

passport. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was such a living example of love and humility that the government officials, became friendly with Him. General Badri Beg of the Turkish army was the frequent guest at dinner with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while we were there.

We stayed with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His household 19 days: November 16th, 1901 to December 4th, 1901. Every day breakfast was served to us in our room. The noon day meal and the evening dinner we had with 'Abdu'l-Bahá at His table. Generally about 16 Persian believers attended each meal, making 19 present. In the Holy Land at that time women did not eat with men when others than the family were present. Each morning after breakfast 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to our room and greeted us. He was gracious, considerate and always concerned with our comfort. At every meal 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave us lessons and allowed us plenty of time to record His remarks in our notebooks.

These talks were later published by the Board of Counsel of New York City in a booklet of 24 pages entitled Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas to two young men, American pilgrims to Acca, 1901. Those days the advisory body of the believers in New York City, was called the Board of Counsel. A photograph of the first Board of Counsel in New York City appears at page 23 of a volume 9 of the Bahá'í World.

In His lesson of November 19, 1901, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"One of the most severe of the world's diseases is that of contention and strife the fire of which is burning among all nations and cannot be removed except through the Word of God. As this intense fire can only be quenched by the heavenly water therefore the faithful followers of God must be as the banner of peace and as the most luminous sun of harmony and union. In the days of Moses the people pitched the tent of martyrdom. And in the time of Jesus Christ they established the greatest church. But in this time the believers in God must raise the tent of peace, union and concord. I hope that through the providence of God the brilliancy of love will light all the horizons."

'Abdu'l-Bahá often wrote to the believers in America. These communications were called Tablets and many were published in book form. They answered many questions concerning world problems. My father received 64 of these Tablets. I have copies of all of them.

Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a serious expounder of the Bahá'í Faith He had a fine sense of humor. One day at dinner, we were eating soup, a nice thick soup. Leaving my spoon in the plate I raised my hand to adjust my collar. As I brought down my hand my elbow came in contact with the handle of the spoon. And soup was spread upon the whiskers of the Persian believer on my right. Of course, I was terribly embarrassed. However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, observing the incident quickly said: "Do not worry. That is a blessing" and laughed aloud. My brother Wendell then remarked: "Who gets the blessing, Bill, you or the friend with the whiskers?" And 'Abdu'l-Bahá laughed again. Wendell and I were so glad to be with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. At some times we were quite jolly. We were mere boys of 18 and 21. Our interpreter, Ameen Fareed, told us that we must be reverent,

that when we entered the presence of the Master we must bow our heads, clasp our hands, avoid smiling. Of course we felt the rebuke. So the next time we entered the dining room, our heads were bowed, our hands clasped, and we did not smile. 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed quickly by us. He seemed to ignore us. We felt further rebuked. Returning to our room we wondered why 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed different in His attitude toward us. Well, we decided that we were not good actors. So when we entered the dining room for the next meal, we smiled. 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled. He came over to us, took us in his arms and said: "That's the way I want you, boys, to act -- be natural, be happy."

At the supper table November 21st, 1901, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"When this blessed Cause was manifested in Persia some of the divines and famous learned men became believers and were martyred. The people murdered the Báb thinking they had ended the Holy Cause. They annihilated thousands of families, plundered the goods of the believers, killed men and captured women and children. However it was found that this had no destructive effect upon the Cause but that the flaming fire of God was kindled the more. The lamp of God became more brilliant, waves of the sea of bounty increased, the breeze of God blew stronger, and the fragrance of the Holy Spirit became more powerful. And after imprisoning the Blessed Perfection the government decided to banish Him to Baghdad thinking that through this banishment the work of the Cause would be destroyed. As it took one month to go from Teheran to Baghdad it was thought by the people that all trace of the Cause would be lost. On the contrary, the Cause of God became more powerful, His words more widely spread, His proclamation more generally heard and the power of His Cause is stronger. Consequently the government decided to send the Blessed Perfection from Baghdad to Constantinople. As Constantinople was a large city and as there were many Persians in the city who traveled freely this plan also proved fruitless. Through the power of the Persian government the Blessed Perfection was then sent to Adrianople, in Rumelia, a country very far from Persia and a possession of Turkey. Because there was no railway there was very little travel by the Persians to and from Adrianople, and therefore it was thought by the learned men of Persia that the Cause of God would have no effect upon the Persians. However it was soon learned that these places were not places of banishment for the Blessed Perfection, glory be to Him. And it was therefore decided that He should be sent to some small place, a place where murderers were confined, where robbers were imprisoned so that His cause would be weakened.

