

In due course, this excellent account will be replaced by a plain english account drawing from many sources.

The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

by Shoghi Effendi and Lady Blomfield, publ. 1922

DEAR FRIENDS,

It is well known that the loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in every part of the world are anxiously waiting to receive some details of the closing events of his unique and wonderful life. For this reason the present account is being written.

We have now come to realize that the Master knew the day and hour when, his mission on earth being finished, he would return to the shelter of heaven. He was, however, careful that his family should not have any premonition of the coming sorrow. It seemed as though their eyes were veiled by him, with his ever-loving consideration for his dear ones, that they should not see the significance of certain dreams and other signs of the culminating event. This they now realize was his thought for them, in order that their strength might be preserved to face the great ordeal when it should arrive, that they should not be devitalized by anguish of mind in its anticipation.

Out of the many signs of the approach of the hour when he could say of his work on earth: "It is finished," the following two dreams seem remarkable. Less than eight weeks before his passing the Master related this to his family:

"I seemed to be standing within a great Mosque, in the inmost shrine, facing the Quiblich (that Point of Adoration where-unto the worshippers turn, as in a Christian church to the East) in the place of the Imám himself. I became aware that a large number of people were flocking into the Mosque; more and yet more crowded in, taking their places in rows behind me, until there was a vast multitude. As I stood I raised loudly the 'Call to Prayer.' Suddenly the thought came to me to go forth from the Mosque.

When I found myself outside I said within myself, 'For what reason came I forth, not having led the prayer? But it matters not; now that I have uttered the Call to Prayer, the vast multitude will of themselves chant the prayer.'

When the Master had passed away, his family pondered over this dream and interpreted it thus:

He had called that same vast multitude - all peoples, all religions, all races, all nations and all kingdoms - to Unity and Peace, to universal Love and Brotherhood; and having called them, he returned to God the Beloved, at whose command he had raised the Majestic Call, had given the Divine Message. This same multitude - the peoples, religions, races, nations and kingdoms - would continue the WORK to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had called them, and would of themselves press forward to its accomplishment.

A few weeks after the preceding dream the Master came in from the solitary room in the garden, which he had occupied of late, and said:

"I dreamed a dream and behold the Blessed Beauty, (Bahá'u'lláh) came and said unto me, "Destroy this room!"

The family, who had been wishing that he would come and sleep in the house, not being happy that he should be alone at night, exclaimed, "Yes Master, we think your dream means that you should leave that room and come into the house." When he heard this from us, he smiled meaningly as though not agreeing with our interpretation. Afterwards we understood that by the "room" was meant the temple of his body.

A month before his last hour, Doctor Sulayman Rafat Bey, a Turkish friend, who was a guest in the house, received a telegram telling him of the sudden death of his brother. 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaking words of comfort to him, whispered, "Sorrow not, for he is only transferred from this plane to a higher one; I too shall soon be transferred, for my days are numbered." Then patting him gently on the shoulder, he looked him in the face and said, "And it will be in the days that are shortly to come."

In the same week he revealed a Tablet to America, in which is the following prayer:

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! (O Thou the Glory of Glories) I have renounced the world and the people thereof, and am heartbroken and sorely afflicted because of the unfaithful. In the cage of this world, I flutter even as a frightened bird, and yearn every day to take my flight unto Thy Kingdom.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Make me to drink of the cup of sacrifice and set me free. Relieve me from these woes and trials, from these afflictions and troubles. Thou art He that aideth, that succoureth, that protecteth, that stretcheth forth the hand of help."...

On the last Friday morning of his stay on earth (November 25th) he said to his daughters: "The wedding of Khusraw must take place today. If you are too much occupied, I myself will make the necessary preparations, for it must take place this day." (Khusraw is one of the favoured and trusted servants of the Master's Household).

'Abdu'l-Bahá attended the noonday prayer at the Mosque. When he came out he found the poor waiting for the alms, which it was his custom to give every Friday. This day, as usual, he stood, in spite of very great fatigue, whilst he gave a coin to every one with his own hands.

After lunch he dictated some Tablets, his last ones, to Rúhí Effendi. When he had rested he walked in the garden. He seemed to be in a deep reverie.

His good and faithful servant, Ismá'il-Áqá, relates the following:

"Some time, about twenty days before my Master passed away I was near the garden when I heard him summon an old believer saying:

'Come with me that we may admire together the beauty of the garden. Behold, what the spirit of devotion is able to achieve! This flourishing place was, a few years ago,

but a heap of stones, and now it is verdant with foliage and flowers. My desire is that after I am gone the loved ones may all arise to serve the Divine Cause and, please God, so it shall be. Ere long men will arise who shall bring life to the world!...

