

Introduction

to

A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb

E. G. Browne *

This book is the history of a proscribed and persecuted sect written by one of themselves. After suffering in silence for nigh upon half a century, they at length find voice to tell their tale and offer their apology. Of this voice I am the interpreter.

So many Persian works of universally acknowledged and incontrovertible merit remain unpublished, not only in Europe but in the East, that one who offers to the public as the result of his study and labour the translation and text of a quite recent compilation, whereof the authorship must remain unknown, and which must therefore rely solely on whatever intrinsic interest and merit it may possess, may reasonably be expected to state the considerations which have led him to select for publication such a work.

This book is, as I have said, recent in composition; for, as appears from a passage which will be found on p. 67,¹ it was written probably during the year 1886. It is also anonymous. This could not well be otherwise; for what Persian could, with ordinary prudence, acknowledge a work written in defence of a faith whereof the name is scarce mentioned in Persia without fear and trembling? So that these two things, which some might incline to account grave defects in the book, and reasons against its publi-

* See link to full book at [bahai-library.com/browne travellers narrative introduction](http://bahai-library.com/browne_travellers_narrative_introduction)

¹ *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*, CUP, p. 67; *A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 40.—M.W.T.

cation, are, in truth, inherent in its very nature and character. It is of quite modern origin, because it treats of a recent movement, of which the first beginnings are remembered by many still living; it is anonymous, because every promoter of that movement is, in the country which gave it birth, as a man "sitting beneath a sword suspended by a single hair, who knoweth not when it shall descend upon him, whether it shall descend instantly or after a while."¹

If, then, the subject treated of in this book be of sufficient interest and importance to merit careful study, and if the book itself, notwithstanding our ignorance of its authorship, can be shewn to proceed from a trustworthy source, I am sufficiently justified in having decided to edit and translate this "Traveller's Narrative".

Now it appears to me that the history of the Bábí movement must be interesting in different ways to others besides those who are directly engaged in the study of Persian. To the student of religious thought it will afford no little matter for reflection; for here he may contemplate such personalities as by lapse of time pass into heroes and demi-gods still unobscured by myth and fable; he may examine by the light of concurrent and independent testimony one of those strange outbursts of enthusiasm, faith, fervent devotion, and indomitable heroism—or fanaticism, if you will—which we are accustomed to associate with the earlier history of the human race; he may witness, in a word, the birth of a faith which may not impossibly win a place amidst the great religions of the world. To the ethnologist also it may yield food for thought as to the character of a people, who, stigmatized as they often have been as selfish, mercenary, avaricious, egotistical, sordid, and cowardly, are yet capable of exhibiting under the

¹ See p. 150 *infra*.

influence of a strong religious impulse a degree of devotion, disinterestedness, generosity, unselfishness, nobility, and courage which may be paralleled in history, but can scarcely be surpassed. To the politician, too, the matter is not devoid of importance; for what changes may not be effected in a country now reckoned almost as a cypher in the balance of national forces by a religion capable of evoking so mighty a spirit? Let those who know what Muḥammad made the Arabs, consider well what the Báb may yet make the Persians.

But to myself, and I believe to most others who have been or shall be brought to consider this matter, the paramount interest thereof lies in this, that here is something, whether wise or unwise, whether tending towards the amelioration of mankind or the reverse, which seemed to many hundreds, if not thousands, of our fellow-creatures worth suffering and dying for, and which, on this ground alone, must be accounted worthy of our most attentive study.

I have now to explain how this book came into my hands; what, so far as I have been able to learn, were the causes which led to its composition; and why (with certain reservations which will be presently specified) we are warranted in regarding it as a true and authentic account of the events which it relates. In order to make this explanation clear, it is necessary for me to describe briefly how my attention was first directed towards this subject; how my interest in it was kindled; how the means of investigating it were made available to me; and how the investigation, whereof this book is at present the final outcome, was conducted.

One day some seven years ago I was searching amongst the books in the University Library of Cambridge for fresh

materials for an essay on the Şúfí philosophy, in the study of which I was then chiefly engaged, when my eye was caught by the title of Count Gobineau's *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. I took down the book, glanced through it to discover whether or no it contained any account of the Şúfís, and, finding that a short chapter was devoted to them, brought it back with me to my rooms. My first superficial glance had also shewn me that a considerable portion of the book was taken up with an account of the Bábís, of which sect I had at that time no definite knowledge, save a general idea that they had been subjected to a most severe persecution.

The perusal of Gobineau's chapter on the Şúfís caused me, I must frankly confess, no small mortification; for I was an ardent admirer of these eloquent mystics, whose spirit has inspired so much of what is best and finest in Persian literature, and a rude shock was inflicted on my susceptibilities by such words as these:— "Le quiétisme, le beng et l'opium, l'ivrognerie la plus abjecte, voilà surtout ce qu'elle [le soufysme] a produit."¹

When, however, I turned from this mournful chapter to that portion of the book which treated of the Bábí movement, the case was altogether different. To anyone who has already read this masterpiece of historical composition, this most perfect presentation of accurate and critical research in the form of a narrative of thrilling and sustained interest, such as one may, indeed, hope to find in the drama or the romance, but can scarcely expect from the historian, it is needless to describe the effect which it produced on me. To anyone who has not read it, I can only say let him do so forthwith, if he is in any way interested in the history of the Bábís. Many new facts may be added to those recorded by Gobineau, and the history which he carried down to AD 1852 needs to be

¹ Quietism, bong and opium, the most abject drunkenness, this is above all what it [Sufism] has produced.—M.W.T.

supplemented by an appendix detailing the events of the last thirty-eight years, but the narrative of the first origin of Bábíism can hardly be told better than he has told it; certainly not in a style more eloquent nor in a manner more worthy of the subject.

Count Gobineau's book, then, effected in a certain sense a complete revolution in my ideas and projects. I had long ardently desired to visit Persia and above all Shíráz, and this desire was now greatly intensified. But whereas I had previously wished to see Shíráz because it was the home of Ḥáfiz and of Sa'dí, I now wished to see it because it was the birthplace of Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb. And, after Shíráz, not Ṭús and Nishápúr, but Zanján, Mázandarán, and Tabríz were the objects of my eager desire. My impatience, too, was greatly increased; for I reflected that although there must be many still living who had witnessed, or even taken part in, the events of which I was so anxious to discover every slightest detail, each year that passed would materially lessen their number, and render ever fainter the possibility of restoring the picture in its entirety. Besides this, I was eager to know more of the doctrines which could inspire such heroism, and to gain this knowledge, as I clearly perceived, there was but one satisfactory and effectual method. As Anquetil du Perron had succeeded in unlocking the secrets of the Zoroastrian religion by going amongst those who professed it, winning their confidence, and eventually, after infinite patience and endeavour, obtaining copies of their sacred books and a clue to their contents, so I, if I were to succeed in fathoming the mysteries of the Bábí faith, must go to the land of its origin, strive to become intimate with some of its votaries, and from these obtain the knowledge which I sought. Let no one suppose that I am so presumptuous as to institute any comparison between Anquetil du Perron

and myself. His task was one which only rare courage, perseverance, and genius could bring to a successful issue. He had to induce the suspicious, taciturn, and uncommunicative priests of an ancient national religion actuated by no desire of making proselytes to impart to him a secret doctrine and ritual hitherto most jealously guarded. And when at length the sacred books were gained, they were books written in a language so long dead that over it had formed a deposit of commentaries in a speed which had grown, flourished, and died since it had been a spoken tongue. Added to this, Anquetil's investigations were conducted amidst hardships, privations, and dangers of an exceptional kind. The Bábís, on the contrary, would, I was convinced, be eager to impart their doctrines to any enquirer on whose discretion and fidelity they could place reliance. Their sacred books, moreover, were either in Arabic, or in Persian, and, beyond a certain reserve and obscurity necessitated by prudential motives, and a peculiar terminology such as all sects, whether philosophical or religious, possess, I anticipated no particular difficulty in understanding them. One special obstacle, it was true, did exist in this case to the primary establishment of relations of intimacy. The Bábís were a proscribed sect, whereof every member was practically liable to outlawry and even death should he allow his creed to become known. It seemed probable enough, therefore, that I should at first have some difficulty in discovering them and putting myself into communication with them. Yet, could I but find means of spending a few months in Persia, it would be hard, I thought, if some lucky chance did not bring me in contact with some Bábí who would venture to take me into his confidence. And, if the first step could be won, I relied on the fair knowledge of colloquial Persian which I already possessed, the general acquaintance with the Bábí doctrines

which Gobineau's work had given me, the genuine admiration which I felt for the Báb and his apostles, and the close brotherhood which, according to all analogy, must probably exist within the sect, to effect the rest.

