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The *Sufi Quarterly* is fortunate in having secured an unusually comprehensive account of the inspiration and ideals upon which Baha'ism is built up, from one whose long connection with the Baha'i Movement has peculiarly fitted her to present the whole subject in a proper light. Lady Blomfield, as the hostess of the late Baha'i leader, Sir 'Abdu'l-Baha 'Abbas, during his visits to London, and through her personal acquaintance with his principal friends and followers, has had exceptional opportunities for studying Baha'ism at first hand. Her article will be read with interest, not only by the Baha'is themselves, to whom some aspects of this fresh presentation of their story may be new, but also by all who have at heart the spiritual welfare of our discordant and material modern world.

In common with the Sufis, though without the inner cult, the Baha'i Movement works to bring nations and the followers of different religions into closer touch, and teaches the highest spiritual ideals. The founder of the Sufi Movement in the West, the late Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan, was a warm admirer of 'Abdu'l-Baha. He would often recall with pleasure a meeting with the Baha'i leader in Paris when the two discussed Eastern music and their respective experiences in Western lands. Perhaps the difference in their methods may best be seen from a part of their conversation then recorded.

“You are also preaching the brotherhood of nations?” asked 'Abdu'l-Baha. And Inayat Khan replied: “I am not preaching brotherhood, but sowing the seed of Touheed, the unity of God, that from the plant of Sufism fruits and flowers of brotherhood may spring up.”

THE EDITOR.

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THE BAHA'IS  
by  
SITARIH KHANUM (Lady Blomfield)

The purpose of this article is to give a brief sketch of the Baha'i Movement, in the course of which it is hoped to suggest something of the atmosphere of that spirit of love and self-sacrifice by which it is animated.

To this end also will be brought together a few of the impressions, as far as possible in their own words, made upon certain personalities of the Western world, whether by their coming into personal touch with Baha'u'llah himself, or through investigations in Persia. To these may be added the remark of the revered Master of Balliol College, Oxford — Dr. Benjamin Jowett — to a fellow-professor, that he was

deeply interested in the Baha'i Movement. "This," he said, "is the greatest Light that has come into the world since Jesus Christ . . . . Never let it out of your sight. It is too great and too near for this generation to comprehend. The future alone can reveal its import."

#### THE BAB

Let us glance for a moment at the earlier scenes of this drama, of which the prologue stretches far back into the centuries that are past.

In Shiraz, a city of Persia, was born in A.D. 1819 a child who was named 'Ali Muhammad. As he grew from childhood he became more and more "renowned for his piety and virtue, his courtesy of manner, and the

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beauty of his person." He spent his youth in the study of the Holy Writings, and became remarkable for his knowledge of their spiritual significance.

In the year 1844, this young man declared his mission, calling men to repentance. Soon after, he proclaimed himself the Forerunner of the "Great Prophet" who had been expected for centuries. He assumed the title of *The Bab*, signifying *Gate* or *Door* (of Heaven and of Wisdom). "What he intended by the term *Bab*, was this, that he was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections, by whose will he moved, and to the bond of whose love he clung. *The Bab* was ever repeating and meditating on the qualities and attributes of that absent-yet-present, regarded-and-regarding Person of his. Thus he makes a mention of Him, whereof this is the purport: 'Though the ocean of woe rageth on every side, and the bolts of fate follow in quick succession, and the darkness of griefs and affliction invade soul and body, yet is my heart brightened by the remembrance of Thy countenance and my soul is as a rose-garden from the perfume of Thy nature.'"

He (*The Bab*) invited men to the work of "preparing His way" by freeing themselves from spiritual bondage. In many *Tablets*, and in the Book of *Bayán* (literally, *Revelation*) — as well as in his spoken word — *The Bab* exhorted his countrymen to return to the original purity of Religion, so that they might be ready to receive the "Great One: Him whom God should make manifest." Many enthusiastic hearers answered his call. The good news spread with wondrous swiftness. *The Bab* was hailed by great numbers "as the Dawn which should break upon a dark and perplexed world." The alarm of those mainly responsible for that darkness and perplexity was awakened; they feared the loss of their power, prestige, and pecuniary benefits. Instigated by these persons, *The Bab* was arrested, taken from prison to prison, and, after many mock trials, finally shot at Tabriz in 1850.

