizens aware of the precious hour in which they lived.

There were still many people alive in Shiraz who remembered vividly the day when the glorious Bab stood on the pulpit of Masjid-i-Vakil and spoke to the multitude, who remembered the cruelties inflicted on Him and His faithful followers, who remembered the parading of Quddus and Ismu'llahu'l-Asdaq in the streets of their city.

Aqa Mirza Aqa made friends with a number of those men who were well known for their integrity and succeeded in clearing away their doubts. <p224> About fifty of them, members of a family known as Khayyat (Tailor) thus embraced the Faith.

Mulla 'Abbas-'Aliy-i-Shamsabadi, who hailed from the district of Marvdasht,[1] was one who came into the Babi fold subsequent to the incident in the Mosque of Vakil.

Aqa Mirza Aqa sought his aid in establishing friendly relations with the prominent men of Marvdasht.

His efforts led to the conversion of Haji Muhammad-Kazim-i-Nasrabadi, a mystic of his time and very powerful in the area of Ramjird.

Mirza Mihdi Khan-i-Fathabadi, a noted poet, was another convert.

Karbila'i Hasan Khan and Karbila'i Sadiq, both of Sarvistan, who had just learned of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, and Muhammad-Hashim Khan of Band-i-Amir[2] found in Aqa Mirza Aqa a highly trustworthy and efficient agent to attend to their affairs in Shiraz, which were indeed considerable.
[1.

Persepolis is situated in the area of Marvdasht.] [2.

Bendimir of Thomas Moore's 'Lalla Rookh' (Lalih-Rukh).] Aqa Mirza Aqa was regularly corresponding with Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' (King of the Martyrs) and Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada' (Beloved of the Martyrs), the two brothers, Mirza Hasan

and Mirza Husayn, whom the treachery and bad faith of the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan and Prince Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, later sent to their deaths. (See chap.

3.) He also had business dealings with them.

Unfortunately most of their correspondence has been lost with the passage of time, but what remains speaks eloquently of their intimate friendship and of the conditions under which the Cause of Baha'u'llah had to fare in those early days.

It was from Adrianople that Baha'u'llah sent Nabil-i-A'zam to 'Iraq and Iran, bearing the tidings of the Advent of Him Whose Name adorns all of the Scriptures of mankind.

Furthermore, Nabil had been appointed by Baha'u'llah to perform the rites of pilgrimage on His behalf in the House of the Bab.

Nabil reached Shiraz by the way of Bushihr and stayed at the house of Aqa Mirza Aqa.

Prior to anything else he proceeded to perform the rites of pilgrimage.

He knew by heart the Tablet of Hajj (Pilgrimage).

When night fell he left the city, and as dawn broke from the heights overlooking Shiraz, Nabil could discern the outlines of the city.

Then he began to recite the Tablet of pilgrimage and walked on to descend into the plain.

Having gone through Darvazih Qur'an--the Gate of Qur'an,[3] within a distance of <p225> a thousand paces from the gate to the city he stopped at a building[1] reared by Karim Khan-i-Zand, and made his ablutions in the waters of Rukni (Ab-i-Rukni).

The waters of Rukni or Ruknabad have been eulogized by the great poet Hafiz.

Then, having completed his ablutions, Nabil perfumed himself, put on a decorous and costly robe, and walked on towards the city.

The sun had not yet risen when he reached the city-gates.

There, lost to the world, he prostrated himself and put his forehead on the ground, on the sacred soil of Shiraz.

The muleteers and the attendants of caravans, who were leaving the city at that early hour, were puzzled by the sight of Nabil, and thinking that he had swooned sprinkled rose-water on his face.

But at that moment Nabil was in a world apart.

He circumambulated the House of the Bab and completed all the rites of pilgrimage. [3.

In an upper room over this gateway there is laid a voluminous copy of the

Qur'an, said to be in the handwriting of Imam Hasan, the Second Imam.] [1.

Called Tanurih-Asiyabi, it was situated approximately where the headquarters of the Gendarmerie of Shiraz stand today, in the Qur'an Avenue.] Before telling anyone else of the message which Baha'u'llah had entrusted to him Nabil gave it to Khadijih Bigum, the wife of the Bab.

Upon hearing it, she immediately responded without the slightest hesitation, and acknowledged with joy the station of Baha'u'llah:

He in Whose path her glorious Husband had given His life.

It was Khadijih Bigum, who, weeks before the encounter between her Husband and Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i, had witnessed the effulgent light of God shining from His Person, and had recognized Him as the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad.

And now, at once, she gave her allegiance to Baha'u'llah.

To this immediate, unqualified response which was evoked from the heart and the soul of Khadijih Bigum, the Most Exalted Pen has testified abundantly:

O My Leaf!...

Thou art with the Supreme Companion, and this Wronged One is making mention of thee in the Prison of 'Akka.

Thou art she, who, before the creation of the world of being, found the fragrance of the garment of the Merciful...

Thou art the one who, as soon as the call uttered by the Lord of the Kingdom of Names reached thy hearing, turned to Him, and was so attracted as to lose all restraint! (See Faydi, Khanadan-i-Afnan, pp.

1 and 3 of a 4-page Tablet attached to p.

185.) Having delivered the message of Baha'u'llah to Khadijih Bigum, Nabil turned his attention to others of his co-religionists in Shiraz, meeting them individually or in groups.

The Baha'is, for their part, became greatly attached to Nabil, ready to do his bidding.

Feeling the great eagerness and total devotion of the Baha'is of Shiraz, Nabil then <p226> took another step.

He called all of them together to a large gathering and asked them to bring along every Tablet, every book related to the Cause which they had.

Let us hear of what happened in the words of Aqa Mirza Aqa, as recorded by his son, Haji Mirza Habibu'llah:

As requested by Nabil I invited the friends to come to a meeting, and I chose the house of Mirza 'Abdu'l-Karim as the place for holding this meeting because his house was well-appointed.

The uncle [Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad] was particularly invited to come and

grace this meeting.

When all had arrived Nabil spoke.

He declared the Advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', He Whose Revelation had been promised in the Bayan.

That Supreme Manifestation of Godhead, he stated, was Baha'u'llah and none other.

Next he divided the writings which the Baha'is had brought with them into three sections.

Taking up the first section, he said: 'These are from the pen of the Primal Point [the Bab], sacred, precious, very dear to us.' Then he pointed to the second portion and said: 'These are revealed by "Him Whom God shall make manifest".'

The Bab promised His Advent, made the acceptance or rejection of all He had revealed in His own Book, the Bayan, dependent on the good-pleasure and all-pervading will of that Supreme Manifestation, and warned us not to tarry for a moment but to give Him when He comes instant recognition and allegiance.

We have been barred by the Bab from taking the wayward path followed by the people preceding us, thus straying into the wilderness.

He [Baha'u'llah] is that Supreme Manifestation of Godhead in Whose path the Bab sacrificed Himself, with His own blood pledging His brave and devout followers to remain constant and faithful, not to deprive themselves of the bounty of responding to the call of the Speaker of the Mount.

Now all that was promised in the Bayan and in the Qayyumu'l-Asma' has come to pass.

Note the Qa'im [the Bab] and the Qayyum [Baha'u'llah].

Note the pronouncement of the Bab regarding the year nine when all good would be realized.

Indeed that prophecy is fulfilled.

It is Baha'u'llah Who is leading us to the understanding of the Cause of God.

Whoever ranges himself under His shadow is of the people of the Light, and whoever takes himself away is of the people of the nether world and totally cut off from the reality of the Cause of the Bab.' He [Nabil] spoke in that vein for nearly an hour.

Then he [Nabil] took up the third portion of the writings and said: 'These belong to doubters and people of wrong thought and their place is in the fire.' Saying that, he threw them into the fire-place where a fire was burning.

This action of Nabil caused an uproar and protest; particularly Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, who did not expect such action on the part of Nabil in his

presence, was very angry and vociferously protested, saying time and again: 'Do you take faith to be like weed; you cut it in daytime and it grows again during the night?' Then it was that this servant intervened and spoke.

Aqa Mirza 'Abdu'l-Karim, Haji Abu'l-Hasan and Shaykh-'Ali Mirza came to my aid.

Courteously and humbly it was put to him: 'Firstly, investigate for yourself to find <p227> the truth of Nabil's words.

Secondly, you should know for a certainty that, according to the text of the Bayan, no one save "Him Whom God shall make manifest" has the temerity to put forth a claim so great.

Regard the Bab: despite His virtues, the truth which He bore, the guidance which was His to give, He was made the target of malice and hate.

He was the Truth, He spoke the truth; and you yourself came to realize it when you attained the presence of Ishan [Baha'u'llah] in Baghdad, when He resolved your difficulties and within the span of two nights revealed for you the Kitab-i-Iqan, thus dispelling all your doubts.

Even if revealing that book should not provide the proof needed for anyone else, it should be the entire and complete proof for your person, leaving not the slightest doubt and giving you the assurance that He is the Truth, that turning away from Him is the very essence of waywardness. (Unpublished memoirs written by Haji Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan of his father's [Aqa Mirza Aqa] reminiscences, pp.

169-73) Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad said no more.

But Nabil did not cease following up his course until the uncle of the Bab openly declared his belief and recognized the station of Baha'u'llah.

In subsequent meetings, in the presence of all, Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad prostrated himself to render thanks for having been guided to the straight path, and praised the Blessed Perfection for that bounty of recognition.

Tears of joy coursed down his cheeks.

His acknowledgement of the station of Baha'u'llah led everyone else in Shiraz to do the same, everyone that is who had accepted the Bab.

And thus not a soul remained in the city of the Bab among His followers who did not turn to Baha'u'llah and recognize in Him the Redeemer of Mankind.

Shiraz, the city where the Dawn had broken, became free of blemish.

It was the grace of the Bab which kept His native town cleansed and purified.

A certain Shaykh Muhammad of Yazd lived in Shiraz.

Prior to the Declaration of Baha'u'llah he would state that He was a Manifestation of God, but when the call of Baha'u'llah was raised Shaykh Muhammad rose up in opposition.

The Baha'is of Shiraz cut him off.

Subsequently he left and made his way to Istanbul.

Thus Shiraz remained immune from his sedition, but he caused a good deal of mischief in Istanbul, leagued with leading Azalis.

Nabil, having brought his mission to a successful conclusion in Shiraz, left for Isfahan.

Soon after, Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim, whom Baha'u'llah had honoured with the designation 'Muballigh' (Teacher, Missioner), moved to Shiraz, his father's native town.

Haji 'Abdu'r-Rasul, the father of Muballigh, was a convert from Judaism to Islam.

And the sister of Muballigh, Hajiyyih Bibi Gawhar, was married to <p228> Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali, known as Khal-i-Asghar, the youngest of the three maternal uncles of the Bab.

Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim was a merchant and his arrival at Shiraz did not at first cause any stir.

However, the purpose of his visit was not trading but teaching the Faith, particularly to the remaining members of the Family of the Bab.

He directed his attention to Haji Mirza Buzurg, son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad (uncle of the Bab), to Siyyid Muhammad-Husayn (paternal grandfather of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith), and to Mirza Abu'l-Hasan and Mirza Mahmud, sons of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim (the brother-in-law of the Bab).

All became Baha'is.

Aqa Mirza Aqa also tried to bring his paternal relatives, who were mustawfis (auditors and controllers of governmental accounts), and the Lashkar-Nivis (Paymaster-General) into the circle of the Faith, but there he did not succeed.

These men showed such hostility that all family ties were snapped, and two generations later the descendants of Aqa Mirza Aqa and the descendants of these relatives, although all of them lived in Shiraz, became total strangers.

It is a well-told tale in <p229> the family that Aqa Mirza Aqa together with Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim were one day locked in argument with Mirza 'Abbas, who was a son of Haji Mirza Ibrahim-i-Lashkar-Nivis and a cousin of Mirza Aqa (the son of a paternal aunt).

Mirza 'Abbas remained adamantly opposed.

At last he said: 'If there be truth in this claim of the Bab, let me fall down when mounting my horse outside this house, and let the bone in my right thigh crack.' Aqa Mirza Aqa replied: 'Ask God to illumine your heart with the light of faith, not maim you.' But he refused to change his plea and sure enough, he

met with the accident he had mentioned, exactly at the place he had named.

The rest of his life he had to hobble with a stick, but to faith he obstinately remained alien.

After a long stay in Shiraz, Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim went to Yazd and promised to do his utmost to bring Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali and Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, the Afnan-i-Kabir, into the Baha'i Faith.

As it happened, Mulla Muhammad--Nabil-i-Akbar--reached Yazd at the same time.

The combined efforts of the Muballigh and Nabil-i-Akbar convinced the uncle of the Bab and His brother-in-law that the Faith of the Bab and Baha'u'llah was true.

That victory achieved, the only one left to be won over was Haji Mirza Abul-Qasim, the brother of Afnan-i-Kabir.

Nabil-i-Akbar, after a sojourn of about a year in Yazd, made for Shiraz where he stayed for thirteen months.

During that time Haji Mirza Abul-Qasim yielded to the urgent pleas of his son, Siyyid Muhammad-Husayn, and his nephew, Aqa Mirza Aqa, and turned to Baha'u'llah.

Then he was honoured with a Tablet, and thus the circle was closed.

All of the Afnans were now safe and secure in the enclave of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

There were two grandees in Shiraz, Mushiru'l-Mulk and Qavamu'l-Mulk, who were most of the time at daggers drawn, bitterly fighting over offices and posts of which the Governor disposed.

Mushiru'l-Mulk, in particular, striving to create difficulties for his rival and to make the Governor suspicious, made the Baha'is the butt of his intrigues.

When Sultan-Murad Mirza, the Hisamu's-Saltanih, an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, arrived as the Governor-General of Fars, Mushiru'l-Mulk, who enjoyed the post of the Vazir of the province, drew up a list of prominent Baha'is of Shiraz which included the names of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad and Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, and gave the list to Hisamu's-Saltanih to persecute them.

Qavamu'l-Mulk, on this occasion, intervened and prevented <p230> mischief.

But Mushru'l-Mulk would not sit still.

He found a way to raise an uproar.

Mirza Aqay-i-Rikab-Saz was one of the early Babis of Shiraz, having given his allegiance to the Bab after the incident of the Mosque of Vakil.

Strangely, he had close connections with Shaykh Husayn-i-Zalim, the Nazimu'sh-Shari'ih, a bitter enemy of the Bab.

On the very day that the Bab was brought to the Masjid-i-Vakil (the Mosque of Vakil) and asked to speak from the pulpit, this Shaykh Husayn insulted Him and tried to hit Him with his walking-stick.

Mirza Aqa's wife was very hostile towards the Faith and, induced by Mushruru'l-Mulk, she sold her husband to the infamous Shaykh Husayn.

That treachery led to the arrest of Mirza Aqa.

Not only this excellent calligraphist,[1] but several Baha'is besides him were detained as well and thrown into prison, where they endured several hardships.

These were Mashhadi Nabi, Mashhadi Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Khayyat, Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Bazzaz (the mercer), Karbila'i Muhammad-Hashim, Karbila'i Hasan Khan-i-Sarvistani, Mashhadi Abu'l-Qasim-i-Kharraz (the haberdasher), Mirza Baqir, Mulla 'Abdu'llah-i-Fadil-i-Zarqani, and Mulla 'Abdu'llah-i-Buka'. [1.

The frontispiece of Buha'u'llah, The King of Glory is the first page of the Kitab-i-Iqan from the copy belonging to the author, in the handwriting of Mirza Aqay-i-Rikab-Saz, who had a good hand at Naskh script.] Aqa Mirza Aqa (Nuri'd-Din) made every endeavour to bring about their release.

At last Mushru'l-Mulk himself stood bail for Mulla 'Abdu'llah-i-Fadil and Mulla 'Abdu'llah-i-Buka'.

Qavamu'l-Mulk, on the other hand, brought about the release of Karbila'i Hasan Khan, and the Imam-Jum'ih managed to get Haji Abu'l-Hasan out of the gaol.

Mirza Baqir was heavily bastinadoed and expelled from Shiraz; he went to Kirman, where he was martyred.

Mirza Aqay-i-Rikab-Saz, Mashhadi Nabi and Mashhadi Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Khayyat met their martyrdom in Hisamu's-Saltanih's prison.[2] The mercer, Haji Abu'l-Hasan, after his release, found it impossible to live in Shiraz.

He fled to the villages in the districts of Sarvistan and Kurbal, taking with him his two sons, children of tender age (the future Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan Dihqan [Dehkan] and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali Khan).

Oftentimes, he had to seek refuge in caves and on the mountain-side to escape the venom of the foe.

After a while he returned to Shiraz and took his abode in the House of the Bab.

Every now and then he attended the Imam-Jum'ih, so that the public should perceive his attachment to that influential divine.

Actually his wife was related to the Imam-Jum'ih.

Finally he opened a shop in the bazar known as Bazar-i-Haji. [2.

When they were martyred, the rabble in Shiraz committed abominations. shameful to describe.] Shaykh Salman was the courier who took supplications of the Baha'is of Persia to the Holy Land and brought Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah.

When in the year AH 1288 (23 March 1871 -- 10 March 1872) he passed through Shiraz, he told Aqa Mirza Aqa that on his return he would be bringing a pilgrim to the Holy Land to stay with the wife of the Bab whilst in Shiraz.

However, caution led him not to mention the identity of this pilgrim and guest.

Before long, Aqa Mirza Aqa received a letter from Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada' (Beloved of the Martyrs), stating that Aqa Siyyid Yahya and his sister would be leaving soon for the Holy Land, and whilst in Shiraz they should be <p232> guests of Khadijih Bigum.

Munirih Khanum (soon to be wedded to 'Abdu'l-Baha) reached Shiraz in Shavval 1288 (December 1871 -- January 1872), and stayed for two weeks with the wife of the Bab.

Khadijih Bigum asked Munirih Khanum to present to Baha'u'llah a request from her: that the House of the Bab be repaired once again, and that she be permitted to reside in it. (She had been living in the house of the uncle of the Bab.) Baha'u'llah granted Khadijih Bigum's request, and the task of the restoration of the house was given to Aqa Mirza Aqa and Haji Siyyid 'Ali, a son of Afnan-i-Kabir.

A mason of Shiraz, Ustad 'Abdu'r-Razzaq, a devoted Baha'i, was chosen for the work, but the house was not restored exactly as it had been in the days of the Bab.

The work done, Khadijih Bigum took her residence there.

Fiddih, the faithful negress, attended her, and for a while very few knew that Khadijih Bigum had moved into that house, but before long Baha'is became aware of it and started frequenting it more and more.

The fanatical residents of the houses of that street sat up and took notice, began to whimper, and went complaining to the mullas.

Very soon it all came to the ears of Prince Farhad Mirza, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who was at this time the Governor-General of Fars.

And so Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih decided to damage the House of the Bab.

Two of his private secretaries who were Baha'is immediately informed Aqa Mirza Aqa of what the crafty prince intended to do.

Mirza Aqa at once moved his aunt and the negress attendant, at night-time, to his own house which was close to the Jami' Mosque of Shiraz.

Khadijih Bigum stayed in her nephew's house for nearly six months.

Around this time the Baha'i community of Shiraz was prospering.

There were some two hundred men and women, amongst them a number of very brave and devout believers, raised by the hand of the Almighty to serve His Cause and give it victory.

Foremost amongst them stood Mirza 'Abdu'l-Karim, Mirza 'Ali-Akbar (son of the poet known as Sabir), Mudhahibb-Bashi (the Chief Illuminator), Shayakh-'Ali Mirza, Haji Mirza Buzurg-i-Afnan (a son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad), Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, Haji Ghulam-Husayn Khan and Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan (Dihqan-Dehkan--of later years).

Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih was still the Governor when, due to the avarice of the Imam-Ju'mih of Isfahan and the cunning of Zillu's-Sultan, the two illustrious brothers, Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' (King of the Martyrs) and Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada' (Beloved of the Martyrs), were <p233> beheaded.

They had had commercial dealings with Aqa Mirza Aqa.

As the news of that foul treachery and the martyrdom of such distinguished and well-famed men reached Shiraz, commotion came upon the city, particularly in mercantile quarters.

Since amongst the Baha'i merchants Aqa Mirza Aqa was the most prominent, the Afnans felt that he ought to leave Shiraz, at least for a short while, lest Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih should follow the pattern of Zillu's-Sultan, his great-nephew, and attempt to extort money and, in the process of lining his pockets, jeopardize the life of this Afnan who was known to <p234> everyone as an outspoken member of the Baha'i Faith.

Within twenty-four hours, Aqa Mirza Aqa was hurried out of Shiraz by his relatives and was on his way to Bushihr, where without lingering he took a boat to Bombay.

The martyrdom of the two illustrious brothers in Isfahan was indeed very hard for Aqa Mirza Aqa to bear.

They had been life-long friends and business associates.

Baha'u'llah honoured him, in this period of engulfing sorrow, with this Tablet:

He is the Comforter, the All-Knowing 0 My Afnan!

That which thou hadst repeatedly sent to our Name Mihdi was read in Our presence, and from it We sensed the fragrance of sorrow caused by this calamity which hath robbed the Temple of Grandeur with the garment of grief.

Thy Lord is, in truth, the Source of praise, the All-Knowing.

Verily, over this supreme affliction My Most Exalted Pen hath lamented.

To this beareth witness what the Maker of the heavens hath sent down in His manifest Book.

Well is it with him who recalleth those who met a martyr's death in the path of God, whether in former or in recent times, or in these days, and readeth what was sent down for them from God, the Lord of the worlds.

0 My Afnan!

Verily the divine Lote-Tree hath moaned and the Rock hath cried out, but the

evil-doers are deep in slumber.

Ere long the scourge of the wrath of thy Lord shall make them aware.

Verily, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

O My Afnan!

It is incumbent on everyone who hath drunk of the wine of the love of God to share, with the denizens of the Supreme Concourse, in this supreme affliction and great calamity, for they mourn as they see the utmost sorrow of this Wronged One--the evidence of His grace, His fidelity and His bounty.

Verily, He is the Gracious, the Ancient of Days.

Nevertheless thou and all the other beloved ones of God should evince the utmost resignation, acquiescence, patience and submissiveness to the will of God... (Unpublished) And there were other Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah concerning the martyrdom of the twin luminaries of Isfahan, addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqa and others of the Afnans in Shiraz and Yazd.

Aqa Mirza Aqa arose, as was his wont, to propagate the Faith of Baha'u'llah in Bombay, where he resided at 5 Appolo Street.

Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Afshar and Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Muballigh were both in Bombay and aided his efforts.

He gave the message of Baha'u'llah to anyone who was willing to listen.

One of these was named Muss, of Jewish background.

This merchant and his family came into the circle of the Faith and went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Although away from Shiraz, Aqa Mirza Aqa was constantly <p235> attending to the welfare of the wife of the Bab, writing to her and sending on her letters to Baha'u'llah.

And this brave, dedicated, indefatigable man's services in every field of Baha'i activity evoked from the Most Exalted Pen a Tablet which conferred upon him the designation of Nuri'd-Din--the Light of Faith.

O My Afnan, upon thee rest My Glory, My Bounty and My Mercy.

Verily, the Servant-in-Attendance [Mirza Aqa Jan] came and made mention of thee in Our presence.

We therefore extolled thee in such wise as to cause the cities of remembrance and utterance to be set ablaze.

Verily thy Lord is the Supreme Ruler over all things.

We have named thee, at this moment, Nuri'd-Din.

We beseech God that He may ordain for thee that which will draw thee near unto Him and be of profit to thee.

He verily is the All-Gracious, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. (Quoted in Faydi, Khanadan-i-Afnan, p.

201) * * * * * [Electronic editor's note:

In the Foreward to this book, p. x, Moojan Momen writes: '...the present writer has contributed short accounts... [The] additions are clearly indicated in the text ... where the added material follows a line of asterisks.' Then in 1882, the wife of the Bab passed away and Zahra Bigum--her sister and Aqa Mirza Aqa's mother--took up residence in the House of the Bab on the instructions of Baha'u'llah.

Later, Baha'u'llah made <p236> custodianship of the House of the Bab a hereditary office among her descendants.

Zahra Bigum passed away in 1889 and the custodianship became the responsibility of Aqa Mirza Aqa, although he was at that time resident in Egypt, where he had established his trading-house in Port Sa'id.

In July 1891, less than a year before the Ascension of Baha'u'llah, Aqa Mirza Aqa arrived for pilgrimage in Haifa with members of his family.

The story of this pilgrimage, which lasted for nine months and encompassed many episodes of great interest and significance, is the subject of chapter 41 of Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, as described by Haji Mirza Habibu'llah, the son of Aqa Mirza Aqa, in his autobiography.

In 1903, 'Abdu'l-Baha issued instructions for the restoration of the House of the Bab exactly as it was in the time of the Bab.

Aqa Mirza Aqa (who was the only living person who remembered the details of the house as it had been) came to Shiraz and, with the assistance of the believers there, undertook the task even though these were difficult times for the Baha'is and persecutions had erupted in many parts of the land.

The restoration was almost complete when Aqa Mirza Aqa took ill and passed away on 15 November 1903. <p237> 18 The Angel of Mount Carmel A shining, world-illuminating day is the night of godly men, Verily, the enlightened know not the gloom of a darksome night. - - - - - Sa'di

Western Baha'is who came on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the latter years of the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha met, at times, on Mount Carmel a very old man, bent with age.

His dignity, serenity and vivacity so profoundly impressed and moved them that they spoke of him as the Angel of Mount Carmel.

That aged man was Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali of Isfahan, a well-tested veteran of the Baha'i Faith.

His <p238> long life had been a mighty adventure of the spirit--a remarkable and rich story to tell.

In the evening of his life, in the shadow of the Mountain of God, he wrote it

down at the request of Aqa Khusraw Biman,[1] a Persian Baha'i of Zoroastrian background residing in Poona, India; and gave his book the title:

Bihjatu's-Sudur--The Delight of Hearts.

Aqa Khusraw had it published in India, in the year 1913.

The odyssey of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali does not merely delight the heart; it stirs the soul. [1.

Aqa Khusraw kept a hotel in Poona close to the railway station.

It was called the National Hotel and was the best in the town.

Many Baha'i functions of early days took place in that hotel.

The present writer has vivid recollections of the dignified, kindly gentleman to whom the National Hotel belonged. (See illustration, p.

260.)] In the Public Record Office in London documents are deposited that touch upon a wondrous episode in the life of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali: his arrest in Cairo in the company of a number of his fellow-believers and their banishment to the Sudan.

The archives of Yale University in the United States likewise contain documents that further expose the malignancy of those who were responsible for the banishment of those Baha'is.

Some time towards the end of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Adrianople, when the insubordination of Subh-i-Azal and his coterie of mischief-makers had already moved to a climax, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali attained the presence of Baha'u'llah.

He stayed for seven months in that uneasy city.

Then, he was directed to Istanbul to take charge of communications.

However, before long circumstances made him desirous of a change of residence, and Baha'u'llah instructed him to go to Egypt, and to be very circumspect.

In a Tablet revealed soon after, addressed to him, Baha'u'llah clearly presaged the perils that awaited him.

On the same boat which took Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and his companion, Mirza Husayn, to Egypt there was also another Baha'i, Haji Ja'far-i-Tabrizi, travelling in commercial pursuits.

He was the same dedicated man, who, later in Adrianople, cut his throat when he learned that the Ottoman authorities had decided to exclude him from the group of the Baha'is who were to be banished with Baha'u'llah.

However, on this boat Haji Ja'far and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali were not to show any sign that they had known each other in the past, and their transactions and treatment of one another were to be entirely on the basis of commercial clients: sellers and <p239> buyers of goods.

But, when Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali reached Egypt, he found his compatriots there very hostile and suspicious, for Persians of Istanbul had done their worst.

The accusations which they had levelled against Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali were both ludicrous and enormous; of course they were accusations which stemmed from the fact that he was a Baha'i.

He had been told by Baha'u'llah to be very discreet, but now he realized that he must seek a middle course between any attempt at concealment of his faith, which was pointless, impossible and derogatory, and a bold assertion of it in the face of solid, fanatical and blind opposition.

And he found that middle course and won the hearts of his prejudiced, hostile compatriots.

He told them that they had been sadly misinformed: it was totally untrue that he and his co-religionists had denied the Holy Prophet of Islam and His illustrious Book; he and his co-religionists believed in Muhammad and the Qur'an with the whole intensity of their souls.

It was equally untrue, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali assured those Persians of Egypt, that he and his co-religionists had assumed the appellations that fell exclusively within the domain of the Imams of the House of Muhammad.

They believed in the Holy Imams and would never brook any disrespect towards them.

He and his co-religionists, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali asserted, were forbidden to engage in futile verbal disputes.

They presented what they had to present with love, with compassion, with understanding.

Let us recall what Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali told Edward Granville Browne, at Isfahan in 1888, two years before Browne visited 'Akka and witnessed the power and the majesty that emanated from the person of Baha'u'llah.

Browne wrote: ...I learned ... that he ... was one of the chief missionaries of the new faith, for which he had suffered stripes, imprisonment, and exile more than once.

I begged him to tell me what it was that had made him ready to suffer these things so readily. 'You must go to Acre,' he replied, 'to understand that.'

'Have you been to Acre?' I said, 'and if so, what did you see there?' 'I have been there often,' he answered, 'and what I saw was a man perfect in humanity.' More than this he would not say (A Year Amongst the Persians, pp.

229-30) Having disarmed the adversaries, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali could, then, consort with his compatriots in amity and mutual respect.

He <p240> says in his autobiography that he and his companion, Mirza Husayn, were oftentimes invited to the homes of the notables of the Persian community.

He gained not only good friends for the Faith which he professed, but eventually he led some of them to give their own allegiance to that Faith.

Haji Muhammad-Hasan-i-Kaziruni became a Baha'i but did not avow it publicly.

Haji Mirza Javad-i-Shirazi, who had known the Bab as a young boy and had met Him when He was engaged in trading, opened his heart to Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and spoke admiringly of the martyred Prophet, Whom he had encountered in His early youth.

Haji Mirza Muhammad-Rafi' was another prominent member of the Persian community in Egypt, who became 'truthfully attracted and strivingly friendly'.

But the case which was indeed miraculous was that of Haji Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirazi.

He was a merchant in Mansuriyyih, very wealthy but miserly, seventy years old.

Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashani had told him of the Baha'i Faith, but Haji Abu'l-Qasim had paid scant attention to what he had heard.

Now, meeting Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali he became a changed man.

For twenty-odd years he had lived away from his family who were in Shiraz, leading a solitary, miserly existence in a caravanserai.

When he fearlessly and openly espoused the Cause of Baha'u'llah, he sent Siyyid Husayn to Shiraz to bring his family out to Egypt and wedded his daughter to him.

As we shall presently see, this marital union caused a stir and a good deal of acrimonious correspondence between the Persian and the British authorities.

Next, Haji Abu'l-Qasim applied to Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, Persian ambassador in Istanbul, specifically for a passport which should take him without hindrance to Adrianople, to the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Haji Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirazi had, indeed, attained second birth.

