

Bahiyyih Khanum's Story

*Abdu'l-Baha's Life, as told by His sister Bahiyyih Khanum
with additional experiences by Myron Phelps
As recorded in his book, "Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi"*



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Supplementary Notes

by David Merrick, not part of the original book)

Phelps' 300-page book was originally published with an introduction by E G Browne (20 pages, omitted here), followed by Phelps' Introductory (17 pages, published below), Bahiyyih Khanum's recollections (84 pages, published below), Phelps' Discourses (155 pages, omitted), and some translations (omitted). Shoghi Effendi appears to have had the following views on the book:-

"In perusing the minutes of the meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly the Guardian noted that the book of Mr. Myron Phelps has been translated into Urdu. He has instructed me to write and tell you that he does not advise publishing this book in any language, as it is full of inaccuracies. In America they have also ceased to republish it or circulate it for the same reason.

He regrets very much that so much trouble has been taken in the matter already, only to prove fruitless in the end.

He would also like you to forward to him the copy of the book you have in English for his reference libraries here, as it is, in spite of its inaccuracies, of historic interest. Assuring you of his loving prayers on your behalf in the Holy Shrines."

(Messages to the Indian Subcontinent, p. 230)

Because the book is made of several independent sections, it is not clear from this quote which section or sections Shoghi Effendi felt were inaccurate. It could be argued that the strength of his reaction would be toward the teachings and principles section which do have clear inaccuracies as Phelps is providing his own summary view of things and are the very place the author would be most motivated to express his own opinions, and also Browne's divisive introduction, it is certainly easy to imagine Shoghi Effendi responding with an especially strong feeling towards these sections. In contrast, the history section has very little for a person to judge as right or wrong, and without an opinion Phelps is more likely to have copied it down as told, and we do see Shoghi Effendi refers to the book as of historic interest. However, at this late stage we really just don't know how general or specific Shoghi Effendi's feelings were, and it is up to the reader to research and consider all these things for themselves in the greater balance of things.

Chapters from the original book now follow...

Introductory (by Phelps)

TO the student of the development of human thought, there is probably not in the world to-day another place so interesting as the small city of Akka in northern Palestine; for there may be investigated, still in its youth and under the fostering care of one of its founders, a religious faith which gives promise of

becoming, at no very distant time, one of the recognised great religions of the world. Whatever we may think of the pretensions which it makes to divine origin, whatever our opinion as to the validity of the system of morals and social ethics which it advocates, or of the truth or error of the psychological and philosophical views which it advances, we can hardly doubt that we are here in the presence of a great force, destined to have a far-reaching influence upon the thought and lives of men.

Fascinating indeed are those mysterious and mighty movements which, now and again, with a certain rhythmic sequence and regularity, have from the earliest days swept over the earth, revivifying spiritual life, changing individual habits and social customs, and, during many succeeding centuries, moulding the lives of vast masses of mankind. A Confucius, a Zoroaster, a Buddha, a Christ, a Mahomet, is born as other men, lives the ordinary span of human life, and dies as others, but by his brief presence the face of the world is changed. What is the character, what are the daily lives, of those remarkable beings who have such unlimited influence over their fellow-men as the founders of religions? How do such men act, how do they speak, what do they teach? What is the apparent nature of the bond which unites to them and to each other the men about them who play the important parts in these history-making epochs?

There are no questions of greater human interest than these. If we have here before us, subject to our inspection, inviting our investigations, and ready to reply to our questions, one who, there is reason to believe, may even possibly be such a man - if, moreover, this man advances a philosophy new to us, which assumes to illumine the ever-baffling mystery of existence and is not without persuasive force, it would be passing strange if we should let go by the opportunity afforded by his presence of studying his life and character and weighing carefully his words.

It is considerations of this sort which, as it seems to me, now invite our attention to Akka. The interest which centres in this city arises from the fact that here have lived for upwards of thirty-four years the leaders of the religion of Babism, or Beha'ism, natives of Persia, who are suffering exile and imprisonment because of their religious innovations. This movement was inaugurated in Persia in 1844 by one Ali Mohammed, a youth of twenty-five years, who in that year announced himself to be the "Bab" (Gate), a term familiar to Moslems, and by which is understood an avenue for the transmission to men of messages from a super-human source. As expressed by one of his followers, Ali Mohammed meant by this term "that he was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections, by whose will he moved and to the bond of whose love he clung."

The mission which Ali Mohammed asserted for himself was the inauguration of a new Divine Dispensation which should be for mankind a revelation of the Divine Will and should result in reforming the beliefs and lives of mankind; in which dispensation he was but the forerunner preparing the way for one greater than he, who would be the direct Manifestation of God - who would, when he came, fully reveal the Divine message, and to whom all that he (the Bab) said was to be regarded as subject and subordinate.

Ali Mohammed supported his claims by passages from the scriptures, and by the traditions of the Moslem Church, which he interpreted as forecasting the appearance of a Divine Messenger at the very time when he himself had announced his mission, but chiefly by the eloquent and elaborate disquisitions which ever flowed from his lips, seemingly

inexhaustible in volume and fertility of reasoning. Whether because of the validity of his appeal to scripture and tradition, the cogency of his reasoning, the force of his eloquence, or because of his spiritual power, all of which resources his followers unite in ascribing to him in a high degree, Ali Mohammed found many to accept him. Zealous missionaries went out from him through all Persia, and his following rapidly became considerable. The Moslem priesthood, apprehensive for their influence, united to repress by force the rising tide of the new faith. An era of bloody and relentless persecution followed, which has not, perhaps, been paralleled in history. Singly, and by hundreds, the Babis were hunted down and slaughtered. One's heart thrills with emotion, one's conception of the noble possibilities of human nature expands as one reads of the splendid and unflinching heroism of the Babis in the cause of their faith. Such was their love and loyalty to their leader that during the whole of the terrible time of persecution hardly a single instance of recantation in order to escape death occurred, though the opportunity was generally offered. Their spirit of absolute and self-forgetting devotion and love is well exemplified in the manner in which Mirza Kurban Ali, one of seven executed together in Teheran in September, 1850, met his death. When he was brought to the foot of the execution pole, the headsman raised his sword and smote him from behind. The blow only wounded the old man's neck, and cast his turban upon the ground. He raised his head and exclaimed: "Oh, happy that intoxicated lover who, at the foot of his Beloved, knoweth not whether it be his head or his turban which he casteth."¹

The number of martyrdoms which have taken place in Persia has been estimated at ten thousand.² Most of these occurred during the early history of the faith, but they have continued with diminishing frequency, even down to the present time.

In 1850 the Bab himself was executed at Tabriz. It had been expected that his death would check the spread of the religion, but this expectation was not realised. The Babis continued to increase in numbers; the persecutions became more intense. In 1852 a number of the leaders of the faith fled from Teheran to Baghdad, in the domains of the Sultan of Turkey. They remained here eleven years, were then transported by the Turkish Government to Adrianople, and five years later to Akka.

In this band of exiles was one Mirza Haseyn Ali, belonging to a Persian family of distinction and great wealth, about thirty-five years of age at the time of the flight from Teheran. He had long been regarded by the Babis as a leader, and venerated for his wisdom and character. The Bab had conferred upon him the title of "Beha Ullah" (Glory of God).

Soon after reaching Baghdad, Beha Ullah withdrew from his family and spent two years alone in the mountains. He then returned to Baghdad and engaged in teaching and expounding Babist doctrines. When the transfer of the exiles from Baghdad was ordered, Beha Ullah made to five of his closest followers the declaration that he himself was the Manifestation of God who had been foretold by the Bab. This declaration was not publicly proclaimed until some four or five years later, from Adrianople. It was then accepted with substantial unanimity by the Babis, who have since that time generally styled themselves and been styled by others, "Beha'is." Beha Ullah occupied his remaining years almost entirely with writing, and has left many voluminous works,

¹ A Traveller's Narrative by Professor E. G. Browne, p. 214.

² This estimate is conservative. Many place the number at from twenty to thirty thousand, and some even higher.

none of which, with the exception of some disconnected passages, have been translated into a European language. He died at Akka in 1892, and was succeeded, at his own designation, by his son, Abbas Effendi, who has since continued to be the leader of the faith. He is styled "Our Master" and "Our Lord" by the Beha'is (by which they mean that he is a man who has reached the understanding and knowledge of God, and, being illumined by His wisdom, is fitted to teach and lead), and is regarded by them with a veneration and affection second only, if indeed second, to that which they bestow upon the memory of Beha Ullah. He is classed by them with the Bab and Beha Ullah as the third and last of the Divine Messengers by whom the present Dispensation is introduced³.

Meanwhile the faith has shown undiminished vitality in Persia, where the number of its adherents is now estimated at several millions,⁴ and it is said to be steadily increasing. Missionaries have also gone out to various parts of the world, and the religion has already taken root in many countries.

While spending the summer of 1902 in London, it happened that through friends I heard much of Beha'ism, which has adherents in England, as well as a much larger number in the United States. Having for many years given much attention to the study of philosophic and religious thought, the subject interested me. I took occasion to read up the history of the movement, and learned what I could of the tenets of the religion. As to the former, I found that, chiefly owing to the careful and extended researches of Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, the results of whose work, so far as published, are contained in two volumes of translations, with copious notes, entitled respectively *A Traveller's Narrative* and *The New History*, and in two papers contributed to the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1889, a full record of the movement was easily accessible. To these sources I am chiefly indebted for the historical outline which I have given above.

It appeared, however, more difficult to ascertain what were the teachings peculiar to the faith. I found much bearing upon the claims of the founders of the religion to divine inspiration in the way of arguments drawn from the prophecies of the Mohammedan and other scriptures and traditions, and an elaborate code of social ethics; but nothing of importance further than this. It seemed to me singular that a religion having the vitality and power of assimilation shown by the history of Beha'ism should have no philosophical or psychological basis for its moral precepts, and I felt a strong desire to ascertain by personal investigation whether such a basis did not exist. I accordingly made inquiries as to whether my presence for this purpose would be acceptable at the headquarters of the faith, and after some correspondence, in which my wishes were furthered by friends who were known in Akka, I received an invitation to come there. This I accordingly did, and spent in that city the month of December, 1902. This month was one of the most memorable in my life; for not only was I able to gain a satisfactory general view of this religion, but I made the acquaintance of Abbas Effendi, who is easily the most remarkable man whom it has ever been my fortune

to meet.

As I had suspected was the case, I found that Beha'ism possesses a system of philosophy and psychology. This system is logical, and to many minds will seem persuasive. It harmonises in every respect with the discoveries and conclusions of modern science, and makes a strong appeal to intelligent and reasoning thought. More even may be said than this; for the conceptions of Beha'ism with regard to cosmogenesis, man and his relation to the universe, bear an analogy which is very striking to the views discussed by the most advanced thinkers of the present day, arguing from scientific premises.

On its ethical side, it has as high moral standards as any of the other great religions; while the social regulations which it advocates are certainly more enlightened than those which have generally been put forward in the name of religion.

Another characteristic of Beha'ism, as refreshing and attractive as it is striking to the mind accustomed to the dogmatic narrowness of the modern Christian Church, is its marvellous spirit of liberality. It recognises every other religion as equally divine in origin with itself. It professes only to renew the message formerly given by the Divine Messengers who founded those religions, and which has been more or less forgotten by men. If revelations have differed it has only been in degree, determined in the several cases by the differing capacities of men in different stages of human development to receive them. No man is asked to desert his own faith; but only to look back to its fountainhead and discern, through the mists and accumulations of time, the true spirit of its founders.

Further, I found that this faith does not expend itself in beautiful and unfruitful theories, but has a vital and effective power to mould life towards the very highest ideal of human character, - which in the Western world is generally agreed, no doubt, to be that of Jesus of Nazareth, - as exemplified by the life of its chief representative and the salient characteristics of those of his followers with whom I became acquainted.

That there was in the world a religion having this character, and embodied in an actual, living, and strenuous movement, which, although new, has already shown great vitality, power of aggression, assimilation, and growth, was to me a revelation. I saw at once that there was in this mere spectacle, which I had had the fortune to see and understand, the potentiality of immense good to other nations of the world by impelling a recognition of the real strength and greatness of the spirit of true religion, under whatever external form it may appear, and stimulating a return to the purity and simplicity which have characterised all religions in their youth. Almost throughout the world to-day religion is stagnant and faith is dead; but here is a demonstration that it is capable of revival. Such a spectacle as the ideal, Christlike life of Abbas Effendi has in it an immense probative and stimulating power.

As a result of reflections of this kind came the impulse to prepare this book, in order to make a permanent record, available to others, of the things which I have observed and learned. I shall first collect my observations and the information I have received from members of his family and others who were eye-witnesses of, or connected with, the occurrences referred to, bearing upon the life and character of Abbas Effendi. This I regard as perhaps the most important part of my present undertaking: since nothing could so well serve to make plain the intended application of the doctrines taught, or could be so effective an incentive to aspiration and effort, as the example of this life. This portion of the book will include a narrative by his sister, Behiah Khanum, of the life of

³ Abdu'l-Baha is not considered a divine messenger, rather as a "mystery of God". [DM]

⁴ A traveller in Persia, recently writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, refers to the Beha'is as comprising something like half of the population of that country. This is no doubt an overestimate. But, on the other hand, published statistics must be taken as erring the other way, since great numbers of Beha'is do not declare themselves publicly, on account of the hostility to which they would be exposed.