Accordingly the clergy or learned men of Persia being hostile to this Holy Cause so arranged that the Blessed Perfection was sent from Adrianople, the land of mystery, to Acca, Syria. In this prison, Acca, the flag of the Garden of God was raised, the greatness of the Word of God appeared, and the Sun of Truth shown in such a degree that all the horizons became clear. Praise be to God, the promises about the Holy Land were fulfilled and the Glad Tidings uttered through the tongues of the Prophets of God were realized. For the enemies caused the Blessed Perfection to be sent to the Holy Land and to have his residence in the Promised Land.

Therefore the faithful followers of God must know that calamities in the path of God will cause His truth to become more apparent. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the means of spreading the Light of the Cause of God. And the martyrdom of His disciples resulted in eternal greatness of the Cause. The disciples were like torches which so burn by the fire of the hostility of the people yet they enlighten the world. Therefore the believers must not be sorrowful for this weak confinement and for these new calamities. But they must be more attracted and kindled in cutting themselves from the world."

The 22nd day of November 1901 was the Mohammedan day of worship similar to our Sunday. The midday meal is eaten one half hour before noon or one half hour afternoon. So our lunch in that day with 'Abdu'l-Bahá was at 12.30 o'clock.

During the early days of the Bahá'í Faith in the United States many of the believers wore a ring containing a stone on which was engraved the greatest name. 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to our room on November 24th, 1901 with ten of those stones. He kissed each one and then handed five of them to Wendell and five to me and then chanted a prayer for us.

'Abdu'l-Bahá often talked to us about mother and father. They had visited him in 1900. On November 26th, 1901 'Abdu'l-Bahá told us that he dreamed that our father was with him again. He said that although Mr. Dodge was not with him in person he was always with him spiritually. It is a great privilege for me to look at my father's picture on page 118 of volume 4 of the Bahá'í World. One of the disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the heralds of the covenant. God surely did bless him. Allah-u-Abha.

During the early days of the Bahá'í Faith in New York the believers were confronted with various ideas of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. It therefore became necessary for teachers from the Holy Land to come here and enlighten us. Many of us believed that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the spirit of Christ referred to in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew. We were quite emotional. There were critical discussions. Therefore on the first day of December 1901 'Abdu'l-Bahá dictated to Wendell and me the following:

"In this greatest period there are only two Manifestations. The Blessed Báb, may my soul be a ransom to Him, and a Manifestation of the Blessed Perfection, glory be to Him. We are all the servants of the threshold of Baha. And the one who serves most in His holy Threshold is the most beloved. My greatest wish and desire is submissiveness and servitude at His Holy Threshold. My name 'Abdu'l-Bahá means the servant of God. My heart is the servant of Baha. And my spirit is the servant of Baha and rejoices only in this name. My purpose is love not only by word but by action. The essence of all essence is love, which is like unto the meat of the nut while all else is like unto the shell or outside. Through the providence of the Blessed Perfection our spirits must be full of the love of God. Therefore anyone who ask you about me, should be told that I am the servant of Baha, because this is my only wish.