As it happened, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali's sojourn in Egypt coincided with Haji Mirza Safa's periodic visits.

Baha'u'llah had warned Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali that he would meet that self-styled murshid and to be on his guard.[1] Haji Mirza Safa was a chameleon and changing colour came easily to him.

It was known that he had the ear of the Persian ambassador in Istanbul.

Although his share of mischief in plotting against Baha'u'llah was undeniable, Haji Mirza Safa now began associating with Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali in good rapport, even going to the length of praising Baha'u'llah in tones of awe and wonderment.

But it soon became evident that the man was indeed false, and that he had his hand in the oppression which soon overtook Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali.

Nevertheless, only a few short months later when Nabil-i-A'zam was detained in Cairo and thrown into prison, it was the anger and the intervention of Haji Mirza Safa which brought about his release from the clutches of the Persian consul-general and his transference to a more salubrious place in Alexandria. [1.

See Balyuzi, Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, pp.

198-201 and 481-2. (Ed.)] In all these cases, the real villain was Haji Mirza Hasan Khan, the consul-general of Iran.

His was the false heart, pulsating with greed, replete with envy.

All that he cared for was how to fleece his fellow-countrymen, how to break those who were defenceless.

To begin with he showed every manner of friendliness to Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali.

There was a certain Haji Mirza Husayn, an engraver of Shiraz [writes this veteran of the Baha'i Faith], whose faith, affiliation, avocation and path consisted of worldly pleasures and pursuits, of good food and good bedding; and to attain these ends he would sacrifice everything else.

The Consul made use of this man covertly to frighten away the Persians so that they should cease consorting with me, while he himself would be associating with me in a friendly manner, simulating sincerity and truthfulness, to learn who were meeting me in secret.

One month passed, and the Persians stopped associating with me openly.

But at nightfall some came, either singly, or two by two; many of them avowed their belief [in this Faith] and did not speak falsely.

Then the Consul and the engraver thought of provoking mischief and arresting me, together with the other believers.

But in Egypt there was freedom of conscience and religion, and they could not lay their hands on anyone in the name of faith and belief.

Satanic motives and self-ridden thoughts made the Consul and the engraver concoct a plan... (Bihjatu's-Sudar, p.

91) The plan was to inveigle Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali into believing that Haji Mirza Hasan Khan really wished to investigate and know the truth.

The engraver, an ingenious hypocrite, set about encouraging and persuading him to believe that, and to this end meetings were arranged in the house of the engraver himself.

Then, Haji Mirza Hasan Khan twice visited Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali in the latter's house, accompanied by the engraver.

He was all friendliness, expressing his disgust in regard to the attitude and behaviour of the people.

And apparently Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali believed that his protestations were genuine.

Next, the Haji writes about another hypocrite, a dervish from <p242> Kashan, named Darvish Hasan.

And he, too, succeeded in deceiving Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, for he had played his game well and gained the Haji's confidence.

As the Haji writes, Darvish Hasan had made himself an intermediary between the Consul, the engraver and their intended victim.

Every day he would come to the Haji with accounts (of his own fabrication) of what the Consul and the engraver had said or done, and would do the same with the others in regard to Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali.

Whereas when consorting with the Baha'is he would avow ardently his belief in their Faith, when meeting the Consul and the engraver he would never pretend that he was a Baha'i, and they took it that the dervish was just attempting to be discreet.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali then writes of Haji Mirza Safa's dissimulation.

That self-styled murshid claimed that he had known the Bab during the days of His sojourn in Bushihr, and had been greatly impressed by Him.

And when he had heard, he said, that a young Siyyid of Shiraz had raised a call, he was certain that this Siyyid could be none other than the young merchant whom he had met in Bushihr.

He told Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali that before long he had come across the Ahsanu'l-Qisas (or Qayyumu'l-Asma', the Bab's commentary on the Surih of Joseph) and also the commentary on the Surih of Kawthar; and knowing that the Bab had received no formal education, he could not but believe that whatever flowed from the pen of that young Siyyid was divinely inspired.

He had been to Tabriz, he averred, to attain the presence of the Bab, but many difficulties and hindrances arose, barring him from his object.

Haji Mirza Safa even went to the length of avowing that the Advent of the Bab was the precursor to the Advent of Baha'u'llah.

And he visited Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali several times.

But the Haji had been forewarned.

The man, amongst many of the learned and the erudite, whom Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali found to be truly outstanding was Mirza Ja'far Aqa: a philosopher of immense learning and knowledge, possessed of such eloquence and power of speech as Haji Mirza Safa could never hope to match.

He had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Adrianople and given Him his allegiance.

Mirza Ja'far Aqa was particularly enchanted by the Most Great Branch, the

eldest Son of Baha'u'llah, and considered himself to be truly the servant of that 'Mystery of God' (Sirru'llah).

Of others in Egypt there was Shafi' Effendi, a Sufi murshid, who had his own hermitage and conclave of dervishes, and was led to embrace the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Haji <p243> Mirza Haydar-'Ali states that after what happened to him personally, Shafi' Effendi could no longer live in Egypt and had to leave everything and go away.

Still, there was another Sufi murshid of the Mawlavis, who had come very close to the Faith of Baha'u'llah, a man of great influence.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali had high hopes, he writes, to establish firm contacts with the Egyptians through his good offices.

But then the axe fell and the treacherous Haji Mirza Hasan Khan, the consul-general of Iran, wielded that axe whereby all ties were sundered.

After the remove of more than a century, that which endures is the shining example of the 'Angel of Mount Carmel', and all that remains of Haji Mirza Khan is a name coupled with infamy.

It was the night of the 21st day of Ramadan, the eve of the anniversary of the martyrdom of 'Ali Ibn 'Ali-Talib, the first Imam, a night held holy by the Shi'his--and not revered by them alone.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes:

The Consul invited me to visit him that night in his house.

All the Persians, he said, are engaged this night with prayer and meditation until dawn, even the servants of the Consulate go away.

There would be no one about, he stated, to cause us concern, and we would have the whole night to consort and to talk.

There was a man, irreligious, inclined to mysticism, eloquent, of good conversation, knowledgeable, who repudiated all faiths.

He had known me in Iran and felt kindly towards me.

He came to Egypt and heard of the Cause of God and claimed: 'I will answer them, I will prove their falsity.' Some people, to satisfy their own understanding and to test him and me, brought him to my home.

When he saw me, he told the intermediary: 'I am neither a believer in this Cause, nor in the previous Causes, but I have seen this man and know that I cannot stand up to him in any respect.

To say I do not give way and to behave unjustly, should it confound those who are present, would firstly neither confound him, nor secondly, confound the one who disputes with him.

And to act in this manner is far removed from equity, courtesy, wisdom, generosity and humanity.' When the Consul offered me that invitation, this man [whose name Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali does not divulge] said: 'Going to the house of the Consul is a rash act and inadvisable, because should the Consul wish to harm thee and detain thee and inflict an injury on thee, he cannot possibly act against thee, Egypt enjoying freedom as she does, unless under the pretence of friendly invitation he gets thee into his own home and under his roof and beneath the flag of his government.

Then, whatever the accusation that he levels against thee, whatever the harm that he causes thee, neither the Egyptian government, nor any other government can question him and take him to task.

Moreover, you have no one to <p244> complain to other governments and stand up to the Consul.' I put down his warning to irresolution, wild imaginings and lack of assurance. (Bihjatu's-Sudar, pp.

95-96) But this unnamed man, truly discerning, knew his Consul better than did Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who fell into the trap set for him by Haji Mirza Hasan Khan.

A few lines later, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali adds: 'That irreligious man, whose name was Aqa Karim, now I have remembered it...' Such are the freshness and spontaneity in the autobiographical writing of the Haji which add immensely to its charm and interest.

Then Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali records the contents and some verses of a Tablet of Baha'u'llah, addressed to him from Adrianople, in which he is told of perils awaiting him.

Thus had Baha'u'llah addressed him:

We hear thy cry and supplication at thy remoteness from the Dawning-Place of Lights.

Be patient and do not bewail thy plight.

Be content with that which God hath ordained for thee.

He, verily, payeth the due recompense of those who are patient.

Hast thou not seen My incarceration, My affliction, My injury, My suffering?

Follow, then, the ways of thy Lord, and among His methods is the suffering of His well-favoured servants.

Let nothing grieve thee.

Put thy trust in thy Lord.

He shall verily confirm thee, draw thee nigh unto Him and grant thee victory.

Should affliction overtake thee in My path and abasement in My name, rejoice and be of the thankful.

Thus have We imparted unto thee the word of truth so that when calamities descend upon thee, thy feet may not slip and thou shalt be as firm and steadfast as a mountain in the Cause of thy Lord... (Bihjatu's-Sudar, pp.

96-7) Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali had shown this Tablet to many, including Aqa Karim.

Trying to dissuade him from accepting the invitation of the Consul, Aqa Karim reminded him of that Tablet and the unmistakable warning which it conveyed.

But Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was not to be dissuaded.

On the appointed night (the eve of the anniversary of the martyrdom of 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib), he, accompanied by Mirza Husayn and Darvish Hasan, went to the house of the Persian consul-general.

The hypocritical Haji Mirza Hasan Khan received his guests with apparent joy and open arms.

They sat down to talk and enjoy refreshments.

Then, nearing the dawn, the Consul got up and retired to his private quarters, without uttering a word of farewell.

And shortly after, his guests were told that they could go home and a lantern was ready for them.

But they soon found themselves surrounded and led away to imprisonment.

They had indeed walked into a trap.

Thus did nine years of captivity begin for the 'Angel of Mount Carmel'.

Describing their capture, he writes:

Such behaviour caused astonishment.

What did this mean, subsequent to all that kindness and expression of kindness?

In any case we rose up to depart.

Only one lantern was needed, but every few steps that we took, more lanterns and more men appeared, until some thirty to forty men, like wolves, encircled me and the other two, and all of a sudden each one of us was seized by eight or nine men, as if we were Rustams[1] and men of war.

We were carried in such a way to the prison they had prepared that nowhere were our feet touching the ground.

In that prison they put chains round our necks and our feet were fettered.

Then they disrobed us and took away our clothes, and left nothing undone or unsaid in the way of beatings and abuse.

But, praise to God, I was very happy.

Day had dawned when they left us and bolted and locked the door of our prison.

There we were all alone:

Mirza Husayn, Darvish Hasan and myself.

When I spoke with joy and gratitude of our plight, I found that Mirza Husayn was somewhat unhappy and discontented, while Darvish Hasan was utterly distressed and unresponsive.

I managed to comfort Mirza Husayn to a degree. (Bihjatu's-Sudar, p. 98) [1.

The legendary hero of ancient Iran, immortalized by the Shahnamih of Firdawsi.] However, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes, Darvish Hasan began to show the nature of his duplicity.

When the time came for breaking the fast, in the evening the Consul's servants brought the prisoners tea and some food.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali remarks on the abusive language and the impertinence of the Consul's minions.

So insulting and so insolent they were, he writes, that the food which they served tasted venomous to the palates of the three men, held unjustifiably and illegally in custody.

He goes on to say:

They went to our house and brought everything we had to the Consul.

Of Writings, Tablets, best products and specimens of calligraphy, and fine valuables, the Consul, Mirza Hasan Khan of Khuy, took possession himself.

What was left the others grabbed.

Then they brought some old clothes and bedding most of which were not ours, insisting that they were.

We made no enquiry regarding other things, because it was obvious that they had helped themselves to everything.

We only said that those old clothes and bedding did not belong to us.

Whereupon they so maltreated us, so mocked and reproved us, that we regretted having said anything to them.

Next they forced me to write a receipt and put my seal to it, declaring that all the goods and chattels in my house had been given to me except Books and Writings.

They wrote that document in the way they wanted, told me to copy it and seal it, and insisted that the other two should sign it as well.

Then it was found that Darvish Hasan was illiterate.

They intended that this document should serve <p246> as a positive proof to my ownership of those Books and Writings.

Having procured what they wanted, they proceeded to put those Books and Writings before the Egyptian authorities, indicating that He [Baha'u'llah] was claiming Lordship and Divinity and that He had instituted a new religion.

Coupled with these statements were the same sorts of calumnies and insinuations that people have always levelled against the Manifestation of the Light, whenever He has appeared.

They told the authorities that these were the men who had intended to assassinate His Majesty the Shah of Iran, and, having failed to carry out their purpose, were now intent on murdering His Highness the Khedive and taking possession of Egypt.

And it is certain that they have accomplices, people who are like-minded:

Egyptians, Persians and Turks in other countries...

With these accusations they beguiled the Khedive, who became apprehensive and frightened.

Thus it was that the Consul was empowered to seize anyone whom he knew to be of this Faith.

From the third day onward they laid hands on anyone who had been consorting with me and put him in gaol.

In Mansurah, they arrested Haji Abu'l-Qasim.

When they were about to fasten him with chains, this pure-hearted, aged man took the chain with both hands and kissed it.

And on his lips were the words: 'Bismi'llahi'l-Bahiyyi'l-Abha' [In the Name of the God of Glory, the Most Glorious].

They had prepared a place near my prison to receive these later detainees.

The Consul had some three hundred men arrested, Persians and others, even Christians and Persian Jews.

It came to my ears that he had covertly sent for a number of Egyptians, asking them for what reason they had visited my house.

These men would have to bribe him to shut his mouth and stop his reporting them to the Egyptian authorities.

We could hear the conversation of the people brought in.

In any case we were very happy because our captivity and imprisonment had come to us in the path of God. (Bihjatu's-Sudar, pp.

99-100) However, it is apparent that the behaviour and the talk of Darvish Hasan caused Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali great distress at times.

And so did the abusive and insulting language which the ruffians and rascals in the service of the Consul used, whenever they came to attend to the needs of the prisoners.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali goes on to say:

One night, he [the Consul] invited a number of prominent Persians and grandees of Egypt to a sumptuous festivity, and sent for me to be brought to that assemblage, in chains, with hands tied.

As soon as I entered there, God is my witness, I saw in my mind's eye a renewal of the court of Ibn-Ziyad[1] in Kufih and the hauling in of the prisoners of Karbila.

They wanted to keep me standing while firing questions at me.

I salaamed and sat down. (Bihjatu's-Sudar, p.

101) [1.'Ubaydu-llah Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Kufih under Yazid, the second Umayyad caliph, who was greatly instrumental in encompassing the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, the third Imam.] <p247> And Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali nonplussed the deceitful Consul further still.

He himself began addressing the Consul and his guests, declaring first that it had always been the destiny of those who had followed the Light of God to suffer darts and torment, affliction and captivity, hardship and imprisonment in the path of their Faith.

Then turning to the guests of the Consul, he told them: 'Ask this man', indicating Haji Mirza Hasan Khan, the Consul, 'what wrong-doing, what wickedness he discovered in me, what plotting, what transgression he uncovered, to subject me to this treatment.' Haji Mirza Hasan Khan of Khuy knew that he was beaten and signalled to his minions to take Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali away.

Another day, the Consul, still smarting under the defeat which he had suffered, but still as vindictive as ever, took a number of the people of Adharbayjan, pilgrims on their way to Mecca, into the prison, and 'in order to show them', as Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali puts it, 'his power and authority', as soon as he came in, gave the prisoner a blow with his walking-stick and told him: 'Speak the truth.

What is your name?' to which query he received the answer: 'Haydar-'Ali.

'But', said the Consul, 'you have been called by other names, such as Gabriel, Katib-i-Vahy (the Scribe of Revelation), Amira'l-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful).' I said that I had never applied these designations to myself; someone else must have done that.

The Consul affirmed that.

Then I said that whoever had related that had not mentioned his name. 'But I know his name: it is Satan, because Satan leads you to evil deeds and enormities, and to speak against people about matters that you do not

comprehend.' [See Qur'an 2:164.] Now, I was hit by a man who said: 'Are you insulting the ambassador?' Next, they brought a man to the prison who demanded from me his brother's clothes.

He said that his brother had given me his clothes to keep for him.

Then he mentioned his brother's name.

I said that I did not know that man, and knew nothing about his clothes.

He became rude and aggressive, but as soon as the Consul's men went away, he kissed me and said: 'I am 'Abdu'llah-i-Najafabadi; I have attained the Presence [of Baha'u'llah].

Now I have come here to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

I heard of your detention, and knew that you had been robbed of everything.

I had two Ottoman pounds and wanted to give them to you.' (Bihjatu's-Sudar, pp.

101-2) Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali then relates the story of that intrepid Baha'i of Najafabad.

Aqa 'Abdu'llah had found that the only way to meet the prisoners was to make up the fictitious account of his brother's clothes.

He stayed with Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali for nearly <p248> six hours .

Then the Consul's men came and took him away.

At Jiddah, Aqa 'Abdu'llah met Haji Mirza Safa, the Sufi murshid whom Baha'u'llah had mentioned to Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, and entered his service.

Other Persians there told the murshid that the man whom he had taken into his service was a 'Babi' and had been to Adrianople.

When questioned, Aqa 'Abdu'llah readily admitted that everything said about him was correct, and stated bravely that he had never failed the murshid in serving him.

Haji Mirza Safa had no complaint on that account, and asked Aqa 'Abdu'llah what he had seen in Adrianople.

He replied: 'Whatever I had heard about the Prophets in the past, I found there.' Then Haji Mirza Safa said: 'Why is it that so many of the learned, the divines, the philosophers have not seen it and you have?' Aqa 'Abdu'llah was ready with his answer.

The same had happened when Muhammad came; men of rank and learning failed to recognize Him, but Bilal, an Ethiopian slave, then a shepherd, a seller of dates, and Salman-i-Farsi (the Persian) did, and came to believe in Him.

The murshid was nonplussed, increased his wages and told him to go away and not to visit Medina.

Aqa 'Abdu'llah left quietly but he went to Medina, notwithstanding.

When he was reproached by Haji Mirza Safa, Aqa 'Abdu'llah very politely pointed out that visiting the Shrine of the Prophet took preference.

Then the murshid took him back into his service, and tried to win him away from his Faith.

But, as Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has it: ...he [Aqa 'Abdu'llah] said: 'The likes of us have to bear the burden and toil, so that you and those like you should live in safety and comfort.' [The murshid] asked then: 'What is it that makes you and those like you so brave and so ready with your answers?' He [Aqa 'Abdu'llah] replied: 'If ye be of the truthful then crave for death [Qur'an 2:

88].

Stating the truth requires no deliberation, no premeditation, no precaution.' May my life be a sacrifice to his power of constancy. (Bihjatu's-Sudar, p.

103) Then Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali relates what he heard a man accused of theft say about the 'Babis'.

The room where he was kept was next door to the main room where all others were housed, and he could hear the conversation of the people there.

This man had spoken at length of the 'Babis', recalled all their past history and had concluded that nothing at all can utterly destroy them.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali says that that poor man was severely beaten and tortured for having sided with the 'Babis'.

The Haji records that before long the treatment to which they [the <p249> Baha'i prisoners] were subjected was completely changed.

Their food was restricted to half a loaf of bread and the water they were given to drink was so little that they suffered greatly from thirst. 'We were so enfeebled', he writes, 'that we could hardly move ourselves.' At this juncture the two Ottoman pounds, which Aqa 'Abdu'llah had given to the Haji, came to their aid.

Darvish Hasan was all the while whining and reviling the Haji so as to win favours from the Consul's lackeys.

All this time, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali relates, the Consul was busy arresting people and fining them--sums varying from a few pounds to five hundred; before releasing them he would send them to spit on the Haji.

Some of these wretched men felt so ashamed that they could not raise their heads to look at him, but they were forced to do so and to spit and curse.

Thus days passed.

Then one night, as the Haji relates: ...six o'clock after sunset, they came

and took Darvish Hasan away.

Next, they came for Mirza Husayn; and finally they took me away.

In the Consulate there was an array of chairs, occupied by the Consul and members of the Egyptian police.

A number of hell's lackeys were also in evidence, as well as a number of men chained whose hands were tied together.

The Consul pointed me out and said, 'This man is the source of all mischief, he is their Gabriel and their Prophet.' Then I was handed over to the Egyptian police.

My hands were tied very tightly behind my back.

Praise be to God, that in the path of His love and for the sake of His name, they put heavy chains on my neck.

They wrote down the names of each one of us, and they also recorded our nativity and the names of our fathers, and these were given to the police.

We were seven Persians and an Egyptian teacher of English.

Because I was teaching him Persian, this Egyptian was accused of being friendly towards me.

Amongst those detained were 'Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Zanjani and Hashrim-i-Kashani, outwardly my servants.

They were my friends and spiritual brothers.

Another one of those, detained was Haji Abu'l-Qasim-i-Isfahani.

They had taken Mirza Ja'far Aqa to task for being friendly towards me and having been seen in my company, but had been properly told off.

Shafi' Effendi, who was a murshid and had a hermitage, found it no longer possible to live in Cairo.

Haji Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirazi had also been detained.

They made him pay a thousand pounds to gain his freedom.

He paid it and did not recant faith.

He also gave ten pounds to a Christian to give to me.

That man came to Sudan and gave me the money.

The Haji passed away soon after.

His son-in-law, Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashi, was a British subject, and everywhere he spoke of the Consul's misdeeds.

He met a martyr's death at the instigation of the Consul.

There was no one to take up the prosecution and the culprit went free.

(Bihjatu's-Sudar, pp.

105-6) <p250> The case of Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashi became a cause celebre, when his nationality was being hotly debated.

Dispatches kept in the Public Record Office in London, as well as a number of documents belonging to the Persian Embassy which are now preserved in the archives of Yale University, provide details of the controversies aroused by the chicanery and greed of Haji Mirza Hasan Khan, the Persian consul-general in Cairo. (See Momen, chap.

15.) * * * * * [Electronic editor's note:

In the Foreward to this book, p. x, Moojan Momen writes: '...the present writer has contributed short accounts... [The] additions are clearly indicated in the text ... where the added material follows a line of asterisks.'] As for Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, he and his six fellow-Baha'is were exiled to Khartum in the Sudan in conditions of the greatest hardship.

When they first arrived there, the minds of the Government officials and of the people had been so poisoned against them that they were harshly treated.

Later, however, as their true characters became known, they won the respect and admiration of everyone in Khartum from the Governor down.

After their exile had lasted nine years, Baha'u'llah succeeded in sending one of the Arab believers, Haji Jasim-i-Baghdadi, to Khartum with messages and greetings for them.

A short while later, in 1877, General Gordon was made Governor of the city, and by petitioning him the Baha'i exiles were able to obtain permission to leave.

From Khartum they made their way to Mecca and from there to 'Akka.

Here Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali spent several months, being frequently in the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Then he was instructed to leave for Iran.

For almost thirty years he travelled around Iran, visiting Baha'i communities and teaching the Faith.

On several occasions, both during the lifetime of Baha'u'llah and during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry, he visited the Holy Land, and remained there for varying periods of time.

He also travelled in Egypt, India, Caucasia and Turkistan.

Finally, in about 1903, he came to settle permanently in the Holy Land, where he died in Haifa on 27 December 1920.

Truly, in his long years of steadfast and uncomplaining service, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, the Angel of Mount Carmel, had fulfilled this injunction laid upon him by Baha'u'llah (Tablets, p.

246):

We have brought thee into being to serve Me, to glorify My Word and to proclaim My Cause.

Centre thine energies upon that wherefor thou hast been created by virtue of the Will of the supreme Ordainer, the Ancient of Days. <p251> 19 The Great Mujtahid Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, known as Mirzay-i-Shirazi, was the greatest mujtahid of his day.

He was considered the sole Marja'u't-Tuqlid for the entire Shi'ih world, which meant that all the Shi'ih in every country looked to him as their spiritual leader and as their guide and exemplar in matters of application of the Holy Law of Islam.

The father of this great man was Mir Mahmud-i-Khushnvis, a resident of Shiraz famed for his calligraphy in the Nasta'liq style.

He was a paternal cousin of the father of the Bab.

Mirzay-i-Shirazi was born on 5 May 1815 in Shiraz and received his initial education there.

He was later sent to Isfahan which was at that time the foremost city of learning in Iran.

In about 1843 he travelled to 'Iraq but at first used to return frequently to Isfahan, until he began to attend the classes of Shaykh Murtiday-i-Ansari.

It was then that he decided to settle in 'Iraq.

Little by little he became known as the most prominent student of Shaykh Murtida, who was acknowledged as the leading mujtahid of the Shi'ih world.

When Shaykh Murtida died in 1864, Mirzay-i-Shirazi succeeded him as teacher of his circle of students.

Over the next few years, his stature among the other 'ulama increased to the point that when Siyyid Husayn-i-Turk died in 1882, Mirzay-i-Shirazi became acknowledged as the sole Marja'u't-Taqlid for the Shi'ih world.

He is also called Hujjatu'l-Islam (the Proof of Islam), Ayatu'llah (the Sign of God) and Mujaddid (Renewer, i.e. of Islam) by his biographers.

In 1875, Mirzay-i-Shirazi transferred his residence from Najaf to Samarra and remained there until his death.

In 1891-2 there occurred the famous protest against the Tobacco Regie.

As a result of a fatwa which is said to have been issued by Mirzay-i-Shirazi, the Government of Iran and the foreign diplomatic establishment were amazed to observe an almost complete cessation of the use of tobacco in Iran.

The Shah was forced to capitulate and the tobacco concession was cancelled.

<p252> Mirzay-i-Shirazi died on 20 February 1895 and his body was carried from Samarra to Najaf, where it was buried.

The story of Mirzay-i-Shirazi does not end there, however.

It has an interesting aspect from the point of view of the Baha'i Faith.

For, unknown to all, Mirzay-i-Shirazi had since his youth been a believer in the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

He only chose to reveal this towards the end of his life and then only to a relative, Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri 'd-Din-i-Afnan, who was an Afnan on his mother's side, but whose father was a paternal cousin of Mirzay-i-Shirazi.

The events leading up to this interview have been recorded by Aqa Mirza Aqa's son, Mirza Habibu'llah Afnan, and the rest of this chapter is a translation of his account. (Footnotes are by the translator.

Ed.) When, in 1311 [1893-4], the mother of Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Afnan [Sahibih-Sultan Bigum] with her daughter Fatimih Bigum, who is the mother of the late Muvaqqari'd-Dawlih,[1] were visiting the Holy Shrines in 'Iraq, they went to the house of Mirza Hujjatu'l-Islam [Mirzay-i-Shirazi] in order to introduce themselves to him. [1.

The father of Mr Balyuzi: (MM)] After the formalities, the mother said: 'I am the wife of the late Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim and this is my daughter.

We would ask for your special blessing and favour.' 'Which Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim?' he asked. 'The maternal uncle of Aqa Mirza Aqa,' she replied.

'Which Aqa Mirza Aqa?' 'The son of the late Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin.' Then he remembered who it was and said: 'The Aqa Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin who lived near the gate of the Masjid-i-Jami?' 'Yes,' she replied, and he was overjoyed. 'Where is Aqa Mirza Aqa now?' he then asked. 'He was living in Egypt, but it appears from what he has written that he now intends to return to Shiraz.' 'Do you know whether he has already travelled and reached Shiraz or not?' 'He has still not arrived.' 'How much longer are you intending to remain at the Holy Shrines?' 'We will stay for perhaps fifteen more days and when we have completed our pilgrimage, we will return to Bushihr.'

<p253> 'Please remember to do the following when you return to Bushihr.

If you find that Aqa Mirza Aqa has already passed through that town and is on his way to Shiraz, then let it be.

But if he arrives while you are in Bushihr, please say to him from me: "Be sure to come to the Holy Shrines and visit me, for it has been many years that I have been deprived of meeting members of my family."

And if you leave Bushihr before he arrives, leave a message for him with a trustworthy person that it is necessary for me to see him.' (The late Hujjatu'l-Islam had family ties with the late Aqa Mirza Aqa, that is to say their fathers were paternal cousins and were also related to the father of the Bab.

It was for this reason that he was trying to arrange this meeting.) The days of the pilgrimage of those two ladies at the Holy Shrines drew to a close and they went to bid farewell to Hujjatu'l-Islam.

They said to him: 'We are taking our leave today.' He urged them once more not to forget his message to Aqa Mirza Aqa and to ensure that when he came to the Holy Shrines, he would come and see him.

After completing their pilgrimage the ladies returned to Bushihr and on the very same day the ship carrying Aqa Mirza Aqa arrived at Bushihr.

They met each other and the ladies conveyed the message of Hujjatu'l-Islam.

Aqa Mirza Aqa has said: 'I was very hesitant as to whether I should go and visit or not.

Eventually, I decided that I ought to go.

The same ship took me on to Basrah and from Basrah I travelled to Baghdad.

I sent a letter to Hujjatu'l-Islam saying: "In conformity with your wishes, your message has been forwarded to me [in which] you had stressed that when I reached Iraq I should visit you.

I am now at Baghdad.

Whenever you appoint a time I shall come to see you." 'I sent the letter through one of the Arab Baha'is and instructed him to identify himself as my messenger and then deliver it.

When the letter reached him and he realized I was in Baghdad, he sent the following reply: "'O Light of my eyes!

Dear and honoured one!

Your letter was received.

Since at the present time there is much coming and going of pilgrims, please remain in Baghdad for fifteen days even though it may be an inconvenience to you.

Then at the expiry of the fifteen days, come here so that we can meet.

I am very eager to meet you.

I am sending this reply with your messenger." 'After seeing this reply, I remained in Baghdad, according to the <p254> instructions, for fifteen days.

At the expiry of that time, I set out to Samarra with a number of the Arab Baha'is.

Upon our arrival, the Arabs found a place for us to stay and we settled in there. 'The following morning I called on His Honour and found an old man with a radiant face, sitting with pillows around him on which he was resting.

The people who were being admitted to his presence would kiss his hand, sit in his presence for an hour or so, and then be dismissed.

I, like the others, went forward, kissed his hand and introduced myself.

He looked at me and enquired after my health.

He asked: "Where are you staying?"

I did not know but the Arab Baha'is who were with me gave the address.

He did not speak to me any more nor pay any attention to me, and after sitting for more than one hour, I got up and again without paying any attention to me, he said "Farewell!" I was annoyed at his ignoring me and was not in a good mood. "What a thing to do,"

I said to myself. "I have caused myself a lot of trouble for no reason and have come here from Bushihr to no purpose."

I was very offended.

I arrived at the place where I was staying and said to my companions, "Let us make preparations to leave at first light tomorrow." 'At the time of the call to prayer, which was two hours before sunrise, I was up and drinking tea, the others were busy collecting their belongings, it was just getting light and I was looking from the shutters towards the gate of the house when I saw an akhund [divine] coming.

When he reached the door of the house, he called out to one of the Baha'is whose name was 'Ali. 'Ali went over to speak to him and he said, "Say that I have a message from His Honour the Mirza, which I want to convey to Aqa Mirza Aqa." 'Ali conveyed the message and I went over and spoke to the akhund.

He said, "His Honour, the Hujjatu'l-Islam, has asked that you come to see him alone, without your companions." I decided to go, but my companions said: "We cannot let you go alone.

Anything could happen." "These thoughts are wrong,"

I replied. "He must want to see me about something since he has specially sent for me." In the end my companions agreed and I set out without them.

