



California and was among the first to teach it in Nevada. Hyde's enquiring and earnest letters to Thornton Chase, enquiring into the deeper teachings of the Faith, prompted his mentor to write several pages, addressing such themes as the nature of fear, the station of the Persian martyrs in comparison with the American Bahá'ís, the resurrection of Christian teachings through the Bahá'í revelation, the mistaking of the holy spirit for the spirit of man; and prompted Chase to write to Hyde Dunn in February 1911: "Your letters are such a pleasure to me. I see shining through them the earnest soul, which has tasted of heavenly food and found it so delicious that it ever hungers for the Table of the Lord."

Both Hyde Dunn and Clara Davis met 'Abdu'l-Bahá when he visited California in October 1912. Hyde attended as many addresses by the Master that he could. The impact of being in his presence gave both he and Clara strength for the remainder of their lives. Hyde's first wife Fanny died in 1916, and a year later he and Clara married. In Berkeley, they lived close to Kathrine Frankland, and Clara knew well Kathryn's sister Hazel Tomlinson of Santa Rosa. They knew Imogene Hoagg well, and spoke in the homes of Dr Woodson and Frances Allen, the first Bahá'ís in Berkely, and of Jesse Vance Matteson in Fruitvale, Oakland. Agnes Alexander dined at their home in Oakland.

When, in 1919, Clara and Hyde learnt of the call Abdu'l-Bahá had made in his "Tablets of the Divine Plan" for teachers to take the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the many lands that he himself was now unable to visit, they shared the same immediate thought: Hyde is reported to have looked up and said "let us go where 'Abdu'l-Bahá wished to go". They decided to go, despite being low in funds. Hyde was always a successful salesman, but spent his income readily on his teaching activities - whether on travel and Bahá'í literature, on fine clothes, or food, with which to serve the many who attended the Dunn's firesides. They invariably rented a well-appointed apartment or cottage, rather than a simple one, in order to have the best surroundings in which to present the Faith.

When Clara suggested that Hyde might go alone to Australia to save the expense, a cable was sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who replied that both should go, thus settling the matter. When some among the San Francisco Bahá'ís expressed concerned that an "old couple" intended travelling so far to spread the Bahá'í message, Hyde is reported to have replied that he would sooner die than not respond to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's call. After a two month sojourn in Hawaii, and a short stop in Samoa, the Dunns arrived in Sydney on 10 April, 1920. Their lack of funds brought distress

in the first few months, during which Clara was able to find work. Within a year, however, Hyde acquired a position as travelling salesman for the Bacchus Marsh Milk Company (soon after acquired by Nestles Milk Co), initially within New South Wales. Typically, he travelled to country towns during the week while Clara remained in a rented cottage in the state-capital, inviting people to weekend meetings for which Hyde returned home and spoke. When he out-performed all other company salesmen in the first year, he requested that he be made an "interstate" man. In the subsequent decade his work took him to every state, and to every major city and town in the country.

Post-war skepticism, in addition to increasing disillusion with the sectarianism and dogmatism of the major churches, contributed to growing interest in alternate religions and philosophies in Australian society, and Hyde continued to speak, as he had done in North America, to "new thought" and new-age religious groups. In Melbourne in 1923, for instance, he spoke on Friday evenings in the home of a herbalist to audiences of over one-hundred, and on another visit to the Victorian state capital the Dunns spoke by invitation to an audience at a Theosophical lodge, and at Spiritualist churches, an Occult church, and the Lyceum Club. After two years of travelling and meeting people, Sydney optometrist Oswald Whitaker, who had been interested in Theosophy, accepted Hyde Dunn's definition of "love" as being "the whole law and power of the Great Universe" and became the first Australian Bahá'í. Soon after, photographer and model-maker Effie Baker accepted Dunn's message immediately after hearing it at Melbourne's New Civilisation Centre. By July 1923 Hyde had visited 225 towns, an average of one new town for each four and a half days work since commencing with Nestles.

Clara had a charitable nature, and gathered others around her to rally to a just cause. The suffering in her early years had developed her sense of compassion, whether for those close to her, or for others whose plight she came to know. Hyde had a friendly disposition, and a distinguished, upright appearance. He retained an English accent, and spoke in an engaging and inspired manner. "With the heart filled with the flame of the love of God," he once explained to a New Zealand friend, "we can stand on any platform, turn our faces to Bahá'u'lláh and deliver His Message of Gladtidings to all peoples, with a conviction and power, through His help that will reach the hearts of the hearers and penetrate their understandings, through the power of the Spirit - It gives the power to the audience to see with the eye of the heart, which is all embracing." With

business acquaintances, Hyde was a keen observer of economic and political conditions, although felt he lacked the training to fully express himself, and referred at one time to the bounty of having friends who helped him "for want of training and technique". In conversation and in correspondence with his Bahá'í friends, however, he spread his enthusiasm for the close study of scripture. The "Hidden Words", he once wrote to Gretta Lamprill, had been to his "thirsty longing soul like a balm or pure water on the hot desert of search and longing".