Some years ago two believers became excited over a discussion as to the station of the Blessed Perfection. One of them declaring that Bahá'u'lláh was the

holy identity of God. To settle the dispute they submitted the matter to the holy presence and the Blessed Perfection answered: "When there is a quarrel all are wrong. But when there is love all are right." The Blessed Perfection said: the only thing that is not beloved is discord. And all that is beloved is love. The believers must love each other, and must reflect the love of God. Some may say the lamp is the light, others may say the lamp is the place of the manifestation of the light. Both statements are correct. But what is wrong is the quarrel. Because it is contrary to the foundation laid by God. Therefore in order that there may be no discord all of the believers in the Truth must not mention me except as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the servant of God. The essential thing is love. I must love you and you must love me. Such is the meaning of the truth while untruth means rancor, discord and hatred. All else save love is merely outwardly uttered words. 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed the hope that the faithful followers of God in America would become gardeners in the paradise of El Abha and fruitful trees of that Garden. The fire of their love should be as the heat in rays of the sun. Their teaching should be like the rains of providence. Their spiritual character should be like the life-giving breezes which diffuse the fragrances throughout all regions."

'Abdu'l-Bahá's last lesson to us December 3rd, 1901, was as follows:

"It is stated in the New Testament that Jesus Christ was once drinking the juice of grapes and said he would drink no more except in the presence of the Father. This means that the spirit needs food for strength as well as the body. The appearance of the Holy Manifestations is for the purpose of causing the heavenly table to descend. This Table means the divine virtues and characteristics and is the means of strengthening the spirit and life. Therefore we hope that as this heavenly table has descended from the Kingdom of Abha in this marvelous period the believers and friends of God will have a great portion of it so that they will be the cause of eternal life and the means of enlightening the hearts of the people of the World.

In short, I hope you will ask God to bless you as being the real sons of the Kingdom. Because the sons of the Kingdom are of two kinds. One is the real son and the other is the material one. Judas Iscariot and Peter were both sons of the Kingdom but Peter was the real son, Judas was the material son. Consequently he was deprived. The real sons of the Kingdom are those souls who act according to the instructions and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Perfection. They are drunken with the cup of Providence and are illuminated by the divine Light. They are honored by all the perfections and virtues of humanity, and are characterized with attributes which embellish the essence of man in such a manner that all the people even the enemies testify of their good actions, attractions, separation from the world, purity, sanctity, knowledge and belief.

In conclusion I most humbly supplicate that God will admit you as the real sons of His Kingdom in such manner that you may be an honor to the Cause of God. And that all the people being astonished may say: "These young men are not the same. When they started for Acca they had a station but on their return they

possess another station. They are baptized by the providence of God, by the fire of the love of God, and by the Holy Spirit. They have received a second birth. They have found eternal life."

During our visit with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Acca we were privileged several times to go to the Ridvan. That beautiful garden of paradise planted by Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Perfection. On our last day in the Holy City, Abdul Baha permitted us to visit the Holy Tomb, and there see the pictures of Bahá'u'lláh and the Blessed Báb. In that solemn atmosphere prayers were chanted by Persian believers.

At 2:45 o'clock that afternoon, December 4th, 1901, we entered the carriage for our return to Haifa and home. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá bade us farewell He gave us the following Tablet for our father.

"He is God. O thou, pure soul, Bahá'u'lláh is upon thee. Thy two happy sons have presented themselves to this blessed spot and were honored by a visit to the most Holy Tomb. I have associated with them for a while during which they were cheered by the fragrances which perfume the nostrils of the spirit, by commemorating the beloved of God and by giving them the Teachings of God. I do supplicate God to make them two lamps glowing with the fire of the gifts of God. That they will serve the Kingdom of God, put their strenuous efforts in the Kingdom of God and spread the Teachings of God inasmuch as the traces of the love of God are brilliantly manifested in their faces. I ask God to help thee to become humble and submissive to all of beloved of God. Be kind and easy and compassionate to all. And dispute not with anybody over anything. Speak of the Divine Word. But if contradicted by a certain person, do not argue with him, follow my steps in all matters and take my disposition as an example for you in dealing with all persons. Rely upon God, the Living, the Self Existent. Upon thee be salutation and praise. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas."