The name of the akhund was Shaykh Hasan and he was one of the intimates of Hujjatu'l-Islam.

I went with him until we reached the door of the house of His Honour the Mirza, where I had been the <p255> previous day.

But he carried on round the corner. "The house of His Honour the Mirza is here, O Shaykh,"

I said to him; "where are you going?" "This is the biruni [outer apartments]," he replied. "He has instructed that you be taken in through the door of the andaruni [inner apartments] which are private." He went on another twenty paces and opened a door.

In the corner of the hallway there was a room.

He opened the door and held up the curtain.

I went in and found His Honour, the Hujjatu'l-Islam, as on the previous day, with cushions around him, lying down. 'I greeted him and he replied.

Then he said to Shaykh Hasan: "Go and make some tea and bring it.

No one is to be permitted to come here, for it is fifty years since I have seen any of my relatives.

I want one hour free from interruption to be with him.

Even the children are not to be permitted." 'After giving these instructions, he said, "Also, close the door."

And so Shaykh Hasan closed the door and left.

Then he opened his arms and embraced me.

He wept copiously and I felt so sorry for him that I began to weep too.

He sat me down next to him and poured out expressions of affection and favour.

"I know that you were annoyed at the way we met yesterday and were displeased.

I realized that you were angered.

What can I do with such people?

What can I do?

It was for this reason that I sent Shaykh Hasan to you in the early morning to bring you here so that I can meet you." 'At this moment, say& Hasan brought in the tea. "Leave it and go," he said. "Aqa Mirza Aqa will pour the tea." 'Shaykh Hasan put down the tray and left.

I poured some tea and offered it to him.

He said, "You drink it."

I declined but he insisted and so I drank the tea.

He ordered me to fill up the same cup again and he drank from it.

Then we began speaking.

He asked a few questions about where I had been during these years, what I had heard and which persons I had met.

I asked: "What sort of persons?"

He said: "Persons who have put forward claims and have caused controversy--that is to say, people with new ideas." 'I replied: "In 1294 [sic] when I travelled from Shiraz, I went to Bombay where I occupied myself trading.

Here I was friendly with and associating with Iranian and foreign merchants.

I met all types of people and we would discuss every kind of topic.

For example, I met <p256> Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Shirazi,[1] who is known as Muballigh, and he spoke of many important matters.

When I considered what he said and weighed his words justly, I could not refute them." [1.

A prominent Baha'i teacher who was responsible for the conversion of some of the Afnan family.] "Where did you go after Bombay?" "In 1305 [19 September 1887 -- September 1888], I went from Bombay to Egypt, and I remained for some time in Port Sa'id and Cairo and was in contact with all sorts of people." "Where did you go from there and whom did you meet?" "It suddenly occurred to me, from his questions, that perhaps he wanted to extract a confession from me and cause me trouble.

But I thought about this and seeing that there was no one present but myself and him, I thought it unlikely that he was planning anything.

So I decided to answer his questions cautiously. "For a time I went to visit my uncle, Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan,[2] and I met there some important people from among the notables such as Aqa Muhammad-Mustafay-i-Baghdadi[3] and others." [2.

Known as Afnan-i-Kabir, a Baha'i resident in Beirut.] [3.

One of the prominent Baha'i residents of Beirut (see chap.

20).] "What did they speak of?" "They spoke of the new cause, and whatever they said was supported by proofs from the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet [Muhammad] to such an extent that no fair-minded person could deny it.

And so I wanted very much to see Your Honour so that I could ask you what my position is according to religious law and what my moral and religious duty is.

Should they be accepted or rejected?" "God, may He be exalted, has said that the parts of the body are for the use of creation that mankind may utilize each of them.

Thus, for example, eyes are created for seeing, ears for hearing, the tongue for speech, hands for touching and feet for walking, but He has created the heart for knowing and understanding Him and has ordained it as the place of His effulgence.

He has said: 'The heart of man is the throne of the All-Merciful.' Since it is thus, Satan has no place there.

And therefore if this cause is not from God, it will have no effect on the heart and being of a man.

Whatever the heart accepts and understands must, without doubt, come from God--it will not err." "When I heard this reply of his, I became more confident and felt free to speak. <p257> "Now, my dear friend, where did you

go from Beirut?" he asked. "I went to 'Akka." He smiled and asked, "And what did you find there?" "From what point of view do you mean?" "From both the material and spiritual points of view." "From a worldly point of view, I found such majesty, power, and authority that no king or emperor could hope to rival.

And as for the spiritual realm, whatever you have heard of the previous manifestations of the power of God [i.e., the Prophets] or have seen in their books, you will find a more complete and one thousand times more mighty a demonstration of that revelation in this holy Personage.

For example, from the Holy Prophet [Muhammad] the verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed in thirty sections [juz'], gradually over a period of twenty-two years.

From this holy Being, that is to say, Baha'u'llah, in one month ten times the Holy Qur'an is revealed with the utmost correctness and eloquence for the world of humanity.

And it is such that no fair-minded man can refute it nor produce the like of it." "It is indeed so, if one be fair-minded," he replied. "I myself have seen some of these writings and they cannot be compared with the verses of previous revelations.

No, they are much more eloquent and profound." Then respectfully I asked, "When did you come to this conclusion?" He smiled and said: "Do you want to hear a confession from me then, my son?" "God forbid!

It is only because Your Eminence is the most learned of mankind that I wanted to know so as to increase the certainty in my own heart. "My dear friend!

Since you want to know, I will tell you.

I was a young man, studying at Isfahan, when the Bab came to that town.

I was present at a gathering with the Imam-Jum'ih and the theological students at the house of the late Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, Manuchihr Khan.

They were asking Him questions of every sort, testing His knowledge, and He was answering each one convincingly and with the utmost eloquence so that all of us fell into an astonished silence.

Then one of the theological students asked a question and He began to give a full reply.

That student showed himself to be unfair and recalcitrant.

His answer to that person decided me and I was convinced and understood everything.

Nor did I allow this understanding to wane. <p258> Whatever of His verses and commentaries came to hand, I read and they renewed my inner, spiritual being.

No doubt has since then entered my mind, and this outward glory that God has

granted me is on account of the fact that I approached this matter fairly and accepted this Cause." 'After hearing these words and becoming completely reassured about that holy man, I said: "Now that this blessed Cause is manifest and proven to Your Eminence and the reins of control over millions of the Shi'ite sect are in your hands, if you consider it advisable, you could make this matter public so that the people will be saved from ignorance and error and will enter the way of right guidance." ""What are you saying, my son?

These people are not fair-minded.

Is my rank higher than that of Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i or Aqa Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Barfurushi [Quddus] and Akhund Mulla Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Zanjani [Hujjat] and the others?

They would have done the same with me as they did with them.

The best thing was for me to conceal my belief.

In the meantime, I was able to perform such services that were I to tell you of them, you yourself would testify that it was right for me to conceal the matter and help the Cause." ""I would like to hear of the assistance that you have given,"

I said. ""In 1301 [sic],[1] a number of the believers were arrested by Nayibu's-Saltanih, Kamran Mirza, in Tihran and kept in prison in harsh circumstances for two years.

Every day they were interrogated and matters were made very difficult for them.

I wrote to Nasiri'd-Din Shah saying: 'Why have you, without any reason and without my authorization [fatwa], caused such harm to befall them?

It has been due to you that this Faith has spread among the peoples and countries.

The Apostle of God [i.e., Muhammad] has said: "Mankind seeks after what is forbidden."

Your prohibitions and persecutions have strengthened this cause.

You must certainly, as soon as my letter arrives, send for the prisoners, be kind to them and set them free.

And from now onwards, do not cause anyone to be killed on account of this matter.' After the arrival of my letter, Nasiri'd-Din Shah summoned the prisoners, gave them one sharafi each and set them free.

Among them was Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar [-i-Shahmirzadi, Haji Akhund], Aqa Mirza Abu'l-Fadl [-i-Gulpaygani], Haji Amin, Mashhadi 'Aliy-i-Qazvini and other important persons.

That was one of the things that I did to serve the Cause. [1.

AH 1300 was the year of these arrests, AD 12 November 1882 -- 1 November 1883.]
<p259> ""And another was when Siyyid Jamalu'd-Din-i-Asadabadi, who is known as

Afghani, was planning some mischief in Istanbul.

He had interpolated some material into the Kitab-i-Aqdas and had inserted some rubbish of his own into that book.

Among the things that he had inserted was that the mosques of Islam should be demolished and razed to the ground.

Mecca should be destroyed and Medina pulled down.

With some other things, he translated this into Turkish and gave it to Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid so that the Sultan might become angry and mischief might result therefrom.

Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid wrote an account of this book to me and asked me what should be done.

I replied: 'You have no right to interfere in such matters.

Whoever has done this has done so out of spite.

Send all such books to me.

After investigating the matter, I will decide what is to be done with them.'

Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid sent them and I had Shaykh Hasan throw them all into the river where they sank and were obliterated. "My son!

You have no idea how often the 'ulama of Iran have written to me and asked for fatwas [decrees against the Baha'is].

I have somehow managed to answer all their questions and have silenced them.

If I were to tell you it all, it would tire you.

Among them was [Mirza Hasan-i-] Ashtiyani ... from Tihran; Shaykh [Muhammad-] Baqir[1] and Shaykh [Muhammad-] Taqi[2] from Isfahan; Siyyid 'Ali-Akbar [-i-Fal-Asiri] and Shaykh Tahir-i-'Arab from Shiraz; Mulla 'Abdu'llah-i-Burujirdi from Hamadan; and others from various places.

Perhaps one hundred letters in all, and to each one I have given an answer and silenced its author." [1.

Stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as 'The Wolf'.] [2.

Son of the last-named. also called Aqa Najafi.] 'After hearing these words from the Hujjatu'l-Islam, I said: "Truly your help and assistance for this Cause have been inestimable and are worthy of praise."... Then he said: "When will you be leaving?" "My only intention was to meet you,"

I replied. "I have no other business here." "Then it is better if you go soon, since, when you arrived in Baghdad some mischief-makers came and said something to the effect that someone has come from 'Akka to Baghdad to teach.

I gave them their reply saying: 'It is Aqa Mirza Aqa, one of my cousins.

I have personally invited him to visit the Holy Places and to come and meet

me.

Do not interfere in this matter." .|bEMINENT_BAHA'IS <p260> 'We embraced and said farewell and I left.

As I left the house I found the Arab Baha'is gathered, worried, around the house of His Holiness.

When they saw me they were relieved. "What are you doing?"

I said. "We became worried because you took so long.

We were thinking all sorts of things.

Being distressed, we left our residence and gathered around the house of His Holiness waiting for you." "That was not necessary." 'I returned with my friends to our residence.

The same day we left for Baghdad and Basrah and eventually reached Bushihr.' <p261> 20 The Apostles of Baha'u'llah by Moojan Momen Because the author's intention to write biographical chapters on the nineteen Apostles of Baha'u'llah was thwarted by his death in 1980, it has fallen to the present writer to provide short accounts of the eleven Apostles not dealt with by Mr Balyuzi in this and the preceding volume.

The following are the nineteen persons designated as Apostles of Baha'u'llah by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith:[1] [1.

As mentioned in the Foreword, the first two were included in Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, and chapters about the 3rd, 6th, 7th, 9th, 13th and 19th Apostles appear in Part I of this volume.

Biographical notes for the remaining eleven Apostles form the material of this chapter.] 1.

Mirza Musa, surnamed Kalim, the only true brother of Baha'u'llah 2.

Mirza Buzurg, surnamed Badi' 3.

Siyyid Hasan, surnamed Sultanu'sh-Shuhada' (See chap.

3.) 4.

Mulla Abu'l-Hasan, surnamed Amin 5.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl (-i-Gulpaygani) 6.

Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, surnamed Varqa (See chap.

7.) 7.

Mirza Mahmud (Furughi) (See chap.

13.) 8.

Mulla 'Ali-Akbar (Haji Akhund) 9.

Mulla Muhammad, surnamed Nabil-i-Akbar (See chap.

9.) 10.

Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi (Vakilu'd-Dawlih) 11.

Mirza Muhammad-Taqi (Ibn-i-Abhar) 12.

Mulla Muhammad, surnamed Nabil-i-A'zam 13.

Shaykh Kazim, surnamed Samandar (See chap.

16.) 14.

Mirza Muhammad Mustafa 15.

Mirza Husayn, surnamed Mishkin-Qalam 16.

Mirza Hasan, surnamed Adib 17.

Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali <p262> <p263> 18.

Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, surnamed Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin 19.

Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad (Ibn-i-Asdaq) (See chap.

14.) Mulla Abu'l-Hasan, surnamed Amin Mulla Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikani, who is known as Haji Amin or Amin-i-Ilahi, was born in about the year AH 1232 (AD 21 November 1816 -- 10 November 1817) in Ardikan, a small town near Yazd.

At seventeen years of age he married into a family of Babis of the town.

He was persuaded to investigate the new religion and eventually, shortly after the martyrdom of the Bab, he declared his belief.

When news of the Declaration of Baha'u'llah came, he accepted immediately and travelled throughout Iran meeting other Babis and teaching them of the advent of Baha'u'llah.

After a time he became the assistant of Haji Shah-Muhammad Manshadi, Aminu'l-Bayan, who was the Trustee of the Huququ'llah.[1] He would travel about the country, earning his living by trading and also by acting as a writer for those who could not write.

At the same time he collected the Huququ'llah and any letters that the believers wished to forward to Baha'u'llah, and also distributed Tablets of Baha'u'llah when these were received.

He came to 'Akka while Baha'u'llah was still imprisoned in the citadel and succeeded in establishing contact with the exiles.

He was the first Baha'i from the outside world to be able to meet Baha'u'llah in 'Akka (in the Public Baths).

He returned to 'Akka on several further occasions.

When Haji Shah-Muhammad Manshadi was killed in 1880, Haji Abu'l-Hasan was appointed Trustee (Amin) of the Huququ'llah.

In 1891 he was imprisoned with Haji Akhund for three years in Tihran and

Qazvin.

In the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha he continued his travels, visiting 'Akka and Haifa on several occasions.

Towards the end of his life he resided in Tihran and Haji Ghulam-Rida, Amin-i-Amin, was appointed his assistant.

He died in 1928 and was posthumously named a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi. [1.

The 'Right of God'--a payment by believers instituted in the Kitab-i-Aqdas.]
Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani Mirza Muhammad, who is known to Baha'is as Mirza Abu'l-Fadl or Mirza Abu'l-Fada'il, was born in 1844 into a family of religious <p264> scholars in Gulpaygan.

He studied the Islamic sciences, becoming well versed in both the traditional transmitted branches of knowledge as well as the rational philosophic branches.

He studied at Karbila, Najaf and Isfahan and eventually became the head of a religious college, the Madrisiy-i-Madar-i-Shah (the religious college of the Mother of the Shah).

The story of his introduction to the Baha'i Faith through a humble blacksmith is well known to Baha'is.

The confirmation of his belief came in 1876 after a period of studying the Writings of the Faith and seeing the prophecies of Baha'u'llah come true.

His conversion led to his dismissal from his post and imprisonment for five months.

He then became the secretary of Manakji Sahib, the Zoroastrian agent in Tihran.

In December 1882 he was arrested, together with a large number of Baha'is of Tihran, and was in prison for twenty-two months.

After this he began extensive travels throughout Iran.

It was principally through his writings that the <p265> Baha'i Faith was presented to the Jews of Iran in such a way as to bring a large number of them into the Baha'i fold.

In 1888 he travelled to 'Ishqabad and later to Samarqand and Bukhara.

In 1894 he spent ten months in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 'Akka and then on the instructions of 'Abdu'l-Baha proceeded to Cairo, where he settled for a number of years and was successful in converting some of the students of the foremost institution of learning of the Sunni world, al-Azhar.

Between 1900 and 1904 he travelled to Paris and the United States where his talks and his writings enabled the nascent Baha'i communities to gain a clearer understanding of the tenets of the Faith.

He then lived in Beirut and Cairo until his death in the latter city on 21 January 1914.

Mulla 'Ali-Akbar (Haji Akhund) Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, who is known as Haji Akhund, was born in Shahmirzad in about 1842.

He was the son of a mulla of that village and after some preliminary studies in his own village, he proceeded to Mashhad to attend the religious colleges there.

In Mashhad he pursued every avenue of religious enquiry until eventually, in about 1861, he encountered the Babis and was converted.

When news of his conversion spread, the religious students rose against him and forced him to leave the town.

He returned to Shahmirzad but was eventually forced to leave there as well.

He settled in Tihiran.

There, he became so well known as a Baha'i that 'Abdu'l-Baha relates that whenever there was an outburst against the Baha'is, he would wrap his 'aba around himself and sit waiting for the guards to come and arrest him.

(Memorials of the Faithful, p.

11) He was arrested many times and is known to have been imprisoned on at least the following occasions: in 1868 on the orders of Mulla 'Ali Kani; in 1872 for seven months by Nayibu's-Saltanih; in 1882 for two years by Nayibu's-Saltanih, together with many other Tihiran Baha'is; in about 1887; and in 1891 when he was imprisoned for two years with Haji Amin.

He visited 'Akka on three occasions, in about 1873, 1888 and 1899.

He was entrusted with many important tasks, in particular the custodianship and transfer of the remains of the Bab.

He was appointed by Baha'u'llah as one of the Hands of the Cause of God and was responsible for much of the teaching work, as well as for administering the community of the Baha'is of Iran.

He died in Tihiran on 4 March 1910.

Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi (Vakilu'd-Dawlih) Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi was born in Shiraz in AH 1246 (AD 22 June 1830 -- 11 June 1831), the second son of Haji Siyyid Muhammad, the maternal uncle of the Bab.

In his youth he met the Bab both in Shiraz and Bushihr.

Then in about 1854 he settled in Yazd where he soon became one of the prominent merchants of the town.

Here he was visited by Mulla Muhammad-i-Qa'ini who spoke to him about the religion of the Bab.

His belief in the Bab was confirmed by a journey in 1857 to Baghdad where he

met Baha'u'llah.

Because of his prominence in the town of Yazd, he was asked by the Russian Government to be their Consular Agent in the town, and hence he became known as Vakilu'd-Dawlih (Representative of the Government), but Baha'u'llah named him Vakilu'l-Haqq (Representative of the True One, i.e.

God).

In those days, Iranian merchants were anxious to be consular agents of Foreign Powers, as this was one way of avoiding the <p267> arbitrary exactions of provincial governors and other government officials.

While he was still a resident of Yazd, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi purchased property in the town of 'Ishqabad in Russian Transcaspia.

This town became a refuge for Baha'is escaping from persecution in Iran, and soon there was a large Baha'i community there.

Baha'u'llah had indicated that a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar should be built in the city and later, in the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Baha'i community asked for permission to begin the building. 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote to Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi asking him to go to 'Ishqabad to supervise the work.

And so in 1900 Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi concluded all of his business affairs in Yazd and left for 'Ishqabad.

There, he not only supervised the erection of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar but paid for most of the building materials from his own funds.

Then in 1906, with the <p268> structure of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar almost complete, Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi travelled to Haifa where he was warmly received by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He remained in Haifa until his passing in 1909, and is buried in the Baha'i cemetery at the foot of Mount Carmel.

Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, Ibn-i-Abhar Mirza Muhammad-Taqi was born in Abhar, a village between Qazvi and Zanjan.

His father, who came from a family of the leading divines of Abhar, became a believer in the Bab through reading some of His writings.

Because of persecution, the family moved to Qazvin and in about 1868 became followers of Baha'u'llah.

In 1874 his father died by poison and after this Ibn-i-Abhar moved to Zanjan where he reinvigorated the Babi community, causing most of them to enter the Baha'i fold.

His activities in Zanjan, however, led to his imprisonment for fourteen months.

After his release, he travelled throughout Iran and later made a trip to the Holy Land in 1886.

He was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God in the same year and travelled extensively in Iran, Caucasia, Turkmenistan and India.

From 1890 to 1894 he was imprisoned in a dungeon in Tihran, and for a time wore the same chains as had been put on Baha'u'llah when a prisoner in Siyah-Chal.

After his release, he went to the Holy Land and then to 'Ishqabad.

In 1897 he participated in the gathering of the Hands of the Cause which led to the formation of the Central Spiritual Assembly in Tihran.

Settling in Tihran, he assisted in the establishment of the Tarbiyat Baha'i School, while his wife, Munirih Khanum, the daughter of Haji Akhund, played a major role in the founding of the Girls' School.

In 1907 he travelled through India with two American Baha'is, Harlan Ober and Hooper Harris, accompanied by Mirza Mahmud Zarqani.

His travels within Iran were extensive, and on eleven occasions he visited the Holy Land.

He passed away in 1917.

Mulla Muhammad, surnamed Nabil-i-A'zam Mulla Muhammad was born in Zarand on 29 July 1831 of humble parents.

He was a shepherd by occupation but strove hard to overcome the handicap of a meagre education.

He learnt to read the Qur'an and often went with his father to Qum where he listened to the discourses of the prominent religious figures there.

In 1847, while on a <p269> visit to his maternal uncle in the village of Rubat-Karim, Nabil overheard a conversation about the Bab and was immediately interested.

Later, through Siyyid Husayn-i-Zavari'i he was more fully informed of the Faith of the Bab and became a believer.

Nabil proceeded to Qum where Siyyid Isma'il-i-Zavari'i confirmed his belief, and together they tried to join the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi but found that they were too late.

He took up residence in Tihran in the same madrisih (religious college) as Mirza Ahmad, the transcriber of the Bab's writings, and met many of the Babis who lived in or were passing through that town, including Baha'u'llah.

At the time of the execution of the Seven Martyrs of Tihran in 1850, Nabil was persuaded to return to his home village, but later he left for Qum hoping to meet Mirza Ahmad there.

Failing to find him, Nabil proceeded to Kashan and eventually located Mirza Ahmad in Kirmanshah; he remained there until after Baha'u'llah's passage through that town in 1851.

Baha'u'llah instructed them to proceed to Tihran where they engaged themselves in transcribing and distributing the writings of the Bab, until the situation became too dangerous and Nabil returned to Zarand.

There followed the attempt on the life of the Shah in 1852 and the persecution of the Babi community to the point of its near annihilation.

During those dark days, Nabil put forward a claim to leadership of the Babi community stating that he was in receipt of Divine inspiration.

But later, when he visited Baghdad and came to recognize Baha'u'llah's station, he withdrew his claim.

From Baghdad and Adrianople, Baha'u'llah sent Nabil on numerous journeys to the Babis of Iran.

During the Adrianople years, his major task was to alert the Babis to Baha'u'llah's claim to be 'He Whom God shall make manifest'.

On one journey, he was instructed to perform the pilgrimage to the House of the Bab in Shiraz and the House of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, being the first to do this according to the laws revealed by Baha'u'llah.

From Adrianople, Nabil was sent by Baha'u'llah to Egypt on a mission which resulted in his imprisonment (see Baha'u'llah, *The King of Glory*, pp.

265-8).

When freed Nabil hurried to 'Akka, but being espied by the followers of Azal who had stationed themselves near the city-gate, he was ejected from the city.

He wandered around the countryside, living for a time on Mount Carmel and for a time in Nazareth until he was able to enter 'Akka.

He was sent by Baha'u'llah <p270> on yet another journey to Iran during which he confirmed the belief of many of the Baha'is.

He then took up residence in 'Akka until the time of the passing of Baha'u'llah in 1892.

Overwhelmed with sorrow at this event, Nabil ended his own life by jumping into the sea.

He was a great poet and, besides writing a lengthy history of the Faith, he has preserved many of the historical events of the Faith in the form of poetry which he used to send to the Baha'is of Iran.

A complete collection of his extensive poetical writings has not yet been made.

Mirza Muhammad Mustafa The father of Mirza Muhammad Mustafay-i-Baghdadi, Shaykh Muhammad Shibi, was a distinguished follower of the Shaykhi leader, Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, and was indeed his personal representative in Baghdad.

When Mulla 'Aliy-i-Bastami, the Letter of the Living, was brought to Baghdad and imprisoned there (see *The Bab*, pp.

59-61), Shaykh Muhammad Shibi visited him in prison, learnt of the claim of the Bab and became a believer.

Later, that distinguished Letter of the Living, Tahiri, stayed at the house of Shaykh Muhammad Shibi in Baghdad for a period and when the time came that she was to be expelled from 'Iraq, Shaykh Muhammad and Mirza Mustafa accompanied her to Qazvin and then travelled on to Tihran, where they met Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i.

Such were the events that filled the childhood and youth of Mirza Mustafa, who was born in Baghdad in about 1837.

During the period that Baha'u'llah was in Baghdad, Mirza Mustafa became devoted to Him, although, of course, Baha'u'llah had not put forward a claim at this time.

In 1874 Mirza Mustafa was arrested along with many others of the Baha'is of Baghdad, and after this he travelled to 'Akka and sought permission from Baha'u'llah to live in the vicinity of that city.

Baha'u'llah instructed him to take up his residence in Beirut where he was frequently of service to those Baha'is travelling to 'Akka.

After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, he moved to Alexandretta (Iskandarun), where he died in 1910.

Mirza Husayn, surnamed Mishkin-Qalam Mirza Husayn, a native of Shiraz but resident in Isfahan, was a Sufi of the Ni'matu'llahi Order.

He was a calligrapher of the first rank, a fine poet, and was also noted for his witty and subtle mind, all of these being qualities highly prized in nineteenth-century Iran.

And so Mirza Husayn or Mishkin-Qalam, his artistic name by which he is usually known, was never short of wealthy patrons.

However, he himself preferred to travel as a wandering dervish with few possessions. 'Abdu'l-Baha states that he first heard of the Faith in Isfahan, but it was in Baghdad a few years after Baha'u'llah's departure from that city that Mishkin-Qalam learned more about the new religion from Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin and Nabil-i-A'zam.

He set out for Adrianople and after a brief sojourn in Aleppo reached the presence of Baha'u'llah where his belief was confirmed.

After a while, he travelled to Istanbul and his talents soon brought him to the attention of the notables of that capital city.

However, the Iranian ambassador plotted against him and caused his arrest.

When Baha'u'llah and His companions were exiled to 'Akka, Mishkin-Qalam was sent with them in the same ship but was compelled to go on to Cyprus where he remained in detention and exile.

He was eventually freed and came to 'Akka in 1886, taking up residence in the Khan-i-'Avamid.

After the passing of Baha'u'llah, he travelled to Egypt, Damascus and India (the last in 1905). 'Abdu'l-Baha, when He heard that Mishkin-Qalam was growing old and weak in India, recalled him to the Holy Land and he remained there until his death in about 1912.

Mirza Hasan, surnamed Adib Haji Mirza Hasan was born in Talaqan in September 1848.

His father was an eminent cleric and Haji Mirza Hasan underwent the usual religious education at Tihiran and Mashhad.

From 1874 onwards he was employed by one of the Qajar princes, I'tidadu's-Saltanih, and later by another prince, Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih.

These two princes used to publish a large number of books which were written for them by their employees but published in their own names.

In this way, Mirza Hasan contributed to such important works as the encyclopaedic Namiy-i-Danishvaran, until his becoming known as a Baha'i caused his dismissal from such work.

He was also, for a time, Imam-Jum'ih (Friday prayer leader) and teacher at the Daru'l-Funun, Iran's first educational establishment founded on modern lines.

He was given the title Adibu'l-'Ulama (litterateur of the 'ulama) and was a poet of considerable talent.

It was his close friend, the eminent cleric Shaykh Hadi Najmabadi, who pointed out to Mirza Hasan the similarity between his views and those of the Baha'is, and this prompted the latter to investigate the Baha'i Faith.

In about 1889, after prolonged conversations with Nabil-i-Akbar, he was converted and soon afterwards was designated by Baha'u'llah as one of the Hands of the Cause of God.

After the passing of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Hasan was much involved in dealing with the activities of the Covenant-breakers.

In AH 1315 (AD 2 June 1897 -- 21 May 1898), he participated in the meetings of the Hands of the Cause which evolved over several years into the Central Spiritual Assembly of Tihiran, the precursor of the Iranian National Spiritual Assembly.

He was chairman of this body.

He also played an important part in the founding of the Tarbiyat Schools in Tihiran and in their administration.

In 1903 he travelled to Isfahan where he was <p273> briefly imprisoned during the upheaval there.

From there he proceeded to Shiraz, Bombay, and eventually to 'Akka.

'Abdu'l-Baha instructed him to travel through India and Burma in the company of the American Bahh'i, Sidney Sprague.

He eventually returned to Tihran where he died on 2 September 1919.

Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali Shaykh Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini was the nephew of Nabil-i-Akbar.

He was possessed of many talents, excelling in oratory, calligraphy and music.

He was born in Naw-Firist near Birjand in AH 1277 (AD 20 July 1860 -- 8 July 1861).

His parents died when he was young and he was brought up by an uncle, Mulla Aqa 'Ali.

While still a young man undertaking religious studies at Mashhad, he was apprised of the <p274> Baha'i Faith and soon became an ardent believer.

He became the close companion of his erudite uncle Nabil-i-Akbar until the latter's death in 1892.

He lived in 'Ishqabad for a while and then in Tihran where he married the daughter of Nabil-i-Akbar.

In 1903, he was instructed to accompany Mirza Hasan-i-Adib to India, but while travelling there he was caught up in the upheavals against the Baha'is in Isfahan during that year.

He was stripped of his possessions, severely beaten, and was fortunate to escape with his life.

He had to return to Tihran but later reached India and remained there for one-and-a-half years.

He then travelled to Haifa.

Here 'Abdu'l-Baha asked him to go to 'Ishqabad and to take charge of the education of children there.

He established himself in 'Ishqabad and, apart from various journeys made for the service of the Faith, he lived there for the rest of his life.

After the death of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani, Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali was asked to go to Haifa to bring to completion, with the help of others, the unfinished writings of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl.

He was in Haifa for one-and-a-half years after the First World War, leaving for 'Ishqabad shortly before 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing.

He fell ill in 'Ishqabad and after a prolonged illness died in April 1924.

Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, surnamed Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, surnamed by Baha'u'llah Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin (the Ornament of the Near Ones) was noted among the companions of Baha'u'llah for his wit and humour, his learning and calligraphy, but above all for Baha'u'llah's high regard for him.

He was born in Rajab 1233 (May 1818) in one of the villages of Najafabad near Isfahan of a family of Muslim clerics.

He himself underwent a religious education and was made a preacher at a mosque in Najafabad.

Although he heard of the Bab's claim in 1844 while he was on pilgrimage to Karbala, it was not until 1851 that he was taught the new religion and became a believer.

Many others were converted in Najafabad and the town soon became a stronghold of the Babi Faith.

Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin decided to visit Baghdad and meet the leading Babis who were in exile there.

He failed to find Mirza Yahya who was keeping himself hidden from the believers, and Baha'u'llah was at this time on His two-year sojourn in the Sulaymaniyyih area.

Disappointed, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin set off for home.

As he approached Najafabad, however, he learned of a violent outburst of persecution against the believers and that officials of the Governor were searching for him.

