

that her father, one of the most learned mullás of Írán, taught her himself and later had a teacher for her. This was most unusual, for in her day girls had no educational opportunities. She outdistanced her brothers in her progress and passed high in all examinations. Because she was a woman they would not give her a degree. Her father often said what a pity she had not been born a son, for then she could have followed in his career as a great mullá of the Empire.

Táhirih was married when she was thirteen years old to her cousin, the son of the Imám-Juma, a great mullá who leads the prayers at the mosque on Fridays. She had three children, two sons and one daughter. She became a very great poet and was deeply spiritual, she was always studying religion, always seeking for truth. She became profoundly interested in the teachings of Shaykh Ahsá'í and Siyyid Kázim Rashti, who were liberalists and said great spiritual reforms would come. Her father was very angry with her because she read their books and her father-in-law was too. But she continued to study their books and she heard about the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and their teachings for universal peace and the equal education of the girl and the boy. She believed in these principles whole-heartedly and declared herself a believer.

This great young woman of Qazvín laid aside the veil which Muhammadan women wear; she didn't put it aside altogether, but she many times let it slip from her face when she lectured. But she declared that women should not wear the veil, should not be isolated, but should have equal rights and opportunities. She quoted her great teacher, Bahá'u'lláh, that man and woman are as the two wings of the bird of humanity, and this bird of humanity cannot attain its highest, most perfect flight until the two wings are equally poised, equally balanced. She was too far ahead of her time, and like other pioneers of great progressive movements, she was imprisoned. Instead of putting her into jail, they made her a prisoner in the home of the Kalantar, that means the Mayor of Tihrán. Here several poets and some of the greatest women of the capital came to call, and every one was charmed by her presence. The Sháh-in-Sháh of Persia sent for her to be brought to his palace, and when he saw her he said: "I like her looks, leave her and let her be."

Násiri'd-Dín-Sháh, the ruler, sent her a letter asking her to give up her very advanced ideas and telling her if she did, he would make her his bride, the greatest lady in the land. On the back of his letter she wrote her reply in verse declining his magnificently royal offer. Her words were:

Kingdom, wealth and ruling be for thee,

Wandering, becoming a poor dervish and calamity be for me.

If that station is good, let it be for thee.

And if this station is bad, I long for it, let it be for me!

She was a prisoner in the Mayor's home for more than three years and during all this time the women of Írán came to love her more and more, and all

people were enchanted with her poetry, and many came to believe as she did, that this is the dawn of a great new universal epoch when we must work for the oneness of mankind, for the independent investigation of truth, for the unity of religions and for the education of the girl equally with that of the boy. The orthodox clergy were afraid of these new progressive ideals and as they were the power behind the government, it was decided to put Táhirih to death. They had to do it secretly because they knew how many hundreds of the most important people in Tíhrán loved her.

They decided upon September 15, 1852, for her death. With her prophetic soul she must have divined it for she wrote in one of her poems: "At the gates of my heart I behold the feet and the tents of hosts of calamity." That morning she took an elaborate bath, used rosewater, dressed herself in her best white dress. She said good-bye to everyone in the house, telling them that in the evening she was leaving to go on a long journey. After that she said she would like to be alone, and she spent the day, as they said, talking softly to herself, but we know she was praying. They came for her at night and she said to them, "I am ready!" The Mayor had them throw his own cloak about her so that no one would recognize her, and they put her upon his own horse. In a roundabout way through smaller streets they took her to a garden and had her wait in a servant's room on the ground floor. The official called a servant and ordered him to go and kill the woman downstairs. He went but when Táhirih spoke to him he was so touched by her sweetness and holiness, that he refused to strangle her, and carried the handkerchief again upstairs. The official dismissed him, called a very evil servant, gave him liquor to drink, then handed him a bag of gold as a present, put the handkerchief into his hands and said, "Go down and kill that woman below and do not let her speak to you." The servant rushed in, brutally strangled her with the handkerchief, kicked her and while she was still living threw her into a dry well and filled it up with stones.

But they could not bury her there! Her influence had gone around the whole world. Táhirih, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, has become immortal in the minds of millions of men and women, and her spirit of love and heroism will be transmitted to millions yet unborn.

I should like to explain to you what her names mean. One of her teachers, Kázím Rashti gave her the name of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, which means "Consolation of the Eyes," because she was so young, so beautiful, so spiritual. Bahá'u'lláh gave her the name Táhirih, which means "The Pure One." While still in the twenties she began to preach the equal rights of men and women, she was martyred at the age of thirty-six years, and yet today, eighty-seven years after her cruel martyrdom, the women of Írán and of many other countries of the Islámic world no longer are allowed to wear the veil, and girls are receiving education. She did not die in vain.