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After the execution of the "beautiful youth, with the shining face, who walked in a serene, sedate manner", the authorities determined to stamp out the movement. Then burst forth a violent storm of

persecution, in which tens of thousands of *The Bab's* followers were massacred. All classes were included; nobles and peasants, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children were martyred. Firm and steadfast in their faith, they suffered confiscation of their property and exile; they endured the most horrible mutilations; "they were tortured, not accepting deliverance"; they were faithful unto death, even the most violent and cruel that could be devised.

None was ever known to recant: "out of weakness they were made strong." "My life is of no importance," said a child of twelve years old, "but to insult the Holy One is impossible" — and the torturers carried out their ghastly threats. Verily "the Tree of Life was watered by the red blood of martyrs," for the remnant of those who were saved, steadfast as the martyred, and ready, if need be, to suffer the same fate, awaited the coming of "Him Whom God should make manifest", whose way had been prepared by *The Bab*. At what cost of "cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments, torments and early death", we may read in a narrative of the time, which describes with a direct simplicity the "Episode of the Bab", of *whom the world was not worthy*.

Of *The Bab* Professor Ross, of London University, has written: "His wonderful life needs no comment. If ever a life spoke for itself, it is *The Bab's*, with its simplicity, integrity, and unswerving devotion to the Truth that was born in him. He felt the Truth in him, and in the proclamation of that Truth, he moved neither hand nor foot to spare himself, but unflinchingly submitted to all manner of injustice and persecution, and finally to an ignominious death. His influence on his hearers penetrated deeper than their curiosity or their minds; it reached their hearts, and inspired them with a spirit of self-sacrifice, dedication, and devotion as remarkable and as admirable as his own."

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#### BAHA'U'LLAH (Jamál-i-Mubáarak)

Among the first to recognise the inspired source of the new doctrine of *The Bab* was a young and wealthy man of noble birth, Mirzá Husayn 'Ali Núri, allied to the royal family of Persia, and whose gentleness and philanthropy had won for him the title of *Father of the Poor*. Now he is revered by innumerable people as *Bahá'u'lláh*, signifying "The Splendour of the Glory of God."

During the reign of horror, after the death of *The Bab*, he was arrested, and, in spite of his powerful family influence, thrown into a dungeon, chained to five other disciples. In this state of torment he was kept for several months. He was then deprived of his property and estates, and with his family driven into exile. The hardships and privations suffered on this journey to Baghdád were doubly cruel, as the children were very young, and the snow was on the ground. A number of families of the faithful and persecuted followed him and soon grew to look upon him as their leader. The greatness of his personality began to attract numbers of cultivated and learned men, who, having discovered the whereabouts of the exiled band of Persians, journeyed to hear his teaching. His power and influence alarmed afresh his ever-vigilant enemies, who persuaded those in authority to summon him to Constantinople. Thence he was banished to Adrianople; but the sound of the Voice crying aloud the Message of Regeneration could not be silenced; its influence could not be stayed. Bahá'u'lláh's teaching had a more universal note than that of *The Báb*. Not only were religious perversions in Persian to be

reformed, but the whole world was to be united in one great bond of brotherhood, and peace and goodwill, under a universal code of love and honour — free from superstition, hatred and war. Then came a day when he proclaimed to his eldest son, Abbás Effendi, and a few intimate friends, that he was the “Promised One”, “He whom God should make manifest.”

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This was in 1863 — nineteen years after the proclamation of the mission of *The Bab*, and in accordance with his prophecy. In spite of all opposition, the sacred Message was persistently proclaimed — God, speaking again through His great Manifestation, would lead mankind to recognise the Sun of Truth shining at the core of all religions: for as “in the realm of Conscience, naught but the Ray of God’s Light can command, and on the throne of the heart none but the pervading power of the King of Kings should rule” — therefore all men, developing their spiritual nature, would make such progress in divine virtue, that they should become regenerate [sic] through love, and this renewal should gather every Nation together under the “Tent of Unity.”

Letters were sent to the crowned heads of Europe. “We trust that God will assist the Kings of the earth to illuminate and adorn the earth with the effulgent light of the Sun of Justice” — Bahá’u’lláh wrote; and he charged them to look upon themselves as trustees of God, and guardians, under His Rule, of their people; and he called upon these powerful ones of the world, as servants of the Most High Lord of Mercy, to put an end to the horrors of War.

