

Episodes in the Life of MONEEREH KHANUM

By MONEEREH KHANUM



Foreword

A few months ago, Moneereh Khanum - the wife of Abdul Baha, and, as she is known throughout the Bahai world by the title of "the Holy Mother," mailed to me a Persian manuscript recording therein, in her inimitable way, some of the most charming and intimate accounts of her eventful and sacred life. The manuscript was accompanied with a letter written by Moneereh Khanum and Shoghi Effendi, offering me the privilege of translating and publishing it for the benefit of the friends.

Considering the many years that I was engaged in the service of Abdul Baha and the innumerable tokens of hospitality and kindness that I daily received from the members of his blessed family while living in the Holy land - I performed this service with a keen pleasure and satisfaction.

There is nothing more significant and helpful than to read the story of an eye-witness of great historical events and Moneereh Khanum has not only been an eye-witness but a close and most intimate participant and partner of the Wonderful Bahai Revelation. May her spiritual account give the readers a greater and more glorious perception of Truth!

Translator,

MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB.

The translation of an autobiography written by Moneereh Khanum, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha - complying with the request of a number of the American friends.

Munirih Khanum's Account

Introductory Words

In the Name of Abha the Most Glorious

In accord with the request of a number of spiritual sisters and the maid-servants of God in the West, I herein write down a brief account of my own life, and its relation to this great Revelation.

O Thou Almighty! Thou dost testify and art a witness that all my limbs, organs, heart, soul and conscience bear testimony to Thy inexhaustible bounties; for, from the beginning of my life, without any merit on my part, Thou didst shower the rains of Thy Favor upon this maid-servant of Thy Threshold.

From the beginning of my life, and during the period of my childhood, there have come into my life wonders - each one of which is a miracle, causing great astonishment. Were I to explain every incident fully, and to thank with my tongue every blessing vouchsafed, I should be unable to go on with this account, and it would lead to prolixity.

From the age of twelve to the day when I stood in the Holy Presence¹, and visited the Blessed Shrine², I have had many dreams which are worthy of record, conducing man to awareness; so that when difficulties and trials encircle the soul, the remembrance of those dreams will impart consolation and rejoicing, patience and forbearance. Then man will come to realize that behind every event there is hidden a great wisdom, and back of every incident there is a spiritual plan. This contemplation will not allow man to become dejected, unhappy, or sorrow-stricken.

In regard to this matter, the tongue of the Blessed Perfection³ and the Pen of the Greatest Name⁴ wrote in the "Seven Valleys":

"If thou seest an injustice, behold in it Justice, and - if thou dost experience unkindness, perceive in it kindness."

In short I will begin with the story and relate

¹ The Presence of God when in the Presence of Baha'u'llah

² Of the Bab or of Baha'u'llah

³ Baha'u'llah

⁴ The Person and Words of Baha'u'llah as the Writing of God on earth

some of the important events of the past. In God we rely, and from Him we beg help. Although many of the events have not left a deep impression on my mind, and are more or less forgotten, yet because some of the friends have urged that a short account may be recorded, I yield to their request. Before beginning with the story, a brief introduction will here be written concerning my own family, so that it may add to the knowledge of the reader.

Father and Ancestors; Family Name "Nahri"

The name of my father was Mirza Mohammed Ali Nahri, son of Haji Siyyid Mehdi Nahri, the son of Haji Siyyid Mohammed Hendi (Indian). Haji Siyyid Mohammed was born and lived in the village of Zavareh, a suburb of Esfahan. Having reached the age of maturity, he travelled to India, and inasmuch as he belonged to the family of Mohammed, the Prophet, and all the descendants of Mohammed are highly honored and respected all over the East, in time he married one of the Princesses of the ruling Indian family. The Indian Prince, in order to be related to a member of the sacred family of Mohammed, and thus receive spiritual blessing and benediction, gave his own daughter into marriage with Haji Siyyid Mohammed. Thus it came to pass that Haji Siyyid Mohammed sojourned in India, and for this reason he became known by the title of "Indian." This family connection became conducive to much fame, wealth, and honor, and he lived in the style of a nobleman - a prince, and with all the retinue of royalty.

After some time, he became the happy father of two sons; the first-born was named Haji Siyyid Mehdi, who, later on, became the sole inheritor of all the wealth and possessions of his father. This eldest son travelled from India to Najaf (one of the Holy Cities in Karbala, Mesopotamia) and domiciled there. In the course of his life, he came into possession of much wealth and real estate - farms, houses, caravansaries, public baths and stores. These properties were in the cities of Karbala and Najaf. After a while he spent one-third of his money constructing an aqueduct to carry water into the city, and for this reason he became known by the title "Nahri" from the Persian word "Nahr" - a stream of water. This title Nahri was handed down through the family, and to this

day his descendants are thus known.

Haji Siyyid Mohammed Nahri had several children, male and female. Amongst them was my father whose name was Mirza Mohammed Ali Nahri, and my uncle, Mirza Hadi - who in time became the father of the wife of the King of the Martyrs⁵. Upon him be Greeting and Praise!

Quest for the Promised One

Now at this point, let me relate a story which is interesting in itself. At the time when Haji Siyyid Mohammed⁶ was living in India, a celebrated and well-known astrologer drew up his horoscope. One of the forecasts in that horoscope was to this effect, - that from his posterity and grand-children a number will be living in the day of Manifestation of God and will become believers in the Promised One, and whole-hearted devotees to His Cause. Inasmuch as Haji Siyyid Mohammed fully believed in this prognostication and looked upon this prediction as indubitable, he wrote something to the following effect in his will and testament:

"After my possessions are distributed according to the law amongst my inheritors, all that remains in cash and other things, must be formed into a trust, so that when the Promised One appears, it may be presented to Him."

He left his will behind, bidding farewell to this world, and hastened to the Kingdom of Light.

When the Call of the Bab arose from Shiraz, my father and uncle, as soon as they heard of it, without returning to their homes, or saying farewell to their families, started for Shiraz, and with the greatest haste travelled toward the Mount of the Beloved.

The other brothers, who were worldly and lovers of material things, who neither walked in the path of religion nor of truth, but availed themselves of the opportunity, and went to the Mullahs of Najaf and Karbala, accusing their two brothers of being infidels and therefore deserving to be disinherited. They called their brothers "Babis," and took possession of all the wealth and belongings of their father, giving no heed to his Will.

⁵ King of Martyrs - Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Hasan.

⁶ Munirih's great-grandfather

Tahirih

When my uncle realized that his brothers lived in that material condition, he withdrew his hand from the world and its inhabitants, closed his eyes to the wealth of his father⁷, and spent days and nights in serving the Cause of the True One. Then, in the name of his father, Haji Siyyid Mohammed, and in order to fulfil his will, and testament, he himself offered a box of precious jewels which belonged to him, to Qurratu'l Ayn⁸. At that time Qurratu'l Ayn was living in Bagdad and Karbala, and all the expenses of her trip, and her journey from Bagdad to other parts, were defrayed out of the sale of the jewels in that box. Thus, in this indirect manner, the will and desire of that noble soul was fulfilled. If I attempted here to give a description of the days when Qurratu'l Ayn lived in Bagdad and associated with my father and uncle, and in what joy and exhilaration they lived, this short treatise would become a book. If I find an opportunity in the future, I will write, in a separate article, a brief account of those remarkable and spiritual days.

