

With his wife and seven children he pioneered to Mahml'Idabad in the Province of Mazandaran in the forty-five month teaching plan assigned to Train by the beloved Guardian, and assisted in the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly; and in his professional capacity as a cotton expert he travelled widely throughout Fairs devoting his free time to establishing deepening classes and presenting lectures on the Baha'i Faith. After retiring, he continued his travels and devoted considerable time to interviewing people and conducting research for the history books he was writing. His two—volume history of Nayriz was published under the title of Lama'dtu'l—Anvdr (The Gleam of Light). Although his history of Ardistan was approved for publication, the disruption caused by the Islamic revolution prevented its appearance.

In his eighty-fifth year, Mr. Rouhani, who was sought by the revolutionary authorities because of his long years of outstanding service to the Faith, left his homeland, accompanied by his wife, at the encouragement of his children who are pioneers in various parts of the world, and settled in India in 1979. In his absence his house was confiscated and razed to the ground and his belongings, including his valuable papers and records, were pillaged. Both in Panchgani and Poona, Mr. Rouhani devoted himself to deepening the friends, especially the youth, until his passing on 25 November 1984 in Poona at age ninety. 'His LIFELONG SERVICES PROMOTION FAITH CRADLE FAITH UNFORGETTABLE,' the Universal House of Justice cabled on his passing. _

When he was in his twenties, Mr. Rouhani joined the first group of seven pilgrims from Nayriz who visited the Holy Land after World War I. The following excerpts are from his memoirs of that period.

Passages in parentheses form an integral part of the memoir; interpolations by the translator appear in square brackets. Statements attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahé, although placed in quotation marks, represent the purport of His remarks according to the author's recollection and, as such, have the status of pilgrim notes.

I from us. We were like dead bodies in His pres—ence. While He was leaning back, He said with 'Abdu'l-Bahé admitted us to His presence a captivating voice, 'Welcome! You sustained immediately upon our arrival in Haifa. There many difficulties during your journey .. .' were seven of us from Nayriz accompanied by As there were seven pilgrims from Nayriz, Nazimu'l—Mulk. We were led to a small room 'Abdu'l—Baha turned His loving attention to us, to the north of the blessed House. We entered asked after the friends there, and said, 'Nayriz with utter humility and attained the honour of is a sacred place. The pure blood of many union. martyrs was shed on its soil. Among the martyrs We had been advised beforehand not to kneel is Aqa Siyyid Yahyay-i-Vahid who had com— before 'Abdu'l-Baha. We were told to enter, mitted to memory thirty thousand traditions. say Allah'u'Abha, and await His instructions. He was foremost among the 'Ulama of Train. We followed this advice, and bowed one by one Also among them was Haj Muhammad-Taqi- one as we entered. With supreme dignity Ayyi'lb, who, as the gamblers say, risked his all. 'Abdu'l-Baha welcomed us and bade us to be He sacrificed whatever he

had in the path of seated. The power of prostration was taken God. He was tortured and made to suffer

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greatly. Finally he went to Baghdad and became the recipient of endless bounties.'

II

The second day after our arrival was the first day of Ridvan. On that day 'Abdu'l-Baha and His family went to Bahji to Visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah. At His behest, bus tickets were obtained for all the pilgrims to go to 'Akka and visit the Most Holy Shrine. As we entered the bus and were introduced to the person in charge, he manifested extreme respect for 'Abdu'l-Baha and expressed delight that we were the followers of 'Abbas Effendi.

We were dropped off at a place about one kilometer from Bahji. From there all of us walked towards the Shrine while singing a song, the opening verses of which are:

We, the followers of Baha,
with dilated hearts,
from the beginning of creation
to the end of time,
are proclaimers
of the Greatest Name:

Allah'u'Abha! Allah'u'Abha! And all of us, with cries of exultation,
responded by repeating the last verse.

When we reached a curve in the path near the Bahji Tea House and saw before us in the distance the blessed figure of 'Abdu'l—Baha, we stopped singing and approached him With absolute courtesy and humility. We bowed and uttered the greeting of 'Allah'u'Abha.' With a heavenly smile He said, 'Welcome.' Then with much compassion and in a very humorous way He pretended to scold us, saying, 'You have publicly disgraced Us! There was a time when no one dared say "Allah'u'Abha". Now you raise the cry of praise and glorification and openly utter the greeting of "Allah'u'Abha" as you come to the Blessed Shrine.'