Abbas Effendi and the fortunes of the family of his father, Beha Ullah, from the time when they left Teheran in 1852. As the restrictions of Mohammedan social custom, which the Beha'is in Akka carefully observe for the sake of peace and harmony, prevented me from meeting this lady personally, this narrative was given by her in instalments to Madam M. A. de S. Canavarro, who was in Akka at the same time that I was, and by her repeated to me. Each instalment was written down within a few hours after it was received from Behiah Khanum.

I shall also say something as to the type of character which this faith tends to attract and develop, as indicated by that of those who compose the little band of Beha'is which share the exile of Abbas Effendi in Akka.

I shall next give an outline of the philosophy and psychology upon which the ethical injunctions of the religion rest. To ascertain the views of Abbas Effendi upon these matters (as to which, as indeed all others, I was assured that his teachings are identical in every respect with those of Beha Ullah) was the most serious portion of my task; such is the great difficulty of grasping the abstract ideas of those whose modes of thought are so different from ours, especially when expressed in a language so unlike our own as the Persian. Had it not been for my familiarity with Oriental philosophic thought, I should have been quite unable to accomplish it. On this branch of the subject the teachings were not, for the most part, given to me in set discourses accompanied by a word-for-word interpretation which could be set down in sequence, as was the case with most of the other matter which I received from Abbas Effendi, owing to the difficulty of transferring these abstruse ideas into English by the aid of the interpreters available. They were chiefly imparted in informal conversations and as replies to questions, which have been collected and systematised.

Next I shall proceed to a synopsis of the teachings of Beha'ism as to the conduct of life, or its conception of true religion as that term is ordinarily used; and in order to give a complete view of the subject, I shall add the leading features of the elaborate code of social ethics enjoined by the leaders of the faith.

It will, of course, be understood that I do not for a moment conceive that I have arrived at a full understanding of the tenets of the religion and the philosophy underlying it in all their scope and detail. The time which I have thus far given to the investigation is far too short for that; nor, until the more important of the voluminous writings of Beha Ullah, and those of Abbas Effendi, which are also considerable, shall have been accurately rendered into a European language, can we hope to have an exact and systematic analysis of it. But although it is, of course, possible that I may have been misled in some minor matters by faulty interpreting, I have checked and counterchecked my understanding of the statements made to me with such care that I am satisfied that in its essential points the presentation which I shall give of the salient features of the philosophy and tenets is substantially correct.

Nothing is quite so necessary to a just view of Beha'ism as a thorough comprehension of its attitude towards other religions. I have therefore thought it advisable to add a chapter dealing with this matter, which, in defining the relations which the faith conceives to exist between itself and the external world, necessarily touches upon its most intimate conceptions of its own essential nature. For a correct understanding of the entire subject this is the most important chapter in the book; and I would advise that it be read both before those dealing with philosophy and ethics, and also in the order in which it stands.

Finally, I shall assemble a number of the discourses which I heard from Abbas Effendi during my stay in Akka, and which were, with the exceptions hereafter noted, taken down from the interpreter consecutively and substantially as they appear here; and to these I shall add one or two other discourses of Abbas Effendi, and a few passages from the writings of Beha Ullah, translations of which have been given to me by friends.

I have already said that the narrative of Abbas Effendi's sister was given to me by Madam Canavarro; further, we have worked together over all parts of the book. It might more properly have been published over our joint names; but since she does not wish this, I am obliged to content myself with stating the facts. Without her clear insight and invaluable aid it would never have reached its present form.

I am aware that it has many deficiencies, and it is possible that I have fallen into some errors. Such defects as exist I hope to supply or correct in a future edition; and I shall feel much indebted to my readers if they will call my attention to any which they may discover, addressing me in care of my publishers.

M. H. P.

Cairo, March 8, 1903.

Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi

The Master of Akka

CHAPTER I

THE MASTER OF AKKA

SMALL as this world is, boast as we may of our means of communication, how little we really know of other lands; how slowly the actual thoughts, hopes, and aspirations of other peoples, the deep and real things of their lives, reach us, if they indeed ever reach us at all! We of the so-called "Christian" lands think, perhaps, that if Christ were to appear again upon the earth the good news would burden the telegraph, that His words and daily life would be marshalled forth under double headlines for our convenient perusal at breakfast or on the rapid-transit trains, giving us the interesting information without interrupting our important occupations. Ah no! We but deceive ourselves. The Man of Nazareth might pursue His holy life on the banks of the Jordan and the shores of Gennesaret for a generation of men, but the faintest rumour of Him would not reach our ministers or our stockbrokers, our churches, or our exchanges.

Imagine that we are in the ancient house of the still more ancient city of Akka, which was for a month my home. The room in which we are faces the opposite wall of a narrow paved street, which an active man might clear at a single bound. Above is the bright sun of Palestine; to the right a glimpse of the old sea-wall and the blue Mediterranean. As we sit we hear a singular sound rising from the pavement, thirty feet below - faint at first, and increasing. It is like the murmur of human voices. We open the window and look down. We see a crowd of human beings with patched and tattered garments. Let us descend to the street and see who these are.

It is a noteworthy gathering. Many of these men are blind; many more are pale, emaciated, or aged. Some are on crutches; some are so feeble that they can barely walk. Most of the women are closely veiled, but enough are uncovered to cause us well to believe that, if the veils were lifted, more pain and misery would be seen. Some of them carry babes with pinched and sorrowful faces. There are perhaps a hundred in this gathering, and besides, many children. They are of all the races one meets in these streets - Syrians, Arabs, Ethiopians, and many others.

These people are ranged against the walls or seated on the ground, apparently in an attitude of expectation; - for what do they wait? Let us wait with them.

We have not to wait long. A door opens and a man comes out. He is of middle stature, strongly built. He wears flowing light-coloured robes. On his head is a light buff fez with a white cloth wound about it. He is perhaps sixty years of age. His long grey hair rests on his shoulders. His forehead is broad, full, and high, his nose slightly aquiline, his moustaches and beard, the latter full though not heavy, nearly white. His eyes are grey and blue, large, and both soft and penetrating. His bearing is simple, but there is grace, dignity, and even majesty about his movements. He passes through the crowd, and as he goes utters words of salutation. We do not understand them, but we see the benignity and the kindness of his countenance. He stations himself at a narrow angle of the street and motions to the people to come towards him. They crowd up a little too insistently. He pushes them gently back and lets them pass him one by one. As they come they hold their hands extended. In each open palm he places some small coins. He knows them all. He caresses them with his hand on the face, on the shoulders, on the head. Some he stops and questions. An aged negro who hobbles up, he greets with some kindly inquiry; the old man's broad face breaks into a sunny smile, his white teeth glistening against his ebony skin as he replies. He stops a woman with a babe and fondly strokes the child. As they pass, some kiss his hand. To all he says, "*Marhabbah, marhabbah*" - "Well done, well done!"

So they all pass him. The children have been crowding around him with extended hands, but to them he has not given. However, at the end, as he turns to go, he throws a handful of coppers over his shoulder, for which they scramble.

During this time this friend of the poor has not been unattended. Several men wearing red fezes, and with earnest and kindly faces, followed him from the house, stood near him and aided in regulating the crowd, and now, with reverent manner and at a respectful distance, follow him away. When they address him they call him "Master."

This scene you may see almost any day of the year in the streets of Akka. There are other scenes like it, which come only at the beginning of the winter season. In the cold weather which is approaching, the poor will suffer, for, as in all cities, they are thinly clad. Some day at this season, if you are advised of the place and time, you may see the poor of Akka gathered at one of the shops where clothes are sold, receiving cloaks from the Master. Upon many, especially the most infirm or crippled, he himself places the garment, adjusts it with his own hands, and strokes it approvingly, as if to say, "There! Now you will do well." There are five or six hundred poor in Akka, to all of whom he gives a warm garment each year.

On feast days he visits the poor at their homes. He chats with them, inquires into their health and comfort, mentions by name those who are absent, and leaves gifts for all.

Nor is it the beggars only that he remembers. Those respectable poor who cannot beg, but must suffer in silence - those whose daily labor will not support their families - to these he sends bread secretly. His left hand knoweth not what his right hand doeth.

All the people know him and love him - the rich and the poor, the young and the old - even the babe leaping in its mother's arms. If he hears of any one sick in the city - Moslem or Christian, or of any other sect, it matters not - he is each day at their bedside, or sends a trusty messenger. If a physician is needed, and the patient poor, he brings or sends one, and also the necessary medicine. If he finds a leaking roof or a

broken window menacing health, he summons a workman, and waits himself to see the breach repaired. If any one is in trouble, - if a son or a brother is thrown into prison, or he is threatened at law, or falls into any difficulty too heavy for him, - it is to the Master that he straightway makes appeal for counsel or for aid. Indeed, for counsel all come to him, rich as well as poor. He is the kind father of all the people.

This man who gives so freely must be rich, you think? No, far otherwise. Once his family was the wealthiest in all Persia. But this friend of the lowly, like the Galilean, has been oppressed by the great. For fifty years he and his family have been exiles and prisoners. Their property has been confiscated and wasted, and but little has been left to him. Now that he has not much he must spend little for himself that he may give more to the poor. His garments are usually of cotton, and the cheapest that can be bought. Often his friends in Persia - for this man is indeed rich in friends, thousands and tens of thousands who would eagerly lay down their lives at his word - send him costly garments. These he wears once, out of respect for the sender; then he gives them away. A few months ago this happened. The wife of the Master was about to depart on a journey. Fearing that her husband would give away his cloak and so be left without one for himself, she left a second cloak with her daughter, charging her not to inform her father of it. Not long after her departure, the Master, suspecting, it would seem, what had been done, said to his daughter, "Have I another cloak?" The daughter could not deny it, but told her father of her mother's charge. The Master replied, "How could I be happy having two cloaks, knowing that there are those that have none?" Nor would he be content until he had given the second cloak away.

He does not permit his family to have luxuries. He himself eats but once a day, and then bread, olives, and cheese suffice him.

His room is small and bare, with only a matting on the stone floor. His habit is to sleep upon this floor. Not long ago a friend, thinking that this must be hard for a man of advancing years, presented him with a bed fitted with springs and mattress. So these stand in his room also, but are rarely used. "For how," he says, "can I bear to sleep in luxury when so many of the poor have not even shelter?" So he lies upon the floor and covers himself only with his cloak.

For more than thirty-four years this man has been a prisoner at Akka. But his jailors have become his friends. The Governor of the city, the Commander of the Army Corps, respect and honour him as though he were their brother. No man's opinion or recommendation has greater weight with them. He is the beloved of all the city, high and low. And how could it be otherwise? For to this man it is the law, as it was to Jesus of Nazareth, to do good to those who injure him. Have we yet heard of any one in lands which boast the name of Christ who lived that life?

Hear how he treats his enemies. One instance of many I have heard will suffice. When the Master came to Akka there lived there a certain man from Afghanistan, an austere and rigid Mussulman. To him the Master was a heretic. He felt and nourished a great enmity towards the Master, and roused up others against him. When opportunity offered in gatherings of the people, as in the Mosque, he denounced him with bitter words.

"This man," he said to all, "is an impostor. Why do you speak to him? Why do you have dealings with him?" And when he passed the Master on the street he was careful to hold his robe before his face that his sight might not be defiled.

Thus did this Afghan. The Master, however, did thus: The

Afghan was poor and lived in a mosque; he was frequently in need of food and clothing. The Master sent him both. These he accepted, but without thanks. He fell sick. The Master took him a physician, food, medicine, money. These, also, he accepted; but as he held out one hand that the physician might take his pulse, with the other he held his cloak before his face that he might not look upon the Master. For twenty-four years the Master continued his kindnesses and the Afghan persisted in his enmity. Then at last one day the Afghan came to the Master's door, and fell down, penitent and weeping, at his feet.

"Forgive me, sir!" he cried. "For twenty-four years I have done evil to you, for twenty-four years you have done good to me. Now I know that I have been in the wrong."

The Master bade him rise, and they became friends.

This Master is as simple as his soul is great. He claims nothing for himself - neither comfort, nor honour, nor repose. Three or four hours of sleep suffice him; all the remainder of his time and all his strength are given to the succour of those who suffer, in spirit or in body. "I am," he says, "the servant of God."

Such is Abbas Effendi, the Master of Akka.

Teheran and Baghdad

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE

TEHERAN AND BAGHDAD

IN introducing Abbas Effendi to the reader I have thus far presented phases of his character which are unusual and first strike the attention. But these qualities are only the efflorescence of a strong, symmetrical, and well-balanced nature, which should be regarded from all sides. In the various relations of life when circumstances demand it he can be resolute, stern, and unyielding, as well as tender and compassionate. In his large family he is the firm and careful head, no less than the kind father and affectionate husband. Among men he is a strong and virile man, with a vigorous and clear intellect, a sound judgment, and substantial common sense. Among his people he is the executive, the administrator, and organiser of affairs.