Grandmother's Dream of Two Orbs

Let me, likewise, detail a few words regarding my grand-mother; that is, the mother of my father. She was a holy, believing soul - may the spirit of the Lord be with her at all times! One night, in the world of dreams, she beheld two orbs rising out of the well in her home and entering her heart. She was so excited and exhilarated over this dream that she awoke from sleep, remained awake all night, and before sunrise, with the greatest happiness, went to the house of Haji Siyyid Mohammed Bagher. This latter was a very important theologian and learned man whose word was obeyed throughout all Persia. He was peerless and without equal in his days. When my grandmother related her dream to him and requested an interpretation, he answered:

"Be thou of good cheer and happy, for God will grant thee two children who, like unto two luminous suns, will enlighten and illumine all your family and relatives."

Just about that time my grandmother became

pregnant and my father, Mirza Mohammed Ali was born and a year and three months later, my uncle, Mirza Hadi, was born.

Father and Uncle - Student and Mystic

When these two brothers reached the age of maturity, my father became eager to study philosophy, science, and literature. He entered the college of "Kaseh-Garan" in Esfahan, and became absorbed in the pursuit of knowledge. On the other hand, my uncle was more mystic and Sufi. He lived in retirement, practiced piety and contemplation, and followed the path of the Quietist school. As time rolled on, people trusted him and the Ulamas believed in him. On account of the fame he enjoyed amongst these well-known people, Haji Siyyid Mohammed Baghar, the high priest, gave unto him his cousin in marriage. This girl, later on, became well-known by the title of "Shms-Us-Zoha" (meaning, "the brilliant sun"). This uncle lived in Esphahan and was loved and respected by everyone.

Siyyid Kazim Rashdi and the Rising of the Bab

When my father graduated from the college, he started on a trip to visit the sacred cities, and in Karbala enrolled himself as a student in the classes of Haji Siyyid Kasem Rashdi. He became a firm and enthusiastic follower of the teachings of this master and Sheik Ahmad. These two brilliant orbs shine today in the world of existence, and were unequalled in fame and knowledge. After living for some time in that sacred city, he took unto himself a wife.

My uncle Hadi, with his family, also started on a journey to Karbala. While there, he associated a great deal with my father and the followers of the Sheikhi school. They were thus engaged, when, all of a sudden, in the year 1844, they heard the Call of the Promised One, in the name of "The Bab," from Shiraz. Immediately upon receiving this message, without informing the members of their families, and with the greatest haste, they departed for Shiraz. The reason for their haste in this journey, and their eagerness to attain to the Presence of the Lord of the Age, was to ascertain for themselves all the facts.

When they were attending the classes of Haji Siyyid Kasem, they repeatedly had met His Holiness the Bab and had observed many wonderful traces and spiritual signs appearing from His Holy Temple.

⁷ That is, his grandfather.

⁸ Tahirih, the female heroine of the Bab's followers

Amongst many stories, my uncle used to relate this:

"During those days before the appearance of the Bab, when Haji Siyyid Kasem was engaged in teaching and instructing the people of Karbala, and calling on them with the words, 'Verily, Verily the Kingdom of God is at hand,' my brother and myself were amongst the disciples of Sheik Ahmad, acquiring from him knowledge and information. Every day we attended the classes; and one day when the class was over, we went to visit the Holy Shrine of Imam Hossein.

When we entered the sacred enclosure, we saw a young Siyyid, very handsome, erect and energetic. He stood before the Shrine with the utmost humility and respect and with the greatest lowliness and submission was chanting a supplication. As we looked into his face and observed his comely countenance, we were so moved with the joy of his meeting that we stood still, looking at him; and our tongues did not move.

We had often heard in the course of his lectures Haji Siyyid Kasem stating the fact, that the day of the Manifestation was drawing nigh. He admonished us at all times that we must be searching, and be in a state of quest, because the Promised One was living amongst the people, was associating with them; but unfortunately the people were veiled and lived in a state of negligence.

When we saw the Bab standing with such humility before the shrine of Imam Hossein, we often wondered if, perhaps, he was not the invisible Promised One, who had come to visit the Shrine of his ancestors. Whenever we saw the Bab thus visiting the shrine, we sat near to him, listening to the sweet melody of his chants, and observed his spiritual grace. Often tears, like vernal showers flowed from his eyes. When he finished his prayer, without entering the inner enclosure of the Tomb, he would bow down with great humility, and leave the place.

Seeing this I was much astonished, and argued with myself - 'who is this sacred, divine personage?' I followed him until he entered his house and disappeared from my view. I inquired from the neighbors of that house - 'Who are the

people who live here?' They answered, 'They are the merchants from Shiraz who have been living there in the past few days.'

Immediately I realized that that sacred personage was a native of Shiraz. From that time on, every day I would meet him at the time of his visit to the Holy Shrine. During his seclusion in Karbala, he attended now and then the classes of Haji Siyyid Kasem, with a shining and luminous countenance. Whenever he entered the class, Haji Siyyid Kasem would show him the greatest respect and honor. When these classes closed, and the period of the pilgrimage was over, the Bab returned to Bu-Shihr and Shiraz and Haji Siyyid Kasem departed to the higher world.

While my brother and I were living in Karbala, we heard the call of the Manifestation under the name of the Bab who had manifested himself in Shiraz. As soon as we heard the news, our hearts turned toward that Personage, as we remembered the smiling countenance of him who had lived in our midst while in Karbala. I immediately said to my brother:

'I declare by God that this heavenly person must be the same Youth of Shiraz who frequented the classes of Haji Siyyid Kasem.'

**Father and Uncle Journey to Shiraz;
Return Separately to Karbala and Isfahan**

In brief, along with my brother, we started on our journey toward the City of Shiraz. When we had travelled half the distance, we were informed that the Bab had started on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and for this reason I returned to Karbala, and my brother went to Esfahan."

Now concerning my father: on arriving at Esfahan, as his wife was living in Karbala, he took a room in the college of "Kaseh-Garan." About this time His Holiness, Babu'l Bab⁹ received a command from the Bab to leave Shiraz for Esfahan. Having arrived in that city, he engaged in the promotion of the Cause, and guided many souls to this wonderful Movement. Among those who accepted the Message was my father. He was led to the path of Knowledge and Faith. After a while misfortune overtook

⁹ Mulla Husayn - the gate (bab) of the Gate (Bab) - the first to recognise the Bab

him, as he received the news that his wife had ascended to the Kingdom.