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One day the writer and another pilgrim from Nayriz were taken ill and were confined to bed. Dr. Lutfu'llah Hakim was our physician. The illness deprived

us of the bounty of attaining the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Baha for a few days. I was able to leave my sick bed on the eighth day of Ridvan. I joined the other pilgrims at the Pilgrim House. However, the condition of Haj

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Amru’llah, the other pilgrim, worsened. ‘Abdu’l-Baha issued instructions for the German doctor to Visit the patient and help Dr. Hakim in his attempts to cure him.

On the ninth day of Ridvan we again left Haifa, at ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s behest, and went to ‘Akka. On that day we Visited the Most Holy Shrine, the Garden of Firdaws,¹ and the Garden of Ridvan, which is also called by Baha’u’llah the Verdant Island. Dr. Hakim was directed by ‘Abdu’l-Baha to remain in Haifa and watch Haj Amru’llah’s condition, which had become critical.

Unfortunately, on this trip I developed diar- rhoea. In the morning the matter was reported to ‘Abdu’l-Baha. He ordered that one-and-a- half litres of milk be boiled. I was to drink it when it was cold. With this prescription I was completely cured; the immediate cure was obvi- ously effected through His blessed Will.

Two days later something happened that astonished us all. ‘Abdu’l-Baha was sitting in the little garden in front of the Shrine of Baha’u’llah² and a group of us were in His presence. He was talking to us when Dr. Hakim arrived from Haifa and sought permission to attain ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s presence. Permission was granted. He, panic-stricken and perturbed, said ‘One of the patients from Nayriz is in a critical condition.’ ‘Abdu’l-Baha said calmly, ‘He will be all right.’ Dr. Hakim, who had given up hope and was certain the patient would die by the time he returned said, ‘My Master, even the German doctor has no hope for him; he is mori- bund.’ With a special gesture, which is His alone, and with considerable force, ‘Abdu’l-Baha repeated His assurance, saying, ‘He will be all right,’ and then He dismissed Dr. Hakim. There were some candies on the table. ‘Abdu’l-Baha took one of the candies known locally as Turkish Delight, gave it to Dr. Hakim and said, ‘You may also give this to the patient.’ The doctor took the candy, backed out respectfully, and returned to Haifa. On the twelfth day of Ridyan, when we returned to Haifa, Haj Amru’llah was out of bed, looking well and very much alive. He joined us in the Pilgrim House near the Shrine of the Bab.

¹ Paradise Garden, an extensive agricultural area immediately adjacent to the Ridvan Garden; see *Door of Hope*, pp. 102— 2That Garden is no longer there; it has been dismantled and

now forms a part of the gardens surrounding the Most Holy Spot.

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One evening ‘Abdu’l—Baha granted an audi- ence to a large number of the friends in the hall of His House. With a captivating eloquence and in a state

of joy and delight, He said, 'No government was able to seize the fortress and port of 'Akka, but when God willed it, it was conquered by two British cavalrymen. ('Abdu'l-Baha with the use of His two fingers emphasized the figure 2). He then said, 'It is the will of God that this Faith should advance, therefore, nothing can hinder its progress or check its growth. All the religions of God have been like this in the beginning. We are holding a pickaxe in our hand ready to build, but we see that the building is raised by itself.' [At this point 'Abdu'l-Baha related the story of Abu Muslim-i—Ighui'asanil, and the seemingly trivial circumstances that contributed to his Victory over the forces of Ibn-i—Marvan, and remarked that 'the same force is in operation now'.]

V

One afternoon 'Abdu'l-Baha was in the garden of His House pacing the path when He admitted a group of us to His presence. We were completely immersed in the bountiful ocean of His eloquent utterances when someone informed Him of the arrival of Aqa Flayhh Fara-ju'llah² from Egypt and requested permission for him to attain 'Abdu'l—Baha's presence. Permission was granted. fihaylgh Faraju'llah came and said one of the well—known scholars of Egypt by the name of flaylgh Muhammad, with whom he had spoken about the Faith for some time and who had several unresolved questions, had come to Haifa with him to discuss his difficulties and pose his questions in person. 'Abdu'l-Baha granted permission for them to attain His presence after supper (the pilgrims usually had their supper at the House of the Master and went to the Pilgrim House to sleep). After supper we were dismissed and returned

IA powerful chief of Persian origin, leader of the religious and political movement in Qurasan through which the Ummayyads were overthrown and the Abbasids (Arabic family descended from 'Abbas, the uncle of Muhammad) attained the throne. He died in 755.