Professor Browne, who visited Akka in 1890, thus graphically describes him as he saw him at that time (*A Traveller's Narrative*, Introduction, page 36):

"Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more. A tall, strongly built man, holding himself straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad, powerful forehead indicating a strong intellect, combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk's, and strongly marked but pleasant features, - such was my first impression of Abbas Effendi, "the Master," as he par excellence is called by the Babis. Subsequent conversation with him only served to heighten the respect with which his appearance had at first inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians, and the Mohammedans, could, I should think, scarcely be found even among the eloquent, ready, and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father's followers. About the greatness of this man no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt."

But the best estimate of the character of Abbas Effendi is to be gathered from the events of his life, to a brief narration of

which I will now proceed. The story is told by Behiah Khanum, his sister, as follows:

"My brother, Abbas Effendi, now our Lord, was born at Teheran in the spring of 1844, at midnight following the day upon which, in the evening, the Bab made his declaration. I was born three years later. He was therefore eight and I five, when in August, 1852, the attempt was made upon the life of the Shah of Persia by a young Babi, who through ungoverned enthusiasm had lost his mental balance. The events following this attempt are vividly impressed upon my mind. My mother, Abbas Effendi, myself, and my younger brother, then a babe, were at the time in Teheran. My father was temporarily in the country.

The attempted assassination caused great uproar and excitement throughout the city. All Babis were searched for, and, when found, arrested. A mob sacked our house, stripping it of its furnishings. My mother fled with us to the home of a sister of her father, whose husband was an official of the government; but, seeing the alarm which her presence caused, she was unwilling to bring her relatives into danger, and returned to her own home.

There we gathered together some furniture which had been left by the mob, and lived in one room, destitute of all but the barest necessities.

My father, as my mother learned from a servant who was with him when he was arrested, was not long after brought to the city in chains and placed, with many other Babis, in a dungeon below ground. They were chained together in squads by heavy chains passing about their necks. He expected to be executed first, as a leader, but he was instead reserved for the more horrible suffering of witnessing the successive torture and death of his companions separately. Each day one or more were selected for this fate, and the others reminded that their turn might come to-morrow.

Meanwhile, we heard each day the cries of the mob as a new victim was tortured or executed, not knowing but that it might be my father. My mother went daily to the house of her aunt for news of him and generally spent the entire day there, hoping that each hour would bring some tidings. These were long and weary days for my mother, young as she was and unaccustomed to sorrow.

At first, on going to her aunt's, my mother would take me with her; but one day, returning unusually late, we found Abbas Effendi surrounded by a band of boys who had undertaken to personally molest him. He was standing in their midst as straight as an arrow - a little fellow, the youngest and smallest of the group - firmly but quietly commanding them not to lay their hands upon him, which, strange to say, they seemed unable to do. After that, my mother thought it unsafe to leave him at home, knowing his fearless disposition, and that when he went into the street, as he usually did to watch for her coming, eagerly expectant of news from his father for whom, even at that early age, he had a passionate attachment, he would be beset and tormented by the boys. So she took him with her, leaving me at home with my younger brother. I spent the long days in constant terror, cowering in the dark and afraid to unlock the door lest men should rush in and kill us.

Meanwhile my mother was without money. She would have been reduced to extremities but for the fact that the buttons of our garments were of gold. These she used for buying food and for bribing the jailors to take food to my father.

Four months passed in this fearful agony of suspense and terror. Meanwhile the Government had investigated my father's case and had become convinced that he had had no connection with the attack upon the Shah. This might not have

been sufficient to effect his release at that time, on account of the popular fury against all Babis, but he was so ill that it was thought he would die, and his illness was made a pretext for his liberation and he was released under surveillance. Two weeks later, in company with a number of other families of believers, we set out for Baghdad with a military escort. It was bitterly cold, and the route lay over mountains. The journey lasted a month. My father was very ill. The chains had left his neck galled, raw, and much swollen. My mother, who was pregnant, was unaccustomed to hardships, and was worried and harassed over our recent trials and the uncertainty of our fate. Another thing which grieved her was her separation from my younger brother whom, being very delicate, she had felt obliged to leave behind in Teheran as unfit to endure the hardships of this journey. We were all insufficiently clothed, and suffered keenly from exposure. My brother in particular was very thinly clad. Riding upon a horse, his feet, ankles, hands, and wrists were much exposed to the cold, which was so severe that they became frost-bitten and swollen and caused him great pain. The effects of this experience he feels to this day on being chilled or taking a cold.

We arrived in Baghdad in a state of great misery, and also of almost utter destitution. The only means that we had brought from Teheran consisted of a few personal effects that my mother had collected before our departure, which had been so hurried that she had had no time in which to make suitable preparation. Even these were nearly exhausted by the time we reached our destination, having been bartered on the journey for necessities.

More misery now stared us in the face. My father was still very ill, my mother and other women in delicate health, small children needed care, while our means were insufficient to procure even the usual necessities of life. My mother's health demanded that we should have servants, but we were unable to hire them. There were, indeed, those among the believers who would willingly have acted as such for us, and who actually did so, to some extent, but we could not permit them to do what we would not do ourselves - especially my mother, who was habitually very thoughtful and considerate, and who always preferred to work for herself and others rather than be a source of trouble to any one.

I was, of course, too young to be of any real help; and as it was, there was no one in our household capable of doing much but my poor mother, who was unaccustomed to labour of any kind. In trying to wash our clothes her hands, which were fine and delicate, became blistered and were torn till they bled.

In short, our sufferings - at least those of our own family - were indescribable. However, we struggled through this period as bravely as we could, until, after a time, occasional remittances came to us from Teheran, the proceeds of personal effects - jewels, cloth of gold, and other valuable articles which were a part of my mother's dowry - which had been left there to be sold. This money ameliorated our condition to a considerable extent.

As soon as the Blessed Perfection⁵ became somewhat better, he began again to teach. Gathering the believers about him he encouraged, exhorted, and taught them until peace and happiness again reigned in the hearts of his devoted followers, and our little band of refugees found joy in his holy presence. But this happiness was of but brief duration. Not long after, my uncle, Subh i Ezel, my father's half-brother, arrived in Baghdad, and then there began to be disharmony and

misunderstandings among the believers. At the time of the trouble in Teheran, Subh i Ezel had escaped and remained for some time in concealment. Then he followed us, travelling in the disguise of a dervish.

I do not wish to be understood as asserting definitely that Subh i Ezel was the cause of the discord to which I have referred; but it began at about the time of his joining us, and I myself have concluded that it was attributable to him.

At length this state of affairs became very distasteful to my father, he being by nature a man of peace. Strife of any kind seemed to hurt him; more, however, because of the unhappiness which it brought upon others than because of the discomfort which it caused him. It was his habit, for the sake of peace and to quell strife, to take all blame upon himself where possible, and to seek to pacify those in contention by his love.

After we had been in Baghdad about one year, he announced that he could endure it no longer, and that he would go away.

Accordingly, taking a change of clothes, but no money, and against the entreaties of all the family, he set out. He was prevailed upon to take a servant, but sent him back the next day.

I have stated that my brother was deeply attached to his father; this attachment seemed to strengthen with his growth. After our father's departure he fell into great despondency. He would go away by himself, and, when sought for, be found weeping, often falling into such paroxysms of grief that no one could console him. His chief occupation at this time was copying and committing to memory the tablets⁶ of the Bab. The childhood and youth of my brother was, in fact, in all respects unusual. He did not care for play or for amusement like other children. He would not go to school, nor would he apply himself to study. Horseback riding was the only diversion of which he was fond; in that he became proficient, being reputed to be a very skilful horseman.⁷

After my father's departure many months passed; he did not return, nor had we any word from him or about him. We were all in great sorrow, and made constant inquiries, hoping to hear some rumour which would enable us to trace him.

There was an old physician at Baghdad who had been called upon to attend the family, and who had become our friend. He sympathised much with us, and undertook on his own account to make inquiries for my father. He at length thought that he had traced him to a certain locality, quite distant from Baghdad, in the mountains; and thereafter was accustomed to ask all persons whom he met from that region for such a man. These inquiries were long without definite result, but at length a certain traveller to whom he had described my father, said

⁶ The letters and shorter writings of the Bab, Beha Ullah, and Abbas Effendi are called "tablets" by the Beha'is.

⁷ In reply to a question by Madame Canavarro, as to what he was most fond of as a child, Abbas Effendi said: "I cared more for hearing the tablets of the Bab recited than anything else. I used to commit them to memory and repeat them. This was the greatest pleasure I knew in my childhood - my play and amusement. I was not fond of study, nor did I care for books."

Being asked whether as a young man he did not seek amusement, like others of his age, he replied: "At Baghdad I rode on horseback; and at one time I had an idea that I would like to hunt. So on a certain occasion I joined a party of hunters and went with them to the chase. But when I saw them killing birds and animals, I thought that this could not be right. Then it occurred to me that better than hunting for animals, to kill them, was hunting for the souls of men to bring them to God. I then resolved that I would be a hunter of this sort. This was my first and last experience in the chase.

This is all I want to tell you of myself. I am only a seeker of the souls of men, to guide them to God."

⁵ This is the appellation usually given Beha Ullah by Beha'is.

that he had heard of a man answering to that description, evidently of high rank, but calling himself a dervish, living in caves in the mountains. He was, he said, reputed to be so wise and wonderful in his speech on religious things that when people heard him they would follow him; whereupon, wishing to be alone, he would change his residence to a cave in some other locality. Further he related this incident: A boy attending a village school had been flogged and sent out for failure in his writing. While he was weeping outside the schoolroom, this holy man came by and asked the cause of his grief. When the lad had explained his trouble the Dervish said: 'Do not grieve. I will set you another copy, and teach you to write well.' He then took the boy's slate and wrote some words in very beautiful characters. The boy was delighted; and showing his slate in pride at now having a better master than he had had in the school, the people were astonished, Dervishes being commonly illiterate. They then began to follow the Dervish; who, wishing to meditate and pray in solitude, left that place for another.

When we heard these things, we were convinced that this Dervish was in truth our beloved one. But having no means to send him any word, or to hear further of him, we were very sad.

There was then in Baghdad an earnest Babi, formerly a pupil of Kurratu l'Aeyn⁸ (a woman famous for her beauty and learning, who was one of the disciples of the Bab, and a martyr). This man said to us that as he had no ties and did not care for his life, he desired no greater happiness than to be allowed to seek for him whom all loved so much, and that he would not return without him.

He was, however, very poor, not being able even to provide an ass for the journey; and he was besides not very strong, and therefore not able to go on foot. We had no money for the purpose, nor anything of value by the sale of which money could be procured, with the exception of a single rug, upon which we all slept. This we sold and with the proceeds bought an ass for this friend, who thereupon set out upon the search.

Time passed; we heard nothing, and fell into the deepest dejection and despair. Finally, four months having elapsed since our friend had departed, a message was one day received from him saying that he would bring my father home on the next day. The other members of the family could not credit the truth of this news, but it seemed to electrify my brother. He minutely questioned and examined the messenger, and became much excited. He quite believed that his father would return, but no one else did.

During the night following the next day, however, my father walked into the house. We hardly knew him; his beard and hair were long and matted - he really was a Dervish in appearance. The meeting between my brother and his father was the most touching and pathetic sight I have ever seen. Abbas Effendi threw himself on the floor before him and kissed and embraced his feet, weeping and crying, 'Why did you leave us, why did you leave us?' while the great uncouth Dervish wept over his boy. The scene carried a weight not to be expressed in words.

The absence of my father had covered a little more than two years. After his return the fame which he had acquired in the mountains reached Baghdad, and not only Babis but many others came to hear his teachings; and many, also, merely out of curiosity to see him. As he wished for retirement these curiosity seekers were a great trouble and annoyance to him.

This aroused my brother and he declared that he would protect his father from such intrusions. Accordingly he prepared two placards, one for the door of his own room, which read, 'Those who come for information may apply within; those who come only because of curiosity had better stay away'; the other for the door of his father's room, of which the purport was, 'Let those who are searching for God come, and come, and come.' Then he announced that he himself would first see those who came. If he found that they were genuine truth-seekers he admitted them to his father's presence; otherwise he did not permit them to see him.

So time passed. My father taught many, and his followers became numerous. Many of them were the fierce and untutored Arabs of Irak. All evinced an intense devotion to him. He was visited also by many Babis from Persia.

During these years Abbas Effendi was accustomed to frequent the mosques and argue with the doctors and learned men. They were astonished at his knowledge and acumen, and he came to be known as the youthful sage. They would ask him, 'Who is your teacher - where do you learn the things which you say?' His reply was that his father had taught him. Although he had never been a day in school, he was as proficient in all that was taught as well-educated young men, which was the cause of much remark among those who knew him.

In appearance my brother was at this time a remarkably fine-looking youth. He was noted as one of the handsomest young men in Baghdad."

Constantinople and Adrianople

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE (*Continued*)

CONSTANTINOPLE AND ADRIANOPLE

THE Governor of Baghdad at this time was a relative of my father, but his enemy on account of differences in religious opinion and family misunderstandings. This man, rendered uncomfortable by the sight of my father's increasing fame and influence, exerted himself to effect his removal from Baghdad. He caused representations to be made to the Shah of Persia that, whereas Beha Ullah had been driven out of Persia because of the harm threatened by his presence to the Mohammedan religion in that country, now he was injuring the religion even more in Baghdad, and still exerting his evil influence in Persia; and that therefore he ought to be removed to a place at a greater distance from that country, and one where he could do less harm.