Meanwhile the first step was to get to Persia, and of this there seemed to be but little chance. Anquetil du Perron would have gone, chance or no chance, and either attained his object or perished in the search. I, not being fashioned in so heroic a mould, waited for the means. I made several fruitless attempts to obtain some appointment which would take me to the land of my quest, and finally, as a last resource, offered myself as a candidate for a medical post in the realms of the Nizám of Ḥaydarábád, on the chance that there I might find means of visiting Persia. Here again I was unsuccessful; and I was beginning to despair of attaining my object when suddenly and unexpectedly that thing befell me which is, as I believe, the greatest good- fortune which can fall to the lot of one eager to pursue a scientific enquiry from which he is debarred by lack of means. A fellowship became vacant at my college, and to this fellowship I was elected. This happened on May 30th, 1887. Five months later I had crossed the Turco-Persian frontier and was within three stages of Tabríz.

Of the disappointments and failures which I at first met with in my attempts to discover and communicate with the Bábís; of the fortunate chance which at length placed the clue in my hand; and of the fulfilment of my hopes in a manner surpassing my most sanguine expectations I have already spoken in another place.¹ Of these and other things incidental to my journey I may perhaps give a fuller account at some future time. Here it is

¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, for 1889, vol. xxi. (New Series), pp. 486-489, 495-496, 501, &c.

sufficient for me to state that I returned to England in October 1888, having visited Zanján, Tabríz, Shíráz, and Sheykh Ṭabarsí, the places most intimately associated with Bábí history; having lived on terms of intimacy for periods varying from a few days to many weeks with the principal Bábí at Iṣfahán, Shíráz, Yezd, and Kirmán; and bringing with me a number of Bábí books and writings, as well as journals wherein the gist of every important conversation with any member of the sect was carefully recorded.

So soon as I had established myself once more in the college which four years' absence from Cambridge and a year's travelling in Persia had served to render yet more dear to me, I set to work to make a systematic examination of the materials collected during my journey. The *Persian Beyán*, the *Íṭḩkán*, the *Kitáb-i-Aḩdas*, the *Epistles to the Kings*, the *Táríḩ-i-Jadíd*, and a host of more or less important letters, memoranda, poems, and abstracts, were read, digested, and indexed; and the outcome of this and my previous labour, together with a brief account of my journey, was laid before the public in two articles, comprising in all 170 pages, of which the first appeared in July, the second in October 1889, in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. To these articles I shall continually have occasion to refer in the course of this work, and, for the sake of brevity, I shall henceforth generally denote them as "B. i" and "B. ii".

The preparation of these articles, in conjunction with other work, kept me occupied till the autumn of 1889, when, the main results of my investigations having been satisfactorily recorded, I was left at liberty to turn my attention to matters of detail. It appeared to me extremely desirable that texts or translations of the chief Bábí works should be published *in extenso*; the only question was which to begin with. Inasmuch as it seemed likely that

the historical aspects of the movement would prove more generally interesting than its doctrinal aspects, I finally determined to publish first the text and translation of the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd*,¹ and this determination was approved by several of my friends and correspondents whose knowledge entitled them to speak with authority. This text and translation I accordingly began to prepare; and the former was completely copied out for the printer (awaiting only collation with the British Museum text),² while the latter was in an advanced stage of progress, when circumstances, immediately to be detailed, occurred, which postponed the completion of that work, and substituted for it another, the present.

My researches amongst the Bábís in Persia had, at a comparatively early stage, revealed to me the fact that since Count Gobineau composed his work great changes had taken place in their organization and attitude. I had expected to find Mírzá Yaḥyá *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* ("Ḥazrat-i-Ezel" as Gobineau calls him) universally acknowledged by them as the Báb's successor and the sole head to whom they confessed allegiance. My surprise was great when I discovered that, so far from this being the case, the majority of the Bábís spoke only of *Behá* as their chief and prophet; asserted that the Báb was merely his herald

¹ Concerning the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* see Note A at end, pp. 192-197 *infra*.

² This collation has since been effected, and the variants offered by the British Museum MS. proved to be both numerous and important. Should the publication of the work be proceeded with, it would be necessary to collate also the defective MS. recently acquired by the St. Petersburg Library, the closing words of which occur on p. 235 of my MS. See note 1 at the foot of p.192 *infra*, and the forthcoming (sixth) vol. of Baron Rosen's *Collections Scientifiques*, p. 244.

and forerunner (those who had read the Gospels, and they were many, likened the Báb to John the Baptist and Behá to Christ); and either entirely ignored or strangely disparaged Mírzá Yaḥyá. It took me some time fully to grasp this new and unexpected position of affairs, and perhaps I should not have succeeded in doing so had it not been for the knowledge of the former state of things which I had obtained from Gobineau's work, and the acquaintance which I subsequently made in Kirmán with five or six persons who adhered to what I may call the "old dispensation" and regarded Mírzá Yaḥyá "*Şubḥ-i-Ezel*" as the legitimate and sole successor of the Báb.

To state briefly a long story, the case stands thus:—

- (1) Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb during his life chose from amongst his most faithful and most gifted disciples 18 persons called "Letters of the Living" ("*Ḥurúfát-i-Ḥayy*"), who, together with himself the "Point" (*Nuḳṭa*), constituted that sacred hierarchy of 19 called the "First Unity" (*Váhid-i-Avval*). Of these "Letters" I have not been able to obtain a complete list, and indeed it would appear that the whole hierarchy was never made known. Mírzá Yaḥyá *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* held the fourth place in this hierarchy, and, on the death of the "Point" and the two first "Letters", rose, by a natural process of promotion, to the position of chief of the sect.¹ Behá, whose proper name is Mírzá Ḥuseyn 'Alí of Núr, was also, according to Gobineau,² included in the "Unity". Gobineau has, however, mistaken the relationship which existed between him and Mírzá Yaḥyá. That the two are brothers (or rather half-brothers, born of the same father by different wives) is a fact established by convincing testimony³

¹ See note 1 on p. 95 *infra*.

² *Religions et Philosophies*, p. 277.

³ cf. pp. 56, note 2; 63, top; and 373.

- (2) Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb declared explicitly and repeatedly in all his works that the religion established by him and the books revealed to him were in no way final; that his followers must continually expect the advent of "Him whom God shall manifest", who would perfect and complete this religion; that, though "He whom God shall manifest" would not, it was hoped, delay his appearance for more than 1,511, or, at most, 2,001 years (these numbers being represented in cabbalistic fashion by the words *Ghiyáth* and *Mustagháth*), he might appear at any time; and that, whenever one should appear claiming to be "He whom God shall manifest", his very being, together with his power of revealing verses, would be his sufficient signs. All who believed in the Báb were solemnly warned not to reject one so characterized and making such a claim, and were commanded, in case of doubt, to incline towards belief rather than disbelief.
- (3) During the sojourn of the Bábí exiles at Adrianople, Behá (according to Nabíl in AD 1866–7) suddenly claimed to be "He whom God shall manifest", in proof of which he revealed sundry "signs" (*áyát*) in eloquent Arabic and Persian, wherein he summoned all the Bábís to acknowledge him as their supreme and sole chief and spiritual guide. Most of the Bábís eventually made this acknowledgement, vowed allegiance to Behá, and thereby became *Behá'ís*; some few refused to transfer their allegiance from Mírzá Yaḥyá *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* (who himself strenuously resisted Behá's claims, which he regarded in the light of an usurpation and a rebellion), and these were thenceforth known as *Ezelís*.

Thus did the great schism take place which divided the Bábís into two unequal parties; a large majority, of whose unbounded and almost incredible love and reverence the object is Behá; a small minority, whose eager gaze is

directed, not to Acre in Syria, but to Famagusta in Cyprus, where dwells the exiled chief whom they refuse to disavow. Needless is it to say how bitter is the animosity which subsists between the Behá'ís and the Ezelís. Amongst both factions I have found good men and faithful friends, and from the chiefs of both and their sons I have met with much kindness; wherefore I would for the present touch as lightly as may be on this painful matter, leaving my readers to draw their own conclusions from what is hereinafter set forth. The general nature of the arguments for and against either side will be found summarized at pp. 514 and 515 of my first and pp. 997–98 of my second article on the Bábís in the *J.R.A.S.*, to which I refer such of my readers as are curious to examine the matter more minutely. Of one thing there can, in my opinion, be but little doubt: the future (if Bábíism, as I most firmly believe, has a future) belongs to Behá and his successors and followers.

