A Year with The Bahá'ís in India and Burma

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Detail from a photograph taken in Rangoon, 1905. Center (l. to r.): Siyyid Mustafa Roumie (posthumously appointed a Hand of the Cause), Mírzá Mahram, Jináb-i Adíb, Hippolyte Dreyfus, Sydney Sprague.

A YEAR WITH THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN INDIA AND BURMA

by

Sydney Sprague

With notes and a new foreword by
R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram

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A YEAR WITH THE BAHAIS
IN INDIA AND BURMA

BY

SYDNEY SPRAGUE

Writer of
"THE STORY OF THE BAHAI MOVEMENT."

SECOND EDITION.

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FOREWORD.

SYDNEY Sprague's *A Year with the Bahais in India and Burma* is a remarkable little book. It is the account of the first visit by a Western Bahá'í to the Bahá'í communities of the Indian subcontinent. The trail Sprague blazed was to be followed by many of the best known names of Western Bahá'í history.

Sprague was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in 1875. After going to Paris to complete his education at the Sorbonne, he remained abroad and spent the first decade and a half of this century in Europe and the Middle East. It was in Paris that he became a Bahá'í and began to study Persian (*fársí*). Thus, though American, Sprague was really a part of the European Bahá'í community, living mainly in France or Britain between his trips to the Middle and Far East.

At the turn of the century, the Bahá'í Faith was just being established in Europe and North America. It was not long before the Western Bahá'ís realized that their Faith had not only spread westward from its historic homelands in the Middle East, but that it had also spread eastward two decades earlier. There were

well-established Bahá'í communities in the Indian subcontinent. Sprague was the first to visit these communities and to provide a description of them for Western Bahá'ís.

Sprague developed the desire to go to India while still in Paris and wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá telling Him of this wish. When he visited 'Akká in 1904, 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggested that he continue to travel eastward to India rather than return immediately to Europe, and this Sprague did. Between December 1904 and the late summer of 1905, Sprague traveled across India and through Burma, meeting Bahá'ís, observing and participating in their activities.

This was Sprague's only visit to these countries, but his interest in the Eastern Bahá'í community continued. In 1908, he was resident in Tehran and teaching in the Bahá'í school there. In 1909 he visited the United States, and in the fall of that year he returned to Tehran to serve for a time as principal of the Bahá'í school. By then he was sufficiently fluent in Persian to pass as a native if he wished.

When Sprague left Tehran after his second stay, he married a niece of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, an alliance which would lead to his temporary estrangement from the Bahá'í community. Sprague's new brother-in-law Ameen Ullah Fareed, who had lived mainly in the United States since 1901, had a history of imposing on

the generosity of the Western Bahá'ís and of indulging in self-aggrandizing and dishonest schemes. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in the United States in 1912, He sent Fareed back to the Holy Land where he might do less harm.

In the spring of 1914, Fareed defied 'Abdu'l-Bahá by traveling to London without permission. There he attempted to gather support for himself from the European Bahá'í community, as later he would try to do from the American Bahá'í community as he traveled across the United States to settle in California. Fareed's father joined him in London. His sister also supported him, and so Sprague was drawn into the matter. He decided for his wife and her family. After the dust had settled, Fareed and his little circle were no longer part of the Bahá'í community, and neither was Sprague.

In 1931, Sprague called on a prominent Bahá'í of Los Angeles to say that he wished to apply for readmission to the Bahá'í Faith. After extensive correspondence with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (as it then was), and later with Shoghi Effendi, Sprague was fully reinstated as a Bahá'í in 1941

Sprague died on 16 August 1943. He is buried in Inglewood Cemetery, outside Los Angeles, near the graves of other early Bahá'ís.

Sprague's account of his visit to the Bahá'í communities of India and Burma is his real monument. Though shorter and less detailed than could be wished, it is an irreplacable account full of fascinating glimpses of Bahá'í communities that differed from both those in the Middle East and those being built in Europe and North America. Many were, in a sense, transplanted Iranian Bahá'í communities, as they consisted largely of former Zoroastrians and Muslims of Iranian descent. But there were also a few communities whose members were drawn from a broader range of backgrounds than was to be found among Bahá'ís in any other part of the world. The vital distinction, however, between the Bahá'í communities in India and Burma and those in the rest of the East was the British hegemony under which they lived. That the power of ultimate recourse was non-Muslim, while not removing entirely the possibility of persecution, enabled Bahá'ís to develop many aspects of their group life more fully than was possible for their coreligionists living under Islamic rule.

Sprague wrote his account in the summer of 1906, while staying at the home of Arthur Cuthbert, a British Bahá'í, in Stranraer, Scotland. He hoped to have it published by the Bahai Publishing Society in Chicago, which was developing as the main publisher of Bahá'í material in the West. But this did not prove possible.

In 1907, Sprague published a booket called *The Story of the Bahai Movement* in which he gave a brief account of the lives of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and an outline of the teachings of Bahá'u'llah as given in the Kitáb-i Aqdas. In this booklet, he illustrated the application of the Bahá'í principles and their capacity to bring together people from mutually hostile backgrounds with stories drawn from the account of his Indian trip. The booklet was published by The Priory Press of Hampstead, London.

In May 1908, this press issued the full account of Sprague's trip. The second edition of that book is reproduced in facsimile here. The London edition was distributed in the United States by the Bahai Publishing Society.

After Sprague's return from India, the story of the Indian Bahá'í who came to Lahore to nurse the typhoid stricken Sprague and was himself struck down by cholera (see pp. 49–52) became well known. To Sprague this was the quintessential experience of his trip: that a stranger should die as a result of his concern for him because they were both Bahá'ís. He continued to talk of it for the rest of his life.

As there was such a delay in publishing the full account of his trip, Sprague sought to satisfy the eagerness of Western Bahá'ís to learn the details of this story by sending a revised version of his book's account of

it to the United States in 1907. This was circulated in typescript form. Sprague did not include these revisions in the published account, and so the typescript version of the episode is given here as an appendix to the facsimile.

There is little information available on the history of the Bahá'í Faith in India and Burma, especially by comparison with the growing, though yet insufficient, resources available on the Bahá'í Faith in the Middle East. I hope that this facsimile will contribute to the correction of that omission.

The history of the Bahá'í communities of the Indian subcontinent, with their antecedents and circumstances so like and yet unlike those of their sister communities in the Muslim East, is of particular interest. Comparison is a prime tool of scholarship, but to exercise it we must have access to data. I look forward to a growing body of material on the earlier history of the Bahá'í Faith that looks further east than its students have hitherto been wont, or able, to do.

R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram
May 1986

PREFACE.

IT is chiefly at the request of certain of my friends that I have written this account of my experiences in India during the year 1905.

I have confined myself, as much as possible, to relating my intercourse with the Bahais and what the Bahai Cause is doing in India and Burma.

This will, naturally, interest much more those who are directly in touch with this movement, but I feel sure that what the Bahai Movement is doing in India to promote the cause of unity and friendship among different peoples, will interest all thoughtful persons.

Everyone who has looked into the matter at all, must acknowledge that the Bahai Movement is enlightening and educating people in a very wonderful manner. Although all may not accept it, yet their eyes will be opened through it to the beauty and truth of other religions, and a realization will come to them that all the world is kin.

The Bahai teacher preaches universal religion; he does not speculate so much about miracles, the re-

surrection of the body, or what the future life is to be; but rather he shows how the miracle of hatred being turned into love may be wrought, of how the body by combating the evils of uncleanliness, intemperance, and other vices, may be raised up, a pure and sanctified temple unto God, and how it is possible while walking on this earth to be in Heaven.

The Bahai Faith teaches that the great Universal Spirit, which is God, has manifested itself to every race and people at some time or other, and that it comes again and again, like the spring, to make all things new.

To me, the Bahai Religion is constantly unfolding and revealing new beauties; but it was necessary for me to go to the Orient to see it in its true, broad, and universal spirit. For it is difficult in the Western world to get away from the name or thought of sect; but in the East, from all Bahais, goes forth the same sincere love for all humanity, irrespective of race or creed.

I have the greatest sympathy and respect for any man who believes he knows a way of bettering Humanity (whatever that way may be) and throws himself heart and soul into that work. The thing to be condemned is to be indifferent and stand by idly. I have friends who have said to me: "We belong to such and such a society, and are working for Unity as you are"; others express a desire for Unity without joining any organization. All are to be commended

for their efforts in this direction, but I hope those who read of what the Bahai Movement has already accomplished in India, to say nothing of what it is doing in other countries, will ponder carefully if there exists in the world to-day a greater instrument for bringing about the Unity and Brotherhood of man they are all wishing and striving for. The detached clouds that float about in the sky, can never bring the heavy fall of rain, it is only when they combine and become as one that the parched earth is watered and refreshed. Were the Bahai Movement a mere sect, it could not have accomplished what it has. It is the great Unifier, and for this reason demands that earnest men and women of every religion devote their lives to it.