Zflayfl Faraju'lléh Kurdi, a well-known believer who rendered outstanding services and who was responsible for printing many Baha'i books in Egypt. At the time he was in the process of publishing Makdn'b—i-'Abdu'l-Bahd (Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha), Vol. III.

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to the Pilgrim House. Some time elapsed. I was in a state between sleep and wakefulness when I heard the voices of two Arabs coming up the mountain, who were talking together as they were approaching the Pilgrim House (the Pilgrim House is situated in the heart of Carmel and the voices of those who climbed could be clearly heard in the silent night. Therefore, I could hear their happy conversation. They were so jubilant, methought they had discovered a treasure house). As they drew nigh, they knocked at the door. Aqa Muhammad Hasan, the attendant . . . awoke and opened the door. It became known that the arrivals were Aqa S_hayl Faraju'llah and his friend, S_hayl

They continued their conversation. S_hayl_k_h Muhammad addressing flayfl

Faraju'llah said, 'I had worked hard for several years and had selected some very difficult questions Which I had noted down to ask. When I decided to accompany you to Haifa, I was thinking that my encounter with 'Abdu'l-Baha would take a long time before settlement could be reached. However, after discussing one of my problems during the first meeting, the response was so comprehensive and all—embracing that I feel all my difficulties have been resolved. 'Abdu'l-Baha has answered all my questions. For example, the problem of fate and free will which seemed to be very complicated and which I thought would have needed a long time to resolve, was disposed of in one meeting. As soon as the first question was discussed, the response was such that my other questions were also answered. It is like a key with which I can open the door to many other questions.'

The flayfl spent several days in Haifa par- taking of the bounty of attaining 'Abdu'l—Baha's presence. On the night of the Ascension of Baha'u'llah I saw him in the Most Holy Shrine

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and in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha with absol- ute devotion and humility. He was so trans— formed and appeared so intoxicated with the spirit and filled with enthusiasm that I was envious of him. His tears were unceasing. He evinced such tender emotions at the time of prostrating himself at the Sacred Threshold that everyone present was affected.

This is the story of the meeting with 'Abdu'l- Baha of one of the learned men of Islam whose transformation I witnessed with my own eyes. I saw how dust was transmuted by alchemy, and copper became gold.

VI

One day as 'Abdu'l—Baha entered the court— yard and was going up the steps leading to His House, one of the pilgrims approached Him and said, 'My purpose in life is to teach the Cause of God. I beseech confirmations.' 'Abdu'l-Baha turned back and addressing the petitioner said, 'Every teacher is confirmed and Victorious. The Blessed Beauty has said: "Verily, We shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favoured angels."'1 He then said twice that purity of motive is needed and, alluding to Alma Knobloch, remarked, 'A woman of slight build and of little formal education arose with pure intention and conquered Germany.'2

VII

One day 'Abdu'l—Baha stepped out into the verdant garden of His House. The pilgrims stood in rows on both sides of the footpath awaiting Him. 'Abdu'l-Baha called His faithful gardener, Isma'fl Aqa, and asked him to bring a basket. 'Abdu'l—Baha with His own Hands picked a considerable number of red roses and placed them in the basket. He then entered the path, followed by Isma'il Aqa who carried the basket. 'Abdu'l-Baha was extremely happy and, as He walked past us, He gave each a rose and said

(‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Words are paraphrased):

‘Gleanings from the Writings Q/‘Balzd’u’l/‘ilz, LXXII.

2Alma Knobloch became a Baha’i in 1903 in the United States. With the consent of ‘Abdu’l-Bahé, and assisted financially by her sister Fanny, Alma settled in Germany in 1907, the first pioneer to join Dr. Edwin Fisher. She remained until 1921. See ‘In Memoriam’, *The Baha’i World*, vol. IX, pp. 641—43. Alma Knobloch died in 1943, Fanny in 1949.

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Today the news was received that a beauty divinely blessed has been martyred in Kirmanfahan. This youth sought martyrdom from Me. I assured him with this verse, ‘O Thou assured soul, return to thy Lord well-pleased and pleasing unto Him.’ Now the news of his martyrdom has arrived. I give you these flowers in memory of Aqa Ya‘qib-i-Muttahidih.³ He then continued as He walked, saying that when the Blessed Beauty [Baha’u’llah] was in Baghdad, there was a flowering tree in the House, which had become weak. Baha’u’llah ordered that some blood from a slaughtered lamb be poured around the tree. This was done and the tree became very strong. This is the effect of blood on a tree. Behold the effect that the sacrifice of blood of a youth such as Aqa Ya‘qib-i-Muttahidih will have on the tree of the Cause.