With most of the facts summarized above I became acquainted during my sojourn in Persia, but I was unable to learn for certain whether Mírzá Yaḥyá *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* was still alive, nor could I ascertain in what part of Cyprus he had fixed his residence. A dervish with whom I became acquainted in Kirmán told me that he had visited him, but could not remember the name of the town wherein he dwelt; and none of the Ezelís whom I saw could give me any more precise information. In my first paper on the Bábís in the *J.R.A.S.* (pp. 516–517) I was therefore compelled to confess my failure in all attempts to elucidate this point. At the same time I pointed out how much precious information might be gained from *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* if he were still alive, and how extremely desirable it was in the interests of science that this matter should be cleared up.

After the publication of my first, and during the preparation of my second paper, I began to institute enquiries on this point. My sister, who was then travelling in the East, succeeded in obtaining the first clue from Mr G. L. Houston, who was kind enough to procure for me definite proof that *Şubh-i-Ezel* was still alive and was residing with his family at Famagusta. Shortly after this, my friend Dr F. H. H. Guillemard, who had spent many months in Cyprus and had friends in all parts of the island, very obligingly wrote to Mr C. D. Cobham, Commissioner at Larnaca, and to Captain Young, Commissioner at Famagusta, asking them to obtain for me the fullest information possible relative to the Bábí exiles in Cyprus. I myself wrote at the same time, stating the nature of the information which I sought. Both Captain Young and Mr Cobham responded to my request with a kindness for which I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude; and so vigorously and energetically did they push their enquiries that I was soon in possession of all the chief facts relating to the Bábí exiles. Captain Young, indeed, spared no pains to clear up every point connected with the enquiry. The day after he received my letter he paid a visit to *Şubh-i-Ezel*; questioned him concerning his life, his adventures, and his doctrines; asked for information on sundry points mentioned in my paper; and forwarded to me a complete account of all that he had learned. Nor was this all; for he succeeded so well in winning *Şubh-i-Ezel's* confidence that with this first letter (dated July 28th, 1889) he was able to forward a MS. of one of the Báb's works, whereof, so far as I know, no copy had previously reached Europe. Through Captain Young I was able to address directly to *Şubh-i-Ezel* letters containing questions on numerous matters connected with the history, doctrine, and literature of the Bábís, to all of which letters I received most full and courteous replies.

Şubḥ-i-Ezel further sent me at different times several other MSS., a complete list of such of the Báb's works as had been in his own possession at Baghdad,¹ and a brief history of the Bábí movement written by himself, besides numerous letters, each one of which contained most precious information.

This correspondence, which opened out so rich a mine of new facts, was but in an early stage when my second paper on the Bábís was published in the *J.R.A.S.* for October 1889, but I was able to add to it an appendix (pp. 994-998) embodying the more important results of the enquiry undertaken by Captain Young, Mr Cobham, and Mr Houston. A fuller and more accurate account of *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* and the other Bábí exiles in Cyprus, based on the enquiries of the above-mentioned gentlemen, the examination of official documents, and the statements made to me by *Şubḥ-i-Ezel*, his sons, and others, will be found in Note W at the end of this book. It is therefore unnecessary for me to allude further to this correspondence at present.

While I was in Persia I had already formed the intention of visiting Acre and learning the doctrine of Behá from the fountain-head. From the moment when I discovered that *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* was still alive I further resolved to visit him also, for from repeated personal interviews I anticipated results which could not be obtained by a correspondence, however elaborate. I was also anxious for my own satisfaction to see those who since the Báb's death had been the leaders of the Bábí movement. Without this I felt that my researches would lack that completeness which I wished to give them. The motives which impelled me towards Acre and Famagusta were equally strong, but somewhat different. At the former place I expected to see

¹ See Note U at end.

the mainspring and fulcrum of a mighty force with the astonishing results of which I had become practically acquainted in Persia, and from which I believed (as I still believe) that results yet more wonderful might be expected in the future. At the latter place I hoped to converse with one whom the Báb had recognized as his immediate successor and vicegerent; one who had been personally acquainted with Mullá Huseyn of Bushraweyh, Mullá Sheykh 'Alí, Suleymán Khán, Kurratu'l-'Ayn, and, in short, almost all of those whose devoted lives and heroic deaths had first inspired my enthusiasm; one, moreover, who represented the spirit and tradition of the old Bábíism, which, in the hands of Behá, had already undergone important modifications, and, indeed, become almost a new religion. Various considerations decided me to visit Cyprus first, of which two only need be mentioned here:— *firstly*, it was practically certain that no obstacle to my seeing *Subh-i-Ezel* would arise, while it was by no means certain that I should be able to see Behá; *secondly*, the logical order of procedure was to begin with the investigation of the old order of things, and having completed this, to continue the examination of the new. I hoped, however, to make one journey suffice for the attainment of both objects; but, allowing for the time which must be consumed in actual travelling, it was clear that at least two months would be required for the enterprise. The Long Vacation was amply sufficient for the purpose, but the summer was the most unsuitable season for such a journey, and I therefore determined to petition the University for such extension of leave at Easter as would enable me to absent from England for two months. The University, ever ready to facilitate research of every kind, granted me permission to absent myself from Cambridge from March 4th till May 3rd, 1890, and accordingly,

leaving England on the date first mentioned, I landed at Larnaca in Cyprus on March 19th.

Captain Young and Mr Cobham, on becoming acquainted with my intention of visiting Cyprus, had, with that ready kindness and hospitality which, so far as my experience goes, are rarely lacking in Englishmen resident in the East, written to ask me to be their guest during such time as I might desire to remain in Famagusta or Larnaca, so that I was entirely relieved of all anxiety as to the possibility of finding a base of operations for my researches. Captain Young further counselled me, in case I wished to gain access to the official records of the Island Government, to obtain before leaving England such letters of recommendation as might ensure the attainment of this object. I accordingly applied for help in obtaining these to Major-General Sir Frederic Goldsmid, whose long residence in Persia and intimate knowledge of the Persian people and language had led him to take some interest in my communications on the subject of the Bábís to the Royal Asiatic Society. He spared no pains to further my plans, and introduced me to Sir Robert Biddulph, who very kindly gave me a letter to Sir Henry Bulwer, the Governor-General of Cyprus, asking him to allow me, so far as might be permissible or expedient, to inspect such official documents as might throw light on the object of my investigations.

In Larnaca I spent only one day, the shortness of the time at my disposal and my eagerness to see *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* compelling me with great reluctance to forego the pleasure which a more prolonged sojourn under Mr Cobham's hospitable roof would have afforded me. That day passed most pleasantly, for in my host I found not only an accomplished Oriental scholar and a traveller to whom few regions of the habitable globe were unknown, but a genial

friend and a warm sympathizer in my researches. Mr Cobham had studied Persian for some time with *Muṣḥkín-Ḳalam*, one of the Behá'í exiles sent with *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* to Cyprus,¹ and from him had learned much concerning the new religion. *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel*, however, he had not seen; for *Muṣḥkín-Ḳalam*, as was natural, had spoken only of Behá, and had entirely ignored the existence of a chief whose authority he disavowed.

On the following day (Thursday, March 20th, 1890) I bade farewell to Mr Cobham, and, after some six hours spent in a somewhat antiquated vehicle belonging to a loquacious Italian who had fought for Garibaldi, found myself at Famagusta, or rather its suburb Varoshia,² where I met with a most cordial welcome from Captain and Lady Evelyn Young. Captain Young at once sent a message to *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel's* son 'Abdu'l-'Alí (who keeps a shop in Varoshia) requesting him to come to the *ḳonák*.³ In a short time he appeared; and I was much struck by the refinement of his manner, the intelligence revealed by his countenance and conversation, and the courteousness of his address. Our conversation was conducted in Persian, which, though he had never been in Persia, he spoke as his mother-tongue. It was soon arranged that I should visit *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* on the following day at whatever time he should appoint.

Next morning we received a message to the effect that *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* was prepared to receive us as soon as we could come. At about 11 a.m., therefore, Captain Young drove me into the town, which is situated about a mile from the suburb of Varoshia. As I had not entered within the walls of Famagusta on the preceding day I now saw for the first time the massive fortifications, the multitu-

¹ Concerning *Muṣḥkín-Ḳalam* see B. i, p. 516; B. ii, pp. 994-995; and Note W at end.

