



Club, I met a lady, a stranger to me, whom I felt led to ask if she knew anything about Theosophy, explaining to her that I was about to become a student at Point Loma. She said that she did not, but asked if I was acquainted with Mrs. Goodall and Mrs. Cooper whom she believed were conducting meetings in Oakland. I replied that I had known them for a long time, and went at once to telephone Mrs. Cooper, who was then living at the Fairmount Hotel. She urged me to come over before starting on my journey to Point Loma.

When I called upon her, she explained that she was not interested in Theosophy but in a marvelous and soul-satisfying religion. I hastened to ask if it had anything to do with God, and warned her that, if so, I wanted nothing to do with it. In her delightful manner she said: "Never mind about that, but take these books home with you and read. If you find yourself interested in them get in touch with Mrs. Getsinger at the Bellevue Hotel in San Francisco, as she and Mr. Thornton Chase are lecturing there." I took the books (among them "The Oriental Rose") to my room and read, while gradually it dawned upon me that here must be the Truth I was seeking. I soon declared: "I believe this Message. What happened in the days of Christ can happen again," and with such thoughts I experienced the first joys of expectancy and hope, quite different from the intellectual exercise produced by the philosophies I had been studying. It immediately took hold of my life, and directed my energies.

At the Bellevue Hotel I met Mrs. Getsinger and Mr. Chase, and at once entered upon a long and intimate association with Mrs. Getsinger, which was to extend over a considerable period of time, and to take us traveling together across the entire United States. I placed myself and my electric coupe at her service during the rest of her sojourn in San Francisco, taking her everywhere she was to speak; and through this attendance and association, coupled with my own personal study of the Baha'i Teachings, life took on a new meaning. I went about continuously telling the story of this marvelous new Revelation, until my friends began to meet me with the cool reproof, "must you always tell it?"

Then came the news of Abdu'l-Baha's preparation to visit America, and with great joy I planned to go to New York to meet Him. But my father's sudden illness, and his passing just a few days before Abdu'l-Baha's arrival made this impossible. But about two weeks after His arrival in New York Abdu'l-Baha telegraphed Mrs. Getsinger, saying: "Permission granted you and Mrs. Ralston meet me in Chicago." And so we set forth on our journeys together.

Arriving at the Plaza Hotel in Chicago, we found Abdu'l-Baha there before us, and many Baha'is already assembled. The next afternoon Mrs. Getsinger came to me and said: "Abdu'l-Baha wants to see you -- come with me." She led me into a room full of people, and standing among them was a venerable Persian wearing a turban and a long white robe. I immediately fastened my attention upon him, thinking at first that it was Abdu'l-Baha. With this thought there came a wave of deep disappointment, how great I could hardly realize until Mrs. Getsinger led me past him and into a room beyond.

Here I came face to face with Abdu'l-Baha. I cannot express in words the emotions that took possession of me as I found myself in the presence of Abdu'l-Baha. The atmosphere about Him seemed to radiate power. I stood transfixed -- unable to move. Abdu'l-Baha came to me and took my hand with words of welcome, and as I looked into His eyes and felt the majesty of His presence, I knew that this Being was not like any one else on earth. He began speaking in Persian, walking back and forth across the room. While I stood motionless, Mrs. Getsinger threw herself upon a couch, weeping. I insisted upon her interpreting Abdu'l-Baha's words in English, and this is what she told me He was saying: "Your worldly possessions will all be taken from you. You will be entirely alone in the world and will not know which way to turn. You will have no place to lay your head, and you will feel that even the friends of God have turned away from you." I do not know how the tragic power of His words might have affected me had I fully realized their import, for I immediately thought: "Such a thing can never happen to me -- surely He does not know." And thus ended thus ended my first interview with Abdu'l-Baha.

Days passed by while many, many hundreds of people came to see Abdu'l-Baha. I often heard Him talk, but the environment in which I found myself was difficult and uncongenial, and I sometimes felt strangely depressed. One day I was weeping in my room, when some one came to say that Abdu'l-Baha had sent for me. As I entered His presence He took my hand and said: "Do not grieve; all will be well." And then I seemed to be immersed in the ocean of His love, that unfathomable emanation that was heavenly, and that seemed to transform all my weariness into rest and peace.

When Abdu'l-Baha's busy week in Chicago had come to an end, a company of devoted followers including Dr. and Mrs. Getsinger, a patriarchial and faithful servant Mirza Assadulla, his secretaries and interpreters, and I, accompanied Abdu'l-Baha to Cleveland and then to Pittsburg. In these cities He taught continuously, and when ready to proceed to Boston, He sent Mrs. Getsinger and me to New York where we awaited His coming.

Returning to New York, Abdu'l-Baha first lived on Riverside Drive, but finding that more room was necessary, He went to Mrs. Champney's at 309 W. 78th St. Mrs. Getsinger and I occupied an apartment in an hotel near by and went daily to be with Abdu'l-Baha. We were there from early morning until late at night. Those were very wonderful days. Abdu'l-Baha's talks during this time are recorded, and so I shall not mention them, but will single out a few incidents that occurred under my observation.

Before leaving Haifa, Abdu'l-Baha had accepted an invitation to speak at the Mohonk Peace Conference in America during the month of May (1912). He invited Mrs. Getsinger, Mountfort Mills and me to accompany Him to Lake Mohonk. In Abdu'l-Baha's party were also Hi interpreter, His secretasry and Zia Baghdadi. Zia had gone to the station to wish Abdu'l-Baha a happy journey. Just as we were about to board the train Abdu'l-Baha said to Dr. Baghdadi "Come with us", and Zia came just as he was -- sans hat, sans overcoat or any luggage whatsoever. Abdu'l-Baha gave an inspiring address on World Peace

before this convention of peace speakers.