Again he was exiled — this time to the far off Eastern fortress of ‘Akká, in the Holy Land. In this town he remained, persecuted, tormented, until he returned to God in 1892. From the “most great Prison”, he sent out his messages; and in his captivity he wrote laws for the spiritual guidance of the world of the future. “For, as nothing can prevent the radiance of the sun descending to give life to the gardens of earth, and no man prevent the fall of rain from heaven, so, no earthly power can prevent the fulfilment of the word of God.”

His long years of tedious banishment and imprisonment, sometimes in chains, sometimes in his own hired house, always surrounded by spies seeking excuses for renewed persecutions — all these tribulations he accepted with joy and a marvellous patient dignity. “My captivity is not my abasement: it is indeed a glory to me,” he

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said. He left to his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, henceforth ‘Abdú’l Baha (*The Servant of the Glory of God*), the mission of carrying his message into all the world.

Few persons of the Western world ever succeeded in obtaining the privilege of coming into the presence of Bahá’u’lláh.

Fortunately, Professor Edward Granville Browne of Cambridge, “after many disappointments and failures, attained the fulfilment of his hopes, in a manner surpassing his most sanguine expectations.”

I propose to quote his description of a memorable visit to Báji near Akká:

“So here at Báji was I installed as a guest, in the very midst of all that Bahá’ism accounts most noble and most holy; and here did I spend five most memorable days, during which I enjoyed unparalleled and unhopèd-for opportunities of holding intercourse with those who are the very fountain-heads of that mighty and wondrous spirit which works with invisible but ever-increasing force for the transformation and quickening of a people who slumber in a sleep like unto death. It was in truth a strange and moving experience, but one whereof I despair of conveying any save the feeblest impression. I might, indeed, strive to describe in greater detail the faces and forms which surrounded me, the conversations to which I was privileged to listen, the solemn melodious reading of the sacred books, the general sense of harmony and content which pervaded the place, and the fragrant shady gardens whither in the afternoon we sometimes repaired; but all this was as nought in comparison with the spiritual atmosphere with which I was encompassed . . . . . The spirit which pervades the Bahá’is is such that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all subjected to its influence. It may appal or attract: it cannot be ignored or disregarded. Let those who have not seen, disbelieve me if they will; but, should that spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an emotion which they are not likely to forget.

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“Of the culminating event of this my journey some few words at least must be said. During the morning of the day after my installation at Báji . . . I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two lapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called *táj* by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed, I can never forget though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one’s very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines of the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard seemed to belie.

“No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

“A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: ‘Praise be to God that thou hast attained! . . . Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile . . . We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment . . . That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled — what harm is there in this? . . . Yet so it shall be: these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the *Most Great Peace* shall come . . . Do

not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? . . . Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures

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more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family . . . Let not a man glory in this that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind . . .’

“Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words, which, besides many others, I heard from Bahá’u’lláh.

“Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion.

“My interview lasted altogether about twenty minutes, and during the latter part of it Bahá’u’lláh read a portion of an epistle (*lawh*) whereof the translation is as follows:

“He is God, exalted is His state, wisdom and utterance! The True One (glorious is His glory), for the shewing-forth of the gems of ideals from the mine of man, hath, in every age, sent a trusted one. The primary foundation of the faith of God and the religion of God is this, that they should not make diverse sects and various paths the cause and reason of hatred. These principles and laws and firm sure roads appear from one Dawning-place and shine from one Dayspring, and these diversities were out of regard for the requirements of the time, season, ages, and epochs. . . . Make firm the girdle of endeavour, that perchance religious strife and conflict may be removed from amongst the people of the world and be annulled.

“For love of God and His servants engage in this great and mighty matter. Religious hatred and rancour is a world-consuming fire, and the quenching thereof most arduous, unless the hand of Divine Might give men deliverance from this unfruitful calamity. Consider a war which happeneth between two states: both sides have foregone wealth and life: how many villages were beheld as though they were not! This precept is in the position of the light in the lamp of utterance.

“O people of the world, ye are all the fruit of one tree and

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the leaves of one branch. Walk with perfect charity, concord, affection, and agreement. I swear by the Sun of Truth, the light of agreement shall brighten and illumine the horizon. The all-knowing Truth hath been and is the witness to this saying. Endeavour to attain to this high supreme station which is the station of protection and preservation of mankind. This is the intent of the King of intentions, and this the hope of the Lord of hopes’.”