He therefore retraced his steps to Baghdad and was fortunate in meeting Baha'u'llah on this occasion, an encounter that confirmed his faith in the new religion.

Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin became one of the pillars of the Babi community in Najafabad and Isfahan, and when he heard of Baha'u'llah's claim to be the One promised by the Bab, he unhesitatingly accepted.

A further outburst of persecution in 1864 precipitated Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin's departure from Najafabad.

He settled in Baghdad and occupied himself with transcribing Tablets.

In 1870 the Baha'is in Baghdad were rounded up and exiled to Mosul.

The Baha'is in Mosul, under the leadership and guidance of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, soon became a model Baha'i community reflecting something of the spirit of the 'Akka community.

While there, it became Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin's task to transcribe the Tablets of Baha'u'llah that arrived from 'Akka on their way to Iran.

Thus these Tablets could be distributed more widely and each of those to whom a Tablet was addressed could have a copy.

In Dhu'l-Hijjah 1302 (September -- October 1885) Baha'u'llah gave permission for Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin to come to 'Akka where he took up residence in the Khan-i-'Avamid, continuing to transcribe Tablets and frequently having the honour of being in Baha'u'llah's company.

Following the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin remained faithful to the Covenant until his passing in 1903. <p277> Part II The ancestors of Baha'u'llah dwelt near the Caspian Sea in the famed province of Tabaristan (now Mazindaran).

Although born in Tihran Baha'u'llah maintained His ties with Mazindaran which embraces Nur, the seat of His ancestral home.

Three of the following chapters relate some of the history of these regions, while two chapters trace His genealogy and give some remarkable prophecies of His advent. <p278> <p279> 21 On the Shores of the Caspian Sea The Caspian Sea, on the shores of which many a generation of the ancestors of Baha'u'llah lived and prospered, is known in Persian as the Sea of Khazar (Daryay-i-Khazar).

Khazars were a people of Turkish origin whose haunts bordered the north of that vast inland sea.

And their story is strange indeed.

They, who had no connection whatsoever with the Children of Israel, voluntarily adopted the Jewish Faith.

They did it in order to free themselves of tutelage to either the Muslim Arabs or the Christian Byzantines.

Being Jewish in faith would liberate them from both Islam and Christianity, they reasoned.

We shall examine their history in some detail anon; but the point to note, now, is their love of independence, their intense abhorrence of submission to the will and the whims of neighbours and magnates of other lands.

This love of liberty which bordered almost on rebelliousness, they shared with other dwellers of the coastal regions of the Caspian Sea, particularly the people of Tabaristan--the home of the ancestors of Baha'u'llah.

When the Arab hosts conquered Iran in the middle of the seventh century and brought Islam with them to present to the vanquished, the inhabitants of the Iranian provinces adjoining the Caspian Sea, sheltered in the fastnesses of mount and forest, refused to let the Arabs in and refused to alter their religious affiliation.

Moreover, they received with open arms anyone who had challenged the caliphs of Damascus and later of Baghdad, and gave them sustenance and refuge.

Most of those who had taken up arms against the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids were scions of the House of the Prophet.

And it was the pacific influence of those who had escaped from the clutches of the caliphs that led the recalcitrants to embrace Islam.

Their Islam, however, was different from that professed by the caliphs, for it was to Shi'ism, in its various guises, that they inclined.

In the following pages we shall take a closer look into the adventures <p280> of these people who lived in the periphery of the Caspian Sea: the Sea of Khazar. 'Abda'r Rahman III, perhaps the greatest of all the rulers of al-Andalus (Moorish Spain), in AD 929 proclaimed himself Caliph and Amira'l-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful)--a powerful rival to both the 'Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad (who were also Sunnis) and to the Isma'ili Shi'ih caliphs of Cairo (the Fatimids). 'Abda'r Rahman was a very remarkable man.

Following the style set by the 'Abbasids, he took the title an-Nasir li-Dini'llah:

Defender of the Faith of God.

A man free of prejudice and fanaticism, he raised Hisdai Ibn Shaprut, his court physician and a Jew, to the highest position of trust in his kingdom.

And Hisdai served him with devotion.

Then it came to Hisdai's ears that far away, half-the-world distant to the East, there was a king, who, with his people, professed the Faith that he himself did.

Hisdai Ibn Shaprut was as remarkable a man as his enlightened master.

He has put it on record that he first heard of that incredible Jewish realm from merchants of Khurasan.

He found it hard to believe.

Then envoys from Byzantium reached Cordoba and they confirmed everything which the Khurasani merchants had related.

They even could give Hisdai the name of the king of that Jewish Land, which happened to be Yusuf (Joseph).

Bursting with curiosity and enthusiasm, Hisdai addressed a respectful letter to King Joseph of Khazaria.

The letter was very long and the writer longed for more information regarding everything.

He wrote:

I feel the urge to know the truth, whether there is really a place on this earth where harassed Israel can rule itself, where it is subject to nobody.

If I were to know that this is indeed the case, I would not hesitate to forsake all honours, to resign my high office, to abandon my family, and to travel over mountains and plains, over land and water, until I arrived at the place where my Lord, the King rules...

And I also have one more request: to be informed whether you have any knowledge ... of the Final Miracle [the coming of the Messiah] which, wandering from country to country, we are awaiting.

Dishonoured and humiliated in our dispersion, we have to listen in silence to those who say: 'every nation has its own land and you alone possess not even a shadow of a country on this earth'. (Quoted in Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, p.

71) King Joseph, in his reply to the Jewish minister of 'Abda'r-Rahman, <p281> made it clear that he and his people did not, at any time, claim descent from Israel.

He stated unequivocally that the people of Khazaria were of the seed of Japheth (Yafith), the third son of Noah.

King Joseph went on to say that Togarma, the grandson of Japheth, was the common ancestor of all the Turkish tribes. 'We have found', he writes, 'in the family registers of our fathers, that Togarma had ten sons, and the names of their [sic] offspring are as follows:

Uigur, Dursu, Avars, Huns, Basili, Tarniakh, Khazars, Zagora, Bulgars, Sabir.

We are the sons of Khazar, the seventh...' (Quoted in Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, p.

72) King Joseph then related the story of King Bulan, and how it happened that he came to accept the Jewish Faith and gave up idolatry.

When Bulan, perhaps the first hereditary king of Khazaria [writes Sale Wittmayer Baron], adopted the monotheistic faith, he apparently embraced it only in the form of a minimal 'religion of Abraham,' which he had heard invoked by spokesmen of Christianity and Islam as well as of Judaism.

He may have been attracted by a legend, current in Arab and Jewish circles, that Turks and other Mongols were descendants of Abraham's sons by Keturah.

According to Ibn Fadhlān,[1] the Khazar kings customarily had twenty-five wives. 'Each of them is the daughter of one of the kings who confront him [the vassal princes], taken freely or by force.

He also has sixty slave-girls, concubines, all of superb beauty.

Each of them, concubines as well as free-born ladies, lives in a castle of her own.' The khagan [khagan] may indeed have felt that such a harem was a legitimate imitation of King Solomon's polygamous establishment and of the wise king's use thereof as an instrument of imperial policy.

Hebrew books must have been extremely scarce.

Certainly talmudic tractates had then only begun to be circulated in the more civilized countries.

Even copies of Scripture had to be brought out of a cave, according to the Cambridge fragment... [1.

Ibn Fadlan:

Ahmad. son of Fadlan (son of Rashid, son of Himad), was a jurisconsult of

Baghdad.

In the days of al-Muqtadir, the 'Abbasid caliph (AD 908-32), he headed a mission to the king of the Bulgars.

He wrote a travelogue, which has been quoted by such eminent writers and geographers as Mas'udi.

Istakhri and Yaqut. (HMB)] Only at the end of the century did King Obadiah conform more fully with the accepted tenets and observances of official Judaism.

Afterwards, King Joseph, in his letter to Hisdai ibn Shaprut to which we owe that assertion, admitted the irregularity of the Khazar calendar.

When Petahiah arrived in that vicinity he was shocked to learn that 'in the land of Kedar [Khazar] there are no Jews, only heretics.

And Rabbi Petahiah asked them:

Why do you not believe in the words of the sages?

They replied:

Because our fathers did not teach them to us.

On the eve of Sabbath they cut all the bread which they eat on the Sabbath.

They eat in the dark, and sit the whole day on one spot.

Their prayers consist only of psalms.

And when Rabbi Petahiah imparted to them <p282> our ritual and prayer after meals they were pleased.

They also said:

We have never heard what the Talmud is.' (A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vol.

3, pp.

201-2) We shall see later what eventually happened to Khazaria.

Now, we ought to go back in time to the years when the people of Khazaria were still pagans and idolaters; we need not go back to the origins of the Khazars.

They certainly were Turks, and certainly not Mongolians.

Even in recent times certain outbursts of nationalistic and racial fervour have tended to confuse the issue.

It was definitely very misplaced for the Turks of Anatolia to take pride in being of the same stock and breed as Chingiz Khan.

In the days of Chosroes I -- Parviz, the great Anushirvan the Just (reigned AD 531-79)--three gold 'guest thrones' were kept in the throne-room of his palace in Ctesiphon.

They were reserved for three potentates well known in the world of those times: namely, the Emperors of China, Byzantium and Khazaria.

It is not recorded that any of them ever paid a visit to Ctesiphon or ever met Chosroes, but the fact that those gold thrones were there awaiting them is a sure indication of the attractive qualities of the Sasanid monarch, and of the position which the ruler of Khazaria had attained, to be ranked with the Emperors of China and Byzantium.

The grandson of Anushirvan, Chosroes II, gained his throne with the aid of Emperor Maurice of Byzantium and overthrew a pretender, but in the year AD 602 Maurice went down before a mob and Phocas, a mere centurion, usurped his throne.

Maurice, who had been forced to abdicate, was cruelly murdered, together with five sons, by a successor entirely unworthy of his rule. 'The reign of Phocas', writes Gibbon,[1] 'afflicted Europe with ignominious peace, and Asia with desolating war...

Every province of the empire was ripe for rebellion; and Heraclius, exarch of Africa, persisted above two years in refusing all tribute and obedience to the centurion who disgraced the throne of Constantinople.' Although urged to rescue and govern the empire, the exarch was old and called upon his son Heraclius to undertake this dangerous enterprise.

Sailing with his fleet from Carthage to Constantinople, Heraclius stripped Phocas of his crown and ascended the throne of the Caesars.

He had to begin rebuilding an almost shattered Roman polity.

Byzantium was indeed in a parlous <p283> condition, for the troops of Chosroes, who had considered it his duty to avenge the death of his benefactor, had made deep inroads into Byzantine territory.

Heraclius was faced with a formidable task, but his great advantage was the weakness of character of the Persian monarch. [1.

1.

Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

Vol.

2, chap.

46] In the beginning Heraclius could do nothing to stem the Persian avalanche.

Antioch fell, and so did Jerusalem.

The True Cross was seized and carried by the victors.

Now, Heraclius sought a reliable ally, and his choice rested on the pagan king of Khazaria.

Let us look at the picture, as depicted by Edward Gibbon:

To the hostile league of Chosroes with the Avars, the Roman emperor opposed the useful and honourable alliance of the Turks.

At his liberal invitation, the horde of Chozars [Khazars] transported their tents from the plains of the Volga to the mountains of Georgia; Heraclius received them in the neighbourhood of Teflis [Tiflis], and the khan with his nobles dismounted from their horses, if we may credit the Greeks, and fell prostrate on the ground, to adore the purple of the Caesar.

Such voluntary homage and important aid were entitled to the warmest acknowledgements; and the emperor, taking off his own diadem, placed it on the head of the Turkish prince, whom he saluted with a tender embrace and the appellation of son.

After a sumptuous banquet, he presented Ziebel with the plate and ornaments, the gold, the gems, and the silk, which had been used at the Imperial table, and, with his own hand, distributed rich jewels and ear-rings to his new allies.

In a secret interview, he produced the portrait of his daughter Eudocia, condescended to flatter the Barbarian with the promise of a fair and august bride, obtained an immediate succour of 40,000 horse, and negotiated a strong diversion of the Turkish arms on the side of the Oxus. (1.

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Vol.

2, chap.

46)

When the ambition of Chosroes was reduced to the defence of his hereditary kingdom, the love of glory, or even the sense of shame, should have urged him to meet his rival in the field.

In the battle of Nineveh, his courage might have taught the Persians to vanquish, or he might have fallen with honour by the lance of a Roman emperor.

The successor of Cyrus chose rather, at a secure distance, to expect the event, to assemble the relics of the defeat, and to retire by measured steps before the march of Heraclius, till (A.D.

627.

Dec.

29) he beheld with a sigh the once loved mansions of Dastagerd.

Both his friends and enemies were persuaded, that it was the intention of Chosroes to bury himself under the ruins of the city and palace; and, as both might have been equally adverse to his flight, the monarch of Asia, with Sira, and three concubines, escaped through an hole in the wall nine days before the

arrival of the Romans. (1.

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Vol.

2, chap.

46) <p284> The faithless, cringing Chosroes took to his heels.

He abandoned armies to their fate.

All that he cared for was his own personal safety.

This was the man who had straddled Byzantium.

This was the man who had dared to tear up the letter of the Prophet of Arabia.

His own son put him in chains and had him stabbed to death.

It is time now to break away from the sad, tragic and demeaning story of Parviz, Chosroes II, and look forward a century to a new chapter of Khazar history.

When the Sasanian hegemony was swept away by the Arab onslaught,[1] the Khazar kingdom became conscious of its isolation.

And as the Arabs penetrated into the Caucasus, they broke, time and again, through the mountain pass of Darband, close to the Caspian Sea, which they named 'Bab-al-Abwab' (The Gate of Gates), to ravish the land of the Khazars.

On the other hand, when the opportunity presented itself, Khazars did the same, erupted into the newly-conquered lands of Islam and caused chaos and confusion.

In the year AD 730 Khazars occupied both Georgia and Armenia, annihilated an Arab army outside the city of Ardibil (in the Persian province of Adharbayjan, home of Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din, the ancestor of the Safavids), and rode on as far as Mosul and Diyarbakr. [1.

Yazdigird 111, the last of this dynasty, was defeated at Nihavand near Ecbatana (present-day Hamadan) in 641.

The genealogy of Baha'u'llah can be traced to him (see chap.

23).

The last time the Arabs made their way into Khazaria, under the command of the Umayyad Marwan (destined to be the last caliph of Damascus), the Khazars were caught unaware and suffered heavy defeat.

They had to sue for peace and Marwan demanded the conversion of the Khazar king to Islam.

It seems that the khagan complied and nominally became a Muslim; but with the withdrawal of Marwan, he went back to his paganism.

Most likely this episode brought the khagan and his people to their final choice: to adopt a monotheistic Faith, which would give them such stamina and strength as to be able to withstand both the pressure of the Byzantine Christendom and the Islam of the Arabs.

And strange enough, at about the same time that Charles Martel defeated the Muslims at Poitiers near Tours (October, AD 732) and stopped the Muslim incursion, the Khazars inflicted such a crushing defeat on the Arabs that they did not try ever again to outflank the Byzantine bastion and pour into the vast areas of Eastern Europe.

As Dimitri Obolensky, Professor of Russian and Balkan History in the University of Oxford, has stated: 'The main contribution of the Khazars to world history was their success in holding the line of the Caucasus against the northward onslaught of the Arabs.' (The Byzantine Commonwealth, p.

172) The Jewish Khazaria lived for centuries.

It prospered and its people remained firmly wedded to their Jewish Faith.

Even St.

Cyril (Constantine, 826-69), the celebrated 'Apostle of the Slavs', who visited Khazaria, could make no impression on those determined Turks, bent on preserving their independence.

In recent times, much has been written and said about a 'Third Force' in world politics.

It can be conjectured that the Kingdom of Khazaria was in its day, and considered itself to be, that 'Third Force', neither inclined to Christianity nor to Islam, treading a middle path, at peace with all and committed to none.

Of course that idyllic condition could not be sustained for long.

Fresh migrations from the hinterlands of the Euro-Asian continental block, brought the Viking to descend on Europe, and the Rus (Rhos and Rhos as well) to make life miserable for the inhabitants of the Eastern marches.

In the year AD 833 the Khazar ruler sent an appeal to Emperor Theophilus of Byzantium to help him build a fortress on the River Don, to serve as a garrison post needed because of the increasing menace of the Rus.

The Emperor was delighted to render assistance and the fortress of Sarkel came into being.

Arthur Koestler writes:

Sarkel was built just in time; it enabled them [the Khazars] to control the movements of the Rus flotillas along the lower reaches of the Don and the Don--Volga portage (the 'Khazarian Way').

By and large it seems that during the first century of their presence on the scene,[1] the plundering raids of the Rus were mainly directed against

Byzantium (where, obviously, richer plunder was to be had), whereas their relations with the Khazars were essentially on a trading basis, though not without friction and intermittent clashes.

At any rate, the Khazars were able to control the Rus trade routes and to levy their 10 per cent tax on all cargoes passing through their country to Byzantium and to the Muslim lands. [1.

Very roughly.

830-930.] They also exerted some cultural influence on the Northmen, who, for all their violent ways, had a naive willingness to learn from the people with whom they came into contact.

The extent of this influence is indicated by the adoption of the title 'Kagan' [Khagan] by the early Rus rulers of Novgorod.

This is confirmed by both Byzantine and Arab sources; for instance, Ibn Rusta, after describing the island on which Novgorod was built, states: 'They <p286> have a king who is called Kagan Rus.' Moreover, Ibn Fadlan reports that the Kagan Rus has a general who leads the army and represents him to the people. (Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, p.

92) Koestler, himself a Hungarian, further writes:

The Magyars had been the Khazars' allies, and apparently willing vassals, since the dawn of the Khazar Empire...

About their origin all we know with certainty is that the Magyars were related to the Finns, and that their language belongs to the so-called Finno-Ugrian language family, together with that of the Vogul and Ostyak people living in the forest regions of the northern Urals.

Thus they were originally unrelated to the Slavonic and Turkish nations of the steppes in whose midst they came to live--an ethnic curiosity, which they still are to this day.

Modern Hungary, unlike other small nations, has no linguistic ties with its neighbours--the Magyars have remained an ethnic enclave in Europe, with the distant Finns as their only cousins. (Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, p.

96) As Koestler remarks, some time in the 'early centuries of the Christian era', the Magyars were pushed out of the Urals by other nomads.

That has been the recurring theme of all the migrations along and across the Eurasian expanse: one group being forced westwards or southwards by another.

For nearly 150 years, to the end of the ninth century, Magyars lived under Khazar domination; the Khazars and Magyars never fought each other.

This was indeed a strange phenomenon.

There existed a state of intermediate warfare between other groupings, as well as between these two and others.

Indeed, such was the nature of their relationships that the Magyars acted as stewards for the Khazars to collect levies.

Koestler writes: 'The arrival of the Rus radically changed this profitable state of affairs.

At about the time when Sarkel was built, there was a conspicuous movement of the Magyars across the Don to its west bank' (Arthur Koestler, The Thirteenth Tribe, p. 97).

The Khazars (here Koestler accepts Toynbee's explanation) placed the Magyars to the west of the Don, in order to set up a barrier against the incursions of the Slavs.

Khazars did all they could to make Magyars a stable group of people, provided them with a king and even went to the extent of having a number of their clans dwell amongst the Magyars and become one with them.

But by the end of the ninth century of the Christian era, Magyars once again set out westwards and settled down in the territory which we know now as Hungary.

The Khazars had lost a prop.

And the pressure of the Slavs continued unabated.

Apart from the perils posed by the Slavs, a <p287> Turkish tribe--he fierce Ghuzz (who within little more than a century were to defeat Sultan Sanjar,[1] the Saljuqid, and capture him)--attacked another Turkish tribe which tried to move into and settle down in Khazaria, but was driven out. [1.

Reigned 1118-57.] Perils abounded and the days of the Jewish Khazaria were numbered.

D.

M.

Dunlop writes: 'By the 9th century at all events the Russians were strong enough to occupy a part of the Khazar territory in the west, including the city of Kiev.' That was the beginning of the end.

When the Russians sailed into the Caspian Sea to raid Persian territory, they had the unwilling assistance of the Khazars.

But the situation was getting out of hand, and around AD 960 the Khazars came to the conclusion that to allow the Russians to come down the Volga into the Caspian Sea was a dangerous game.

They tried to put a stop to it.

However, as Khazaria was slowly declining, the Russians were gathering more strength.

The downfall and extinction of Khazaria, its date and circumstances, have all remained a matter of contention amongst historians, past and present.

However, Dunlop asserts that the year 965 was 'the year in which the Russians invaded Khazaria', and that 'the Khazar kingdom in its traditional form hardly survived the Russian invasion.' (The History of the Jewish Khazars, pp.

238, 224, 247) Historians have yet to settle (if it ever can be settled) the problem of the date of Khazaria's extinction.

Some have been bold enough to state that it was the Mongol invasion of the early thirteenth century that destroyed Khazaria.

Even if that proud land and its proud people eked out an impoverished independent existence for another two centuries, the eminent fact is that by the end of the tenth century of the Christian era the Khazaria which had defied the Arabs as well as the Byzantines had ceased to be.

And the Jewish Khazars, just as the other clans and tribes and groupings had done, took the road to the West.

They spread over Europe.

Many of the Jews of the Diaspora in central, northern and eastern Europe are the descendants of those very brave men: the Turks who cherished a way of life, all their own, unfettered by submission and homage to Powers mightier than themselves. <p288> 22 The Story of Tabaristan Tabaristan, the renowned province lying south of the Caspian Sea, known today by the even more honoured name of Mazindaran, has ever been a land of marvels.

Great men strode across its scene.

The manliness of its inhabitants and their intense desire to remain self-ruled and independent have remained unsurpassed.

Tabari, the foremost historian of Islam, as his name indicates stepped out of this delectable corner of Iran.

Even Fars and its Persepolis of ancient splendour cannot compete with the magnificence of Mazindaran.

Here dwelt the ancestors of Baha'u'llah.

In the preface to his abridged translation of Ibn Isfandiyar's History of Tabaristan (E.

J.

W.

Gibb Memorial, Volume II), Edward Granville Browne, the distinguished orientalist of the University of Cambridge, wrote:

Separated from the rest of Persia by the lofty barrier of the Elburz Mountains, culminating in the great cone of Damawand (Dunbawand), the Caspian

provinces have always possessed, to a certain extent, a history and character apart.

Long after the Sasanian dynasty had fallen and the rest of Persia had been subdued by the Arabs, the Ispahbads continued to strike their Pahlawi coinage and maintain the religion of Zoroaster in the mountains and forests of Tabaristan; and their struggles against the Arabs were only ended about A.D.

838 by the capture and cruel execution of the gallant Mazyar, the son of Qarin, the son of Wanda-Hurmuz.

Twenty-five years later was established the Shi'ite rule of the Zaydi Sayyids, which lasted till A.D 928; and these were followed by the noble house of Ziyar, of whom Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus was especially conspicuous for his literary eminence.[1] Even after the disastrous Mongol invasion, representatives of the ancient aristocracy of Tabaristan continued to wield a more or less considerable power. [1.

This is a mistake.

The author of the celebrated book:

Qabus-Namih, was 'Unsuru-l-Ma'ali Kaykavus, a grandson of Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus. (HMB)] Of this strange and interesting country the clearest and most ineffaceable <p289> <p290> recollection must remain in the mind of every traveller who has visited it.

I merely traversed it in about a week on my homeward journey from Persia in the autumn of 1888, yet of no part of that journey do I preserve a more vivid impression; the first entry, from the great stony plain of 'Iraq-i-'Ajami into the lower hills at Agh, with its rippling streams and almost English hedgerows; the long winding climb to the eastern shoulder of the mighty Damawand; the deep canons of the Lar; the Alpine beauties of Rene; the gradual descent, through rock-walled valleys, into virgin forests, bright with the red blossoms of the wild pomegranate, and carpeted with ferns and mosses; the sluggish streams and stagnant pools of coast-ward fenlands; ancient Amul, with its long slender bridge; Barfurush and the swampy rice-fields of Shaykh Tabarsi, memorable in the history of the Babi religion; and the sandy downs towards the Caspian Sea. (History of Tabaristan, pp. x-xi) In the following pages we shall examine the witness of Ibn Isfandiyar, whose love for Tabaristan glows through the pages of his book.[1] [1.

The author both summarizes and translates Ibn Isfandiyar and also quotes Browne's translation; the extracts from Browne are indicated. (Ed.)] On the Characteristics and Wonders of Tabaristan From time immemorial, Tabaristan has been the refuge and the stronghold of mighty kings and magnates.

Because of its natural strength and difficult mountain passes, like a storehouse where rarities and treasures are sent thereto for safekeeping, any ruler overcome by an enemy, finding it impossible to dwell anywhere else in this world, would seek security in this domain and find release from the

stratagems of the foe.

The land was one and the king was one; and the people of Tabaristan had no need of the goods of any other land.

Whatever exists in the abundance of the world, needed for good living, can be procured therein.

In all seasons one finds there gladsome vegetation, waters pure and luscious, all varieties of bread, good and wholesome, of wheat, rice and millet; all sorts of meat and flesh of beasts and birds, contrary to what can be found in other domains; delicious foods; bright and clear beverages, wines yellow, red and white, coloured like unto a flower and ruby and similar to rose-water, in clarity and delicacy like unto the tears of lovers: bringer of joy and exultation like achieving union with the beloved, of little nuisance like the company of men of good intent, productive of power and profit, bereft of the headache of intoxication, fragrant like pure <p291> musk.

The winter of Tabaristan is like unto the autumn of other districts, and its summer resembles the spring of other lands.

All its earth is covered with groves and orchards, so that eyes meet nothing but greenery.

The urban and the rural areas are joined together.

Springs and water channels flow from their sources over pebbles.

The mountain, the plain and the sea are together united.

The air as it blows from the north is soft and equable.

But due to the proximity of the sea and the plenteousness of rainfall at times, the moisture and the mist exceed those of other places.

It was related by the Qadi Abu 'Abdi'r-Rahman Muhammad b.[1] al-Hasan b. 'Abdu'l-Hamid al-Lamrasaki to Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b.

Muhammad al-Yazdadi, on the authority of his father, who had it from men of ancient time, that there lived in the neighbourhood of Lamrasak a man named Shahr-Khwastan [Shahr-Khastan] the son of Zardastan, possessed of great wealth in personal and landed property and cattle, aged, experienced, and surrounded by numerous sons, cousins and kinsmen, all loyally attached to him.

When Farrukhan, the great Ispahbad [Ispahbud], had completed the construction of Sari and the great Dyke, all the people, save Shahr-Khwastan, offered him their congratulations and eulogies.

The Ispahbad was vexed at this omission and despatched two horsemen to bring Shahr-Khwastan before him.

When they arrived, he was holding a great banquet, at which all the local nobles and gentry were present.

Ordering the two messengers to be hospitably entertained, he packed in sacks

samples of all the products of Tabaristan, garments of wool, silk, linen and cotton, bread-stuffs of all sorts, sweetmeats,[2] apples, cereals, water-cresses, fresh and salted game, birds, fruits, wines, fragrant herbs, flowers, and the like, and, furnished with these, set off for Sari, where he arrived at day-break.

By chance the Ispahbad was giving a great banquet, at which he was presiding, seated on a high throne, whence, after pronouncing a khutba [ceremonial discourse] after the fashion of kings, he addressed the people as follows. 'O men of Tabaristan, know that ye were a people dwelling apart in a corner of the world, of whom no fame was spread abroad, and to whose country none were attracted.

Ye dwelt in jungles with the wild beasts and beasts of prey, ignorant of the enjoyments of life, the ways of men, soft raiment, good horses and agreeable perfumes.

It was I who introduced you to nobler aims and a richer and more desirable life; who built for you fine cities which attracted travellers and merchants from afar, so that rare and precious merchandises flowed into your country, and ye became notable and famous in the world, and your cities celebrated for their wealth and splendour.

For all this I deserve your thanks.' Then all those present, except Shahr-Khwastan, rose up and applauded.

The Ispahbad, observing with displeasure Shahr-Khwastan's silence, cried to him, 'What ails thee that thou art tongueless as a fish <p292> and soulless as a serpent?' [The word that Browne has translated as 'soulless' is 'Pichan' in Persian, which means 'twisting'.] Said the other, 'If permission be accorded me, I will speak;' and, on receiving permission, he produced and opened the ten sacks which he had brought with him, and displayed their contents.

Then he spoke as follows: 'May the Ispahbad-Ispahbadan[1] live long!

O assembly, [lend me your ears, for an hour, and consider what I have to say.' He brought out those edibles and beverages and clothings out of the sacks for the people to see.

Then he said:] 'We were in this land men independent of imports from other countries, contented with what sufficed for our needs, and enjoying ample ease and luxury.

None hindered us, nor envied us, nor contended with us, nor coveted our country, nor was cognizant of its secrets.[2] We had need of no one; we had houses, corn-lands and hunting-grounds within the Great Dyke, and every two parasangs was stationed a head-man, captain or squire, whom all man [sic] readily obeyed.

Now this Prince[3] [omitted in translation: 'may he prosper and triumph'] hath made all strangers and foreigners to know us and our land, [and the secrets of our domain, and tore open the veil concealing our condition and caused enemies

and adversaries to appear.

Whilst no creature, barred, could find a way into this province] and hath caused them to flock hither and settle here, and ere long they will pick a quarrel with us, strive to take our land, and drive forth our children as wanderers and exiles.' Then the Ispahbad and the people perceived that he spoke truly, and asked what should now be done, to which he replied, 'The thing is done, and there is now no averting it.

Had you consulted with me sooner, I would have shewn you a way.

Please God that by the Prince's [king's] good fortune no harm may result.'
(Ibn Isfandiyar's History of Tabaristan, pp.

30-32, translated by E.

G.

Browne and amended by the author)] [1.

Ibn, or Bin: 'the son of'. (HMB) (footnote is from page 291)] [2.

Edward Browne has shortened the list of all the foodstuffs and delicacies.
(HMB) (footnote is from page 291)] [1.

Ispahbud-i-Ispahbudan. (HMB)] [2.

Left out by Edward Browne: 'No one had any inclination towards us'. (HMB)] [3.

King and ruler' in the original. (HMB)] 'The virtue, beauty, health and excellence of the women of Tabaristan have been already mentioned [by Ibn Isfandiyar] in connection with the narrative of the building of Amul by Firuz-Shah.' (E.G.B., p.

32) Ibn Isfandiyar quotes Abu'l-Hasan-i-Yazdadi as having heard from a centenarian Khurasani that he had been all the world over, and had never found a domain like Tabaristan for 'enjoying life', for 'security', for 'comfort' and for 'cleanliness'.

Furthermore:

You never find therein deadly snakes, scorpions, lion and tiger and beasts and insects that are injurious; like the snakes of Sajistan and Hindustan [India] and scorpions of Nisibin and Qashan [Kashan], Jashk and Muqan; locusts of 'Askar; tarantulas and fleas of Ardibil; beasts of Arabia, crocodiles of Egypt, sharks of Basrah; or famine of Damascus, heat of 'Umman and Siraf and Ahvaz.