I received many scoldings from Abdu'l-Baha. He knew everything that was going on, and at the time I did not realize that He was reprimanding others through me, and so I suffered intensely, because I thought I did not merit these scoldings. It was not until later that I realized that they were not meant for me. I shed many tears in the presence of Abdu'l-Baha. He once pressed his fingers to my eyes and said: "You must not cry. I am scolding you just as I would Ruha; you are my daughter." After that I knew it was a blessing to be reprimanded by Abdu'l-Baha.

On day Abdu'l-Baha after speaking to a group in a New York home, paused before me as He was passing from the room. With a piercing glance into my eyes, He said: "If you follow Abdu'l-Baha you will be persecuted, you will be stoned. :Can you submit to this? I said -- "Yes." That afternoon after addressing a group, He passed from the room where we were all sitting and motioned Juliet Thompson and me to follow Him. With Him was a beautiful young Persian believer Vali'u'llah Khan and Ahmad Sorab. As usual the Master walked alone, the rest of us following at a respectful distance. he was a very majestic figure, His robes floating out with great grace as He walked. It was a very hot July afternoon. People from the tenements had come to Riverside Drive for a breath of cool air. Groups of poorly clad, uncouth children began to hoot at Abdu'l-Baha. They formed a ring and danced around Him, calling out: "Anti-Christ! Anti-Christ!" Others took up the cry, and there seemed to be no police or other protection. Abdu'l-Baha walked on paying no attention. Soon a group of Greek laborers came near us and began throwing rocks. Two came and spat on Juliet's and my gowns. Abdu'l-Baha turned and said: "Why am I persecuted? Is it because I am dressed in such garments as Jesus wore 2000 years ago?" He then walked back in the direction from which He had come. A lady in a home near by raised a window and called to one of Abdu'l-Baha's secretaries, and motioned for them to come over there. She then asked them to come in until the crowd had dispersed. This invitation they did not accept and we all followed Abdu'l-Baha back to His apartment. Thus Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy -- "you will be stoned" -- that He had uttered earlier in the day, had brought an external fulfillment before the day was done.

Abdu'l-Baha returned to His room. Half an hour later the door bell rang, and there stood one of the Greek labourers who had stoned Abdu'l-Baha. He asked to be taken to "that Holy Many", and there in Abdu'l-Baha's presence he fell upon his knees and begged forgiveness. Abdu'l-Baha spoke to him kindly, and the Greek returned daily for several days to attend Abdu'l-Baha's talks -- apparently the only one of that group of labourers to recognize the high station of the Master.

He asked Abdu'l-Baha to go on Sunday to speak to a group of Greeks at a picnic on the green, out beyond the end of the Bronx subway. The Greek met our train at the terminal. It was terribly hot. We walked up quite a distance to where we could look down upon the men and women dancing on the green.

Abdu'l-Baha stopped. The Greek said: "Come, you must go further -- you must go to them -- but Abdu'l-Baha replied: "No, I will wait here." The Greek was very much disturbed when Abdu'l-Baha told him to go to them, and tell them that Abdu'l-Baha was waiting to receive them. He went, but returned alone, saying: "They will not come to you -- they wish you to come to them." The Master replied: "Abdu'l-Baha has come here. He will now return to New York." He had stood without, knocking at the door. They would not leave their pleasures long enough to bid Him welcome.

Those days of extreme heat were very trying. All could see that Abdu'l-Baha was intensely weary; He ate very little, He rested little; indeed it seemed to us that His service went far beyond human endurance. Yet, when in this exhausted state, after speaking at a Feast at the home of Mr. McNutt in Brooklyn, some one invited Him to go to Far Rockaway to visit a man who was ill, He freely consented. The man had said that he would provide an automobile, and that it was not much of a ride. So late in the afternoon, Abdu'l-Baha went, accompanied by an interpreter, Mr. Dodge and the driver. As they were about to start Abdu'l-Baha sent for me, and I ran without hat or coat or gloves -- as we all did when the Master called in haste -- and sat between Him and Mr. Dodge in the back seat. We drove sixty miles, finally bringing Abdu'l-Baha to the bedside of the sick man, an Italian fisherman -- a non-Baha'i. He stayed with him a long time and then we drove the sixty miles back again, arriving at 10 P. M. During the return Abdu'l-Baha laid His weary head upon my shoulder and slept, with my arm around Him to support Him. At Mrs. Krug's a group had assembled at 8 o'clock to hear Abdu'l-Baha speak, and here they remained waiting, knowing that sooner or later the Master would come. An opening prayer of thankfulness was read, and taking His theme from the prayer, He gave a beautiful and restful talk upon "Gratitude for the Favors of God."

For some time Mrs. Getsinger had been seeking an entree for Abdu'l-Baha into the home of Mr. Gifford Pinchot. She had repeatedly written Mrs. Amos From "Mahmud's Diary", ed. by Christine Lofstedt, 1958, pp. 166-68, the entries for 3 and 4 June 1912 reads:

"One of the cabinet members of the United States of America invited the Blessed One to appear before a select group. For one day and night the statesmen and notables of the Republic were immersed in a state of rapture and fascinated at seeing the world illuminating Face. His address in one of the meetings has been written separately. The salutary answers which issued forth from the Holy Lips form in themselves a detailed book and a resume of all the addresses and the detailed answers to questions which He made during that one day and night.