These representations and suggestions he sent repeatedly to the Court of Persia, until at length the Shah was moved to use his influence with the Sultan of Turkey to have the Babis transferred from Baghdad to Constantinople. An order to this effect was at length made by the Sultan.

When this news came to us, from which we inferred that my father would again be made a prisoner, we were thrown into consternation, fearing another separation. He was summoned before the magistrates. My brother imperiously declared that he would go in his stead; but this our father overruled, and went himself. Great numbers of his followers had assembled about our house, and these witnessed his departure with many demonstrations of grief, feeling that it was possible that he might not return,

The magistrates expressed great sorrow to my father; they said that they respected and loved him, that they had not instigated the order, but that they were powerless to suspend or modify it, and must proceed with its execution. My father remained in conference with them nearly all day, but could do

⁸ Also known as "Tahirih" [DM]

nothing to avert the catastrophe. When he returned, he told us that we must prepare to set out for Constantinople in two weeks.

This report was like a death-knell to his followers, who were still gathered about the house. Many of them were Arabs; their fierce natures rebelled and they gave way to violent remonstrances. They implored the Blessed Perfection not to desert them. 'You are our shepherd,' they said; 'without you we must die.'

The next day they so overran the house that we could not prepare for the journey. Then the Blessed Perfection proposed to go with Abbas Effendi to the garden of one of our friends and live there in a tent till the time of departure, that the family might be able to proceed with the packing. This remark was repeated and misunderstood, and the rumour circulated among the believers that the Blessed Perfection was to be taken away alone. Then they came pouring in by hundreds, so wild with grief that they could not be pacified; and when my father started to leave the house with my brother they threw themselves upon the ground before him. One man who had an only child, which had come to him late in his life, stripped the clothes from the child's body and placing it at my father's feet cried, 'Naked I give you my child, my precious child, to do with as you will; only promise not to leave us in distress. Without you we cannot live.'

Then, as the only way in which to soothe his followers, the Blessed Perfection took all his family to the garden, leaving to friends the preparation of his household goods for the journey. Here we pitched tents and lived in them for two weeks. The tents made, as it were, a little village, that of my father, which he occupied alone, in the centre.

Four days before the caravan was to set out, the Blessed Perfection called Abbas Effendi into his tent and told him that he himself was the one whose coming had been promised by the Bab - the Chosen of God, the Centre of the Covenant. A little later, and before leaving the garden, he selected from among his disciples four others, to whom he made the same declaration. He further said to these five that for the present he enjoined upon them secrecy as to this communication, as the time had not come for a public declaration; but that there were reasons which caused him to deem it necessary to make it at that time to a few whom he could trust. These reasons he did not state; but they are to my mind suggested by the subsequent events which I shall narrate farther on, and which I think he at that time anticipated, and in view of which he felt that he needed special protection.

Many of the Blessed Perfection's followers decided to abandon Baghdad also, and accompany him in his wanderings. When the caravan started, our company numbered about seventy-five persons. All the young men, and others who could ride, were mounted on horses. The women and the Blessed Perfection were furnished waggons. We were accompanied by a military escort. This journey took place in 1863, about eleven years after our arrival in Baghdad.

From the time when the declaration was made to him at Baghdad Abbas Effendi seemed to constitute himself the special attendant, servant, and body-guard of his father. He guarded him day and night on this journey, riding by his waggon and watching near his tent. He thus had little sleep, and, being young, became extremely weary. His horse was Arab and very fine, and so wild and spirited that no other man could mount him, but under my brother's hand as gentle and docile as a lamb. In order to get a little rest, he adopted the plan of riding swiftly a considerable distance ahead of the caravan, when, dismounting and causing his horse to lie down,

he would throw himself on the ground and place his head on his horse's neck. So he would sleep until the cavalcade came up, when his horse would awake him by a kick and he would remount.

The march to Constantinople occupied four months. Much of the weather was inclement and during many whole days we were without proper food. In our company were many small children, upon whom and the women the journey was very hard. On one occasion during a long and cold march, my brother having obtained some bread, rice, and milk, my father made up with his own hands a sort of pudding by boiling these together with a little sugar, which was then distributed to all. The preparation of this food was a reminiscence of my father's two-years' sojourn in the mountains, where he was dependent on what might be given him, and this dish - which he sometimes made for himself - was the only warm food he had.

Such times as these were moments of pleasure; but there was always present a feeling of apprehension - as though a sword were hanging over our heads.

Arrived in Constantinople we found ourselves prisoners. We were put into a small house, the men below and the women above. My father and his family were given two rooms. The weather was very cold and damp, and we had no fires or proper clothing. Because of the crowding the atmosphere was foul. We petitioned for better quarters, and were given another house, which was to some extent an improvement.

While we were here the Blessed Perfection was advised by persons of prominence who came to see him to appeal to the Sultan, state his case, and demand justice, in accordance with the Turkish custom. To these suggestions he replied that he was a man whose only concern was the spiritual welfare of men; that he had never interfered in any way with worldly affairs, nor should he ever do so, even in his own behalf; that the Sultan had commanded his presence in Constantinople, and for that reason alone he had come; that in like manner he should in the future comply with the wishes of the Sultan; that he saw no reason why he, a spiritual man, should initiate the trouble, argument, and commotion incident to an appeal; and that if the Government wished to investigate the truth of the matter, it would itself institute an inquiry.

I have heard that these words were repeated to the Sultan and did not please him, perhaps because a different construction had been put upon them by the narrator than the meaning which the Blessed Perfection intended to convey. However that may be, it being a matter about which I cannot speak with certainty, my father was not called upon to appear at any inquiry. An order was, however, made, about two months after our arrival in Constantinople, directing our transfer to Adrianople, a town in eastern European Turkey of notoriously bad climate, to which criminals were often sent.

Before we set out a threat was made of separating us - of sending the Blessed Perfection to one place, his family to another, and his followers elsewhere. This overwhelmed us with apprehension, which hung over us and tormented us during the whole of the journey and long after. The dread of this or of the execution of my father was the greatest of our trials - a horrible fear of unknown danger always menacing us. Such threats were frequently repeated after this time also. Had it not been for them we could have borne our sufferings with greater resignation; but these kept us always in a heart-sickening suspense.

The journey to Adrianople, although occupying but nine days, was the most terrible experience of travel we had thus far had. It was the beginning of winter, and very cold; heavy snow fell most of the time; and destitute as we were of proper clothing

or food, it was a miracle that we survived it. We arrived at Adrianople all sick - even the young and strong. My brother again had his feet frozen on this journey.

Our family, numbering eleven persons, was lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city of Adrianople. It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare allowed us, which was unsuitable for the children and the sick.

That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger, and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family.

In the spring, on the appeal of the Blessed Perfection to the Governor, we were removed to somewhat more comfortable quarters within the city. Our family was given the second story of a house, of which some of the believers occupied the ground floor.

We remained for five years in Adrianople. The Blessed Perfection resumed his teaching and gathered about him a large following. We were very poor and always in great privation, but had become so inured to suffering that we should have lived in tolerable contentment had it not been for two things - the feeling of dread and sense of unknown danger of which I have before spoken, and another matter to which I will presently more particularly refer.

During this period, as, in fact, had been the case for a number of years, Abbas Effendi was the chief dependence and comfort of the entire family. He had from childhood a remarkably self-sacrificing nature, habitually yielding his own wishes and giving up whatever he had to his brothers and sisters, keeping nothing for himself. He was always gentle; never became angry, and never retaliated. The life we were living afforded constantly recurring occasions for the exhibition of these qualities of his character; and his unceasing efforts did a great deal to make its conditions endurable for the other members of the family.

For the poor also he had ever been very tender-hearted, and, destitute as we were, he always contrived to find something to give to others who were in greater want. This alms-giving proclivity of my brother was a great trial to our mother, for in our straitened circumstances she found it very difficult with the means at her disposal to provide for her own family only those things which were actually necessary.

The matter to which I have just referred as interfering with our contentment was a very terrible experience brought upon us by Subh i Ezel, to whose machinations our subsequent sufferings were chiefly due, and which were the immediate cause of our being sent some years later from Adrianople to Akka. To this very serious affair I will now proceed.

Subh i Ezel continued to be one of our company after we came to Baghdad in 1853. With his family he now occupied in Adrianople a house separate from ours though near it. The relations between the two families, which for a time while we were in Baghdad had been strained, had become again harmonious. The food of Subh i Ezel's family was usually prepared in our house, under my supervision, and sent to Subh i Ezel's house. The reason for this was that his wives were not properly attentive to their household affairs and prepared his food so badly that it was not suitable for him to eat. We saw this, and, in order to enable him to live comfortably, offered to cook his food and send it to him.

There was a bath in our house, but none in Subh i Ezel's, and he was accustomed to use our bath. The same servant prepared the bath and acted as bath attendant for both my father and Subh i Ezel.

Up to this time the declaration which the Blessed Perfection had made to five of his disciples in Baghdad had not been formally communicated to Subh i Ezel, or, indeed, to any one else, and we do not know that he was aware of it: though his conduct suggests that he suspected it, and that this suspicion furnished the incentive which prompted him in doing what I am about to relate. As you no doubt know, Subh i Ezel claimed to have been appointed by the Bab as his successor, and therefore to be, after the Bab's death, the head of the Babi Church.

The events which I am about to relate occurred about one year after he had moved into the city from the quarters which he had at first occupied in Adrianople. One day while in the bath Subh i Ezel remarked to the servant (who was a believer) that the Blessed Perfection had enemies and that in the bath he was much exposed, and asked whether it would not be easy for an attendant who was not faithful to the Blessed Perfection to make away with him while shaving him. The servant replied that this was certainly the case. Subh i Ezel then asked him whether, if God should lay upon him the command to do this, he would obey it. The servant understood this question, coming from Subh i Ezel, to be a suggestion of such a command, and was so terrified by it that he rushed screaming from the room. He first met Abbas Effendi and repeated to him Subh i Ezel's words. My brother endeavoured to quiet him, and commanded his silence. This the servant refused unless he was taken at once to the Blessed Perfection. Abbas Effendi accordingly accompanied him to my father, who listened to his story and then enjoined absolute silence upon him.

This occurrence was ignored by my father and brother, and our relations with Subh i Ezel continued to be cordial. The Blessed Perfection was indeed several times warned to beware of Subh i Ezel, by persons who claimed to have overheard conversations between him and his intimates, but no attention was paid to these warnings.

Some time afterwards, to celebrate a family festival day, Subh i Ezel invited us all to his house. At this time, also, my father was warned not to take food there, but replied that he must treat Subh i Ezel with kindness and could not refuse it.

This entertainment was looked upon as cementing the family reconciliation, and it is usual on such occasions among Persians for the heads of the two family factions which have been alienated to eat from the same plate. So, now, rice for both my father and Subh i Ezel was served to them on one plate. This rice, as well as all the other food used for the meal, had been prepared in Subh i Ezel's house, contrary to the usual custom. Now my father and Subh i Ezel had these well-known peculiarities of taste - that the former was very fond of onions, while the latter could not endure them. The portion of rice intended for my father was accordingly flavoured with onions, while that intended for Subh i Ezel was differently prepared. The servant bringing in the plate placed it, at the direction of Subh i Ezel, with the side upon which was the rice flavoured with onions toward the Blessed Perfection. While he did so Subh i Ezel smilingly remarked, 'Here is rice cooked as you like it!' My father ate some of the rice prepared for him, but fortunately not very much, as for some reason it did not please him. He preferred the rice prepared for Subh i Ezel, and ate of it, and also of the dishes which the others at the table were eating.

"Soon after eating the rice my father became ill and went

home. About midnight he was seized with severe vomiting and passing of blood from the bowels. A physician was summoned, and declared that he had been poisoned.

My father was desperately ill for twenty-two days; during all this time he took no food. On the eighteenth day the physician said that he could not live. The death sentence terribly moved Abbas Effendi. He placed his head on the pillow beside his father's in the utmost agony of grief. He implored him to live for the sake of the world, for his family, and for him. My father was too feeble to speak, and could only place his hand on my brother's head. The physician was deeply moved by the sight. He had learned to love Abbas Effendi, - as did every one who came in contact with him, - and declared he would give his life to save the father for the boy. Thrice he repeated, 'I will give my life - I will give my life - I will give my life,' walking as he spoke several times around the bed. At length, utterly despairing of the case, he left. The next morning he sent word that he was ill, and advised that another physician be summoned. Nine days later he died. We then recalled his singular words.

Meanwhile we did not summon another physician for my father, feeling that the case was hopeless; but to our surprise his condition soon showed marked improvement, and on the third day he asked for food, which gave us much hope. From this time he grew stronger continuously, but very slowly,⁹ and at length recovered.

After the recovery of my father from this illness, Abbas Effendi strongly urged him to declare himself to Subh i Ezel. My father, however, persisted in replying that so long as Subh i Ezel did not effect other harm than he was able to do to him personally, that is, so long as he did not injure the Cause, he would not assert himself against him.

