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Mr. Roy Wilhelm

Haifa, Thursday, February 23, 1922

Mountfort Mills and I arrived noon Tuesday and were met at train by Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney and Mírzá Jalál. Ruth Randall's steamer we could see in the harbour about a half mile from shore – but she did not land until late afternoon: very glad to find her recovered from the attack of flu which we found her in the midst of when we boarded her steamer in Naples. Last night she hurt her ankle in coming down the steps from a meeting in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house, and will have to keep off it for two or three days. Dr. and Mrs. Krug have gone to Italy and Germany – the Bosch's to Europe enroute to America. Lady Bloomfield is here as is also Miss Roseberg from London, who with Hippolyte and Laura and Mrs. Hoagg and Curtis we have quite a family. The food is cooked at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home from where it is sent across the street to Pilgrim House and served to us by "Fudgo" and Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím. Yesterday afternoon we had an interesting gathering composed of Shoghi Effendi, Mons and Madame D-Barney, Mountfort, Mírzá Jalál, Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, Rúḥá Effendi, Ruth Randall, Monever Khanoum and myself. In the evening we attended a meeting at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house at which there were about fifteen of the men, including one elderly gentleman who is a son of Şubḥ-i-Azal – so even the children of former enemies are now accepting the Cause. In the afternoon Hippolyte, Mountfort and one of the Persians visiting from Egypt and I went up to the Tomb – a good climb of perhaps 500 feet above the house. The faithful caretaker admitted us to both the rooms of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and The Báb lie beneath the floors which are covered with finest Persian rugs upon which are placed lamps and candelabra. 'Abdu'l-Bahá at various times has told the friends that it is very good to pray upon Mount Carmel.

We found Curtis Kesley busily engaged with an assistant completing the electric wiring. The lighting makes a great difference in the appearance of the rooms.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá once expressed a desire that a beacon light be placed upon the Tomb. It was a great surprise to see the power of even the small light now in place which makes shadows visible in the main street of Haifa a half mile or more distant. Mírzá Jalál stated that this attracted great notice, even the Government of Haifa saying it should be marked upon the Marine Charts. Curtis plans a new arrangement which will double and possibly treble the power so that this bedroom will be visible at a greater distance than the present small light-house being so much higher above the sea level.

This morning Mírzá Jalál called and took us to his home which the house of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and here we met the ladies of the Holy Household – The Greatest Holy Leaf (‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sister), the Holy Mother (His wife) and the four daughters. A few interesting two hours were spent with them – the daughters talking and also interpreting for the Holy Leaf is wonderful, in many ways much resembling that of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It possesses wisdom, tenderness and power. We are told she possesses, like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a rare sense of humor.

Among other things it was explained that by the terms of the Will and Testament, Shoghi Effendi must now be regarded as a young and tender shrub, and must be carefully nurtured and protected by all the friends of God. He will at times almost overcome by the thought of his great responsibilities which so suddenly have been placed upon him. This afternoon he and his cousin and secretary Rúhí Effendi took Mountfort and me a long walk during which affairs of the Cause were discussed and many questions asked about America. He has expressed upon Hippolyte, Mountfort and me that we must very carefully study the Will and Testament so as to become quite familiar with details. We are to await the arrival of other friends whom he has called for consultation from various parts of the world, among them Jenabe Faḍil and Herr Consul Schwarz from Stuttgart. Major Tudor-Pole is in Cairo but was prevented from carrying out his intention of coming with us by an attack of the “flu” from which we hope for his speedy recovery.

Shoghi Effendi asks that the Will and Testament be regarded as private – the details just for the Bahá’ís and asked me to cable this to Miss Lloyd who will receive the copy for America addressed to me late in January. He has also said that this Document is not merely for Bahá’ís but its import is for the whole world and gradually it will become known and effective. Plans for the organization of the House of Justice are being undertaken, but there is much to first be done. He made it very plain that all the friends of the world, and particularly those in America, must now devote their whole energies to teaching and spreading the Cause and to helping establish the principles of the Will and Testament. All lesser things he said must be subordinated to the “Most important work.”

Shoghi Effendi is a most interesting character study. He is I presume, about twenty-three, small of stature, a singular sweetness of countenance and character, possessing extraordinary brilliance of mind and perception, it seems to me, for one of his years. His quickness, too remarkable. He makes it constantly evident that he wishes authority to rest in the body of the Bahá’ís at

large. It seems to me that we should as far as possible _____ him from the multitudinous perplexities which continually were presented and pressed upon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from all quarters of the globe – else his sympathetic mind will be so overburdened that his health may not be equal to the strain, and in my event, his time and attention diverted from the most important matters – of bringing into operation the terms of the Will and Testament. This may be and probably is a pattern and standard for the formation of the only World Governments which shall survive these times. Another point upon which Shoghi Effendi placed great emphasis was that the Local Spiritual Assemblies are responsible for the spiritual affairs of the Cause in their respective centres and that likewise the Convention and the executive Committee are responsible for general spiritual matters. He said all this had become so well understood and established in Persia that there was no further question or trouble there; that while sometimes there were differing understandings about details – all were united in putting in first place the interest of the Cause itself. Tonight (24th) we had a most interesting experience – a meeting at which were present quite a number (nearly 20) of Persian s who recently arrived, some of the sled 6r weeks from interior cities. There were between sixty and seventy present - a number of the women of the Household and the Haifa friends standing in the hall outside the rom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house. These pilgrims represented various religions and classes some were light, others dark - some were merchants, other landowners or farmers they wore various kinds of costumes - some had red fezes, some black, some tall others short - one or two big turbans, another the head covering and bands, like the Sphinx. But their faces all shone. They expressed great love for us and asked us in turn to send their affection to America and to express the hope that as time goes on they may have the opportunity to meet American believers. Shoghi Effendi said that when arrangements are made for better contacts and closer acquaintances between America and Persia it would be productive of great good and make for spiritual progress in both countries.

After meeting the Household this morning the Greatest Holy Leaf sent to Mountfort and me a Bahá’í “boquet” which now adorns one whole corner of our room – it is 7 to 1 feet tall and nearly as wide a – whole tree top with about fifty beautiful mandarins (tangerines) large, juicy and not only sweet and flavory but as fragrant as the roses. The oranges are superb too – those of nearby Jaffa of the long “sheepnose” variety being known as among the finest in the word. I’m sure Mountfort would not want you to know how many of these wonderful fruits he surrounds in a day – for myself I do not usually eat more than three or-four at a time several times a day.

Friday 24th. Now I am in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s garden at his home - an abundance of golden mandarines hang on the trees - lighter colored lemons, bananas, oranges – this must be the best season for these luscious fruits. The flowers of many varieties are in bloom - roses large and small – white roses, red roses, large golden roses, violets growing along the paths – a number of kinds of smaller flowers such as one finds in the old fashioned country gardens – all these fragrances blend together into a wonderful symphony of color and sweet smells. We find here as

great peace – what a contrast when one thinks of the world’s cities. One day at our home ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted from Bahá’u’lláh, “The city is the abode of bodies – the country is the home of spirits.”

(Signed) Roy (Wilhelm)