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Foreword

Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, and appointed Expounder of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, its Founder, is the one human being in all history, past, present or future, to exercise the greatest influence on the ultimate shape and modus operandi of the social order of the world. He is the one who understood the vision of his great-grandfather Bahá'u'lláh and his grandfather 'Abdu'l-Bahá — respectively the Revealer and the Interpreter of teachings destined to reshape the divisive society of the present world and usher in an era of universal peace — and applied Their doctrines in practical terms to the organization of such a future state of society. There cannot be, on this planet, a greater social or political unit than World Order. It is Shoghi Effendi who, while not the architect of that consummation, is certainly its chief builder and engineer. He laid the foundations of the Administrative Order of a Faith which, as it develops, will come — as he stated — "to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind."

Only his widow, Ruhyyih Rabbani, could have written this book. For twenty years she was his wife, and for sixteen of those years his personal secretary; she was his close companion and his representative on many occasions. In a cable to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, her homeland, he designated

her as "my helpmate, my shield in warding off the darts of Covenant breakers and my tireless collaborator in the arduous tasks I shoulder." She shared in all the circumstances of his life and knew the pressures and restrictions both within and without the Bahá'í community which imposed themselves on his total dedication to his divinely-appointed task. She observed his deep love for his fellow Bahá'ís and his constant concern for their spiritual and material welfare.

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It is apparent that countless eulogies, evaluations, acclamations, biographies and panegyrics of the God-given genius of Shoghi Effendi will be added in future to the already proliferating number. The prime depository of source material for such works will forever be The Priceless Pearl, Ruhiiyyih Rabbani's own version of her illustrious husband's life and mission, of which this sister volume constitutes a more compact presentation. We can offer the gratitude of posterity to Ruhiiyyih Rabbani for this clear and authentic account of his life and endeavours. But for the present generations, and particularly those of us who served under the beloved Guardian, no expressions of thanks can be adequate for the personal glimpses of our "true brother" — as he was wont to sign his letters — in action and in his daily life. This book, dealing so intimately with the life of a man who in 36 years of ministry left an indelible imprint on the fortunes of mankind, will outwear the ravages of time as it continues to bear authentic witness to the life and personality of Shoghi Effendi.

David Hofman

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chapter 1

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