That day ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Words about martyrdom were such that they caused even the most stone-hearted individuals among the audience to desire martyrdom.

In the evening there was a beautiful gathering in the Master’s House. ‘Abdu’l-Baha ordered that the letter from Mirza Yfshifghan—i-Vujdani describing the circumstances attending the martyrdom of Aqa Ya‘qib-i-Muttahidih be read from the beginning to the end. The letter closed with the following lines of verse [by Jalalu’d—Din-i—Ri’lmi]:

Thou hast slain the lovers,

Thy hands are stained with their blood;

Thou hast then performed prayers

Over their bodies, one by one.

‘Abdu’l-Baha again spoke in praise of that beloved youth who had asked Him to be permitted to be the first martyr from among the Baha’is of Jewish origin.

³ Translator’s note: The Baha’i scholar ‘Abdu’l—Hamid Ishraq Eha’vari in his book *Mullddidrdl’* states that Ya‘qib-i-Muttahidih was born in Kashan and raised in Hamadan. When he embraced the Faith, the intensity of his love was such that he beseeched ‘Abdu’l-Baha on several occasions to bestow on him the honour of martyrdom. ‘He is the only martyr from the Baha’is of Jewish background,’ *I.s_h_raq_K_havari* writes (there have been others since) and ‘he was the last to give his life for the Faith

during ‘Abdu’l—Baha’s ministry.’ To please his mother, Hajjiyah ghamim, Mr. Mut— tahidih had been about to marry, but when he recognized that his request to be martyred was to be granted, he declined to marry and asked his mother, instead to invite the Baha’is to a meeting after his death and offer them sweetmeats. She fulfilled her son’s wish each year on the anniversary of his martyrdom, inviting the friends for prayers, and then, with stooped posture and a brave smile, passing sweets among the guests.

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A meeting was convened one evening in the beautiful garden of the Master’s House. At His bidding tea was served. Then two Jews, who had returned to Haifa from Jerusalem, asked permission to meet with ‘Abdu’l-Baha. Per- mission was granted. They said, ‘We are Jews. We had gone to Jerusalem for pilgrimage. Now that we want to return, it is the time of [heavy rains], we are fearful that our ship may sink. We have heard that Your prayers for people are answered. We have come to You with our need and beseech Your guidance and prayers.’

‘Abdu’l—Baha said, ‘We will pray, rest assured. From here you should go to Port Said. You will be able to get a ship to take you directly from there to Basra and Bfishihr. You will reach home safely.’ Then He dismissed them. As they were saying farewell they said, ‘We are strangers in this City and have no place to rest tonight.’ ‘Abdu’l-Baha said, ‘Go to the Pilgrim House and spend the night there.’ They bowed and left with supreme happiness and humility.

When they left, ‘Abdu’l—Baha said, ‘I like them very much. Although they came to Us with a need to be fulfilled, they were frank and forthright. The friends should have such an attitude and use this as an example. . .’

IX

One day a meeting was held in the hall of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s House. A large number of people were present and ‘Abdu’l-Baha, While seated, spoke to the friends. At the end of His talk two small Children, four and six years old, whose father was of Armenian background and had embraced the Faith, stood up with their hands over their chests and, with ‘Abdu’l- Baha’s permission, recited in very sweet voices a poem which starts with the verse: ‘O ‘Abdu’l— Baha, I am helpless, O ‘Abdu’l—Baha, I am homeless, hold Thou my hand, hold Thou my hand.’

It was very interesting to see the extra— ordinary kindness with which ‘Abdu’l-Baha treated those children. He called them to Him, seated them on His lap and, after showering His special favours upon them, let them go. The two children went to the other side of the meeting hall and sat on the lap of Aqa Husayn— i-Kahruba’i.I

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X

One day when we were in the presence of ‘Abdu’l—Baha, He was informed that the British Crown Prince² was arriving in Haifa and that the Governor [of Palestine] wished to borrow His car, which was the latest model and had been presented to Him by the American friends. [‘Abdu’l—Baha expressed no objection]