"A few days after this he said: 'I am so fatigued! The hour is come when I must leave everything and take my flight. I am too weary to walk.' Then he said: 'It was during the closing days of the Blessed Beauty, when I was engaged in gathering together his papers, which were strewn over the sofa in his writing chamber at Bahjí that He turned to me and said, "It is of no use to gather them, I must leave them and flee away."

'I also have finished my work, I can do nothing more, therefore must I leave it and take my departure.'

"Three days before his ascension whilst seated in the garden, he called me and said, 'I am sick with fatigue. Bring two of your oranges for me that I may eat them for your sake.' This I did, and he having eaten them turned to me, saying 'Have you any of your sweet lemons? He bade me fetch a few Whilst I was plucking them, he came over to the tree, saying, 'Nay, but I must gather them with my own hands.'

Having eaten of the fruit he turned to me and asked 'Do you desire anything more?' ' Then with a pathetic gesture of his hands, he touchingly, emphatically and deliberately said:

'Now it is finished, it is finished!'

These significant words penetrated my very soul. I felt each time he uttered them as if a knife were struck into my heart. I understood his meaning but never dreamed his end was so nigh."

It was Ismá'il-Áqá who had been the Master's gardener for well nigh thirty years who, in the first week after his bereavement, driven by hopeless grief, quietly disposed of all his belongings, made his will, went to the Master's sister and craved her pardon for any misdeeds he had committed. He then delivered the key of the garden to a trusted servant of the Household and, taking with him means whereby to end his life at his beloved Master's Tomb, walked up the Mountain to that sacred place, three times circled round it and would have succeeded in taking his life had it not been for the opportune arrival of a friend, who reached him in time to prevent the accomplishment of his tragic intention.

Later in the evening of Friday he blessed the bride and bride-groom who had just been married. He spoke impressively to them. "Khusraw," he said, "you have spent your childhood and youth in the service of this house; it is my hope that you will grow old under the same roof, ever and always serving God."

During the evening he attended the usual meeting of the friends in his own audience chamber.

In the morning of Saturday, November 26th, he arose early, came to the tea room and had some tea. He asked for the fur-lined coat which had belonged to Bahá'u'lláh. He often put on this coat when he was cold or did not feel well, he so loved it. He then withdrew to his room, lay down on his bed and said, "Cover me up. I am very cold.

Last night I did not sleep well, I felt cold. This is serious, it is the beginning."

After more blankets had been put on, he asked for the fur coat he had taken off to be placed over him. That day he was rather feverish. In the evening his temperature rose still higher, but during the night the fever left him. After midnight he asked for some tea.

On Sunday morning (November 27th) he said: "I am quite well and will get up as usual and have tea with you in the tea room." After he had dressed he was persuaded to remain on the sofa in his room.

In the afternoon he sent all the friends up to the Tomb of the Báb, where on the occasion of the anniversary of the declaration of the Covenant a feast was being held, offered by a Parsi pilgrim who had lately arrived from India.

At four in the afternoon, being on the sofa in his room he said: "Ask my sister and all the family to come and have tea with me."

After tea the Mufti of Haifa and the head of the Municipality, with another visitor, were received by him. They remained about an hour. He spoke to them about Bahá'u'lláh, related to them his second dream, showed them extraordinary kindness and even more than his usual courtesy. He then bade them farewell, walking with them to the outer door in spite of their pleading that he should remain resting on his sofa. He then received a visit from the head of the police, an Englishman, who, too, had his share of the Master's gracious kindness. To him he gave some silk hand-woven Persian handkerchiefs, which he very greatly appreciated.

His four sons-in-law and Rúhí Effendi came to him after returning from the gathering on the mountain. They said to him: "The giver of the feast was unhappy because you were not there." He said unto them:

"But I was there, though my body was absent, my spirit was there in your midst. I was present with the friends at the Tomb. The friends must not attach any importance to the absence of my body.

In spirit I am, and shall always be, with the friends, even though I be far away."

The same evening he asked after the health of every member of the Household, of the pilgrims and of the friends in Haifa. "Very good, very good " he said when told that none were ill. This was his very last utterance concerning his friends.

At eight in the evening he retired to bed after taking a little nourishment, saying: "I am quite well."

He told all the family to go to bed and rest. Two of his daughters however stayed with him. That night the Master had gone to sleep very calmly, quite free from fever. He awoke about 1.15 a.m., got up and walked across to a table where he drank some water. He took off an outer night garment, saying: "I am too warm." He went back to bed and when his daughter Rúhí Khánúm, later on, approached, she found him lying peacefully and, as he looked into her face, he asked her to lift up the net curtains, saying:

"I have difficulty in breathing, give me more air." Some rose water was brought of which he drank, sitting up in bed to do so, without any help. He again lay down, and as some food was offered him, he remarked in a clear and distinct voice:

"You wish me to take some food, and I am going?" He gave them a beautiful look. His face was so calm, his expression so serene, they thought him asleep.