And the whole world agrees that for residence a man of <p293> good taste cannot find a land better than Tabaristan.

Of materials and goods permissible, such as wood and fruit, reeds and herbs, medicinal substances of the plain and the mount, mines of sulphur, copperas, collyrium stone, and many a mine of gold and silver, which bring profit and means of living to the poor and provide merchandise and goods for the use of

the rich, all can be found there.

All kinds of choice cloths of linen, cotton, silk and wool in varied grades of golden and woollen materials are exported to the east and the west of the world.

Yazdadi has related that in the first instance, they came to Tabaristan for satin and woven cloth, for the costly silk material: 'uttabi [so named after its inventor, 'Uttab] and all kinds of highly-priced brocades and greatly-valued scarlet cloth, and expensive wine, and camphor, the very best of its kind; and striped cloth, silken and woollen and narrow; and thick coverlets and blankets, be it Jahrumi carpets or Mahfuri; also Baghdadi crystal glass, and 'Abbadani mats...

They did not find anywhere else in the world goods of such excellence.

Until our days the market wherein to obtain the wares of Saqsin [a country in Turkistan] and Bulghar [Bulgaria], was the city of Amul.

And the people of Tabaristan traded with Bulghar and Saqsin, because Saqsin is situated opposite Amul on the other side of the sea.

It is said that a ship takes three months to reach Saqsin...

And there are women in Tabaristan who earn fifty dirhams a day by their handiwork...

It is related that a man of Tabaristan got married in Mecca.

And as it is the way of loving one's native land, he used every day to talk lavishly of his city, until one day he said that one never finds a beggar in Amul.

The people of Mecca decided to give lie to his claim, until one day they found a man [that is, a beggar] and took him there [to meet the Tabari who was making so much noise].

He [the Tabari] asked the mendicant: 'Are you from Amul? [The mendicant] answered: 'Yes, I am from Amul, and the quarter in which I live is Hazmih Kuy. 'The mendicant described every aspect of Amul.

The Tabari then tried to confuse him, asking the names they used in Amul for certain objects, and found his answers to be wrong.

And so he told the man that he was fraudulent.

Then that man admitted that he was really a native of Ray and had been taken to Amul in his childhood by his parents. (Ibn Isfandiyar, History of Tabaristan, HMB translation; see pp.

33-4.) Edward Browne takes up the translation here:

The taxes and imposts of Tabaristan are light, and especially was this the case under the rule of the House of Bawand [Bavand], while the water is abundant, good, and freely accessible to all.

The satraps, governors and Ispahbads of Tabaristan have always enjoyed a great influence, and Kisras and Caliphs alike have sought their advice and counsel.

Their doctors, scribes, physicians, astronomers and poets also include many famous names, and, from the time of Feridun [Firaydun] and Minuchihr [Manuchihr], who have been already mentioned, many great and notable men have sought refuge there... (Ibn Isfandiyar's History of Tabaristan, p.

34 as translated by Edward Granville Browne) <p294> Ibn Isfandiyar mentions that Dara, 'fleeing before Alexander, took refuge in Tabaristan, and sent a message to the invader, saying, "I grant that you have conquered the Seven Climes, but what will you do with Farshwadjar?"'[1] (Ibn Isfandiyar, History of Tabaristan, p.

35) [1.

An ancient name for Mazindaran and Gilan.] Now we come to the 'wonders of Tabaristan':

Ibn Isfandiyar first mentions Mount Damavand and says: 'Ali Ibn Rabban al-Katib mentions in his book Firdaws al-Hikmat that from the village Ask to the summit, the ascent takes two days, and that [the summit] is like a conical dome.

There is permanent snow all round it except at the top, where in the space of thirty jaribs snow does not settle either in the summer or in the winter.

There it is all sand, into which the feet sink.

When you stand on the sand at the summit all the peaks round look like hills, and the Caspian Sea can be seen right at the front.

There are three[2] cavities at the top of this mount from which sulphurous vapours are emitted, and tremendous sounds are heard coming out of these cavities, caused by the flaming of fire; and in truth, there is fire within this mount; and because of the heavy wafting of wind no animal can stay there.

It is said that the Philosopher's Stone of the alchemists can be obtained there.

Yazdadi relates that in the days of Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus there was a young man called the son of Amir Ka, who found there red sulphur and produced gold.

When the king came to know he ran away. (Ibn Isfandiyar, History of Tabaristan, HMB translation; see pp.

35-6.) [2.

Browne translates as 'thirty craters and fissures.' (Ed.)] Ibn Isfandiyar mentions a number of other wonders that are found in Tabaristan.

One of these is located in the district of Umidvarih-Kuh.

There is a well in that area, he says, which is called Chah-i-Vijan, and cannot be fathomed.

Time and again great lengths of ropes were taken there, tied together and let down into the well, but the bottom could not be touched.

And when they threw stones into it the noise of their falling could be heard for a long time.

He further records that in summertime a scented and cool breeze blows out from the depths of the well.

There are trees around it which provide fragrant timber.

Sitting on that wood during the summer affords coolness (History of Tabaristan, p.

39).

Ibn Isfandiyar is most keen to enumerate and describe as many as possible of the 'wonders of Tabaristan', some of which are trivial, such as the description of a mountain where a poisonous plant grows.

Some Rulers of Tabaristan The most notable of all the rulers and kings who came out of <p295> <p296> Tabaristan were the sovereigns of Al-i-Buyih or the Buwayhids (AD 932-1062).

There were three brothers: 'Ali, Hasan and Ahmad, to whom the 'Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad were compelled to assign the titles: 'Imadu'd-Dawlih (the Mainstay of the State), Ruknu'd-Dawlih (the Pillar of the State), and Mu'izzu'd-Dawlih (He Who Gives Might to the State), respectively.

Ahmad occupied Baghdad, and made the caliph his puppet.

The Buwayhids--were Shi'ihis of the Ithna-Ashariyyah, or Twelver, denomination.

Spiritually they did not owe allegiance to the 'Abbasids.

But facing an Islamic world, preponderantly Sunni, they had to maintain the caliph on his throne.

The people of Daylam and Gil (Tabaristan and Gilan), having stood out for long against the encroachments of the Arab invaders, and clinging to their Zoroastrian Faith for many decades, spurned the Islam of the caliphs:

Damascene or 'Iraqi, and always gave refuge to those descendants of 'Ali, who, fleeing from the tyrannies of the caliphs, sought security amongst them.

And it was a descendant of 'Ali, a member of the House of Muhammad, who led them into the Shi'ih fold.

THE FIRST EIGHT IMAMS OF THE HOUSE OF 'ALI mentioned by the author.

Numerals refer to the chronological sequence of the Imams and AD dates are given.

1. 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib 63Z-661 2.

Hasan Ibn 'Ali 661-669 3.

Husayn Ibn 'Ali 669-680 4. 'Ali II, Zaynu'l-'Abidin 680-712 5.

Muhammad al-Baqir 712-734 6.

Ja'far as-Sadiq 734-765 7.

Musa al-Kazim 765-799 8. 'Ali Ibn Musa'r-Rida 799-818 Let us begin the story of Tabaristan where Ibn Isfandiyar begins, with the tragic tale of one of the most accomplished men whom one encounters in the chronicles of Islam: 'Abdu'llah Ibna'l-Muqaffa'.

This extraordinary man, although professing Islam, was in truth an enthusiastic Manichaeen.

By translating Pahlavi texts into Arabic, with his own embroidering and interpellation, he tried to diffuse Manichaeen doctrines.

Al-Muqaffa', whose real name was Dadhbih, son of Dasdhjushras, fell to the fury of Mansur, the second of the 'Abbasid caliphs (AD 754-75), who had him put to death in a most <p297> horrific manner.

For the people of Tabaristan, who would not submit to the Arab caliph, the work and the fate of 'Abdu'llah Ibna'l-Muqaffa' provided both an inspiration and a warning.

THE 'ABBASID CALIPHS mentioned by the author.

Numerals refer to the chronological sequence of the Caliphs and AD dates are given.

2. 'Al-Mansur 754-775 5.

Ar-Rashid 786-809 7.

Al-Ma'mun 813-833 8.

Al-Mu'tasim 833-842 10.

Al-Mutawakkil 847-861 12.

Al-Musta'in 862-866 18.

Al-Muqtadir 909-932 20.

Ar-Radi 934-940 According to Ibn Isfandiyar, Farshvdhgar[1] encloses Tabaristan, Daylamistan and Gilan (History of Tabaristan, p.

14).

Then this author of the history of Tabaristan gives details of the early days of city-building in that delectable area, and ascribes actions to kings and rulers and heroes of the ancient past, who, we know now, were chiefly mythical figures, but also we know that some of them were historic persons whose real names have been forgotten in the course of centuries by their fellow-countrymen, and feats have come to be ascribed to them which are figments of imagination.

But this much is certain, that well-famed towns and cities of Tabaristan (or Mazindaran) go back to antiquity (History of Tabaristan, pp. 14-30).

Ibn Isfandiyar relates that the Jami' Mosque of the town of Sari was built by a descendant of Imam 'Ali during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid (AD 786-809), but Prince Mazyar, the son of Qaran, completed the construction (History of Tabaristan, p.

17). [1.

According to Arsene Darmesteter (1849-94), the celebrated French orientalist, this name is a corruption of Patashkhar, the name of the mountain range which separates Tabaristan from the rest of the Iranian Plateau.] Having mentioned Prince Mazyar, it is well to stop here and tell his story.

Even if Mazyar did, as Ibn Isfandiyar alleges, finish the work of raising a mosque at Sari, he remained firmly wedded to his Zoroastrian Faith.

He was a leader of the Mubayyadah (the White-Clad), deadly opposed to the other grouping, the Musawwidah, who donned black garments to indicate their attachment to the House of <p298> 'Abbas.

Mazyar yearned with all the intensity of his soul to drive the Arabs out of the whole of Iran, and detested those of his own nation who had not only embraced the Faith of the Arabian Prophet, but were totally submissive to their conquerors and, even more, supported them.

Mazyar made a pact with Afshin, who was also of royal lineage (his ancestors had ruled over Transoxania and hence Haydar al-Afshin was wrongly called a Turk), to end the domination of the 'Abbasids.

According to Ibn Isfandiyar, Qaran, the father of Mazyar, had gone to Baghdad at the invitation of the caliph who wished him to embrace Islam, but Qaran refused and returned home.

Mazyar was at odds with his own great uncle, Ispahbud Shahriyar, and wished to be the sole champion of Tabaristan.

He picked a quarrel with Shahriyar, but was routed in the battle that ensued and fled to the domain of a cousin.

The victor in that contest was firmly demanding that the vanquished should be handed over to him.

Mazyar managed to escape and took refuge with 'Abdu'llah Ibn Sa'id al-Jarshi, the Caliph Ma'mun's (AD 813-33) representative in Ray, who had been well acquainted with Mazyar's father and grandfather.

After a while this representative took Mazyar with him to Baghdad.

There the prince of Tabaristan met Bizist, the astronomer (or rather, the astrologer) to Ma'mun.

This man was a native of Amul and promised Mazyar every assistance within his capacity.

His praises of Mazyar made Ma'mun eager to receive him.

To make the story short, the caliph was greatly impressed by Mazyar and when the right moment came, the prince of Tabaristan was given the mountainous regions of Tabaristan to rule.

Mazyar very soon found means to rid himself of Ispahbud Shapur, a grandson of Ispahbud Sharvin.

Gradually Mazyar's excesses became hard for the people to bear.

Ma'mun came to hear of their complaints and sent his astronomer to investigate.

Mazyar, while giving Bizist a most friendly reception, managed to terrify him.

Consequently, when he and the qadis of Amul and Ruyan reached Baghdad they declared that all was well.

However, the qadi of Amul could not escape the pangs of conscience and confessed that he had lied to the caliph.

Ma'mun was then on the point of leaving Baghdad to levy war on Byzantium, and promised that on his return he would take action against Mazyar.

In the meantime, the people of Amul and Ruyan broke into revolt.

Mazyar put down the rebellion with a heavy hand and stopped a description of the true picture reaching Baghdad, whilst <p299> continuously sending false reports to the caliph.

Though himself an ardent leader and supporter of the Mubayyadah, in his reports to Ma'mun he laid all the blame for unrest and revolt at the door of those White-Clads and assured the caliph that he had the situation well in hand.

Ma'mun, in order to satisfy himself, sent an emissary, Muhammad Ibn Sa'id, to find how matters stood in Tabaristan.

He too, beguiled by Mazyar, exonerated him.

Now Ma'mun took the extraordinary step of turning over the whole of Tabaristan to its prince. (His governance lasted two years, to AD 839.

Ed.) Well satisfied with his success, Mazyar came almost into the open.

He meant to destroy the 'Abbasids, and began persecuting all who were inclined towards them.

Muslims were flung into prisons and their gaolers were Mazdeans and Khurramdinis.[1] Ma'mun died in the year 833 and his brother, Muhammad al-Mu'tasim, succeeded him. 'Abdu'llah, the Tahirid emir of Khurasan and Ray, took Mazyar to task but Mazyar did not heed him.

It is claimed that Babak (a Mazdean or a Mazdaki), who was little more than an adventurer, was in league with Mazyar and Afshin, but the latter betrayed him and sent him in chains to Baghdad where Mu'tasim put him cruelly to death.

Mazyar, who knew that before long he would have to fight for his life, was turning Tabaristan into a well-entrenched and fortified war camp.

Afshin, on the other hand, had his eyes on the vastness of Khurasan.

He hoped that the Tahirid emir, in any contest, would be worsted by Mazyar, and then it would fall to him to liberate Khurasan from the 'Abbasid yoke.

However, Mazyar's wretched rule nullified all that Afshin had hoped.

The prince of Tabaristan dispossessed the Bavandi Ispahbuds, in the first instance, and then, apart from one brother, Kuhyar, who had served him well, he denied his other brothers and his relatives what was theirs by right.

His enormities mounted high and the people of Tabaristan were heartily sick of him. [1.

Khuramdinis are reputed to have been followers of Mazdak, the heresiarch of the days of Ghubra and Chosroes I, Sasanian monarchs.] At last 'Abdu'llah, the Tahirid emir, struck.

Three armies converged on Tabaristan.

Now Mazyar's relatives, even his favoured brother, Kuhyar, betrayed him.

It was Kuhyar who led the enemy to his brother's lair.

A present-day historian, Isma'il Mahjuri, writes that the men on the trail of Mazyar went through passes and passed by forts that 'until that day no stranger's feet had trodden'.

Mazyar was taken into custody and hauled before the Tahirid emir, who, well aware of Afshin's complicity with Mazyar, asked the chained prince of Tabaristan to give him the letters he had received from the prince of Transoxania.

Furthermore, on the road to Iraq and Samarra, the Tahirid gave Mazyar so much wine to drink that the prince's tongue was loosened, and he blurted out all the details of his secret pact with Afshin.

Thus that brave man from Transoxania was also doomed.

Mu'tasim himself supervised and directed Afshin's arrest.

No matter how tyrannous and devious the prince of Tabaristan was, no matter how many he had injudiciously sent to their death, he was a very brave man and he yearned to free his native land.

Afshin, too, was brave and had motives beyond reproach.

Their cruel deaths showed, once again, the hollowness of the claims of the 'Abbasids.

Their rule was far from humane.

The twin corpses of Mazyar and Afshin graced the gates of Mu'tasim's capital for many years.

Mazyar was dead, but not the independent spirit of the people of Tabaristan.

Their goal was the same as Mazyar's: to make a clean sweep of the alien rule.

Now as the tyranny of the governor appointed by the Tahirids pressed hard upon them, the people of Tabaristan turned to the scions of the House of the Prophet to extricate them from the clutches of their oppressors.

When 'Abdu'llah al-Ma'mun, the seventh 'Abbasid caliph, named 'Ali Ibn Musa ar-Rida, the eighth Imam, to be his successor, many of his relatives (and he had twenty-one brothers) made their way to the great city of Ray and its neighbourhood.

But those halcyon days did not last long.

Under pressure from his rebellious kinsmen, Ma'mun was forced to change his decision.

Shi'is have always maintained that at Tus in Khurasan, where Harun ar-Rashid, the father of Ma'mun, had died and was buried, the 'Abbasid caliph gave Imam Rida poisoned grapes, causing his death.

The magnificent Shrine of Imam Rida at Mashhad in Khurasan is one of the holiest shrines of the Islamic world.

In the shadow of the tomb is also situated the grave of Harun ar-Rashid, held in opprobrium by the Shi'is.

Following the death of the eighth Imam, the descendants of 'Ali who had congregated in Iran fled to the safety of Daylamistan (soon to attain fame as the homeland of the Buwayhids) and Tabaristan.

Some of them lost their lives, but the majority found protection afforded by the Ispahbuds of Tabaristan.

After the death of al-Mutawakkil (AD 847-61), the 'Abbasid caliph who was particularly hostile to the family of 'Ali, the descendants of 'Ali began to assert themselves.

One of them, Yahya Ibn 'Umar--a descendant of Zayd, the son of the fourth Imam--who lived in retirement in Kufah, took steps to lead a revolt.

A century before, his grandsire Zayd, driven to rebellion because the minions of the Umayyad caliph Hisham (AD 724-43) had denied him justice, had done the same and had lost his life.

Now, when it became evident that Yahya Ibn 'Umar was going to challenge the 'Abbasids, the people of 'Iraq came to him with a proposition: if it was impecuniosity which had induced him to appear as a rebel, they would collect all he needed of the goods of the world and present them to him.

But Yahya refused to accept riches from them because his whole object, he said, was to rescue the Faith of Muhammad from degradation.

He too lost his life, fighting Muhammad, the Tahirid emir of Khurasan, whom the caliph sent against him.

When Yahya died, more of his kinsmen, scions of the House of 'Ali, hastened to the refuge of Daylam and Tabaristan.

Once the Tahirids had Tabaristan in their power, they installed a tyrannical and brutal governor, Muhammad Ibn Aws, who made life miserable for the people of that region.

For a while they just groaned, but finally they appealed to the cowed descendants of 'Ali to come to their rescue.

In the city of Ruyan there lived a descendant of Hasan, the second Imam, named Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim, famed for his piety and integrity.

The leaders of the people of Tabaristan invited him to put himself at their head, to challenge the Tahirids and their 'Abbasid overlords.

Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim felt unable to shoulder the responsibility but directed these determined men to take their case to his brother-in-law, Hasan Ibn Zayd, who lived in Ray.

As soon as the notables of Tabaristan made their proposal to Hasan Ibn Zayd, he eagerly undertook to lead them into battle.

That resolute, unflinching man is known to history as Da'ia'l-Kabir (the Great Caller).

He fought many battles, and disentangled many rivalries amongst the Ispahbuds of that enclave by the Caspian Sea.

His chief adversary was the Tahirid Sulayman, son of Amir 'Abdu'llah.

When worsted on every side Sulayman hit upon a plan to win over the Daylamites, but the plan miscarried and the defeated Sulayman escaped to Gurgan.

Having abandoned his wife and children at Sari, he wrote to the Da'i to beg the restoration of his family, and the latter was magnanimous enough to accede to his request.

That final victory over the Tahirid brought great joy to the Da'i because he felt that his fallen kinsman, Yahya Ibn 'Umar, had been avenged.

Once firmly established in the governance of Tabaristan, the Da'i proceeded with the establishment of the Shi'ih doctrine throughout his domain.

He instructed his appointees in all the towns and cities of Tabaristan to follow in every detail the rulings of 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib, the first Imam, and gave them a specific line of guidance which made the Shi'ih practice the pattern for the whole province.

But his brand of Shi'ism was Zaydi, neither Isma'ili nor Ithna-'Ashari.

As for Sulayman, he realized that the role he had played in Tabaristan was over, and so wended his way to Baghdad where the caliph, al-Musta'in, gave him the constabulary of his capital.

The fame of the Da'i reached an ever-widening circle, and large numbers of the descendants of 'Ali came pouring into Tabaristan.

It is related that whenever Da'i rode out, three hundred siyyids with drawn swords accompanied him.

But Da'i knew no peace.

His very successes in capturing city after city outside Tabaristan, which included the great city of Ray, brought forces against him which he could not withstand.

He became a fugitive, but had another turn of fortune which regained him much that he had lost.

But once again an adversary loomed on the horizon--no less a person than Ya'qub Ibn Layth-i-Saffar.

Ya'qub himself had been an adventurer and had risen from humble beginnings to great power.

He too was a Shi'ih, and a Twelver to boot.

He had nothing but contempt for the 'Abbasids, and no respect for the Da'i's pretensions.

Ya'qub came storming into Tabaristan, and although the Daylams scorned him he took it out of the people of other regions, particularly those of Kujur.

The Saffarid intruder was not obstructed by human beings only.

Elements and insects of the thick woods also combined to punish him.

Forty consecutive days of lightning, thunder and rain decimated the ranks of his army.

Nearly forty thousand of his soldiers perished.

Flies killed most of the camels which carried his equipage.

Ya'qub was glad to leave Tabaristan behind him.

Next, Da'i came up against one of the Ispahbuds of the House of Bavand.

His name was Rustam, and although outwardly at peace with the Da'i, he intended to have the whole of Tabaristan to himself.

However, his effort remained fruitless; the ebbs and tides of the flow of fortune kept Da'i still riding the storms.

But then gout killed him.

His was an amazing episode.

Muhammad, his brother, succeeded him.

Isphahbud Rustam tried once again to assert himself and once again was beaten.

In the end he lost his life by treachery.

Now another star had risen on the horizon of Khurasan.

Amir Isma'il, the Samanid, although claiming descent from the nobility of pre-Islamic Iran, was a Sunni devoted to the House of 'Abbas.

He had overthrown 'Amr, the brother of Ya'qub Ibn Layth who was a Twelver Shi'ih, at the express order of the 'Abbasid caliph.

And next he turned on Muhammad Ibn Zayd in Tabaristan.

Muhammad died on the battlefield, and his son Zayd was captured and taken to Bukharh.

Zayd's tragic story reached the ears of Amir Isma'il.

Magnanimously the Samanid ruler allowed him, should he wish, to return to Tabaristan.

But Zayd preferred retirement in Bukhara.

Muhammad Ibn Zayd, who ruled over Tabaristan for sixteen years, was a very generous man, helping his kinsmen in Medinah and providing them with ample funds.

Moreover, he rebuilt the Shrines of the Imams in Najaf and Karbila, which the impious hands of the 'Abbasid, al-Mutawakkil, had desecrated and destroyed.

The reign of the House of 'Ali in Tabaristan was over, but not their influence.

Abu-Muhammad, Hasan Ibn 'Ali, known as Nasiru'l-Haqq--a descendant of 'Umar al-Ashraf, son of the fourth Imam--had to flee to Daylamistan in company with many others of the descendants of the first Imam.

As soon as he reached safety he began to teach the Shi'ih doctrine.

Jastan III of Daylam, the son of Vahsudan, embraced that variety of Islam which he was preaching.

Until this point of time, there is every reason to believe that the rulers and the people of Daylam had tenaciously kept their old Faith.

Although its identity is not very clear, it has been alleged that it may not have been Zoroastrian (Mazdean).

Whatever the case, the independent spirit of the people of Daylam, evident long before the coming of Islam and the Arabs, had made these brave people the cynosure of the vastly greater number of men amongst whom they lived.

But here we must once again make a diversion and go with the years, to learn a little more about the Daylamites from whose lowest ranks the glorious House of Buyih emerged.

That Caspian province, north of the Elburz range, which is known today as Gilan, was known as Daylaman in the days when Sasinians were the masters of Iran.

And in that province, Siyyid Ahmad-i-Kasravi[1] tells us, dwelt two tribes, one named Gil and the other <p304> Daylam.

The first tribe had its haunts in those areas where today the cities of Rasht and Lahijan are situated, the second grouping occupied more southerly regions, where we now have the settlements of Rudbar and Alamut.[2] Apparently these two tribes came from the same stock.

In the course of time they separated.

The Daylams were more numerous and more powerful, and were determined to reject whatever and whomsoever were alien to their land.

Rebellious in pre-Islamic times, the coming of Islam and the Arabs made them even more determined not to submit.

They fought the Arabs in battle after battle. [1.

A brilliant but erratic Persian historian of recent years.

His highly unorthodox and extravagant views led him into a courtroom, on trial for heresy.

Fanatics broke into the Court of Justice and murdered him.] [2.

Alamut became the fortress of Hasan-i-Sabbah. the Isma'ili ruler (AID 1090-1124).] Towards the end of the second century Hejira (Hijrah), circa AD 796, one encounters the dynasty of Jastaniyan holding the reins of authority in the Daylam country.

The most famous of these rulers was Jastan III.

The friendly reception which he accorded to Nasiru'l-Haqq resulted in the conversion of the Daylams to the Faith of the Arabian Prophet.

They became fervent Shi'ihis, totally rejecting the 'Abbasids.

Jastan unhesitatingly took up the cudgels on the part of the descendants of 'Ali and fought the Samanids.

Although once defeated, he did not give up the contest.

But the next episode in the history of this dynasty is indeed strange.

Jastan III was murdered by his brother, 'Ali, whose name indicates that he had become a Muslim.

Next we hear of 'Ali breaking away from the long tradition of his people and

becoming a partisan of al-Muqtadir (908-32), the vacillating, unreliable 'Abbasid caliph.

But true to his colours Muqtadir eventually dismissed 'Ali.

Now the power of the Jastaniyans was on the wane.

An event of great interest which occurred during the years of Muqtadir's caliphate was the raid of the hitherto unknown Russians on the shores of Tabaristan.

They were uncouth pagans and robbers.

Their sudden descent on Tabaristan caused some havoc, many were killed and homes and warehouses were pillaged; but the Russian raiders were driven out in the end.

The Samanids did not keep Tabaristan for long.

As soon as their official, Muhammad-i-Bal'ami, withdrew, Nasiru'l-Haqq gathered forces from Gil and Daylam and wrested the province from its unwanted occupiers.

Further attempts to win Tabaristan for the Samanids proved fruitless and Nasiru'l-Haqq remained its master to the end of his days, although he left governance to others and retired from rulership, devoting his time to literature and the furtherance of knowledge and authorship.

Men came from far and wide to sit at his feet and learn.

Nasiru'l-Haqq (also known as Nasir-i-Kabir:

Nasir, the Great) died at the advanced age of ninety-five.

The rest of the story of the siyyids and their rule over Tabaristan is characterized by constant struggle.

There were many claimants, and the Samanids were never totally absent from the scene.

One of them, Amir Nasr, a very accomplished ruler, never took the field himself except once and that nearly ended in disaster.

But now, other men of ability and ambition had arrived, men such as Makan, the son of Kaki; Asfar, the son of Shiruyih; Mardavij, the son of Ziyar.

As soon as Hasan Ibn Qasim, the last of the siyyid potentates, was killed outside the city of Amul in the year 928, Asfar established himself as the sole ruler of Tabaristan.

Asfar and Mardavij were both Daylamites, Makan in Ray represented the Samanids.

The two Daylamites fell out between themselves, and Asfar lost.

Now, Mardavij, whom C.

E.

Bosworth characterizes as 'one of the fiercest of these Daylami condottieri' (The Islamic Dynasties, p.

92), had the field entirely to himself and ranged as far as Isfahan and Hamadan.

About this time, the three brothers, 'Ali, Hasan and Ahmad (see p.

296)) sons of Buyih, a Daylamite who had been for years in the service of Makan, seeing him much reduced, left him and joined Mardavij.

They were destined to found a dynasty which overpowered the 'Abbasids--the desideratum of all the Daylamites.

Mardavij, although outwardly converted to Islam, was secretly, like his brother Vushmagir and Asfar, a dedicated Mazdean.

He tried to revive the traditions of the Sasanians, and detested the Caliphate as heartily as any faithful man of Daylam and Gil.

At Isfahan (in the winter of 934-5) he suddenly ordered the observance of the rites of Sadih, the winter festival[1] of the Mazdeans.

Soon, in that city, he met his death at the hands of his Turkish officers.

Finding that they had been negligent with the preparation for the festival--lighting a huge bonfire on the banks of Zayandih-Rud--he was enraged, and the Turks, fearing for their lives, caught him unaware in his bath and murdered him.

Thus died one of the most remarkable men of Daylam, whom Bosworth stigmatizes as one of the 'condottieri'. (Mardavij, a Ziyarid, ruled from AD 927 to 935.

Ed.) [1.

The four great festivals of pre-Islamic Iran consisted of Naw-ruz (Spring), Tir (Summer), Mihragan (Autumn), Sadih (Winter).

Mihragan--the festival of Mihr (Sun), recalled the worship of Mithra.]

<p306> Strangely enough, the sons of Buyih did not remain tied to the Al-i-Ziyar (Ziyarids), and the obvious reason can be found in the ambitions which they themselves nurtured.

They were set to dominate the whole world of Islam.

Of course they did not attain that zenith, but nevertheless they rose to great heights.

The whole of Tabaristan, and not only Tabaristan but the whole complex of Islamic society, stretching from the vale of Oxus and the foothills of Hindu-Kush to the waters of the Atlantic, experienced many an upheaval in the opening decades of the fourth Hejira century.

Vushmagir had to contend with the Al-i-Buyih right to the end.

And when he died in a riding accident, his two sons, Bisutun, or Bihistun, and Qabus, fought over his heritage.

The younger, Qabus, was soon forced to seek refuge in Bukhara, of all places.

Mansur, the Samanid Amir, helped him, whereas the elder brother had been aided by 'Adudu'd-Dawlih, the greatest ruler of the Buwayhids.

However, Bisutun died in 978 and Qabus came into full possession of Tabaristan.

Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus (reigned 978-1012) is one of the most notable princes of Tabaristan.

He was a talented man, well versed in literature, and was also a man of great ability.

But the rivalries of the Buwayhids entangled him as well. 'Adudu'd-Dawlih had incurred the displeasure of his father, Ruknu'd-Dawlih, because he had challenged his cousin, Izzu'd-Dawlih Bakhtiyar the son of Mu'izzu'd-Dawlih Ahmad (one of the three brothers, founders of the Buwayhid Dynasty), and led his armies to Baghdad.

But the ailing Ruknu'd-Dawlih, who died in Isfahan in September 976, was reconciled with his son before his death, appointing him his successor. 'Adudu'd-Dawlih had a full brother, Mu'ayyidu'd-Dawlih Buyih, and a half-brother Fakhru'd-Dawlih 'Ali.

Now, 'Adudu'd-Dawlih, disregarding the injunctions of his father, sent Mu'ayyidu'd-Dawlih to fight their half-brother, who, unable to withstand the onslaught, fled to Tabaristan and sought the aid of Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus.

Mu'ayyidu'd-Dawlih demanded in rude terms the surrender of Fakhru'd-Dawlih, which infuriated a man as refined as Shamsu'l-Ma'ali.

Inevitably battle was joined between them, but Qabus did not have an army strong enough to keep the Buwayhid at bay.

Together with the Buwayhid prince, who had taken refuge with him, he took the road to Khurasan.

There, Nuh II, the Samanid Amir, gave Qabus the aid he required.

But treachery undid them.