XI

One day we were in the presence of the Master in Bahji. Something came up that prompted ‘Abdu’l—Baha to speak of Nayriz. Aqa Mirza Ahinad-i-Nayrizi conveyed a request from some of the friends, who had seen us off, that they be blessed and graced by the Master. ‘Abdu’l—Baha said, ‘They are all the recipients of favour.’ Mirza Ahmad said, ‘They seek the good pleasure of their Master.’ ‘Abdu’l-Baha responded, ‘I am well pleased with the friends of Nayriz and the Blessed Beauty is also well pleased With them. How can I be dissatisfied? They have thrice sacrificed their lives in the field of martyrdom.’ Mirza Ahmad said, ‘Our fathers gave up their lives but we are sinners and ashamed of ourselves.’ ‘Abdu’l—Baha replied, ‘We are all sinners but the bounty of the Blessed Beauty is immense, be assured.’

XII

On a certain day when a group of pilgrims and resident Baha’is were in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, Aqa Siyyid Mustafa,³ the renowned Baha’i teacher from Rangoon, Burma, found an occasion to say that the land of India is like a jungle of different religions and denominations. He said the beliefs, customs, and manners are very diverse and superstitions are rampant. ‘Abdu’l-Baha said it was true, but He added that the establishment of schools and the promotion of knowledge will eradicate the foundation of superstition.

Aqa Siyyid Mustafa said, ‘The friends in India are awaiting the arrival of their Master there.’ ‘Abdu’lBaha said, ‘I was inclined to the taking of a trip to Japan, China and India,

1 A Baha’i from India who, with Curtis Kelsey from the United States, installed the lighting plants for the illumination of the Shrines. ,

2Edward VIII.

3Mustafa Rfimi, posthumously appointed a Hand of the Cause by Shoghi Efiendi. He died 13 March 1942.

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The Eastern Pilgrim House, Haifa (north Side) 011 4 April 1922.

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but now there are obstacles in the way. I have accomplished My work. The Mafiriqu’l- Aflkar of Turkistan has been built and the foundation of another one in the United States is in place.¹ Today We have received the news that the Annual Convention has also been convened. The time has come for the friends

to take over the work.’

These utterances conveyed the sad news of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s imminent departure from this world, but no one dared ask a question except Aqa Mirza Abu’l-Hasan—i-Afnan, who was an ardent lover of the Master. Because that venerable man was a trustworthy person, ‘Abdu’l-Baha shared with him the hidden meaning of His utterance. When we returned to Iran, we received the news that because Mirza Abu’l-Hasan could not bear the thought of separation from ‘Abdu’l—Baha, he, while the Master was still enjoying good health, wrote his will and drowned himself.

XIII

I was a youth in my twenties when I came on pilgrimage. As it is a condition peculiar to this age, I had not set a fixed pattern for earning a living and serving the Cause. At times I wanted to leave home and finish my education, then arise and teach the Faith on a full-time basis. At other times, since I was married, I thought of having children and educating them for this work. And yet at other times, I contemplated seeking wealth in order to spend it in the path of service.

As I was sincere in my intention, I knew that once I made up my mind and sought ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s assistance, He would grant it. ‘But what should I request that would not be harmful?’ I asked myself. ‘If I request wealth, it may become the cause of negligence; if I seek knowledge for the purpose of teaching the Faith, that knowledge may become a veil.’ I was doubtful about what to ask that would be beneficial and in my best interest.

Several nights, before going to bed, I pondered upon the subject and prayed with fervour in order to choose the best option. One night I had a dream which gave me the courage to set aside my own thoughts, leave my affairs in

‘The Houses of Worship in ‘Ighqabad and Wilmette, Illinois.

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the hand of the divine Physician, and implore Him to prescribe for me that which He saw was in my best interest. However, I knew that in His presence I would not have the power to utter anything, unless He granted me the strength to do so. Therefore, I chose a short sentence and practised it well with the intention of reciting it, if I ever had the bounty of attaining His presence privately.

Then I mentioned to Aqa Mirza _D_hikru’llah, ‘Abdu’l—Baha’s cousin, that I was longing to attain His presence in private. Because I knew ‘Abdu’l—Baha did not deprive sincere petitioners of reception in His Court, I made the necessary preparations for the Visit.

I had just received a letter from Nayriz containing the glad-tidings of the arrival there of Mr. Natiq,² a Baha’i teacher, of the establishment of Mimaqiyyih School, and the news of the inauguration ceremony. Attached to the letter was the text of the speech delivered by my brother. I kept this material

with me to present to 'Abdu'l-Baha, because I knew He appreciated receiving such news.