The words of Baha Ullah: "Ye are all one soul, in many bodies; ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the drops of one sea," is the golden rule by which Bahais try to fashion their lives. They know that to try to save "one's own dirty soul," as Charles Kingsley puts it, is not enough, but that our duty is to save the soul of the human race. How selfishness will shrivel up and sneak away, ashamed, when the dawn of this glorious truth illumines the world!

One day, while I was in Bombay, I met a Bahai who had just arrived from Yezd, where that terrible massacre of Bahais took place, not very long ago. To hear this massacre described by one who had

been there, and who was one of the Faithful, was to experience an emotion impossible to describe—one of aching pity, and yet triumphant joy, that men can rise to such sublime heights of heroism and unselfishness, and that love is victor over all things.

Is there not in such love as was there poured out, a more vital power and means for regenerating the world than in the ancient creeds, or any cold, calculating philosophy? The solution of the ills and troubles of the world lies in such self-sacrificing love. While living in the Orient, I have seen the effects of this love and service, which the Bahais are so abundantly showing forth, and I earnestly believe that we in the West need this same spirit, which will bring about the regeneration of the world and the quickening of the nations.

SYDNEY SPRAGUE.

LONDON,
APRIL 1908.

AKKA.

THE week in Akka had just come to a close; my last day there had been one of the most beautiful. I had taken a walk with one of the Persians, and we had spent the afternoon in the garden of the Rizwan; a veritable garden of Eden it seemed to me in its luxuriant foliage, where every fruit could be eaten in safety.

We spoke together of the days when Baha Ullah himself sat under the large spreading tree near the fountain, and taught his disciples. We seemed to feel a spiritual atmosphere in that spot, where so many words of life had fallen from the lips of the great Teacher. I remember saying to my friend: "The pictures painted of the joys of Paradise, seem to me no more ideal than this," and he said: "Think of it —you an American, and I a Persian, and yet our hearts are quickened by the same love, and we sit in Paradise together."

Nothing had been said about my departure from Akka, and I had begun to hope that my stay might be indefinitely prolonged. Two or three things

encouraged this hops, I had been making myself useful in a small way. There is a school in Akka for the Bahai children; and while I was there, their regular teacher was away on a long journey, and I asked the Master* if I might teach them during his absence, to which he graciously consented.

The school is held in the room of a large inn, which is used by Mohammedan traders. The court of the inn was usually crowded with the donkeys and camels of the travelling caravans, and often our lessons would be disturbed by the discordant bray of some "locomotive of the Orient."

I taught the boys Grammar, Geography, Physiology, and other subjects, and found them all very bright and eager to learn. They would write out exercises in English for me, which afterwards they would show to the Master for his inspection. The Master takes a great interest in the progress of these boys, and often gives them helpful little talks, one of which I will reproduce here in the words of one of the pupils, which he wrote out in English for me and which I have but slightly altered.

The History of a Sunday Morning.

How lucky I was and what good fortune I had yesterday in the morning. While all the scholars and

* Whenever the word "Master" is used it has reference to Abdul Baha (Abbas Effendi), the present Leader of the Bahai Movement.

I were assembled together in the school and reading our lessons, suddenly our hearts were filled with joy by hearing our Master's voice blessing the Believers; then He entered the school with shining face and smiling lips, and began to walk very calmly through the room, addressing us and saying: "Endeavour and strive eagerly that you may progress and advance rapidly. You are born in this Holy Day, attaining this great privilege by the favour of God, therefore you must not waste or throw away this Bounty and Mercy. Think always for that which is the way of getting more manliness and humbleness, and to love one another. You are like a small plant newly sown. If the rays of the sun reflect on it, and it is watered by showers of rain, there is no doubt it will by-and-by grow and at last become a very fruitful tree; but, if cold winds blow and the plant be deprived of the shining of the sun and the rain, it will certainly be withered and become a useless thing.

Now, if you occupy yourselves, for instance, in affirming some reasons for the Truth of this Holy Cause and how to deliver the Word of God to everyone, these things will support and strengthen you, and will prepare you for the good of this world and that which is to come; but if, God forbid, you lose your time in vain chattering and useless talk, and running hither and thither, these things, be sure, will never lead you to the way of salvation.

Never think whether you will have more or

less wealth, for riches will never guide any man in the right way.' 'O children,' addressed our Master, 'there is a matter which is very important, and that is this, let none of you at any time be puffed up with pride or despise any other being. Never, never do this, this is worse than all things. Man is a sinful blunderer, therefore he must acknowledge his faults.

His Holiness, the Blessed Bab, mentions in His Book that everyone must consider at the end of each day what have been his actions. If he finds something which would please God, he must thank Him and pray to be strengthened to do this good act throughout his life; but if his actions have not been approvable or honest, he must earnestly ask God for strength to do better."

"'And now," said our Master, "the report of your weekly work is good and free from blunder and fault, therefore I am greatly pleased and very happy. I want you to work for the sake of God, and not for my own interest. Therefore I am advising you, with the greatest love and kindness, for your own benefit and comfort."

These were our beloved Master's utterances yesterday in the morning.

* * * * * * *

The second day of my visit in Akka the Master called on me, in the little house where I was lodged

with two of the Persian Believers. The house was a plain, one-storey dwelling, consisting of three small rooms.

The Master inspected every article of furniture in the room, and found fault with one or two things, which he said were not good enough for me, ordering a carpenter to come, a new curtain to be brought. Surely, I thought, all this care bestowed on me must mean that I am going to stay some time, I did not realize that the Master is so thoughtful that he would not leave anyone uncomfortable for a single day if he could help it. But to go back to my last day in Akka. When I returned from my afternoon in the garden of the Rizwan, I was told that the Master wished to speak to me. I found him in the large room upstairs, which looks out on to the Mediterranean, sitting on the divan. He beckoned me to come and sit beside him, and after taking my hand and holding it in his, in a grip of steel, he said to me very impressively: "I wish you to leave for India to-night." This announcement came as a thunderclap out of a clear sky. It is true that I had wished before to go to India, and had written to the Master while I was in Paris, asking that I might be allowed to do so some day, but while in Akka I had forgotten everything except that I wanted to live there always. The Master knew my thought. "I want you to consult your own wishes in this," he went on, "I only desire your happiness. It will be a very good thing, a very good thing, if

you will go now to India, but if you wish to stay in Akka longer you may do so, otherwise you may go to India and return to Akka, sometime, to finish your visit, and you can study Persian, so that I may be able to talk to you when you come again without an interpreter."

The Master, as all his followers know, never commands or compels obedience, he only sweetly suggests, and his followers have found that to follow his suggestions will surely lead them on in the right way.

I thanked the Master for his confidence in me, and said, "if I could be of service to his Cause I would be glad to go."

"This is a very important mission on which I am sending you," he said. "The results of this journey will be very great; you may not see them, but in the future they will be known."

I realized the importance of it all. I was to be the first Western Bahai to go to the far Orient, and carry tidings that my fellow Believers in Europe and America are one in love and unity with their Oriental brethren. I was to see the literal fulfilment of that beautiful prophecy of Baha Ullah: "The East and West shall embrace as lovers."

I expressed to the Master my doubt as to my worthiness to carry out this great mission. "Do not worry," he said, "you shall be strengthened. My thoughts and my prayers will follow you. Remember

that the thoughts of the King are always with his generals who are fighting in the front rank."

During the whole of the interview, the Master never relinquished my hand, but held it in a vice-like grasp, so that I felt I should feel its impress all the days of my life; and I felt, too, as though he were imparting to me some of his own strength and courage, which have never failed him during the half-century of his wanderings, exile, imprisonments, and persecutions. Truly, no prophet, or man of God, has endured what he has endured. The sword has been ever hovering over his head. The way to Calvary has been trodden many times. He has been betrayed in the house of his friends, nay, even in that of his very brother. But through all the mists and clouds of these sorrows and afflictions pierces ever the sun of his countenance—that radiant and divine smile of his which scarcely ever leaves his face, and which to see is to have a glimpse of "one like unto the Son of Man."

The Master gave me a few more special instructions about my voyage, and after giving me his blessing left me.

Before saying farewell to Akka, I wish to tell of an incident which occurred there, and which will illustrate better than anything the effect of the Bahai teaching.

One night during my stay there, the Master invited all the pilgrims present to supper. We were gathered together in a little upper chamber that evening—some forty men and women. Would that I had the pencil of a Raphael, or the pen of a Dante, to fittingly describe that scene! We sat round that common table, old and young, rich and poor, dark and fair; the various coloured robes and turbans giving striking colour to the scene. We represented five of the world's great religions, and many different races. We had come from places as far away as America on the one hand and India on the other. We had been complete strangers a few days before, but now we all felt a warmth of friendship and affection for one another.

