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with the approval of Shoghi Effendi

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IN MEMORIAM

I.

THE UNITY OF EAST AND WEST

American Bahá'í Sacrifices Her Life in Service to Persian Believers.

MRS. KEITH RANSOM-KEHLER'S MISSION

THE death of Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler at Isfáhán, Persia, October 23, 1933, culminated a mission which constitutes one of the most poignant episodes in the current history of the Bahá'í Faith. The last year of this heroic believer's life, devoted to the high aim of securing from the Persian government a removal of the ban on entry and circulation of Bahá'í literature, as well as a final lifting of the heavy disabilities laid for so many years upon Persian Bahá'ís, may be likened to a wave whose concentrated force breaks upon a rocklike obstacle, then recedes to be gathered into the body of the sea. While the obstacle remains, the force has nor been spent in vain. In future years the effect of this valiant faith will be fully disclosed.

Mrs. Ransom-Kehler carried forward a mighty task on which the American Bahá'í community has exerted itself over a long period of time: the consolidation of the spiritual unity of the East and West in fulfillment of the universal principles revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. The chief obstacle to this unity has throughout the eighty-nine years of Bahá'í history consisted in the resistance made by Persia to the new conceptions of amity and fellowship created by Bahá'u'lláh, a notable expression of which was the work known as "The Mysterious Forces of Civilization" written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to inspire his fellow Persians with the true spirit of enlightenment and progress.

The present era of the Cause, dating from the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, has witnessed a rapid development of the relations between the Bahá'í communities of Persia and America. By 1921, however,

under 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance, a lasting foundation had already been laid in the cooperation extended by American Bahá'ís in the work of the Tarbiat School at Tíhrán, through donations for scholarships and also the important services rendered the School by Dr. Susan I. Moody, Miss Lillian Kappes, Dr. Clock, Dr. Genevieve Coy and Miss Elizabeth Stewart.

The Persian Bahá'ís, meanwhile, had made their own unique and eternal contribution to the American Bahá'í community through the visits of such influential Bahá'í teachers as Mirza Abu'l-Faql and Jinab-e-Fadel.

During 1925 an opportunity was afforded American believers to express their attitude of spiritual unity with their Persian co-workers by the transmission of funds for the relief of the believers afflicted by floods at Nariz. Since 1921, moreover, Dr. Genevieve Cay served for a term as teacher in the Tarbiat School, and her visit to Persia was followed by that of Miss Martha Root and Mrs. Siegfried Schopflocher.

In 1927 a fresh outbreak of persecutions led to the preparation of an appeal on the part of the American National Assembly to His Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi, copies of which were published and spread throughout the United States and Canada. Soon afterward a statement on the Cause prepared by the Assembly and addressed to leading Persian Moslems was translated into Persian by the Tíhrán Bahá'í community, and printed copies of this statement were sent to many hundreds of influential people in that country.

Again, early in 1932 the American Bahá'í Assembly addressed petitions to the Shah and his Prime Minister that the ban on entry



Keith Ransom-Kehler, a Hand of the Cause and first American Bahá'í martyr.

IN MEMORIAM

of Bahá'í literature be removed. This formal representation failing in its purpose, on **June 10, 1932**, the American National Spiritual Assembly addressed a **communication to His Majesty** requesting the recognition of **Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler** as its **representative** duly chosen and empowered to present in person its **renewed appeal**. This letter, sent to Mrs. Ransom-Kehler as her credentials for the important **mission** with which she had been entrusted at Shoghi **Effendi's** request, stated in part:

"Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler, an American citizen, a member of the Baha'i community of this country, and a distinguished student of the teachings and history of the Bahá'í Faith, can, with your Majesty's gracious permission, **amplify and** supplement the statements made by this Assembly in the written petition addressed to your Majesty under **date of January 12, 1932**.

"More **effectively** than in our written communication, this personal representative can make **clear** to your Majesty how widely spread throughout America, and **especially** among the Bahá'ís, is the appreciation of the **notable reforms** which have been made in Persia as the result of your Majesty's administration of affairs in that land. Mrs. Ransom-Kehler can likewise affirm for your Majesty the importance of the spiritual ties binding Persia and America through the **reverence of the** believers in both countries for the enlightened religious teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the extraordinary **effect** of these teachings in paying **high** tribute to the prophetic character of the mission of **Muhammad**, **overcoming** the prejudice and misunderstanding **prevalent** among Christians in opposition to **Islám** for more than one thousand years, and the **high moral value** Bahá'í religious teachings have had for Persia by inculcating **loyalty** to Government, **forbidding** sedition and upholding true ideals of education and humanitarian service.

"The appointment of a representative to journey to **Tíhrán** for the purpose of **presenting** in person the petition of this Assembly will make it evident to your Majesty how **profoundly** the American Bahá'ís are moved by their inability to communicate **fully** with their fellow-religionists in Persia by reason of the Postal regulations **still prohibiting** the

entry of Bahá'í books and magazines published in the United States and Canada."

It will be recalled that in Bahá'í News dated **October, 1932**, was **published** this reference to Mrs. **Ransom-Kehler** from a letter written to the National Spiritual Assembly by the Guardian's secretary: "Mrs. Keith **Ransom-Kehler** is now with us in Haifa and in a few **days** will start for Persia. She rendered wonderful services in both **Australia** and **India**, and Shoghi **Effendi** trusts that **SAP** will do the same in Persia."

On August 20, 1932, the following cablegram was received: "Mission successful. (Signed) Keith."

On September 14 the National Spiritual Assembly, rejoiced by this swift consummation, despatched a **cablegram** to the Court **Minister** at **Tíhrán** as follows:

"On behalf American Babb'is we express abiding gratitude for removal ban on entry Bahá'í literature into Persia. This noble **action** of His **Imperial** Majesty's Government has profoundly impressed Bahá'is of the United States and Canada **who** have already **felt strong** attachment to Bahá'u'lláh's native land. We **wish** to assure your **Highness** of our sympathy for his Imperial Majesty, our great interest in the progress and welfare of his Empire and our **desire** to assist in **enhancing** its prestige throughout the **world**." This message was brought to the attention of the **Persian Minister at Washington** in a letter dated October 21, 1932. A statement to the American press was also issued reporting that **Mrs. Ransom-Kehler** had received firm assurance from the **Court Minister** that the postal regulations under which Bahá'í literature had been confiscated would be **immediately** annulled.

Before taking up the events which destroyed this hope, it is interesting to learn of the impressive reception given Mrs. **Ransom-Kehler** by the Persian Bahá'is on her arrival in that land. In November, 1932, the **Spiritual Assembly of Haifa, Palestine**, issued a general letter **throughout** the Bahá'í world, from which the following **excerpts** are taken:

"Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler, the energetic and faithful Bahá'í teacher, has been the object of great enthusiasm and loving devotion on the part of the **Persian believers**.

. . . In Tabriz several meetings were held in the Hazirut-ul-Quds where large numbers of Bahá'ís, both men and women, had the pleasure of greeting the international Bahá'í teacher. From Tabriz she proceeded to Milan, accompanied by a group of believers. But before leaving Tabriz, the police authorities, apparently disturbed by the scenes of Bahá'í rejoicing, sent warning and forbade the believers to hold any meetings in honor of Mrs. Ransom-Kehler at Tabriz, and requested her to abandon her visit to Milan. But the Spiritual Assembly immediately sent a delegation to the authorities and upon assuring them that no demonstrations held by the Bahá'ís would disturb the public peace, permission was granted for her journey to Milan.

"A most thrilling meeting was held in Milan, where old and young believers witnessed in Mrs. Ransom-Kehler's visit the dawn of the fulfillment of the prophecy found more than once in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Persian Bahá'ís, that the day will come when 'brothers and sisters from the West will arrive and help you in promoting the Cause,'

"After proceeding to Sisan, Mianej, Azarbayejan and Qazwin, Mrs. Ransom-Kehler proceeded to Tíhrán. A reception committee, followed by a group of more than a hundred believers, met the guest at a garden about four miles from the city. Her entrance in Tíhrán was like the visit of a queen, amid the acclamations of thousands of rejoicing Bahá'ís. Never had Tíhrán so welcomed any guest from the West."

Mrs. Ransom-Kehler's own report of her successful interview with the Court Minister was written to the American National Spiritual Assembly on August 20, 1932, the brevity of the communication revealing the pressure of that physical weakness against which she struggled so gallantly to the end. "On August 15 I saw His Highness Taymur Tash and received from him the direct, unqualified assurance that Bahá'í literature would be admitted freely into Persia and permitted to circulate."

From other sources the American Assembly learned further details of this interview. "His Highness received the Bahá'í delegate kindly and listened with attention to her

appeal. He stated that the matter did not require her to seek audience with the Shah nor to send him the written petition. The former Ictter of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States has been received and given due attention. 'I hereby promise that the restrictions on the import of Bahá'í books will be removed.' Mrs. Ransom-Kehler thereupon asked whether she could cable America and inform the American Bahá'ís of this assurance. The Court Minister replied that she most assuredly could do so and that she must consider the matter as finally settled. Mrs. Ransom-Kehler then asked whether she might arrange to have her own Bahá'í books sent to her for use while in Persia, and the Minister said there was no reason why she might not do so."

It was not until the receipt of a letter from Mrs. Ransom-Kehler dated January 20, 1933, that the American Bahá'ís learned that the assurance given their representative by the Court Minister had not become fruitful in action. In that letter she stated that the Bahá'í books shipped to her from Beirut had been confiscated, and that she had written the Court Minister to acquaint him with this fact and renew her petition on behalf of the American Bahá'ís. This letter also conveyed the disturbing information that, during a visit to Azarbayejan, the Governor General had refused to receive her and moreover that police orders had been issued forcing the abandonment of meetings arranged in her honor by the local Bahá'ís.

Later, press dispatches from Persia reported that changes had been made in the office of Court Minister, making it clear that all of Mrs. Ransom-Kehler's work would have to be done over again.

Undiscouraged, Mrs. Ransom-Kehler immediately arranged an interview with the Secretary charged with American affairs at the Foreign Office. In a report of this conversation sent to the American Assembly, the following significant statement is quoted:

"He informed me that at the present time our Bahá'í literature could not circulate in Persia for three reasons. First, that it is contrary to the constitution of Persia to recognize any religion founded after Islám, and, since the Bahá'í religion cannot legally receive recognition, it follows that our liter-

ature **must** remain unrecognized. Second, that it is contrary to the constitution of Persia to permit the **circulation** of any literature **opposed** to Islám. Third, that the circulation of Bahá'í literature at this time might **cause grave internal** disorders that would **bring** much **suffering** to the Bahá'ís themselves."

This interview **was in fact** also reported to the Shah himself, in a letter which the valiant American Bahá'í addressed to him **on February 25, 1933**, in a **supreme** effort to fulfil her delicate and difficult mission. "In my report to America," she informed his Majesty, "I shall be constrained to **admit** that I must have misunderstood completely the purpose and intent of the interpreter, for exhaustive investigation reveals **no reference** in the Constitution of Persia to the status of religions founded **later** than Islám.

"**Since every Bahá'í** before he can so **designate** himself must accept: the validity of the Prophet Muhammad and display toward the Qur'án the same reverence as that shown by the **most** orthodox Muslim, and since this attitude is inculcated through Bahá'í literature, the point of excluding it because it is opposed to Islám will, I fear, be **incomprehensible**. . . . I shall await your Majesty's authority to submit the result of my conversation with the Foreign Office, herein set forth, to the proper Bahá'í **centers throughout** the world; for I **have** no desire, a second time, to find myself mistaken as to your Majesty's intention."

This appeal to the Shah receiving no reply, the National Spiritual Assembly in America, realizing that its report to the press stating that the **ban on entry** of Bahá'í literature into Persia had been removed was proved **untrue**, dispatched to its representative in Persia another **communication** to be presented to the Shah. **This communication** was dated March 27, 1933. A portion is **quoted**, as follows:

"Information has been received which leads us to believe that the permission granted in your Majesty's name by your Majesty's Minister of Court **some months ago removing** the ban on the **entrance of Bahá'í** literature into Persia has **now been** withdrawn.

"We trust that events will prove our present understanding of your Majesty's in-

attention to be **incorrect**. The recent gracious action of your Majesty in asserting the power of religious freedom and opening the **door** to the amenities of international communication customary in modern lands **was** by us **immediately** communicated to **all** leading newspapers in the United States and **Canada** together with an expression of our grateful recognition of your Majesty's **response to our** petition.