Subh i Ezel made no further attempts upon the life of the Blessed Perfection, but he began to endeavour to arouse dissensions among the believers, making various false accusations against the Blessed Perfection. At this time, of course, the Babis in general did not know that my father had said that he was the Divine Manifestation, but he was

regarded by most of them as their leader, and very much beloved. Subh i Ezel was looked upon as leader, however, by some of the Babis.

Thus matters went, becoming worse and worse, until it was plainly evident that the Cause was suffering. Then the Blessed Perfection summoned Abbas Effendi and said to him that the time had come for a public declaration. 'Not for myself would I do it,' he said, 'but because the welfare of the Cause demands it.' He then wrote a tablet, longer than any he had before written and of great power, - it has been said that men trembled as they read it, - addressed to the Babis generally, and setting forth his declaration.

This tablet he directed to be read to every Babi, but first of all to Subh i Ezel. He assigned to one of his followers the duty of taking it to Subh i Ezel, reading it to him, and returning with Subh i Ezel's reply. When Subh i Ezel had heard the tablet, he did not attempt to refute it; on the contrary he accepted it, and said that it was true. But he went on to maintain that he himself was co-equal with the Blessed Perfection, affirming that he had had a vision on the previous night in which he had received this assurance.

"When this statement of Subh i Ezel was reported to the Blessed Perfection, the latter directed that every Babi should be informed of it at the time when he heard his own tablet read. This was done, and much uncertainty resulted among the believers. They generally applied to the Blessed Perfection for advice, which, however, he declined to give. At length he told them that he would seclude himself from them for four months, and that during this time they must decide the question for themselves.

This he did. None of the believers other than his own family had access to him, or communication with him, for four months. At the end of that period all the Babis in Adrianople, with the exception of Subh i Ezel and five or six others, came to the Blessed Perfection and declared that they accepted him as the Divine Manifestation, whose coming the Bab had foretold. The Babis of Persia, Syria, Egypt, and other countries, also, in due time accepted the Blessed Perfection with substantial unanimity.¹⁰

Subh i Ezel now took up another line of action. He opened a correspondence with prominent persons in the Turkish government and the Moslem Church, in which he alleged that the Blessed Perfection was stirring up strife and seeking to destroy the Moslem faith by showing a contempt for the Koran, neglecting the fast of Ramadan, permitting the women of his followers to go unveiled, condemning polygamy, and the like. These allegations, although wholly unfounded, since the Blessed Perfection, equally with our Master at the present time, required of his followers the most careful observance of, and respect for, the social customs of the people among whom they lived, were persisted in by Subh i Ezel, until he had made the impression which he desired. The Turkish government, annoyed and irritated, finding our people, between whom, as can be well understood, it was unable to discriminate, vexatious and troublesome, wearied of the whole matter, and determined to scatter us; a course which under the circumstances was a quite natural and intelligible outcome of Subh i Ezel's actions. An order was therefore issued decreeing that the Babis in Adrianople should be

⁹ Partisans of Subh i Ezel have endeavoured to anticipate and break the force of these revelations by publishing the following story, cited by Professor Browne in a note, *A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 359. They allege that Beha Ullah "caused poison to be placed in one side of a dish of food which was to be set before himself and Subh i Ezel, giving instructions that the poisoned side should be turned towards his brother. As it happened, however, the food had been flavoured with onions, and Subh i Ezel, disliking this flavour, refused to partake of the dish. Beha Ullah, fancying that his brother suspected his design, ate some of the food from his side of the dish; but the poison having diffused itself to some extent through the whole mass, he was presently attacked with vomiting and other symptoms of poisoning." This transparent fabrication assumes an impossible ignorance on the part of Beha Ullah of the fact that onions were disliked by his brother, as well as the improbable hypothesis that Beha Ullah would knowingly have partaken of food in which poison had been placed.

In the following pages of his book Professor Browne mentions a number of other charges made against Beha Ullah by the Ezelis, equally incredible, at least so it seems to me, to any one familiar with the character and teachings of the Beha'is. I do not think that it would be time well employed to advert to these charges in detail. Allegations so flatly in contradiction to the spirit, lives, and teachings of Beha Ullah and his successor, will quickly enough fade away and be forgotten if left to themselves. But I must protest most energetically against Professor Browne's suggestion (pp. 371 et seq.) that any traits of Oriental character shared by the leaders of Beha'ism could be assumed as possibly closing their eyes to the iniquity of such proceedings in support of their cause. Of course one cannot dogmatise on impressions of character, but I wish to place on record the fact that my own acquaintance with the Beha'is and the spirit which animates them makes it inconceivable to me that such utter perversion of moral sense, however possible it may generally be to the Oriental type of character, about which I here express no opinion, could under any circumstances characterise their policy as a body, or the policy of their leaders.

¹⁰ Subh i Ezel had, indeed, a few adherents; but his following has been so inconsiderable, and so utterly without the vitality and power of assimilation so characteristic equally of the earliest and latest stages of this movement, that the defection has not impaired in any ascertainable degree its solidarity, and is to be regarded, in considering the present status of the faith, as a quite negligible quantity.

separated and banished; that Subh i Ezel should be sent to one place, the Blessed Perfection to another, his family to another, and the followers to still others; and that all should be kept in ignorance of their own and the others' destinations.

During the period of his residence at Adrianople, Abbas Effendi had endeared himself to every one, high and low, those of the faith and others alike. He taught much and even at that time was commonly called the 'Master.' The Governor himself had become a friend of the Master's and delighted to listen to his religious discourses. It was the habit of the Governor frequently to have the Master at the palace, and when my brother could not go to the Governor he sometimes came to my brother.

When the Governor received the order of banishment from Adrianople he was so affected by it that, not having the heart to execute it himself, he put it into the hands of his subordinates for execution, wrote a letter to Abbas Effendi, and left the city. In this letter he said:

'This trouble has come upon you through members of your own family. It is Subh i Ezel who has caused the Sultan to take these steps. I am powerless to aid you, and my love for you is so great that I must go away. I cannot see this dreadful thing happen.'

This trouble broke with the suddenness of a tornado upon us. We were sitting quietly together at home when we heard a bugle-call. My brother looked out and saw a cordon of soldiers about the house presenting arms. Our first thought was that the life of the Blessed Perfection or of Abbas Effendi was threatened. The latter endeavoured to quiet our alarm, and went out to inquire the cause of this demonstration. He was given the Governor's letter. The family consulted and Abbas Effendi then told the officer in command that we would die rather than be separated, and asked at least for respite. The reply was, 'No; you must go to-day, Beha Ullah and his family to different places, and neither can know the destination of the other.' Abbas Effendi demanded permission to go to the Governor's palace and appeal to his representative. This was at first refused but finally granted, and he set out between two guards.

My brother pleaded so eloquently with the officials that they consented to telegraph to Constantinople asking that the order be changed so that our family might remain together. A reply was received refusing the change. My brother persisted, and had such influence with the officials that they seemed unable to put the measure into execution, permitting him to send despatch after despatch for a week.

These were days of horror. The members of our family neither ate nor slept. No cooking was done in the house. When my brother left in the morning with the guards we feared that we might never see him again, and watched hour after hour for his return.

At length a telegram was received granting the concession that my father should be permitted to take with him his immediate family, but directing that his followers should be separated from him, without knowledge of his destination. A servant who had accompanied my brother overheard a part of this despatch read and misunderstood it. Without waiting to inquire whether he had heard aright, he returned to us with the report that the first order was not to be rescinded; that the Blessed Perfection was to be separated from his family and his followers. After telling us this he ran out and spread the news among the believers who were gathered near our house. They were as though stunned, paralysed. One of them, an old and faithful follower, seized a knife, and exclaiming, 'If I must be separated from my Lord, I will go now and join my God,' cut

his throat. Fortunately this man's knife was partially arrested by a bystander so that his jugular vein was not severed; with the aid of a physician his life was ultimately saved.

The attempted suicide caused a great noise and disturbance, which attracted our attention. My mother and I went out to inquire into the cause of the commotion. We came near, and saw a man lying on the ground with blood streaming from him. The soldiers surrounding the group prevented us from approaching closely enough to determine with certainty who it was, but the first thought which came to us was that my poor brother, on hearing that the order was to be carried out, had, in his despair, killed himself. We could hear the gulping utterances of the man - 'You have separated me from my Lord, - I prefer to die.' Though unable to distinguish the voice, we still thought it was my brother. We remained in this agonising suspense for some time, until we suddenly heard my brother's voice rising high above the din, and speaking with tremendous force.

On hearing him, two things amazed us. First, he seemed to be wrought up to the highest pitch of anger and indignation. Never before had we heard him speak an angry word. We had known him sometimes impatient and peremptory, but never angry. And then, his great excitement had apparently given him command of the Turkish language, which no one had ever heard him speak before. He was, in Turkish, and in the most impassioned and vehement manner, protesting against, and denouncing, the treatment of the officers and demanding the presence of the Governor, who in the meantime had returned to the city. The officers seemed cowed by his vehemence, and the Governor was sent for. He came, and seeing the situation said, 'It is impossible, we cannot separate these people.'

The Governor returned to his palace and telegraphed to Constantinople. The next day he received a reply granting permission to the followers of the Blessed Perfection to accompany him. We were told to prepare for immediate departure, but were not told to what place we were to be sent. When we set out there were seventy-seven in all in our band.

We journeyed six days, and arrived at Gallipoli, which is on the sea.

On our arrival at this town we were met with the information that the Governor had a telegraphic order from the Sultan's government directing our separation; that my father with one servant was to go to one place, my brother with one servant to another, the family to Constantinople, the other followers to various places. This sudden and unexplained withdrawal of the hard-won concession we had so recently obtained exhausted our patience. We unhesitatingly declared that we would not be separated, and a repetition, in substance, of the events of the last days in Adrianople followed. My brother went to the Governor and told him that we would not submit to separation. 'Do this,' said he, - 'take us out on a steamer and drown us in the ocean. You can thus end at once our sufferings and your perplexities. But we refuse to be separated.'

We remained in Gallipoli for a week, in the same horrible suspense which we had experienced at Adrianople. Finally my brother, by his eloquence in argument and power of will, succeeded in gaining for the second time from the Constantinople government the concession that we should remain together.

At Gallipoli the German, Russian, and English Consuls called upon the Blessed Perfection and offered to intercede in his behalf with the Turkish government, assuring him that they could procure, for him and his family, permission to go to one of the countries of Western Europe, where they would have no further trouble. My father replied that he did not wish to

oppose the will of the Sultan, nor would he consent to abandon his followers; that his only interests were in spiritual things and his only desire to preach a religion, and that therefore he had nothing to fear.

The order from Constantinople directed that we should embark together upon a government vessel, and no time was lost in putting it into execution. In the hurry, distress, and uncertainty of the moment, we neglected to provide food for the voyage, but to one old servant, on his way to the ship, the thought occurred that he had not seen any provisions prepared, and he bought a box of bread. This, with the ship's prisoners' rations, which were almost inedible, was the only food we had for five days, when we reached Alexandria. Here the rumour that we were to be separated was renewed; and all were so terrified by it that no one was willing to leave the ship to buy provisions lest he be prevented from returning. We were able to procure only some grapes and mineral water.

The little bread we had was now spoiled; and, what with hunger, fright, and grief, we were almost bereft of reason. On one of our company, indeed, these conditions had so preyed as to unbalance his mind, and he threw himself from the ship as we were leaving the harbour of Alexandria. The ships' officers were, however, fortunately able to bring her to in time to reach this man before he sank, and he was brought on board and revived.

Akka (Part 1)

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE (*Continued*)

AKKA

AFTER a voyage of about two days we were landed at Haifa, in Syria. All were sick, from hunger or eating improper food. I myself was a healthy woman up to the time of taking this voyage; since then I have never been well.

'We remained one day in the prison at Haifa, the men in chains, and were then taken in small boats to Akka (a distance of ten miles). The water was very rough, and nearly all became seasick.

'Akka, as we afterwards learned, was a prison to which the worst criminals were commonly sent from all parts of the Turkish Empire. It was reported to have a deadly climate. There was a saying that if a bird flew over Akka it would fall and die.

At that time there was no landing for the city: it was necessary to wade ashore from the boats. The Governor ordered that the women be carried on the backs of the men. My brother was not willing that this should be done, and protested against it. He was one of the first to land, and procured a chair, in which, with the help of one of the believers, he carried the women ashore. The Blessed Perfection was not allowed to leave his boat until all his family had landed. When he had come ashore, the family were counted and taken to the army barracks, in which we were to be imprisoned. From the terrible sufferings and privations of the journey we were nearly all sick; worst of all, perhaps, the Blessed Perfection and myself.

Arrived at the barracks, it was proposed to put the Blessed Perfection and his family on the second floor, and he was sent up; but I fainted from exhaustion and was unable to ascend the stairs. [Here the narrator paused a moment, visibly trembling, and then continued.] Of my own experience perhaps this is the most awful. The horrible sufferings of the voyage had reduced me almost to the point of death. Upon that came the seasickness. When we landed in Akka all the people of the town came crowding about us, talking loudly in Arabic, which I understood. Some said that we were to be put in the dungeons and chained; others that we were to be

thrown into the sea. The most horrible jests and jeers were hurled at us as we were marched through the streets to this dreadful prison.