Once again, in Khurasan, Qabus and Fakhru'd-Dawlih found themselves hopelessly stranded, <p307> because the Samanids, themselves rapidly in decline, could no longer aid them.

The stalwart men who had come to the fore were Sabuk-takin and his son, Mahmud, the Ghaznavid, Turks and fanatically Sunni.

However, death came to the rescue of Fakhru'd-Dawlih.

First, 'Adudu'd-Dawlih and then, within a year, Mu'ayyidu'd-Dawlih died.

Fakhru'd-Dawlih came back to regain his patrimony.

But he proved to be an ingrate.

He gave Tabaristan to a general who had deserted the Samanids.

Fakru'd-Dawlih was indeed a man of uncertain character.

The great vizier, Sahib Ibn 'Abbad, had helped him to his throne and with wise guidance had enabled him to retain it, but as soon as Sahib died, Fakhru'd-Dawlih broke his word, confiscated all of Sahib's property and threw the relatives of that wonderful man into prison.

Death overtook Fakru'd-Dawlih in 997.

At last, after seventeen years of exile, Shamsu'l-Ma'ali returned to his beloved Tabaristan.

Notwithstanding all his splendid attainments, Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus, having known bitter years of adversity, had developed a hardness and harshness of character which lost him many friends.

After some years, the independent spirit of the people of Tabaristan could no longer tolerate his excesses.

Condemning to death Ispahbud Shahriyar, the Bavandi prince, as well as Na'im Zaman, his own chamberlain and a much loved man, brought its retribution.

Qabus fled to Bastam in Khurasan.

His son, Falaku'l-Ma'ali Manuchihr, stood by him and wished him to return.

But Qabus knew that he could no longer rule the people of Tabaristan.

Manuchihr placed him in a fortress for his own safety, but a number of generals made their way into the fortress and murdered him.

Thus ended the life of one of the most talented and accomplished men who had ever adorned the scene of Tabaristan.

Now the days of the Ziyarids as well as the Buwayhids were drawing to a close.

Falaku'l-Ma'ali Manuchihr had to make his submission to Mahmud, the Ghaznavid, and marry a daughter of that unbearable fanatic.

The end of the Ziyarid rule is a matter of conjecture.

Did Unsuru'l-Ma'ali, Kaykavus, the author of the celebrated work, Qabus-Namih,[1] and his son Gilan-Shah (for whose edification that book was composed by his learned and worldly-wise father) ever rule over Tabaristan?

Opinions differ and diverge.

But that which is certain is the fact--sad though it is--that the curtain had come down <p308> over the independence of Tabaristan in the days of Falaku'l-Ma'ali Manuchihr, attachment to whom made Abu'n-Najm Ahmad, the famed poet of Damghan, adopt Manuchihr as his nom de plume. [1.

Translated into English by Reuben Levy under the title of 'A Mirror for

Princes'.] One could relate in detail the adventures, oftentimes gripping, of the Ispahbuds, whose forebear was Kayus, a Sasanid prince, brother of the great Anushirvan, Chosroes I.

Those Ispahbuds of the House of Bavand grace the history of Tabaristan, but they did not spring from the stock of Daylam or Gil.

We have already had glimpses of the House of Jastan which brought forth wise and just rulers.

Tabaristan had another line of Ispahbuds, variously known as Musafirids, Salarids, or Kangarids, who had Daylamistan within their grasp, but only for a short time.

Adharbayjan was their main hunting-ground until the Isma'ilis of Alamut ended their power in the middle of the eleventh century.

The story of Tabaristan, independent Tabaristan, had reached its close.

The Saljuqs, who came next, rode roughshod over that dearly-cherished province by the Caspian Sea.

But some flicker of its independence remained, until it was totally extinguished by the man who established Shi'ism throughout Iran: the Safavid, Shah Isma'il.

Tabaristan of ancient fame was dead.

But Mazindaran (the new Tabaristan) lived to attain the apogee of honour and distinction.

Therein dwelt, flourished and prospered the ancestors of Baha'u'llah--the Supreme Manifestation of the Almighty God. <p309> 23 The Ancestry of Baha'u'llah The celebrated Baha-i scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani, has written that at the time when he lived in Tihiran a controversy arose amongst some of the Baha'is regarding the purpose of verses composed by Shalmaghani that point to the Advent of a Manifestation of God in future years.

Abu-Ja'far Muhammad Ibn 'Ali was a native of the village of Shalmaghani, which was situated in the region of Wasit in 'Iraq.

So he was known as ash-Shalmaghani.

He was a Shi'ih and a close associate of Husayn Ibn Ruh, who claimed to be the third deputy of the Hidden Imam.

Husayn Ibn Ruh was a prominent member of the House of Nawbakht, and owed his appointment to the previous deputy:

Abu-Ja'far Muhammad Ibn 'Uthman al-'Umari.

Despite his high connections, he was thrown into gaol by the highly-capricious 'Abbasid caliph, al-Muqtadir.

Shalmaghani is greatly vilified, because during the period of Husayn Ibn Ruh's

incarceration he changed his views and denied the existence of a Hidden Imam.

The Twelvers, amongst whom Shalmaghani had enjoyed prestige and leadership, then directed their efforts towards his destruction.

During the caliphate of ar-Radi (AD 934-40) Shalmaghani and Ibrahim Ibn Abi-'Awn, one of his ardent supporters, were both put to death and their bodies were burned.

In a Tablet addressed to Mullazadih of Tabriz, 'Abdu'l-Baha points out that Shalmaghani spoke the word of truth, foretelling the rise of the Divine Luminary from the horizon of Iran, but that men devoid of truth denounced him and condemned him to death.

The following pages are from the pen of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, to whom 'Abdu'l-Baha referred Aqa Khusraw Biman for information concerning the ancestry of Baha'u'llah.

His reply was later published <p310> as a pamphlet in Bombay and is here translated, in part, by the present author.[1] [1.

Sharh-i-Shajarih Namih-i-Mubarakih (Description of the Blessed Genealogy).

See Bibliography.] 'Some considered that the poem under consideration carried the tidings of the Advent of the Primal Point.

They took the word "Farsi" that appears in the poem to be the same as "Shirazi".

Others considered the reference to be to the Advent of the Abha Beauty, because Shalmaghani had denied that the appearance of the Promised One would be from the House of Hashim, and had prophesied that the Light of Abha would shine from the House of Kisra [Chosroes].

Thus it is proved [they concluded] that the prophecy gave the tidings of the Advent of the Blessed Beauty and not of the Bab. 'Sometime previous to that I had noted these words in the Dasatir [a book related to the Mazdean Faith]: "Should it remain of high Heaven, I shall raise up one of your people and shall show Him the Way, and shall not take away prophethood and Lordship from thy children".

And in other books of the Parsis I had observed amongst the tidings which they carry the definite statement that this bounty shall be realized after the passage of twelve hundred and some more years from the time of the inception of the Faith of Islam: that is to say, before 1300 years have come to pass from the birth of Islam that shining Luminary will appear over that delectable horizon.

Briefly, for these reasons I reached the conclusion that the ancestry of the House of Nuris goes back to the ancient dynasties of Iran; and therefore Shalmaghani intended in that poem to convey the tidings of the Advent of the Abha Beauty and not the Advent of the Primal Point. 'However, since firmly holding this conception without the support of the testimony of history was not

a rational act, I went out to investigate the matter in the history of Tabaristan.

Historians maintain that consequent to the victory of the Muslims over Iran and the extinction of the Sasanids, some princes of Iran captured Mazindaran, and several dynasties branching out from them reigned over that domain for a very long time.

Such were the Badustaniyan, who, as it is retailed in Habibu's-Siyar [a history by Khundmir, AD 1523], after the abandonment of the capital by Yazdigird the son of Shahriyar [Yazdigird III, the last of the Sasanids], took over Mazindaran and <p311> protected it from domination by the Arabs.

The seat of the government of the Badustaniyan was at the city of Amul and the city of Barfurush and also other central cities of Tabaristan.

For many a generation the governance of these cities belonged to this dynasty.

And of the kings of Tabaristan there is also the dynasty of Al-i-Ziyar whose first ruler was Mardavij, the son of Ziyar, who came to power in the year AH 315 [AD 927] and within a short time brought all the cities of Tabaristan under his independent reign.

The Ziyarids held power for nearly one-hundred-and-sixty years.

Their capital was Gurgan or Jurjan.

They were descendants of Sasanids.

The most famous of them is 'Unsurul-Ma'ali Kavus the son of Vushmagir, son of Mardavij, son of Ziyar of Daylam.

To this day, his book the Qabus-Namih, which he wrote in a style eloquent and strong for the edification of his son, Gilan-Shah, is well-famed and pleasing to masters of ethics. 'Again, of the kings of Tabaristan is the dynasty of the Sipahbudan of Mazindaran.

Historians consider them to have been the real kings of Mazindaran, and trace their descent back to Anushirvan the Just.

The residence and the seat of government of this dynasty was mostly in the district of Nur and Kujur.

Every ruler of this line dwelt with his family and offspring in the castles of these areas.

And the people of Tabaristan--peasant and landlord, ruler and governor--kept their Zoroastrian Faith until the third century of the Hijrah.

It was then that Da'iy-i-Kabir, Hasan Ibn Zayd-i-'Alawi, conquered Tabaristan and the star of the 'Alawid Zaydiyyih rulership rose over Eastern lands.

When that happened all the people of Tabaristan, young and old, rich and poor, without compulsion and dislike, guided by this great Emir, were converted to Islam and became known far and wide as faithful to the Imamate of the Zaydiyyih

School.

The rulership remained with this dynasty until the star of the Safavids rose in turn.

Tabaristan was then governed by the celebrated Emir, Aqa Rustam-i-Ruzafzun.

He refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of Shah Isma'il.

Because of that the emirate of that House became extinct.

All of those emirs were well known for their devotion to the Imams, and for their patronage of knowledge and learned men.

Some of the celebrated savants have penned invaluable tomes dedicated to the rulers of Gurgan and Tabaristan.

Eminent poets have composed lambent odes in praise of the Sipahbuds of Mazindaran.

One such was Manuchihri, the well-famed poet of the fifth century AH [eleventh century AD] who praised <p312> Falaku'l-Ma'ali Manuchihr, the son of Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus, the son of Vushmagir, from whose name he adopted his sobriquet.

And another was the celebrated Khaqani, who composed splendid odes in praise of the Sipahbuds of Mazindaran.

Another famous poet, Zahiri-Fariyabi [twelfth century AD], although in the service and a panegyrist of Qizil-Arslan [AD 1186-91, Atabak of Adharbayjan] and a fervent Sunni himself, addressing his patron in an ode tells him that after thirty years of service in 'Iraq, it is the King of Mazindaran who supplies the daily bread of the poet.

And in another ode, equivocally he says: "Decided have I to turn towards Mazindaran.

Love of Abu-Bakr and friendship for 'Umar provide not the means of living."
'In brief, when I noticed these occasions in history books I became convinced that in all probability I could find correctly the genealogy of the Abha Beauty.

Then a number of trustworthy people stated that Rida-Quli Khan, entitled Amiru'sh-Shu'ara, has mentioned in his book Nizhad-Namih that the descent of the House of Nuris goes back to the just king, Anushirvan.

This was a reliable source, because Hidayat [Rida-Quli Khan's sobriquet], although immersed in waywardness, is one of the most celebrated historians of Iran.

Rawdatu's-Safay-i-Nasiri is one of his works, over which he has toiled many years and has rearranged a famous book.

Secondly, Hidayat is an enemy of the Cause of God.

The nonsense which he has included and published in the Appendices to Rawdatu's-Safa, even overtaking the author of Nasikhu't-Tavarikh [a history of the world in several volumes by Muhammad-Taqi Khan-i-Sipihr of Kashan, entitled Lisfinu'l-Mulk] in shameless fabrication and disparagement, provides clear proof of his enmity.

Therefore it was evident that had he had any doubt regarding the descent of the House of Nuris from the just monarch, Anushirvan, he never would have put it on record and given it wide publicity. Fortunately, at that very time I met the late Haji Mirza Rida-Quli [a half-brother of Baha'u'llah] at the home of one of the noblemen of Tihiran.

The host, prompted by me, asked Haji Mirza Rida-Quli to explain who the forebears were of the House of Nuris.

He replied that their descent was from Yazdigird-i-Shahriyar [the last of the Sasanids].

Our host further enquired whether they had a genealogical table to indicate their descent, or was it only a matter of oral tradition and repetition passed on by the prominent personages of the House?

Haji Mirza Rida-Quli replied that such a genealogical table existed, <p313> in which the names, the professions, and the entitlements of every one of the forebears of this House are all recorded, right up to Yazdigird the son of Shahriyar.

One could gather from what he said that there were several copies extant of that genealogical table in the possession of his cousins and the prominent members of his family. When these evidences were all obtained I presented a supplication to the Holy Threshold of the Abha Beauty, stating the variety of views expressed regarding Shalmaghani's intent and the tidings related to Iran and the historical evidences that exist.

In answer I was honoured with a Tablet, dated 26 Sha'ban 1299 [July 1882].

Regarding the intent of Shalmaghani in his poem, the Pen of the All-Merciful did thus inscribe in that holy Tablet: "O Abu'l-Fadl!

Verily thou hast spoken the truth and hast brought to light that which was enshrined in his words..." (Sharh-i-Shajarih Namih-i-Mubarakih, p.

14) 'As it happened, in those years Ustad Javanmard, the principal of the Parsi School of Yazd and a teacher of the school, who was a prominent Baha'i of Parsi origin, wrote a supplication and enquired about the genealogy of the Blessed Perfection.

In answer to that supplication the Tablet of Shir-Mard was revealed.

In that Tablet it is said: "You had enquired about the pure-natured ancestors; Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani, upon whom be My Glory, has written of heavenly works on this theme that would impart information and increase perception."

Since the text of the Tablet was not available, here the gist of it was quoted. 'What I have written here is also the gist of the treatise which I wrote about the holy Family.

And since on 28th of Rabi'u'l-Avval 1300 [February 1883], on the orders of Kamran Mirza, the Nayibu's-Saltanih, a number of friends and myself were arrested in Tihran, and all my books and writings were looted, the manuscript of that treatise fell into the hands of enemies and was lost to me...' <p314> 24 The Testimony of Ahl-i-Haqq Ahl-i-Haqq--The People of Truth (the name by which they refer to themselves)--are known to the public at large as 'Aliyu'llahi, those who assert the divinity of 'Ali: 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib, the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, the husband of His beloved daughter, Fatimah, the first to believe in Him (apart from His wife, Khadijah), the first rightful Imam, the fourth Caliph.

Their own answer to the above allegation is best summed up in this couplet:

God, we do not consider 'Ali to be, And, in no way, separate from God is he.

It was believed and reported by so eminent a historian as Tabari that 'Abdu'llah Ibn Saba, a Jewish convert, introduced the belief in the divinity of 'Ali into the realm of Islam, and paid with his life for that blasphemy, 'Ali himself ordering his death.

This view has been contested in recent years.

Whether such a person as 'Abdu'llah Ibn Saba existed or not, the fact remains that the belief in the divinity of 'Ali was current in Islam from early days.

On occasions it found fantastic expression.

There was a group called Mukhti'ah--the Errant--who maintained that the Angel Gabriel made an error by bringing the call to Prophethood to Muhammad, because Prophethood had really been ordained for 'Ali.

Even more ludicrous was the belief of a group of people called Azdariyyah, who alleged that 'Ali, the father of Hasan and Husayn (the second and third Imams), was really a man named 'Ali al-Azdari, while the Imam 'Ali was the Creator, and the Creator cannot possibly have progeny.

Enough has been said to indicate the nature of aberrations regarding 'Ali.

Those groups and many others similar to them in the Shi'ih camp, who upheld such fantastic views, were collectively called Ghulat--Extremists.

But the Ahl-i-Haqq of recent centuries have nothing in common with those weavers of fancy, those producers of weird and grotesque <p315> notions who flourished amazingly in early times.

They are an esoteric denomination; of that there can be no doubt.

But they are also people distinguished for their integrity, tolerance, amiability and charity.

Although they have been much harmed by the ignorant and the fanatic, they never harm anyone.

Their stronghold is the township of Kirand and the Guran country in western Iran, not far from the city of Kirmanshah and the border with 'Iraq.

When Baha'u'llah, banished from Iran, reached Kirand on His way to 'Iraq, the notables and the generality of the inhabitants of that delectable township received Him with marked respect.

That area of western Iran is mostly peopled by ethnic minorities, chiefly the Kurds.

The majority of Kurds are Sunnis, but a sizeable number of them belong to Ahl-i-Haqq.

Consequently almost all the literature of this esoteric group is in Kurdish, but with a modicum in Turkish.

In Syria and Lebanon, the Ahl-i-Haqq are known as Nusayri.

The Company of Yaristan is another appellation for them, Yaristan meaning the 'Abode of Friends'.

The fanatics in the Islamic world did great harm to the people of Yaristan, condemning their prominent men to death.

That persecution drove them underground, and they drew an effective veil over their beliefs.

As a result dissension and varied beliefs appeared among them.

One of the early leaders of Yaristan, Sultan Ishaq (Isaac), warned his followers against making their beliefs widely known until the advent of Khavandigar (the Lord).

Sultan Ishaq was truly a ruler, and his seat of government was at Huwayzih in the Persian oil-province of Khuzistan.

He himself was a devotee of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Musha'sha'.

This siyyid, at the hour of death, passed his power and position to Sultan Ishaq.

The Ahl-i-Haqq believe that because the Sultan had purity of heart and intent, truth was unfolded to him.

But he had inveterate enemies, notably his brothers, who, although many people had chosen to follow the Sultan, led a mob against him.

Consequently Sultan Ishaq abdicated and with a number of his followers took the road to northern regions:

Kirand and Guran and Qal'iy-i-Zanjir.

When they reached the vale of Shish, enemies were at their heels.

Pir-Binyamin (Benjamin) asked the Sultan to find a way of rescue.

Sultan Ishaq guided his people to climb to the top of the mount and spend the night there.

The enemies stopped at the base of the mountain, awaiting dawn to rush the besieged and cut them down.

Then, it is believed, the Sultan ordered this Pir-Binyamin or <p316> another elder, named Pir-Davar, to take a handful of dust and throw it at the enemies, whereupon a tremendous storm arose: thunder, lightning and tempestuous winds.

A few of the Sultan's followers then charged the enemy, who, in the dark and in the thick of the storm began fighting each other.

When dawn came, only a small number of them had survived the struggle, and when they realized what had happened, they fled the field.

Now, the story goes, Pir-Binyamin begged the Sultan to show some particular favour towards those of his followers who had lost their lives.

Sultan Ishaq ordered the Company of Yaristan to fast for three days in memory of the martyrdom of those Yars (Friends).

The Kurds observe this fast, but there are differences amongst them as to the exact time and date; some consider it to be at that time of year when the Pleiades face the moon.

Once the peril was averted, Sultan Ishaq and his followers went to Kirand and settled in that neighbourhood.

The Sultan took his abode at Qal'iy-i-Zanjir.

This place is considered by Ahl-i-Haqq to be equivalent to the Ka'bah.

It is named after Pir-Davar.

Very few ever visit it, because the pilgrimage there is conditional upon total detachment and renunciation of all earthly ties.

There are two mountains in that area called Valahu and Balabanu by Ahl-i-Haqq.

The latter is the mountain of Sulaymaniyyih, to which Baha'u'llah went.

There Darvish Sidq-'Ali, the attendant of the Shrine of Pir-Davar, on meeting Him came to see in Him all the signs by which the Promised One was to be recognized.

Darvish Sidq-'Ali became greatly devoted to Baha'u'llah.

Thus did 'Abdu'l-Baha speak of him:

He was a dervish; a man who lived free and detached from friend and stranger alike.

He belonged to the mystic element and was a man of letters ... unlike the other Sufis he did not devote his life to dusty hashish ... only searched for God,

spoke of God, and followed the path of God.

He had a fine poetic gift and wrote odes to sing the praises of Him Whom the world has wronged and rejected...

That free and independent soul discovered, in Baghdad, a trace of the untraceable Beloved.

He witnessed the dawning of the Daystar above the horizon of 'Iraq, and received the bounty of that sunrise.

He came under the spell of Baha'u'llah, and was enraptured by that tender Companion.

Although he was a quiet man, one who held his peace, his very limbs were like so many tongues crying out their message.

When the retinue of Baha'u'llah was about to leave Baghdad he implored permission to go along <p317> as a groom.

All day, he walked beside the convoy, and when night came he would attend to the horses.

He worked with all his heart.

Only after midnight would he seek his bed and lie down to rest; the bed, however, was his mantle, and the pillow a sun-dried brick. ...In his high station, that of groom, he reigned like a king; indeed he gloried over the sovereigns of the earth.

He was assiduous in attendance upon Baha'u'llah; in all things, upright and true...

While in the barracks, Baha'u'llah set apart a special night and He dedicated it to Darvish Sidq-'Ali.

He wrote that every year on that night the dervishes should bedeck a meeting place, which should be in a flower garden, and gather there to make mention of God...

This eminent dervish spent his whole life-span under the sheltering favor of God.

He was completely detached from worldly things.

He was attentive in service, and waited upon the believers with all his heart.

He was a servant to all of them, and faithful at the Holy Threshold...
(Memorials of the Faithful, pp.

368) That dervish festival mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha is styled 'Id-i-Laylatu'l-Quds--the Festival of the Night of Holiness.

It is said that whenever Sultan Ishaq visited the mountains of Sulaymaniyyih and its environs he told his followers that He Who ruled over destinies of nations would come there and decide the issue.

Sultan Ishaq was apparently a contemporary of Amir Timur-i-Gurkani (Tamerlane, AD 1370-1405).

He had seven sons, all of whom arose after the passing of their father to promote his teachings.

Each one of them laid a foundation of belief, and that was why there came to be seven denominations within the Circle of Yaristan.

Apparently all of the seven were in agreement about points of belief, differing only about fasting.

The following paragraphs describe how that difference is explained.

Shah Ibrahim, a grandson of Sultan Ishaq, was established in Baghdad and the fame of his virtues spread far and wide.

In Tabriz the ruler, Shah Jahan, had an official whose son fell terribly ill and the physicians were unable to cure him.

Hearing of the miraculous deeds attributed to Shah Ibrahim, the official took his son to Baghdad where Shah Ibrahim cured the boy.

Today the book of Qushchi-'Ughli, the son of that official, is well regarded and treasured by Ahl-i-Haqq.

That book of verses, all in Turkish, has many references to the advent of the Bab and His martyrdom in Adharbayjan, and to the advent of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad and His sojourn in the Holy Land.

Until Qushchi came to Baghdad the membership of Yaristan was confined <p318> to the Kurds, but after his attachment to Shah Ibrahim an appreciable number of Turks came within its orbit.

Seven men, it is related, took the road to Baghdad, full of zeal, singing, dancing, and playing their musical instruments, but since they had not been summoned by Shah Ibrahim and had not obtained his permission before setting out, they were endangered by a snowstorm and died in a cave where they had taken refuge.

Pir-Binyamin requested Shah Ibrahim to bestow some favour upon them, and he instituted fasting for a week in their memory.

Again Pir-Binyamin intervened.

Many of the members of Yaristan, he pleaded, would succumb should they refrain from eating and drinking for seven days.

Then Shah Ibrahim reduced the days of fasting to three.

This is why, it is explained, the Turks of Yaristan observe the fast in memory of those who perished in the cave, while the Kurds of Yaristan do it in remembrance of the martyrs who died defending Sultan Ishaq.

Khan-Atash, who was a contemporary of Nadir Shah (1736-47), the Afsharid, put

a ban on fasting.

He is the last of the spiritual guides and was a descendant of Sultan Ishaq.

He based his pronouncement on the words of Sultan Ishaq and Shah Ibrahim, who had definitely stated that their decree of fasting would endure until the Advent of Khavandigar, and then the command would be His.

Khan-Atash declared that this Advent was close at hand, and the people of Yaristan should be exceedingly happy and rejoice.

Khan-Atash left no successor.

Haji Mirza 'Abdu'llah-i-Sahih-Furush (resident in Tihran) was a prominent member of the Company of Yaristan.

Having enthusiastically embraced the Baha'i Faith and being well acquainted with all the texts of Ahl-i-Haqq, he was moved to compose a book,[1], pointing out and proving that the prophecies contained in those texts have all been fulfilled in the Advents of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. [1.

The title of his book was Istdlaliyyih Baray-i-Ahl-i-Haqq.

He died several decades ago.

See Bibliography. (Ed.)] Many are the words of wisdom and of right counsel which Sultan Ishaq bequeathed to the Company of Yaristan.

Would to God that all the people of Iran had given a receptive ear to these words, as did the Kurds and the Turks who found their spiritual home in Yaristan: 'If thou carest for thine own Faith thou wilt not abuse the Faith of any other.' The elders and seers of Yaristan have spoken of two Advents, in the <p319> fullness of time.

At first, they have predicted, Binyamin (Benjamin) will step forth, to be followed by the greater Advent of Havangar (Khavangar) or Khavandigar (the Lord).

Shaykh Amir, who lived some two centuries prior to the Advent of the Bab, specified that Binyamin was to declare the nearness of the Coming of the Lord.

Siyyid Fardi, who also lived about two hundred years before the days of the Bab, told his disciples, when his death was close at hand, that a man named Taymur (Timur) would come out of the village of Banyaran (which is in the district of Guran), in the guise of Ayut-Hushyar.

He will be, the Siyyid declared, the 'Herald of Truth'.

Indeed, during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1834-48), a young man named Taymur, nearly twenty years old, came from that village, love-intoxicated, and cried out: 'O Yaristan, I have tidings for you; my Lord, the generous King is here.

I am Taymur, Taymur:

Ayut-Hushyar, come to herald Mihdi of Shah Khavangar.' Taymur had several

thousands of the people of Yaristan gathered round him.

In <p320> the early part of the reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, Taymur was arrested and the Shi'ih divines condemned him to death.

Qushchi-'Ughli clearly prophesied the emergence of the company which had attained salvation from the area of Khurasan, and indeed that referred to the Babu'l-Bab (Mulla Husayn) and his companions, who took the road to Mazindaran from Khurasan.

Taymur had, in a couplet in Kurdish, spoken of the eighteen (the exact number of the Bab's Letters of the Living) who would stand with their Commander.

Lachin, another seer of Yaristan, clearly named the city of Shiraz as the place where choice gifts of the spirit would be offered.

Other seers of Yaristan, such as Naw-ruz, Karim and Rustam, specified the years that Binyamin would have to fulfil his mission, which tally with the number of years of the Ministry of the Bab; and pointed to the martyrdom of the Bab and His disciple, Anis (Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Zunuzi), at Tabriz.

Still others foresaw the upheaval of Zanzan and the exodus from Khurasan.

All these prophecies are in Kurdish verse.

Then we have Murad, another Kurd and a poet, who very clearly mentioned the attempt which would be made on the life of the Shah, because he would be considered responsible for the martyrdom of the Lord of the Age.

That same Murad left no doubt that Husayn, the Deliverer on Whose brow rests the crown of divine sovereignty, would be put in chains during the reign of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

And Lachin, already quoted, made the Advent of Husayn, who is Shah Khavandigar, the point in time marking the commencement of a trial of strength with the Qajars and the rapid downfall of that clan.

He also specified Damavand as the area from which Shah Khavandigar would step into the arena of the world.

Lachin dwelt particularly on the cruelties and the misdeeds of the Qajars and plainly declared that their iniquities would cause lamentation, and that He Who rides the charger of Truth would quit Iran.

Moreover, Shaykh Amir foretold the retirement of Baha'u'llah to Sulaymaniyyih:

He went away to a place unknown to all.

The King and the Lord of Binyamin went away to a place, unknown to all.

Men are looking for Him in vain.

The Lord is manifest in a human temple and people know not.

Then, Naw-ruz specified the mountain Valahu (the range of mountains on which Sulaymaniyyih is situated) as the place where <p321> Faith would be renewed.

Haydar was the next seer to look into the future and see the return of the King of Truth--Baha'u'llah--from the mountain where He dwelt; and he commented on the bounties which He would shower on the people.

Astounding, also, is Il-Bagi's wording of his prophecy: 'The Babis shall follow Baha.' And once again Lachin foretold the doom of the Qajars: 'by the roar of men, lion-hearted, and by the call of the dragon of the Lord, tremble shall the very foundations of the Qajars.' Shir Khan was another Kurdish seer who foretold in detail the Advent of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, the Declaration of His Cause in springtime (the Ridvan period), the opposition of the divines, the frustration of their designs, and Baha'u'llah's journey to Istanbul. 'Baghdad and Istanbul we shall bring under our dominion'.

Rustam, already quoted, foretold a good deal more of those events associated with the rise and the diffusion of the Faith of Baha'u'llah: 'How wonderful is the horseman [the rider] who, with sword drawn, shall conquer Najaf, Baghdad, Istanbul, Rum [Ottoman domains], and Farang [Europe], and reach the shores of the Black Sea.' 'The King of Truth is in Sham [Syria], and the Herald at Tabriz.' Khan Almas pointed to the Turkish Revolution (1908), the spread of the Faith in the West, the degradation of Iran, the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the establishment of the House of Justice.

Finally, to crown these breath-taking prophecies which are found in the texts (mainly and chiefly Kurdish) of the people of Yaristan, let us hear once again from Murad:

The King of Glory seated on the throne of sovereignty called the peoples of the world to gather and dwell under the pavilion of unity.

Murad! to these He gave the tidings that 'We have revealed all that was hidden'.

The Lord of the World, the Master of all who dwell therein, now established on the seat of Judgement.

He shall judge between nations, and give the people that which they deserve.
<p322> 25 The Land of Ta The Land of Ta--the area of Tihran, capital-city of Iran--was a home of ancient splendour.

And it had a tryst with destiny.

Its hour of incomparable honour, of crowning glory, of supernal bliss, arrived on the 12th day of November 1817.

For on that never-to-be-forgotten day, Tihran witnessed within its compass the birth of the Supreme Manifestation of God.

This chapter will tell the story of the environs of Tihran from earliest times.

Thus, in the Apocrypha--the Book of Judith:

Therefore [Nebuchadnezzar][1] was very angry with all this country, and sware

by his throne and kingdom, that he would surely be avenged upon all those coasts of Cilicia, and Damascus, and Syria, and that he would slay with the sword all the inhabitants of the land of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and all Judea, and all that were in Egypt, till ye come to the borders of the two seas. [1.

Reigned 605-662 BC.] Then he marched in battle array with his power against king Arphaxad in the seventeenth year, and he prevailed in his battle: for he overthrew all the power of Arphaxad, and all his horsemen, and all his chariots, And became lord of his cities, and came unto Ecbatane, and took the towers, and spoiled the streets thereof, and turned the beauty thereof into shame.

He took also Arphaxad in the mountains of Ragau and smote him through with his darts, and destroyed him utterly that day. (I:12-15) Ragau mentioned in the Book of Judith is the celebrated city of Ray (Rhages).