"This announcement to the press **was** considered by us of **extreme** importance in **view** of the fact that it is **among** American Bahá'ís that the love and **admiration** for Persia and its people is most pronounced. The effect of the Bahá'í teachings upon believers in all countries outside of Persia has for many years **been** to establish not only an attitude of spiritual respect for the **historic** greatness of Persia but also a **firm** and unyielding confidence in the **future** greatness and worldwide influence of the Persian people.

"The responsibility seems **now resting** upon us to inform the **press** that our previous communication, made in perfect good faith, **must** now be withdrawn.

"The **press** in America exercises such far-reaching influence that we have **ever** been **most** scrupulous and careful in authorizing **only the most** conservative and accurate statements. The American press has become aware that on account of the existence of Bahá'í communities in many lands the American National Spiritual **Assembly** is well informed and enjoys unusual sources of information. **Our** devotion to the spiritual character of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh makes it incumbent upon us to maintain our reputation with newspaper editors of unflinching sincerity and reliable **accuracy**.

"Our petition we entrust to our accredited representative, **Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler**, who, at our request, traveled to **Persia many months ago** in order to represent the Bahá'ís of the **United States and Canada** in our **appeal** to your Majesty and your Majesty's Government for a favorable and **final decision** in the matter of the entrance and circulation of Bahá'í literature."

Mrs. Ransom-Kehler **presented** the foregoing communication to the Shah in a letter dated **Tíhrán, April 23, 1933**. Meanwhile, on April 3, she **addressed his Majesty once**

again in a letter which pointed out her obligation to report the results of her mission in Persia, and with that letter enclosed a detailed summary of her interview with the Foreign Office.

Before the opening of the Annual Convention of American Bahá'ís on June 1, 1933, it had become clear to the National Spiritual Assembly that the matter had come to no favorable decision, and reports were received which indicated even a recurrence of the physical maltreatment of Persian Bahi'is. On advice of Shoghi Effendi the problem was accordingly laid before the assembled Convention delegates, with the result that the delegates unanimately pledged their support in the National Assembly's effort to alleviate these dire conditions.

In order to carry out the spirit of this action, the Assembly on July 10, 1933, sent personal representatives with a communication to present to the Persian Minister at Washington, thus opening a new phase in the progress of the matter.

Meanwhile, though her physical illness had increased, Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler, as afterward learned, had been continuing her efforts in Tíhrán. Thus, in a letter dated June 8, 1933, she once more addressed the Persian Shah, in a letter which stands as an expression of deep concern at the unfavorable conditions existing for the Persian Bahá'ís, with a most passionate and devoted resolve to leave no stone unturned in effort to change the official attitude. Some excerpts follow:

"A year ago this month I reached Persia as representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, having traveled halfway around the world to present a petition on their behalf to your gracious Majesty requesting the removal of the ban on entry and circulation of Bahá'í literature in Persia.

"This petition was framed because of the incalculable blessings which your Majesty's reign has bestowed upon Persia; because of the advancement, the liberation and the protection which, under the firm and spectacular power exhibited by your Majesty, have elevated this sacred land of ours to the forefront of progress and revival.

"Certainly it would have been folly to

have sent such a communication in any period preceding your Majesty's accession, for at that time ears were deaf to every plea of justice, and Persia had become the tragic plaything of wilful, corrupt and ruthless lords.

"But mindful of the great blessings which have flowed from your Majesty's enlightened rule, the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada felt that the time was now ripe, that the amazing accomplishments of your Majesty now favored the idea of consummating the complete emancipation of the Bahá'ís of Persia from the trammels and deprivations inherited from the dark past. . . .

"We must look not to Shah Abbas nor to Nadir Shah but to the distant past—to the days of Cyrus, Darius and Jamshed—for anything comparable to the accomplishments which in twelve brief years have characterized your Majesty's achievements. . . .

"These were the ideas we had in mind when petitioning your Majesty to remove this last barrier from the pathway of Bahá'í freedom and progress in Persia by according us the privilege of the press, an ordinary civil right in all but the most backward of countries.

"In fact, in the Minutes of the Twenty-Second Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations we find the statement (pages 41-42): 'Was it said that the Bahi'is were such a small minority in Iráq that there was no need to bother about them? It was the very fact that the minority was a small one that made it necessary for the authorities to safeguard its rights. It showed the weakness of the Iráqi Government; the power which an intolerant majority had over it—and this record has gone out not only to the fifty-six nations that comprise the League but to the whole world, carrying this reproach to the Irhqi Government for its treatment of the Bahá'ís.

"The Bahi'is of Persia are not a weak and helpless minority; we stand in numbers next to the State religion; but as the League report further says, 'The Bahá'ís are by their religion, tenets and character of an extremely conciliatory disposition.'

"For that reason they patiently endure whatever hardships are imposed upon them

by their governments, and for that same reason they are worthy of the utmost trust and confidence from those in authority. . . .

"The numerous communications . . . which I have had the honor of addressing to the Crown since my interview at the Foreign Office have had but one purpose: that of ascertaining in definite and dependable form whether or not the amazing and feeble statements given me there were really in accord with your Majesty's intent and desire."

however, are thousands of volumes that have been confiscated. Even a brief survey of any one of these will prove that Bahá'u'lláh lays down as fundamental, loyalty to one's government, and the sanctity and verity of Islám."

On that same day, moreover, the representative of the American Bahá'ís felt compelled to appeal once more to the Shah. "To my horror and grief I have just heard of the burning, on the part of your Majesty's officials in Kirmanshah, of the sacred photo-



Bahá'ís of Tíhrán bidding farewell to Keith Ransom-Kehler on her departure to Isfáhán.

To every Cabinet Minister and to the President of Parliament, Mrs. Ransom-Kehler sent on July 3, 1933, a letter containing the following statements:

"It would give me great pleasure to place in your hands portions of our Bahá'í literature in order to prove the great contribution that it has made to the advancement of Islám in countries unfriendly to its reception; but although Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian literature, all opposed to Islám, is permitted to circulate, our Bahá'í literature that upholds and converts to Islám is denied this privilege. Therefore I have nothing available to present to you.

"In the Post Offices and Customs of Persia,

graphs of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I am fully convinced that such a sacrilege has been committed without the knowledge of your Majesty, for it is fundamentally contrary to the policy of expansion, protection and tolerance that have characterized your Majesty's evident intent with regard to the advancement of Persia.

"It is because I am certain that such an infamy was perpetrated without the knowledge or consent of your Majesty that I am presenting this memorandum to acquaint your Majesty with these high-handed and abominable outrages committed by your Majesty's irresponsible servants. . . .

"Assuredly the most precious and sacred

thing in life to any man is his religious conviction. Without hesitation thousands of Bahá'ís have given their lives for their faith. That flame that once burned in Persia alone has now enkindled the world. The Bahá'ís as a body stand ready if necessary to die for the protection of their belief. We are willing to endure any degree of injustice and persecution ourselves but, when it comes to regarding with other than outraged sentiment a gratuitous indignity offered to that illustrious example of human perfection, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Baha'is of the world arise in the full strength of their solidarity to utter a vehement protest.

"In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives us this last instruction: 'Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good will and friendliness; that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá; that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancor may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the light of unity.'

"Is the one who uttered such words of peace and reconciliation worthy of suppression and desecration?"

"I now with the most intense fervor supplicate and implore your Majesty to put a final stop to these fanatical persecutions that disgrace in the eyes of men the annals of Persia's former rulers, by removing this ban against Bahá'í literature, that bids fair if it continues to involve the world in contempt for this sacred land."

The Minister of Education, replying in a letter dated "bitarikh 28—4—1312. No. 9880/4320" to the communication which Mrs. Ransom-Kehler sent to all members of the Cabinet, made this significant statement: "I would inform you that today all individuals and inhabitants of the country, whether Muhammadans or people of other nations, are resting in the cradle of tranquillity and security under the shadow of the power and grandeur of His Majesty Shahanshah Pahlavi, may our souls be sacrificed for him, and they benefit equally from the privilege of existing laws. But in the meantime new publications which are con-

sidered contrary to the official religion of the country or its political aspect can not be agreed to."

Meanwhile, as it became apparent that communications addressed to the ruler did not penetrate the official entourage and reach the Shah himself, the American Assembly, as already mentioned, applied to the Persian Minister at Washington. The letter dated July 10, 1933, was presented to the Minister by three representatives. It read, in part, as follows:

"Your Excellency: On October 21, 1932, the members of this American Bahá'í Assembly sent to the Persian Legation at Washington a copy of a cablegram which on September 14, 1932, had been dispatched to the Minister of the Court in Teherán.

"This communication was acknowledged by Mr. Y. Azodi, Charge d'Affaires, under date of October 22, 1932.

"In substance, the cablegram sent to the Court Minister on behalf of the American Bahá'ís expressed abiding gratitude for the decision to remove the ban on entry and circulation of Bahá'í literature in Persia.

"On March 27, 1933, as the result of unexpected information indicating that this decision had either been reversed or never made effective, we addressed a respectful petition to His Imperial Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi, expressing our profound hope that our understanding of the matter was incorrect and referring to the fact that the American Bahá'ís had informed the press that the ban had been removed, and in the event that this statement proved to be unfounded the Bahá'ís would be reluctantly obliged to make it clear to the press that Bahá'í literature is still prohibited from entry and circulation in Persia.

"This petition we forwarded to our personal representative in Teherán, Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler, a Bahá'í and American citizen, with the request that it be communicated to his Majesty on our behalf.

"To our astonishment and regret, during May, 1933, we learned that not only is the ban on literature still rigorously applied, but that Bahá'ís in Persia are even incurring physical maltreatment at the present time.

"These circumstances were considered by the delegates representing sixty American

cities **who** met in **Annual** Convention in the Foundation Hall of the Bahá'í House of Worship at Wilmette, Illinois, from June 1 to 4, 1933.

"It seems desirable to **inform** your **Excellency** that the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada adopted unanimously the **following resolution**:

'Resolved, that the delegates of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention representing **sixty** communities of the United States and Canada, realizing the burdens of **oppression** still laid upon their brethren of **Persia**, recommend and **urge** the **National Spiritual Assembly** to take **immediate** action to bring about the cessation of the reported maltreatment of our Bahá'í brethren, to secure the **entry** of Bahá'í literature and to restore the **constitutional** provision for **the printing and circulation of Bahá'í** literature within Persia;

'And be it further resolved, that the delegates pledge the **support** of the local Bahá'í communities to the **National Spiritual Assembly** in its effort to carry **out** the terms of **this appeal**.'

"In view of this action on the part of the **Annual** Convention, expressing the deep concern and heart-felt anxiety of all American Bahá'ís to assist in bringing about a final alleviation of all civil disabilities **still** suffered by our beloved brothers and co-workers in Persia, the **National Spiritual Assembly** has requested its chairman and secretary to call upon your Excellency and **respectfully** request your good **offices** in bringing our petition to the notice of the Persian Government.

"In discharging **this** grave responsibility, we respectfully point **out** to your **Excellency** the **unique** ties of sympathetic fellowship which have **long** united the Bahá'ís of America and Persia. For many years the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada **have** courageously upheld the **Prophethood** of Muhammad as one of **the** divine Messengers, in the face of the traditional antipathy and **indifference** of a predominantly **Christian** population. In publishing and distributing the literature of our Faith **we** are **actively** promoting **the** reality of Muhammad as well

as the **reality** of Jesus. By accepting Muhammad as a Prophet inspired with the same Holy Spirit as Jesus, **we** have entered into a spiritual **unity** with the Persian Bahá'ís without **parallel** in the history of the East or of **the** West. **We** state **with** all emphasis **that** apart from this spiritual bond of faith **in** the **one** God of **all** mankind, the relations of the various **peoples** and nations of the **world** are uncertain and replete with peril of war and economic **chaos**.

"After entertaining the hope that the ancient land of Persia had been granted the **high** privilege of a regime based upon fearless **justice**, the very foundation of civilization, **we** cannot but **deplore** the survival from the past of **indications** that free intercourse on the part of American **citizens with loyal citizens** of Persia on matters of **purely** spiritual interest is **prevented** by **regulations** imposed by Persian authorities.

"The Bahá'ís of America assert **very** frankly to your Excellency their unhappiness **because** of the fact that unfounded prejudice against the Bahá'ís of Persia, whether **emanating** from atheistic or from **ecclesiastical** sources, can in this day and age **find** sanction from authorities of the State. **Without** this sanction, active or passive, **it would be impossible** to forbid **the entry** and circulation of a sacred literature which one day will be recognized as the glory of Persia, while at **the** same time permitting the entry and circulation of **other** religious literature the essential purpose of which is to defame the founder of **Islam** and overthrow the very foundation of Persian culture and ideals. . . .