"One of the persons questioned the Beloved about the International War. He said: 'It will certainly come about but America will not partake in it with the same motive. This war will be staged in Europe....'

At the time of departure, in addition to the heart-winning influence

of His Blessed explanations, His kindness and reward to the servants and maid-servants of that family made a great impression. Calling them all before Him He thanked them and gave them one pound each. When the hearts were attracted, heads were bowed and faces turned towards the illumined Face, He left the place majestically. As He returned and observed the verdure of the place, the tears trickled suddenly down the Blessed cheeks. he was thinking of the Blessed Beauty and was grieved and sad on remembering the afflictions of the Pre-existent Face."

It appears that Abdu'l-Baha's trip was actually to the Pinchot mansion in what must have been Milford, Pennsylvania. Further research is required to confirm the location. Pinchot was the founder of forestry and conservation in the United States, and served in the federal government and later as governor of Pennsylvania.

Pinchot, with whom she was acquainted, a sister-in-law of Mr. Gifford Pinchot, asking for an invitation for Abdu'l-Baha. Finally the invitation came, and Abdu'l-Baha when accepting it, requested that I be invited to go along as His guest. Among others who accompanied Him were Mrs. Getsinger, Fareed as interpreter -- and as we were leaving New York Abdu'l-Baha included Ahmad Sorab. When we arrived at the station on the New Jersey shore we were met by Mr. Amos Pinchot in one automobile, and their chauffeur in another. Abdu'l-Baha invited me to get in with Him and Mr. Pinchot and Fareed. The rest were seated in the other automobile except Ahmad, who was left standing alone on the platform. Mr. Pinchot asked: "And who is this?" Abdu'l-Baha answered: "He is my secretary." Mr. Pinchot replied: "We were not expecting him. He will remain in the village."

It was a considerable drive from the station to the Pinchot mansion. This was the home of Mr. Gifford Pinchot who was absent at the time, but we were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Amos Pinchot and had been invited to spend the week-end, arriving there on Friday afternoon. Upon our arrival we were ushered into a small waiting room, where we waited for an interminable time before any one came. Finally Mrs. Amos Pinchot arrived, greeted our party, and sat conversing with Abdu'l-Baha for awhile, after which we were shown to our rooms. There we remained until summoned to dinner. At dinner we were suhered into a very small room -- probably a breakfast room -- where we were seated with Mrs. Pinchot, but no other members of the family came. We could hear children's voices and the voices of other guests, but Abdu'l-Baha's party were kept apart. Abdu'l-Baha had requested that Ahmad be sent for. His request was granted and Ahmad was brought, but when we were seated at the table there was no place for him. He stood behind Abdu'l-Baha's chair -- and was not served. When the butler passed food to Abdu'l-Baha, He would take the tiniest morsel and lay it on His plate. We all followed Abdu'l-Baha's example. he did not partake of any of the food -- so neither did we. After dinner we were returned to the small reception room where Mrs. Pinchot asked Abdu'l-Baha many questions regarding socialism, and Abdu'l-Baha gave a most wonderful talk. This, I believe, has never been published. Shortly after

He finished speaking we retired.

the next morning after coffee, Abdu'l-Baha took a walk through the marvelous grounds, and we followed. It was a glorious, cloudless morning. The place is noted for its magnificent waterfalls and natural scenery. We came to a beautiful small lake with a dashing waterfall on the opposite side. In the foreground was a great rock and Abdu'l-Baha went forward to this rock and sat down -- motioning us to go away and leave Him. We went a short distance but stood where we could still see Abdu'l-Baha. And Abdu'l-Baha wept! Within a few moments after that the whole heavens had clouded and it was pouring rain -- weeping with Him. We all were saturated and completely drenched. Hurrying back to the house we removed our wet clothing and Mrs. Pinchot had them dried for us.

After a light luncheon, Abdu'l-Baha very courteously thanked Mrs. Pinchot for her hospitality, stated that He had an urgent engagement in New York, and we were sent to the train and returned to New York. Speaking privately to our party before leaving for the station, Abdu'l-Baha had said: "Mention this to no one. It is Lua who has brought this about." And turning to Lua He said: "Your importunities have caused me serious embarrassment, for you have brought about a situation that has caused my friends to suffer this great discourtesy."

While driving from the station to the Pinchot home Abdu'l-Baha had turned to me and said: "Why are you sitting beside me here in this automobile?" I replied in a very small weak voice that I did not know. He said that He had that morning received a letter from a Princess in Persia who had never seen Him, but had written Him that if she could only hold for one instant the hem of His garment in her hand, she would gladly lay down her life. Abdu'l-Baha said: "She is a Princess and cannot see me, but you are riding here seated by Abdu'l-Baha -- and why is this?" I again remarked that I did not know why I had this great privilege. He said: "I do not know either, except that it is God's will. He doeth whatsoever He willeth."

In New York, daily meetings and public talks were continued. Shortly before Abdu'l-Baha went to Montclair, where He stayed several days leaving Lua and me in New York, He called me to Him and told me I must return to San Francisco. Lua, also, was to return. It seemed as though the darkness was enveloping me and the gates of heaven were slowly closing, when Abdu'l-Baha told me that I must leave Him. Floods of tears burst forth over which I seemed to have no control. Abdu'l-Baha hastily said: "Never mind! Never mind! We will not mention this now, but later. But when I ask you again to return to San Francisco, I hope you will do so cheerfully and without tears."