The Master himself did not sit with us at the table, but served us, going from one to the other, heaping the rice on our plates and saying a kind word to each, thus bringing home to us the beautiful saying: "Let him that is greatest among you be your servant." Some of the Orientals there were strong, rough men, of humble birth, and I saw that they could hardly bear that the Master should wait on them. I knew that they felt as did Peter when Christ washed his feet. After the supper a Tablet was chanted in Persian, and then one of the oldest men there made a beautiful speech to us, the Westerners present; it was like the thanksgiving of an aged Simeon that his old eyes had witnessed such a scene and that he could

depart in peace. A certain Bahai from Washington replied for us. This supper, truly the Lord's supper in all its spiritual significance, will ever be to me the most beautiful and impressive incident in my life. Let those who sincerely desire love and unity to be brought about on earth, think of the significance of this scene which took place in a Turkish prison.

I left Akka at two a.m., in order to catch a boat leaving Haifa at an early hour in the morning. Two of the Persians accompanied me in the carriage. What a wonderful ride it was! The night was luminous with many stars—great brilliants, sparkling in their deep purple setting.

We drove through the dark, narrow streets of Akka, not a sound to be heard but the clatter of our horses' hoofs. At the gate of the fortress, the Turkish sentinel challenged us, but a satisfactory answer being given by my friends, we were allowed to pass. We drove along the beach of the sea, which is the road to Haifa. As we passed the garden of the Rizwan, the palm trees, stirred by the evening breeze, waved us an adieu. Then we forded the two shallow streams which Naaman boasted of to the prophet as the rivers he possessed, afterwards passing a caravan of camels, which moved in the dark like some strange uncanny creature of the night, and seeing fishermen with their nets hurrying for an early morning catch

Nearing Haifa, the first streaks of dawn began to appear, and then, with a suddenness which always surprises one in the Orient, the sun arose, and we entered the town by daylight. I found four Zoroastrian pilgrims there, Ardeshir, Khosroe, Bahram, and Feridoon, who were returning to India, and were much surprised to see me.

"The boat is very late," they said, "and we should have been off long before this."

The steamer had arrived at the same time as myself, so no time was lost in getting aboard, and I laughingly said to my friends: "You see I have given up my two good Mohammedan friends and have gained four good Zoroastrian ones in their place." As we sailed out of the Bay of Akka, I looked up at Mount Carmel, and saw the tomb of the Blessed Bab, shining in the morning light like a great pearl brooch on the emerald breast of the mountain. In the distance were the gleaming minarets and domes of Akka.

Here, on the holy mount, reposed that glorious Herald of Truth, the Dawn of this great Day; and there, a few miles distant, lived the third of the great Trinity of Revelators and Teachers, continuing that mighty work for the spiritualising of the world begun in Persia sixty years ago. Who could have believed, when the Bab arose in the black night of Persia like a glorious morning star, that its light would have endured and its beams spread over the whole earth?

Little did the persecutors who put his followers to the sword and finally gave him a martyr's death, think that the hated and despised sect would blossom forth as a universal and honoured religion. Could anyone have predicted that when his wounded and bleeding body was thrown out into the streets of Tabriz, to be dishonoured, that it would one day be brought by loving hands over hill and plain to the Holy Land itself, and repose for ever on God's mountain, and that fifty years after his heroic death, men and women from all parts of the earth would meet at his tomb and remember him in their hearts?

FROM PORT SAID TO BOMBAY.

On our arrival in Port Said we were met by Bahai friends, who had secured a passage for us on one of the English merchant vessels. We were the only passengers on the boat, and the deck and a few cabins were placed at our disposal. The Persians transformed the deck in a very short time into quite a luxurious abode; rugs and carpets were spread, divans and beds arranged, the tea-service set out, and we had all that constitutes comfort in the Orient. The Red Sea and the Indian Ocean have a temperature warm enough even in the middle of November to make sleeping out of doors thoroughly agreeable, so that I enjoyed going to bed by moonlight and being awakened very early in the morning by the warm rays of the sun.

The steamer was heavily laden, and seemed to crawl along, so that the voyage took about nineteen days. The weather and the sea were perfect all the way and my fellow voyagers excellent company. Our party consisted of Jenab Adib, a well-known Persian

philosopher; Mirza Mahram, a Bahai teacher who has been chiefly responsible for the growth of the Bahai Movement in India; Mirza Isaac, a merchant of Bombay, and Mushkin Kalam, the famous writer who, together with his son and family, was going to India for the first time. Counting myself and the four Zoroastrians, we were sixteen altogether.

A splendid opportunity was afforded me during this long trip to learn Persian. I had already studied this language in Paris, but my knowledge of it was slight and I had had little opportunity of hearing it spoken, but now I set to work with a will, and my friends were all most kind in helping me, so that before the end of the voyage, I could follow a conversation and express myself fairly well. The cooking was mostly done by two of the Zoroastrians. We would sit in a circle on the deck around the samovar, Mohammedan, Christian, Zoroastrian, cheek by jowl, and, while the tea was being drunk, different experiences were related by each one and sometimes animated discussions took place. There would be sad and stirring tales of the Bahai martyrs of Persia, perhaps that of a relative of one of those present; there would be anecdotes told of the Bab, Baha Ullah and Abdul Baha; there would be discussions on theological and philosophical subjects. Then the conversation might take a lighter vein; Mushkin Kalam, though the oldest of the party (I think he was nearly ninety years old), seemed always brimming over with fun and good

spirits, and told many amusing stories which convulsed everyone with laughter.

There is one thing I have always remarked about the Persian Bahais, that notwithstanding the earnestness of their faith, their truly deep spiritual natures, their readiness to become martyrs for the Cause, that they always seem happy and enjoy a good hearty laugh ; they do not take their religion, as did our ancestors the Puritans, with long faces and acid countenances. Religion is a thing of joy to them, and they rejoice in the spirit and are glad.

BOMBAY.

ON the first day of December in the morning we arrived at Bombay and found some of the Bahais waiting to greet us on our landing. I was welcomed most cordially as though I were an old and dear friend.

The news that we had arrived spread quickly through the city, and soon large numbers of Bahais, chiefly Zoroastrians, were crowding the Mashreg-ul-askar to see their new brother from the Occident. The Mashreg-ul-askar is a large hall which they have rented for their meetings, and in a room off this I lived. There are three meetings a week held in Bombay, on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday evenings at six o'clock. The Tuesday meeting is reserved for the House of Justice, composed of nineteen members. I will speak of this later. The other two meetings are general, and there are, as a rule, eighty to a hundred men present. This does not constitute the numerical strength of the Bahais in Bombay, for many have shops which they are unable to leave

more than once a week, on which occasion another Bahai friend takes charge of the shop for them. The women have a separate meeting and there is a school for the children.

At the meetings Tablets are chanted (there was one young Zoroastrian boy who chanted especially well). Talks were given by different men. I spoke through an interpreter, and on Sunday evenings there were always strangers present, and their questions were asked and answered.

The Bahai community enjoy an excellent reputation for honesty, sobriety and polite and just dealing with their fellow-men. By these qualities they attract others to investigate their religion. Drunkenness has unfortunately become a vice among the Zoroastrians of Bombay, so when a Zoroastrian is seen never to touch liquor it is at once said he must be a Bahai. It is needless to say that these new converts to Bahaism are obliged to stand a good deal of opposition, and even some persecution from the orthodox Zoroastrian. I knew a school teacher who used to come to the meetings, though he had not openly proclaimed himself a Bahai. The Zoroastrian parents of his pupils suspected him, however, of a change in his faith, and so took their children out of his school, which left him penniless.

My experiences in other Oriental cities made me realize that it is no easy thing to become a Bahai in India. It often means a great sacrifice on the part of

the believer, a loss of friends, money and position. There is great solidarity, however, among the Indian Bahais, and this is always most wonderful to see when we think that these groups are composed of men of different castes and creeds who were but yesterday strangers, if not actual enemies—such, for instance, as the Zoroastrians and Mohammedans.

There has certainly been much reason in the past for followers of these two religions to have little love for one another; now a seeming miracle has occurred, and we see Zoroastrian and Mohammedan working together in perfect unity and harmony for the common good of the community. I am referring especially to the Council of nineteen, two-thirds of which are Zoroastrians, the remaining third Mohammedan. I attended some of the meetings of this body and wish to cite one or two incidents to show how affairs are managed by the House of Justice. A Zoroastrian Bahai shopkeeper came one evening and told the Council that affairs had been going very badly with him and that he was on the point of failure. The Council deliberated and decided that different members should give a part of their time each day to helping him in his shop, lay in a new stock of goods to attract customers, and give pecuniary help if necessary. This was done, and soon the man was on his feet again.

On another evening, a Mohammedan Bahai arrived in a state of much perplexity. He had just received from a Mohammedan friend a hundred lot-

tery tickets to dispose of, the lottery being for some Mohammedan charity. "I do not know what to do with them," the man said; "in the Kitab-el-Akdas (book of laws) Baha Ullah has strongly forbidden gambling, but I am not sure whether a lottery would come under the head of gambling or not. If I accept and distribute these lottery tickets I may be breaking one of the laws; on the other hand, if I refuse them I will probably make this friend of mine, who is an influential Mohammedan, my bitter enemy." The nineteen members of the House of Justice consulted together as to what should be done. Finally a Zoroastrian member saw a way out of the difficulty, and he proposed that each one of the Bahais should take a ticket and then return them together with the hundred rupees, writing that they did not care to take a chance in the lottery, but they were very glad to help a Mohammedan charity. I wonder if all who read these lines will appreciate the beauty and the greatness of this act. It impressed me perhaps more than anything else that I saw in India. It showed forth two great results of Bahai teaching; first, that the Oriental Bahais look upon gambling, one of the most prevalent vices of the Orient, with aversion; secondly, that the feeling of animosity and hatred of Zoroastrians for Mohammedans which has endured for centuries, has become so modified thad they are glad to help a Mohammedan charity. Truly this is no small fruit from the Bahai tree.