The utterances of Bahá'u'lláh are of two classes. In one class he writes or speaks simply as a man who has been charged by God with a message to his fellows, while again sometimes his words have the authority of the direct utterance of God Himself. Bahá'u'lláh writes in the *Book of Iqán*:

“There are two stations for the Suns rising from the Daysprings of Divinity. One is the station of Unity and condition of Oneness. ‘We make no distinction between any of them’ (*Quran*, S. 2). Thus it is said, ‘Verily, they who swear fealty unto thee, swear fealty unto God . . .’

“In this station, all are sent forth from the presence of that Ideal King and Eternal Essence . . .

“The other station is that of distinction, creation and human limitations. In this station for each one a temple is designated, a mission is indicated, a manifestation is decreed, and certain limitations are assigned. Each one is named by a certain name, characterized by a quality, and appointed to a new Cause and Law.

“In the station of Oneness and rank of Singleness, pure Sublimity, Divinity, Unity and absolute Deity have been and are ascribed to those Essences of Existence, because they are all seated upon the throne of the ‘Manifestation of God’ . . . that is, the appearance and the beauty of God is revealed by their beauty.

“But in the second station, which is that of distinction, separation, limitation and temporal condition and indication, they show forth absolute servitude, real need and utter lowliness: as it is said, ‘Verily, I am the servant of

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God’, and, ‘Verily, I am only a man like you’ (*Qur’an*, S. 41).

“If it be heard from the perfect Manifestations: ‘Verily, I am God’, it is true and without doubt; for . . . through their Manifestation, Attributes and Names, the Manifestation of God, the Attributes of God and the Name of God appear upon earth . . . Likewise if they say: ‘We are the servants of God’, this also is confirmed and evident, for outwardly they have appeared with the utmost degree of servitude. No one [else] hath the courage to appear in the world with that manner of servitude!

“Thus those Essences of Existence when submerged in the seas of Eternal Holiness and when ascending to the summits of the significances of the Ideal King, utter declarations of Unity and Deity. Were one to consider attentively, he will find that even in this state they witness in themselves the utmost humility and lowliness in presence of the Absolute Existence and Real Life as though accounting themselves utterly non-existent and deeming mention of themselves in that court as *polytheism* . . .

“Therefore, whatever they may say and claim, including Divinity, Deity, Prophethood, Messengership, Successorship, Imámat or Servitude, is true and without doubt.”

When Bahá'u'lláh speaks as a man, the station he claims for himself is that of utter humility, of “annihilation in God.” What distinguishes the “Manifestation”, in his human personality, from other men, is the completeness of his self-abnegation as well as the perfection of his powers. In all circumstances he is able to say, as did the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.”

Thus in his epistle to the Shah of Persia Bahá'u'lláh says: “I was asleep on My couch: the breaths of My Lord, the Merciful, passed over Me and awakened Me from my sleep; and commanded me to proclaim betwixt Earth and Heaven. This was not on my part but on His part, and to this bear witness the denizens of the realm of His power and His kingdom, and the dwellers in the cities of

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His Glory, and Himself, the True. I am not impatient of calamities in His way, nor of afflictions for His love and at His good pleasure — God hath made afflictions as a morning shower to His green pasture, and as a wick for His lamp whereby earth and heaven are illumined.” And again: “By God, though weariness should weaken Me and hunger should destroy Me, though My couch should be made of the hard rock and My associates of the beasts of the desert, I will not blench, but will be patient, as the resolute and determined are patient, in the strength of God, the King of Pre-existence, the Creator of the nations: and under all circumstances I give thanks unto God”.

In the *Hidden Words* Bahá'u'lláh speaks from the station of Divinity.

“O SON OF SPIRIT!

“My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty, heavenly, ancient, imperishable and everlasting.”

“O SON OF BEING!

“Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou love Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.”

“O SON OF SPIRIT!

“I have created thee rich; wherefore impoverish thyself? Noble I made thee; why dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of Knowledge I manifested thee; why seekest thou any one beside Me? Of the Clay of Love I moulded thee; why dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, Powerful, Mighty and Supreme.”

“O SON OF SPIRIT!

“Know verily that he who exhorts men to equity, and himself does injustice, is not of Me, even though he bear My Name.”