The mountains of Ragau are the ranges in Shimran, the area of a number of summer resorts at the foothills of Elburz (Alburz), which today are for the most part joined together and modern Tihiran has reached up to them.

One of these delectable spots was Murgh-Mahallih, much loved by Baha'u'llah.

In ancient times the great city of Ray (or Rayy) was well to the south of the Shimran ranges and the large village of Tihiran.

A few of the summer resorts in the upper slopes of Elburz were (and still are) exceedingly pleasant in the summer months, but isolated oftentimes in the heart of the winter. <p323> Avesta, the Zoroastrian scriptures, also contains reference to the area of Ray.

It is described as a sacred enclave.

Overlooking old Rhages (which, as we shall see, was totally destroyed centuries ago) was the mountain known as Mt.

Bibi Shahr-Banu.

On it a shrine has been erected, to which men are not admitted.

Shahr-Banu, most reliable historians agree, was a daughter of Yazdigird III, the last of the Sasanian kings who went down before the sweeping tide of Islam.

Shahr-Banu was made a prisoner and taken to Medinah. 'Umar, the second caliph, gave her to Husayn, who inherited the Imamate from his brother, Hasan, and fell a martyr on the bank of the Euphrates.

Legend has it that after the appalling slaughter of the descendants of the Prophet on the plain of Karbila, Shahr-Banu, to escape from the unholy hands of the minions of the Umayyad usurpers, rode Duldul--the renowned horse of her illustrious husband who was decapitated and trampled by the hooves of the steeds of a merciless foe--and fled from the battlefield.

The enemy set out in pursuit.

But Duldul sprouted wings and thus Shahr-Banu made good her escape.

That wonderful horse, it was believed by the credulous, carried the
<p324> daughter of Yazdigird all the way to the distant Ray.

There, it was maintained, a cleft in the hillside opened to swallow her,
after which the gaping aperture was closed.

That is the legend which gained currency over the centuries.

But the truth is quite apart.

Discarding the miraculous element, the fact of the matter is that Shahr-Banu
could not have been on the bank of the Euphrates.

She died, long before the terrible destruction of the House of the Prophet, at
the time she gave birth to 'Ali, the fourth Imam, known as Zaynu'l-'Abidin (the
Adornment of the Devout). 'Ali, the Medial (Awsat), as he was also known,
on the day his glorious father quaffed the cup of martyrdom was a sickly boy
of uncertain health, fever-ridden, and pining on his bed.

Thus he remained the sole survivor of the holocaust, and the mantle of Imamate
came to rest on his shoulders.

And because the blood of the Sasanians ran in his veins, in the eyes of the
Persians, smarting under defeat, his spiritual heritage was greatly enhanced.

It was in Persia that many of his descendants found refuge and support,
escaping from the tyrannies of the caliphs of Damascus and, later, of Baghdad.

On that mount of Bibi-Shahr-Banu, sanctified in Islamic times by a legend, once
stood a temple dedicated to Nahid:[1] Anahita.

Hence the reference in Avesta to the sacredness of the area of Ray,
which included then the village that has grown into a colossal capital-city:

Tihran--the birthplace of Baha'u'llah.

Anahita was one of the supreme 'Izids' of the Mazdean (Zoroastrian) Faith.

Greeks knew Anahita as Aphrodite and Romans as Venus Erucina.

In the area of Tihran and the mountainous region to the north of it, which in
early Islamic times came to be known as Qasran, the worship of Anahita was
widespread. [1.

Nahid, Zuhrah in Arabic, means Venus.

The Arabic name denotes the brilliance of this planet.] It is asserted that
Alexander the Great set out to destroy Zoroastrianism in Iran.

He demolished Mazdean temples and put their priests to death.

The inhabitants of Ray and its environs, being strongly attached to their
religion and even described as fanatical, suffered heavily in the days of

Alexander.

Nizami of Gandzha (now Kirovabad in Soviet Caucasia), one of the most eloquent classical poets of Persia who flourished in the twelfth century AD under the Saljuqs, graphically relates these depredations of Alexander.

Apparently his successors in Iran, the Seleucids, followed the same <p325> <p326> policy of repression in relation to the Mazdeans.

Then a great earthquake hit Ray and razed it to the ground.

When Seleucus Nicator came to rebuild that city of renown, he named it Europos.

The Seleucids had their day.

On the whole, Iran flourished under them, but soon the onrush of the Parthians, who were of Iranian stock, swept them into limbo.

The Parthian dynasty of the Arsacids (Ashkaiyan in Persian), who now held sway, made the city of Ray their spring capital.

Under the Arsacids the area of Tihiran came to assume a central position.

And the Mazdeans regained their freedom of belief.

The Arsacids, although destroying the semi-Greek Seleucids, were themselves influenced by Hellenism.

They did give recognition to Ahuramazda of Zoroastrianism, but they also propagated the worship of Mithra and Anahita.

Even more, they revered Zeus and Apollo of the Greeks.

Later, Artemis also joined their Parthenon.

Arsacids, with their liberal beliefs, practised complete religious toleration.

The Arsacids had, before long, to cope with the rising power of Rome.

In the year 53 BC, in the vicinity of Carrhea (Harran of Islamic times) in Mesopotamia, they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Roman legions.

Crassus, the Roman general, was killed.

There and then the Roman expansion to the East came to a halt and ended.

Octavius (Augustus, the first emperor of Rome) was an officer in the army of Crassus and was present at the battle of Carrhea.

It was during the reign of Augustus and the Arsacid Farhad V that Jesus was born, in Bethlehem.

The Jews were now enslaved, once again, groaning under a foreign yoke.

The glories of David and Solomon had long become memories of a dead past.

Now even the brave deeds of Judas Maccabeus, who heroically defied Antiochus

Epiphanes (176-164 BC), were fast receding into a dim memory.

And the yoke of the Romans rested heavily on the children of Israel.

The Parthians, on the other hand, besides the tolerance which they habitually practised, were exceedingly kind and helpful to the Jews because they resented the Romans and their tyrannies.

The Arsacid kings even went to the length of actively supporting the Jews to drive out Herod, who was a puppet of Rome, in the year 40 BC and helped put Antigonus, the 'last representative'[1] of the Maccabees, on the throne.

For three years Antigonus held the Romans at bay, and died bravely when the inevitable happened:

Romans triumphed and Herod was restored. [1.

The words quoted are from Magnus, Outlines of Jewish History, p.

23. (Ed.)] <p327> <p328> But now to go back to the story of Ray and Tihran:

Ray, as we have seen, was chosen by the Arsacid kings to be their spring resort, and that city became known by their name, 'Arshak' (Ashk).

In the year AD 226, after a reign of nearly five centuries, the Arsacids lost their throne to Ardashir,[1] who ruled in the province of Fars.

Ardashir was the grandson of Sasan, a priest of a temple in the city of Istakhr, dedicated to Anahita.

When Ardashir overthrew the Parthians he claimed descent from the Achaemenians, and set out to restore the Mazdean Faith to its pristine purity.

Now the religion of Zoroaster was beset with the problem of Zervanism.

The most authoritative work in English on Zervanism is that of the late R.

C.

Zaehner (Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics in the University of Oxford).

In his introduction to that voluminous and exceedingly readable and informative tome, Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma, Prof.

Zaehner wrote: [1.

Ardashir (or Ardishir) is the same as Artaxerxes in Greek.

In his day his name had this form in Middle Persian:

Artakhishatr.

In the Achaemenian times it was pronounced thus:

Artakhishatra.] Both the Zoroastrians in Sassanian times and the Shi'ah Muslims in the Safavi period proved to be exceptionally intolerant of

other religions--largely, one suspects, to emphasize their difference from the neighbouring states. (Prof.

R.

C.

Zaehner in his Introduction to Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma, p.

3) He goes on to say: ...Zoroastrianism was uncompromisingly dualist.

Nor was its dualism the classic dualism between spirit and matter which would have provided a common meeting-ground with the Indian Jains ..., with the Gnostics to the West, and with the Manichaeans in Iran itself.

It was a dualism of spirit, postulating two principles at the origin of the Universe--the Spirit of Good or Ohrmazd, and the Spirit of Evil or Ahriman.

This extremely original idea dates back to Zoroaster himself, and it is his basic contribution to the philosophy of religion...

Though it was no doubt Zoroaster himself who sowed the seed of spiritual dualism, it was left to his epigones in later times to systematize it...

It can be readily understood that so fundamental a dualism might well produce a reaction, since the history of religion proves that the nature of man seems to demand a unified godhead.

This reaction duly appeared: it is what we call Zervanism.

As might be expected in a heterodox sect, in Zervanism we do appear to find traces of alien ideas which were so rigorously excluded from the Zoroastrian orthodoxy... ...The Zervanites tried to re-establish the unity of the godhead by positing a principle prior and superior to Ohrmazd and Ahriman, thereby doing away <p329> with that essential dualism which is the hub of the Zoroastrian position... (Prof.

R.

C.

Zaehner in his Introduction to Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma, pp.

3-5) Here is not the place to counter the belief that the Faith of Zoroaster was not essentially monotheist, although duality is apparent in its own guise.

This is not the place either to present a detailed account of Zervanism, its arguments, its duels with the revived Mazdeanism under the Sasanians.

But before leaving the subject it ought to be said that Zervanism, despite suppression, endured throughout the Sasanian period, sometimes even in the ascendant.

In the days of the Sasanians, the governance of Ray resided with the family of Mihran.

This powerful family took its name from a village of that name and had arisen to prominence in the whole area of Tihran.

In the present-day Tihran there is a large garden called Mihran, situated in the road until recently known as Avenue Kurush-i-Kabir (Cyrus the Great).

That is the site of the old village.

Bahram-i-Chubin, who rebelled against Chosroes II--Khusraw Parviz--and even occupied the throne for a while at Ctesiphon, was an outstanding member of the family of Mihran.

At the end Chosroes defeated him and Bahrim fled to Turkistan.

His grandson, Siyavakhsh, was the Governor of Ray and the area of Tihran when the armies of Islam invaded Iran.

Throughout the reign of the Sasanians, the area of Tihran maintained its supremacy in the domain of religion.

Two great fire-temples sprang up: one to the north of Tihran, within the environ of Qasran on the heights of Mt.

Tuchal; the other, to the south, in the vicinity of the present-day Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim.

The worship of Nahid (Anahita) also held its ground firmly right to the end.

Iran and Byzantium ruined themselves with their constant warfare.

Chosroes II, at first scoring victory after victory over the Byzantines, even overrunning Jerusalem and carrying away what was believed to be the true cross, wilted under brilliant and desperate counter-attacks by Heraclius.

He, who had defied the summons of the Arabian Prophet, fled miserably from the battlefield, Byzantine armies penetrated deep into Persian territory, and the disgraced and crestfallen Chosroes was deposed by his son, Shiruyih, and murdered in his prison-cell.

How awesome sound those prophetic verses of the Qur'an which foreshadowed the victory of the Byzantines and the abasement of the overbearing Parviz:

<p330> Rum [the Byzantines] were defeated in the near land.

They, after their defeat, shall be victorious, in a few years.

Command belongs to God, before and after; and on that day the believers shall rejoice in God's aid.

God will aid whomsoever He willeth.

And He is the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

The promise of God:

God faileth not to fulfil His promise, but most men do not know it. (Qur'an 30:1-5) Very soon after the debacle of Chosroes II, the triumphant

armies of Islam poured into Iran and Yazdigird III, the last of the Sasanians, suffered the same fate as Darius III, Codomanus, the last of the Achaemenians.

He was treacherously murdered.

Writing of the ancestors of Baha'u'llah, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith states:

He derived His descent, on the one hand, from Abraham (the Father of the Faithful) through his wife Katurah, and on the other from Zoroaster, as well as from Yazdigird, the last king of the Sasanian dynasty.

He was moreover a descendant of Jesse, and belonged, through His father, Mirza 'Abbas, better known as Mirza Buzurg--a nobleman closely associated with the ministerial circles of the Court of Fath-'Ali Shah--to one of the most ancient and renowned families of Mazindaran (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 94).

The extinction of the Sasanian dynasty occurred in the year AD 641, at the Battle of Nihavand.

After that battle, which the Arab historians came to call Fath-al-Futuh--Victory of Victories--Yazdigird was a fugitive, and was murdered ten years later, in the vicinity of Marv in Khurasan.

The coming of Islam made no appreciable difference to the way of life in the area of Ray and Tihiran.

According to the great historian at-Tabari (whose name indicates that he was a man of Tabaristan), in the year AH 22 (AD 644) Zinabi,[1] a general in the service of Siyavakhsh, the hereditary governor of Ray, betrayed his master because of a grudge against him, and opened the gates of the city to the Arab commander.

Later he strove hard to make peace between the conquerors and the people of Ray.

The Mazdeans agreed to pay jizyah (poll-tax), like other dhimmis (people of the Book).

However, they proved insubordinate and turbulent.

With the passage of time, the number of the Mazdeans decreased; but bending knees to the caliphs of Damascus and later of Baghdad was abhorrent even to the newly converted.

And before long Shi'ism spread throughout the area.

A number of the prominent disciples of the fifth and the sixth <p331> Imams--Muhammad al-Baqir and Ja'far as-Sadiq--were men of Ray, such as Yahya Ibn Abi'l-'Ala, 'Atiyyah Ibn Najih Abu-Mutahhar, 'Abdu'r-Rahim Ibn Sulayman, and 'Isa Ibn Mahan. [1.

Originally Zinbudi: the head of the armoury.] Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim, whose

shrine in the area of Ray has for centuries been a place of pilgrimage, died there in the year AH 250.

He led a secluded life while residing in Ray, and used to visit from time to time a grave in the neighbourhood, claiming that Hamzih, a son of Imam Mussal-Kazim, the seventh Imam, was buried there.

The Shrine of Imam-Zadih Hamzih, himself a scion of the House of Muhammad, now stands, in its magnificence, next to that of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim.

Next, we hear that several villages in the area of Ray and Tihran, such as Vanak, had rallied to the Zaydi sect.

This development was due to the fact that on the other side of the Elburz range, in the Caspian province of Tabaristan, descendants of 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib, following the Zaydi rite, had come to power.

Zayd was a son of the fourth Imam--'Ali, known as Zaynu'l-'Abidin, whom the tyrannies of the Umayyads drove into open revolt; despite the advice of his nephew, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, he gathered a force to wage war on the caliph at Damascus.

The result was a foregone conclusion.

Zayd suffered defeat and martyrdom.

Eventually a sect grew up bearing his name, although he himself had never made a particular claim to a position of spiritual authority.

In the days when the 'Abbasids--the scions of 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet--rose up in the name of the House of Muhammad to overthrow the Umayyads, Abu-Muslim of Khurasan became the engineer of their victory over the ungodly, as they said.

But very soon the 'Abbasids went the way of the Umayyads, and Abu-Ja'far al-Mansur treacherously put Abd-Muslim to death in 755.

Before long a sect sprang up claiming that Abu-Muslim was not dead, but lived in hiding in the mountains of Ray.

These are the mountains which rise up from the plain of Tihran and overlook it; they afforded in those early centuries many places of refuge.

As time went on these Muslimiyyahs (so they were called) changed their tune.

Abu-Muslim, they asserted, would emerge in the fullness of time to vanquish the ingrates and the unfaithful.

But it was still in the caves of Elburz where they located their hero, who had chosen to withdraw for the time being from the world. 'Withdrawal and Return' was fast becoming the pattern of dissident beliefs. <p332> The Khurram-Dinan (or Khurramiyyah) were another group of innovators and recalcitrants, both strong and troublesome, in the area of Ray and Tihran.

They were the ones who cherished the memory of Mazdak, the heresiarch who was

put to death, with a large number of his followers, by Chosroes I in 528.

As centuries rolled on, Ray became the most populous city of Asia, and the Tihiran area flourished accordingly.

An amazing development was the congregation of the descendants of 'Ali, the first Imam, in these environs.

The large number of shrines harbouring the remains of the sons and grandsons of the Imam that one encounters in the plain and running up to the heights of the Elburz range and even beyond onto those heights themselves, are evidences of that remarkable turn of events in the first centuries of the Muslim Era.

A modern writer of Iran, Dr Husayn Kariman, divides the descendants of 'Ali, who made their way to the northern limits of that land, into four categories.

First, there were those who suffered by the tyrannies of the Umayyads, and particularly by the enormities of their despicable agent, Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf.

Next came the group who had been heartened by the fact that 'Abdu'llah al-Ma'mun had named, in the year 815, the eighth Imam, 'Ali Ibn Musa'r-Rida, as his successor.

But before long, under pressure from the dispossessed 'Abbasids, Ma'mun changed his mind and secretly, it is claimed, encompassed the death of Imam Rida by poisoning.

The 'Alawiyyin, noting the treachery, had hastily to seek places of refuge.

The third category consisted of those descendants of 'Ali who had rallied to the support of their kinsmen, in rebellion against the caliphs.

Once their leaders were destroyed they had to find routes of escape.

The fourth group were those 'Alawiyyin who flocked to Mazindaran (Tabaristan) when their relatives found power and authority in that region.

And it must be said at once that the dwellers of both sides of the Elburz range, discontented as they were with the caliphs, received the descendants of 'Ali with joy.

We have already described how Hasan Ibn Zayd, then living in Ray, accepted the rulership of Tabaristan (see pp.

30I-2), where he established the Shi'ih doctrine throughout his domain.

Within a few years he was master not only of Tabaristan, but of the whole area of Damavand and Ray and Tihiran as well, where he was firmly established by the year 867.

Hasan was succeeded by his brother Muhammad, who, although unable to retain Ray, did succeed in building shrines over the graves of the descendants of 'Ali in those northern regions.

Centuries later some of them, such as the shrines of Imam-Zadih Hasan,

Imam-Zadih Ma'surn and Imam-Zadih Zayd, were to harbour for a while the remains of the Bab--the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad.

The Samanids, who came to power in Transoxania and Khurasan and ruled from Bukhara (819-1000), had their origins in the Mihran family of the area of Tihran. (See p.

329.) When Amir Isma'il was presented with the domain of Ray, he declined to annex it to his kingdom. 'This is a city of ill omen,' he declared.

In contrast, for the sake of obtaining the governorship of Ray, 'Umar Ibn Sa'd and Shimr had consented to take up arms against the grandson of the Prophet and encompass his martyrdom on the banks of the Euphrates.

The coming of the Buwayhids (932-1062) out of the Daylam country on the shores of the Caspian, and their establishment particularly in Ray where Hasan (entitled Ruknu'd-Dawlih) ruled,[1] made Shi'ism of Ithna-'Ashariyyah (Twelvers) the dominant force in the whole area of Ray and Tihran.

Sultan Mahmud (998-1000), the Ghaznavid centred on the land that is now Afghanistan, followed the Buwayhids to power.

He was fanatically and intolerantly Sunni in his religious profession, took Islam with the sword to India, and inflicted great hardships on the Shi'ih population of the area of Tihran.

His actions were indeed shameful, particularly so as they came in the wake of the benevolent rule of the Buwayhids.

He set up two hundred gallows and hanged as many prominent and outstanding Shi'ites as he could catch in his net.

He accused them of being Qirmati (Carmathian).

Not only the Shi'ih, but the Mu'tazilites as well suffered at the hands of Mahmud.

The great library of Sahib--the wise and learned vizier of the Buwayhids--was raided and despoiled.

Ibn Athir, the celebrated Arab historian, amply testifies to the depredations of the agent of Sultan Mahmud in that well-stocked library.

But once he was in his grave and the Ghaznavid domination had ended, the Shi'ite supremacy was restored in that area. [1.

He was one of the three brothers who were the builders of Buwayhid power. (Ed.)] Then came the Saljuqids (1038-1194).

They too were Sunni, but like the Shi'ite Buwayhids they lorded it over the 'Abbasid caliphs, who were reduced to impotence.

Indeed, gone were the might and dominance of Harun and Ma'mun.

The 'Abbasids had become puppets in the hands of both Shi'ih and Sunnis.

The changes that took place in the fortunes of the Shi'is of Ray and Tihiran, under the Saljuqid kings, were truly spectacular.

Learning, in whatever quarter it was found, was greatly respected.

And Tihiran came to be noticed more and more.

In the Fars-Namih of Ibn Balkhi, dedicated to Sultan Muhammad--the Saljuqid monarch (1105-18), son of the well-famed Malik-Shah (1072-92)--particular mention is made of the pomegranates of Tihiran, whose excellence is compared to the goodness of the pomegranates of the district of Kavar in Fars.

In the days of Nizamu'l-Mulk--the celebrated vizier of the Saljuquids Alp-Arslan and his son Malik-Shah--who was a staunch Sunni of the Shafi'ite school, the village of Tarasht in the area of Tihiran had become a Shi'ih stronghold where regular conferences and seminars were held to discuss matters of text and tradition.

The learned man who directed these circles was a well-known Shi'ih theologian: Khajih Ja'far Ibn Muhammad, author of several books.

The Saljuqid vizier, as already stated, was a Sunni of very decided views; moreover, he was not altogether well-intentioned towards those who believed in the Imamate.

But he made it a point to go from Ray, every week, to that Shi'ih village, and sit at the feet of the Shi'ih theologian.

The Saljuquids were succeeded by the Kharazmshahis who were also Sunnis and exerted pressure on the Shi'is of the area of Ray and Tihiran.

But it was of no avail and Shi'ism became deeply rooted.

We come now to the catastrophe of the Mongol invasion which shook the whole Realm of Islam to its foundations and left the great city of Ray for ever desolate.

It happened in the reign of 'Ala'u'd-Din Muhammad-i-Kharazmshah (1200-20). Sultan Muhammad was a foolish king.

His overbearing haughtiness, the veniality and greed of his chief frontiersman, the senseless execution of the emissaries of the Mongol overlord (who, incidentally, were Muslims) directed the wrath and the fury of Chingiz Khan (whose intentions, at the very beginning, were thoroughly peaceful and neighbourly) to the vast Empire of the Kharazmshah.

Even worse, 'Ala'u'd-Din Muhammad proved a bad planner, a bad general and a cringing coward.

While scores of flourishing districts and cities, homes of culture and beauty, were burned and devastated, while thousands perished and thousands more took to the wilderness, the hapless 'Ala'u'd-Din Muhammad died, an abandoned fugitive, in the forlorn island of Abaskun off the coast of Tabaristan.

His very brave son, Jalalu'd-Din-i-Mankubarni, <p335> faced the Mongol hordes with the utmost courage, but the enemy was far too strong.

Furthermore, fellow-Muslims betrayed him and he was murdered by a demented Kurd on a lone hilltop.

Now that Ray was in ruins, and was never to rise again, the area of Tihiran became of prime importance.

Its people, as we have seen, had been staunch Shi'ihis for a long time.

They were regarded jealously by their Sunni neighbours who began concocting fables about them, and some of these fables are strangely reflected in such authoritative works as Mu'jama'l-Buldan of Yaqut al-Hamavi.

In the succeeding centuries which saw the rise and the downfall of the descendants of Chingiz, the appearance of many petty kingdoms, the scourge of Amir Timur (Tamerlane), the civilizing influence of his progeny (which stood in amazing contrast to Timur's own destructiveness), the ruined Ray and the flourishing Tihiran were crossed and re-crossed, visited and re-visited by many a magnate.

The Al-i-Baduspan of Ruyan in the western part of Tabaristan, towards the middle of the fourteenth century captured the whole area of Tihiran and Ray.

These Ispahbuds also had Nur and Kujur within their domains.

They are known as Rustamdariyans as well, because they were centred in Rustamdar.

Their rule endured in that area of Tabaristan well into the reign of Shah 'Abbas the Great, the Safavi ruler.

Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, who led an embassy from the court of Henry III, King of Castile, to the court of Tamerlane, gives a good account of Tihiran, where he stayed for a couple of days in the best house of the town; Tamerlane himself had lodged there.

In our narrative we have now reached the days of the Safavids.

With them Iran is made new.

Isma'il, a scion of Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din of Ardibil, at the age of thirteen came out of the forests of Gilan by the Caspian Sea to avenge the death of his father and his grandfather.

He claimed that he was a descendant of Imam Muss al-Kazim, the seventh Imam.

It is now proved, beyond any measure of doubt, that he was not a siyyid.

Of a certainty he was of Kurdish origin, and had Turkish blood as well as Greek.

Despina, a daughter of Kalo Ioannes, the last Greek emperor of Trebizond, was the mother of his mother.

Habitually he spoke and wrote in Turkish, and composed poems in Turkish.

He dragged an Iran mostly Sunni into the Twelver Shi'ih fold.

Iran lacked enough Shi'ih divines.

He brought those whom he needed from Jabal 'Amil in Syria.

And there is no question that Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din, whose name was given to the <p336> dynasty which Isma'il founded, was a Kurd, a Sunni and the head of a Sufi fraternity.

It is with the advent of Shah Tahmasb I, son of the founder of the dynasty and its second monarch, that Tihran rises to eminence.

In the first place Tahmasb had his capital in Qazvin, which is within a short distance from Tihran.

Secondly, Tahmasb was a pious man, narrow-minded even with his piety, as evidenced by his treatment of Anthony Jenkinson, a traveller from England in search of trade.

He spent time and money liberally to restore and beautify the Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim.

Visiting that shrine, Shah Tahmasb had to pass through Tihran.

The trees and verdure, and the plenteousness of water there, pleased him, and he decided to have it surrounded by a moat and give it battlements and four gates.

Towers to the number of the surihs of the Qur'an--one hundred and fourteen--were placed in the battlements, and within each tower one of the surihs was entombed.

Pietro della Valle, the 'Roman patrician' who sojourned for seven years in Persia during the reign of Shah 'Abbas the Great, became well acquainted with 'Abbas.

During one of his peregrinations, waiting on the Shah, he visited Tihran with his Nestorian Christian wife, Ma'ani, whom he had married in Baghdad.

Pietro liked Tihran and was enchanted by the stately plane trees which he found adorning its thoroughfares.

Apparently, unlike his grandfather, 'Abbas was not fond of Tihran.

He had no palace of his own within the city, and was forced to live in tents outside.

Moreover, on one occasion the people of Tihran had insulted him by seeming indifference.

During the Afghan invasion, which resulted in the virtual extinction of Safavid rule, Tihran, for long a stronghold of Shi'ism, suffered greatly at the invaders' hands.

For a while, they took a defensive position in Tihran and added to its fortifications.

Nothing of importance happened in Tihran or to Tihran in the succeeding decades.

Occasionally, Nadir Shah, the Afsharid, passed through it; and once he encamped there for a fairly long time.

In the wake of the assassination of Nadir Shah in the year 1747, a period of total anarchy ensued.

There were three chief contenders for power: an Afghan named Azad Khan; Muhammad-Hasan Khan, the chieftain of the Qajars (who occupied a good part of the area that was Tabaristan); and Karim Khan-i-Zand, a Lur and in no way Turkish. <p337> Karim Khan was in Tihran when his stubborn rival, the Qajar chief, was treacherously murdered and decapitated in his haunts by the Caspian Sea.

The murderer carried the trophy triumphantly to Tihran, hoping for high reward.

But the wretch had thoroughly misjudged the Zand Khan.

As soon as Karim set eyes on the head of his rival, sorrow seized his heart and his tears flowed.

He ordered the execution of the murderer, and the head of Muhammad-Hasan Khan was respectfully interred in the precincts of the Shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim.

Such a man was Karim Khan-i-Zand.

Karim Khan ascended the throne in Tihran, but refused to assume the designation of 'Shah'.

He was only Vakilu'r-Ru'aya, he said, 'the Deputy of the People'.

Then he had a fresh moat dug round Tihran, added to its fortifications and battlements and ordered the construction of a number of mansions and government buildings.

He intended to make Tihran his capital-city.

But soon he changed his mind and went to Shiraz--the immortal Shiraz of the glorious Bab, as it would become--and established his capital there.

We have now almost reached the end of our story of Tihran, which the Qajars made their capital-city.

And Tihran in the nineteenth century witnessed many infamies, great and small, the handiwork of the Qajar usurpers.

Aqa Muhammad Khan, the eunuch-king and first of the Qajars, who inaugurated a dynasty which ruled from 1779 to 1925, began his blood-stained reign in the

foothills of the Elburz range by ordering an odious deed--foul to commit and foul to relate--the dastardly treatment meted to the last of the Zands: the brave, the generous, and immensurably high-minded Lutf-'Ali Khan.

And what then of the Land of Ta?

At a time when the New Age was foreshadowed by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim; when its Herald Prophet the Bab was preparing the way for 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', and was martyred; when that glorious, expected One, Baha'u'llah, the 'Lord of Hosts' and the 'Master of the Day of Judgement', received in a dungeon in Tihiran an intimation of His Mission and was exiled to live and die in Ottoman domains--the Land of Ta was the scene of much tyranny and degradation, and its suffering and eclipse are still evident.

Yet its true station, destined to be <p338> perceived and understood by all mankind, was promised and extolled by Baha'u'llah in these glowing words:

Let nothing grieve thee, O Land of Ta, for God hath chosen thee to be the source of joy to all mankind...

Rejoice with great joy, for God hath made thee 'the Day Spring of His light' inasmuch as within thee was born the Manifestation of His Glory.

<p339> Appendix The Village of Quch-Hisar Quch-Hisar is one of the several villages of the rural district of Ghar, in the vicinity of Tihiran.

Ghar forms part of the larger district of Ray which includes the precincts of the Shrine of Shah-Zadih 'Abdu'l-'Azim.

Quch-Hisar belonged to Baha'u'llah, and Haji Mirza Aqasi, the wily Sadr-i-A'zam of Muhammad Shah and the Antichrist of the Babi Revelation, had had his covetous eyes on this excellent property.

We know there were strong ties of friendship between Mirza Buzurg, the Vazir-i-Nuri, father of Baha'u'llah, and Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, Qa'im-Maqam the Second, the high-minded vazir of Muhammad Shah.

We also know that it was the statesmanship, the effort and endeavour of this Qa'im-Maqam that secured the throne for Muhammad Shah.

He had pledged his word to the late Nayibu's-Saltanih, stood by his word, and, in the teeth of strong opposition by a number of royal pretenders, brought the son of his late master from far-off Tabriz and had him crowned.

Qa'im-Maqam had been faithful, but not so the ingrate who now occupied the imperial seat.

Muhammad Shah listened to the promptings of the Antichrist, and destroyed his benefactor.

One of the first acts of Qa'im-Maqam, on gaining Tihiran, was to appoint Mirza Buzurg, the Vazir-i-Nuri to a post in Luristan.

He was given the administration of Burujird and a considerable area of the Bakhiyari country which had suffered from unrest.

A royal rescript issued by Muhammad-Shah is extant, dated August 1835, in appreciation of the services rendered by Mirza Buzurg in Burujird and its environs.

But very soon, too soon, those halcyon days came to an end.

Haji Mirza Aqasi triumphed, Qa'im-Maqam was treacherously <p340> murdered,[1] and the friends of Qa'im-Maqam found themselves in dire straits.

Mirza Buzurg was recalled from Burujird, deprived of all posts and positions, even of his stipend, and forced into the seclusion of his home.

He had a large family to support, and before long he ran into financial difficulties.