"**The outcome** of this representation **will, we** trust, enable the **National Spiritual Assembly** to inform the local Bahá'í communities that their determined desire to assist in removing the disabilities and **maltreatment** of their Persian brothers has been completely **realized**."

On July 26, 1933, the Assembly reported to Mrs. Ransom-Kehler a summary of actions **taken** by American Bahá'ís in the **matter** of conditions affecting the Persian believers, with the **request** that she communicate these facts and the attitude of the **American Bahá'ís**, to the officials of the Persian Government, and report the results, that the **Assembly** might **inform** the local American Bahá'í

communities whether their **Convention** resolution had borne fruit. The answer **came** in this message, cabled by **Mrs. Ransom-Kehler** on September 10: "Petition unanswered."

The grief and disappointment caused by this outcome of her **mission**, magnified by **exhaustion** resulting from self-sacrificing effort to meet every opportunity to visit and address Bahá'í gatherings in Persia, reduced Mrs. Ransom-Kehler's strength to such a degree that on **October 23, 1933**, while at **Isfáhán**, this consecrated follower of Bahá'u'lláh fell victim to small pox and succumbed within a few brief hours,

This grievous event was announced in *Bahá'í News* of November, 1933, as follows:

"On October 27, 1933, the Spiritual Assembly of **Tihrán**, Persia, cabled the startling news that Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler had passed into the spiritual Kingdom. With burning hearts the Persian Bahá'ís conveyed their grief at this mysterious culmination of our sister's special mission in the land of the birth of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

"The beloved Guardian on October 30 dispatched this message: 'Keith's precious life offered up in sacrifice to beloved Cause in Bahá'u'lláh's native land. On Persian soil, for Persia's sake, she encountered, challenged and fought the forces of darkness with high distinction, indomitable will, unswerving, exemplary loyalty. The mass of her helpless Persian brethren mourns the sudden loss of their valiant emancipator. American believers grateful and proud of the memory of their first and distinguished martyr. Sorrow stricken, I lament my earthly separation from an invaluable collaborator, an unfailing counsellor, an esteemed and faithful friend. I urge the Local Assemblies befittingly to organize memorial gatherings in memory of one whose international services entitled her to an eminent rank among the Hands of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.' (Signed) Shoghi.

"A message from the American Consul at **Tihrán**, communicated through the Secretary of State, brought the information that Keith had passed on at **Isfáhán** on October 23.

"With the approval of Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler's nearest relative, a message was cabled to the **Tihrán Assembly** asking that burial be arranged at **Isfáhán** under Bahá'í

auspices, and stating that the American Assembly will construct a permanent memorial.

"Shoghi Effendi, on November 3, sent this message: 'Instructed **Isfáhán Assembly** to inter Keith in the vicinity of the grave of **Sultanushushuada**, surnamed by Bahá'u'lláh "King of Martyrs,"'

"The detailed reports which our beloved sister has during the past year sent from **Tihrán**, to convey information on the result of her mission, as the representative of the American believers chosen by the Guardian, to secure from the Persian Government the lifting of the ban on entry of Bahá'í literature and also removal of the difficulties and hardships placed upon the Persian Bahá'ís, form one of the precious and important historical records of the Cause. A summary of these reports will be published in *Bahá'í News* next month.

"Local Spiritual Assemblies and groups are requested to arrange memorial meetings in accordance with the Guardian's wish."

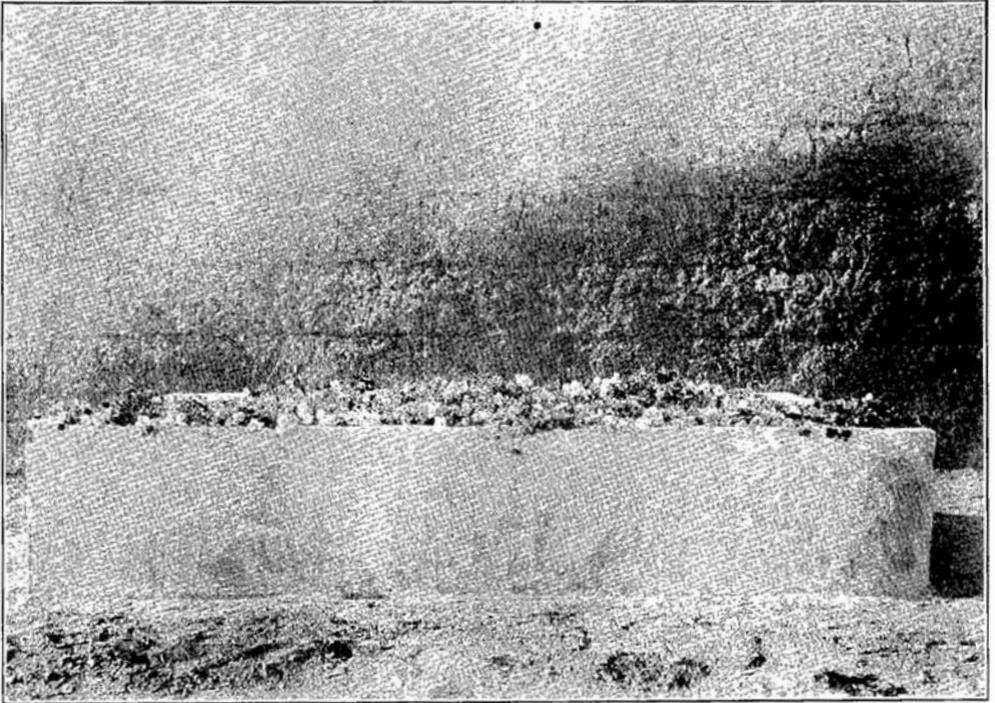
The papers of New York and other cities reported in detail the news of the death of this American citizen in Persia. The following statement was published in the "New York American" on October 28, 1933:

"Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler, who spent the last year in Teheran, Persia, as representative of the American National Bahá'í Assembly, died in that city on October 25, it was reported in a cable received yesterday by the Assembly from the secretary of the Teheran Bahá'í community.

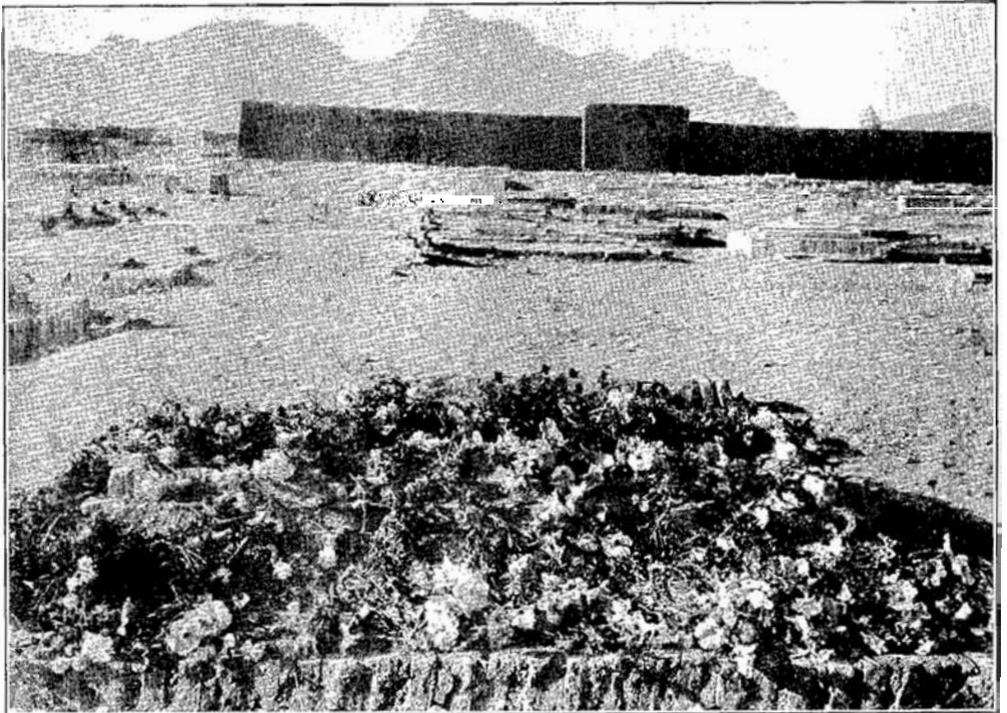
"In August, 1932, Mrs. Ransom-Kehler, after two years' travel in China, Japan and India as a Bahá'í teacher, went to Persia on a special mission to represent the American Bahá'ís in appealing to the Shah's government for removal of the ban on entry of Bahá'í literature into the country of the origin of the world religion established by Bahá'u'lláh nearly seventy years ago.

"From the **Couxt** Minister, Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler received assurance that the prohibition, passed under the former régime while the **Muhammedan** clergy were at the height of their power, would be rescinded,

"This promise was, however, unfulfilled, and Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler devoted the remaining months of her life to the task of penetrating the imperial entourage and pre-



Grave of Keith Ransom-Kehler, Isfahan, Persia.



Grave of *the* Sultānu'sh-Shuhadā (King of Martyrs), near which
Keith Ransom-Kehler was buried.

senting to the Shah in person a formal Stipulation prepared by the American Bahá'í Assembly on behalf of the sixty Bahá'í communities of the United States and Canada.

"The American Bahá'ís will erect in Teheran (correctly *Ishfáhán*) a memorial to commemorate the work of Mrs. Ransom-Kehler, the second American Baha'í to die in Persia while serving the cause of unity and international peace."

That memorial, we may be assured, will in future be visited by innumerable Bahá'ís of

West and East as a shrine marking the physical interment of a pure and valiant Bahá'í spirit who, not in vain, sacrificed its earthly existence for the sake of the believers in that land.

The above statement has been prepared in reverent acknowledgment of Mrs. Ransom-Kehler's mighty services to the Bahá'í Faith, that the worldwide community of believers may know what has been done to this date in effort to assist in bringing about freedom and security for the Bahá'ís of Persia.

II.

Grand-Hotel, Tíhrán, Persia,
3rd. April, 1933.

Your Majesty,

In a matter of vital importance to a vast number of people, I took the liberty, a few weeks ago, of invoking Your Majesty's assistance.

Your Majesty's Foreign Office has given me information so strange, so inconsistent and out of keeping with Your Majesty's recognized policies that before making this interview public it seemed only wise and just to inform Your Majesty of its tenor.

For that reason I summarized its main points and submitted them for approval to Your Majesty before dispatching this news to the world.

Having as yet received no reply from the Throne I am now, with humble supplication, presenting my full report to Your Majesty hoping and praying that Your Majesty will indicate your good-pleasure in this matter, since I have nothing in mind but the satisfaction and approval of Your Just and Gracious Majesty.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, an officially incorporated body, is now pressing me for further information concerning their petition. This petition has already been granted by a then-accredited Minister of the Crown. They are therefore at a loss to understand why the question involved in their petition remains in its former status.

Since this is a matter of international Emport may I again, very beseechingly, request

Your Majesty to give me an authentic answer concerning the enclosed report.

Relying on Your Majesty's grace
Very respectfully,

(Sgd.) KEITH RANSOM-KEHLER.

To:

His Imperial Majesty
the Shahanshah of Persia
Riza Shah Pahlevi,
T í h r á n .

Grand-Hotel, Tíhrán, Persia,
3rd. March, 1933.

National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of the United States
and Canada.

Dear Bahá'í friends:

My delay in submitting this report is due to my having summarized it in a petition to His Imperial Majesty requesting that He consent to affirm its accuracy.

You are already too familiar with my experience of last summer when a then-accredited Minister of the Crown gave me a firm and solemn assurance that has since been entirely disregarded and that now seems to be invalid. In order to avoid the repetition of sending wrong or inaccurate information around the world a second time it seemed to me more fitting to ascertain the authenticity of what I am about to set forth.

His Majesty not having seen fit to reply to my supplication on the one hand, and your request for further information on the other, now necessitate the following response.

With the sanction of the ex-Minister of

Court, as already reported, I sent for some Bahá'í books. When they were examined by the Customs authorities I was denied the right to receive them. Astonished and perplexed I at once wrote the former Minister to inquire why his definite and unqualified promise was being disregarded.

There was no response to my inquiry and very shortly thereafter he was dismissed.

You can imagine my concern to find that all of our efforts, hopes and past assurance have proven valueless and that the matter of the circulation of our literature is in a worse condition today in this advanced régime than it was some years ago, when there was no ban against it.

I confess that my ingenuity is becoming more and more taxed to understand this violent opposition, on the part of certain Ministers and those in political posts, to our Faith. Like the intelligentsia in every land today, many educated Persians regard religion as a matter of minor consideration, except a negligible percentage who still display a formal loyalty to Islám. The daughter of a Persian in the diplomatic service, whom I met abroad, answered when asked her religious allegiance, "Le Lion et le Soleil," (the ancient symbol of Persia).