Father Remarries after Wife's Death

While he was thus deprived of the comforts of a home, he met and associated with Haji Aga Mohammed, a well-known merchant of Esfahan and one of the new believers. He was very devoted to my father. One day he said to my father:

"Inasmuch as your wife has passed away without issue, would it not be better for you to forsake your room in the College, and come to live with us in our home; I have a sister, and if agreeable to you, I will be more than happy to arrange a marriage between you, so the bond of love and affection may thus be strengthened between you and our family."

My father readily consented to this wise suggestion, and Haji Aga Mohammed, after consulting with his mother, found that she not only had no objections, but was most eager to bring about the union. His mother said:

"Last night I saw, in the world of dreams, a nobleman (Siyyid) with luminous face visit our home. He carried in his hands two lamps. Now that Siyyid must be this personage, and unquestionably you must hasten the consummation of this marriage."

Munirih Conceived from the Bab's Intervention; Brothers and Sisters

Then Haji Aga Mohammed invited many friends to a betrothal feast, and his sister, who is my mother, was affianced to my father. It was well-known that my father had no children from his first wife. Two years passed after his marriage with my mother, but no child was born. Then His Holiness the Bab, travelling from Shiraz, arrived in Esfahan, and took up his abode in the home of Imam Joma¹⁰. My uncle, Mirza Ibrahim, the father of the King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of the Martyrs¹¹, was appointed by Imam Joma as host to His Holiness the Bab, to be ready at all times to serve him under all circumstances. One night he invited to dinner His Holiness the Bab, who graciously accepted this invitation. The people present at that

¹⁰ The Imam-Jum'ih was the leader of the Friday prayers (the most important of the week)

¹¹ King of Martyrs, Haji Siyyid Muhammad-Hasan; Beloved of Martyrs, Jahi Siyyid Hummad-Husayn, martyred 17 Mar 1879.

memorable feast were: Mirza Siyyid Mohammed, Imam Joma, Mirza Mohammed Hossein (the brother of Imam Joma, who later became instrumental in the martyrdom of the King and the Beloved of the Martyrs, and whom the Supreme Pen of Baha'u'llah called "the snake"), Siyyid Mohammed Reza, Haji Aga Mohammed, Mirza Ibrahim Taj, Mullah Mohammed Haji Harati - the father of Mirza Mohammed Ali and Mirza Ibrahim - and the uncle, who was the host. Those present at that Glorious Feast received the bounties and favors of the Bab, and listened to his words until supper was served. Then they all sat down to a spiritual and material feast. While partaking of the supper, His Holiness the Bab turned to one of those present and made inquiries about the children of my father. That person answered that, although he had been twice married, no children were born to him. His Holiness the Bab then offered my father a spoonful of sweets. He ate, and at that moment it occurred to his mind that the blessed will of the Lord had at last destined the birth of a child for him. When the feast was over and he had returned to his home, he mentioned this fact to my mother. Having kept a little of the sweets, he gave it to her. After eight months and nine days I was born into the world. Three years passed, and then Haji Siyyid Yahya was born. After another three years, Razieb Beygoum was born. Five years elapsed and another sister, Gohaur Beygoum saw the light of day; in short my parents were blessed with nine daughters and one son.

Bab's Imprisonment in Tabriz and Mah-Ku; the Black Standard; Father and Uncle Enrol - 1848

The Bab, having brought to an end his sojourn in Esfahan, went to Tabriz and Makou¹². While he was living in those parts, a Tablet was received from Him for all the believers of God, asking them to enlist themselves under "The Black Flag"¹³ which was to be raised in the Province of Khorassan. My father started for that region. Before departing he said to my mother:

I am going on this long journey. I do not know

¹² Fortresses of imprisonment

¹³ Expected of the coming of the Promised One in Islam to arise from Khorasan

how it will end, or what will befall me; perhaps I may be martyred. Therefore I will make my will now that if, God willing, another child be born, and is a son, give him the name of Ali, and if a girl, call her Fatima."

Badasht and Khorasan; Nayala; Persecutions

This was the will of my father and mother. Then, in company with about twenty-five other men, he started for the Province of Khorassan. When they arrived at the Plain of Badasht¹⁴, which was to be the meeting ground of the believers, my uncle, Mirza Hadi, also joined them. At that time the Blessed Perfection, Baha'u'llah, His Holiness Goddous¹⁵, and Qurratu'l Ayn¹⁶ were in Badasht. Daily contingents of the believers from different parts of Persia arrived, and joined the others until all had come, and the Army of God struck its tents and departed for Khorassan. It was here that the incidents of Nayala and the stoning of the friends came to pass. (The detailed accounts of these events are found in history.¹⁷)

Uncle Dies; Father Buries Him with Surprise Help

My uncle received many injuries and died on the way; my father, afterward, used to relate this event:

When Nayala was disturbed, and the believers were scattered, each group running in a different direction, the inhabitants of Nayala mercilessly followed them up, killing everyone they could lay their hands on. My brother and myself and a few other believers, having taken to the road, were making slow progress, when all of a sudden, my brother was overcome by a great weakness. We found on the way, a ruined caravansarie, and spent the night there. During the night my brother passed from this life, and the friends, being fearful that the enemies would attack again, at midnight, left for various parts. I was left alone with the remains of my brother.

In the morning, I left the caravansarie and stood

by the roadside lost in wonder, not knowing what to do, how to secure the means for the burial of my brother, or how to escape the persecution of the enemy. Suddenly I saw in the distance, a woman walking to me. Having approached, she inquired:

'Who are you and why do you stand here?' I answered:

'Last night my brother died in this Caravansarie, and I am wondering how I shall bury him.'

The woman answered:

'Do not be anxious, I have come to help thee in the performance of this service. Last night I saw in my dream Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed. She told me that one of her children had died in this caravansarie, and in the morning I should come and assist in his burial. Now I have come to fulfil her order.'

Having said this, she returned to the village, and came back immediately with a number of other persons, bringing with them all the means of burial. The body of the dead was washed in the running stream. Then it was covered with a white sheet. Inasmuch as my brother had wished to be buried "by the side of the road where the pilgrims come and go," we buried him there. Then the people of the village returned to their homes, and I continued my travels toward Teheran, and from there I journeyed to Isfahan, arriving utterly exhausted, fatigued, stoned by the enemy, my brother dead, and my sister travelling with Quarratu'l Ayn, their whereabouts unknown, and their safety in doubt.

Father Reaches Isfahan; Challenges

In this condition my father reached Esfahan, at a time when no one would dare to mention the word "Babi." Amidst these furious hurricanes, on the very night of his arrival, a glowing meeting was held, and he began to deliver the wonderful Message of the New Manifestation. He was so enkindled with the fire of the Love of God, that his elder brother, the father of the King and the Beloved of the Martyrs, sent a message to him:

"O beloved brother, You Babis have a great commotion in your minds, and you are not afraid of any danger or calamity. If such is the case, it were better for you to leave this quarter of the city, for my life, and the life of my family and children are in great danger."