Imagine, if you can, the overpowering impression made by all this upon the mind of a young girl, such as I was then. Can you wonder that I am serious, and that my life is different from those of my countrywomen? But this is digressing.

When we had entered the barracks the massive door was closed upon us and the great iron bolts thrown home. I cannot find words to describe the filth and stench of that vile place. We were nearly up to our ankles in mud in the room into which we were led. The damp, close air and the excretions of the soldiers combined to produce horrible odours. Then, being unable to bear more, I fainted. As I fainted, those about me caught me before I fell; but because of the mud and filth there was no place upon which I could be laid. On one side of the room was a man weaving a mat for the soldiers. One of our friends took this mat and I was placed upon it. Then they begged for water, but they could not get it. The soldiers would permit no one to go out.

There was a pool of water on the dirt floor, in which the mat-maker had been moistening his rushes. Some of this water was dipped up and strained and put to my lips. I swallowed a little and revived; but the water was so foul that my stomach rejected it, and I fainted again. Then a little of this water was thrown into my face; and at length I revived sufficiently to go up-stairs.

In the meantime my brother had slipped out and gone down to assist in the landing of the remainder of our company, whom we had left in the boats. When the soldiers discovered that he had disappeared, they at once notified the Governor, who had search made for him and found him helping the others ashore. The followers were all brought to the barracks together and lodged on the ground floor. Among them were the women and children, almost dying with hunger and parched with thirst. My brother begged to be permitted to go out for food and water. The soldiers replied: 'You cannot put a foot outside of this room. If you do, we will kill you. Our orders are not to let you leave the barracks under any pretext.' Then he asked permission to send out a servant guarded by soldiers. This was refused.

The above was related to us by my brother, when he at length returned to our family quarters, in reply to our inquiries as to the occasion of his absence. He had been away for hours, and our hearts had been filled with anxiety for his safety.

Then came another time of heart-sickening suffering. The mothers who had babes at breast had no milk for them, for lack of food and drink, so the babes could not be pacified or quieted. The larger children were screaming for food and water, and could not sleep or be soothed. The women were fainting.

Under these conditions, my brother spent the first part of the night in passing about among the distressed people, trying to pacify them, and in appealing to the soldiers not to be so heartless as to allow women and children to suffer so. About midnight he succeeded in getting a message to the Governor. We were then sent a little water and some cooked rice; but the latter was so full of grit and smelled so badly that only the strongest stomach could retain it. The water the children drank; but the rice only the strongest could eat. Later on, some of our people in unpacking their goods found some pieces of the bread which had been brought from Gallipoli, and a little sugar. With these a dish was prepared for the Blessed Perfection, who was very ill. When it was taken to him, he said: 'I command you to take this to the children.' So it was

given to them, and they were somewhat quieted.

The next morning conditions were no better; there was neither water nor food that could be eaten. My brother sent message after message to the Governor, appealing in behalf of the women and children. At length he sent us water and some prisoners' bread; but the latter was worse even than the rice - appearing and tasting as though earth had been mixed with the flour. My brother also succeeded in getting permission to send out a servant, guarded by four soldiers, to buy food. But before this permission was given, the Governor commanded the presence of my brother and told him that neither he nor any of our people - not even a child - was to leave the prison under any circumstances whatever, and that unless this was promised the servant would not be permitted to go out. Under the circumstances my brother was obliged to give this promise.

The servant selected was told that if he spoke to a man or woman except in bargaining for supplies, he would be spitted on the swords of the soldiers.

The servant procured some provisions; yet even thus we were still badly off for food, for we were all so poor that we could buy but little. So the Blessed Perfection requested that the prison allowance for our support should be commuted for money. The Governor consented, and gave to my father the amount allowed our family, and to my brother the amount allowed to the others. Then my father gave his own share and that of our family to my brother for the people, the whole being insufficient, for them, saying: 'I will eat bread.' Thereafter, when the supply of provisions was insufficient and he learned of it, he would take only bread and water.

When we were first brought to the barracks we had no knowledge as to the manner of life to which we were to be consigned. We feared that the Blessed Perfection, my brother, and perhaps others would be placed in dungeons and chained. The only information about it which we could obtain was that our sentence would be read on Friday - our arrival being early in the week. This uncertainty was an additional horror. When the sentence was read to us, we learned that it stated that we were political prisoners, nihilists, murderers, and thieves; that wherever we went, we corrupted the morals of the people; that we had leagued to overthrow the Ottoman Empire; that we could be given no leniency, and that the orders to keep us under bolt and bar must not be broken. It was because of this evil reputation, which had doubtless been given to the government by those who had reasons for desiring our destruction, and not from any want of humanity on the part of our jailors, who later became very kind and friendly to us, that we were subjected to such stern treatment and were given no more latitude or aid.

The season was summer (1868) and the temperature very high. All our people were huddled together on the damp earth floor of the barracks; with little water to drink, and that very bad, with no water with which to bathe, and scarcely enough for washing their faces. Typhoid fever and dysentery broke out among them. Every one in our company fell sick excepting my brother, my mother, an aunt, and two others of the believers. We were not allowed a physician; we could not procure medicine. My brother had in his baggage some quinine and bismuth. With these two drugs and his nursing, he brought us all through with the exception of four, who died. These were two months of such awful horror as words cannot picture. imagine it, if you can. Some seventy men, women, and children packed together, hot summer weather, no proper food, bad water, the most offensive odours from purging and excretions, and a general attack of the terrible diseases of dysentery and typhoid.

There was no one with strength to be of any general service but my brother. He washed the patients, fed them, nursed them, watched with them. He took no rest. When at length he had brought the rest of us - the four who died excepted - through the crisis and we were out of danger, he was utterly exhausted and fell sick himself, as did also my mother and the three others who had theretofore been well. The others soon recovered, but Abbas Effendi was taken with dysentery, and long remained in a dangerous condition. By his heroic exertions he had won the regard of one of the officers, and when this man saw my brother in this state he went to the Governor and pleaded that Abbas Effendi might have a physician. This was permitted, and under the care of the physician my brother recovered.

For long after our departure from Adrianople none of the friends and followers of the Blessed Perfection in Persia knew our whereabouts. We were not permitted to send any letters. Great efforts were made to find us, and our friends finally traced us to Akka; but this whole city was then practically a prison from which strangers were carefully excluded, and they found it impossible to get into communication with us, or even to pass the city gate.

There was a Persian follower of the Bab who some time before, having failed in his business at home, had emigrated to Akka. He had not dared to disclose his faith, and no one suspected it. The servant who marketed for us happened one day, as he went about the bazaar to come to this man's shop; and though he was not allowed to speak with him, he seems to have known intuitively that he was a friend. So thereafter he made most of his purchases of provisions at his shop. Some of the Persian believers who had come to Akka, but who had been unable to enter the city, effected communication with this man and arranged with him to send a note to the Blessed Perfection. This the shopkeeper accomplished by concealing the note among some vegetables and giving them to the servant with such a look that the latter understood and afterwards searched for it. The note begged the Blessed Perfection to send out some word; but this seemed to be beyond our power.

The physician who visited my brother, on seeing our condition, had so much sympathy with our distress, and became so fond of Abbas Effendi, that he asked him if there was not something which he could do for us. My brother begged him to take a message to the believers who were waiting to hear from the Blessed Perfection. He undertook to do so, and carried a tablet away in the lining of his hat. For two years this physician conveyed tablets and messages to and fro for us in this way.

After this first message had been transmitted from the Blessed Perfection, many believers came here from Persia and remained in the neighbourhood with the hope of effecting some communication with him, or at least of getting a glimpse of him. They would go to some prominent point where they could be seen from his window. Some of us, seeing them, would call my brother's attention to them, whereupon he would inform the Blessed Perfection and follow him to the window and wave his handkerchief.

We were imprisoned in the barracks, without any substantial change in our manner of life, for two years. During this time none of us left the prison - not even my brother or any of the children. The Blessed Perfection passed his time in his room, writing tablets, or rather dictating them to my younger brother¹¹, who was a rapid penman. Abbas Effendi would copy them and send them out by the physician.

¹¹ Mirza Mihdi [DM]

It was usual to carry on this work during the evening. One evening towards the end of the second year, my younger brother came, as was his habit, to write for his father. But as he was not very well, and as some others of the family were also ill, the Blessed Perfection told him to go and come later. So he went up to the flat roof of the barracks, where we were accustomed to walk, and which was our only recourse for fresh air and exercise. He was walking up and down, repeating tablets and gazing at the sky, when he stumbled, lost his balance, and fell through the opening to which the ladder from below led up. The room into which he fell had a lofty ceiling; it was the living-room of the family. No one was in the room at the time, but, hearing his cries, some of the family rushed in and found him lying in a heap on the floor with the blood pouring from his mouth. The Blessed Perfection, hearing the commotion, opened the door of his room and looked out. When he saw his son he turned back and re-entered his room, saying: 'Mahdy has gone!'

We took him up and laid him on his mat. He was perfectly conscious. Later the Blessed Perfection came and remained with him. The physician was sent for; he said that there was no hope.

My brother lived for about thirty hours. When he was about to pass away the Blessed Perfection said to him: 'What do you desire? Do you wish to live, or do you prefer to die? Tell me what you most wish for.' My brother replied: 'I don't care to live. I have but one wish. I want the believers to be admitted to see their Lord. If you will promise me this, it is all I ask.' The Blessed Perfection told him that it would be as he desired.

So, after much patient suffering, my brother's gentle spirit took its flight. As we could not leave the barracks, we could not bury our dead; nor had we the consolation of feeling that we could provide for him through others the grateful final tribute of a proper and fitting burial, as we had no means wherewith even to purchase a coffin. After some consideration and consultation among ourselves, finding that we had nothing to dispose of, and at a loss how to proceed, we told our Lord¹² of the sad situation. He replied that there was a rug in his room which we could sell. At first we demurred, for in taking his rug we took the only comfort he had; but he insisted and we sold it. A coffin was then procured, and the remains of my deceased brother placed in it. It was carried out by our jailors, and we did not even know whither it was taken.

The death of this youngest and favourite child - of a very gentle and sweet disposition - nearly broke his mother's heart. We feared for her reason. When the Blessed Perfection was told of the condition of his wife, he went to her and said: 'Your son has been taken by God that His people might be freed. His life was the ransom, and you should rejoice that you had a son so dear to give to the cause of God.' When our mother heard these words she seemed to rally, - knelt, and kissed the Blessed Perfection's hands, and thanked him for what he had said. After that she did not shed a tear.

I should perhaps here say a word about our relations, in the family, to the Blessed Perfection. After his declaration we all regarded him as one far above us, and tacitly gave him a corresponding position in our demeanour towards him. He was never called upon to consider, or take part in, any worldly matters. We felt no claim upon him because of family relationship - no more than that of his other followers. When we had but two rooms for all, one was set apart for him. The best of everything was always given to him, he would take it and then return it to us and do without. He slept upon the floor

because his people had no beds, although he would have been furnished one had he wished it.¹³

Some time after the death of his son, the Blessed Perfection (who, as I have said, usually never attended to affairs, these being all left to my brother) expressed a wish to have an interview with the Governor. Meanwhile my brother's dying prayer, that the believers might be permitted to visit their Lord, having been overheard by a soldier who was present at the time and by him repeated to the officer in charge, had come to the ears of the Governor. Very possibly it had touched him and now influenced him to accede to the Blessed Perfection's request for an interview; at all events the request was granted, and the Blessed Perfection met the Governor in council with his officers. He then addressed them on the subject of his separation from his followers and of their great sorrow and distress occasioned by it, reminding them of his deceased son's dying petition, and speaking with such eloquence and power that the Governor was moved to grant his appeal.

We were, in consequence, removed from the barracks and given a comfortable house with three rooms and a court. Our people, and also our family, were permitted to go at large in the city, and whoever wished could visit us; but my father was required to remain within the house."

Just here I wish to interrupt the narrative in order to call attention to what seems to me a very remarkable fact. Notwithstanding this interminable catalogue of the extreme and almost incredible sufferings and privations which this heroic band of men and women have endured - more terrible than many martyrdoms - there is not a trace of resentment or bitterness to be observed amongst them. One would suppose that they were the most fortunate of the people among whom they live, as, indeed, they do certainly consider themselves, in that they have always been permitted to live near their beloved Lord, beside which they count their sufferings as nothing. They well know that those having their own motives for maligning them have persistently misled the Sultan's advisers as to their real character and purposes; and that their implacable enemies have been, not the authorities of the state, but those allied to them both by nationality and close ties of family relationship. Except as these have interfered and caused prejudice and trouble, they consider their treatment by the government humane and even kind. Moreover, they recognise the fact that the deplorable attack upon the life of the Shah of Persia, while in no sense their fault, has been inevitably their misfortune, rationally explaining much of the suspicion and harsh treatment to which they have been subjected.

When all is fairly considered, it must be acknowledged that the Sultan is fair and liberal in the treatment of religious opinions, provided that these opinions are not used as a shield for hostile political purposes and intrigues. Men of many various faiths dwell together in peace, harmony, and contentment in all parts of his dominions.