Here are the Bahá'ís scattered round the world, protecting the prestige and advancing the interests of Persia; making of every Bahá'í convert an adherent of Persia's state religion, Islám; Persian Bahá'ís, like all others scrupulously refraining from any political activity; serving with honesty and zeal in administrative posts; loyally supporting the progressive policies of the Government; what more could a politician ask? Of course if they want us to say that the Qa'im has not come thirty thousand Bahi'ís, with joy and valor, have looked upon death as a less formidable alternative.

Perhaps a reason for this resentment is because we of other lands have widely and easily succeeded in making friends for Persia where Persians themselves have been less successful; perhaps it is the mediaeval reflex that still grips the minds of those emerging from the dark night of Persia's ignorance and fanaticism into the Shining Era of Pablevi; perhaps the larger, richer, fuller outlook on life given in the Bahá'í teachings causes in-

stinctive dread on the part of generations constrained through dogmatism and repressed by hereditary conservatism. Whatever the reason, we see the amazing phenomenon of those both in and out of Persia who are devoting themselves to her advancement, persecuted, dispossessed and reviled, by Persians.

One of the most intelligent and well-informed men in Persia is Mr. Mohammed Ali Khan Euruqi, former Persian Secretary to the League of Nations and now Foreign Minister. Of his great ability there is not the slightest doubt. I have heard a rumor to the effect that his father supported the claim of Yahya, brother of Bahá'u'lláh, called Subhi Ezel, and, though this group is now practically extinct, the few remaining Ezelis are still animated by their only *raison d'être*, that of opposing, thwarting and persecuting the Bahá'ís to the extent of their capacity.

The first rigid exclusion of our literature was when Mirza Furuqi was Minister of Finance. If our information be correct, from him probably emanated this suggestion that was enacted by the Council. At the interview which I am about to discuss, his Secretary for America informed me that this practice has now become so firmly entrenched that even the Shah Himself (who, perhaps as a matter of routine, signed this decree when President of the Council) is now helpless to reverse it, for fear of an uprising. Naturally the Secretary did not state it that way; he merely said that to remove this ban would cause internal disorder; but there is no other logical inference that can be deduced from his admission. When we recall the brilliant and spectacular manner in which His Majesty with astounding intrepidity, and no untoward results, changed many of the age-old customs of this country we are, of course, constrained to conclude that this regulation, supposedly devised by the present Foreign Minister and superimposed in the midst of the vicious and corrupt conditions of the past, now constitutes a law so powerful that even a new and advanced dynasty is forced to respect it. However, I will discuss this further in its proper place. It is certainly shocking enough, wherever it is discussed that members of His Majesty's Gov-

ernment should, with perfect candor, give out such discreditable information to foreigners. It is well that such an astonishing admission of Persia's weakness should have been made to a friend and lover of Persia who thoroughly disbelieves and denies it, instead of to an enemy.

The Minister of Posts and Telegraph was kind enough to grant me an interview and treated me with the utmost courtesy and respect, I was filled with gratitude for the consideration which he showed me. The Persians are unrivalled for suavity, courtesy and hospitality. But on two occasions he has denied the use of the public telegraph for Bahá'í communications; one a death message, when the Tíhrán Assembly wished to inform Persian Bahá'ís of the ascension of the Greatest Holy Leaf. *

So you see that these Ministers, most vitally concerned in the question of Bahá'í publications and printing, are not cordially disposed toward the Cause.

Having twice importuned the Shahanshah for an audience, so that there could be no mistake as to His intentions and desire, I was summoned after some weeks to the Foreign Office. On that very day I was seized with a violent attack of sciatica and was unable to touch my foot to the floor for more than a week. Finally when I was up and about again an appointment was made for me, after office hours to avoid interruptions.

I was very fortunate in having the matter handled by the Secretary for American Affairs, Mr. Shayesteh, a gentleman of much affability and sincere kindness who extended to me the greatest courtesy, Mr. Assadi was my interpreter. Being a Columbia University M.A. he was admirable for this work,

How strange the ways of God, that I, a poor, feeble, old woman from the distant West, should be pleading for liberty and justice in the land of Bahá'u'lláh, who has given to the world its most advanced standards of humanitarianism and enlightenment.

After the interchange of usual compliments, I introduced the subject by speaking of the love and loyalty which the Bahá'ís of the world entertain toward Persia.

As is customary in such cases the gentleman spoke of the friendly relations between

Persia and America, and of how much Persia appreciated these sentiments on the part of the West. I hastened, as I always do on such occasions which are constantly recurring, (for it does not suit the purposes of official Persia to admit the vital and valuable service which the Bahá'ís everywhere are rendering to this land), I hastened to inform him that to the bulk of our hundred and thirty millions Persia is a mere name—just another Oriental country; while the money contributed for schools, hospitals and the like represents to the American church-goer no definite love for this country, since the donor is unconcerned whether it goes to China, Siam, Turkey or Persia as long as it is saving infidels and converting heathen. With more persistence than tact I never leave this subject until it is definitely understood that the sentiments which the Bahá'ís entertain toward Persia and the international service which we are rendering to Persia is not to be confused with anything else.

Mr. Shayesteh inquired politely as to our numbers, asking if many Christians had left their faith to embrace this teaching. At once I explained that the phenomenal progress of the Bahá'í Cause in every land is due to its support and reenforcement of the great religious teachings of the world: that a Jew to become a Bahá'í must acknowledge Jesus; that a Christian to become a Bahá'í must acknowledge Zoroaster; that a Hindu to become a Bahá'í must accept Muhammad; that the Bahá'í teachings attack no belief, do not require the relinquishment of one's faith, but protect the sanctities and enhance the spiritual value of every religion.

"It might be possible for Christians to argue this way and to accept the Bahá'í Cause while remaining Christians; but to the Moslem the idea is absolutely impossible. To reconcile being a Bahá'í and a Moslem would be outside the limits of Islám."

"The idea of being a Bahá'í and a Moslem is no less comprehensible to the non-Bahá'í Moslem, than being a Bahá'í and a Christian is to the non-Bahá'í Christian: it offers to the fanatical and dogmatic Christian the same obstacles which you have described as applying to the Moslem. But certainly to the Bahá'í Moslem and to the Bahá'í Christian no such obstacles exist, the proof being that

we have not abandoned our original faith. The fact that we have a vast concourse of Moslem Bahá'ís who have reconciled the two beliefs, demonstrates that this attitude has not proved as difficult to many millions of Moslems as your suggestion would imply."

The Secretary gave an interesting account of Sufism and Sheikhism, showing that they were philosophies, a way of life which, though the Persian might not accept, he could understand; while the Bahá'í Cause offered a challenge to Islám. Of course I fully agreed that the Bahá'í teachings offer a challenge to the world, since they unfold a new civilization.

"But," said the Secretary with amiability, "we will discuss these abstruse points at future meetings." It seemed from this that there was to be a complete interchange of views. I was astonished and gratified.

And now the real purpose of the interview was broached. "You have written requesting an audience with His Majesty?" he suggested kindly.

"Yes," I answered, "on a subject of vital importance to millions of people: the free entry and circulation of Bahá'í literature."

Throughout the interview Mr. Shayesteh spoke in the most conciliatory and tactful way. I am full of admiration for his gentleness and delicacy.

"The Bahá'ís must show great patience in this matter; in due course of time this will be possible, but now it is necessary to wait. Being a foreigner you cannot understand the laws of Persia. It is against our constitution to admit literature contrary to Islám."

Naturally it was a blow to hear that the promise and assurance of an accredited Minister of the Crown, given me only a few months before, were untrustworthy and invalid. But at once I rallied sufficiently to say that our literature supports Islám, converts to Islám, defends Islám, and gave the classic example of Queen Marie's having, as a Bahá'í convert, acknowledged the authenticity of Muhammad in the English-speaking press.

I then repeated the same thing that I had said to the former Minister of Court: "The Bahá'ís of the West are at a total loss to comprehend why Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians and Hindus who violently oppose Islám,

art permitted to import and print their literature, while the Bahá'ís, who embrace and support Islám, are denied this simple, civil right."

The answer was not verbal, being only a bland smile. For on the basis of both logic and justice this must be quite as incomprehensible to the intelligent Persian as to the average Occidental,

"It is contrary to the law," the Secretary continued, "to recognize any religion founded after Islám; since the Bahá'í Movement cannot be recognized its literature can have no standing."

This information nearly overwhelmed me. I did not know how it could be possible that no one had ever informed me of this condition, since the basis of our teaching is respect for the law of the land. Of course if this thing that we have been pressing were contrary to law nothing more could be done about it.

Immediately upon leaving the Foreign Office I hastened to make inquiry, for this represented an obstacle so grave as to check any future activity in the matter. To my intense relief I found that neither the Constitution nor constitutional law makes any reference to religions founded after Islám. Some one argued, however, that since Moslems believe in the finality of Islám and since Islám is the constitutional state religion that this involves the repudiation of any later religion.

The established state religion of England is Christianity. Church and state are one; the bishops of the church of England sit in the House of Lords. Christianity teaches that no religion will follow it. Jesus will come and all other religions will be abrogated. Along this line of argument Moslems should have no rights in England and Islámic literature should be barred. But instead the Moslems have their Mosque and the Qur'án is even taught in the universities. This is the practice of enlightened countries everywhere. Since all civilized lands offer complete religious freedom, these gentlemen were placing themselves in the awkward position of saying that Persia is not fully civilized—an admission which I should think they would be the last to make.

On this point, brought up two or three

times as the conversation progressed, I must have misunderstood entirely the information that was being conveyed, for the constitution not only does not deny recognition to later religions but says that every citizen of Persia has equal rights before the law.

As I sat there, through my mind kept running the query, why if the circulation of our literature is contrary to law should the Secretary have assured me at the very outset that presently this privilege would be granted? I did not press many queries nor advance many arguments for, after all, the kind Secretary could do no differently from his instructions, and could exercise no final authority. My purpose was not to debate with him, since he was only an intermediary, but to gather as full information as possible concerning the viewpoint of his superiors: he probably thought me a rather inept and easily-persuaded old woman.

"In spite of all the bloodshed, all the oppression, all the appalling cruelty of the past Persia has never been able to do enough to the Bahá'ís to make us hate her. To whatever degree these persecutions may be continued we will always remain loyal to this land and venerate and serve it as the home of Bahá'u'lláh."

The Secretary looked distinctly embarrassed.

"But the Persians have always been tolerant," he said. I regret that I was sufficiently undisciplined to laugh out loud: the idea was so quaint.

"You must certainly have been informed of the 30,000 martyrs whom the Persian Bahá'ís have offered in the pathway of God?" I inquired.

Both men looked unaffectedly amazed.

"Certainly not so many," ventured Mr. Assadi.

"On the authority of European historians, to whom the matter made no difference one way or the other, it is so estimated."

They then accepted the statement without further opposition.

"But the Bahá'ís killed the Persians, too," I was told.

"They were all Persians," I answered; "but no Bahá'í ever killed a Persian or anyone else. The Bábís, who were attacked by the Imperial Army for the avowed purpose of

extermination, defended themselves; but Bahá'u'lláh, who came after the Báb, taught that 'it is better to be slain than to slay.'"

"To us they are all the same, Bábís and Bahá'ís."

"The Bábís became Bahá'ís but there were many differences in their teaching," I answered. I couldn't help wondering if in America we would entrust to those not completely informed a discussion with a foreign representative, such as I am here.

"The Persians have never shown the religious intolerance of the Europeans," repeated the secretary. I make no attempt to fathom his purpose in this statement; whether he assumed that I was uninformed of the notorious cruelty practised by the Persians toward Jews, Zoroastrians and Kaffirs generally, or whether he himself was uninformed. "Woe betide the first Jew who crossed the path of a Persian on a holy day," I quoted Lord Curzon, "What of the humiliating suppression of the Zoroastrians who could not even wear a new dress?"

"But they did not harm them," was the lame reply, as if such persecutions were harmless. I dropped the discussion: I was not there to argue nor antagonize, but to gather valuable information. A recollection of "the fiendish ingenuity of the torture-mongers of Tíhrán," as described by Count de Gobineau, Nicholas, Lord Curzon, Captain von Goumoens and others flashed through my mind, however. I remembered my meeting a few days before with a young Bahá'í, shockingly disfigured, because in infancy he had been thrust into an oven by these harmless people, and was thereby partially cooked.