I left Bombay at the beginning of the year 1905. My stay had been so pleasant there, my friends so kind, that I said good-bye to them with real regret. I think everyone had shown me some kind act of attention; some would send me fruit, others sweetmeats and cakes, others flowers. As I spent Christmas Day in Bombay, some sent me gifts, knowing that was a Western custom.

On the day of my departure the great railway terminus of Bombay presented a very animated picture, for all who could get away from their work had come to bid me farewell. The sight of so many persons dressed in different robes and turbans, representing different races, saying such enthusiastic good-byes to a Western gentleman in a straw hat, attracted a good deal of attention and apparent curiosity from the other passengers.

A very unusual thing as well was my travelling with an Oriental dressed in the robes of a Mohammedan Mulla, for my travelling companion was Mirza Mahram, who had been with me ever since we left Port Said; he was a very congenial fellow-traveller and kindly helped me much with my Persian, also giving me valuable explanations of the Bible, Koran, Zend Avesta, and other holy books. The journey from Bombay to Calcutta was a very pleasant one, the railway carriages on the Indian lines are very spacious and comfortable, and the meals served at different stations very palatable; everything was new

and strange to me, so the long journey of two days did not seem at all monotonous or tiring.

We stopped a short time in Calcutta,* and I was glad to meet again Jenab Adib, who was now teaching there. From Calcutta we took a steamer for Rangoon, the voyage taking about four days, at the end of which we found our Bahai friends of Burma awaiting us at the pier.

* At the time of my visit, there were only a few Bahais in Calcutta, but now there is quite a large assembly.

RANGOON.

Before entering Rangoon we were subjected to a strict inspection according to the plague regulations, for the dreaded plague so rampant in India had not yet made its appearance in Burma, but two days after our arrival the plague broke out in Rangoon and numbers of deaths were recorded daily.

The city of Rangoon is one of the most cosmopolitan in the world. Though in reality a Burmese city, the number of Burmese inhabitants are less than the combined number of Chinese, Mohammedan and Hindu inhabitants. Every religion under the sun is represented there, and, as a rule, in large numbers.

The Buddhists have many splendid golden pagodas; the Mohammedans have fine mosques; the Hindus their strange looking temples; the Chinese many Joss houses; the Zoroastrians and Jews their well-built fire temples and synagogues; the Christians of every sect their various churches and meeting-places. I should imagine there was no place in the world where one could study the customs and rules of different religions so well as in Rangoon.

Each day in the week seemed to be a feast or fast day of one or the other of the religions. I saw the festivities of four different New Year's Days. The Buddhists celebrated this day very much as the Carnival is held in France and Italy—only, instead of throwing confetti, they pour water on each other. No one is respected on that day, not even the highest dignity of the land, and the only way to escape a ducking is to shut oneself in the house.

The Hindus have even a more disagreeable way of celebrating their festal day, for they throw a red fluid on each other which remains on their clothes for some time to come.

The Mohammedans celebrate the day in a more dignified manner, and instead of trying to ruin their neighbour's clothes, they try to outshine him in the gorgeousness of their raiment. They don their very best robes and fezes embroidered in gold, and pay each other visits and pass the day in merrymaking.

The Chinese New Year reminds one of the American Fourth of July, for crackers and fireworks form the leading feature.

It would fill a book were I to describe all the remarkable religious customs that I saw in Rangoon, and as my desire is to confine myself as closely as possible to the narrative of my experiences among the Indian Bahais, I will return to my friends whom I have left welcoming me on the pier.

I stayed in Rangoon at the house of Syed Ismael

Shirazi and his father, Syed Mehdi, Persians, formerly of Shiraz. Their house is a very large and handsome one, and here the meetings were held on the same evenings as those in Bombay.

I should like to speak here of the great hospitality and kindness that was shown to me during my three months' stay in Rangoon by the two noble gentlemen whose guest I was. It was largely through their earnest solicitations that I made my stay much longer than I had intended, and they did everything in their power to make my visit a pleasant one.

Here the Bahai Movement has achieved perhaps its greatest triumph, for in this most cosmopolitan of cities one is able to see representatives of six great religions sitting side by side at a common religious meeting and united in a true spirit of love and brotherhood.

The meetings, as I have stated, are usually held three times a week, but during the whole of my visit we had meetings every evening, and there was scarcely a time when the room was not well filled, often to overflowing, so that many had to sit in the garden. It was a wonderful and inspiring sight to see the room filled with Buddhists, Mohammedans, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and even an occasional Chinaman. Strangers came to make enquiries, not only at the evening meetings, but also at all hours of the day, eight o'clock in the morning not being thought too early in the Orient to

seek for Spiritual knowledge. Large numbers of Christians, both native and English, came to see me; most of them I am afraid if not to scoff at least to criticise, but some remained to pray. There were both Roman Catholics and Protestants who became Bahais during my visit, and one of them was a missionary. Who, possessed of an open and unprejudiced mind, could help but be impressed at seeing that marvellous example of Bahai Unity, so strikingly shewn forth every evening?

"I cannot believe," said a missionary to me one night, "that all these men are really Bahais." "It is easy enough to find out," I replied, "you have but to ask them." The answer he received left no doubt on that score. The Bahai is never a luke-warm Believer: he has good reasons for his faith and he knows how to express them. There was, naturally, some opposition to my presence in Rangoon. The Roman Catholic priests forbade their flocks to come to the meetings, the Protestant ministers spoke against us. A Mohammedan Mulla preached openly in a city square, warning the Mohammedans to keep away from the Bahais, who possessed a power able to turn them away from the true faith. One ardent Buddhist used to come to the meetings with the sole purpose of drawing away the Buddhists, a Hindu came regularly to interrupt and argue against us. Perhaps one of the most remarkable cases of opposition was that concerning a young Jewish soldier of the British

Army. He had dropped into one of our meetings, and becoming interested, had returned again and again, and finally announced that he had become a Bahai, and a very ardent one, too, for he used to talk to his fellow Christian soldiers, and soon our meetings were made more interesting, and certainly a new touch of picturesqueness was added by having several young soldiers in their white and gold uniforms. Some sailors from the many foreign ships lying in the harbour also attended our meetings.

But to return to our young Jewish friend. It seems that great efforts had been made by army missionaries to convert him to Christianity, but without success. He had always remained true to the faith of his fathers. When, therefore, it became known that our young Jew had become converted to something that was not called Christianity, and was actually preaching it and converting others, great consternation and indignation were aroused.

One night our meeting was interrupted by three or four young soldiers entering, one of whom was an Evangelist who held revival services in the Army. He began in an excited manner to preach against the error into which his friends had been drawn. He challenged me to answer him, and when I tried to do so in a quiet way he would not listen, but continued his invectives, finally surprising everyone by falling on his knees and bursting forth into emotional and impassioned prayer, calling upon Heaven for some

miracle to turn his friends away from what he deemed error. I felt very sorry for him, for he was evidently in earnest. I felt sorry, too, that there still exist in the world such narrow and bigoted spirits who have distorted the broad charitable spirit of Christ's teachings into something so different. When the Evangelist had finished his prayer he called upon the three Bahai soldiers to leave their evil surroundings and return with him to the barracks. They remained fixed in their seats, and the poor man was obliged to confess himself defeated and to go away. "I wonder," said the Jewish soldier to me afterwards, "why this man who has tried so hard to make me believe in Christ, is so angry now that I do believe in Him." Alas, it is too often the Christ of the creeds that one is asked to believe in, and not the Christ of humanity.

There are many interesting incidents which occurred during my long stay in Rangoon, but were I to speak of them all, there would be little space left to recount my experiences in other Indian cities. I will mention but one or two others. One day, soon after my arrival, an Englishman called to see me and questioned me minutely about my object in coming to Rangoon, and what the teachings of the Bahai Faith were. He seemed interested in my replies and came again and again, finally saying that he believed all I told him was the highest and most beautiful Truth, and he could accept it all and call himself a

Bahai. Then he went on to say: "I must now inform you who I really am. I am a member of the Rangoon secret police, and it was my duty to find out about you, to see if your mission in India was a peaceable one, and one that would not lead to a native uprising. I little thought that my investigation would lead to my ultimate conversion." Mr. R. proved himself to be a kind friend and a devoted Bahai during the rest of my stay.

The friendly protection of the Bahais by the police in India is not a thing to be despised, for on one occasion it has been shown that, though India is governed by such a progressive and enlightened country as Great Britain, persecutions for religious beliefs are possible. I shall have occasion to speak later of a Bahai who narrowly escaped a martyr's death in the city of Mandalay.