Táhirih's courageous deathless personality forever will stand out against the background of eternity, for she gave her life for her sister women. The sweet perfume of her heroic selflessness is diffused in the whole five

continents. People of all religions and of none, all races, all classes, all humanity, cherish the memory of Táhirih and weep tears of love and longing when her great poems are chanted.

When I was in Vienna, Austria, a few years ago, I had an interview with the mother of the President of Austria, Mrs. Marinna Hainisch, the woman who has done most for woman's education in Austria, that nation of great culture. Mrs. Hainisch established the first high schools for girls in her land. She told me that the inspiration of all her lifework had been Táhirih of Írán. Mrs. Hainisch said: "I was a young girl, only seventeen years old when I heard of the martyrdom of Táhirih, and I said, 'I shall try to do for the girls of Austria what Táhirih tried to do and gave her life to do, for the girls of Írán.'" She told me: "I was married, and my husband too, was only seventeen; everybody was against education for girls, but my young husband said: 'If you wish to work for the education of girls, you can.'" I mentioned this interview over in Alighrah, India, a short time ago when I spoke to the university students at the home of Professor Habíb, and at the close of my talk another guest of honor arose, a woman professor of Calcutta University, and asked if she could speak a few words. She said, "I am Viennese, I was born in Vienna and I wish to say that Mrs. Marinna Hainisch established the first college for the higher education of girls in Austria and I was graduated from the college." This is a proof of the influence of Táhirih. Mrs. Hainisch had said to me, "It is so easy for you, Miss Root, to go all around the world and be given the opportunity to speak on the equal education of the girl and the boy. It was so hard for me to interest people in this new idea in my day, but I remembered Táhirih and I tried. Poor Táhirih had to die for these very ideals which today the world accepts!"

When I was in Cawnpore, India, and spoke in a girls' college on Táhirih's life the founder and the donor of that great college arose and said: "It is my hope that every girl in this school will become a Táhirih of India."

Sir Rai Bahadur Sapru of Allahabad, one of India's greatest lawyers, said to me: "I love Táhirih's poems so much that I have named my favorite little granddaughter Táhirih. I have tried for years to get her poems, and now today you give them to me." When I was in the Pemberton Club in London one evening, a well known publisher said to me: "I shall get Táhirih's poems collected and publish them at a great price." But he could never get them. I should like to tell you, dear listeners on the air, that the day after the martyrdom of Táhirih, the authorities burned her clothing, her books, her poems, her birth certificate; they tried to wipe out every trace of her life; but other people had some of her poems, and a friend of mine worked for years to gather them together, copied them in longhand and gave them to me as a present when I was in Írán in 1930. Another friend in India, Mr. Isfandiar K. B. Bakhtiari of Karachi, has twice published one thousand copies of these poems for people in India. In my book Táhirih the Pure, Írán's Greatest Woman, published July, 1938, I included her poems and published three thousand copies.

Two of these poems are translated into English, but the original poems are all in the Persian language. They would be very beautiful sung in the Persian language over your radio.

Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, in his book *A Traveller's Narrative*, wrote: "The appearance of such a woman as Táhirih, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, is in any country and in any age a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Persia it is a prodigy, nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvelous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence, her fearless devotion and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth incomparable amidst her countrywomen. Had the Bábí religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient, that it produced a heroine like Qurratu'l-'Ayn."

And now dear listeners, that we have heard of Táhirih, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, this first woman suffrage martyr, this first woman in Central Asia to work for the education of girls, what will our own endeavors show forth in this twentieth century?

Today you have equal education for girls and boys in Australia, and you have suffrage for women; but you in Australia and we in the United States and in all other parts of the globe are born into this world to work for universal peace, disarmament, a world court and a strong international police force to ensure arbitration. We are born into this world to work for universal education, a universal auxiliary language, for unity in religion and for the oneness of mankind. Our lives, our world, need strong spiritual foundations, and one of the finest traits of Táhirih, and one that helped the world most, was her fidelity in searching for truth! She began as a little girl and continued until the very day of her passing from this world.

O Táhirih, you have not passed out, you have only passed on! Your spiritual, courageous life will forever inspire, ennoble and refine humanity; your songs of the spirit will be treasured in innumerable hearts. You are to this day our living, thrilling teacher!

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