My father sent the following message.

¹⁴ Where the break from Islam was made

¹⁵ Quddus

¹⁶ Tahirih

¹⁷ With the new freedom felt at Badasht, and Tahirih having removed her veil, a few Babis took this freedom to excess, and at dawn they were stoned from the top of a mountain by the people, causing everyone to flee, leaving only Bahá'u'lláh, Tahirih and a young man. [see Dawnbreakers, p298-9.]

"I will not sell the religion of God for the sake of worldly consideration. I gave up the unlimited wealth of my father, and as long as life lasts in this body, I will exert the utmost effort in the spread of this Cause."

Immediately afterward, my father bought a house in another quarter of the city called "Shah-Shahan." Here, in company with His Honor, Zein-el-Mogarrabeen¹⁸ and Siyyid Ismail, (who in later years, sacrificed himself by his own hand in Bagdad) they spent their time in promulgating the Cause of God. Some of the noble souls who were guided to the Fountain of Truth in those days were the King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of the Martyrs. Having finished their work here, together they started for Bagdad to visit Baha'u'llah.

**Visit to Baha'u'llah, 1850s;
Great-Uncle Believes in Baha'u'llah Before His Declaration**

Often I heard my father, in the course of conversation, say:

"During this journey I told my uncle 'when you present yourself in the Presence of Baha'u'llah, you must act as the interpreter of our hearts, and lay before him all our questions.' My uncle rejoined: 'Rest thou assured, when in Badasht, I became very intimate with Baha'u'llah; therefore there will be no difficulty in approaching Him.'

When we arrived in Bagdad, and the hour of meeting was at hand, I observed my uncle who, on the way had boasted of his intimacy with Baha'u'llah, yet in His Presence was most humble, silent, as one lost, who could not utter a word. No matter how much the Blessed Perfection manifested his kindness and bounty, my uncle remained only more silent and humble. Finally, Baha'u'llah addressed him:

'Mirza Hadi! You and I were intimate associates, and travelling companions.'

Then all those who were in the Presence of Baha'u'llah received permission to retire. When we came out I asked my uncle:

'What happened to you that you could not say a word?' He answered:

'I declare by God that this Baha'u'llah is not the same Baha that I met in Badasht: nay rather,

with the utmost assurance and certainty and confidence of my heart, I testify that this Holy Personage is the Promised One - Him Whom God Shall Manifest, foretold by the Bab."

In short, this uncle was one of those souls who had become a believer in the Blessed Perfection and the Most Great Name, before His public declaration. After some months they returned from Bagdad, and one more year elapsed, when we were overtaken with the calamity of the departure of our father. He ascended to the Kingdom. May the Bounty and Favor of the Lord rest upon him.

At the time my father returned from Bagdad, I was eleven years old¹⁹. I often heard my father say to my mother:

"It is my intention to take Fatima to the Holy Family." And I would wonder within myself,

"Oh God, where is this Holy Family, in Karbala, or some other blessed land."

**Father Passes Away; Munirih Raised by Relatives;
Suitors, Stresses and Sadness**

When the father passed away, our affairs fell into the hands of relatives of father and mother. On both sides they manifested toward me the greatest love and kindness, for with great faith they looked upon me as a gift unto them granted by His Holiness the Bab, on the night of the feast. In their eagerness to serve and please me, they would elect as my future husband, the most handsome and attractive young men who appealed to them as eligible. There was constant competition between the members of the two families, and much feeling and altercation ensued. The matter reached to such a point that relations became strained. These sad events and constant disagreements, made a deep impression on my young life, and left me depressed and unhappy, with no desire to take part in any joyous occasion. Often I asserted my right, declaring that I was the master of my own destiny, and I would not accept any one, be he Christ from heaven, or the beautiful Joseph from Egypt.

I spent a great deal of my time in reading the Tablets and chanting the communes. I recited every day the Great Prayer, and kept both the Bahai and Mohammedan fasts. My heart did

¹⁸ Zayn al-Muqarrabin, a well-known Baha'i scribe

¹⁹ 1859 AD

not incline to worldly pleasures, and I often wondered at myself, and questioned my heart:

"Why is it that I feel so detached, and have no inclination toward the ordinary recreations of society?" I would argue that I greatly love and honor my relatives and friends, then why was it that I would not try to obey them and fulfil their wishes?

Every day about sunset, I would ascend to the roof of the house, and spend my time in chanting the communions and reciting sacred poems. I always spent part of the night in this state of spiritual communion. This angered my mother, and she would exclaim: "Why dost thou this?"

Dream of the Horseman in the Desert

In brief, one night I came down from the roof in a depressed and unhappy condition, and with greatest melancholy, retired to bed. In the world of dreams I saw myself walking in a desert while a person was following me. As I walked he traced my footsteps. Suddenly a horseman appeared on the scene and addressed me:

"Why art thou afraid? Come, I will take thee on my back, and will carry thee to whichever destination thou desirest."

He then took my hand, caught me from the ground, and made me ride behind him. Then he said:

"Tell me what thou wishest, and I will grant it thee." I said:

"Confer upon me two wings that I may soar aloft." He touched my back, and raised me a little above the saddle. Immediately I realized I had two wings and I began to fly. For a long time I soared, until I reached a vast field where I saw a multitude of people. In the midst of this immense throng, I saw a raised pulpit. On the pulpit I saw His Holiness Mohammed, and all the prophets and apostles gathered around him. While I observed all these strange scenes, I knew I was in the form of a dove soaring freely in the air. I circled above the crowd and then alighted on a corner of the pulpit. His Holiness Mohammed touched me with his blessed hand, and hung a necklace about my neck. Then I rose and started to fly again, and flying on and on, beheld wondrous sights and strange scenes of indescribable beauty. In one place I observed a concourse of people in a state of retirement,

amongst whom I saw my mother, to whom I gave the necklace, and again continued my flight.

This dream caused such intense joy and exhilaration that it awakened me, and I began to weep. My mother, who was near, was also awakened, and wondered what had happened. The next day, from morning until evening, I was in a dazed condition. In short, I saw many dreams of this nature, soaring in the air and feeling exalted and rejoiced, and I knew full well that there is a beautiful and significant interpretation in all dreams in which people see themselves flying. Thus my time passed until, by the insistence and persistence of the King and the Beloved of Martyrs, and the forcefulness of Imam Joma, they compelled me to yield and consent to marry the younger brother of the two above mentioned Martyrs. Realizing their determination, I could not refuse, and acceded to their demand.

Fateful First Marriage

At that time, all the letters and communications that passed between the Holy Land and the believers of Esfahan, were carried by this young man. He was a youth endowed with comeliness, courtliness, and an engaging personality. He was ignited with the fire of love, enkindlement, and attraction. Thus all the relatives and friends were exceedingly happy and rejoiced over the forthcoming union. They made great preparation, and looked after the completion of every detail with the utmost precision.