A few days later Lua and I went to the West Englewood Feast. I watched Mirza Vali'u'llah Khan and Said Assadulla prepare the pillow for this Feast, and we took it over in the car in a large container -- for 150 people. There Abdu'l-Baha served each with His own hands. The servings were so generous that it seemed the supply might soon be exhausted. Abdu'l-Baha

served with a second helping and still there was plenty -- certainly the miracle of the loaves and fishes repeated!

We returned to New York, and after a few days Abdu'l-Baha returned also. In the meantime the fatal day arrived when Abdu'l-Baha sent for me to say that I really must return to San Francisco and my husband. I received this message with a smile -- and no tears. Lua did not want to go back, and became very ill at the hotel. She was in such agony that we did not know what to do -- tearing the sheets into shreds. Dr. Getsinger and Mr. and Mrs. Kinney and I put our heads together and decided that Lua must have a doctor. Dr. Getsinger walked back with me to Abdu'l-Baha's home where I told Him of Lua's illness, and that perhaps she needed a doctor. Abdu'l-Baha looked at me very searchingly and said: "Very well, you and Dr. Getsinger will find a doctor for Lua." We did not know just what to do, so taking the telephone directory we picked out the first physician we came to. We telephoned, and he said he would come immediately to Abdu'l-Baha's home. In due time he arrived and rang the bell of the basement sitting room where Abdu'l-Baha was sitting, attended by all his Persian followers. When the doctor arrived Abdu'l-Baha called out for them to send for Mrs. Ralston to come as the doctor was there. So I went out and got into the automobile with the doctor, and immediately he turned to me and asked in a loud rude voice: "What are you, an American woman, doing in the same house with those d----- Dagoes?" I replied: "You don't know what you are saying ... that was Abdu'l-Baha." "Who is Abdu'l-Baha?" "If you had been reading the papers you would have known who Abdu'l-Baha is. He has spoken in all the churches and the worthwhile clubs and organizations in New York City." My impulse was not to take him to Lua, but Abdu'l-Baha had sent me, so I went on.

We went into Lua's room and the doctor very gruffly asked what was the matter with her. To make matters worse, although Mrs. Bosch was in the room, there was also Mirza Vali'u'llah Khan. She said that she was suffering great pain, and feared that she could not return to San Francisco within the three days left, preceding the day set for her departure. His reply was: "You can return tonight." He prescribed medicine and said that if wanted again he would return. I paid him and told him it would not be necessary for him to return. I told Vali'y'llah Khan what had happened in the automobile. He went to Abdu'l-Baha and told Him that something unpleasant had happened to me, and that Lua had heard it and had refused to take the medicine. The telephone soon rang and the message came from Abdu'l-Baha that Lua was to take the medicine, and that he wished to see Mrs. Ralston. I went to Abdu'l-Baha's apartment and He immediately asked: "What did the doctor say to you?" I replied: "He thought it strange for me to be in a house where there were so many foreigners." Abdu'l-Baha turned His searching gaze upon me and repeated: "What did the doctor say?" I was compelled to repeat those terrible words.

By morning Lua had become violently worse, raving so that she had to be held in bed. In the morning hours I went to Abdu'l-Baha's house and asking

for Him, told Him of Lua's violent suffering during the night. He walked up and down the room in front of me, and as He passed me He turned that marvelously piercing gaze upon me and said: "Very well, perhaps you had better get a doctor." But I had learned my lesson. I said: "I know now that there is only one physician in the world, and that is Abdu'l-Baha, who can cure Lua. He replied: "Very well! Go to the kitchen and ask Said Assadulla to make a strong cup of tea. Take the tea and return to Lua, and also take her an apple. When she is nauseated give her the tea, and for the dysentery give her the apple to eat." Lua ate the apple and drank the tea and that evening she was up and dressed.

Time came for us to return to San Francisco. Abdu'l-Baha had given away many rugs that had been brought from Persia, to different individuals, but had kept one for Himself. This He kept in His bedroom during the months He had been in New York. Everyone wondered what Abdu'l-Baha would do with this rug. We would sometimes get together and agree that this one or that one ought to receive the rug -- for good deeds done. I agreed with everybody that these individuals had been so marvelous in their service that they surely were entitled to the rug, never thinking for one instant that I, myself, could be worthy to receive it. One morning Lu called me, "Come! Come! Abdu'l-Baha wishes to see you." On the stairway going up, she said, "Oh, Abdu'l-Baha has given you the rug." When I went to Abdu'l-Baha's room, He said: "I wish you to take this rug back with you to California. It is yours." I uttered my thanks from the depths of my heart. Later, I asked Him when I should take it and He replied: "Now, immediately. I will send it down for you to have it wrapped and expressed." It is a Saruk gift rug about four feet by seven, which I hope will some day be hung in the Temple. Vali'u'llah Khan told me about the rug. He had brought it from Persia where it had been made especially for Abdu'l-Baha, and sent as a gift from the Persian believers. It was used by Abdu'l-Baha in His room while in New York. It lay on the floor in a bay-window, with the small rocking chair upon it, in which Abdu'l-Baha usually sat.