Please do not forget when reading this that in every instance the atmosphere was kept perfectly clear and quiet. There was no tension; the suavity and affability of the Secretary never relaxed.

"It would be a very ill-advised thing to remove this ban on Bahá'í literature at present. You have just spoken of the Bahá'ís who lost their lives. It is for the protection of the Bahá'ís themselves that this petition from America is denied. The result of granting it might be fraught with the gravest danger to the Bahá'ís themselves. T k Shah is a kind father to all his subjects; a father

loves all of his children alike; it is to save and help the Bahá'ís that the request is denied for the present. Later it can be granted, but this must be gradual; now is not the time."

This was positively too much. First I am told that the Persians are tolerant and harmless; then, that if other Persians obtain ordinary civil rights they will likely be butchered by their tolerant and harmless Persian brothers; Persians against Persians, not against outsiders. It was like the previous statement that it is against the law to circulate our literature and that presently it can circulate.

Imagine my having to sit there and calmly listen while Persian officials discussed, without shame, the incapacity of their own monarch, certainly one of the most valiant, heroic, decisive and just rulers in the world, to handle this minor situation. I was profoundly shocked at the callousness with which this feeble argument was advanced.

Do they think that the press of the world has not been ringing with the stupendous accomplishments of the Shahanshah; of his intrepid onslaughts against the forces of ignorance, conservatism and decadence in this country; of his supreme determination to elevate Persia in spite of her own opposition and timidity above her mediaevalism to a position of advancement and modern culture?

Did they expect me to agree with them as to powerlessness of this superman who has securely established an enlightened dynasty; who has literally changed the physical face of his country in a few brief years; who has completely broken the paralyzing power of the clergy; who has set at naught the religious practices of centuries—the most difficult of all political accomplishments; who has taken trousers from women and skirts from men; who has inaugurated a new economic life for Persia; who is rapidly substituting patriotism for religious fanaticism; who has defied European powers; who has achieved for all religions, including the Bahá'ís, comparative protection and safety; the irresistible power of whose word is sufficient to accomplish the most far reaching and dramatic results?

It was quite evident that they did not

realize the full import of what they were saying, and I did not discuss it with them. Within my own memory, in Persia's dark and corrupt past, Bahá'í literature had circulated freely and Persian cities are today full of these books, imported in that period. There was no royal firman, no new law that stopped their import but, if I am correctly informed, the personal connivance of the present Foreign Minister; and now, God save us, I am told by Persian officials that though the Shah is sufficiently powerful so that previous interpretations of the Qur'an may be modified; that compulsory military service may be established; that the fez and chadur may be cast aside; that the clergy may be dispossessed; yet this regulation, suggested perhaps by the former Minister of Finance, is above the Shariat, above traditional customs, above the innumerable changes which have already been achieved and has become so sacrosanct that the Shah fears the effect of its removal on the people.

The suggestion is odious, fantastic and ridiculous; and I took the liberty of expressing this in a letter to His Imperial Majesty.

"Why are the American Bahá'ís interfering in these questions which concern Persia?" Mr. Assadi enquired.

"The Bahá'í world is one great organism. What concerns one part concerns all. If even a finger is infected the whole body suffers. It is impossible for the followers of other faiths, that separate and divide men from their fellows, to grasp the meaning of Bahá'í inclusiveness and solidarity."

"But Persia has many, many problems confronting her; she has no time to deal with these questions," I was told.

I was not rude enough to say: "The circulation of Bahá'í literature is one of those problems confronting Persia." What I did say was that this strangulation of our communication, the only blemish of the religious tolerance of Persia, makes our propaganda for Persia throughout the world unnecessarily difficult; for we can not assert that in contrast to her dark past she now enjoys complete religious freedom. This is what we are longing to say.

"Persia has been through too many crises and difficulties; what she needs is peace."

"The last thing that the Bahá'ís of the

world desire is in **any way** to hinder or to embarrass Persia. Since peace is the foundation of the Bahá'í teachings **we** are in heartiest **accord** with this sentiment.' ' stopped there **though tempted** to add: "But in what country anywhere is there tranquillity where **men** are unequal before the law; where there is suppression, **coercion and intimidation**; where ordinary civil rights are denied and where recourse of **police** protection is **un-availing**?"

One of the richest ornaments of modern Persia is the name of **Mirzá Abu'l Fadl-i-Gulpayagani**. As traveller and speaker he has adorned the foremost platforms of the world and her great libraries **welcome his** writings. But still within the past few weeks his nephew **was** beaten in the public bath of that **town and was** deported to **Tihrán**, with inadequate preparation and without notice, **by the** police. Obligated to leave **all** of his possessions there and to come without money or proper **clothing** to a strange city, **how** did **this** represent that quality before the law, that the constitution of Persia vouchsafes to every subject? Especially **when this** glaring injustice was committed by the law itself?

Does the Foreign Office seriously expect me to believe that this mighty monarch at whose slightest word all Persia stands at attention and displays obedience is incapable of upholding the constitution of this land and timid about **issuing** peremptory orders to **village** policemen? Do **they** expect me to imagine that His Imperial Majesty is informed of these outrages and **permits** them, because he is helpless to prevent them?

Things **have** reached a **very** strange pass when Western Bahá'ís entertain a more exalted and **confident** admiration and respect for the **all-conquering** power of the Shah than Persian Moslems, and His own officials at **that**.

Again I called attention to what the Bahá'ís of the world, wherever they are scattered, are **doing** to promote the **interests** and to enhance **the** prestige of Persia.

"But when I was in Geneva in 1927 I saw an attack on Persia, **written** by the **American Bahá'ís**, that has no real basis; it transpired that there had been a **quarrel** in **Shiraz** between a Bahá'í and a Moslem family, **over** some property. The Persian Baha'is

bad conveyed wrong information to America and there **they** had exaggerated this trivial incident into **something** of major importance that reflected discredit on Persia," said the Secretary.

"That year I was serving on a committee and I **never knew** or **heard** of our publishing such a pamphlet."

"Perhaps I **can find** it for you," he answered. "I think it is here **somewhere**."

"I **certainly wish** you would, for to my knowledge the Bahá'ís **have** never issued such a statement. As you have **already mentioned** we have **many** enemies and this may be their **work** in order to undermine the position of **Persian Bahá'ís**."

The only pamphlet of which I am cognizant is the one addressed to His Majesty on the subject of the martyrdoms of Jahrum. **Rut** since, by no stretch of the imagination, could the **pillage** and **burning** of twenty Bahá'í homes and the murder of eight people in Jahrum be construed into a quarrel between a Bahá'í and Moslem family in Shiraz over some property, the Secretary could not have been referring to this article.

Moreover, **when** we remember the great stir and revulsion that it created throughout the civilized world against Persia; the press protests; the expressions of **horror** from all sides: this letter which aroused universal indignation certainly could not be described in such a feeble way as "reflecting discredit on Persia."

If **any** person or any organization could **write** or say **anything** to stop evil practices in America **every** right-minded American would look upon such a person or group as a great benefactor and **not** as an enemy. So it **was** the duty of the **American Bahá'ís** to exercise **whatever** restraining influence **was** possible to prevent **such** barbarous and appalling practices in Persia. These martyrdoms victimized men, **women** and children who had **broken** no law but the ancient bestial **law** of hatred, enmity and strife; **whose** only fault **was** a belief in love and peace and goodwill.

"You understand that now you have had your answer to this petition. It will **not** be necessary to discuss it any further." At the beginning of the **conversation** **future** **inter-views** had been mentioned. "It is **not** prac-

licable nor expedient to grant this request at present." And again the Secretary repeated, "Later on the matter will adjust itself and the ban will be removed."

In the beginning I had mentioned our being an officially incorporated body enjoying the sanction and protection of the Government of the United States.

"I shall communicate your conclusion to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada," I said, "and when their answer is returned it may be necessary to consult you further. I am not referring to anything remote and metaphysical. There may be some practical questions to discuss."

"I shall be glad to receive you at any time," he answered, with the same imperturbable courtesy; and with every show of respect and urbanity he accompanied me to the door. I liked him exceedingly.

He expressed some kind compliment for my age and general attitude which might have been construed to mean that he regretted seeing me involved with such an unsavory and nefarious crew as the Bahá'ís. It is really very amusing: how we pity those who are not Bahá'ís, and how those who are not Bahá'ís pity us.

It seemed incredible to me that this message, as it was delivered, could really have come from His Majesty, who has the clearest, the most definite, the most precise ideas, together with the soundest possible judgment.

That this mass of illogicalities and vulnerable arguments could possibly have proceeded from the Throne seemed to me beyond belief; for certainly the Shah would not say that things were in the Constitution which are not to be found there; would not sanction religious intolerance when his whole policy, for which every Bahá'í in the world is indebted to him, has been toward greater and greater religious freedom; and certainly it is difficult to imagine that He would announce His own timidity and powerlessness to cope with a very ordinary situation—that of conferring a commonplace civil right on a large number of his subjects.

For that reason I addressed His Majesty in terms of the enclosed letter, summarizing as briefly as the subject-matter permitted the conversation herein related; asking His Majesty graciously to respond as to whether or not the information received was according to his intent, and if so to accord me permission to release it to the waiting Bahá'í world.

No answer has as yet reached me. Therefore I shall now submit this full report to the Crown, relying still upon his clemency and justice. If at last no answer is vouchsafed I shall be constrained, in response to your requests, reluctantly to send this record as it stands.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Your sister in el-Abha,

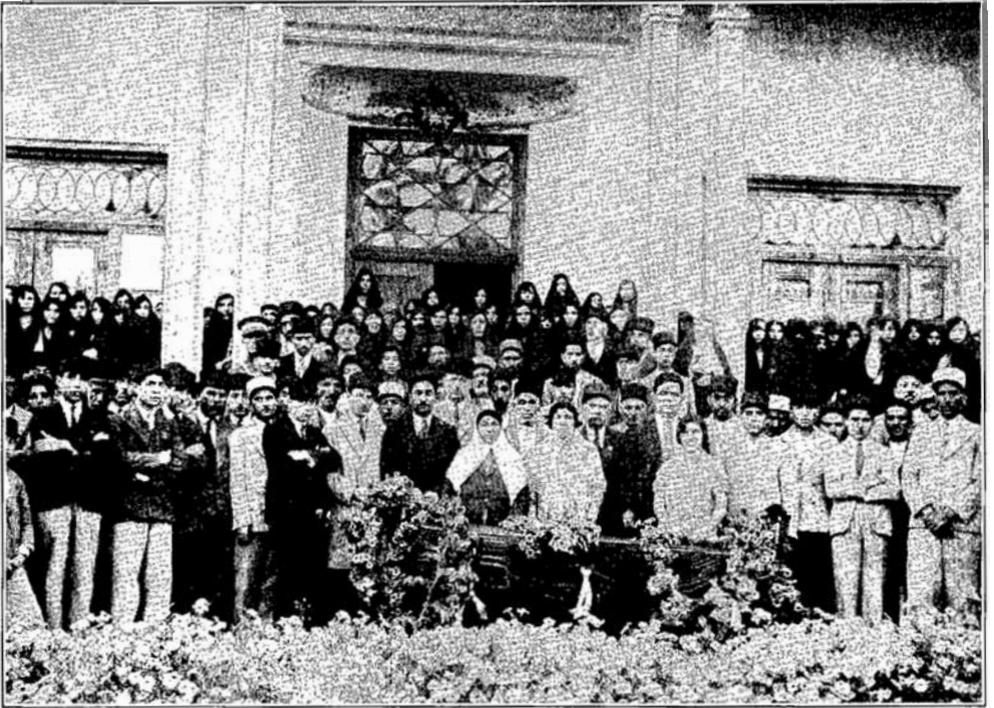
KEITH.

III.