This youth dispatched to me every day letters overflowing with affection and love. This correspondence continued while a house was being erected for our future home. The home was finished, and at last the nuptial banquet was spread, and the night of marriage drew nigh. According to marriage ceremonies in Persia, they invited guests and relatives and carried me to the house of my uncle. Meanwhile, the bridegroom spent his time in reading and singing verses of happiness and reciting poems expressing his felicity. After the hour of ten, my cousin came from his room and welcomed me with an effusion of joy, and took me to the bridal chamber.

By that time, all the guests had dispersed except a few near relatives. In time these, also, departed, and we were left to ourselves. I sat

silent and observed my cousin who did not raise his head, nor did he speak one word. He did not try to remove my bridal veil, nor make any attempt to welcome me, inquire about my health, or express any sign of affection. This continued for several hours until I could endure it no longer, nor did I dare say a word. At last I saw the foregleamings of the light of day, and I detected the shadows of several of the relatives who were trying to peep through the lattice of the window. Feeling desperate, I broke my silence and said:

"What has come over you that you do not speak one word?" He answered:

"I have a headache which had taken away the power of speech." And he again lapsed into silence.

There is no need to go into the inexplicability of this story, the strangeness of which is rare indeed in the annals of human relationship. It is so strange that no one would believe its accuracy except the people of Esfahan who saw with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears. This event saddened all the brothers, and cast a pall of grief over all the relatives who would argue with him, and tried to make him understand his unheard of behavior, but he was helpless, like a man living in a state of consternation and wonderment; swearing by God that the matter was beyond his control, that some power kept him away from me - he was willing to obey any of the wishes of his brothers except the wish to live with his cousin as man and wife. Often he would conclude his remarks that there must be some reason behind this, which would become manifest and evident in the future.

For some time we continued to live together according to the above rule. I found him always silent, taciturn, quiet and dreamy. He would not speak to any one, did not communicate his thoughts to any soul, nor associate with the people. One night we were alone in the house except for the maid. He placed his head on my lap, and without speaking a word, went to sleep. A long time passed, and suddenly I felt a strange sensation. I touched his hand, it was icy cold. He had given up his life to his creator, may the Mercy and Bounty of the Lord be upon him forever!

I relate this story so that it may become apparent that for every difficulty that appears in the way of man, unquestionably there is a wisdom behind it. In reality this chaste and pure cousin was a patrol who carried me to the ideal beloved, and joined this stream of water to the most great sea. After the occurrence of this sad event, I turned my back completely to the world and its inhabitants, cut my heart from every attachment, and overflowing with the love of God, occupied my time with reading the verses and the signs of God, and associating with the believers of God.

Engaged to Abdu'l-Baha

Then, in compliance with the command of the Blessed Perfection, Siyyid Mehdi Dhajy arrived in Persia, and later passed through Esfahan to promulgate the cause of God. A great feast was prepared for him, and all the believers clustered around inquiring eagerly the news of the Holy Land, and all the details concerning the Blessed Family and an account of the imprisonment of the believers in the barracks of Acca. Among the inquirers was Shms os Zoha, the wife of my uncle, and a member of the household of the King of the Martyrs. She asked of Siyyid Mehdi:

"While you were in the Presence of Baha'u'llah, did you ever hear whether any girl had been spoken of, or selected for the Master Abdul Baha?"

He answered, "No, but one day the Blessed Perfection was walking in the men's apartment and speaking. Then He turned His face to me and said, Aga Siyyid Mehdi! I had a remarkable dream last night. I dreamt that the face of the beautiful girl who is living in Tihran, whose hand in marriage we asked from Mirza Hassen for the Greatest Branch, became dark and obscure²⁰. At the same moment, the face of another girl appeared on the scene, whose countenance was luminous and whose heart enlightened. We have selected her to become the wife of the Greatest Branch.' Except for the above talk from the lips of the Blessed Perfection, I have heard nothing."

When my aunt returned to the house and saw me, she declared by the One God that, at the very moment when Siyyid Mehdi was relating to

²⁰ She became ill and passed away.

us the dream of Baha'u'llah, it had occurred to her mind that, without question, I was that girl, and ere long we would realize that she was right. I wept and answered:

"Far be it, for I am not worthy of such a bounty. I beg of thee never let another word concerning the matter issue from thy lips; do not speak about it."

Some time passed and then a Tablet from the Holy Land arrived in honor of the King of the Martyrs. In that Tablet the Blessed Perfection revealed:

"We have accounted you as our relatives and near ones." When he read this phrase, he immediately went to all the members of the family and inquired whether any one had written anything of an intimate nature to the Blessed Presence of Baha'u'llah. He wondered at these glad tidings and could not see the reason for the bestowal of this great Bounty. We all answered him that no one had written anything. Then he requested every one not to mention the contents of This Tablet to any of the believers, and that we should wait until we received further light to enlighten us regarding this enigmatical passage.

Munirih Travels to Palestine via Mecca

Again time rolled on and then, after a number of months Sheik Salman arrived in Esfahan from the Holy Land. He met the King of the Martyrs and told him he had brought great news and the most wonderful bounty. It was this:

"I have received an order to take your cousin, the daughter of Mirza Mohammed Ali, and convey her by way of Mecca, along with the pilgrims who go to visit the House of God in Arabia. Therefore you must prepare the means of journey so that, during the month of pilgrimage, we may start on our trip by way of Shiraz and Bu-Shihr. However, you must keep this news very quiet, and let no one know anything about it until three days before our departure."

Meeting with the Wife of the Bab and Relatives in Shiraz

The time of pilgrimage arrived and in company with my brother Siyyid Yahya and a servant, we started for Shiraz. When we entered that city, we took up our abode in a very delightful

caravansarie. It was about sunset. The Afnan²¹, hearing of our arrival, came to visit us, and took us to the house of the uncle of the Bab, Haji Mirza Siyyid Mohammed. We spent the night in that beautiful home. To my mind it is holy ground, a luminous spot, a gallery from the galleries of Paradise. Here I met the ladies of Afnan who welcomed me with the greatest affection, and I embraced and kissed them with holy love. There is no need to explain here the spirituality, the sanctification one attains to by sleeping in that house. Next morning, the blessed wife of the Bab, like unto Mary the Virgin, and Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, came to welcome us.

She overwhelmed us with kindness and graciousness. She invited me to go with her to her home. I was glad to avail myself of the opportunity, and accompanied her. Her home belonged to the great uncle of the Bab, Haji Siyyid Ali, who later attained to martyrdom, and is well-known as one of the Seven Martyrs. This house is situated next to the house in which the Bab was born. I was taken first to the House of the Bab. In it there is a large room whose doors and windows are always locked. No one enters it. It belonged to the Bab. In order that we might visit the room they opened its doors and we entered. We stood, with the utmost humility and submission for nearly one hour on that holy spot. Then the wife of the Bab said:

"I have been expecting your arrival. Mirza Hassan wrote me that ere long I would have a guest."