One day when all the pilgrims from Nayriz were in the House of the Master, Mirza thk- ru'llah gave me the awaited news. He told me that 'Abdu'l—Baha was alone in the house of Mirza Jalal, His son—in-law, and had called me into His presence. I took the items which I wanted 'Abdu'l-Baha to bless and with exceed- ing gladness accompanied Aqa Mirza thk— ru'llah to the appointed place. With extreme excitement and in a state of utter humility and lowliness I entered the vestibule of the house. Mirza D__hikru'llah went in and sought per- mission for me to enter. Permission was granted. I left the wrapper, which contained several items to be blessed, in the corridor. I then opened the door and saw 'Abdu'l-Baha seated at a desk. I bowed and said 'Allah'u'Abha'. He gave me permission to enter.

I immediately threw myself at His feet, held the hem of His robe and entreated Him tearfully saying: 'O my Beloved! Do not leave me to myself, cause me to move in accordance with Thy Will, and confirm me in my servitude and obedience to Thee.'

'Abdu'l~Baha bountifully lifted me up with the hand of His power and with a penetrating voice said, 'God hath confirmed thee in serving

2Mirza Muhammad Natiq.

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His Cause, in elevating His Word, and in spread- ing His fragrances.'

This blessed utterance opened before my face the portals of happiness. It imparted hope and assurance to my heart and helped me to know what course of action to follow in my life. I immediately realized that I was not going to become wealthy, but knew of a certainty that He would grant me all that was necessary for rendering service.

After I arose to my feet, 'Abdu'l-Baha granted me permission to sit on a chair. He then gave me the courage and the opportunity to give Him the glad-tidings from Nayriz. The news of the arrival there of Mr. Natiq, of the establishment of the Mithaqiyyih School, of the inauguration ceremony, and of the speeches read by the students of the school, was presented to Him. In the end I submitted the handwritten copy of the speech which I had received from my brother, Jalal, and sought divine con- firmations for the teachers and students of the school. 'Abdu'l—Baha took the copy, read it carefully and in His own handwriting added the word 'bagi'l to a sentence. He then called His amanuensis, who was not there. Therefore, He took the pen and at the foot of the same sheet of paper wrote the following prayer:

O God, my God! I supplicate confirmation and assistance for those who have arisen to serve Thy Cause and educate the children who have been nurtured (It the breast of Thy Love. O God! Glorify these children in Thy Kingdom and teach them from Thy knowledge. Thou art the Powerful and the Mighty.2

Praised be God! ‘Abdu’l—Baha’s favours were far beyond anyone’s imagination and perception. It was providential that His amanuensis was not there, so that He wrote the prayers in His own handwriting.

It was the custom that unless ‘Abdu’l-Baha clearly dismissed a person by saying, ‘May you be in God’s trust,’ the Visit continued. Therefore, as He left the room, I followed Him. Outside in the corridor, I saw the items I had left there and forgotten about. I presented them to ‘Abdu’l-Baha and just said, ‘For blessing.’ He took them with the Hand of compassion

‘ A word introducing a summing up. equivalent to the phrase ‘in short’.

2Translation authorized by the Universal House of Justice.

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and, while holding them, He recited a prayer and returned them to me.

He still did not dismiss me. As He was leaving the corridor to enter the vestibule, He rubbed His eyes with His Hands and said, ‘I am tired, it is the spirit that endures, the body cannot bear it.’ Then He recited a verse of poetry which says, ‘Servitude is captivity and Lordship a headache.’ He then immediately added, ‘Servitude is not captivity, although Lordship is a headache.’

As ‘Abdu’l-Baha entered the courtyard of the house, He ordered that chairs be set up and the pilgrims from Nayriz be called. This was done. As soon as the chairs were in place, ‘Abdu’l— Baha sat down and granted me permission to be seated. The other six pilgrims from Nayriz also arrived and were seated at His behest.

‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke favourably of the friends of Nayriz, of their successes in rendering service, of the arrival of Mr. Natiq there, of the establishment of the Mithaqiyyih School, and He praised Mr. Natiq. When He was informed that before the arrival of Mr. Natiq, Mr. Mutlaq and Mr. Nabilzadih³ had Visited Nayriz, and produced great results, He said, “Mr. Nabilzadih and Mr. Mutlaq are indeed sacrificial.’ We were then dismissed.