How easy it is to excite the fanaticism of a crowd. I remember the anxiety of my friends one night while we were holding a meeting. Diagonally across the street from us was a Mohammedan mosque, and on that evening a large meeting was being held in front of it in the open air, the Imam preaching from the porch and the hundreds of Mohammedans standing or squatting in the road. The preacher's voice was so loud and clear that we could hear it across the road, and my friend told me he was preaching against Bahaism. I looked

across and saw by the flaring light, the excited face of the Mulla, waving his arms about, the swaying forms of the white-robed figures on the ground, and heard the pious ejaculations with which the speaker was occasionally interrupted. Ah, I thought, it needs but one word from that man to bring about a Bahai massacre. Even the fear of the English police would not restrain that crowd, now worked up to the white heat of hatred and fanaticism.

In violent contrast to the fanatical spirit existing in all of the religions in India, is the spirit of liberality, charity, and broadmindedness among the Bahais. Not once have I come across the least tinge of bigotry and narrowness, and this is the more wonderful when one considers that most of its adherents have been brought up in the strongest atmosphere of fanaticism. To us, brought up in the broad spirit of Western thought, this should be a constant lesson if we are ever tempted to show an intolerant spirit to any who do not think as we do. Consider how difficult it must be for a Mohammedan to acknowledge that there could be anything of truth in religions such as Brahmanism or Buddhism, which he has always regarded with abhorrence as rank idolatry. "Think of it," once said a Persian Bahai to me, "I once thought I was polluted if I was obliged to shake hands with a Christian—now I am glad to shake hands with all the world."

What a great and noble work are these pioneers of the Bahai religion doing! They are laying the foundation of a mighty edifice which shall endure throughout all ages; the stones of love and harmony and unity and brotherhood which they are laying shall never be swept away, but the human race shall rise upon them to higher things—to its true destiny.

I left Rangoon in a rather exhausted condition; for the strain of talking to people day and night, for three months in extremely hot weather, was very great. It often happened that our meetings would last until one o'clock in the morning, and our meals were held at most irregular hours—whenever the coast was clear and there were no visitors.

MANDALAY.

I ARRIVED in this city, together with my ever faithful companion, Mirza Mahram, the first week of April. Here I spent six weeks of pleasant days. I lived among the native Burmans, and the simple and primitive way of living appealed greatly to me. The whole life of the people is passed out of doors: men, women, children, goats, chickens, all together—the children running about naked. Of a morning I would look out of the window of my little bamboo hut among the trees, and see the women cooking dinner, and the men weaving silk at very primitive looms. Then, in the evening, they would sit out under the luminous stars, while one would play a weird, appealing air on a rude pipe, and very happy and contented they all seemed. How complicated we make our lives, what slaves we are compared with

these people! "Not what we are, but what we shall be thought," is the question with us. Everything with us must be bought for a price, there all is free as God meant it to be.

The Bahais number several hundreds in Mandalay and are nearly all native Burmans, and a very gentle, kindly race of people they are.

In Rangoon the Bahais are drawn from all classes, and some had had excellent educations. There were doctors, lawyers, and employees in the English government among them. In Mandalay, the larger number of Believers are drawn from the silk weavers, and few of them could speak English, though all the children are brought up to do so.

While I was in Mandalay, plans were being drawn up to build a Bahai school for the children. The idea is to build a meeting place and school in one. At present the meetings are held in a private house, that of a Burmese widow where I was staying. The room is much too small for the large number who congregate together twice a week, so those who cannot find room in the house hold a meeting out of doors. In these meetings the women took part; this was not the case in Bombay and Rangoon where the conditions are different, but in Mandalay the Buddhist women have always been accustomed to a good deal of liberty and freedom, and now that they have become Bahais they naturally do not abandon that,

and their Mohammedan sisters who have also become Bahais are only too glad to enjoy their freedom with them.

There are some impatient reformers who have said to me: "I thought the Bahai Movement was going to improve the condition of Oriental women, but I do not see that it has." Such people must remember that the emancipation of women in the Orient is the most difficult of all reforms to bring about, because of the deep-rooted prejudices that exist. It is a thing that can only be done very gradually. This reform has a prominent place in the Bahai programme, but were the Oriental Bahai women suddenly to throw aside their veils and mingle freely in the world, it would simply stir up enmity and scandal and do more harm than good to their cause.

Baha Ullah has made a law that every girl should be educated as well as every boy. When the Oriental women are sufficiently educated and know what to do with their liberty, then, and only then, should they be emancipated. However, the meeting of Mohammedan and Buddhist women with the men in Mandalay is an answer and proof to all, that this will be the condition of affairs in the future, and that woman shall finally come into her own.

The children, boys and girls, of all ages, also take part in these meetings. They squat on the floor, their hands folded, listening attentively, a good model

for some of our restless Western children; the women in their light pink and blue and green silk robes, their immaculate coiffure, usually crowned with wreaths of white roses, their delicate Japanese type of beauty, made a very pretty picture. The men were dressed in the native silk skirt and white flowing jackets, and silk turbans around their heads. After chanting the Tablets, someone would give a little talk in Burmese. I often addressed them through an interpreter, and it was inspiring to see their radiant spiritual faces turned to me. The meeting ended with tea and cakes being served, and then the pretty custom of children going round with baskets full of flowers and giving handfuls of roses and jasmine to each one. I doubt if any meetings in any other part of the world could be more impressive than these. The meetings of the early Christian Church must have been like this before religion became cold and formal and fashionable.

A remarkable testimony to the unity and harmony existing among these Mandalay Bahais was once given by a Mohammedan. There was a convention of Mohammedans from different cities meeting in Mandalay, and certain matters were discussed which ended in angry disputing among them. Finally a prominent Mohammedan got up and said: "I wonder why it is that we Mohammedans can never get together without coming to blows, while the

Bahai company has lived for years in the greatest peace and harmony, although they come from many different sects." Of course no one could answer him, but his question must have given them much food for thought.

In spite of this beautiful love, there is much animosity and opposition displayed against the Bahais by the other religions in Mandalay. It is a common saying that it is only necessary to go to one Bahai meeting to become a Bahai, so the greatest effort is made by religious leaders to keep their flocks from attending the meetings at all. Great anger was kindled against my Persian friend, Mirza Mahram, some five years ago, because of his remarkable success in converting people to the Bahai Faith. Finally some of the Mohammedans and Buddhists decided that they would make him leave the city or threaten his life if he refused. A band of hoodlums gathered together one evening and with sticks and stones proceeded to march to Mirza Mahram's house. When they reached it they found him waiting calmly to receive them. He spoke gently to them, but firmly refused to leave Mandalay. How he would have fared at the hands of the infuriated mob it is easy to imagine if a detachment of English soldiers had not arrived in time to keep order. The officer in command advanced towards Mirza Mahram and addressed him angrily: "What did he mean by

creating all this disturbance in Mandalay? Why did he come to preach some heretical schism and so anger the population?" Mirza Mahram explained to him that he was only doing what the early Christian teachers did when they were accused of the same things that he was now being accused of, and he went on then to explain the true mission of the Bahai Religion, which so impressed the officer that his whole manner changed, and he held out his hand genially, saying: "There is nothing to find fault with in these teachings; if you get into any new trouble you have a friend in me, and I will order a special detachment of police to protect your house." "I thank you," replied Mirza Mahram, "but I do not wish for any protection, I have a Higher Protector than even the English government." However the officer insisted on placing his men around the house to preserve order, and they remained there several days No more open attacks were made by the populace hostile to the Bahai Faith, but often some malicious hand would hurl a stone at some passing Bahai. During my stay in Mandalay I was never allowed to go out without some Bahai with me, for they feared some injury might befall me. It was generally known that a Western Christian Sahib was living among the Bahais as their friend, and this further enraged their fanatical enemies.

There is a statement which nearly all western writers on Oriental affairs make—it is this, that the

Oriental has no idea of truth or honesty as we conceive of them in the Occident. I have not seen enough of Orientals in general to either accept or refute this statement, but among the Oriental Bahais whom I did know well I found a sense of integrity and honour often higher than I have found in America or in Europe, as the following incident will show :—

One very hot afternoon a young Bahai walked to the post office, a distance of over two miles, to get some stamps for me. On his return he gave me the stamps and then said : "Now I must go back again." "But why?" I said, "Surely on so hot a day you don't want to take that long walk again?" "The man at the post office has given me four annas too much change," he replied, "and I must return it at once."

There is a beautiful passage of Baha Ullah's in the Tarazat (the Adornments) in which he describes Honesty as the greatest ornament of the people of Baha. "Honesty," he says, "is the door through which come the repose and peace of the world, and the maintenance of all things is bound up with it."