On the 24th day of February 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote my father of His plan to visit the United States of America. Here is that Tablet:

"To Mr. Dodge, upon him be Bahá'u'lláh el Abha. O thou, dear friend. I always remember thee and beg for thee the protection and preservation of the possessor of the Kingdom. Ere long I shall hasten to America to meet the friends and spend some time with joy and fragrance through the favors of Abha and shall become engaged in proclaiming the Name of the True one. Convey on my behalf the wonderful Abha greetings to all the friends and the maid servants of the Merciful especially thy respected wife and thy dear sons. They are always in my memory and I seek for them heavenly confirmation. Consider how I should love to behold the faces of the friends that I make a trip to America. Although the body cannot easily bear the hardships of such a trip yet the spirit is yearning for the meeting of the friends.
'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas."

The believers were joyful at the good news. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in New York on the 11th day of April 1912, a large delegation of the believers went to the ship to greet him. And among those present were my father and mother, my

brothers Wendell and Paul, my wife Evelyn and of course I was there. As soon as His baggage was passed by the customs inspector, 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the automobile of Roy C. Wilhelm and went directly to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Edward B. Kinney, 780 West End Avenue. The believers followed.

Later in the afternoon that day April 11th 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to us as follows:

"How are you? Welcome. Welcome. After arriving today although weary with travel I had the utmost longing and yearning to see you and could not resist this meeting. Now that I have met you, all my weariness has vanished. For your meeting is the cause of spiritual happiness. I was in Egypt and was not feeling well, but I wished to come to you in America. My friend said: 'This is a long journey. The sea is wide. You should remain here.' But the more they advised and insisted the greater became my longing to take this trip. And now I have come to America to meet the friends of God. This long voyage will prove how great is my love for you. There were many troubles and vicissitudes but in the thought of meeting you all these things vanished and were forgotten. I am greatly pleased with the city of New York, its harbor entrance, its piers, buildings and broad avenues are magnificent and beautiful. Truly it is a wonderful city. As New York has made such progress in material civilization I hope it may also advance spiritually in the Kingdom and Covenant of God so that the friends here may become the cause of the illumination of America, that this city may become the city of love, and that the fragrances of God may be spread from this place to all parts of the world. I have come for this. I pray that you may be the manifestations of the love of Bahá'u'lláh. That each one of you may become like a clear lamp of crystal from which the rays of the bounties of the Blessed Perfection may shine forth to all nations and peoples. This is my highest aspiration. It was a long, long trip. The more we traveled the greater seemed the expanse of the sea. The weather was brilliant and fine throughout. There was no storm and no end to the sea. I'm very happy to meet you all here today. Praise be to God, that your faces are shining with the love of Bahá'u'lláh. To behold them is the cause of great spiritual happiness. We have arranged to meet you every day at the homes of the friends. In the East people were asking me: 'Why do you want to take this long voyage? Your body cannot endure such hardships of travel.' When it is necessary, my body can endure everything. It has withstood 40 years of imprisonment and can still undergo the utmost trials. I will see you again. Now I will greet each one of you personally. It is my hope that you will all be happy, in that we may meet again and again."

Our good friend and wonderful believer Cooper Harris, recorded stenographically the above remarks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was a glorious occasion. During His stay in New York 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in many churches. I can see Him now as he addressed the congregation of the church of the ascension 5th Avenue and 10th street. Sunday morning April 14th 1912, the Reverend Percy Stickney Grant, the pastor introduced 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Various other associations were addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was a sacred privilege to accompany Him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to the Bowery mission, April 19th 1912 was a never to be forgotten example of His love for humanity. Preceding His remarks Mrs. Maud Goodrow sang a beautiful song "Coming through the rye". Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to the unfortunate men with such feeling and in such a kindly attitude that there was hardly a dry eye in the hall. And when He concluded His message, He stood at the door and gave each man a silver coin.

The homes of many of the believers were also visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Among them was the residence of my mother and father at 261 West 139 Street, New York City and my home 1043 East 16 Street, Flatbush, Brooklyn. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had luncheon with us. We had placed a large comfortable chair at the table for Him. But he sat in a smaller chair, another example of humility. I recalled the last meal with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Acca, December 4th, 1901, when He said: "We will eat together again." While at our home, November 29th, 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá baptized our children: Jean Elizabeth, age seven, Anna Evelyn, aged two and William Copeland Dodge Junior, age 1 month.