We should beware, moreover, of hasty criticism, remembering how difficult it is for a sovereign to penetrate to the truth of such matters, easily obscured by the perversions of hostile interests which have his ear; and we may hope that the patient resignation and good lives of Abbas Effendi and his little band of followers at Akka may at length convince his Majesty that, as is, indeed, the fact, he has not in his dominions more loyal subjects or more useful citizens.

¹² Beha Ullah

¹³ The floor in such places being infested with vermin. [DM]

Akka (Part 2)

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE (*Continued*)

AKKA

"AMONG those who went with us from Adrianople to Akka were three men who were followers of Subh i Ezel, and also one of Subh i Ezel's wives who, having quarrelled with him, asked permission to accompany us. During the two years of close confinement these four lived peaceably with the followers of the Blessed Perfection, the woman in his family. As soon as our company was released from the barracks, they began to make mischief. They slandered the believers to the people of Akka, saying that we would make trouble at the first opportunity, and other things of like nature. The men were relatives of the woman, and she asked permission to live with them. So they took up quarters together in another part of the town from that in which we lived.

After this their hostility became more aggressive and open. They declared that they were imprisoned by mistake, being enemies of the Blessed Perfection; threatened to kill the Blessed Perfection and my brother, if there should be an opportunity; and carried on various intrigues against them, as the forging of letters purporting to come from the Blessed Perfection and saying evil things of the Sultan and the Governor, which they took to the officials. At length they were so successful in inviting trouble that a threat came from Constantinople of again transporting and separating us.

Two of the believers thought that they would settle the matter themselves, without taking counsel with the Blessed Perfection or my brother. They reasoned that if they should take such counsel, they would be forbidden to execute their plans, and, having been forbidden, they could not disobey. 'We will,' they said, 'do a wicked deed; but we will stop the evil doings of these people even if we are cursed for it. We will save our Lord though at the risk of our own souls.' They persuaded another of the believers to join them and the three proceeded to the house of the Ezelis. Their intention was to demand of them a promise to stop their mischief, under threat of death; but they did not have the opportunity to get so far as that. Having called the Ezelis out they asked them whether they intended to kill the Blessed Perfection and the Master; whereupon the Ezelis attacked them fiercely with clubs and sticks. A general fight followed in which two Ezelis and one Beha'i were killed.

In consequence of this affair (which occurred very soon after our release from the barracks) my brother was arrested and put in chains in the dungeon, on the assertion by the surviving Ezele and the woman with him that he and the Blessed Perfection had instigated the trouble. Then followed another period of misery. The Blessed Perfection was brought before the court and gave testimony in behalf of himself and my brother. Abbas Effendi was speedily released from prison, but remained under suspicion, and the matter was not determined for many months, during which we lived in terrible suspense and anxiety. But at length the Court was satisfied that the charges were baseless, and they were withdrawn.¹⁴

¹⁴ Professor Browne (*A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 370) quotes Laurence Oliphant as saying that Beha Ullah, on being brought before the court on this occasion, and being asked who and what he was, replied: "I will begin by telling you who I am not. I am not a camel-driver," - an allusion to the prophet Mohammed, - "nor am I the son of a carpenter," - an allusion to Christ." This is as much as I can tell you to-day. If you will now let me retire, I will tell you to-morrow who I am." "Upon this promise," continues Mr. Oliphant, "he was let go; but the morrow never came. With an enormous bribe he had in the interval purchased

The Blessed Perfection then excommunicated the two Beha'is who were in the fight and survived it: they never again had speech with him. He soon after began a series of tablets on the sin of murder; declaring that no one, whosoever he might be, who would take the life of his brother, could be a Beha'i.

The woman and the surviving Ezelite were sent to Constantinople.

These, so far as I have ever heard, were the only Ezelis who have been killed by Beha'is.

After our liberation from the barracks and the termination of this affair, my brother was able to mingle freely with the people of Akka, and he at once began to establish friendly relations with them. As illustrating the manner in which he gradually won their good-will, an incident occurs to me which I will relate. The believers needed fuel, but the people would not sell it to them. They regarded us as heretics and thought there was merit for them in harshness and unkindness towards us. Abbas Effendi obtained permission to send out of the city for charcoal, and a camel-load was brought back. The driver was stopped by a Christian merchant. 'This is better charcoal than I can get,' he said, and without more ceremony took it for himself - nor would he return the money paid for it.

This was reported to my brother. He went to the merchant's shop and stood in the door. He was not noticed. Then he entered and sat down by the door. The merchant continuing to transact his business with those who came and paying him no attention, he waited in silence for three hours. At length, when the others had left and no more came, the merchant said to him: 'Are you one of those prisoners here?' Abbas Effendi assenting, he continued: 'What have you done that you are imprisoned?'

'Since you ask me,' replied Abbas Effendi, 'I will tell you. We have done nothing. We are persecuted as Christ was persecuted.'

'What do you know of Christ?' said the merchant.

My brother replied in such a manner that the merchant perceived that he was not ignorant of Christ and the Christian Bible. He then began to question him about the Bible and was interested in his replies, as my brother gave him explanations which he had never before heard.

an exemption from all further attendance at court."

I called Abbas Effendi's attention to this statement, and asked him if there was any truth in it. "There is none whatever," he replied. "You can yourself see that Beha Ullah could not have made those remarks. This being a Turkish government, the officials are all Mohammedans. There are also a very large number of Christians here. All Mohammedans and Christians would have understood the allusions; and such remarks being disrespectful to Mohammed and Christ, and the Blessed Perfection being a prisoner accused of endeavouring to subvert religious faith, they would have cut him in pieces - he could never have left the court-room.

"What the Blessed Perfection actually said in his own behalf was in substance this:

"I am innocent of any knowledge of this matter. How could I, who teach love and pity for every creature - who have given my life and that of my family to demonstrate that this is true religion - instigate this thing?"

"You are trying to fasten upon me a guilt of which I am innocent; but I am ready to die. If you wish to execute me, I will sign any paper which you may prepare consenting to my execution; but I declare to you that I am innocent of this accusation."

"The trial of these men lasted six months; during all this time the effort was being made to fasten the guilt upon the Blessed Perfection. Moreover, this trial was before a judge and jury. Is it likely that under these circumstances he could have bribed both a judge and a jury, who were, besides, to begin with, not too well disposed towards him? The effort would have been futile had he attempted it. He did not, nor would he have done so under any circumstances."

Next he invited my brother to a seat beside him and continued the conversation for two hours. At its conclusion he seemed much pleased, and said: 'The coal is gone, - I cannot return you that, but here is the money.' He then escorted my brother to the door and down into the street, treating him with the greatest respect. Since that time he and Abbas Effendi have been fast friends, and the two families also.

Yet the prejudices and animosities of the people against us were so deep-rooted that much time and patience have been required to remove them. You have already been told, I think, of the Afghan who persisted in his enmity for twenty-four years, but was finally softened by my brother's kindnesses. So it has been with many. But in time his love for others has won all hearts. People have commonly said of him: 'What does he do to his enemies that he makes them his friends?'

The Governor, the magistrates, the officers of the army, first learned to respect him, and then to love him. Nearly every one in the city loves him, - Moslem and Christian, rich and poor.

Yet perhaps there is one exception - I know of no other - of which I will now speak.

The Blessed Perfection indicated in many ways that Abbas Effendi was to be his successor. Many years before his death he declared this in his Book of Laws. He has referred to Abbas Effendi as 'The Centre of my Covenant,' 'The Greatest Branch,' 'The Branch from the Ancient Root,' 'The Mystery of the Greatest God.' He conferred upon him the designation of 'His Highness the Master,' and usually so addressed him and spoke of him; and he required all his family to treat him with marked deference. He also left a testament in which he reiterated his will in this respect.

Nevertheless, after the death of the Blessed Perfection, Abbas Effendi's assumption of this position was resented by our half-brother, Mirza Mohammed Ali. For a time he endeavoured to stir up dissensions among the Beha'is. Failing in this, he sought to injure my brother personally. At this time, as had been the case for more than twenty years, my brother was permitted to go at his pleasure beyond the walls of Akka, and had the freedom of the surrounding country. I then myself resided in Haifa, and he as well as the other members of his family were in the habit of going there frequently, a change which was of much benefit to their health, since Akka is a small, crowded, and, in some seasons, unhealthy city. Mohammed Ali proceeded to make false charges of various sorts against Abbas Effendi to the Turkish government. One of these was this:

The Blessed Perfection before his death gave Abbas Effendi the charge to build, on a site which he had selected on the side of Mt. Carmel above Haifa, a building which should be the permanent resting-place of the remains of the Bab, himself, and my brother, and also contain a hall for meeting and worship. This building was in process of erection at the time I speak of - it is not yet completed - and Mohammed Ali represented to the authorities that it was intended as a fort, in which Abbas Effendi and his followers intended to intrench themselves, defy the Government, and endeavour to gain possession of this part of Syria.

Other equally baseless charges were fabricated and reiterated until the Government, as on previous occasions, became weary of the annoyance and issued a firman decreeing that the original order, by which the Blessed Perfection and his family were confined within the walls of Akka, should be again put in force.

This was about two years ago. Since that time my brother has been assured that on his application in behalf of himself alone, his strict confinement would be again remitted. He

refuses, however, to make this application.¹⁵ This is because he is much more grieved by his brother's alienation from himself than by his own loss of freedom. He regards harbouring hatred against another as the greatest evil which can befall a man, and he is determined to rescue his brother from this, if possible, at whatever cost to himself. He knows that his own liberation would cause Mohammed Ali's hatred to increase, and probably render a reconciliation impossible; but he hopes that, if the situation remains as it is, he may in time be able to soften his brother's heart and regain his love.¹⁶

My father's imprisonment in his house continued for nine years after our release from the barracks. His followers from abroad now had free access to him, and our life was in most respects comparatively comfortable. After this time the Governor gave the Blessed Perfection the freedom of the city, and of the country in the vicinity of Akka. His friends now urged him to reside in the country, believing that his health would be benefited by the change. He at first refused, but at length yielded to persuasion and transferred his residence to a house without the city.¹⁷ Here he passed a quiet and peaceful

¹⁵ Further, in the fall of 1902, a number of American friends of Abbas Effendi formed the plan of visiting the Court of the Shah of Persia and securing his co-operation in an application to the Sultan of Turkey for the release of Abbas Effendi. They came to Europe for this purpose, and from Paris telegraphed to Abbas Effendi asking his assent to the project. He replied, requesting that the undertaking should be abandoned.

¹⁶ As this book is about to go to press, I am informed of an event which has caused great rejoicing in the Beha'i world. Besides Mohammed Ali, Abbas Effendi has another half brother (full brother to the former), by name Badi Ullah. Badi Ullah has always maintained friendly relations with Abbas Effendi and his family, but has sided with Mohammed Ali in his protest against recognising Abbas Effendi as the head of the church. He has now repented of his apostasy, and in a lengthy manifesto, a copy of which I have seen, announces his adherence to Abbas Effendi as the true "Centre of the Covenant." [This return was transitory, but the document which confessed a great many things, continued to be invaluable evidence regarding their schemings and was published widely. - DM]

¹⁷ Professor Browne visited Beha Ullah here in 1890, and his graphic description of his first interview with him is so effective and interesting that I will quote it. "I was conducted," he says, "through passages and rooms at which I had scarcely time to glance to a spacious hall, paved, so far as I remember (for my mind was occupied with other thoughts), with a mosaic of marble. Before a curtain suspended from the wall of this great antechamber my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called taj by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

"A mild, dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: 'Praise be to God that thou hast attained!... Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile.... We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment.... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that the diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled - what harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the "Most Great Peace" shall come.... Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold?... Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind.... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one

life until his death at the age of seventy-five, in the year 1892. His chief occupation, as it had been at all times since his return from his sojourn of two years alone in the mountains near Baghdad, was the writing of sacred books and tablets.

Abbas Effendi continued to live in Akka. He frequently visited the Blessed Perfection, and generally came out on foot. The walk was long, and in summer the sun very oppressive. It was his habit, if overcome with heat or fatigue, to lie down on the ground, rest his head on a stone, and sleep. The Blessed Perfection remonstrated with him about this, saying that he should use a horse. My brother replied, 'How can I come to my Lord riding? I must show that I am the humblest of all the people. When Christ went out he walked, and slept in the fields. Who am I, that in visiting my Lord I should go as greater than Christ?'

In his early life my brother was much disinclined to marry. It is a Persian custom, when two cousins, a boy and a girl, are born about the same time, to promise them in marriage to each other in their infancy. My brother was promised in this way to a cousin, and while we lived in Baghdad we thought that the time had come for the marriage. He, however, thought differently; and when our mother desired to send for the girl, he positively refused to permit it to be done. 'Why should I marry?' he asked; 'are there not enough to suffer now, that we should propose to bring others to share our lot?'

After our release from the two-years' confinement in the barracks here, my mother and myself were both very desirous that my brother should marry, and we began to look about for a girl whom we would approve. Our choice finally fell upon the daughter of a believer living in Syria, who was said to be very beautiful and amiable, and in every way a suitable match. Without consulting my brother, since we wished to place him in a position where he could not refuse our oft-repeated appeals to give us a daughter and a sister, I invited her to visit us. The invitation was accepted, and she set out with her brother. After a hard and wearisome journey, they reached Haifa and were taken to the house of one of my uncles there.