Upon our return to San Francisco, we spent busy and happy days in preparation for Abdu'l-Baha's visit, arranging for His accomodation at a home on California Street, and preparing for His welcome. Mayor Rolph had accepted an invitation to extend an official welcome to Abdu'l-Baha, but on the day of Abdu'l-Baha's arrival he was absent from the city. Other public men who might have taken His place were absent also. Again, we found that people were narrow minded and did not open their churches for Him to speak -- as freely as they had done in New York.

Finally the wonderful day of His coming arrived. He was met at the train by Dr. d'Evelyn and escorted to the home on California Street. Abdu'l-Baha had requested by telegraph that no gathering of the friends should meet Him at the station, as His train was not due until late at night, and that He would meet them in the morning. Early the following morning a group of friends attended Abdu'l-Baha, and He gave an impromptu talk upon the subject of His

arrival in San Francisco.

I, at that time, had an electric automobile which Abdu'l-Baha enjoyed driving in, as He said there was no odor and no noise and the motion was very soothing. Mrs. Goodall's very beautiful closed car was also at His disposal with a chauffeur. As He did not wish to show any favoritism, He called first upon Mrs. Goodall and then upon me, alternately. We had many delightful rides, and Abdu'l-Baha talked often to groups in Golden Gate Park. We would follow Him along the winding paths, and occasionally He would stop and speak. One day He spoke about the plants and flowers. He said that plants were very sensitive to their environment, and that they were sensitive to the thoughts of human beings.

Abdu'l-Baha would sometimes leave the others and drive with me in the electric, alone. One day He called Mrs. Goodall, and we three went to Golden Gate Park. We stopped to look at the buffalo, busily eating grass, and Abdu'l-Baha remarked: "There are the true philosophers, for they never get their heads above the earth." Other days Abdu'l-Baha would drive with me alone. I had placed a very soft comfortable pillow in the corner of the car, and Abdu'l-Baha would sleep while I drove along the ocean shore.

In San Francisco Abdu'l-Baha spoke at the Unitarian Church. There was a life size painting of Moses above Abdu'l-Baha's head as He stood at the pulpit, while speaking, and we received a strong impression as if the Patriarch of the ancient day had merely stepped down from the painting and become transformed into the Patriarch of the New Day.

At that time in San Francisco there was an East Indian named Har Dyal who was opposed to everything religious and spiritually constructive. He was looked upon unfavorably, and had been dismissed from the Stanford Faculty because of his revolutionary teachings. He invited Abdu'l-Baha to speak at the open Forum in San Francisco, believing that He would speak on religion, and planning to thwart and embarrass Him by speaking in opposition. The small group of friends close to Abdu'l-Baha were very much worried. We said: "Oh dear! Abdu'l-Baha will speak at this terrible place and before this terrible man. We wish that he would not do so." A few minutes before eight o'clock Abdu'l-Baha called me saying that he would drive with me to the Forum. He also called to Mrs. Goodall and His interpreter to drive with us. Other Baha'is followed in their automobiles. Just before Abdu'l-Baha left the car to go into the lecture room, He turn to Mrs. Goodall and me, saying: "We will not speak of religion tonight." He gave a wonderful talk on the Evolution of Man. When He had finished, the Chairman took the platform and said: "We have no reply to make to this wonderful man." And then all of Har Dyal's followers crowded about Abdu'l-Baha and said: "How happy we would be if only we could have you to stay here with us in San Francisco."

On evening Abdu'l-Baha called me and said that He wished to drive -- "We will go onto Market Street and see the lights." As we drove along He spoke: "The lights are very brilliant and very beautiful, but they are as

nothing compared to the lights of heaven. Mortal eyes could not endure the brilliance of the heavenly lights."

Another time He said that He wished to go to the flower show, which was being held at the Fairmont Hotel. Abdu'l-Baha was amazed at the beautiful blossoms. He said that He would like to have cuttings sent to Haifa, and asked if I would attend to it. I went to many florists, but at that time none of them would undertake to ship plants as far as Haifa, saying that they would dry out before reaching their destination. I tried to find friends who were going, who would take them, but we were unable to find anyone going from California. So I sent many packages of seeds which I believe arrived there. A few grew and blossomed, but some required specialized care not at that time possible at Haifa.

On another occasion Abdu'l-Baha called me, and taking three others of His secretaries -- filling my car to capacity -- He asked me to drive to the cable office, as He wished to send a message. It had happened that some of Abdu'l-Baha's cabled messages had not been delivered at their destination, and so when we arrived at the office and the attendant prepared to take His dictation, Abdu'l-Baha said no! that He wished to go into the room from which the message was sent -- He wished to see it sent. The attendant said that such a thing was impossible -- that no one was permitted to enter that room. A member of the party replied: "Abdu'l-Baha is a law unto Himself." The door was opened, and Abdu'l-Baha stood beside the operator and watched the message sent.

Those glorious days had to end, and Abdu'l-Baha's visit came to a close. When Abdu'l-Baha went to Los Angeles, Mrs. Goodall, Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Franklin, myself and others went along. After a few days we returned to San Francisco. He allowed the same group to accompany Him to Sacramento where we bade Him goodbye, as He began His return journey to the East. This was near the close of 1912.

1913 was a happy and busy year. We were engaged in teaching and following various instructions Abdu'l-Baha had left, in connection with the work. War began in 1914, but so long as America remained out of the war we continued in communication with Abdu'l-Baha. The Panama-Pacific-International Exposition opened in San Francisco in 1915, and a Baha'i Congress was held there. We had many speakers and large gatherings, and among those very much interested in the Congress was my husband who accepted the Teachings without reservation and expressed his belief. Abdu'l-Baha had showered much loving attention upon my husband, and had called him "my son." As the exposition closed America entered the war, and all communication with Abdu'l-Baha ceased.