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Until 1908, sixteen years after the passing of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was himself confined in the fortress of Akká, where the system of watchful persecution was continued. Having endured a lifetime of exile and imprisonment, a “captive for the cause of God,” he was liberated, at the age of sixty-four, by the Young Turk Party. Now, at last, after forty long years, borne with the cheerfulness of high faith in his mission to succour the suffering sons of men, he was able to make plans for carrying out the charge laid upon him by Bahá’u’lláh. “That cry of Regeneration, raised behind prison walls, now echoes abroad in the hearts of men”, for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came and proclaimed the Message to the Western world!

“I waited forty years in prison to bring this Message to you; are you pleased to receive such a guest?” he said to those who awaited him in London.

Those who have had the privilege of knowing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Prison Fortress of Akká, during his days of captivity, and those who came into personal touch with him in London and Paris, were alike impressed with the great moral beauty of his character, and the indescribable spiritual dignity of his demeanour.

Always did he speak with authority, and not as the mere expounder, albeit a certain gentle courtesy was most conspicuous, and seemed to surround him with an atmosphere of loving-kindness, the benign influence of which was felt by all who came into his presence. Whether it were a great minister of State or an ecclesiastical dignitary, a busy toiler for his daily bread or a sorrow-burthened Princess, a famous artist or a learned barrister, a celebrated physician or a Christian Scientist, a woman suffragist or an Oxford Professor, a poor seamstress or a renowned writer, an

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inquiring journalist or an able man of science, none was either too great or too insignificant to receive of the bountiful warmth of his sympathetic consideration. He was marvellously energetic, and his presence brought a delightful, vivid gladness. “When a man turns his face to God, he finds sunshine everywhere; all men are his brethren”, he said to us one day. Never was he sad, save for others’ sorrows. One day, in Paris, he heard the news of the battle of Benghazi. “My heart is grieved:” — he looked very sorrowful as he spoke — “I wonder at the human cruelty which still exists in the world. There is nothing so heart-breaking as an outburst of men’s savagery. I charge you all that each one of you concentrate the thoughts of your hearts on Love and Unity; when a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of Peace. Do not think the Peace of the world an ideal impossible of attainment; nothing is impossible to the Divine Benevolence of God! Through this Power comes the success of the most colossal undertakings.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá with a serene aloofness counselled a detachment from personality [*sic*]. It is to be borne in mind that he himself claimed no title but ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá*, i.e. the servant of the Splendour of God, so that there can never be any controversy concerning his station. He called to all the friends of God in every region of the earth to arise and help him in the Service of Humanity, in the well-being of the world, and in the spreading of Divine love and kindness! He inspired the Baha’is (literally, *Friends of*

*God and Followers of the Light*) with an amazing enthusiasm for the cause of the Love of God. They hold that there is nothing else in this world worthy of their life's devotion. The service of the brotherhood of man is their inspiration — that all the children of God, our Father, out of every tribe and nation, should be gathered together in a Spiritual Unity, is their aim and high endeavour. To be zealously engaged in the working out of the Supreme Design, under the one Divine Architect of the Universe, is their joyful occupation. To serve as soldiers in the army of Love and

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Light, ever vanquishing the power of hatred and darkness on the battlefield of the world is their ambition. 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not suggest our leaving our own beloved form of Truth, but rather that we should strive to enlarge its horizon, free ourselves from the uncharitableness of narrowing prejudices and set our hearts and minds on the Divine work of bringing it into the Grand Unity.

He enjoined upon all an unvarying courtesy and kindness in every relation of life, however fraught with difficulty, reminding us that where soldiers of the world draw their swords, soldiers of God clasp each others' [sic] hands; that to be nominally a Christian is easy: to be a real Christian is hard; and that, whilst we must not neglect to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's", we must diligently "render unto God the things that are God's."

The "Followers of the Light" are at all times charged to be loyal adherents of all just and righteous governments, and to be law-abiding citizens, in whatever country they may dwell. They have no form of membership nor institutions to differentiate them outwardly from other people. The Cause asks only for the hearts of its followers. When the heart is in the work, giving and doing are privileges and not obligations.