² Varosha is the southern quarter of Famagusta.

³ Turkish "guest", or a meeting room of a hotel, etc.—M.W.T.

dinous churches (whereof the number, as is currently reported by the inhabitants, equals the number of days in the year), and the desolate neglected streets of that most interesting relic of the Middle Ages. After Captain Young had transacted some other business we proceeded to *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel's* abode, in the court-yard of which we were received by his sons 'Abdu'l-'Alí, Riṣvân-'Alí, 'Abdu'l-Waḥíd, and Takí'u'd-Dín, and an old Bábí of Zanján who had settled in the island so as to be near his master. Accompanied by these (with the exception of the last-mentioned) we ascended to an upper room, where a venerable and benevolent-looking old man of about sixty years of age, somewhat below the middle height, with ample forehead on which the traces of care and anxiety were apparent, clear searching blue eyes, and long grey beard, rose and advanced to meet us. Before that mild and dignified countenance I involuntarily bowed myself with unfeigned respect; for at length my long-cherished desire was fulfilled, and I stood face to face with Mírzá Yaḥyá *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* ("the Morning of Eternity"), the appointed successor of the Báb, the fourth "Letter" of the "First Unity."

This my first interview was necessarily short and somewhat formal, for I had yet to win the confidence of *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* and induce him little by little to speak without reserve of those things whereof I so earnestly desired to hear. In this, thanks to the confidence with which Captain Young's kindness had already inspired *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel*, and the very vivid picture of the chief actors in the Bábí movement, which, first derived from the perusal of Count Gobineau's work, had continued to glow and grow in my mind till it became almost as a part of my own personal experience, I was completely successful. During the fortnight which I spent at Famagusta I visited *Ṣubḥ-i-Ezel* daily, remaining

with him as a rule from two or three o'clock in the afternoon until sunset. Lack of space forbids me from describing in detail and consecutive order the conversations which took place on these occasions. Note-book and pencil in hand I sat before him day by day; and every evening I returned to Varoshia with a rich store of new facts, most of which will be found recorded in the notes wherewith I have striven to illustrate or check the statements advanced in the following pages. Apart from the delight inseparable from successful research my stay at Famagusta was a very pleasant one, for from every one with whom I came in contact, but most of all from Captain and Lady Evelyn Young, I met with a kindness which I can never forget. Besides my visits to *Şubh-i-Ezel* in the afternoon I often spent some portion of the morning with his son 'Abdu'l-'Alí, and we were sometimes joined by Rizván 'Alí, or by one or other of the few Ezelís who have settled in Famagusta. During these conversations I learned many new facts of greater or less importance. The reserve which had at first been apparent in *Şubh-i-Ezel* gradually disappeared, and at each successive interview I found him more communicative. Although our conversation was chiefly on religious topics, and the history, biography, doctrine, and literature of the Bábís, other matters were occasionally discussed. Of the Báb and his first apostles and followers, as of his own life and adventures, *Şubh-i-Ezel* would speak freely, but concerning the origin of the schism which for him had been attended with such disastrous results, and all pertaining to Behá and the Behá'ís, he was most reticent, so that, perceiving this subject to be distasteful, I refrained for the most part from alluding to it. During these conferences *Şubh-i-Ezel's* sons were always present, though they hardly spoke in the presence of their father, towards whom they observed the utmost deference and respect.

Tea was always served in the Persian fashion, but tobacco in all forms was conspicuous by its absence, the Ezelís, unlike the Behá'ís, following the injunctions of the Báb in this matter. In the course of each visit, or sometimes when I was leaving the house, *Subh-i-Ezel's* youngest son Takí'u'd-Dín, a pretty, graceful child about thirteen years of age, used to present me with a little bunch of roses or such other flowers as the modest garden attached to the house would afford. On my walk to and from Famagusta I was always accompanied by 'Abdu'l-'Alí and often by one of his brothers.

A few days after my arrival at Famagusta I wrote to Sir Henry Bulwer stating what was my object in desiring to examine the official records concerning the exiles which might be preserved at Nicosia, asking whether I might be permitted to do so, and forwarding the letter of recommendation given me by Sir Robert Biddulph. In response to my request Sir Henry Bulwer, having learnt that the shortness of my stay in the island made it difficult, if not impossible, for me to visit Nicosia, was kind enough to forward for my perusal all the more important papers bearing on the subject. All of these, therefore, I was able to examine at my leisure; and of all of them, with one exception, I received permission to make use. An abstract of the important facts and dates established by these documents will be found in Note W at the end of this book.

The fifth of April, which was the ultimate limit whereunto my stay in Cyphus could be protracted, unless I were prepared to postpone indefinitely my visit to Acre, came at last. On the morning of that day, therefore, having with great reluctance bade farewell to all my kind friends, I left Famagusta, and embarked the same afternoon at Larnaca

on the Messageries steamer *Gironde*. I passed a pleasant evening with a Turkish official and a Syrian who were the only other passengers besides myself, and early next morning awoke to find myself at Beyrout.

As I had now but two weeks at my disposal ere I must again turn my face homewards I was naturally anxious to proceed as soon as possible to Acre, especially as I learned that should I fail to find a steamer bound directly for that port, three days at least would be consumed by the journey thither. It was, however, necessary for me first to obtain permission from the Bábí head-quarters; for though I could without doubt proceed to Acre if I so pleased without consulting any one's inclination save my own, it was certain that unless my journey had previously received the sanction of Behá it would in all probability result in naught but failure and disappointment. Now there reside at Beyrout, Port Said, and Alexandria (by one of which places all desirous of proceeding to Acre by sea must of necessity pass) Bábís of consequence to whom all desirous of visiting Behá must in the first instance apply. Should such application prove successful, the applicant is informed that he may proceed on his journey, and receives such instruction, advice, and assistance as may be necessary. To the Bábí agent at Beyrout (whose name I do not feel myself at liberty to mention) I had a letter of recommendation from one of his relatives with whom I had become acquainted in Persia. The first thing which I did on my arrival was to send a messenger to discover his abode. The messenger shortly returned, saying that he had indeed succeeded in finding the place indicated, but that the agent was absent from Beyrout. This was a most serious blow to my hopes, for time was against me, and every day was of vital importance. There was nothing for it, however, but to make the best of the matter, and I therefore went in person to

the abode of the absent agent and presented myself to his deputy, who opened and attentively perused my letter of recommendation, and then informed me that his master was at Acre and was not expected back for ten days or a fortnight. In reply to my anxious enquiries as to how I had best proceed, he advised me to write a letter to his master explaining the state of the case, which letter, together with the letter of recommendation, he undertook to forward at once, as the post fortunately chanced to be leaving for Acre that very evening. I at once wrote as he directed, and then returned to my lodging with the depressing consciousness that at least five or six days must elapse ere I could receive an answer to my letter or start for Acre; that even if permission was granted (as no steamer appeared likely to be sailing) three more days would be spent in reaching my goal; and that consequently eight or nine days out of the fourteen still remaining to me would be wasted before I could even set foot in the land of my quest. Altogether I began to fear that the second part of my journey was likely to prove far less successful than the first.

Fortunately matters turned out much better than I expected. In the first place I made the acquaintance of Mr Eyres, the British Vice-Consul, whose kindness and hospitality did much to render my stay at Beyrout pleasant, and who, on learning that I wished to proceed to Acre, told me that he himself intended to start for Acre and Ḥaifá¹ on the following Friday (April 11th), and that I might if I pleased accompany him. In the second place it occurred to me that I might save two or three days' delay by telegraphing to Acre so soon as my letter must, in the natural course of things, have reached its destination, and requesting a telegram in reply to inform me whether I might proceed thither. On Wednesday, April 9th, therefore, I sent a telegram to this effect. On Thursday evening, returning

¹ Arabic Ḥayfá', Hebrew Hefa or Hepha, and English Haifa.—M.W.T.

after sunset to my hotel from a ride in the hills, I was met with the welcome news that a Persian had called twice to see me during the afternoon stating that he had important business which would not brook delay, and that he had left a note for me which I should find upstairs. From this note, hurriedly scribbled in pencil on a scrap of paper, I learned that permission had been granted, and that I was free to start as soon as I pleased.