The Bab's Great Uncle's Wife Believes

Then she took us to her own home where we met the wife of the great uncle of the Bab. I found her a holy, prayerful, sanctified woman who devoted much of her time to religious devotion, but she was not fully convinced of the truth of the great Cause. She would say,

"This, our Mirza Mohammed Ali, has indeed caused a great commotion in the world of humanity! How many important souls have perished as a result of this upheaval, and how much blood has been shed!" I answered,

"O my beloved friend, your Mirza Mohammed Ali

²¹ "Twigs" - maternal relatives of the Bab and the surname of their descendants

is the Promised One of Mohammed. He is the Qa'im and the expected Revelator of all the Sacred Books. Whenever a Manifestation appears and the call of God is raised, no matter in what time, or in what age, the same commotion and uproar are raised, rivers of blood flow and opposers deny. Have you not read in the Holy Book of Qur'an the verse 'Whenever a Messenger cometh unto you with that which your soul desires not, ye proudly reject him, accusing some of imposture and slaying others.' Again you read in the Qur'an, 'O the misery of men! No messenger cometh unto them, but they laugh him to scorn.'" I quoted a number of similar passages from Qur'an. She voiced the objection that no one understood the real meaning of the Qur'an except God and those grounded in knowledge. I answered,

"All right, I accede to your argument that the Qur'an is above and beyond human comprehension; then let us look over the books of Masnavi (a book well-known in the Orient for its religious and mystical teachings in which the stories of the Prophets of the Bible are recorded to illustrate points which the author of the book intends to bring forth.) Ponder over the story of Moses and Pharaoh, how the latter rejected Moses. Think of the way the Pharisees received His Holiness Christ. Meditate over the history of the life of Mohammed and how the people of Arabia rejected him. All these historical facts are recorded in Masnavi and other books."

We spent hours together reading the book of Masnavi and I explained to her its salient points. The ladies of the Afnan were present on these occasions. They were indeed happy days, the sweetness of which will never be forgotten, the memory of which remains with me forever.

After our departure from Shiraz I heard the glad news that she was confirmed in the faith.

Wife of the Bab Narrates Stories of the Bab

One day I asked the blessed wife of the Bab, as we had talked enough regarding these argumentative subjects, if she would not relate to me some of the incidents of her life and association with the Bab, the hours she spent in His Holy Presence, and the manner in which her marriage to him was brought about. She answered:

"I do not remember everything but since you request it, I will relate to you all that has remained in my mind. The father of the Bab, Siyyid Mohammed Reza, was the son of my uncle. He was engaged in lucrative commerce. We were three sisters. One night I saw in the world of dreams, Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, coming to our house and desiring one of us to marry her son. My sisters and I welcomed her with affection and courtesy. When she sat down, she looked us over keenly, then arose from her seat, came forward and kissed my forehead. In the world of dreams I felt that she was much pleased with my appearance and that I was her favorite. Next morning I arose and felt light and buoyant, but I was ashamed to relate my dream to any one. The afternoon of that very day the mother of the Bab came to our house. With my sisters we went to welcome her, and, to my surprise just as I had seen in my dream, she left her seat, came smilingly toward me, kissed my forehead and embraced me. After some general conversation she left. My eldest sister whispered into my ears that she had come to ask my hand for her son. I answered, 'How fortunate I am.' Then I related my dream of the previous night saying that the realization of this dream had brought to my heart great happiness.

After a number of days the betrothal was discussed and some gifts were forwarded to our house to bind this happy agreement. Then His Holiness the Bab, accompanied by His uncle, left for Bu-Shihr so he might engage in commerce there. After that dream, whenever I met the mother of the Bab, although she was my aunt, yet I could not treat her with intimacy, but I exercised toward her the utmost courtesy and humility.

At this time I do not remember how long the trip of the Bab to Bu-Shihr lasted: but while he was in that city, one night I saw in my dream that the night of marriage had arrived and I was sitting beside the Bab. He wore a green robe around which some writings were embroidered which, on closer scrutiny, I found to be verses from the Qur'an, amongst which was the verse on Light, and it seemed that the body of the Bab was enveloped in a halo of light. It made me exceedingly happy and rejoiced to meet the Bab

in this marvelous manner. I awakened from my sleep, and from that time a conviction was born in my heart and I was filled with a great faith that he must be a most wonderful personage. His love filled my heart to overflowing, but I did not dare tell these intimate things to any one until after he returned from Bu-Shihr and his uncle arranged the marriage festival.

When the matrimonial event passed by and I came to know the Bab personally, I found myself detached from material things, my heart being entirely attracted to him, and his sayings of wisdom, instruction, his behavior and manners assured me that he was a person from on high, but I never, in my wildest flight of imagination, could conceive that he was the promised Mehdi, the Qa'im of Mohammed.

Declaration of the Bab in 1844

He spent a great deal of his time in supplication and prayer, chanting communions and reading the Holy Verses. In the evening when he returned home, according to the usual custom of merchants, he would request to have brought to him his portfolio, and what I thought, his account books but, on a close inspection, they did not seem like ledgers and account books. Sometimes I would ask him:

'What do these books and papers contain?' He would smilingly answer:

'These are the account books of the people of the world.'

While he was thus engaged in reading and writing, if a person suddenly appeared on the scene, he would hastily gather up his books and papers and tie them in a handkerchief. All the friends and relatives, such as the uncles and aunts, felt assured that the Bab was an extraordinary being, and they therefore manifested great respect and veneration toward him, until the night of May 23, 1844. On this night, Mullah Hossein Bushreyeh visited the Bab, acknowledged His Mission, and became the first believer in His Cause. That was indeed a wonderful night. The Bab said:

'We will entertain tonight, a very dear guest.' His blessed face was enkindled and set aglow. This spiritual ecstasy on the part of the Bab, made me long to listen to His blessed words, but He turned His face to me and said:

'It is better for you to retire and sleep.' I did not

desire to disobey His wish and leave my bed, but I lay awake all night and at all hours heard his spiritual voice conversing in the most animated manner with Mullah Hossein Bushreyeh, reading the verses to him and presenting proofs and arguments.

Persecution and Suffering following the Bab's Declaration

Every day, from that time on, the Bab entertained a strange guest, while these spiritual discourses continued uninterrupted. If I wished to relate fully the suffering and trials that were heaped upon Him during those days, you would not be able to listen, but I will give you one of the many incidents showing how He was apprehended by his enemies.

One night we were in bed asleep. At the hour of twelve, Abdul Hamid Khan, the Mayor of the City, followed by a concourse of men penetrated into the house from the roof, entered the rooms, dragged the Bab out of bed, and without asking any questions or permitting any explanations, took him away clad only in a very thin robe. That was my last visit with my blessed husband. The ordeals and trials which surrounded the Bab, the unheard of persecutions inflicted upon Him are beyond the power of my description. I never again met any of his friends and disciples. The door of communication was shut from all sides, and we could neither meet nor correspond with Him.