Mr. Ralston was deeply involved in the political world, and in 1916 he entered the race for Governor of California. I was very much opposed to this, for while at that time it was not strictly forbidden Baha'is to enter politics, Abdu'l-Baha was very unfavorable towards it. Mr. Ralston, however, was influenced by political friends who used him as a "cat's-paw" to

split the party. He was defeated, of course, and his so-called political friends left him with all the campaign expenses upon his shoulders. These, of course, were heavy and there was not much ready money available, the war having made inroads upon his property income. Mr. Ralston was very sad. I sold everything -- automobile, saddle horses and everything else available, and we covered as many political debts as we could.

Mr. Ralston, very unhappy because of this disaster and humiliation, decided to leave San Francisco and move to New York City. There we took an apartment, and Mr. Ralston established himself there as a stockbroker. His secretary over a long period of time -- having entered his employ when quite young -- accompanied us. She had laid siege to his affections, and had openly boasted that sooner or later she would succeed. I had remonstrated with him for taking her to New York, but he said that he could not run his business without her. Abdu'l-Baha had warned me of this when driving with me one day in New York he had said: "Your husband must be very lonely without you, and if you do not return to him soon he will desert you for some one to take your place." I replied to the effect that I would rather stay with Abdu'l-Baha -- that my husband would do very well without me. It was about that time that Mirza Ali Akbar -- while I was sitting in Abdu'l-Baha's home one day -- shook his finger at me and said: "He who looks too continuously at the sun becomes blinded."

In New York I occupied myself in glorious association with the friends there, my husband joining in. I also worked daily at the red-cross for the duration of the war, and later after the war was ended I assisted Mr. LeDeux in his free restaurant -- waiting on table. All this, along with various Baha'i activities, kept me very busy.

Mr. Ralston had been going frequently to Reno, where he had established an office. In 1918 he wrote me from Reno that he had left New York, and if I wished to come to Reno I could do so, but he would remain in Reno for six months and then return to New York for six months, so whichever place I preferred would be acceptable to him. Later he wrote me saying he believed we had better go our own separate ways and that he would not return to me any more. I became very ill and placed myself under the care of Dr. Krug, undergoing a serious operation. During the time I was in the hospital Mrs. Krug could not believe he had deserted me in this manner. They wired Mr. Ralston of my illness begging him to return to New York. He came, and while there seemed to waver between a desire to stay and a desire to go, as if he wanted to return to me and still could not do so. Finally upon my recovery, the hardness that had developed in his nature re-asserted itself, and he told me that there was no use for us to consider the matter further. He returned to Reno, and I went to San Francisco to the home of my sister, when able to travel. I had been there only a few days when a telegram from Mrs. Krug came, saying: "Return to New York at once; your future happiness depends upon it." I returned and found that Mr. Ralston had brought suit against me for desertion and had announced that he was not responsible for my bills. The case was tried

in court, and the judge from the bench decided that there had been no desertion on the part of the wife, and that the husband was responsible for the expenses of illness.

I then went to live with Miss Charlotte Bingham, a believer, and I took a position with Mrs. Bertha Holley in her studio, where I worked for some months. One day the doorbell rang and a man presented me with a paper. Upon opening it I found that Mr. Ralston had brought suit against me from Reno for desertion, and for many ridiculous things such as only Reno can concoct -- such as that I had worked at the Red-Cross and in the evening had knitted for the soldiers, leaving him to play solitaire. But the most terrible thing he charged me with was my love for Abdu'l-Baha, and my affiliation with a "strange oriental cult." He said that I wished to go to Haifa, the headquarters of this cult, and leave him. This was a terrible blow and quite shattered my strength. I took this summons to Mr. Mills and he advised me to bring counter-suit against Mr. Ralston, denying these charges, and asking that the divorce be granted to me. This I did, and when the case was called in Reno the divorce was granted me along with \$200.00 a month, alimony.

In 1918 Mrs. Hoagg and I taught for several weeks in Montana, after which we returned to New York. Soon Abdu'l-Baha asked for volunteers to go forth and teach in foreign countries where the light of this Message had not yet penetrated. Mrs. Hoagg had already preceded me to Alaska, and I went to join her at Juneau where she and Miss Jacks were located. Miss Jacks returned to New York and I remained with Mrs. Hoagg, accompanying her to various towns where she lectured on the Cause. Returning to San Francisco I remained there for a short time and then proceeded to New York. Mrs. Hoagg was then preparing to go to Haifa and I had planned to accompany her, but Abdu'l-Baha wrote me not to come. Upon Mrs. Hoagg's arrival there she begged Abdu'l-Baha to permit me to come. He requested her to write me that if I went to Haifa my husband probably would not continue to pay alimony. I grieved over this very much as I wanted greatly to go. When I heard that Mrs. Goodall, Mrs. Cooper and Mrs. Franklin were about to leave for Haifa I could contain myself no longer. I cabled Abdu'l-Baha imploring Him to allow me to accompany them to Haifa, and the answer came back "Very well, you may come."