He had gone from the gaze of his loved ones!

The eyes that had always looked out with loving-kindness upon humanity, whether friends or foes, were now closed. The hands that had ever been stretched forth to give alms to the poor and the needy, the halt and the maimed, the blind, the orphan and the widow, had now finished their labour. The feet that, with untiring zeal, had gone upon the ceaseless errands of the Lord of Compassion were now at rest. The lips that had so eloquently championed the cause of the suffering sons of men, were now hushed in silence. The heart that had so powerfully throbbed with wondrous love for the children of God was now stilled. His glorious spirit had passed from the life of earth, from the persecutions of the enemies of righteousness, from the storm and stress of well nigh eighty years of indefatigable toil for the good of others.

His long martyrdom was ended!

Whilst yet the gloom of their bereavement was hanging darkly over the disconsolate ladies of the Household, a grand-daughter of the Master had a wondrous dream of him; he was speaking with his beloved sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf, in the very room where, in the early hours of the day, it was the custom of the ladies to assemble in his presence, chanting the morning prayers, and to take their morning tea. He turned to her and said: "Wherefore are ye all perturbed, why lament and be sorrowful? With you all I am well pleased. For a long time have I desired to join my Father, the Blessed Beauty. I was ever beseeching Him to take me to His Rose-garden above, and now that my prayer is granted, how happy, how joyous, how rested I am. Therefore grieve not."

He then counselled them in many ways, exhorting them to follow at all times the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh. Early on Monday morning November 28th the news of this sudden calamity had spread over the city, causing an unprecedented stir and tumult, and filling all hearts with unutterable grief.

The next morning, Tuesday November 29th, the funeral took place; a funeral the like of which Haifa, nay Palestine itself, had surely never seen; so deep was the feeling that brought so many thousands of mourners together, representative of so many religions, races and tongues.

The High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, the Governor of Jerusalem, the Governor of Phoenicia, the Chief Officials of the Government, the Consuls of the various countries, resident in Haifa, the heads of the various religious communities, the notables of Palestine, Jews, Christians, Moslems, Druses, Egyptians, Greeks, Turks, Kurds, and a host of his American, European and

native friends, men, women and children, both of high and low degree, all, about ten thousand in number, mourning the loss of their Beloved One.

This impressive, triumphal procession was headed by a guard of honour, consisting of the City Constabulary Force, followed by the Boy Scouts of the Moslem and Christian communities holding aloft their banners, a company of Moslem choristers chanting their verses from the Qur'án, the chiefs of the Moslem community headed by the Mufti, a number of Christian priests, Latin, Greek and Anglican, all preceding the sacred coffin, upraised on the shoulders of his loved ones. Immediately behind it came the members of his family, next to them walked the British High Commissioner, the Governor of Jerusalem, and the Governor of Phoenicia. After them came the Consuls and the notables of the land, followed by the vast multitude of those who revered and loved him.

On this day there was no cloud in the sky, nor any sound in all the town and surrounding country through which they went, save only the soft, slow, rhythmic chanting of Islám in the Call to Prayer, or the convulsed sobbing moan of those helpless ones, bewailing the loss of their one friend, who had protected them in all their difficulties and sorrows, whose generous bounty had saved them and their little ones from starvation through the terrible years of the "Great Woe."

"O God, my God!" the people wailed with one accord, "Our father has left us, our father has left us!"

O the wonder of that great throng! Peoples of every religion and race and colour, united in heart through the Manifestation of Servitude in the life-long work of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

As they slowly wended their way up Mount Carmel, the Vineyard of God, the casket appeared in the distance to be borne aloft by invisible hands, so high above the heads of the people was it carried. After two hours walking, they reached the garden of the Tomb of the Báb. Tenderly was the sacred coffin placed upon a plain table covered with a fair white linen cloth. As the vast concourse pressed round the Tabernacle of his body, waiting to be laid in its resting place, within the vault, next to that of the Báb, representatives of the various denominations, Moslems, Christians and Jews, all hearts being ablaze with fervent-love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, some on the impulse of the moment, others prepared, raised their voices in eulogy and regret, paying their last homage of farewell to their loved one. So united were they in their acclamation of him, as the wise educator and reconciler of the human race in this perplexed and sorrowful age, that there seemed to be nothing left for the Bahá'ís to say.