One day I heard a great commotion in Shiraz. It was as though an insurrection had set in. I heard music and bugle calls and I saw people running to and fro. Inquiry revealed that they had brought the heads of the martyrs of Nayriz to the city. The next day, amidst the same hubbub and clamor, and the yells of the mobs they paraded the captives of Nayriz through the streets. I longed to meet one of those prisoners: but it was impossible. Later two of the captives, disguised as beggars, knocked at our door, but they did not dare say a word about the Cause, because they were watched by spies. Those were, indeed, most trying days; but in these days when you arrive, you enjoy comparative freedom. We can sit down and speak about this Truth without fear and trembling. Is it now possible for you to remain here for some time and meet the ladies of the Afnan, and converse with them about these spiritual matters?"

**Farewells to the Wife of the Bab;
Khadijah's Requests and Passing from this World**

Sheik Salman, who managed the affairs of our caravan, said it would not be wise to stay in Shiraz any longer, that it was the blessed command of Baha'u'llah to continue our journey with the hosts of the Pilgrims. In short, amidst crying, weeping and lamentation, we bade farewell to the wife of the Bab and other Afnan ladies, and started for Bu-Shihr. Before our departure, however, she asked me to take two requests to the Blessed Perfection; the first was, that one of the leaves of the Blessed Tree of Baha'u'llah be given in marriage to one of the relatives of the Bab; so that these two divine Trees might be connected also in the outward and apparent world. The second request was that that permission be given to her to visit Baha'u'llah. When I presented myself in the Holy Chamber I delivered these messages and both of them were immediately granted.

Baha'u'llah stated that the brother of the wife of the Bab - who is the father of Mirza Mohsen, the husband of one of the daughters of Abdul Baha - may leave Shiraz, bringing the wife of the Bab with him and travel to the Holy Land. He was commanded to journey as though he was going toward Mecca. Owing to some unavoidable difficulties, he started for the Holy Land, then wrote to his sister, the wife of the Bab, that he had been obliged to go on ahead, but that, God willing, the means of travel for her would also be brought about. She was so grief-stricken on receipt of this letter, that her health failed, and within two days her spirit departed from this world. Her remains were buried in Sha-Tcherag, Shiraz.

When the Blessed Perfection was informed of these sad events, he was exceedingly grieved and immediately sent an order to Mirza Sadeg of Esfahan that, without delay or excuse, he must immediately send the relatives of the King of the Martyrs to the Holy Land. This command was executed with dispatch.

Arrives in Bushihr; the Sea

Accompanied by my travelling companions, I arrived in Bu-Shihr late one afternoon, and we stopped at a caravansarie. As I had never seen the ocean, I immediately went to the roof of the building, and for the first time set eyes on the infinite expanse of the sea. I was thrilled at the

sight, and said to myself:

"Thou must travel over these waters to distant worlds."

Thoughts of home mingled with love and attachment for my relatives filled my mind and revived bygone memories in a most vivid manner. I was so moved that involuntarily tears came to my eyes, because the members and relatives of our family are all important people and were united with the tie of a peculiar love and tender affection. Nevertheless, I praised the Lord that He had scattered us over the face of the earth in His divine path. He had divided us, caused many of us to sacrifice our lives for the Cause, made our name the subject of discussion in every Assembly, and their title the King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of the Martyrs.

Dream of the Pearls

I descended from the roof submerged in a sea of happiness and rejoicing. Still thinking of far-off friends, sisters and relatives, and moved by many sweet remembrances, I placed my head on the saddle-bag in the corner of the room and fell asleep. While thus I slept, I dreamed. I found myself in an interminable desert. A pearl necklace hung around my neck. Suddenly, the thread of the necklace broke and the pearls were scattered all over the sand. Agitated and full of anxiety I feverishly engaged in collecting them, but to my surprise each pearl had become as large as a hen's egg, nay rather, a little larger, and some of them were linked together, diffusing such brilliancy and radiance that the great Sahara was illumined. They were so beautiful, so flawless, so rich in whiteness and loveliness, that in my dream, I was reminded of the words of His Holiness the Bab revealed in the Persian Beyan:

"Endeavor ye, as much as ye can, to present every priceless and valuable article to the Presence of Him Whom God Shall Manifest."

I said to myself, 'Would it not be wonderful to gather all these pearls and carry them along with me, and when I stand in the Presence of the Blessed Perfection, I may offer them to him?' In dreamland I found a vase, and gathering the pearls, placed them in it. Then holding the vase above my head I cried at the top of my voice:

'O Thou! Him Whom God Shall Manifest! O Thou!
Him Whom God Shall Manifest!'

I seemed to have traveled some distance when, all of a sudden a branch shot forth from the center of the vase, and inclined itself toward the Holy Land, guiding me to that blessed spot. Now I would see the branch standing erect, and again bending down as though in the act of prostration. A sweet seraphic voice issued forth from the branch:

"Allah O Akbar! Allah O Azem! Allah O Abha!"

I joined in this exclamation of greeting and salutation, praising and glorifying the Lord with those words. My voice sounded so loud, and I was crying with so much joy that Siyyid Yahya was awakened from his sleep. He shook me until I awoke, saying:

"Sister, sister, what has happened to you that you cry and talk so much in your sleep."

Then I related to him my dream, and said that my tongue was unable to give him an adequate description of its beautitude and heavenliness. I was in such a state of exaltation that I sat down, in the middle of the night, and wrote out an account of that dream for my mother, and mailed it to Esfahan.

**Steamship to Jeddah; Pilgrimage at Mecca;
Delays from Trouble in Akka**

Next day we embarked on the steamer, and after a few days' journey on the sea, arrived at the port of Jeddah. We then visited Mecca and performed the ceremonies of Haj. Here we met a number of believers, amongst them Siyyid Ali Akbar, the nephew of Siyyid Mehdi Dahjy, and his wife, who were returning from the Holy Land, and had also performed the visitation to Mecca. When they learned that we were travelling to the Holy Land, they tried to prevent our departure, saying that in these days no one is permitted to go to Acca, because some sad and unfortunate events had caused anew the incarceration of the Friends, and the authorities did not permit any Bahai to enter the city of Acca. This news disturbed us a great deal, and we wondered what we should do, but Sheik Salman assured us that these conditions did not apply to us, and made us feel confident that we should enter the Holy Land with the utmost ease and tranquility, even if all the believers were thrown into prison and under chains.

Having performed all the necessary requirements, religious devotions and ceremonies belonging to the pilgrimage of Mecca, we returned to Jeddah. There we found a letter from Mirza Aga Jann, the amenuensis of Baha'u'llah, awaiting us, in which he stated that, according to the command of the Blessed Perfection, we must remain in Jeddah until all the Pilgrims to Mecca had returned to their respective homes. Then we should quietly travel to Alexandria and await receipt of a cablegram.