It was with this attitude that the Dunns fostered small and isolated Bahá'í communities across Australia and New Zealand, and guided them toward the establishment of a National Spiritual Assembly. The first Local Assembly was established in Melbourne, in December 1923, followed by others in Perth, in July 1924, and Adelaide, in December 1924. Assemblies were also established in Sydney in April 1925, and in Auckland early in 1923. These assemblies lacked firm foundations, and declined when the Dunns moved to another city. Subsequent visits were required to revive them.

When Clara Dunn met Shoghi Effendi in the course of her pilgrimage in 1932, the Guardian stressed the necessity of forming a National Assembly, and this was achieved in 1934, with delegates coming from Adelaide, Sydney and Auckland (New Zealand) Assemblies. Hyde served on the Assembly during its first year. He was now in his seventies, and Shoghi Effendi instructed the national body to provide for the comfort of the pioneers, to whom the Australian and New Zealand Bahá'í communities owed so much. The Guardian had great affection for Hyde Dunn. In *God Passes By* he referred to him as "great-hearted and heroic"; and he included the Dunns among the pioneers he wrote of in *Advent of Divine Justice* who had "won the eternal distinction of being the first to raise the call of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá in such highly important and widely scattered centres and territories as....the Islands of the Pacific...Australia and New Zealand...".

Those who had become Bahá'ís after hearing the Dunns numbered above one hundred, and this hundred, in turn, had assisted in firmly establishing Bahá'í communities throughout the South Pacific. Such notable Bahá'ís as Gretta Lamprill, Bertha Dobbins, and Harold and Florence Fitzner - all of whom became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh in the World Crusade - were among those attracted to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the 1920s by Clara and Hyde Dunn. By 1933, when Hyde retired aged nearly 80, he had worked for some eleven years in Australia. He died in Sydney on 7 February 1941.

Clara had always regarded Hyde as the better speaker. But

after his passing, the friends turned to her, and fully expected her to speak in his stead. She invariably commenced her talks with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's question: "do you know in what day you are living?". In later years her speech was suffused with supplication, as she frequently recited the prayers which began "O Thou incomparable God!...", and "O God! O God!

This is a broken-winged bird and his flight is very slow...". When the National Assembly called for pioneers at the commencement of a new phase of teaching in 1943, Clara settled in Brisbane for several months. Subsequently she recommenced the visits to the major centres which had ceased in the years of Hyde's last illness. She visited the Bahá'ís in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, and Hobart, as well as numerous smaller towns, always ensuring that she returned in December-January to participate in summer schools at the Yerrinbool Bahá'í school property south of Sydney - as the school committee's guest, in a room adjacent to the Hyde Dunn Hall. Participants at many schools in the 1940s and 1950s were privileged to hear "mother" Dunn recount how she met 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and tell of her many years of travel with Hyde. She attended her last summer school in 1959.

On 29 February 1952 Clara Dunn was appointed by Shoghi Effendi as one of the Hands of the Cause. Now in her late years, she gathered her strength to fulfil her far-reaching spiritual and administrative responsibilities. At the commencement of the World Crusade the Guardian directed her to travel amongst the Bahá'í communities in Australia and New Zealand, and in October 1953 she attended the New Delhi conference. In April 1954 the Guardian appointed her as Trustee for the Continental Fund for Australasia, and at the same time, Shoghi Effendi requested that she appoint two members to the newly established "Auxiliary Boards". At national convention, Clara appointed H. Collis Featherstone and Thelma Perks. Mr Featherstone was later appointed as Hand of the Cause, and Thelma subsequently served on the Continental Board of Counsellors for Australasia. Both assisted Clara greatly in her duties, often writing reports to the Guardian on her behalf. Her companion on many inter-state visits, Thelma had acted as a daughter to the Dunns from as early as the 1940s, before she had herself become a Bahá'í, and was now privileged to assist Clara in her work as a Hand of the Cause.

Clara ventured several times to be with the New Zealand Bahá'í friends. She attended their summer school in 1954, and represented the Guardian at their inaugural national convention, in 1957. Although physically frail, she remained robust in spirit. Later in the year she insisted on taking her place at the meeting of the Hands of the Cause which followed the sudden

passing of the Guardian. From early years in which she experienced intense personal suffering, Clara Dunn lived to see her pain transmitted into spiritual joy, the result of a life lived in service, prayer, and dedication. She died in Sydney on 18 November 1960.

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