So we went to Haifa and spent a month (that of October 1920) at Abdu'l-Baha's home -- a month of ideal peace and happiness with Abdu'l-Baha and the ladies of the household. Abdu'l-Baha often talked with me, but I was still a bit sad and resentful at the way fate had treated me. He kept repeating these words: "Abdu'l-Baha is best for you." But my heart was very heavy even during those glorious days. I spoke to Abdu'l-Baha about Mr. Ralston, saying how sad this was. Abdu'l-Baha said: "No, not sad -- but disappointing. Mr. Ralston will go down in the deepest regret, and he will pass from this world shattered -- spiritually as well as physically."

Abdu'l-Baha then asked me what I wished to do, and I said that on the \$200.00 monthly that Mr. Ralston was sending me I could remain in Europe and

work with Mrs. Hoagg in Italy. He said: "Very well", so I returned with the party as far as Naples where they left me to return to San Francisco, while I remained in Naples. I had a few hundred dollars with me, but found upon my arrival there that the money I was expecting had not arrived, as my alimony had been cut off, and I never again received any. Without consulting Abdu'l-Baha, I soon left Naples for Sorrento, then going to Austria and finally to Paris. There I remained in association with Baha'i friends for nearly three years, visiting Germany and near-by places. My resources were nearly exhausted but I had left a bond with Roy Wilhelm which he sold for enough to last me during my stay in Paris. By this time we had received the sad news of Abdu'l-Baha's passing.

At the beginning of 1923, my funds being very much depleted, I wrote my sister about my predicament and asked if the Nevada ranch in which I had an interest was not producing. She replied that it was deeply in debt and that she had carried the burden upon her own shoulders quite long enough, and it was best for me to return. I had just enough money to pay my passage back to Nevada where I arrived with fifty cents in my purse.

My sojourn there was anything but pleasant as a member of the family felt that I was an obstacle in the way of their obtaining the property. My father had made millions in mines and then invested the money in lands. Being more or less persecuted by this member of the family and being very unhappy, I returned to California where I tried to obtain a position of some sort. But I had never been trained in any self-support, and my age was against me, and there seemed to be nothing I could put my hand to. I was on the point of returning to Nevada, when about that time two dear girlhood friends -- both widows, non-Baha'is -- living in a beautiful home in Oakland, asked me to visit them. The invitation was for three weeks and I then made preparation to leave, when they asked me to extend the visit. I remained with them seven years. I had no home, no money, and I was very happy to feel that I could make myself useful in the home of these two dear friends in return for the shelter they offered me. There was remuneration, and my finances were absolutely depleted, although I received occasional help from my sister -- and also clothing.

After meeting with what I considered a slight at the time from a certain Baha'i Assembly, I withdrew within myself and associated no more with Baha'is -- not even with my Baha'i books. I felt that I had been deserted by the whole world and that Baha'i friends had also turned against me. Under this heavy strain of poverty and humiliation and grief I became very ill, my nervous system a complete wreck, and I thought deeply of ending my life. One day I was in such despair it seemed that darkness had closed around me and that the end had surely come -- when I felt a great longing for Abdu'l-Baha and the friends. I searched for the Baha'i books that had been laid away, and opening the Hidden Words at random I placed my finger upon the words: "I beckon thee to life, but thou desirest death. Why hast thou neglected My Will and followed thy desire?" It seemed as if some helping hand had reached down

into the abyss into which IO had fallen to pull me out. I prayed desperately to Abdu'l-Baha to forgive me for all my worldliness and my wilfulness. Slowly the light seemed to return into my life. I returned to Berkeley (in 1932) to live among and associate with the friends of God. Gradually my condition became improved, I felt the sustaining power of the friends, and I had the love and friendship of my sister who assisted me financially, and in many ways. My previous good health, however, seemed to have been lost. My life was now much easier, I spoke wherever I could for Abdu'l-Baha and the Cause of God, and did what I could to help others to know the path.

And now I have come to the end of my story. Not material wealth, but the wealth of contentment has become mine; my needs are taken care of and my friends are many. I know now that when I stood in the presence of Abdu'l-Baha and He looked into the future, He did not wish trials for me. He only had love in His heart. He saw my wilful nature and placed my feet in the right path. If I turned aside through my own weakness and wilfulness, my actions must brought sorrow to Abdu'l-Baha. I fear not for the things I have done. I fear only for the things I have not done.

I received sixteen Tablets from Abdu'l-Baha. These I kept in a small Viennese embroidered case which was kept locked. Upon one of my trips to San Francisco I left it in my writing desk, which was unlocked. When I returned, the case and letters were gone.

## INCIDENTS

Lua and I had many disagreements about dogs. I had always been a great lover of dogs, having at one time possessed a large kennel of some forty dogs. When Lua came to my home and saw the two beautiful dogs remaining in my possession, she insisted that I must get rid of them -- that I must turn all my thoughts to the Cause and to humanity. When we received word that Abdu'l-Baha would greet us in Chicago I sent the dogs to a friend to care for. I paid their expenses there but never took them back. One day I spoke to Abdu'l-Baha about my love for animals, saying that I seemed to love animals better than I loved human beings. Abdu'l-Baha did not reprove me, but said that my love for animals would some day develop into love for human beings.

Then He told me a story of a Miller's dog: "At a certain mill the Miller had a dog that was his close companion. Often astronomers came to this mill to study and observe the heavens. A certain noted Astronomer, while there, was spending his nights out of doors where he could observe the heavens. One night the Miller called to him and said: 'Better come in and sleep tonight because it is going to rain.' But the Astronomer replied: 'Oh no, you must be mistaken, there is not a cloud in the sky, neither is there a sign of rain in the heavens.' The Miller said 'very well' and shut the door and windows and retired into the mill. In the night there came a great pounding at the door, and when the Miller opened it there stood the Astronomer, who exclaimed 'it is raining.' The Miller said, 'come in' but the Astronomer replied, 'Oh no, I do not want to come in, I only want to know how you knew it was going to rain.'