On receiving this intelligence my first action was to verify it beyond all doubt by calling at once on the deputy of the absent agent, whom I fortunately found at home. He congratulated me warmly on the happy issue of my affairs, and handed over to me the original telegram. It was laconic in the extreme, containing, besides the address, two words only:— "*Yatawajjahu'l-musáfir*" ("Let the traveller approach"). He then informed me that as no steamer was starting for Acre I must of necessity proceed thither by land, and that the reason why he had been so anxious to communicate with me earlier was that the post left that day at sun-down and I might have accompanied it. I then told him of Mr Eyres' kind offer; which, as we agreed, was a most exceptional piece of good-fortune for me, inasmuch as he proposed to start on the following morning, and expected to reach Acre on April 13th.

After bidding farewell to the deputy-agent and thanking him for the effectual aid which he had rendered me, I visited Mr Eyres, and told him that I would accept his kind offer if I could obtain a horse and make the necessary arrangements for my journey on the following morning. He told me that he must start early, but that if I left Beyrout by mid-day I could easily overtake him at Sidon, where he would halt for the night; and he further placed at my disposal the services of one of his *ḳawwáses*¹ to assist me in my preparations.

¹ Qawwás, "armed guard".—M.W.T.

Next morning (Friday, 11th) I was astir early, for there was much to be done. With the help of my friend Jemálu'd-Dín Bey of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, and the active co-operation of the *ḵawwás* of the Consulate, all was at length satisfactorily arranged; and shortly after midday I found myself on a sturdy, good-looking, but somewhat indolent horse, with a *ḵhurjín* (pair of saddle-bags) containing the most indispensable of my effects behind me, plodding along a sandy road bordered with cactus in the direction of Sidon, where (the road being fortunately easy to follow) I arrived without mishap at sun-down.

To speak of the delights of that three days' journey, the beauty of the scenery, the purity and fragrance of the soft spring air, the pleasant mid-day halts by some rippling stream or in some balmy grove, and the hospitable receptions accorded to me as Mr Eyres' travelling companion by those in whose houses we alighted at Sidon, Tyre, and Acre, would be to wander further than is permissible from the subject in hand. Suffice it to say that, thanks to Mr Eyres' kindness in allowing me to accompany him, a journey, which, if performed in solitude, would have lost more than half its charm, was rendered enjoyable in the highest degree. The last day was perhaps the most delightful of all, and I was greatly astonished on entering the Acre plain to behold a wealth of beautiful gardens and fragrant orange-groves such as I had little expected to find in what Behá has stigmatized as "the most desolate of countries" (*akhrabu'l-bilád*).¹ I subsequently mentioned this feeling of surprise to the Bábís at Acre, who replied that had I seen it when Behá first came there nearly two and twenty years ago I should not have deemed the title misapplied, but that since he had dwelt there it had assumed this fair and comely aspect.

¹ "Place of ruined countries".—M.W.T.

We entered Acre towards sun-down on April 13th, and, wending our way through the fine bazaars, on the smooth stone pavement of which our horses' hoofs slipped as on ice, alighted at the house of a Christian merchant named Ibráhím Khúrí, who accorded to us the usual hospitable reception. That same evening I sent a note to the Bábí agent, which was brought back by the messenger unopened, with the disagreeable news that my mysterious correspondent had gone to Ḥaifá with Behá's eldest son 'Abbás Efendí.¹ This was most unwelcome information; for as Mr Eyres was leaving the next day for Ḥaifá, and I did not wish to trespass further on the hospitality of Ibráhím Khúrí, it was absolutely essential that I should obtain help from the Bábís in finding other quarters. Evidently there was nothing for it but to wait for the morrow and what it might bring forth.

Next morning I enquired if there was any representative of the absent agent who might be cognizant of his movements, and was conducted to a shop in the bazaar, where I found a tall handsome youth clothed entirely in white save for his red fez, from beneath which a mass of glossy black hair swept back behind his ears, at the lower level of which it terminated.² This youth, accosting me in Turkish, enquired first somewhat haughtily what might be my business. I answered him in Persian, whereat he appeared surprised; and, after hearing what I had to say, bade me follow him. He led me to a house situated near the seashore, at the door of which we were met by an old Persian

¹ 'Abbás Afandí adopted the name 'Abdu'l-Bahá after the death of Bahá'u'lláh.—M.W.T.

² Concerning the characteristic manner in which the Bábís arrange their hair, cf. B. i, pp. 499–500. The wearing of pure white garments was from the first another special feature of theirs. Thus we learn from the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* that the defenders of Sheykh Ṭabarsí used to issue forth to attack their foes clad in pure white raiment and crying out "*Yá Sáhibu'z-Zamán*" ("O Lord of the Age!").

with long grizzled hair and beard, whose scrutinizing gaze was rendered more rather than less formidable by an enormous pair of spectacles. This man, after conversing for a few moments with my guide in an under tone, led me into a large room devoid of all furniture save a sort of bench or divan which ran round its four sides. I had scarcely seated myself when another Persian, evidently superior in authority to the other two, entered and saluted me. He was a man of middle height and middle age, with a keen and not displeasing countenance, whereof the lower part was concealed by a short crisp beard. After bidding me reseate myself (for I had of course risen on his entrance) and ordering his servant (for such, I discovered, was the old man who had met me at the door) to give me a cup of coffee, he proceeded to subject me to a most minute cross-examination as to my nationality, my occupation, my travels in Persia, the objects of my present journey, and the like. My answers appeared to satisfy him; and when he had finished his questioning he asked me what I proposed to do. I told him that I would be guided entirely by his advice. He then asked me whether I would proceed to Ḥaifá, where I was certain to find the agent whom I sought with Behá's son 'Abbás Efendí. To this I replied that as I had but a few days at my disposal, and as Acre and not Ḥaifá was the goal of my journey, I would rather remain than depart. "In that case," said he, "I myself will go to Ḥaifá this afternoon and bring back word tomorrow what you must do. Meanwhile will you remain where you stayed last night till I return?" I answered that I would rather not trespass further on a hospitality extended to me solely as Mr Eyres' friend, and that if he could suggest any other lodging for that night I should be glad. I was not, I added, exacting in the matter of comfort, and would be quite content with a caravansary.

He reflected for a few moments and then said, "Very well. If that be your wish you can stay here. I myself shall be absent, but I will give instructions that you shall be looked after. And after all it is only for one night: tomorrow I shall return, and we will, if God please, find you better quarters. When the consul departs for Ḥaifá do you also leave the house where you are staying and bring your effects here." I then took my leave with many expressions of gratitude, and occupied myself during the remainder of the morning in packing my saddle-bags and making arrangements for the stabling of my horse during the time I expected to remain at Acre.

After lunch Mr Eyres departed for Ḥaifá, and I, quitting Ibráhím Khúrí's abode, found someone to carry my effects to the house which I had visited in the morning. Here I was received by a sharp-looking boy of about fourteen, who proved to be the son of my interlocutor of the morning, to whom also, as I subsequently discovered, the house which I had now entered belonged. I had expected to receive but the roughest accommodation, the resources of the house being in nowise revealed by the room on the ground-floor where I had been received in the morning. My experience of the hospitality of the Persians in general and the Bábís in particular, and the deceptive exteriors of Oriental houses, might, it is true, have led me to expect tolerable comfort, but could hardly have prepared me for the positive luxury which the thoughtful kindness of my host had provided. During the afternoon I was entertained by my host's son, who showed that admirable courtesy and *savoir faire* with which even quite young Persian boys are capable, in the absence of their elders, of receiving the stranger and doing the honours of the house. As it was Easter Monday the street outside was filled with Syrian Christians, who continued so long as daylight lasted to

express their joy in howls, gun-shots, and wild dances, at which we looked on in amazement from the window. A more remarkable and discordant expression of religious fervour it has never been my lot to witness. Towards the latter part of the afternoon my host's son, thinking, I suppose, that I needed further amusement, took me to see an itinerant Greek photographer who was temporarily established in a sort of cellar in the basement of the house. This Greek spoke French tolerably well, and seemed an honest, kindly fellow. He was very anxious to make out that I was a free-mason, and importuned me greatly to tell him the names of the pillars of Solomon's temple. Dim recollections of some book purporting to expose the secrets of that cult prompted me to seek escape from his pertinacity by suggesting "Boaz",¹ whereupon nothing would serve him but I must tell him the name of the other. As I had forgotten this, and begun to weary of the subject, I took my leave.