We who saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1912, will always remember the 29th of June, when we were His guests at the picnic in the grove of Roy C. Wilhelm, West Englewood, New Jersey. A photograph of that happy assemblage is one of my cherished possessions. Another sacred souvenir is a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with my father and some Persian believers on Riverside drive, New York City. The last time I saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá was December 15th, 1912, the day He sailed away from New York. Many believers said farewell to Him on board the steamship Celtic. He gave a flower to each of us. My carnation was later framed and is a constant reminder of the blessed privilege of knowing Him.

When I was a state senator, I wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and asked if it would be advisable to introduce a bill in the legislature for the establishment of a Bahá'í university. In a Tablet translated by Shoghi Rabbani in Haifa, June 24th 1919, 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered as follows:

"To his honor Mr. William Dodge, New York city, USA. Upon him be Bahá'u'lláh Abha.

He is God

O thou, living memory of thy illustrious father. Mr. Dodge was my dear friend, an honorable with whom I was affectionately connected and to whom I was kind. Of his death from a standpoint I grieved and sorrowed for it was a cause of separation. But on the other hand as his spirit has hastened to the immortal realm and like unto a star has glided in the kingdom of light I was thereby relieved and consoled. At present, praise be to God, he has left behind one like thee as a souvenir. This flower pertains to that rose garden and this fruit belongs to that tree. Praise be to God. Divine confirmation has assisted thee and such a position has been attained.

Thou hadst written concerning the university about which thou hadst talked with Mr. Harris. If the establishment of a Bahá'í university is made possible it is highly suitable that the oneness of the world of humanity, universal peace,

the conformity of religion with science, the dispersion of prejudice, and the eradication of denominational, sectarian and other prejudices which are due to limitations of human thought, may be propounded and established in this university. But in these days it does not seem that this dream will be fully realized. As to Mr. Harris, verily he is a respected personage. He is heavenly, energetic and diligent and to the body of the Cause an active member. Friends must appreciate him. For in reality he serves the Kingdom of God. Convey on My behalf respectful greetings to all the friends and maid servants of the Merciful and convey My utmost kindness to thy respected mother and revered wife and similarly embrace on my behalf thy four dear children. Upon thee be Bahá'u'lláh Abba. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas."

Friends, it is now February 6th, 1959, I am in my 79th year. I hope, I am truly grateful for the sacred privilege of knowing and associating with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In humility may I comprehend the message of November 23rd, 1901, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "My hope is that the believers may be steadfast after my departure. That their flame may be greater and their love more and more. Then they must be as lighted lamps in order to brighten the horizons and cause the proclamation of God to reach all people."

May I conclude with the prayer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the North-Eastern States, February 2nd, 1917

"O thou, kind Lord! Praise be unto Thee as Thou hast shown unto us the highway of guidance, opened the doors of the Kingdom and manifested Thyself through the Sun of Reality. To the blind Thou hast given sight; to the deaf Thou hast granted hearing. Thou hast resuscitated the dead. Thou hast shown the way to those who have gone astray. Thou hast led those with parched lips to the fountain of guidance, Thou hast suffered the thirsty fish to reach the ocean of reality and Thou hast invited the wandering birds to the rose garden of grace.

O Thou, Almighty, we people are Thy servants and Thy poor ones. We are remote. We yearn for Thy presence. We are thirsty for the water of Thy fountain. We are ill, longing for Thy medicine. We are walking in Thy path, and have no aim, no hope, save the diffusion of Thy fragrances, so that the souls may raise the cry: "O God! Guide us to the straight path." May they open their eyes by beholding the lights and become freed from the darkness of ignorance. May they walk around the lamp of guidance, may the portionless receive a share and may the deprived ones become the confidants of the mysteries.

O Almighty! Look upon us with the glance of mercifulness. Grant us heavenly confirmation, bestow upon us the breaths of the Holy Spirit, so that we may become assisted in service and like unto the brilliant stars we may shine in these regions with the light of guidance. Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty, and Thou art the Wise and Seeing.

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá

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