Towards the end of my stay in Mandalay, I received a letter from my old friend and brother Bahai, M. D———, of Paris, stating that he had arrived in Bombay and would soon join me in Mandalay. It was pleasant meeting him again and receiving news from the home circle of Bahais. I say home circle, for it was in Paris that I first became attracted to the Bahai Cause. I found

D———, as enthusiastic as I had been over the splendid reception given him in Bombay and Rangoon. We stayed nearly a week in Mandalay, he also being a guest of the Widow Mong Taw. I remember how amused D———, was that he could never get a glimpse of her. With all that sense of politeness which Frenchmen possess, he insisted that he must see his hostess to thank her for her hospitality. But the widow could never be found. The most attractive and well-cooked meals were sent to us from somewhere, and everything was kept in perfect order, but the widow remained invisible. D———, began to think she was some mysterious being who had no earthly existence ; when, the day before our departure, some friends brought her to see us she seemed much embarrassed, and on D———, thanking her profusely she said: "But I have done nothing at all; you would do the same for me if I came to see you."

We had interesting talks with Buddhists and members of the Arya-Samaj, who invited us to speak at one of their meetings. The Arya-Samaj is a society recently started among the Hindus, and attempts to draw them altogether away from idolatry and give them a Unitarian form of faith.

D———, Mirza Mahram, and myself, with perhaps a Buddhist and a Mohammedan Bahai, used to take walks through the streets of Mandalay, naturally attracting much attention, for it is not a usual sight in the Orient to see people in Christian,

Mohammedan, and Buddhist dress walking together chatting and laughing in a friendly manner. I remember one day when we were walking with a certain doctor, M. Ali, a devoted Bahai, a man of position and much respected, that we passed a group of Mohammedans standing at a corner; they beckoned to him and asked him who the Sahibs were he was walking with. "The venerable old gentleman is a Persian, born a Shia Mohammedan," he said; "one of the two men in European clothes is a Frenchman, born a Jew; the other, an American, born a Christian; while I, as you know, was born a Sunni Mohammedan. We have all laid aside the old names," he went on, "which once divided us, and we have become united and are friends and brothers through the teachings of Baha Ullah."

This striking and visible example of Bahai Unity made a great impression on these Mohammedans, as I am certain it did on many others. It became noised abroad that an unheard-of miracle had taken place. A Mohammedan, a Jew, and a Christian, had joined hands and were all teaching the same thing.

If those who read these lines could only realize what animosity exists between the different sects of Islam, such as the Shia and Sunni, which corresponds to the feeling between Roman Catholics and Protestant Christians in Western countries, they would realize how difficult it is to weld even these sects into one. Then, indeed, would they marvel at

the power of the Bahai movement, which has done not only this, but has gathered into one fold people of every creed known on the face of the earth.

Our departure from Mandalay was the occasion of a scene which will always remain in my memory. It was a worthy climax to the many wonderful experiences I had been having in India. We, that is to say, Mirza Mahram, D———, and myself, were to leave by the boat which left at the earliest streak of dawn. We had heard much of the beauties of the Irrawaddy River, and were anxious to return to Rangoon that way. On the eve of our departure, a farewell meeting was held. Every room in the house was full, and the crowd overflowed into the garden. After D———, and I had spoken a few words of farewell, an aged Burman, the oldest Bahai in Mandalay, arose, and with a voice that shook with emotion, made a most touching and beautiful speech. He told us what our coming had meant to all of them, how much they appreciated our visit, and he spoke of the barrier that had always existed between East and West, which was partly their fault as well as the fault of the English who governed them. He thanked God that he had lived to see the day when, through the manifestation of Baha Ullah, their hearts in the Orient, in far away Mandalay, had been united by so wonderful a love to the hearts of their Western brothers in Europe and America.

By this time, although it was after midnight, the

whole assembly, men, women and children, insisted on coming with us to the steamer. Some mistake had been made in ordering the carriages for us, and there were none to be found. "We will all walk," they cried —the distance was over two miles. We started off, a curious and picturesque procession. The light of a full moon made it almost as clear as day, and the bright silk robes of the Burmans shimmered and waved in the breeze, and it seemed as though some ethereal army of pink and white was being blown gently down the road. The effect was startling in its beauty. Before we had gone half-way some bullock carts caught up with us, and we finished the journey in these.

On reaching the river bank all grouped themselves around us to say good-bye. The solemnity and the beauty of that scene were indescribable. What a picture it was! The red fezes and the long white robes of the Mohammedans, the pink and yellow silks of the Burmans, the little children in their bright dresses, the women with their big white combs and wreaths of jasmine in their hair, standing under the waving palm trees flooded by the glory of the full moon. Again some kind words were uttered, and the tears were streaming down the faces of all as we said goodbye. I said to my friend D———, "Wuold that all the people of the world could see this; there would be no need of teachers to prove the truth of the Bahai

Cause, for this is its proof. Where such love exists, there is God." To think that a group of Buddhists and Mohammedans should weep at the departure of a Christian and a Jew from their midst!

We much enjoyed the restful three days' journey to Rangoon. The scenery along the river is very picturesque—the little villages among the palms, the many ruined pagodas, and a continuous background of blue hills.

RANGOON AGAIN.

My second visit to Rangoon lasted about two weeks, and during that time D———, and I both gave public lectures, an interesting fact in connection with the lecture given by D———, being that it was arranged by Christians who had been attracted to the Cause during our stay, and the hall was lent by a rich Jew.

The lecture I gave was under the auspices of a Hindu society. I was much pleased to have been asked to speak before them, for I understood that I was the first Westerner, or one of Christian origin, who had been invited to address them in their own building. The letter from the secretary inviting me to speak ran thus: "We have heard that you are teaching very noble and beautiful ideas in Rangoon, and that you have much sympathy for our religion, Brahmanism, therefore we ask you to present your ideas to us."

On the day of my lecture about 150 Hindus, chiefly of the high caste of Brahmins, came to hear

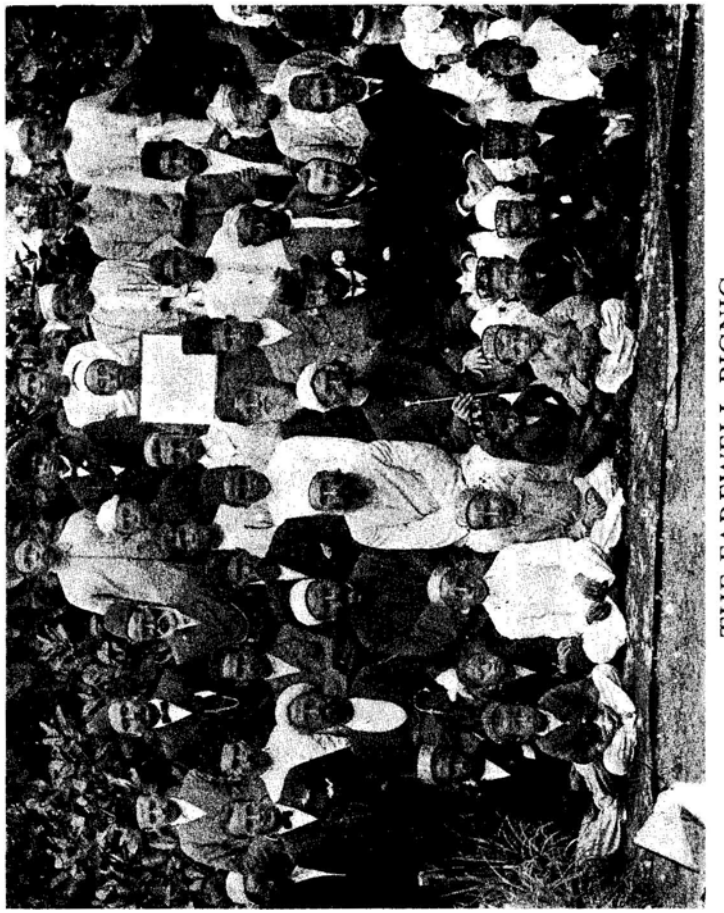
me. After the lecture, some came up and told me how much they had been impressed by what I had said, and of their desire to read, study and know more of the Bahai religion; others asked that the lecture might be printed for circulation among their friends. This was afterwards done. Editors of different native papers asked me to write articles for them, which were translated into many languages. I remember my surprise about a month later, on arriving in Lahore to find one of these articles printed in a Punjabi paper; oddly enough, the article appeared on the very day of my arrival. Letters came to me from different parts asking questions about the Bahai religion; all this kept me very busy.

The time had now come for us to leave Rangoon, and we began to plan where we should go to next. A certain Hindu wished me to go with him to Madras, his native city, and speak there, which I had intended to do later, but was prevented. D———, was planning to travel through the North of India, stopping at several cities, and finally embarking at Kurrachee for Persia, and he urged me to go with him. Mirza Mahram also approved of this plan, and said he would come with us. I had not been told by the Master to visit the North of India, but I thought this would meet with his approval, for he had said to D———, when in Akka, "It will be good for you and Mr. Sprague to be together in India." Before we left Rangoon

our friends gave us a farewell picnic. We spent the day in a beautiful garden. belonging to one of the Bahais, outside the city. Refreshments were served, all sitting in a circle on the ground. Afterwards our photograph was taken, and in that group all the great world religions were represented. We were permitted to see at this time a beautiful tomb of white marble intended to hold the body of Baha Ullah: a similar one had been made by the Bahais in Burma and sent to Akka to contain the body of the Bab, but it had not been found advisable to send this one at present, so it is resting in the grounds of a Rangoon Bahai.