XIV

On the first day of Ramadan we were in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Baha together with a group of pilgrims and resident Baha’is, such as Haji ‘Ali-i-Yazdi, the brother of Haji Muhammad Tahir-i-Malmiri. Because of the difference in the lunar calendar, some of the Muslims had observed the first day of Ramadan the previous day. ‘Abdu’l-Baha asked Haji ‘Ali whether the people in the market had observed the fast yesterday or today. He replied that some started the fast as from yesterday and some from today.

‘Abdu’l-Baha said, ‘Because they have not understood the significance of the fast, they have abandoned the primary purpose and have clung to a secondary matter, thus they have become the cause of division. In the early days of Islam this was not so, it has gradually become like this.’ Then He continued, ‘Fasting means abstinence from that which increases the appetite for lust

and passion. This has been the

3Mirza ‘Abdu’l-lah Mutlaq and Mira Munir Nabilzadih, noted Baha’i teachers.

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wisdom of the fast. Just as people abstain from indulging in food, they should likewise abstain from the promptings of the baser self and protect themselves from their evil effects. However, as it can be seen,’ He said, ‘they dispute with each other over the basic principle and instead of spending their extra time in meditating and pondering upon the Writings, in performing good and charitable deeds, and in suppressing their evil promptings, they are engaged in advancing their personal interests and improving their business.’

XV

As the night of Baha’u’llah’s Ascension drew close, ‘Abdu’l-Baha instructed all the pilgrims and the resident Baha’is to go to Bahji on the eve of the Ascension. Therefore, in the company of a group of friends we travelled to Bahji the day before the Ascension and were accommodated in the houses in the Vicinity of the Shrine of Baha’u’llah. (These houses were destroyed during the ministry of Shoghi Efendi and became a part of the Gardens.) At about sunset there was a meeting of the friends. ‘Abdu’l—Baha blessed us with His presence and spoke about the sufferings of Baha’u’llah in a manner which deeply affected everyone.

At the instruction of the Master another gathering of the friends was held at night in the Biruni’ opposite the Mansion of Bahji. ‘Abdu’l-Baha honoured the meeting with His presence. The Covenant-breakers were watching the meeting from the Mansion of Baha’u’llah and evinced signs of immense envy and rancour. They tried to attract attention by pretending that since they were the occupants of the Mansion, they were Baha’u’llah’s true heirs. When ‘Abdu’l-Baha was giving a discourse, one of them started Chanting one of the prayers of the Blessed Beauty’s with a very loud voice, so that it could be clearly heard. After the prayer, ‘Abdu’l—Baha recited a poem in Persian, the gist of which is this: Once a fox stayed in a paint container for about two hours. When he saw his colourful coat and tail, he thought he was a peacock. His claim to be a peacock was nothing but the manifestation of his vain imagining.

That night the utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Baha

1 Outer part of an eastern house, separate from the women’s quarters, and used for receiving guests.

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revolved around the sufferings of Baha’u’llah and immersed us all in an ocean of sorrow. After the talk, when the darkness of the night had enveloped the land, ‘Abdu’l-Baha arose and left the meeting; in a short while He disappeared from our sight. No one knew where He had gone. When the meeting was

over, we did not know what to do, because He had not indicated anything about how we should proceed.

I took advantage of the opportunity and decided that, since we were deprived of the opportunity of Visiting the Mansion, I would circunambulate it. As I was walking around the Mansion, I was reciting one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's prayers. When I finished the prayer, and as I was still circumambulating, 'Abdu'l-Baha in His white cloak appeared before my eyes. I felt completely lost and did not know what to do. I bowed and said 'Allah'u' Abha.' I had no power to utter anything. I followed Him to the place of the gathering.

As He stood there, He instructed the friends to form several groups and each group to continue praying and meditating in one of the rooms.

'Abdu'l—Baha left for the chamber on the second floor of the building in the small Garden of Bahji, which is now called the Tea House. It was either through the intervention of Providence or the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha that, when the rooms were being assigned, a room on the first floor of the same building which 'Abdu'l—Baha was using, was allocated to those of us who had come from Nayriz. Hence the appointed night when 'all were sleeping but we were awake engaging in prayer and meditation'² was at hand.