From then to the end of his days, life was a continuous struggle against impoverishment.

And Quch-Hisar was a property mortgaged time and again.

At the time of his affluence, Mirza Buzurg had gradually bought two-thirds of the village of Quch-Hisar.

The rest he held on lease and was successfully farming the whole of the property.

And at the time of adversity, Quch-Hisar proved invaluable as a security to borrow money for day-to-day expenses.

That inevitable oft-repeated borrowing by Mirza Buzurg began in Dhu'l-Hijjah, the closing month of the year AH 1251 (April 1836).

Haji Mulla 'Abbas-'Aliy-i-Nuri, a trusted confidant of Mirza Buzurg, mortgaged a third of Quch-Hisar on his behalf.

Aqa Bahram, a well-known eunuch of the royal household, provided the money.

It was a short-term arrangement, and on the last day of Muharram, the first month of 1252, Mirza Buzurg raised money from some other source and redeemed this debt.

Immediately, on the following day (the 1st day of Safar), the same Haji Mulla 'Abbas-'Aliy-i-Nuri mortgaged the same section of the property on behalf of the Vazir, and borrowed 700 tumans for him from Mirza Muhammad-Taqi-i-Ashtiyani.

When six months had expired and Mirza Buzurg had been unable to settle the debt, the Ashtiyani lender almost foreclosed the mortgage.

However, the Vazir negotiated a fresh agreement with that creditor to last for another six months.

Apart from the property at Quch-Hisar, Mirza Buzurg was, perforce, using the houses in which he and his large family lived in Tihiran as securities to raise further loans.

That was the state to which the malevolence of Haji Mirza Aqasi had reduced

him. [1.

He was strangled because Muhammad Shah had pledged his word to his father never to be privy to the spilling of the blood of that good man and accomplished vazir.

See index references to Qa'im-Maqam in Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, The Bab and 'Abdu'l-Baha for further information on him.] .

In April 1837, Mirza Buzurg paid his debt to that Ashtiyani in full.

Next, in June 1838, one-sixth of Quch-Hisar was mortgaged to Karbila'i Muhammad-Hadi Astarabadi for one year for the sum of 670 tumans.

The condition was that if the sum was not repaid within the set time together with an additional 74 tumans, the property would revert to Karbila'i Muhammad-Hadi.

Fortunately, within forty days, <p341> Mirza Buzurg was able to borrow 251 tumans and this together with a silk robe was sufficient to repay the mortgage.

But so difficult was Mirza Buzurg's position that in July 1838 we find him mortgaging the property again, this time to the daughter of the deceased Haji Muhsin for the sum of 375 tumans.

This debt must also have been paid off after a short while although no documentary evidence exists as to when and how.

The strain of his financial predicament took its toll on Mirza Buzurg and in the middle of 1839(the beginning of AH 1255), he passed away.

Mirza Buzurg had named Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi of Nur as his trustee and his own brother, Mulla (or Shaykh) 'Azizu'llah, the supervisor for the disposition of his inheritance.

This arrangement, however, had been entirely verbal and there was no written document to support it.

Therefore Baha'u'llah drew up such a document, and asked the people who knew of His father's wishes to affix their seals and signatures to it.

Haji Mulla 'Abbas-'Aliy-i-Nuri, Mulla Mirza Baba, Mulla Qasim and Mirza 'Ali-Riday-i-Sunji witnessed this document.

Mirza Buzurg had also stated that whatever of his property he had distributed amongst his offspring in his own lifetime was entirely their concern and no longer his, and that which was his own to leave behind comprised the sheep in Takur and the village of Quch-Hisar.

He had specified, as well, that his debts amounted to 1,200 tumans.

He had charged his trustee to clear his debts, divide two-thirds of whatever was left amongst his inheritors, in accordance with the law of the Qur'an, and use the remaining third in any way the trustee himself deemed advisable.

Once these preliminaries were completed and implemented, Mulla 'Azizu'llah, on behalf of Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi of Nur and the minors amongst the children of Mirza Buzurg (Mirza Yahya, Mirza Muhammad-Quli, Fatimih-Sultan Khanum, Nisa' Khanum and others), acting together with Mirza Mihdi (a full older brother of Baha'u'llah)[1] and Mirza Muhammad-Hasan (His half-brother), mortgaged one-sixth of Quch-Hisar and borrowed 200 tumans from Mirza Ahmad, Mustawfiy-i-Nuri.

It was a short-term loan for two months only.

It is strange that this debt was not paid in time and Mirza Ahmad-i-Mustawfi foreclosed the mortgage and took the land into his own possession.

Mirza 'Ali-Riday-i-Sunji then bought it from Mirza Ahmad.

It is interesting to note that one of the witnesses of that <p342> mortgage which resulted in the loss of one-sixth of Quch-Hisar was Mulla 'Abdu'l-Fattah, one of the victims of the holocaust of 1852.

Another witness was Haji Mulla 'Abbas-'Ali, the confidant of Mirza Buzurg, who had acted in previous years on his behalf.

A third witness was Mulla Mirza Baba, another martyr of future years. [1.

Mirza Mihdi was already dead, but this refers, presumably, to his estate. (Ed.)] A letter, written by Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi-i-Nuri to Haji Mulla 'Abbas-'Ali is extant, in which he states that in order to clear Mirza Buzurg's debts, he himself gave half of the village of Quch-Hisar to Mirza Husayn-'Ali (Baha'u'llah), took from Him 80 tumans in cash, and passed on to Him 700 tumans of His father's debts.

He also questions the validity of Mirza 'Ali-Rida's transaction.

The same mujtahid of Nur wrote to Mirza 'Ali-Rida, directing him to cancel the sale and take back his money, which he apparently did.

Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi claimed that as Mirza Buzurg's trustee, he should have been consulted, and his consent obtained.

Thus with the help of the mujtahid of Nur, that one-sixth of the property also passed into the possession of Baha'u'llah.

And since He was the holder of two-thirds of Quch-Hisar, the whole estate was placed under His management, and other owners whose holdings were small received their annual dues from Him.

In the year 1844 some officials, casting their eyes on this prosperous and profitable property, laid an unjust claim to it, stating that Quch-Hisar had, in reality, been part of Crown lands.

Baha'u'llah took the case to Muhammad-Shah.

Now the chief witness was Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalik, and he testified most definitely that the village of Quch-Hisar had never been part of Crown lands in

the rural district of Ghar and Fashafuyih.

The royal rescript, accordingly, directed the highhanded officials to cease interfering in the affairs of that village.

It seems that Haji Mirza Aqasi had penned the royal edict, which was issued in June 1844.

This peril over, the next centred in the very person of Haji Mirza Aqasi, and made itself felt within three years.

Let the inimitable pen of Nabil-i-'A'zam relate the rest of the story of Quch-Hisar:

Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Grand Vazir of Muhammad Shah, though completely alienated from Baha'u'llah's father, showed his Son every mark of consideration and favour.

So great was the esteem which the Haji professed for Him, that Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, the I'timadu'd-Dawlih, who afterwards succeeded Haji Mirza Aqasi,[1] felt envious.

He resented the superiority <p343> which Baha'u'llah, as a mere youth, was accorded over him.

The seeds of jealousy were, from that time, implanted in his breast.

Though still a youth, and while His father is yet alive, he thought, He is given precedence in the presence of the Grand Vazir.

What will happen to me, I wonder, when this young man shall have succeeded His father? [1.

Not immediately; in between them came Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir-Nizam and Amir Kabir, who was responsible for ordering the execution of the Bab.] After the death of the Vazir [Mirza Buzurg], Haji Mirza Aqasi continued to show the utmost consideration to Baha'u'llah.

He would visit Him in His home, and would address Him as though He were his own son.

The sincerity of his devotion, however, was very soon put to the test.

One day, as he was passing through the village of Quch-Hisar, which belonged to Baha'u'llah, he was so impressed by the charm and beauty of that place and the abundance of its water that he conceived the idea of becoming its owner.

Baha'u'llah, Whom he had summoned to effect the immediate purchase of that village, observed: 'Had this property been exclusively my own, I would willingly have complied with your desire.

This transitory life, with all its sordid possessions, is worthy of no attachment in my eyes, how much less this small and insignificant estate.

As a number of other people, both rich and poor, some of full age and some

still minors, share with me the ownership of this property, I would request you to refer this matter to them, and to seek their <p344> consent.' Unsatisfied with this reply, Haji Mirza Aqasi sought to achieve his ends through fraudulent means.

As soon as Baha'u'llah was informed of his evil designs, He, with the consent of all concerned, immediately transferred the title of the property to the name of the sister of Muhammad Shah, who had repeatedly expressed the desire to become its owner.

The Haji, furious at this transaction, ordered that the estate should be forcibly seized, claiming that he already had purchased it from its original possessor.

The representatives of Haji Mirza Aqasi were severely rebuked by the agents of the sister of the Shah, and were requested to inform their master of the determination of that lady to assert her rights.

The Haji referred the case to Muhammad Shah, and complained of the unjust treatment to which he had been subjected.

That very night, the Shah's sister had acquainted him with the nature of the transaction. 'Many a time', she said to her brother, 'Your Imperial Majesty has graciously signified your desire that I should dispose of the jewels with which I am wont to adorn myself in your presence, and with the proceeds purchase some property.

I have at last succeeded in fulfilling your desire.

Haji Mirza Aqasi, however, is now fully determined to seize it forcibly from me.' The Shah reassured his sister, and commanded the Haji to forgo his claim.

The latter, in his despair, summoned Baha'u'llah to his presence and, by every artifice, strove to discredit His name.

To the charges he brought against Him, Baha'u'llah vigorously replied, and succeeded in establishing His innocence.

In his impotent rage, the Grand Vazir exclaimed: 'What is the purpose of all this feasting and banqueting in which you seem to delight?

I, who am the Prime Minister of the Shahanshah of Persia, never receive the number and variety of guests that crowd around your table every night.

Why all this extravagance and vanity?

You surely must be meditating a plot against me.' 'Gracious God!' Baha'u'llah replied. 'Is the man who, out of the abundance of his heart, shares his bread with his fellow-men, to be accused of harbouring criminal intentions?' Haji Mirza Aqasi was utterly confounded.

He dared not reply.

Though supported by the combined ecclesiastical and civil powers of Persia, he

eventually found himself, in every contest he ventured against Baha'u'llah, completely defeated. (Unpublished) Needless to say, prior to the sale of Quch-Hisar to the sister of Muhammad Shah, Haji Mirza Aqasi had used every means, fair and foul, to prevent it.

He had incited a number of the heirs of Mirza Buzurg to appeal to Siyyid Abu'l-Qasim, the Imam-Jum'ih of Tihiran, with the plea that Baha'u'llah had deprived them of their patrimony.

The Imam-Jum'ih, being a just man, had investigated the case put to him most thoroughly and assiduously, and found that the plea was false.

He had given a clear verdict accordingly.

Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, the mujtahid of Nur, had lent his support to Baha'u'llah.

Having failed miserably to achieve his purpose in an ecclesiastical court, Haji Mirza Aqasi had next tried to utilize the power and influence of Mahmud Khan, the notorious Kalantar of Tihiran.

He had induced Mirza Muhammad-Taqi,[1] a younger son of the Vazir-i-Nuri, to draw up a statement pledging himself not to enter any transaction, regarding any part of the village of Quch-Hisar, without the knowledge and consent of the Kalantar.

Mirza Rida-Quli, the brother of Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, and their mother, Kulthum Khanum, had also certified this document and affixed their seals to it.

But, in truth, they were not entitled to the ownership of any part or section of that village.

When Baha'u'llah was apprised of this curious stratagem of Haji Mirza Aqasi, He personally bought the one-twelfth of the property which belonged to His nephews--Mirza Muhammad-Baqir and Mirza Mahmud, sons of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali--and then, with the full consent of other smallholders, sold the property of Quch-Hisar to the sister of Muhammad Shah.

Within a few months, Muhammad Shah was dead and Haji Mirza Aqasi had fallen from power.

Thus ended the saga of Quch-Hisar. [1.

He was a poet with the sobriquet of 'Parishan'.

In later years, he satirized Baha'u'llah.

He died relatively young.] <p346> Bibliography 'ABDU'L-BAHA.

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C.

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Clarendon Press, 1955. <p349> Glossary 'Aba = Outer cloak or mantle.

Ajudan-Bashi = Chief Adjutant.

Akhund = See Mulla.

Allahu-Abha 'God is All-Glorious'.

Amir Kabir = Title of Mirza Taqi Khan-i-Farahani, who became Grand Vizier

Azali = Follower of Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal.

Babi = Follower of the Bab.

Baha'i = Follower of Baha'u'llah.

Biruni = Outer or men's quarters.

Darvish = Dervish.

A Sufi vowed to poverty Farman = Order or royal decree.

Farrash = Footman, lictor or attendant.

Farrash-Bashi = Head footman or chamberlain.

Farsang (Farsakh)= A distance of approximately 3 miles, or 67 kilometres.

Fatwa (Fatva) = Sentence or judgment by a Muslim Mufti.

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.

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.

Jarib = 10,000 square metres.

Ka'bah (Ka'bih) = Most Holy Shrine of Islam, in Mecca.

Kajavih = A kind of pannier, howdah, or litter.

Kalantar = Mayor.

Khan = Prince or chieftain.

A khan is also an inn.

Kisras = Caesars.

Madrisih = School or religious college.

Masjid = Mosque.

Mirza = Prince when after a name, or simply 'mister' when prefixed to a name.

<p350> Most Exalted Pen = A designation of Baha'u'llah.

Mu'adhdhin = Muezzin, one who sounds the call to prayer.

Mujtahid = Doctor of Law.

Mulla = One who has had a theological education.

Murshid = Sufi spiritual guide.

Mutasarrif = Governor, under the Vali.

Nargileh = See Qalyan.

Parasang = See Farsang.

Pasha = Honorary title given to provincial governors, ministers and military officers of high rank in Turkey.

Qadi (Cadi) = A religious judge.

Qa'im = 'He Who shall arise'; the Promised One of Shi'ih Islam.

Qalyan = A pipe for smoking through water.

Qiblih = 'Point of Adoration', towards which people turn in prayer (i.e., Mecca for Muslims, the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji for Baha'is).

Sadr-i-A'zam = Grand Vizier, Prime Minister.

Sardar = Sirdar, military commander.

Shaykh = Elder, teacher, master of a dervish order, etc.

Shayki = 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 (Sura) = Chapter of the Qur'an; also a Tablet of Baha'u'llah.

Taj = 'Crown'; a felt head-dress.

Tuman = Unit of Iranian currency. 'Ulama = 'Those who know'; persons learned in Islamic law.

Vali = Governor-General, governor of a Turkish province.

Vazir (Vizir) = Vizier, minister of state. <p351> [Note: page 351 begins an Index.

For this electronic copy it is the beginning page of a List of Illustrations.]

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row, 3rd from right), both poets of note.] Page 133: [i:

Mirza Muhammad, whose sobriquet was Na'im, a poet of the first rank] Page 135: [i:

Baha'is of Isfahan, including the poet Sina--Siyyid Isma'il--(last on right in first row) and Aqa Mirza Asadu'llah Khan-i-Vazir 2nd from left in first row), who became the secretary of Zillu's-Sultan, the Governor of Isfahan] Page 136: [i:

Mirza' Asadu'llah Khan-i-Vazir, a distinguished Baha'i of Isfahan and its Vazir for some three decades.

Following Baha'u'llah's instruction, he assisted in the protection and transport of the remains of the Bab from Tihran to 'Akka in 1899.] Page 139: [i:

Baha'is of Tihran, among whom are (first row, seated, from left): (1) Mirza Muhammad Na'im, (2) Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Muhibbu's-Sultan; (seated behind, from left) (3) Dr Yunis Khan-i-Afrukhtih, (4) Mirza Mahmud-i-Furughi, (5) the Hand of the Cause Ibn-i-Abhar, (6) Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Gulpaygani, (7) the Hand of the Cause Haji Akhund, (8) Mirza Mahmud-i-Nayyir, (9) Siyyid Isma'il Sina] Page 140: [i:

Mirza 'Ali-Akbar-i-Rafsanjani, London 11 January 1914] Page 143: [i:

Fath-'Ali Shah (reigned 1797-1834)] Page 144: [i:

Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza] Page 149: [i:

Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, Shaykhu'r-Ra'is] Page 150: [i:

Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, known as Ibn-i-Abhar, one of the four Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Baha'u'llah] Page 151: [i:

Malik Man,sur Mirza, the Shu'a'u's-Saltanih, Governor-General of the province of Fars] Page 152: [i:

Baha'is of Isfahan, with Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, Shaykhu'r-Ra'is (first row, centre), and including Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Sarraf (back row, 3rd from right)] Page 153: [i:

Muhammad-'Ali Shah, (reigned 1907-1909] Page 156: [i:

Muzaffari'd-Din Shah, (reigned 1896-1907) Page 159: [i:

Mirza Mahmud-i-Furughi] Page 162: [i:

Mirza Mahmud-i-Furughi (seated, left) and Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali (right), both designated Apostles of Baha'u'llah] Page 164: [i:

A gathering of Baha'is with Mirza Abu'l-Fadl in Cairo, April 1907 (seated, 3rd from right), on the occasion of the pilgrimage to 'Akka of Thornton Chase, the first American Baha'i (seated next to him) and Mr and Mrs Arthur S.

Agnew (seated across the table).

Also identified are Haji Mirza Niyaz, one of the early believers of Persia, loved by all, who lived many years in Cairo until his death in 1919 (seated at front, with white turban); Husayn Ruhi, who owned and directed two schools in Cairo (at table, centre foreground); and Shaykh Muhyiddin Sabri Sanandaji al-Kurdi (standing, hatless, below the tree at left), a disciple of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl and a well-known scholar and Baha'i teacher invited by 'Abdu'l-Baha to go to Tunisia and North Africa] Page 172: [i:

Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, known as Ibn-i-Asdaq, one of the four Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Baha'u'llah] Page 174: [i:

Ibn-i-Asdaq] Page 176: [i:

The Consulting Assembly of Tihnan, 1899, established at the behest of 'Abdu'l-Baha, which eventually became the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran.

Members shown are (front row, left to right) Haji Mirza 'Abdu'llah-i-Sahih-Furush, Mirza 'Azizu'llah Khan Varqa, Mirza Zakariyya; (second row) Dr Asifu'l-Hukama, the Hand of the Cause Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, known as Adib, the Hand of the Cause Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, known as Ibn-i-Asdaq, the Hand of the Cause Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, Haji Mirza Muhammad-i-Afnan, Mirza Siyavash; (back row, from left) Mirza Muhammad Khan Jadhbih and Aqa Muhammad-Husayn-i-Kashi] Page 181: [i:

A view of Istanbul, the Golden Horn, in the late nineteenth century] Page 186: [i:

Aqa 'Azizu'llah-i-Jadhhab] Page 188: [i:

Count Leo Tolstoy] Page 193: [i:

The Masjid-i-Shah in Qazvin, in which it is probably that Haji Mulla Taqi, The Hujjatu'l-Islam of Qazvin and the father-in-law of Tahirih, was fatally stabbed (Dieulafoy, La Perse)] Page 196: [i:

An early panorama view of Tabriz] Page 197: [i:

The fortress, or citadel, of Tabriz where the Bab was confined for about forty days before being sent to the castle of Maku.

His martyrdom occurred in the public square in Tabriz, 9 July 1850, following almost three-years' imprisonment in Maku and Chihriq (Dieulafoy, La Perse) Page 199: [i:

Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar, Apostle of Baha'u'llah] Page 202: [i:

Baha'is of Qazvin, including Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar (seated, centre), Mirza Musa Khan, Hakim-Bashi (on his left), Tarazu'llah Samandari, later appointed a Hand of the Cause of God (standing 2nd from right) and (on his left) Muhammad Labib, author of The Seven Martyrs of Hurmuzak] Page 206: [i:

Haji Amin, Trustee of the Huququ'llah (seated, right), with Hakim-Bashi and

(standing) Muhammad Labib] Page 208: [i:

Napoleon III, the French Emperor who first ignored and later spurned the two Tablets which Baha'u'llah addressed to him] Page 214: [i:

Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin (centre), assisted by Haji Ghulam Riday-i-Isfahan, later Amin-i-Amin (on his left) and Mirza Taqiy-i-Qajar (on his right)] Page 219: [i:

Afnan relatives of the Bab and other Baha'is of Shiraz in the company of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim (seated above at right), a brother-in-law of the Bab and the great-grandfather of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith.

Others identified are: (front row, from left) Shaykh 'Ali Mirza, a nephew of the Imam-Jum'ih; Mirza Abu'l-Hasan, the maternal grandfather of H.

M.

Balyuzi; Mirza Mihdi, a poet of note whose sobriquet was Sabir; Mirza Buzurg, a cousin of the Bab; Siyyid Muhammad-Husayn, the paternal grandfather of Shoghi Effendi; Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din; (second row, from left) unknown; Mirza 'Ali-Akbar, the son of Sabir; Mirza Mahmud, son of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, above; Haji Ghulam-Husayn Khan, the host and outstanding Baha'i of Shiraz; Mirza Hadi, the father of Shoghi Effendi; Mirza Siyyid 'Ali; Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan (Dihqan); Mirza Rahim, brother of Mirza Hadi. (The three at the back are unidentified.)] Page 223: [i:

The pulpit of the Masjid-i-Vakil in Shiraz, where the Bab addressed the Friday congregation on the invitation of the Imam-Jum'ih, Shaykh Abu-Turab] Page 228: [i:

Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim, whom Baha'u'llah designated 'Muballigh' (Teacher)] Page 231: [i:

Shaykh Salman (seated, right), the courier between Baha'u'llah and the Baha'is of Iran, in Shiraz in the year AH 1288 (1871-72), with Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Bazzaz (seated, left), the father of Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan (Dihqan), and (standing) 'Abbas-Quli Khan] Page 233: [i:

Some of the Baha'i community of Shiraz in AH 1297 (AD 1879), identified as follows (from left to right): (1st row, seated) Aqa Mirza 'Ali, son of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Afnan; Aqa Mirza Ibrahim, son of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Afnan; Mirza 'Ali-Akbar, son of the poet known as Sabir; (2nd row, seated) Aqa Mirza Mahmud, son of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Afnan; Aqa Mirza Abu'l-Hasan, son of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim-i-Afnan and grandfather of H.

M.

Balyuzi; Haji Mirza Buzurg, son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, uncle of the Bab; Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Afnan, father of Aqa Mirza Hadi (father of Shoghi Effendi); (3rd row) Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan (Dihqan); Haji Ghulam-Husayn Khan; Mirza Siyyid 'Ali; (back row) Aqa Mirza Rahim, brother of Aqa Mirza Hadi; next two unknown; Aqa Mirza 'Abdu'llah-i-Isfahani, father of Dr Habibu'llah

Salmanpur] Page 235: [i:

Aqa Mirza Aqa, Nuri'd-Din, in Egypt, circa 1885.] Page 237: [i:

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, the Angel of Mount Carmel, with Sulayman Khan, known as Jamal Effendi, the Conqueror of India] Page 260: [i:

The National Hotel in Poona, India, 1907, taken during the visits of four Baha'i teachers (see footnote, p.

238): (in the back seat of the 1st carriage) Mulla Muhammad-Taqi, Ibn-i-Abhar and Mr Hooper Harris; (in the back seat of the 2nd carriage) Mr Harlan Ober and Mirza Mahmud Zarqani, diarist of 'Abdu'l-Baha's travels in the West; (standing behind the front wheels of the 2nd carriage) Aqa Khusraw] Page 262: [I:

Apostles of Baha'u'llah (numbered as the list beginning on page 261)] Page 264: [i: [Left] Mulla Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikani, known as Haji Amin, appointed posthumously a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Baha'i Faith [Right] Mirza Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpaygani 'It is a rare thing to find a person perfect from every direction, but he was such a person.' ('Abdu'l-Baha speaking to Baha'is in Haifa, the night after Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's passing, 22 January 1914)] Page 265: [i:

Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, appointed a Hand of the Cause of God by Baha'u'llah] Page 267: [i: [Left] Haji' Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, known as Vakilu'd-Dawlih, the chief builder, in 'Ishqabad, of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar [Right] Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, known as Ibn-i-Abhar, appointed a Hand of the Cause of God by Baha'u'llah] Page 271: [i: [Left] Mirza Muhammad Mustafay-i-Baghdadi, one of the believers who assisted in the transport of the remains of the Bab to 'Akka in 1899 [Right] Aqa Husayn-i-Isfahani, known as Mishkin-Qalam (see Baha'u'llah, The King of Glory, pp.

161 and 251, for specimens of his highly-valued calligraphy)] Page 273: [i: [Left] Mirza Hasan, entitled Adibu'l-'Ulama and known as Adib, one of the four Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Baha'u'llah [Right] Shaykh Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini, nephew and close companion of Nabil-i-Akbar] Page 275: [i:

Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, surnamed Jinab-i-Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, a designation conferred upon him by Baha'u'llah] Page 289: [i:

Map of Northern Iran (See map of Iran, p.

5.)] page 295: [i: [Note:

A Table in columnar format entitled] DYNASTIES AND RULERS OF TABARISTAN AND NORTHERN IRAN mentioned in this chapter Dates are according to the Muslim (AH) calendar, followed after an oblique stroke by the Christian (AD) dates.

See also the list of Dynasties and Rulers of Iran, p.

325.

Bosworth, The Islamic Dynasties, lists and describes the dynasties in Iran after Muhammad; many of the following dates come from this book.

BADUSPANIDS 45-1006/665-1599 BAWANDIDS or BAVANDIDS (ISPAHBUDS)
45-750/665-1349 Sharvin (Sharwin I) 155-181/772-797 Shahriyhr I
181-210/797-825 Shapur 210-222/825-837 Rustam I 253-282/867-895 DABWAYHIDS
(DABUYIDS) 25-141/645-758 Farrukhan (Farkhan Ibn Dabwayh) 90-103/708-21
ISPAHBUDS, see BAWANDIDS, also BADUSPANIDS JASTANIYANS (JUSTANIDS) From 2nd
cent. -- 315/c.

796-927 Vahsudan (Wahsudan) uncertain Jastan III 290-300/903-912 'Ali
300-304/912-916 MUSAFIRIDS or SALARIDS or KANGARIDS c.

304-c.483/c.916-1090 SAFFARIDS 253 -- c.

900/867 -- c.

1495 Ya'qub Ibn Layth-Saffar 253-265/867-879 'Amr Ibn Layth 265-289/879-901
SAMANIDS 204-395/819-1005 Isma'il I 279-295/892-907 Nasr II 301-331/914-942
Mansur I 350-366/961-976 Nuh II 366-387/976-997 TAHIRIDS 205-259/821-873
'Abdu'llah 213-230/828-845 Muhammad 248-259/862-873 ZAYDiS (SIYYIDS),
TABARISTAN 250-316/864-928 Hasan Ibn Zayd (Da'ia'l-Kabir) 250-270/864-883
Muhammad Ibn Zayd 270-287/883-900 Hasan Nasiru'l-Haqq 301-304/913-916 Hasan
Ibn Qasim 304-316/916-928 ZIYARIDS 315 -- c.

483/927 -- c.1090 Mardavij 315-323/927-935 Vushmagir 323-356/935-967 Bisutun
356-367/967-978 Shamsu'l-Ma'ali Qabus 367-402/978-1012 Falaku'l-Ma'ali
Manuchihr 402-420/1012-1029 'Unsuru'l-Ma'ali, Kaykavus 441-?c.

483/1049-?c.

1090 Gilan Shah ?c.

483/?c.

1090 (rule uncertain)] Page 319: [i:

Haji Mirza 'Abdu'llah-i-Sahih-Furush (left), author of a book on the
Ahl-i-Haqq, with Mirza Ghulam-Husayn] Page 323: [i:

Murgh-Mahallih, a much-loved summer residence of Baha'u'llah in the district
of Shimran] Page 325: [i: [Note:

A Table in columnar format entitled] DYNASTIES AND RULERS OF IRAN mentioned
in this book, alphabetically by dynasty See also the list and note on p.

295.

ACHAEMENIANS 559-330 BC Cyrus II, the Great 559-c.

529 BC Artaxerxes II 404-359 (358) BC Darius III.

Codomanus 336-330 BC AFSHARIDS 1148-1210/ 1736-1795 Nadir Shah
1148-1160/1736-1747 ARSACIDS(PARTHIANS) 247 BC -- AD 226 Farhad V 2 BC - AD

4 BUWAYHIDS 320-454/932-1062 Line in Kirman Mu'izzu'd-Dawlih (Ahmad) 324-338/936-949 'Adudu'd-Dawlih 338-372/949-983 (also in Fars) Line in Fars and Khuzistan Imadu'd-Dawlih ('Ali) 322-338/934-949 (also in Jibal) Line in Jibal Ruknu'd-Dawlih (Hasan) 335-366/947-976 Brunch in Hamadan und Isfahan Mu'ayyidu'd-Dawlih Buyih 366-373/977-983 Brunch in Ray Fakhru'd-Dawlih 'Ali 366-387/977-997 (also in Hamadan) GHAZNAVIDS 366-582/977-1186 Mahmud Sultan 388-421/998-1030 KHARAZMSHAHIS (KHWARAZM-SHAHS) c. 470-628/c.

1077-1231 'Ala'u'd-Din Muhammad-i-Kharazmshah 596-617/1200-1220 Jalalu'd-Din-i-Mankubarni 617-628/1220-1231 PARTHIANS, see ARSACIDS QAJARS 1193-1342/1779-1925 Aqa Muhammad Khan 1193-1212/177-1797 Fath-'Ali Shah 1212-1250/1797-1834 Muhammad Shah 1250-1264/1834-1848 Nasiri'd-Din 1264-1313/1848-1896 Muzaffari'd-Din 1313-1324/1896-1907 Muhammad-'Ali 1324-1327/1907-1909 SAFAVIDS 907-1145/1501-1732 Shah Isma'il 907-930/1501-1524 Tahmasb I 930-984/1524-1576 'Abbas I, the Great 996-1038/1588-1629 SALJUQS (SELJUQS) 429-590/1038-1194 Alp Arslan 455-465/1063-1072 Malik Shah I 465-485/1072-1092 Muhammad I 498-511/1105-1118 Sanjar 511-552/1118-1157 SASANIANS AD 224-641 Ardashir I 226-241 Chosroes I (Anushirvan) 531-579 Chosroes II (Khusraw Parviz) 590-628 Yazdigird III 632-641 SELEUCIDS 312-64 BC Seleucus I Nicator 312-281 BC TIMURIDS 771-912/1370-1506 Timur (-i-Lang or -i-Gurkani) 771-807/1370-1405 ZANDS 1163-1209/1750-1794 Karim Khan 1163-1193/1750-1779 Lutf-'Ali Khan 1203-1209/1789-1794] Page 327: [i:

MAP OF TIHRAN AREA IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY (Adapted from a map drawn by Major A.

Krziz in 1857-8) Page 343: [i:

Haji Mirza Aqasi, the Grand Vizier of Muhammad Shah] ..

(nbm)

— Eminent Baha'is in the Time of Baha'u'llah