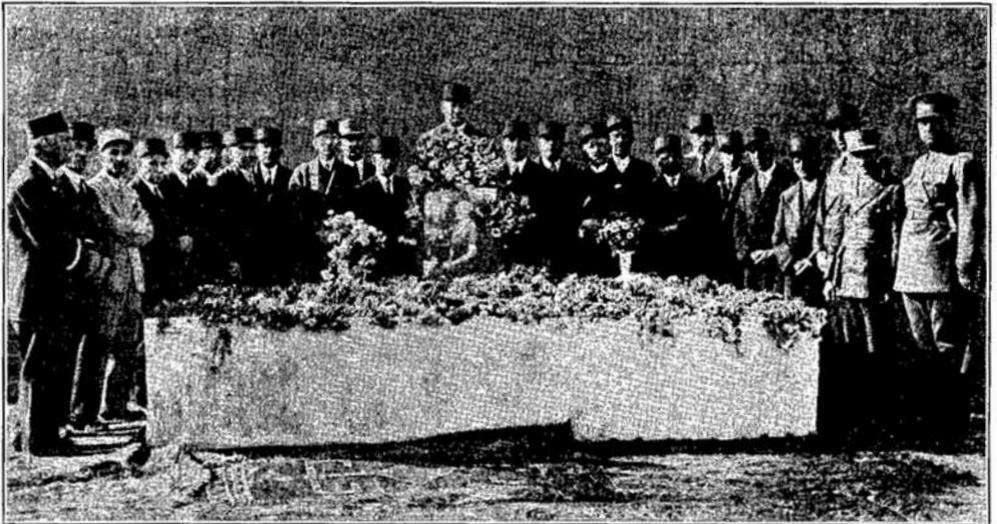
EXTRACT FROM THE NEWS LETTER OF THE "UNITY OF THE EAST AND THE WEST COMMITTEE" ṬIHRÁN, PERSIA

ON pilgrimage to Keith's grave, the Ṭihrán Assembly left for Iṣfáhán November 23rd, in fulfillment: of the Guardian's instructions, and a large meeting was held there on November 24th, at which the Ṭihrán and Iṣfáhán Assemblies, the Ṭihrán and Iṣfáhán friends, and the six delegates from those centers which Keith was to have visited—Shiráz, Yazd, Kirmán, Ábádih and the southern ports—were present. On the following

morning the two Assemblies in conjunction with the delegates and many other friends proceeded to the cemetery on the outskirts of Iṣfáhán, stopped as Keith herself had done a few days before her last illness at the graves of the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs, and gathered close by at the resting-place of the "first western martyr." An enlarged photograph of Keith brought by the Assembly from Ṭihrán was placed above the



Bahá'ís of Isfáhán gathered about the casket of Keith Ransom-Kehler.



Members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Persia and representatives of various Bahá'í centers in Persia assembled at the grave of Keith Ransom-Kehler.

IN MEMORIAM

grave, and the ground was covered with flowers; the Shiráz delegate, Habíbulláh Afnàn, poured out rose water which he had brought from the House of the Báb, and gave some to each of the friends; all stood in silence while prayers for dead were chanted. Later a second memorial service was held at the Hazíratu'l-Quds, where the Guardian's letters regarding Keith and her Persian mission were read, her spiritual rank and glorious services described, and fervent tributes paid her; a memorial dinner was then offered in her name, and on the following day the Central Assembly returned to Tíhrán. In addition to the Assemblies and delegates who made this pilgrimage in the

Guardian's stead, the Guardian sent a special representative, Âqáy-i-Faydí of Tíhrán, who travelling from Haifa laid a beautiful wreath on Keith's grave on behalf of the Guardian. Recent instructions from Haifa stress the importance of informing all centers in Persia of Keith's eminent station, so that all may know that she was "the first Bahá'í martyr of the West, the standard-bearer of this long-suffering people, the true, unequalled champion of God's followers in that land, envied by her spiritual brethren of the West"; that "she solidly welded the Bahá'ís of the East and the West"; and that "in life and in death she glorified and exalted God's Cause."

IV.

. . . "I have fallen, though I never faltered. Months of effort with nothing accomplished is the record that confronts me. If anyone in future should be interested in this thwarted adventure of mine, he alone can say whether near or far from the seemingly impregnable heights of complaisance and indifference, my tired old body fell. The smoke and din of battle are to-day too dense for me to ascertain whether I moved forward or was slain in my tracks.

"Nothing in the world is meaningless, suffering least of all. Sacrifice with its attendant agony is a germ, an organism. Man cannot blight its fruition as he can the seeds of earth. Once sown it blooms, I think for-

ever, in the sweet fields of eternity. Mine will be a very modest flower, perhaps like the single, tiny forget-me-not, watered by the blood of Quddús that I plucked in the Sabz-i-Maydán of Bárfurúsh; should it ever catch the eye, may one who seems to be struggling in vain garner it in the name of Shoghi Effendi and cherish it for his dear remembrance.

"While the tired waves vainly breaking
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back through creeks and inlets
making,
Silent comes flooding in the main."

KEITH

V.

KEITH

O poet soul, whose unremitting toil
I-las helped to rend the veils from dark Iran,
Thy tree of love is planted in her soil,
Where suns have clothed the crescent faith of man.

When, in the dawn of that immortal day,
Our martyrs quaffed of God's eternal wine,
The stream of glory coursed its crimson way
Until it blended their rich blood with thine.

First martyr from America to stain
 The rose of Persia with thy fragrant blood,
 The annals of thy life fore'er remain
 The *signs* of love's unconquerable flood.

The Sulṭánu'sh-Shuhadá's path is there,
 Where thy sure footsteps followed to his shrine,
 And Iṣfáhán has now become aware
 Thou wert ordained a 'Hand of the Divine'.

PHILIP AMALFI MARANGELLA
 New York, December, 1933

Mrs. AGNES PARSONS

"Greatly deplore loss distinguished hand-
 maid of Bahá'u'lláh. Through her manifold
 pioneer services she has proved herself worthy
 of implicit confidence reposed in her by
 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Advise American believers
 hold befitting memorial gatherings. Assure
 relatives heartfelt sympathy, prayers."

(Signed) Shoghi.

(Cable to National Spiritual Assembly)

"The dress was destroyed, but the one who
 wore the dress is living." These words are
 part of a wonderful teaching on immortality
 which 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to Mrs. Parsons
 when she supplicated for a word from Him
 for a friend who was inconsolable because of
 the passing of a dear one. It seems appro-
 priate now in connection with the going
 away of our dear sister herself, for in this
 world "she proved herself worthy of the im-
 plicit: confidence reposed in her by 'Abdu'l-
 Bahá," as stated in the cable about her from
 our Guardian.

On Friday, January 19, 1934, at about six
 p.m., Mrs. Parsons was crossing a street alone
 and was knocked down by a passing auto-
 mobile. A serious illness followed, and finally
 on Tuesday night, January 23rd, about mid-
 night, she ascended to the world of eternal,
 radiant light and life. "The human spirit
 comes from God and to Him it returns."

Mrs. Parsons, we are informed, had reached
 the age of seventy-three years, a long and
 eventful life which, as far as all earthly
 measurements are concerned, seemed full of
 promise for many more years of service.

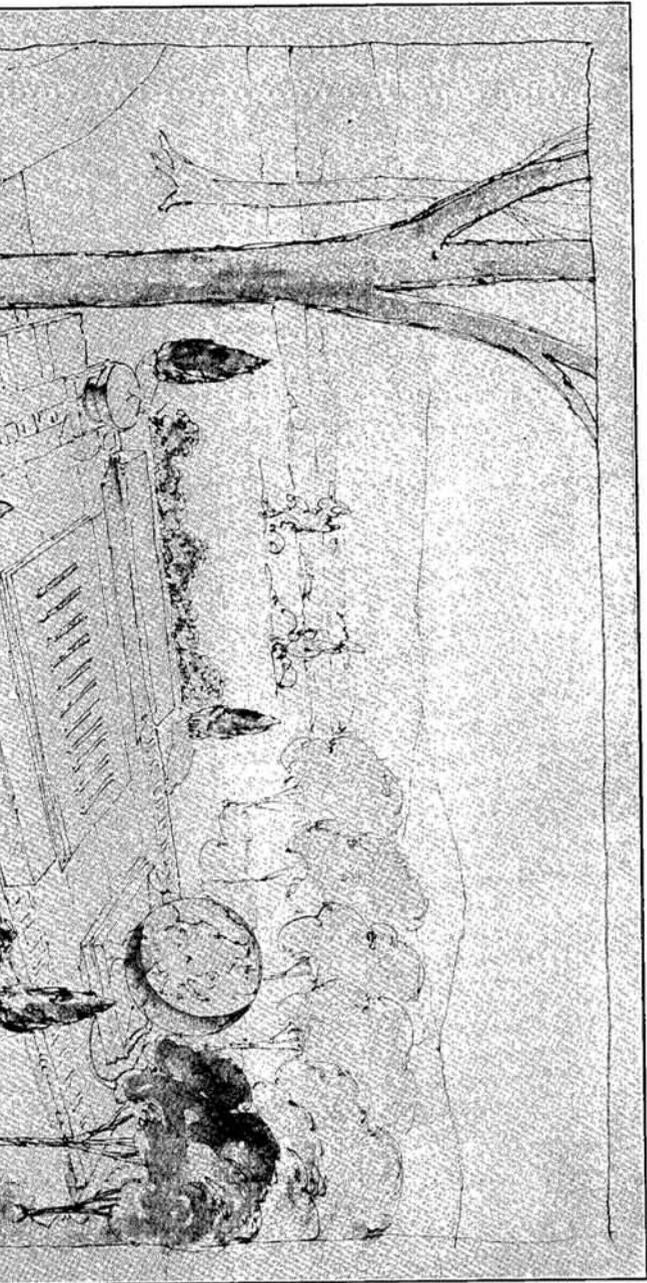
The only child of General and Mrs. Royal,
 Mrs. Parsons was born into and lived in what
 at that time was considered a beautifully

sheltered world. Until middle age when she
 first became a Bahá'í she had never known
 nor associated with any one outside of her
 own immediate circle. The absolutely
 miraculous creative effect of the Revealed
 Word of Bahá'u'lláh was never more pro-
 nounced than in the unfoldment of this
 great soul into a devoted and loyal follower
 of the Risen Sun of Righteousness and Truth.

Mrs. Parsons first heard of the Bahá'í
 Teachings around 1908, and became a con-
 firmed follower of the Bahá'í Revelation
 when she made her pilgrimage to see 'Abdu'l-
 Bahá in Haifa in 1910.

Our recorded Bahá'í history gives abun-
 dant proof of her outstanding service to the
 Cause in 1912 when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in
 Washington. There is no statement which
 any one could make which would sufficiently
 glorify her for the magnificent services
 which it was her privilege to render at that
 time. It was Pure Bounty from God the
 Almighty to her that she was able to offer
 to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the hospitality of her new
 home during the greater part of His first
 visit to Washington in the spring of 1912.
 Every one who witnessed her indefatigable
 work can whole-heartedly testify that she
 left no stone unturned to make her service
 perfect at the feet of the Lord. 'Abdu'l-
 Bahá Himself testified to this fact.

Some of the marvelous talks which
 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave in her home are recorded
 in the "Promulgation of Universal Peace,"
 but there were many private interviews with
 individuals and groups from the official and
 social circles of Washington which have
 never been printed. Many of the details of
 the Master's visit have been written by Mrs.
 Parsons herself, and no doubt this important



INSCRIPTION

In Loving Memory of
Keith Ransom-Kehler,
1878, Isfahan 1933.

"Keith's Precious Life
Offered Up in Sacrifice
to Beloved Cause in
Bahá'u'lláh's Native
Land."—*Shoghi Effendi*.

"The East Shall Become
Illumined, the West
Perfumed and the Chil-
dren of Men Shall Enter
Beneath the All-Em-
bracing Canopy of the
Oneness of the World

document will be included in the history of the **Cause** in America.

In August, 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited Dublin, N. H., where Mr. and Mrs. Parsons maintained their summer residence. Here Mrs. Parsons turned over to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the exclusive use of Himself and His entourage, one of her places there known as "Day-spring." Thus two of her homes—one in

both subjectively and objectively received, shows that she was confirmed.

From that time on Mrs. Parsons gradually began to serve very definitely *in the Cause*, for the most part giving the Message to groups in her own immediate circle. Traveling teachers who came to Washington always received an invitation to speak to these groups in her home.



Portrait of Mrs. Agnes S. Parsons.

"Through her manifold pioneer services she has proved herself worthy of the implicit confidence reposed in her by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.'—SHOGHI EFFENDI.

Washington and one in Dublin—will forever be mentioned in the Bahá'í history of this country. During His stay in Dublin 'Abdu'l-Bahá talked again to many individuals and groups of great importance.