'Abdu'l-Baha was awake in the upper chamber. At about midnight He started revealing a Tablet of Visitation in honour of Aqa Ya 'qub-i-Muttahidih, who was mentioned earlier. We could hear the captivating and melodious voice of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Just before the time of the Ascension, we heard a sound. Thereafter we beheld @usraw, the faithful attendant of 'Abdu'l-Baha, descending from the steps of the upper chamber with a lantern in his hand. 'Abdu'l-Baha followed him down the steps and left the area. Immediately after, we were informed of 'Abdu'l—

² 'Abdu'l-Baha, on an earlier occasion during the pilgrimage of the Baha'is from Nayriz had alluded to the observance in those words.

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Baha's instruction to proceed to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah for the recitation of the Tablet of Visitation.¹

We set off walking behind 'Abdu'l-Baha until we reached the entrance to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, the Qiblih of the people of Baha. As I approached the outer Threshold, I beheld 'Abdu'l-Baha standing in the vestibule holding a large bottle of attar, with which He anointed those who entered. We stood in a line and went in one by one. As my turn came to be anointed, I stretched out my hand in such a way that my palm was flat. 'Abdu'l-Baha lovingly pressed the palm of my hand with His thumb in order to make a hollow. He then poured the perfume generously into it. I was afraid it would spill from the corners of my hand. To avoid losing the precious perfume which 'Abdu'l—Baha had granted me, I sipped some of it. It burned my throat to such a degree that my tears started rolling down.

After all the friends were anointed, they stood in rows facing the Inner Shrine. The Master, Who was in front, with a movement of His Hand and in a very quiet voice, instructed one of the resident friends to recite the Tablet of Visitation. At that time the learned man from Egypt, who was the travelling companion of Shayfī Farajū'llah _D_hakīy-i—Kurdi and who had been completely transformed in one meeting with 'Abdu'l-Baha, was standing in front of me. He was weeping profusely as He supplicated at the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty.

After the recitation of the Tablet of Visitation, 'Abdu'l-Baha kissed the Threshold of the Sacred Shrine and backed away. Others did likewise. While the ladies of the Holy Family and other women believers Visited the Shrine of Baha'u'llah (in those days in the Holy Land the matter of 'hz'jdb' had not been abolished yet; therefore, men and women Visited the Shrines of Baha'u'llah and the Bab separately), the Master sat on a chair outside facing the Sacred Spot. For about half an hour He was fully wrapt in meditation in absolute silence and complete lowliness. During that time we were all standing behind Him in utter humility and supplication. When the morning light broke, we were dis- missed and proceeded to our rooms.

1 A Tablet revealed by Baha'ulléh which is read at His Shrine

and at the Shrine of the Bab' It is also frequently used in commemorating Their anniversaries.

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On the afternoon of the Day of Baha'u'llah's Ascension, the seventieth day after Naw-Rfiz, we had our last meeting with 'Abdu'l—Baha at Bahjl. Thereafter, we had to leave the promised Paradise.

'Abdu'l-Baha called the pilgrims from Nayriz one by one to His presence. He honoured us each with a separate Tablet and, after showering us with His supreme favours and endless bless— ings, He bade us farewell. When my turn came, I prostrated myself as I entered, kissed the thres- hold and kneeled before 'Abdu'l—Baha. He pointed to a chair and invited me to sit on it. He quoted a verse of the Kitdb-i—Aqdas to the effect that God desires us to sit on thrones. He then graciously gave me a Tablet revealed in my honour, at the foot of which was the following prayer in the handwriting of His amanuensis:

0 my God, 0 my God! 'Verily this plant hath yielded its fruit and standeth upright upon its stalk. Verily it hath astounded the farmers and perturbed *the envious. 0 God, water it with showers from the cloud of Thy favours and cause it to yield great harvests heaped up like unto mighty hills in Thy land. Enlighten the hearts with a ray shining forth from T hy Kingdom of Oneness, illumine the eyes by beholdz'ng the signs of T hy grace, and gratify the ears by hearing the melodies Of the birds of Thy confirmatians Singing in Thy heavenly gardens, so that these souls may become like thirstyfish swimming in the pools of T hy guid— ance and like tawn y lions roaming in the forests of

Thy bounty. Verily Thou art the Generous, the Merciful, the Glorious and the Bestower.²

The above prayer was revealed at my request for my use on a regular basis. I was then dismissed when 'Abdu'l-Baha said, 'May you be under God's protection.'

It can be well imagined how we felt; we had been invited to paradise and then dismissed. Methinks life was taken from us and our Vitality sapped. The thought of separation from our Beloved reduced us to spiritless bodies.

² Translation authorized by the Universal House of Justice.

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