We said good-bye to our friends here with as much regret as we had done in Mandalay. D———, went on ahead to spend a few days in Calcutta, while I was to follow with Mirza Mahram, and meet him in Benares, but out plans were upset and I did not see D———, again in India. The weather was chiefly responsible for this.

The summer months in certain parts of India are made very cool and pleasant by the enormous amount of rain which pours down daily. These rains take place after the arrival of the monsoon. During the year 1905 the monsoon was much delayed, the month of June had come to an end with no prospect of rain. The papers were full of the terrible suffering caused in Calcutta and other northern cities by the excessive and exceptional heat and the drought. We had hoped by the time we reached Calcutta the



THE FAREWELL PICNIC

Rangoon, 1905. Hippolyte Dreyfus and Sydney Sprague seated right.

rains would have commenced, but D———, wrote that he had encountered such terrible and unbearable heat there that he was obliged to go on. In Benares and Lucknow he found it the same, so he hastened on to Kurrachee to take a boat for Persia. When Mirza Mahram and I arrived in Calcutta a week later we found the same condition of affairs. The heat was considered exceptional even for India ; at least so the papers said. We spent a day in Benares, but I think if we had stayed longer we should both have been stricken down by the heat. Men were dying every day from its effects. The hot air which one inhaled seemed to scorch the lungs, and there was no escaping from it. We hurried on to Aligarh, the trip across the Indian plains being a terrible one ; had it not been for the tatties, a sort of straw curtain over the windows which we continually dampened, I think we should have been roasted alive.

ALIGARH AND DELHI

WHEN we reached Aligarh the weather had changed, the monsoon had broken, and the rain was descending in torrents.

Aligarh is a small town, and is not usually visited by tourists. It contains, however, a very fine Mohammedan college, one of the largest Mohammedan institutions in the world. We stopped at Aligarh partly to see the Mohammedan Prince who was at the head of the college and who was a friend of Mirza Mahram, and partly to meet some Bahai students. The head of the College, the Nawab, was one of the finest gentlemen I have ever met ; he was a true nobleman, courteous and gentle in all his ways. He gave us a most cordial welcome, and during our stay of nine days we saw him daily. Every afternoon at five, when his work was finished, he would send his victoria to fetch us, and we would spend the evening chatting in his garden. His sympathy toward the Bahai Cause was very great, for he was a most broad-minded Mohammedan and realized the tremendous

need there is for reform in Islam. He made a brave fight for many years to make education more general among the Mohammedans, but he met with much opposition from the Mohammedan Mullas, who look with suspicion on Western learning, thinking it leads to Atheism. The Nawab introduced us to the professors and scholars, and I made some good friends among them. One evening I was invited to a college debate, and asked by the president to speak. As the subject of the debate had something to do with education, I spoke warmly of the advantages of education in broadening the character, in uprooting bigotry and prejudice, and preparing the mind to receive the highest forms of truth. When I finished there was much applause, and one of the Bahai students whispered to me: "I am so proud and happy that you spoke that way, for it is generally known in the college that you are a Bahai, and this will make our Cause more popular and liked." In fact several of the students came to ask me about the Bahai Movement, and became very much interested.

The next stop on our journey was at Delhi. The Bahai Movement has not yet gained a footing in this old city of the Mogul Emperors, called the most fanatical Mohammedan city in the world, but we had some letters of introduction to certain prominent Mohammedans, so we thought of spending a week in Delhi to present them and then return later on to stay longer.

We met and had animated discussions with some of the leaders of Islam, including the head Imam of the big mosque, the Jumma-Musjed. One of the Mohammedans, a gentle old man, more broad-minded than the others, seemed to have taken a great fancy to me, and urged me many times to return and live in his house, which was one of the handsomest in Delhi; he said I could have my private apartments, and he himself would give me opportunities of spreading the Cause. This, as well as many other invitations from different towns of India, I was obliged to refuse owing to a serious attack of illness, about which I shall have more to say later. From Delhi we proceeded on to Lahore. There we were met by Mirza Mahmoud, who had been teaching in the Punjab during the last two years, and we stayed with him at his house, which was situated in the crowded native quarter.

LAHORE.

LAHORE is a great centre of missionary activity. Here the Americans have a large college, and there are numerous other institutions of learning.

Great interest was aroused by my coming, and many enquirers from all religions came to see us. Mirza Mahmoud is possessed of an unusually sweet and winning personality, and has made many friends in Lahore; even those who had not yet accepted his views, told me how much they admired his excellent character, and he is teaching continually by his beautiful life, which Baha Ullah has said in many of his Tablets is the best way of teaching.

I felt that there were great opportunities for work in Lahore, and planned to stay there some time. Two Hindu societies had asked me to give them lectures, and I had received invitations from Amritsar and Rawalpindi to visit those places. But, alas, for human plans, I had only been a fortnight in Lahore when I was taken ill with a severe attack of typhoid fever. The great heat I had experienced, the strain

of meeting and talking with so many people, had all told on me, and I had little strength to fight the disease. The first attack was followed by a relapse, and it was nearly six weeks before my temperature went down. At times I seemed hovering on the brink of the great Beyond, and as I look back and think of the terrific heat of the Lahore climate and of my own high temperature, it seems wonderful that my life was spared. In fact, the doctor had said: "I can do nothing for him, his life is in the hands of God."

Although my illness was a severe test to me at the time, I can now look back on it with pleasure, for it was the means of the bringing out and the making manifest of what stuff the Oriental Bahais are made.

Some Western writer has said that the Oriental is cowardly, and when a contagious disease appears he flees in horror from it, leaving others to their fate. How different was my experience. No one could have had two more devoted and loving nurses than I had in Mirza Mahram and Mirza Mahmoud; they tended me day and night, never thinking of their own rest or comfort or the danger they were running. I was not taken to a hospital, for the hospitals were overcrowded, there being a great epidemic of disease in Lahore. I could not, as the Doctor said, have received better care there than I had at the home of Mirza Mahmoud. Finally, these two good friends were completely worn out, and it was necessary for

someone else to look after me, so a telegram was sent to Bombay, and as soon as it arrived one of the Zoroastrians volunteered to come and take care of me.

Dear Kai Khosroe, when I saw his strong powerful form, his kind manly face by me, and felt his tender care, I already began to feel better. Alas, that I must record that his coming meant that he was to sacrifice his life for mine. Scarcely four days had passed, when he was stricken down with cholera, which was raging in Lahore, and died in less than twenty hours before my eyes. The two Mirzas were obliged to divide their attention between us, and they bravely ministered unto him until the last, holding the poor man possessed by so frightful and contagious a malady in their arms. I lived through all this, but the death of this good friend was a shock which it was difficult to recover from. I thought with many a pang of the heart, of the wife and children he had left behind—and he had done this for me—no, not for me, but for the love of God.

Other friends came and looked after me in turn. I remember one young Hindu who was especially devoted to me, he would sit for hours by my bed, saying nothing, but ready for any service. In his desire to cheer me he used to bring me presents from the bazaar, ranging from perfumery to sleeve links. The incongruity of these presents at such a time made me smile even then. I was told that special meetings had been held by all the Bahais in India,

and prayers offered for my recovery. As soon as it was possible for me to be moved it was decided that I should leave the unhealthy climate of Lahore and seek a cooler clime. I wished to go up in the Himalayas where a Sikh Bahai had invited me to visit him. It was thought, however, the trip would be too difficult, so I was put on a cot and taken by the rapid express to Bombay, attended by the ever-faithful Mirza Mahram, and the change to the much cooler atmosphere—for it was the rainy season—was very beneficial. Here, surrounded by the many friends whom I had left some eight months before, my health and strength returned. The father and two little sons of Kai Khosroe came to see me, and they came with tears of joy rather than of sorrow, happy that he had been able to render so great a service to the Cause. "He was a humble shopkeeper," they said, "and had no ability to teach, but you are able to go about and teach great multitudes; he could only give his life to serve the Cause of God, and he was glad to do it." Noble Kai Khosroe, you will always be remembered as the first Oriental friend to give his life for a Western Bahai brother.

I had the pleasure of meeting at this time too Jenab Ebn Asdaq, a well-known Bahai teacher from Persia who had just arrived in India to teach.

I was scarcely well enough to walk alone when a telegram arrived from Akka saying it would be better to leave India and return to Europe. This

indeed proved to be the very best thing for me, since the fresh sea air and the quiet voyage were of the greatest benefit. During the voyage I used to lie in my steamer chair, close my eyes, and think of the wonderful year I had spent in India, and the kind faces of every colour and nationality would flash before me, and I would hear again their regretful good-byes, and see their eyes full of tears. I was glad to think that as a result of my work some had entered into the Bahai fold of Unity, and that the sympathy and love I had tried to show to all had been so liberally responded to, and that I had been brought into touch with so many of my Oriental brethren. Even some who had not become Bahais had said to me: "We have never opened our hearts to any Westerner as we have to you"; so that if I, a worker in a great Cause, have succeeded in removing some of the prejudice and misunderstanding which separate the Oriental from the Occidental, and have helped to make East and West advance but one step nearer to each other, then I am well content.