'Abdu'l-Bahá often referred, during these times, to Mrs. Parsons' spirituality *and* to her significant services to the **Cause** of God. That she was "called" to render this service and that she so whole-heartedly and graciously and happily arose and translated into the world of action all those instructions

Her second visit to the Presence of the Master in Haifa, Palestine, was made during the winter and early spring of 1920. During this second visit she received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá a remarkable instruction—a command—which, carried into execution, placed her in the ranks of those who rendered pioneer services to the **Cause**. "The blessings that come to one are greater than those one seeks," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This instruction was not sought by Mrs. Parsons; it came to her from the heaven of *the Master's Divine*

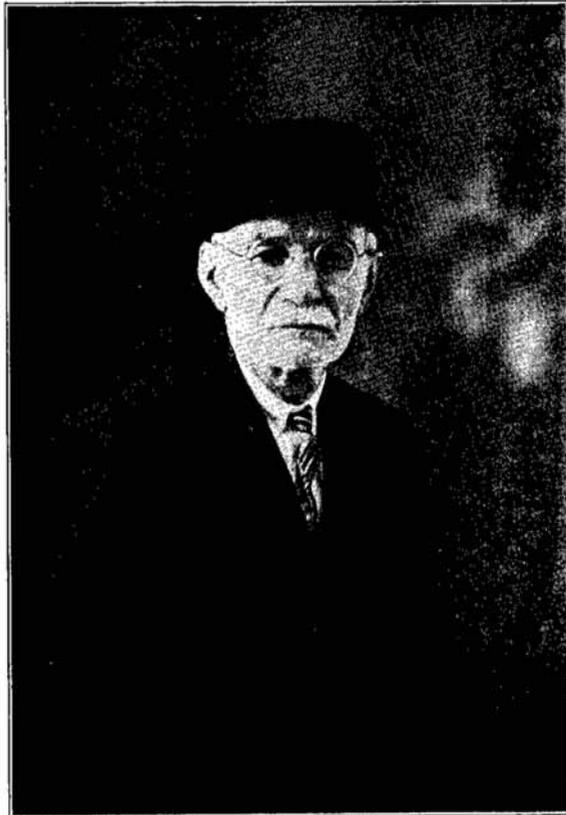
Will, and was in truth and in fact a great and overwhelming surprise to Mrs. Parsons herself. The Master's instruction was as follows:

"I want *you* to arrange a Convention for unity of the colored and white races. You must have people to help *you*."

After Mrs. Parsons returned to America she often spoke of this command. In those days "to arrange a Convention" seemed a

country in time to serve as Chairman of one of the Convention sessions. At this meeting he read the following message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent through him to be read at the Convention:

"Say to this Convention *that* never since the beginning of time has one more important been held. This Convention stands for *the* Oneness of Humanity; *it will* become the cause of the removal of hostility



Yúsuf Khán-i-Vujdáni, distinguished Persian Bahá'í teacher. d. 1934

tremendous undertaking, but she always said: "I will be able to do it. I must for it is the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá." And in accordance with the explicit command of the Master she succeeded in gathering around her a helpful, active and earnest Committee.

During the period of preparation for this Convention (and the preliminary work consumed weeks and even months), Mr. Mountfort Mills was in Haifa. He returned to *this*

between races; it will be the cause of the enlightenment of America. It will—if wisely managed and continued—check the deadly struggle between these races which otherwise will inevitably break out."

Immediately after the close of the Convention Mrs. Parsons sent the following cable to 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Convention successful. Meetings crowded. Hearts comforted." And

'Abdu'l-Bahá replied at once by cable: "The white-colored Convention produced happiness. Hoping will establish same in all America."

The Tablets of the Master which followed, not only to Mrs. Parsons but to others, indicated that this first Amity Convention was termed by the Master "the mother convention" from which many Amity Conventions would be born, and in one Tablet He called it a perfect convention.

Since that time Amity Conventions arranged by the Bahá'í Interracial Committees—both national and local—have been held in nearly all the large cities of America: three additional Conventions have been held in Washington, and in Green Acre every summer a Bahá'í Amity Convention is held as part of the regular program.

It is difficult to convey to any one the full import: of the work accomplished by Mrs. Parsons. One sees at a glance, even from this brief statement, that she was confirmed. The Master said to her:

"God has elected you and led you to the Kingdom of Abha, therefore you must be very grateful to God, the Bestower of these bounties upon you."

Any outline of Mrs. Parsons' services—brief or otherwise—would not be complete without a word about her wonderful cooperation with the National and Local Bahá'í Funds to the fullest extent of her ability; without mention of her many charitable and kindly deeds. Pages could be written doubtless about her contributions and helpful donations along many lines.

At the time of her passing she was a member of the Washington Spiritual Assembly, Chairman of the National Interracial Committee, and a member of the Interracial Committee of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Parsons had a unique station. Absolutely no one can fill her place. She had a capacity all her own, and her station was a particular one not conferred upon any one else. She was very dear to the Master and He showed her great and extraordinary favor. Her place is empty; there is no one to fill it. Down through the ages her unique position in the Cause will be spoken of and

written about, for a conferred position, conferred by the Master, can never die.

MARIAM HANEY

DR. ARASTÚ KHÁN HAKÍM (1877-1934)

Dr. Arastú Khán was the grandson of Hakím Masih, court physician to Muḥammad Sháh, and the first Jewish Bahá'í. Hakím Masih had learned something of the new faith through Táhirih herself, during the early days of the Báb's manifestation, when he was in Baghdád, and from that time on he had searched for the source of her power. Later in Tíbrán he offered to visit the prison and treat a Bahá'í child, when the Moslem doctors had refused; the child's father was the famous Ismu'lláhu'l-Aṣḍaq, and in the course of these visits Hakím Masih became a Bahá'í. He later achieved fame in the Cause, and among other Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh revealed the following for him:

"In the name of God, the Wise, the All-knowing: O Hakím, be staunch in the faith of thy Lord, that the blasts of oppressors may not cause thee to shake; be enduring in the Cause of thy Lord, by thy trust in the Lord and His might; and say, O men, how long will ye sin and stray, how long will ye place passion over salvation? Do ye not see that those who left your midst have not returned, that those who were scattered have not again been gathered? Ere long shall your days to come pass by as your days that are gone. Fear your merciful Lord: by the one true God He hath desired only that which will draw you close unto Him and cause you to enter the realms of eternity, and He is the Giver, the Kind, Eat ye of the fruit of the eternal tree which is ever at hand, for those bereft of it are back of heavy veils. . . . Then know We are imprisoned where eyes can never penetrate, where ears cannot distinguish the words that God the Wise, the Able, and the Knowing doth reveal. By such means have they sought to withhold God's slaves from hearing the words of their Lord, that His light might go out in the midst of His creatures; but God in His might hath revealed what He willed unto those who were turning toward Him with radiant

faces. Then guard what We have entrusted to thee: thou hast in the sight of God a high station; praise Him, be of those who acclaim Him. Grieve not over that which hath come upon Us, be content with what God hath desired for Us, for We are in radiant gladness, and all praise is meet for the Lord of the heavens and earth."

Dr. Arastú's father Ḥakím Sulaymán was likewise a Bahá'í and Dr. Arastú himself

Master, who wrote him many tablets. In 1900 Aflátún died.

Shortly after his brother's death Arastú Khán went to 'Akká, where it was his privilege to stay in the Master's presence one year. During the first days of his visit the Master continually addressed him as "Aflátún," which puzzled him considerably; until one night when he and Dr. Yúnis Khán Afrúkhtih were following the Master through the narrow crooked streets of the prison city, the Master again addressed him



Dr. Arastú Khán Ḥakím.

gradually increased his services in the Cause as he grew to manhood. Meanwhile he was carrying on the family tradition, as are his sons today, of practicing medicine. About 1897 he had graduated from the American School in Ṭíhrán and was working in the American Hospital, where he already showed signs of that healing personality which later made him one of the foremost doctors in the capital. At this period he spent many hours in out of the way houses in the back streets of Ṭíhrán, studying this faith, in those days when knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's cause often ended in death. Soon he began to teach on his own account; his brother Aflátún was also an ardent Bahá'í, much loved by the

as Aflátún and said, "Do you know why I call you Aflátún? It is because I desire his truth, and spirituality to reappear in you." Arastú developed rapidly in 'Akká, studying the Master's way, and he worked with Dr. Yúnis Khán translating letters from the Western Bahá'í. The Master had hoped to send him to America, but family concerns necessitated his return home. Here he worked devotedly for the Cause, founding a weekly teaching meeting which continued to his death, and which according to his will is to be perpetuated. He received his medical diploma, became known throughout the capital for his generosity to the poor and for his gentleness. In 1911 he was in London

with a patient and ably defended the Cause from Azali activities, and he was with the Master in Switzerland. In 1925 he again went abroad, this time visiting the Guardian in Haifa.

During his last years his health failed, but although he was ill himself he continued to visit the sick. His frequent meetings with Keith Ransom-Kehler were an important event of his last year; it was she who arranged a match between his son Dr. Qulám-Husayn Khán and the sister-in-law of Rahmat Alá'í, officiating herself at the wedding which will long be remembered in Tíhrán.

Dr. Arastú's death made a deep impression on Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike. Several hundred persons attended his funeral, following his coffin up one of the main thoroughfares of the capital. In commemoration of his passing, The Guardian sent to his family the following cablegram: "Beloved Arastú joined Immortals (of) Supreme Concourse. Fully share your grief earthly separation. Praying fervently. Awaiting account life with photograph for Bahá'í World." (Signed) Shoghi.

The Qur'ánic verse chosen for Dr. Arastú Khán's gravestone symbolizes what his life was: "O well-assured spirit, willing and blessed go thou back to thy Lord."

GEORGE ADAM BENKE.

George Adam Benke was born on a flourishing and prosperous farm in Fredericksfelt, Southern Russia, of God-fearing parents in the year 1878.

When but a small boy of nine he had an attack of smallpox. Taking a severe cold after this, he lay at death's door for four years. The doctors had little hope of a recovery. When his mother heard this, she fell on her knees at his little cot, beseeching God to restore her boy to health, promising that if he recovered, his life should be dedicated to God's service as a missionary. Very shortly after this a peasant woman was found who declared she could effect a cure. She proceeded to administer doses of sarsaparilla brewed from an herb, and fed the boy only on unleavened bread. At the end of two weeks there was a marked improvement, so

the child was allowed to have his regular food for a time, and then to go back again to her treatment. In a very short time Adam was up and about.

When the time drew near far his higher education, a great famine and pestilence fell on the land. The crops failed. Barely enough grain was saved for the families' nourishment, while twenty-six of the best horses and cattle died. All thought of educating Adam as a missionary had to be abandoned, and instead he became a schoolmaster. Nevertheless his mother's great desire for him filled his thoughts, and while unable to go forth to foreign fields, or become a university student, still he could and did live a life of love for God. And when, in 1901, he married Miss Lina Wolf from Carlsruhe, Baden, they together searched long and lovingly for truth.

Then came the world's war, after which German soldiers came to the Ctimea. Life soon became very hazardous, and it seemed better to escape with the soldiers. They then settled in Liepzig, and having had to leave all their worldly possessions behind them, they had to begin all over again. Some twelve or more months later, while they were still investigating reality through the Theosophical Society, they had the joy of meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Ober and Miss A h a Knoblock, who gave to them the glorious message of Bahá'u'lláh. They then knew that they had found what they had long sought, The Pearl of Great Price, and thereafter they gave all attention to the study of the Sacred utterances.

To Mr. Benke's delight, he found in the University Library of Liepzig the Russian writings by Thomansky and Rosenberg translations from Bahá'u'lláh. These he proceeded to put into German and, in order to enable himself to further enrich the German Bahá'í Library, he set himself the task of studying English, since a good number of these precious words had already been translated into English.

In June, 1931, Mr. Benke was called to help Mrs. Jack in Sofia, where his knowledge of Russian was of great benefit, since that language is now taught in the high schools. He worked arduously in this city nearly three months, leaving no stone unturned in his

efforts to find the ready souls. He was sent during the month of August to the Esperanto Congress at Starazagora, and meeting the Bulgarian President on the train, who became much attracted to him, he was elected honorary vice-president of the Congress.

He was again called to Sofia the following year, and remained until his passing in November. During those months Mr. Benke

of the Administration in order that he might become absolutely efficient in this important matter, and such an obedient servant that he would be above reproach. His longing was that all believers should be firmly centered in the One chosen for us by our Heavenly Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá to guard and guide us after His ascension.

The second year in Sofia he was again elected as vice-president of the Esperanto



George Adam Benke.

worked night and day. Nothing could divert his attention from the work in hand. When nothing else offered he studied Bulgarian, English, and Esperanto. His ambition to become an efficient teacher of the Cause and a servant of whom his beloved Guardian would be proud was very great. This devotion to the Great Head of the Bahá'í Administration was very touching. He wanted to obey not only to the letter, but to the spirit, and studied earnestly every letter from the Great Guardian, and every word

Congress, this time held in that city. Later he was invited to Varna on the Black Sea. Here he spoke twice under the auspices of the Esperanto Society to groups of enquirers. On his return journey he stopped over in Starazagora to renew his acquaintance with the Esperanto friends and refresh their knowledge of the teachings. Likewise he looked up his friend Dr. Tchernenkof in Plovdiv to meet those interested by him in that city.