Professor Edward Granville Browne thus describes 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "Soon after this, a sudden stir without announced the arrival of fresh visitors . . . one of whom . . . as I guessed from the first, by the extraordinary deference shewn to him by all present, was none other than Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son, 'Abbas Efendi. Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more. A tall strongly-built man holding himself straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad powerful forehead indicating a strong intellect combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk's, and strongly-marked but pleasing features: such was my first impression of 'Abbas Efendi, "the

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Master" (*Áká*) as he *par excellence* is called by the Bahá'is. Subsequent conversation with him served only to heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more ready of argument, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muhammadans, could, I should think, scarcely be found even amongst the eloquent, ready, and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and

esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father's followers. About the greatness of this man and his power no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt."

Mr. Horace Holley has also left on record an account, which is well worth reproduction, of his first meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at Thonon on the Lake of Geneva.

"Prepared in some measure for the meeting by the noble mountain scenery through which we had passed, we approached the hotel feeling ourselves strangely aloof from the tourist world. If I could but look upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá from a distance, I considered that I should fulfil a pilgrim's most earnest desire.

"Groups of people were walking quietly about under the trees . . . My wife pressed my arm . . . I looked up quickly . . . and saw a stately old man, robed in a cream-coloured gown, his white hair and beard shining in the sun.

"He displayed a beauty of stature, an inevitable harmony of attitude and dress I had never seen nor thought of in men. Without having ever visualized the "Master", I knew that this was he. I seemed to have turned into some most sensitive sense-organ, as if eyes and ears were not enough for this sublime impression. In every part of me I stood aware of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence . . . A glory, as it were, from the summits of human nature poured into me, and I was conscious of a most intense impulse to admire.

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"In 'Abdu'l-Bahá I felt the awful presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and, as my thoughts returned to activity, I realized that I had thus drawn as near as men now may to pure spirit and pure being . . . I had entered the Master's presence and become a servant of a higher will . . . Even my memory of that temporary change of being bears strange authority over me. I *know* what men can become . . .

"After what seemed a cycle of existence this state passed . . . and I advanced to accept 'Abdu'l-Bahá's hearty welcome . . .

"I yielded to a feeling of reverence which contained more than the solution of intellectual or moral problems. To look upon so wonderful a human being, to respond utterly to the charm of his presence — this brought me continual happiness . . . The tribute which poets have offered our human nature, in its noblest manifestation, came naturally to mind as I watched his gestures and listened to his stately, rhythmic speech . . . Patriarchal, majestic, strong, yet infinitely kind, he appeared like some just king, that very moment descended from his throne to mingle with a devoted people . . . 'Abdu'l-Bahá, even more impressive walking than seated, led the way . . . Our party included some Orientals. I could not help remarking the bearing of these splendid men . . . All were natives of countries in which Bahá'ism has not only been a capital offence in the eyes of the law, but the object of constant popular hatred and persecution; yet not one, by the slightest trace of weariness or bitterness showed the effect of hardship and wrong upon the soul. Toward 'Abdu'l-Bahá their attitude was beautifully reverent. It was the relationship of disciple to master . . . The dinner was throughout cheerful and animated. 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered questions and made frequent observations on religion in the West. He laughed heartily

from time to time — indeed, the idea of asceticism or useless misery of any kind cannot attach itself to this fully-developed personality.”

Finally, it may be of interest to add an extract from a talk recorded by Mirza Valiyyu'llah Khan Varga. “My

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father,” said Valiyyu'llah Khan, “was much with Bahá'u'llah. One night Bahá'u'llah, as he strode back and forth in his room, said to my father:

“‘At stated periods souls are sent to Earth by the Mighty God with what we call *the power of the Great Ether*. And those who possess this power can do anything: they have ALL power.’

“‘Even this walk of mine’, said Bahá'u'llah, ‘has an effect in the world. Jesus Christ had this power. The people thought Him a poor young man whom they had crucified; but He possessed *the power of the Great Ether*; therefore he could not remain underground. This ethereal power rose and quickened the world. And now look to the Master, for this power is his!’”

“Bahá'u'llah”, added Valiyyu'llah Khan, “taught my father much about Agha. AGHA (*Master*) you know, is one of the titles of ‘Abdu'l Bahá, and *The Greatest Mystery of God* is another, and *The Greatest Branch* is still another. By all these we call him in Persia.