APPENDIX.

THIS ACCOUNT is from a copy of a letter dated 4 September 1907 which was written to Mariam Haney. The copy is in the Thornton Chase Papers, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

YOU HAVE DOUBTLESS heard of how I was stricken with typhoid fever in Lahore, and I want to take this opportunity of telling the American believers that the Master did not send me to that City, but that my own zeal to do more in India than He had planned for me, led me to go there.

When I had finished the itinerary which the Master had mapped out for me—instead of leaving India before the dreaded summer heat began—I decided, after consulting my Persian companion who was always with me, to go to Lahore and teach. On arriving in that City, we found the summer rains were delayed and the whole of the district of the Punjaub suffering from a drought. The heat was almost unbearable, but we decided to brave it out, and began to work for the Cause we had so much at heart.

We began to arouse interest at once among the natives and many came to see us. Invitations came to me to speak to some Hindu Societies, and I felt delighted at the prospect of a busy summer in Lahore, in spite of the temperature which seemed each day more difficult to bear. Finally I broke down in the second week of my stay; was taken with the most violent form of typhoid fever, and for some time hovered between life and death. I was not removed to a hospital, for they were very crowded, there being an epidemic of diseases in the City: fever, cholera and plague claiming victims each day. Fortunately I was in the house of a Persian Bahai, and it would have been impossible to have had more careful and devoted nursing than he and my Persian companion bestowed upon me. They served me day and night, never thinking of their own health or comfort, doing the most menial work—and yet they were Persians of culture and noble birth.

Finally they were obliged to call in assistance, so they sent word to Bombay asking if one of the Bahais there could come and help nurse me. When the letter reached Bombay, it was read aloud to the Assembly [that is, the Bahá'í community], and at once a Zoroastrian Bahai, named Kai Khosroe, expressed his desire to go to my aid. I was told that before his departure he said good-bye to his family and friends,

and arranged his business matters, as though he felt he might never return.

Before Kai Khosroe's arrival in Lahore, I had been steadily growing worse; my temperature had passed the point where life is supposed to be possible, and I lost consciousness: indeed I was in the valley of the shadow of death, for my Persian friends told me afterwards that my limbs stiffened, my jaw dropped, and to all appearances I was dead. "Then," said my friend, "I caught hold of the Robe of our Lord, and I prayed in the anguish of my heart that your life be spared, and GOD heard my prayer."

How can I but believe that it was his prayers, his faith, which kept my spirit from leaving its earthly temple? I heard also that prayers had been offered for my recovery by the Bahais in other Cities of India.

It seemed, however, as though one life must be sacrificed. It was not (by the will of GOD) to be mine, but that of Kai Khosroe who willingly gave his life for mine. When I saw the strong, powerful body, the kind, manly face, and felt the loving care of Kai Khosroe, I began to feel better. It almost seemed that he was bestowing his strength on me. I remember his saying to my friend the first day of his arrival, "I do not think I will ever leave this city alive; this heat will be too much for me." He had left Bombay, which was then enjoying a temperature of 85 degrees—owing to the

rainy season having commenced there—and found in Lahore a temperature of 115 degrees, the country burned to a cinder by the horrible drought. Alas! his words were prophetic! The fourth day after his arrival, he was stricken down without a moment's warning by Asiatic cholera, and in less than twenty hours he was dead. So suddenly was he overtaken by the dread malady, that it was impossible to remove him from the house. My friends were obliged to divide their attention between him and me. They never deserted their post, but ministered unto him until the last, holding the poor man possessed of so frightful and contagious a disease, in their arms.

I was a spectator of all this, and how I lived through it I cannot imagine. For weeks, for months, afterwards, the cry of the unfortunate Kai Khosroe was in my ears.

A few days after his death, accompanied by my faithful Persian friends—who, miraculously it seemed, had escaped both the fever and cholera—I was taken on a cot and put on a train which would take me to a cooler clime.

I might mention that during my last days in Lahore, natives who had come in touch with us, seemed overcome with wonder and admiration at witnessing the heroic devotion of my friends, and they, too, came and offered their help. I remember one young Hindu who in his great desire to do something

for me, used to bring me presents from the bazaar ranging from perfumery to cuff buttons, things which it did not seem then I would ever have use for again.

I reached Bombay in a very feeble condition, and was looking forward with dread to meeting the family of Kai Khosroe. He had left a wife, two little boys and an aged father. How can they feel anything but bitterness toward me, I thought, for am I not responsible for the death of their dear one? Oh! it is impossible to fathom the depths of the Bahai spirit of love and service! They came to me, with tears in their eyes it is true, but tears rather of joy than of sorrow; happy that their father, husband and son, had been able to render so great a service to the Cause. "He was a humble shop-keeper," they said, "and had no ability to teach; whilst you are able to go about and teach great multitudes. He could only give his life to serve the Cause of GOD, and he was glad to do it."

Dear, noble Kai Khosroe! Though I should live to teach many, many years and make thousands of believers, I would still not have reached to the heights you have attained, for in the utmost humility and self-renunciation, you gave what you had—a life—and you became in truth one of God's martyrs. Forever you will be remembered as the first Oriental brother to give his life for a Western friend!

Do you wonder that I feel a tremendous responsibility ever hanging over me? Can a life of even the

greatest labor and devotion repay such a sacrifice? It humbles me to the dust when I think of it!

Oh brothers and sisters of America! Tell the people of this story of love and service; of how those who were brought up Zoroastrians and Mohammedans, gave themselves unsparingly to save one of Christian origin from the West, and were faithful unto death! Is not this one of the greatest proofs that the Love and Power of GOD are manifested upon the earth to-day in greater degree than ever before? "By their fruits ye shall know them," and the fact that the Orient is now sacrificing its life for the Occident, shows, as the Master says, what the Bahai spirit is.

GOD grant that we in the West may be ever as ready to give our lives for our breathren in the East!

(signed) SYNDEY SPRAGUE

NOTES.

p. vii: "the year 1905"—Sprague actually arrived in India on 1 December 1904, and left in the late summer of 1905.

p. ix: "Yezd"—In 1903, the Bahá'ís of Yazd, Iran, were subjected to severe persecution. The sad details of these events would have been known to Sprague's Bahá'í readers through Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí's *Bahai Martyrdoms in Persia in the Year 1903, A.D.* (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Society, 1904; reprinted by Aubade, 1985).

p. 10: "the great Trinity of Revelators and Teachers"—Before the publication and distribution of Shoghi Effendi's *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh* in the mid-1930's, it was commonplace for Bahá'ís to speak and write of a "Trinity" of Manifestations being associated with the Bahá'í Faith. That they attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the station of a Manifestation of God at least equal to the Báb, both the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá being seen as somewhat lower in station than Bahá'u'lláh, was

in opposition to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's repeated spoken and written statements to the contrary.

p. 15: "the Mashreg-ul-askar"—Such a place as Sprague describes would now generally be called a Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds or Bahá'í Center. In the early years of this century the terms Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds were used interchangably, although the latter term was not well known in the West. Although the terms are now used as if totally distinct in reference, the functions of the two are actually interpenetrative.

p. 15: "the House of Justice, composed of nineteen members"—Such a locally elected administrative body is now called a Local Spiritual Assembly. It usually has nine members, but in special circumstances it may have more.

p. 17: "On another evening"—In *The Story of the Bahai Movement* (pp. 17-18), Sprague states that the incident of the lottery tickets happened on the same evening as the discussion of the shopkeeper's problems.

p. 32: "Oriental Bahai women"—The condition of Eastern Bahá'í women was a point on which Bahá'ís were subject to much criticism by missionary opponents of the Faith. Certainly, for women not to have veiled in public places, in areas where failing to observe local proprieties would have opened the Bahá'ís to violent reprisal,

would have been foolish. Nevertheless, the degree to which previous cultural patterns of gender interaction continued within the Bahá'í community suggests that there was a reluctance on the part of some Bahá'í men and women to apply the Faith's teaching of equality on a social as well as a spiritual level. This reluctance may be seen as comparable to that among some Bahá'ís in the United States to embrace racial integration. A number of Western Bahá'í visitors commented on the exceptional situation of women in Mandalay.

p. 36: "passage . . . in the Tarazat"—A more recent translation of this passage is: "Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it." (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh.* Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978, p. 37)

p. 36: "M. D———, of Paris"—This is Hippolyte Dreyfus, an early member of the Bahá'í community in Paris, and an orientalist who translated various Bahá'í works into French.

p. 44: "our photograph was taken"—For a detail from this photograph see the frontispiece. The full photo is reproduced facing p. 44.

p. 46: "his victoria"—This is a light, four-wheeled carriage the hood of which can be folded down in suitable weather.