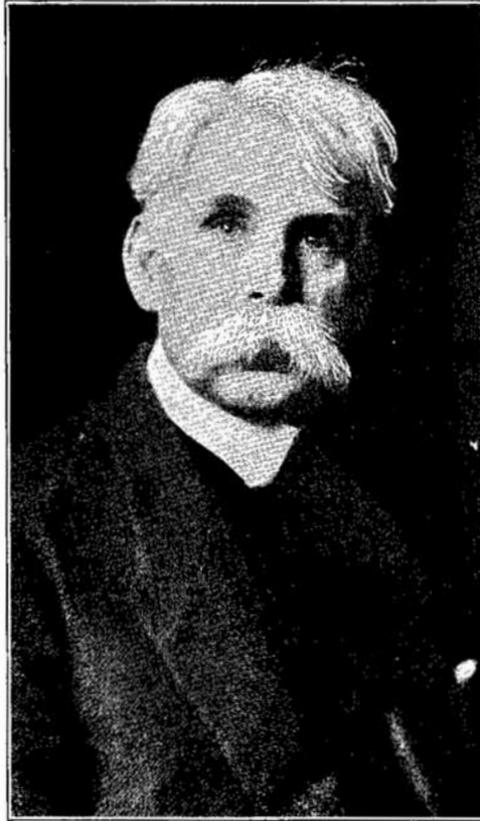
Up to the very hour of his death Mr.

Benke was in harness and in the evening he taught a Russian lady, and later, until after midnight, he was giving counsel and advice to a young Bulgarian brother. He had no illness at the last, only a short half-hour of discomfort during which time he turned in prayer to Bahá'u'lláh for relief, and sweetly passed with the "Remover of difficulties" on his lips, into the great beyond, to join the noble army of martyrs in the Su-

their heavenly welfare as well as for the peace, unity and concord of all humanity. His example in living the life spoke even more loudly than his eloquent words.

MR. EDWIN SCOTT.

The passing of Mr. Edwin Scott, for many years a loyal and active member of the Bahá'í Cause, was deeply felt by the friends



Edwin Scott.

preme Concourse, and at last to see face to face the Adored One whom he had never met in life except frequently in the happy hours of dreams.

His body was laid to rest in the Sofia cemetery.

All who knew him in Sofia and elsewhere testified to the beauty of his life and character. Many and many a one felt that when he went they had lost a dear friend and brother and one whose interest in them was of immense spiritual help, for he longed for

with whom he had spent long years in loving, active service in Paris. In 1911 when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited Paris He spoke several times in the studio of Mr. and Mrs. Scott and to this day that studio continues to be the Bahá'í center where Mrs. Scott welcomes the Bahá'í friends, whether tourists or residents of Paris, with the same beautiful courtesy, finding thus her greatest source of joy and consolation since the loss of her husband.

Because of his recognized ability as an artist Mr. Scott was made Chevalier of the

IN MEMORIAM

Légion d'Honneur and he was a distinguished member of la Société National des Beaux Arts. Five of his paintings were purchased by the French government and after his demise one of his works was hung in the Salle du Jeu de Paume, in the Museum of State in Paris, a distinction much sought after by painters.

Washington home of Mr. and Mrs. Barney was open for Bahá'í meetings on many occasions.

Mrs. Barney visited Accá in the spring of 1905 with her daughter Laura, remaining there near 'Abdu'l-Bahá a month, during which time she painted the portrait of the son of the Governor.



Mrs. Alice Barney.

The Bahá'í Cause has suffered a grievous loss through the passing of Mr. Edwin Scott.

MRS. ALICE BARNEY.

Mrs. Alice Barney, gifted poetess, painter, dramatist, musician, architect and crafts-woman who passed away in Los Angeles in 1931, lived as her friends and contemporaries attest, in a world of beauty. She became interested in the Bahá'í Cause shortly after her daughter Laura (now Mme. Dreyfus-Barney of Paris) visited Haifa in 1900. The

Mrs. Barney's paintings are to be found in most of the important museums of the United States, the National Museum of Washington alone having as many as five of her works, while a painting which she exhibited in the Paris Salon was purchased by the French Government. She was always a generous patron of the arts and offered her encouragement especially to members of the colored race, assisting them to develop their talents with sympathetic understanding.

The well-known settlement "Neighborhood-House" was her gift to the city of

Washington, and this splendid institution interested 'Abdu'l-Bahá very much when He visited Washington in 1912.

Mrs. Barney was particularly attracted to the Bahá'í Cause because of its broad teachings of tolerance, its humanitarianism, its love of the beautiful and fruitful action.

Elsewhere in this volume appears a re-

Cause in America, and loyal servants of the Abhá Kingdom.

Word has come of the passing of Dr. Auguste Forel, the distinguished savant of Switzerland, known throughout the world as one of the foremost scientists of this day. In 1920 Dr. Forel embraced the Bahá'í Cause, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to him



Lisbeth Klitzing.
1884-1933.

markable portrait of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl which was made during the visit of this great teacher to Washington in 1903.

IN MEMORIAM

During the past two years the BAHÁ'Í NEWS has carried the announcements of the passing of the dearly beloved American believers whose names are listed below. It is with great sorrow that we chronicle the loss of these members of the Bahá'í Communities, many of whom were valiant pioneers of the

that great Tablet presenting the scientific proofs of God's existence, which was published in its entirety in the *Star of the Vest*, Vol. 13, pages 101 to 109. By his tireless research Dr. Forel greatly augmented scientific knowledge and rendered inestimable service to mankind, and the beauty of his life and character will long remain with us as an example of selfless service to humanity.

Mrs. Dora Taylor passed from this life August 18th. Mrs. Taylor united with the Cincinnati group of Bahá'ís more than

twenty-five years ago. At her request, the service used at the funeral of Mr. Louis Bourgeois, was read by Miss Hilda Stauss. Mrs. Taylor had been incapacitated for many years by a most distressing illness. She was the wife of Benjamin R. Taylor and leaves four children.

The Los Angeles Spiritual Assembly and Community of Bahá'ís report the passing of one of their honored members, Edgar F. Waite. He was born in Massachusetts in 1865, moved to Chicago in 1893, remaining until 1915, when he went to California. He has been a valued member of the Los Angeles Community of Bahá'ís for fifteen years, having been for several years Chairman of the Los Angeles Spiritual Assembly. His life has been one of self-sacrificing service to the Cause, and his passing a perfect example of "radiant acquiescence" to the will of Bahá'u'lláh. The friends feel keenly the absence of Mr. Waite's physical presence and sincerely sympathize with Mrs. Shahnaz Waite in her bereavement.

On Thursday, September 17th, at Honolulu, one of our much loved friends, Mrs. Meta A. Sutherland, passed on suddenly to the Spiritual Kingdom. She served the Cause faithfully and lovingly for many years as a member of the Honolulu Bahá'í Assembly and through her spirit of steadfastness, understanding, gentleness and true humility, endeared herself to all. She was born in Honolulu on May 8th, 1862, and was one of the early believers in the Islands.

THE PASSING OF MME. DELAGNEL.

Once again the friends of Washington, D. C., were called upon to translate into the world of action the divine injunction of Bahá'u'lláh, "I have made death to thee as glad-tidings . . ." without this teaching the devoted friends of Mme. Josephine Cowles deLagnel would have been a sorrowful group, for her passing into the life eternal and radiant would have meant a bereavement inexpressibly great and very deeply felt. This faithful maid-servant war for many years an active and beloved member of the Washington Bahá'í Community and for many years she had served on the Local Spiritual Assembly.

Mme. deLagnel became a Bahá'í in 1902, and from the day she entered the Fold she was a comprehending follower of the Faith, —loyal, devoted, sincere at every point and at all times. She had "found her Lord," as she so often said, and so all of the Teachings emanating from the Source of Life and Light and Love in this Great Day constituted her armor and buckler and were indeed all-in-all to her. Through the creative effect of the Holy Utterances she had developed spiritual ears and spiritual eyes and a keen spiritual perception. Her greatest charm was her firmness in faith and her longing to serve the Most Great Cause. She was eighty-five years of age, yet she was active up to the time of her serious illness which began about six weeks before the final dissolution of that once very strong body. She was well equipped for service for she had a strong spirit and a strong mind in a strong body.

Those who knew her well during all the thirty years of her devotion to the Cause will remember her unique and beautiful character, and the Washington friends in particular will always remember that her home was the Bahá'í meeting-place for years. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Washington in 1912, He visited her home, and thereafter she herself and many others considered the home was especially blessed and that it had an unusually pure spiritual atmosphere.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said to her, "She is My real daughter, there is no one who could be dearer to me than she is because she really serves. I love her. I love her very much." And in one of her own Tablets from Him, these words, "Every soul has a protector, but praise be to God thou hast God." And during the storms and stress of life she held firmly to these Holy Words.

Mrs. May Warrick Hughes, Glendale, Calif.
Miss Lena Geib, Bloomfield, N. J.

Mrs. Rachel O. North, Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Charles T. Kerin, Pittsburgh, Penna.

Mrs. Ingrid Anna Nelson, Hollywood, Calif.

Miss Mable Sankey, San Francisco, Calif.

Mr. Herman Pauli, New York, N. Y.

Miss Ada Murray, Washington, D. C.

Mr. Edward Fuhrman, Sr., Washington, D. C.

Mr. Arthur D. Mayo, Washington, D. C.

Mr. Irving H. Vail, Pasadena, Calif.

Captain Albert W. Hall, Akron, Ohio.

- Mr. S. T. Ditmars, Spokane, Wash.
 Mr. Arthur James, Bloomfield, N. J.
 Mr. Augustus Dobleman, Baltimore, Md.
 Mrs. Henrietta Wagner, Santa Barbara, Calif.
 Dr. Emma McKay Appel, Chicago, Ill.
 Mr. Stephen Saghatielan, Portland, Ore.
 Mr. Carl G. I-fillman, Seattle, Wash.
 Dawn Nabil Britt, Seattle, Wash.
 Mrs. Belle Blaney, Cleveland, Ohio.
 Mrs. Shari Boros, Cleveland, Ohio.
 Mrs. Hazel Chandon Hopkins, Gridley, Calif.
 Mr. Frank Miller, Los Angeles, Calif.
 Mrs. Ellen Davies, Detroit, Mich.
 Mr. Frederick Heuther, Bloomfield, N. J.
 Mr. William R. Ripley, Orlando, Fla.
 Mother Beecher, Lima, Ohio.
 Mrs. Ann Marshall, San Francisco, Calif.
 Dr. Frederick W. D'Evelyn, San Francisco, Calif.
 Mr. Charles Greenleaf, Texas.
 Miss Mary Vistue, Denver, Colo.
 Miss Martha Robinson, New York, N. Y.
 Miss A m Boylan, New York, N. Y.
 Miss Jennie Bishop, New York, N. Y.
 Mrs. Cora C. Horn, New York, N. Y.
 Mrs. Marion Hotchkiss, New York, N. Y.
 Mr. Robert J. Edgar, Phoenix, Ariz.
- Infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kendricks,
 Hinsdale, N. H.
 Mr. Nels Peterson, Fruitport, Mich.
 Mrs. Alice Ives Breed, New York, N. Y.
 Mrs. Harriet Sprague, New York, N. Y.
 Mrs. Annie Stewart, Kooskia, Ida.
 Mrs. Margaret Adams, Johnstown, N. Y.
 Dr. Charles Berrien Hall, Chicago, Ill.
 Mrs. Altia May, Chicago, Ill.
 Mrs. Leona S. Barnitz, Washington, D. C.
 Mrs. W. H. Repogle, Bakersfield, Calif.
 Mr. Frank W. Doty, Yonkers, N. Y.
 Mr. J. T. Reddin, Marstock, Nova Scotia.
 Miss Katherine Brandeau, Cleveland, Ohio.
 Mrs. Angela Lynch, San Francisco, Calif.
 Mr. John Hampel, Milwaukee, Wis.
 Mrs. Pauline Ayres, Trenton, N. J.
 Mrs. E. A. Dillabough, Farran Point, Ont.
 Mr. Frederick Diehl, Pasadena, Calif.
 Mrs. Mary Lucas, Boston, Mass.
 Mrs. Lily Wiggins, Phoenix, Ariz.
 Mrs. George W. Busey, Urbana, Ill.
 Mrs. Katherine Bertlessen, Kaloma, Wash.
 Mrs. Katherine Sankey, Oakland, Calif.
 Mrs. Mary B. Morris, San Francisco, Calif.
 Mr. M. B. Lessen, Racine, Wis.
 Mrs. Katherine Miller, Racine, Wis.