Towards evening I received another visitor, whose mien and bearing alike marked him as a person of consequence. He was a man of perhaps thirty or thirty-five years of age, with a face which called to one's mind the finest types of Iranian physiognomy preserved to us in the bas-reliefs of Persepolis, yet with something in it beyond this, which involuntarily called forth in my mind the thought, "What would not an artist desirous of painting a saint or an apostle give for such a model!" My visitor (who, as I afterwards discovered, was a son of Behá's deceased brother Músá) was clothed, save for the tall red fez which crowned his head, entirely in pure white; and everything about him, from his short well-trimmed beard and the masses of jet-black hair swept boldly back behind his ears, to the hem of his spotless garment, was characterized by the same scrupulous neatness. He saluted me very graciously, and

¹ Boaz and Jachin were two copper, brass or bronze pillars that stood on the porch of Solomon's Temple, the first Temple in Jerusalem. They are used as symbols in Freemasonry and sometimes in religious architecture.—M.W.T.

remained conversing with me all the evening. Shortly after supper he bade me good-night, saying that I must doubtless be fatigued with my journey. I was then conducted by my host's son and the old servant to the room where I had spent the afternoon, where, to my astonishment, I found that a bed provided with the most efficient mosquito-curtains and furnished with fair white sheets and soft mattress had been prepared for me. The arrangement of the mosquito-curtains (called by my new friends *námúsí*) was such as I had not previously seen, and, as it appeared to me perfect in simplicity and efficiency, I shall describe it for the benefit of other travellers. The *námúsí*, then, consists of what may most easily be described as a large box or small chamber of muslin, rectangular in shape, greater in length than in breadth, and furnished with a single funnel-shaped aperture in one of its sides. This muslin chamber is suspended by its corners by cords attached to the wall, and is entered through the funnel-shaped aperture, the mouth of which is encircled by a cord. The bed is laid inside, its component parts being introduced one by one. The occupant on entering draws tight the constricting cord, and is thereby completely cut off from the attacks of gnats, mosquitoes, and the like. The whole structure can, when not in use, be folded up into a very small compass.

I arose next morning (Tuesday, April 14th) after a most refreshing sleep, and was served with tea by the old man with the spectacles. Soon after this a sudden stir without announced the arrival of fresh visitors, and a moment after my companion of the previous evening entered the room accompanied by two other persons, one of whom proved to be the Bábí agent from Beyrout, while the other, as I guessed from the first by the extraordinary deference shewn to him by all present, was none other than Behá's eldest son 'Abbás

Efendí. 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 'Abbás Efendí, "the master" (*Áká*) as he *par excellence* is called by the Bábís. 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.

In this illustrious company did I partake of the mid-day meal. Soon after its conclusion 'Abbás Efendí and the others arose with a prefatory "*Bismi'lláh*", and signified to me that I should accompany them, which I did, without having any idea whither we were going. I observed, however, that the saddle-bags containing my effects were carried after us by one of those present; from which I concluded that I was not intended to remain in my present quarters. We left the house, traversed the bazaars, and quitted the town by its solitary gate. Outside this gate near the sea is a large shed which serves as a coffee-house, and here we seated ourselves, my companions evidently awaiting the arrival of something or somebody from a large

mansion half-hidden in a grove of trees situated about a mile or a mile and a half inland, towards which they continually directed their glances. While we were waiting thus, a weird-looking old man, who proved to be none other than the famous *Mushkín-Ḳalam*,¹ came and seated himself beside us. He told me that he had heard all about me from a relation of his at Iṣfahán (that same *dallál* who had been the means of my first introduction to the Bábí community),² and that he had been expecting to see me at Acre ever since that time.

Presently we discerned advancing towards us along the road from the mansion above mentioned three animals, one of which was ridden by a man. Thereupon we arose and went to meet them; and I soon found myself mounted on one of those fine white asses which, in my opinion, are of all quadrupeds the most comfortable to ride. A quarter of an hour later we alighted in front of the large mansion aforesaid, whereof the name, *Behjé* (Joy),³ is said to be a corruption (though, as the Bábís do not fail to point out, a very happy corruption) of *Bághcha* (which signifies a garden). I was almost immediately conducted into a large room on the ground-floor, where I was most cordially received by several persons whom I had not hitherto seen. Amongst these were two of Behá's younger sons, of whom one was apparently about twenty-five and the other about twenty-one years of age. Both were handsome and distinguished enough in appearance, and the expression of the younger was singularly sweet and winning. Besides these a very old man with light blue eyes and white beard, whose green turban proclaimed him a descendant of the Prophet, advanced to welcome me, saying, "We know not how we

¹ See B. i, p. 516, B. ii, p. 994, and Note W at the end of this book.

² See B. i, p. 487 *et seq.*

³ Arabic bahjí.—M.W.T.

should greet thee, whether we should salute thee with '*as-selámu 'aleykum*' or with '*Alláhu abhá.*'"¹ When I discovered that this venerable old man was not only one of the original companions of the Báb but his relative and comrade from earliest childhood, it may well be imagined with what eagerness I gazed upon him and listened to his every utterance.

So here at *Behjé* was I installed as a guest, in the very midst of all that Bábíism accounts most noble and most holy; and here did I spend five most memorable days, during which I enjoyed unparalleled and un hoped-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. Persian Muslims will tell you often that the Bábís bewitch or drug their guests so that these, impelled by a fascination which they cannot resist, become similarly affected with what the aforesaid Muslims regard as a strange and incomprehensible madness. Idle and absurd as this belief is, it yet rests on a basis of fact stronger than that which supports the greater part of what

¹ *i.e.* with the salutation ordinarily used by the Muhammadans, or with that peculiar to the Bábís.—Ed. *as-salámu 'alaykum* or *Alláh-u-Abhá.*—M.W.T.

they allege concerning this people. The spirit which pervades the Bábís 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.

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 *Behjé* one of Behá's younger sons entered the room where I was sitting and beckoned to me to follow him. I did so, and was conducted through passages and rooms at which I scarcely had time to glance to a spacious hall, paved, so far as I remember (for my mind was occupied with other thoughts) with a mosaic of marble. Before a curtain suspended from the wall of this great ante-chamber my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to 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 on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist 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 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 Behá. 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 Behá read a portion of that epistle (*lawh*) whereof the translation occupies the last paragraph on p. 70 and the greater part of p. 71 of this book.

During the five days spent at *Behjé* (Tuesday, April 15th to Sunday, April 20th), I was admitted to Behá's presence four times. These interviews always took place an hour or two before noon, and lasted from twenty minutes to half-an-hour. One of Behá's sons always accompanied me, and once Áká Mírzá Aká Ján (*Jenáb-i-Khádimu'lláh*)¹ the amanuensis (*kátib-i-áyát*) was also present. In their general features these interviews resembled the first, of which I have attempted to give a description. Besides this, one afternoon I saw Behá walking in one of the gardens which belong to him. He was surrounded by a little group of his chief followers. How the journey to and from the garden was accomplished I know not: probably under cover of the darkness of night.

At length the last day to which my departure could possibly be deferred if I were to reach Cambridge ere the expiration of my leave arrived. Loath as I was to go, there was no help for it; and reluctantly enough I declined the pressing invitations to prolong my stay which the kindness of my friends prompted them to utter. Finding that I was bent on departure, and that I could remain longer without running a great risk of breaking my promise, they ceased to try to dissuade me from going, and, with most considerate kindness, strove to make such arrangements for my return journey as might most conduce to my comfort. In spite of all my assurances that I could easily return by myself, it was settled that the Bábí agent of Beyrout should accompany me thither. I was very un-

¹ See B. i, p. 519; and pp. 355, n. 2, 358, and 360-362 *infra*.

willing to put him to such inconvenience, but was finally compelled to accede to this arrangement, which, of course, made the return journey far pleasanter than it would otherwise have been.

In the course of a conversation which took place soon after my arrival I had expressed a strong desire to become better acquainted with the later history of the Bábí movement, adding that the only history written in a friendly and sympathetic spirit which I had seen was the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd*, and that this only carried the narrative down to the year AD 1850. In reply I was told that a concise and authentic history carried down almost to the present day had been compiled;¹ and that same day this book, of which the text and translation are now published, was placed in my hands. I did not at first understand that this was a gift, for many books were lent to me to read in my room; and consequently I spent much time which, as the event turned out, might have been more profitably employed, in copying out what I deemed the more important passages of the work in question. When, at the moment of my departure, I offered to return the book, I was told that it was a gift which I might take with me in remembrance of my visit; whereat I rejoiced greatly. Besides this I received a fine MS. copy of the *Íkán* written by the same scribe, "*the Letter Zá*" [footnote: See Note Z at end.]; for I had mentioned incidentally that the copy of that work which I had obtained in Persia had unfortunately suffered damages which rendered many passages almost illegible.