Then the Miller explained: 'My dog prefers to sleep outside, but when it is going to rain he always comes inside. Last night he came in.' At which the Astronomer cried: 'Ah me! I have spent all my life in the study of sciences, and now I do not know as much as a dog!'

Walter Hampden, the actor, who by his own confession had sunk to "the lowest of the low" level on the moral plane, received many letters and pamphlets on spiritual values while playing in "The Servant in the House." His public seemed to consider him endowed with the virtues he portrayed, and commended him highly. This aroused his conscience. One night during the play he fainted, and in this state he seemed to see hundreds of doves settling all around him. The curtain was rung down, he was returned to his home, and there he picked up one of the pamphlets, the reading of which coupled with the incident of the evening upset him strangely. After a wakeful night, he went for an early morning walk on Riverside Drive. There he saw Abdu'l-Baha, and following Him home he rang the bell and asked if he might be permitted to meet this Holy man. After this interview he returned many times. Finally, he wired for his wife and children whom he had previously deserted, and brought them all to Abdu'l-Baha. One daughter was afflicted, and Mr. Hampden asked Abdu'l-Baha to heal her. Abdu'l-Baha replied: "She will be healed" -- implying spiritual healing. She died shortly after that. Mr. Hampden took back his family, and from external appearances it may be inferred that at this time a great and permanent change took place in his life.

Abdu'l-Baha looked at me one day and said: "You have been working too hard, you need recreation, it is not best to concentrate too continuously upon one subject, go out and have some fun -- take Ali Akbar to Coney Island. I obediently gathered together a little group including Mr. and Mrs. Kinney, Mr. and Mrs. Grundy, Mirza Ali Akbar, Mirza Vali-u-llah Khan and Ahmad Sorab. Lua did not go. We thought her costume might attract too much attention in such a place. Said Assadulla stayed at home for the same reason. As it was, the red fezz worn by the Persian friends attracted much attention and several times we were asked: "What concession are you from?" We had an enjoyable time and many laughs while in the crazy house and other equally amusing concessions. I shall always remember the rigid pose and staring eyes of Mirza Ali Akbar, as we swooped downward -- and upward again -- on the scenic railway. At last, tired and hungry, we went into a large restaurant for rest and sandwiches. We had not been seated long before the music started and many couples began to dance in the space reserved for that purpose in the middle of the floor. This was too much for Mirza Ali Akbar. He jumped up, and coming around to me and reaching for my handbag, he said: "Come, this is no place for you." Everyone laughed at him, but it was no use -- he was my protector on this occasion and home we had to go, at once.

One day a group asked Abdu'l-Baha if it was all right for them to visit a fortune-teller. He replied, "If you wish, you may go for amusement. But never let anything they tell you influence your actions."

On the day of the Feast of Abdu'l-Baha at West Englewood, Lua had

walked at the side of the road among the bushes and had become poisoned with poison ivy. The next morning it was causing a great deal of pain, but she dressed and went to Abdu'l-Baha's house where she threw herself upon the couch, moaning and crying. I was standing by her side when Abdu'l-Baha entered the room. He asked: "What is the matter, Lua? What is troubling you?" "My Lord, I am suffering from poison ivy." "How did you get this?" "Yesterday, on my way from the Grove at Roy Wilhelm's to his house, I walked among the bushes and became poisoned with the ivy." The Master replied: "Oh Lua! Lua! If you would only walk in the middle of the path and not in the weeds, these trials would not come to you."

While in Haifa I was taken very ill, having contracted the flu. Abdu'l-Baha did not come near me, although Mrs. Franklin had told Him I was ill and urged Him to see me. He said: "Baha'u'llah suffered much. It will not hurt Mrs. Ralston to suffer a little." A few hours later Abdu'l-Baha came into my room looked searchingly at me and said: "Would you like to have a doctor? There are many splendid doctors at the English hospital." I replied: "No, Abdu'l-Baha is the only Physician." Shortly after that He sent His daughter Ruha to me with a glass of delicious pomegranate juice. In a few hours I had recovered.

At the Pinchot's, in the middle of the night we heard Abdu'l-Baha give a most piercing cry of agony. Lua sprang from her bed and was determined to go to Him. I feared to arouse the household and prevailed upon her not to go.

In Sacramento, the night before Abdu'l-Baha started East, that same cry rang forth in the middle of the night -- like a soul in agony. All heard it. We gathered together the next morning and spoke of it. It rang through the building.

## METADATA

Views710 views since posted 2025-10-07; last edit 2025-10-07 02:36 UTC;

previous at [archive.org.../ralston\\_reminiscences\\_early\\_believer](https://archive.org.../ralston_reminiscences_early_believer)

Language

English

Permission

public domain

Share

Shortlink: [bahai-library.com/7089](https://bahai-library.com/7089)

Citation: [ris/7089](https://bahai-library.com/ris/7089)

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

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

[chronology](#)

[search:](#)

[author](#)

[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

[adv. search](#)

[languages](#)

[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

[links](#)

[about](#)

[contact](#)

[RSS](#)

[new](#)

— Reminiscences of an Early Believer (Used by permission of the curator)