Thus, in accordance with the above order, we remained in Jeddah until all the Hajis were dispersed. We travelled to Alexandria accompanied by seventeen of the Friends of God who became our travelling companions from Mecca. Here a cablegram reached us from the Blessed Presence of Baha'u'llah instructing that all the other companions of the trip must return, and we four must depart for Acca on the Austrian steamer. The cable further stated that when the steamer reached the port of Acca, we must remain on board until Abdul Ahad called on us, and with him we could disembark.

Steamer to Palestine; Long Wait to Disembark

Thus our travelling companions left us, and we started on our trip to the Holy Land. Our steamer anchored half an hour before sunset in the port of Acca. We waited and waited, but could not see Abdul Ahad. All the passengers left the ship, the cargo was unloaded and still no one appeared. We were agitated and wondered what to do. My brother, Siyyid Yahya, said humorously:

"Dear sister, it seems to me we will have to go back."

"Brother, we are ready to obey. In a Tablet called the City of Resignation, Baha'u'llah states 'The paradise of Resignation is superior to the paradise of negation.'"

Night came and the gang planks were raised. We lost heart and were completely disappointed. Sheik Salman, beside himself, was crying all the time. Suddenly, out of the hushed stillness, the clear voice of Abdul Ahad, like the trumpet of heaven, or the Revelator of His Holiness the Almighty, reached our ears. The gang plank was lowered, and we descended. He had brought a special boat. In

the silence of the night we rode²² to the landing of Acca. It was very dark and we could see no one except Kaleem, the brother of Baha'u'llah, and Khojeh Abboud. The latter was the owner of the house in which the Blessed Perfection lived. Later, the Greatest Holy Leaf²³ told me that Abdul Baha, in obedience to the command of Baha'u'llah, had also come to the landing, but I do not remember having seen him.

Akka; The house of Kaleem

Following Kaleem, we went to the Khan (Inn) and were entertained by him and his family. The next morning, members of the Blessed Family came to visit and welcome us. I returned with them, and for the first time stood in the Presence of the Blessed Perfection. The state of ecstasy and rapture that possessed me was beyond description. The first words of Baha'u'llah were these:

"We have brought you into The Prison at such a time when the door of meeting is closed to all the believers. This is for no other reason than to prove to everyone the Power and Might of God."

I continued to live in the house of Kaleem for nearly five months. I visited Baha'u'llah many times and then returned to my abode. Whenever Kaleem returned from his visit to the Blessed Perfection he would tell me of His infinite bounties, and bring a material gift from Him for me. One day he arrived with a great happiness in his face. He said:

She is named Munirih (Illumined); Marriage to Abdu'l-Baha

"I have brought a most wonderful gift for you. It is this; a new name has been given you and that name is 'Moneereh' (illumined)."

Instantly I remembered Siyyid Mehdi in Esfahan who told us of the dream of the Blessed Perfection, in which He had seen the daughter of Mirza Hassan ill, her color fade, and her continued decline until she left this material world. And after that, another girl appeared with luminous face, an enlightened heart, and she was selected to be the wife of the Greatest Branch.

The reason I continued to live in the household of Kaleem for five months, was the lack of room

²² Perhaps 'rowed'?

²³ Greatest Holy Leaf - Bahá'u'lláh's daughter, Bahiyyih Khanum.

in the house of the Blessed Perfection. Khojeh Abboud asked Kaleem why the marriage was being postponed. He did not receive a clear answer, but later he perceived for himself that the cause of the postponement of the marriage had been the absence of a room. His house adjoined the house of Baha'u'llah, so he raised the partition between the two houses, and added a room from his house to the house of Baha'u'llah. He himself furnished the room with the utmost simplicity and purity. When all was ready, he went to the Blessed Perfection and told Him he had prepared this room for Abdul Baha. His offer was graciously accepted.

Then the night of union, preferable to a hundred thousand years, drew nigh. I was dressed in a white robe which had been prepared for me by the fingers of the Greatest Holy Leaf, and which was more precious than the silks and velvets of Paradise. About nine o'clock in the evening, the soul-ravishing voice of the Peerless Beloved was heard from the Supreme Concourse, and I was permitted to stand in the Presence of Baha'u'llah. Attended by the Greatest Holy Leaf, I listened to the words of the Blessed Perfection, who was resting under a mosquito net. He said:

"You are welcome! You are welcome! O thou my Blessed Leaf and Maid Servant! We have chosen thee and accepted thee to be the companion of the Greatest Branch and to serve him. This is from My Bounty, to which there is no equal; the treasures of the earth and heaven cannot be compared with it."

After speaking in this manner, and showering His Mercy upon me, he referred to Bagdad, Adrianople and the Most Great Prison, saying that many girls had hoped for this great bounty, but they were not accepted.

"Thou must be very thankful for thou has attained to this most great favor and bestowal."

Baha'u'llah then sent us away with the words:

"May you always be under the Protection of God."

You can easily imagine, after listening to these heavenly words, and beholding these lordly bestowals, in what glorious atmosphere I was soaring. How marvelously had all my hopes been fulfilled. As the Persian Poet says:

"At that moment the heaven, addressing the

earth declares, 'It thou hast not seen the resurrection with thine own eyes, come and behold!'"

After that blessed hour and fortunate time, I dwelt in the paradise of eternity with a world of longing, attraction, humility and submission. I entered the room prepared for the Greatest Branch and experienced his favor, his affection, his glory and his grandeur.

An hour later, Abdul Baha, the wife of Kaleem, the wife of Khojeh Abboud, the owner of the house, and his daughter entered the room. The mother of Mirza Mohammed Ali brought with her the special Tablets which are read and chanted on such occasions, especially that Tablet of Baha'u'llah which begins with the joyous declaration:

"Verily the doors of Paradise are opened and the divine Youth hath appeared!"

She delivered this Tablet to me and besought me to chant. Involuntarily I took that blessed Tablet into my hands and began to chant with a clear and resonant voice. In later years, whenever I would meet the wife of Abboud, she would refer to that night, saying she could not forget that meeting, and the sweetness of that chanting was still ringing in her ears. She would say:

"Never before in this world, have I heard a bride chanting at her own wedding."

Closing Words

The above is a brief account of my own life, my dreams, my travels and my meeting with the wife of the Bab. If I were to write the details of the fifty years of my association with the Beloved of the world, of his love, mercy and bounty, I would need fifty years more of time and opportunity to write it; yet, if the seas of the world were turned into ink, and the leaves of the forests into paper, I could not render adequate justice to the subject.

I beg of the Threshold of Oneness, and beseech Him that He may shower upon us his Favor and Bounties throughout all the worlds. O Lord, make the end of all days and occupations filled with goodness, honor and happiness.

Written by the Maidservant at the Threshold
Moneereh.

January, 1924.

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