At length the moment of departure came, and, after taking an affectionate farewell of my kind friends, I once

¹ For a fuller account of the circumstances which led to the compilation of this history see that portion of Note A which is devoted to the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* (pp. 194-195 *infra*.)

more turned my face towards Beyrout. I was accompanied by the Bábí agent; and a servant, who, left fatherless in childhood by one of the Bábí persecutions in Persia, had since remained in the household of Behá, went with us as far as Tyre. I have seldom seen one whose countenance and conversation revealed a more complete contentment with his lot. That night we slept in a caravansaray at Tyre. Next day the servant bade us farewell and turned back towards Acre, while we continued on our way, and shortly after sunset passed through the beautiful gardens which surround Sidon, that fairest and most fragrant of Syria's cities. Here we alighted at the house of a Bábí of Yezd, whose kindly hospitality formed a pleasant contrast to our somewhat dreary lodgings the previous night.

On the evening of the following day (Tuesday, April 22nd) we entered Beyrout, and halted for a while to rest and refresh ourselves with tea at the house of a Bábí of Baghdad which was situated in the outskirts of the town. This man had as a child gone with his father to Persia in the hope of seeing the Báb. This he was unable to do, the Báb being at the time confined in the fortress of Chihrík, but at Teherán he had seen Mullá Huseyn of Bushraweyh. I asked him what manner of man Mullá Huseyn was. "Lean and fragile to look at," he answered, "but keen and bright as the sword which never left his side. For the rest, he was not more than thirty or thirty-five years old, and his raiment was white."

Next day soon after sun-down, the last farewells said, and the precious MSS. carefully concealed about me, I was borne swiftly out of Beyrout harbour by the Egyptian steamer *Rahmáníyya*. Eight days later, on Thursday, May 1st, I was back in Cambridge. So ended a most interesting, most successful, and most pleasant journey.

Shortly after my return to Cambridge I addressed a note to the Syndicate of the University Press, stating in brief outline the course and results of the investigations which had occupied me during the last three years, and my desire to place before the world some portion of these results by publishing the text and translation of one or other of the two Bábí histories which I had obtained. Of these two histories I briefly discussed the respective merits, adding that, although the text of the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* only awaited collation with the British Museum MS., while the translation thereof was far advanced towards completion, this newer history, owing to its comparatively small bulk, could probably be got ready for publication quite as soon as the larger work, while the MS. of it which I had obtained, being accurate, well written, and, to the best of my knowledge, unique in Europe, might, with perfect propriety, be reproduced in *facsimile* by some process of photo-lithography. In reply to my application, I was presently informed that the Syndicate was prepared to accept and publish the smaller work so soon as it should be ready, while the expediency of publishing the larger *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* was deferred for future consideration. On learning the favourable result of my application I at once applied myself vigorously to the work of translation and annotation, and by the end of July 1890 the first proof-sheets were already before me. As it had been decided that the text should be reproduced by photo-lithography, I had no anxiety on that score; and the excellence of the *facsimile* produced in the workshops of the Cambridge Engraving Company under the careful supervision of Mr Dew-Smith of Trinity College, will, I am confident, more than reconcile the Persian scholar to the necessity of dealing with a lithographed instead of a printed text.

It remains for me to speak briefly of the peculiarities of this history both as regards tone and style. As to the former, the chief features which will strike the attentive reader are:—

- (1) The quite secondary importance accorded to the Báb, whose mission is throughout depicted as a mere preparation for the fuller and more perfect dispensation of Behá. In like manner the deeds and sufferings of the early apostles of Bábíism are passed over very lightly, and many of the most remarkable events of the older dispensation (such as the deaths of the 'Seven Martyrs',¹ and the great massacre at Teherán in 1852 which Renan² calls "un jour sans pareil peut-être dans l'histoire du monde")³ are almost or quite unnoticed. The martyrdoms of Mírzá Badí⁴ and the two Seyyids of Işfahán,⁵ which belong to the new dispensation, are, on the other hand, treated of very fully.
- (2) Mírzá Yahyá *Şubḥ-i-Ezel* is throughout depicted as a person of no consequence, enjoying for a while a merely nominal supremacy, bestowed upon him, not for any special merit or capacity, but out of regard for certain considerations of expediency.⁶ No opportunity is lost of disparaging both his courage and his judgement,⁷ and of contrasting him in these respects with Behá, who is everywhere described as the true and legitimate chief.
- (3) Towards the Sháh of Persia an extraordinarily temperate tone is observed, and in several places apologies are put forward for his justification, the blame for the cruelties inflicted on the Bábís being thrown either on his

¹ See Note B at end.

² *Les Apôtres*, p. 378. See also Note T at end.

³ "a day unparalleled perhaps in the history of the world".—M.W.T.

⁴ See pp. 102-106 *infra*.

⁵ See pp. 167-169 and 400 *et seq. infra*, and B. i, pp. 489-491.

⁶ cf. pp. 62-63 *infra*.

⁷ cf. pp. 51-52; 63-64; 89-90; and 93-101 *infra*.

ministers and courtiers, or on the Muhammadan doctors, who are repeatedly and strongly denounced.¹

- (4) The resistance opposed to the government by the earlier Bábís is deprecated even when evoked by the most wanton acts of aggression and cruelty,² the attempt on the *Sháh's* life in particular being alluded to with the utmost horror;³ and it is implied that, although the Báb's precepts were altogether those of peace, the stronger will and influence of Behá were needed to give them actual currency.⁴

The chief peculiarities presented by the style of this work are as follows:—

- (1) A remarkable terseness and concision rare in Persian.
- (2) An unusual preponderance of the Arabic element, and the frequent employment of many uncommon Arabic words.
- (3) An abundant use of the past participle in place of the past tense where we should expect the latter. A good instance of this peculiarity occurs in the first five lines of p. 3 of the text. Of these three peculiarities the second and third are noticed by Gobineau (*Religions at Philosophies*, p. 312) as characteristic of the Bábí style in general. He says:— "C'est un persan où il ne paraît presque que des mots arabes choisis parmi les plus relevés et les plus rares, et où se combinent les formes grammaticales des deux langues de manière à exercer singulièrement la sagacité et, il faut le dire aussi, la patience des lecteurs dévots et confiants. Suivant un usage, qui est du reste assez reçu dans les ouvrages philosophiques, les verbes persans employés se présentent presque toujours sous la⁵

¹ cf. pp. 20, 32–33, 34–35, 40–41, 52, and 104–106 *infra*.

² cf. p. 35 *infra*.

³ See pp. 49–51 *infra*.

⁴ cf. pp. 65–69 *infra*.

⁵ "It is a Persian in which almost nothing appears but Arabic words chosen from among the highest and rarest, and in which the grammatical forms of the two languages are combined in such a way as to exercise singularly sagacity and, it must also be said, patience of devout and confident readers. According to a custom, which is moreover fairly accepted in philosophical works, the Persian verbs used are almost always presented in the

forme concrète de participes passés, afin de ressembler autant que possible à des verbes arabes.”

- (4) A very noticeable tendency to omit the Persian auxiliary verb after Arabic participles, whether active or passive, and generally speaking to restrict the employment of the verb as much as possible. The following instances (and the like will be found almost on every page) will suffice to illustrate this feature:—

(On p. 2, first line):¹— چون این روایات مختلفه در سایر اوراق مذکور و بیانش سبب الخ — تطویل لهذا الخ
 and [since] the setting forth thereof [would be] the cause of prolixity, therefore”... etc.

(On p. 39, last line, and p. 40, first line):— باری ایران در این بحران علمای اعلام
 “Well, Persia [was] in this critical state and the learned doctors perplexed and anxious, when the late Prince Muḥammad Sháh died.”

(On p. 43, last line, and p. 44, first three lines):— تصور و افکارشان بقرار سابق و سلوك و رفتارشان بر حسب قدیم مطابق طریق وصول یاب نیز مسدود و آتش فتنه از هر
 “Their conceptions and ideas [were] after the former fashion, and their conduct and behaviour in correspondence with ancient usage. The way of approach to the Báb [was], moreover, closed, and the flame of trouble visibly blazing on every side.”

(cont.) concrete form of past participles, in order to resemble Arabic verbs as much as possible.”

¹ Page numbers are for the original text.—M.W.T.