“*The Blessed Perfection*, Bahá'u'llah, revealed the station of ‘Abdu'l Bahá to my father. And my father wrote many poems to the Master, though the Master would scold him and say, ‘You must not write such things to me!’ But the heart of my father would not keep quiet. One [*sic*] one occasion he wrote:

*O Dawning-Place of the Beauty of God!  
I know Thee!*

*Though Thou wrappes Thyself in ten thousand veils,  
I know Thee!*

*Though Thou shouldst wear the tatters of a beggar,  
Still would I know Thee!”*

Lord Curzon of Kedleston, in his *Persia* (published in 1892), wrote of the Baha'i Movement with deep appreciation. “Beauty”, he says, “and the female sex also lent their consecration to the new creed, and the heroism of the

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lovely but ill-fated poetess of Kasvin, Zerín-Taj (*Crown of Gold*) or Kurrat-el-Ain (*Solace of the Eyes*), who, throwing off the veil, carried the missionary torch far and wide, is one of the most affecting episodes

in modern history . . . The lowest estimate places the present number of Baha'is in Persia at half a million. I am disposed to think, from conversations with persons well-qualified to judge, that the total is nearer one million. They are to be found in every walk of life, from the ministers and nobles of the Court to the scavenger or the groom, not the least arena in their activity being the Mussulman priesthood itself. It will have been noticed that the movement was initiated by Seyids, Hajis, and Mullahs, *i.e.* persons who, either by descent, from pious inclination, or by profession, were intimately concerned with the Mohammedan creed. If one conclusion more than another has been forced upon our notice by the retrospect in which I have indulged, it is that a sublime and murmuring devotion has been inculcated by this new faith, whatever it may be . . . Tales of magnificent heroism illumine the bloodstained pages of Babi and Baha'i history. Ignorant and unlettered as many of its votaries are, and have been, they are yet prepared to die for their religion, and fires of Smithfield did not kindle a nobler courage than has met and defied the more refined torture-mongers of Teheran. Of no small account, then, must be the tenets of a creed that can awaken in its followers so rare and beautiful a spirit of self-sacrifice."

Mr. Bernard Temple, also, has given some impressions of the Baha'is in a lecture before the Royal Society of Arts in London (*in May, 1910*) . . . "I believe that events are shaping in Asia which may end in reconstructing the whole fabric of present-day internationalism, and add a chapter to the world's history as dramatic and momentous as any that has been written. The Baha'i Movement arose in Persia . . . The number of Baha'is in the world is now stated to exceed two millions [*sic*]. Not less than one fifth of the population of Persia has embraced Baha'ism. In Turkey, Egypt, North India, and elsewhere Baha'is are

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becoming numerous — even among the Sikhs, the Buddhists, Taoists, Shintoists, and the Persian Jews. Many Parsees have become Baha'is, and their teaching has been adopted in Russia, Germany, France, the United States, and England. The number of Baha'is in London is appreciable, and smaller circles exist elsewhere . . . In its essential character it is not so much a religion as a religious movement . . . Therein lies its force, promise, and historical momentousness. There has arisen . . . thanks to the freshness and fineness of Persian thought, a regenerative influence of almost incalculable energy."

On November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1921, 'Abdu'l Bahá passed away at Haifa, and something of the loss felt by his followers may be gathered from a letter written then to his family by a gentleman of Arabia, who extolled the Master in the terms of Eastern enthusiasm:

*If the trees of all the woods, gardens, and forests of the world were made into pens;  
Were the waters of all the rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans of Earth converted into ink;  
Were all the mountains, hills, and plains rolled out into one mighty scroll;  
And were the whole human race, from the beginning of time, to write and write and write — yet would they fail  
in setting forth the majesty of Thy service to Humanity.*

*Therefore, O 'Abdu'l Bahá, Servant of the living God, we say*

NOTHING.

By the will of 'Abdu'l Bahá his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, still at Balliol College, Oxford, when his grandfather passed away, was appointed to the position of "Guardian

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of the Cause of God". His tasks and responsibilities are many and onerous. Baha'i Assemblies are now formed in almost every country of the world; their correspondence, dealing with the manifold affairs of the Cause, receives his untiring attention: while the translation of the Baha'i *Tablets* and *Laws* is an immense undertaking. Of these, probably not more than a third have been done into Western tongues, but this work, as well as the rest, is felt by the Baha'is to be in excellent and worthy hands. May God prosper the Cause!