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# INTERVIEW

"How do you do? Is that the celebrated home of the ancestors of Sir 'Abdu'l-Baha?" It is not every day that the secretary of a local Baha'i community receives such an introduction to a telephone conversation. In this instance, the speaker was Mrs Lillian Crawford, who was phoning after having heard a radio interview with Richard St. Barbe Baker, and wished to let us know that she had met 'Abdu'l-Baha many years ago in the Holy Land.

A member of the Edinburgh community recently went to visit Mrs Crawford. The following account is based on their conversation.

Mrs Crawford and her husband, who was a captain in the British Regiment, went to Haifa in the year 1919. Soon after their arrival, as with other new residents of the town, they were visited by 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi (who interpreted for his grandfather) at their home, which was just across the road from the house of 'Abdu'l-Baha. "This", said Mrs Crawford, "'Abdu'l-Baha did as a matter of courtesy, because He was a gentleman. He brought gifts for the new arrivals, which was the Arab custom. When He came to our house He brought me a gift of a beautiful ruby ring, which I am sorry to say was lost a few years later in a garden in Jerusalem." At this point Mrs Crawford left the room and returned a few moments later with a framed photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha which the Edinburgh Assembly had presented to her earlier in the year. "I keep this photograph in my bedroom and look at it every day", she said.

There continued an account of 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to their home. "He brought His grandson, who had been to England, as His interpreter, because 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself spoke only a little English. Out

of His kindness, 'Abdu'l-Baha invited us to return His visit and go to His house."

When she was asked about Shoghi Effendi she could remember that he did not dress in the style of the East but wore a black suit. "He spoke English fluently, just as they speak it in Oxford. My husband often spoke to him about philosophy at his house."

When asked if she could remember anything of the knighthood ceremony of 'Abdu'l-Baha, she replied, "I saw Him in Governor Staunton's large garden for his knighthood." (Governor Staunton was the governor of Haifa.) She was able to identify herself in a photograph of the ceremony. When asked how 'Abdu'l-Baha was regarded, she said that he was a most popular man. "Politics He did not touch", she remarked emphatically. "He used to walk with a group of oriental men along the lanes near Mount Carmel. He had a beautiful house, with a garden full of orange and pineapple trees. He was so well known in America that some of His followers came to Haifa and built houses beside His, in order that they might be near Him."

"The only way I can describe Him is to say that He was truly a holy man."



The Knighting of Abdul Baha, Haifa, Palestine, April 27, 1920.