(5) Two peculiar idioms common to all Bábí compositions remain to be noticed. The *first* of these is the continual use of چه که in the sense of “for”, to the almost complete exclusion of چراکه, زیرا, or the simple چه, which are commonly employed in other works. The *second* is the combination of the past and the present or the past and future tenses in general assertions (an idiom which is even more common in the writings of the Báb than in those of Behá). Of this usage the following instances may be cited from the present work:—

(At the bottom of p. 141):— چه که آن سلطان بی مثال لا زال مقتس از صعود و نزول ... بوده و خواهد بود. “for the Peerless King *hath been and will be* for everlasting Holy above ascent or descent.”

(In the sentence at the top of p. 142 which follows the above):— پس معنء نصرت — مجادله با نفس نبوده و نخواهد بود. اليوم اعتراض بر احدی و *neither hath been nor will be* interference with any one, nor strife with any person.”

The peculiarities of style affected by the Báb have for the most part received the sanction of Behá, and are copied with greater or less fidelity by the majority of Bábís, so that one familiar with them might often succeed in recognizing a letter or other document as of Bábí authorship.

It remains for me to say a few words as to the principles which have guided me in my own work, viz. the translation and notes. As regards the former, I have taken as my guide the canon laid down by the late Dr William Wright, whose

death, mourned by all as an irreparable loss, was to such as were like myself privileged to listen to his teaching and feel the genial influence of his constant and unvarying kindness and encouragement, the saddest of bereavements. This canon he states as follows (*Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, Cambridge, 1882, pp. vi-vii of the Preface):— “In my translation I have striven to be as literal as the difference between the two idioms will allow. My method is first to translate as closely as I can, and then to try if I can improve the form of expression in any way without the sacrifice of truthfulness to the original. I also endeavour to preserve a somewhat antiquated and Biblical style, as being peculiarly adapted to the rendering into English of Oriental works, whether poetical or historical. The Old Testament and the *Ḳorân*, which are, of course, in many ways strikingly similar in their diction, can both be easily made ridiculous by turning them into our modern vernacular, particularly if we vulgarize with malice prepense.” Now though I cannot flatter myself that I have succeeded in making my translation of this history very eloquent English, I can at least conscientiously declare that I have spared no pains to reproduce faithfully not only the thought but also the style and diction of my author. The desire to give a correct impression of the original has even led me to preserve the Persian idiom where a slight alteration would have improved the English. An instance of this occurs in the very first sentence on p. 1, where “on the lips” would undoubtedly have been better English than “on the tongues”. Throughout my translation I have unhesitatingly preferred fidelity to elegance; and, even if I have gone too far in this, I trust that at least the English reader will obtain a clearer idea of the peculiarities of the original than would otherwise have been possible. Words of constant recurrence have been, so far as possible, rendered

by the same English equivalent, which, according to the canon above referred to, often bears the meaning which it has in the Bible rather than that which is given to it in ordinary usage. Thus by "lawyers" (فقهاء)¹ are intended the expounders of the Sacred Books and of the Law therein contained, and by "doctors" (علماء)² those learned in theology and the kindred sciences.

As regards the notes with which I have endeavoured to elucidate, control, and amplify the text, they are of two kinds; foot-notes containing explanations necessary for the proper comprehension of the text, references, supplementary details or varying traditions of events recorded in the body of the work, brief notices of events intentionally or accidentally passed over, comments, and the like; and the final notes designated by capital letters, to which perhaps the term "Excursus" or "Appendix" might more fitly have been given. These latter have, I confess, grown to proportions far exceeding what I originally intended, for the printing of the translation was finished ere half of them was written, and ever as I wrote fresh scraps of information which I could not persuade myself to omit kept coming in. I cannot but feel that, partly in consequence of this, partly because of the very nature of my original plan, portions of my work will appear discursive, desultory, and disconnected, even if it be free (which I can scarcely hope) from contradictions and repetitions. But my aim and object has been chiefly to record, for the benefit of future historians, every fact which I have been able to learn, and every varying tradition which I have heard in Persia, Turkey, Syria, or Cyprus. In the case of divergent traditions I have, so far as was consistent with the safety of my informants, give the *isnád* or chain of authorities by which they reached me. When this could not be done, I have striven to give

¹ Faqíh, pl. fuqahá': legist, jurisprudent and theologian, jurist.—M.W.T.

² 'Álim, pl. 'ulamá'.—M.W.T.

the reader some means of forming an estimate of the character of my informant. The office of the chronicler and collector of traditions is, in comparison with that of the historian, a humble one; yet the labours of the former are indispensable to those of the latter, and must precede them. The immense superiority of Ṭabarí to all other Oriental historians lies, as Professor Nöldeke¹ observes, in this, that he was content to record the various traditions of diverse events which he learned from this one or that one without seeking prematurely to blend them into one harmonious narrative. Let the oldest traditions of any historical event once be gathered up, the credibility of their narrators being, as far as possible, determined, and the chronicle may without prejudice to itself await in patience, for centuries if need be, the magic touch of the true historian; but if once the old traditions be lost the loss can never be made good. Through a fortunate combination of circumstances unlikely to repeat itself I was placed in a singularly good position for gathering together Bábí traditions from sources many of which will in a few years be no longer available, and I was impatient to place on record the mass of information thus arduously acquired; so that now, as I write the last page of this work, I am conscious of a deep sense of relief and thankfulness that no obstacle has intervened to prevent the conclusion of my labours.

Of the bibliography of Bábíism a full account will be found in Note A at the end of the book, so that I need add nothing further on this subject. My first and second articles on the Bábís in the *J.R.A.S.* for 1889 (vol. xxi, new series, parts iii and iv) are, as already explained, respectively denoted throughout this work as "B. i", and "B. ii". When Gobineau is quoted, his work *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (2nd edition, Paris, 1866) is referred to, unless otherwise specified. Mirza

¹ Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) was a German Orientalist and scholar.—M.W.T.

Kazem-Beg's five articles on the Bábís in the *Journal Asiatique*, though all published in 1866, extend through two volumes of that periodical, each of which volumes has a separate pagination. For convenience and brevity, therefore, the first and second of these articles, included in vol. vii (*sixième série*) of the *Journal Asiatique*, are together denoted as "Kazem-Beg i", while the third, fourth, and fifth, contained in vol. viii, are called "Kazem-Beg ii". Any other works whereof the full titles are not given in the notes will be found described in detail in Note A.

Concerning the *facsimile* of the text some few words are necessary. Thanks to the careful supervision of Mr A. G. Dew-Smith of Trinity College, for whose sympathetic and cordial co-operation I desire to express my warm gratitude, this leaves little to be desired, reproducing faithfully the features of the original MS. In spite of all care, however, the reproduction of a letter or word here and there would in the first instance prove defective, while now and then points and dots not belonging to the original would creep in. Most of these defects have, I hope, been removed, every page having been subjected two or three times to a careful scrutiny. During this revision the original MS. was always before me, and only when it appeared that a defect observed in the proof already existed there has it been left untouched. In a word, so far as the text is concerned the object has been to reproduce, not to correct or emend. From this general rule, however, I have been compelled to deviate in certain special cases. Throughout the original MS. a somewhat erratic system of punctuation by means of red dots prevails. These red dots necessarily appeared as black dots in the *facsimile*. Now and then it happened that, owing to their situation, they came to simulate diacritical points, thus creating a confusion, ambiguity, or unsightliness which was foreign to the

original MS. In such cases I have considered myself justified in removing these marks of punctuation, but so far as possible they have been allowed to stand. The Persian title-page does not belong to the original, but was subsequently written at Acre by my request in black, and beautifully reproduced in colours by Mr Dew-Smith.

An investigation such as that whereof the course has been above detailed can be brought to a successful issue only by the co-operation and assistance of many persons, without whose kindly aid the desired information could not be obtained. To each and all of those to whose aid I am thus indebted I have striven, even at the risk of repetition, to express my indebtedness as occasion arose. It only remains for me to tender my most sincere thanks to such of my friends as have assisted me in the actual preparation of the work. In the tedious work of revising the proof-sheets I have received most efficient and valuable help from Mr R. A. Neil of this College. To the kindness and learning of Professor Robertson Smith, of Christ's College, and Mr A. A. Bevan, of Trinity College, I am indebted for many suggestions and corrections. To the rare generosity of Baron Victor Rosen of St Petersburg in allowing me to make full and free use of still unpublished work I have had occasion to refer repeatedly in the course of my notes. Lastly, I desire to express my gratitude to the Syndics of the University Press for that liberal assistance without which the publication of this work might have been indefinitely postponed.