"We commenced quietly to make preparations for the marriage, without making known to my brother the arrival of the girl. However, many of the believers knew of it and of our intentions, and were so delighted that 'their Master' (as they always called him) was to take a wife, thus giving them the hope that he might have a son to succeed him in fostering the faith until it should become established, that their pleasure shone in their faces. My brother saw that there was something unusual afoot, and the thought occurred to him, since the subject had been so much urged upon him, 'Now perhaps they are getting me a wife.' So he hastened home to us and demanded with considerable energy, 'What is this - what are all the people smiling about? Is it possible that you are again planning to get me a wife? If you are, you may as well give it up, for I will not marry.' We tried to plead and reason with him, but he would not hear us. Finally we said, 'What, then, is to be done? She is at Haifa - she has come with her brother - what can we do?' Then he hesitated, looked serious, and finally said: 'Well, if you have brought her here, she belongs to me, and I will give her in marriage to some one who will be better suited to make her happy than I.'

kindred and one family.... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.

"Such, so far as I can remember them, were the words which, with many others, I heard from Beha. Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion."

She remained at Haifa for some time, until at length my brother brought about her marriage to a husband of his own selection. The marriage has resulted satisfactorily to all parties.

The Bab, during his life, had a certain follower who was specially devoted to him. On one occasion he visited this man in his home. His host said to him that his visit filled him with the greatest happiness of his life; but that he had one sorrow of which he wished to speak. He had been married ten years, and was childless. He begged the Bab to pray for a child for him, and this the Bab promised.

Nine months later a daughter was born to this follower. When this daughter grew up she was very sweet and very amiable. She had been promised in her infancy to a cousin; and her cousin, in due time, was very desirous for the marriage. Having been permitted to see her, from that day on he seemed to think of nothing but the time when she should be his wife. He urged on the marriage, provided the house, and made all the usual preparations. On the day set, the bride was brought to the bridegroom's house, which, according to Persian custom, completed the civil marriage. Then, to every one's amazement and consternation, the bridegroom refused to see the bride. To the demands of the relatives as to why he had changed his mind within an hour his only reply was, 'I do not know. I cannot explain and have nothing to tell. All I know is that I cannot see her.'

Six months later the young man died.

The girl remained in her husband's house until his death; but she never saw him after entering it.¹⁸

She felt much humiliated, and resolved that she would never again marry. She and her family were very earnest believers; and after this occurrence she begged her father and mother to send her to be a servant in the household of the Blessed Perfection. Because of her disappointment her parents did not wish to refuse her; and her mother wrote for permission to visit the family of the Blessed Perfection with her daughter. Permission was granted and they came to Haifa. The Blessed Perfection asked my brother to bring them; but, not finding it convenient to go himself, he gave the commission to some one else to execute. Mother and daughter came to our house, and, having seen the Blessed Perfection, asked to see the Master. At that moment my brother entered and conversed briefly with the ladies, seeming, however, unusually interested for him.

The ladies returned to Haifa and remained there, coming back and forth occasionally to visit us. My mother and I, seeing that my brother was noticing the young woman, hoped that he might marry her; but, remembering our experience, we did not dare to suggest it. About six months later the Blessed Perfection called my brother to his room and asked him if he would not take this young woman for his wife. My brother consented.

In deciding to marry, my brother undoubtedly sacrificed his own preference for a single life to the wishes of the rest of the family, and especially of the Blessed Perfection. The latter had suggested to him that, as his example would influence all believers, it would be well if it illustrated the best and highest condition of life for men, which was the married state. Yet in coming to this decision, I think that our Master was much influenced by the warm regard and affection which he undoubtedly felt for the woman whom he was asked to marry.

¹⁸ This extraordinary episode is given in full in Munirih Khanum's autobiography. [DM]

Then there was much rejoicing. All the believers looked forward to the marriage with delight. But time went on and yet it was not concluded. The real reason, which we did not care to mention publicly, was that we had no suitable room to give my brother in the house, and were not willing to lose him from our home, where his presence was so essential to our happiness.

Finally, I went to the wife of our landlord and told her of our perplexity. She consulted her husband, and he, a good-natured man, said that he could remove the difficulty. He owned the adjoining house; and he cut a door to connect the courts of the two houses, and gave us a room, completely furnished, in the other house.

The way was thus made plain for the marriage, and it was duly solemnised soon after.

The occasion of the wedding had one peculiar feature so characteristic of my brother that I will mention it. Our marriage service is very simple, consisting of the reading of a tablet and the exchange of promises by the contracting parties. It is usually followed by feasting and the entertainment of friends until late at night.

Our Master had made, personally and with great care, all the preparations for receiving and entertaining the guests. The ceremony was performed by the Blessed Perfection about two P.M. My brother then quietly withdrew without speaking to any one, and did not return until after the guests had dispersed.

It was not from want of consideration for the solemnity of the occasion or for his bride that he did this, for the tender affection which he has always shown for her disproves this; or for his guests, for his minute attention to the arrangements for their pleasure disproves this also. But it was his habit to spend this part of the day and the evening in visiting the poor and sick and explaining the Koran, he being frequently thus occupied until a late hour. He never permitted his own affairs to interfere with the discharge of these duties, and was unwilling to neglect them even on this occasion.

My brother's marriage has proved exceedingly happy and harmonious. Several months ago my sister took two of her daughters to Beyrout on account of their health, and this has been her first separation from her husband for any length of time. Since a short time after her departure a question repeated by my brother the first thing every morning to his daughter, who is his constant attendant, is, 'Ruha, when do you think your mother will come back?'

Eight children have been born to them, of whom four are living. Their family now consists of two unmarried daughters, two married daughters with their families, and myself.

Many influences, and those of the very strongest character, have been brought to induce my brother to take a second wife - a practice which the Blessed Perfection did not in terms forbid, but advised against. The believers have urged it strongly for several reasons. Very many of them wish to take a second wife themselves, but feel constrained from doing so by the Master's example. In Persia, except among believers, polygamy is a universal custom, and the restriction to one wife, which all believers feel and respect, seems very severe. Then there is a general wish that the Master might have a son to succeed him. Other arguments have been advanced; and the pressure brought to bear upon him has been, and still is, very great - greater than you can easily imagine.

The general advice of the Blessed Perfection against a second marriage would in itself have had the effect with my brother of a command and have settled the question; but as regards him it was withdrawn by our Lord before his death. He said to

Abbas Effendi that he rather wished to lead the believers gradually to monogamy than to force them to adopt it, which they felt bound to do by reason of the Master's example; that therefore, and since it was much desired by all that the Master should have a son, he withdrew even the advice in his case, and desired him to consider himself free to follow his own desires and inclination.

To this the Master replied that his own wishes and feelings were against a second marriage, though, if the Blessed Perfection should command it, he would obey. This, however, the Blessed Perfection never did.

To all other appeals his reply has always been a firm refusal. He thinks that if it had been God's will that he should leave a son, the two who had been born to him would not have been taken away. He believes that the best and highest condition of life for a man is marriage to one wife, and that it is his duty to set that example to the world."

Characteristics and Incidents

CHAPTER VI

I SHALL now collect some of my own observations with regard to Abbas Effendi, and a number of incidents of his life related to me by others, which throw light upon and illustrate his character, but which I am not able to make a part of any consecutive narrative. I am aware that in doing this I am disregarding literary symmetry; but as my only object in preparing this book is to give those who read it as much information as possible about him and his teachings, I do not wish to omit any material which may contribute to this end.

The characteristic of Abbas Effendi, regarded as a religious leader, which is at once the most striking, the most attractive, and the most impressive, is his generous and tolerant liberality. It is disappointing to find that narrowness and intolerance have already shown themselves in the teachings of some of his followers - a perversion and degradation of true religion which is seen to be an almost inevitable tendency of human nature in all ages of the world, and which most religions have suffered in the hands of their adherents. The chief glory of Beha'ism is that its true spirit, as exemplified in its Great Apostle, is utterly free from it.

I shall state at length his attitude in this respect in a subsequent chapter, here merely mentioning two incidents illustrating it, which were related to me in Akka.

One was that of a gentleman who wrote to Abbas Effendi to this effect: That he recognised him as a man of great spiritual force, and one who, in urging upon men the observance of the Law of Love, was doing much in the service of humanity; that he desired to work with him and for him; but that also he (Abbas Effendi) had said some things with which he did not agree, and that he himself had some spiritual light, which he did not wish to surrender.

Abbas Effendi replied that he welcomed him as a co-worker; that he asked him to give up nothing; that he approved of his continuing to adhere to any religious faith with which he might be associated, and that the one thing necessary was to love God above all things and seek Him.

The other case was that of a lady who was visiting Abbas Effendi in Akka. She had accepted him as her religious teacher, and desired to assist in spreading his teachings. When about to return to her home, she told him that her associations were all in the orthodox Christian Church, and that her friends would be repelled by the idea of a new religion. He advised her to return as a Christian, to remain in the Christian Church, and to teach what she had learned as

the true teaching of Christ.

Abbas Effendi has another characteristic as a religious leader which seems to me to be, especially at this time, remarkably refreshing and reassuring, - he makes no claim to being a "healer" or to the performance of "miracles." Whether or not he possesses such powers I would not undertake to say; but he certainly regards physical health as of too little importance in comparison with spiritual welfare to merit primary attention. The only real sickness which he recognises is sickness of the soul. The one and exclusive object which he has in view is the spiritual elevation of humanity - an all-sufficient end in itself, which does not require for its justification any physical gain.

Yet, in point of fact, he says there is a physical gain in attaining spiritual health; for the normal effect of this is to promote recovery from bodily disease; and still more, in those cases where the latter is not removed by spiritual regeneration, the spirit which has experienced this change does not feel physical pain, and looks upon the sufferings of its body with the same indifference with which the ordinary man regards suffering in the body of another. The body is, therefore, sometimes restored, and pain is overcome by spiritual force; but these occurrences are properly regarded as unimportant incidents in the attainment of spiritual well-being.

Further, Abbas Effendi is very careful not to countenance any interpretation of his acts by his followers which could lead to the imputation to him of miraculous powers. The assertion of such powers for himself or for his predecessors would, he says, stand in the way of other messengers, who will come, in the future as in the past, when the world requires them. If men's minds are fixed on miracles, which prove nothing except themselves, they will be less open to the reception of truth, or be closed entirely to the Divine Message.

He says, also, that if miracles are ascribed to the founders of a religion and become engrafted upon it, they will inevitably be simulated by priesthoods and other pretenders to Divine authority to mislead, delude, and defraud the ignorant masses of mankind, as illustrated by the greater part of the past history of Christianity, and by the hundreds of quacks and impostors who at the present day practise their shameful impositions upon the people in the name of Christ.

So, too, Abbas Effendi discourages everything tending to centre attention upon himself or to exalt his personality into an object of devotion or worship. He has had numerous applications for his photograph, but always declines to have it taken. His reply to these requests is: "I do not wish to have men think of my personality or my form. The personality changes, the form passes away: there is nothing permanent about them. All this must die - must pass out of the recollection of men. But deeds and words never die. These are my sign: it is these only which I wish to leave to the believers and to the world."

His only claim or description of himself is, "Servant of God," or "Servant of Beha Ullah," or "Servant of the servants of Beha Ullah."

Beha Ullah bestowed many titles upon him (see page 80), but as to these he says that they were all given by favour, and that they mean but one thing - "Servant."

As might be expected from this lack of self-assertion, Abbas Effendi's life is spent in quiet and unassuming work. His general order for the day is prayers and tea at sunrise, and dictating letters or "Tablets," receiving visitors, and giving alms to the poor until dinner in the middle of the day. After this meal he takes a half-hour's siesta, spends the afternoon in making visits to the sick and others whom he has occasion to see about the city, and the evening in talking to the believers

or in expounding, to any who wish to hear him, the Koran, on which, even among Moslems, he is reputed to be one of the highest authorities, learned men of that faith frequently coming from great distances to consult him with regard to its interpretation.

He then returns to his house and works until about one o'clock over his correspondence. This is enormous, and would more than occupy his entire time, did he read and reply to all his letters personally. As he finds it impossible to do this, but is nevertheless determined that they shall all receive careful and impartial attention, he has recourse to the assistance of his daughter Ruha, upon whose intelligence and conscientious devotion to the task he can rely. During the day she reads and makes digests of letters received, which she submits to him at night.

In his attention to these various duties he is absolutely unremitting. The month which I passed in Akka was the Mohammedan fast of Ramedan, which, as all other Mohammedan observances, was scrupulously kept by Abbas Effendi and his followers, for the sake of peace and to avoid the imputation of social innovation. This fast requires abstinence from food between sunrise and sunset. The effect of this privation upon him, in addition to that of his assiduous activity, was very marked, and towards the end of the fast he frequently appeared to be in a state of great exhaustion.

I have adverted to his frugal and abstemious habits in matters relating to his personal comfort. Several incidents further illustrating this trait were told to me. On one occasion he was going to Haifa, and asked for a seat in the stage. "Your Excellency," said the driver, "surely wishes a private carriage." "No," replied Abbas Effendi. The driver thought this parsimony in a man of his position. At Haifa, while he was still in the stage, a fisherwoman came to him in great distress, saying that all day she had caught nothing, and must go home to a hungry family. He gave her five francs, and turning to the stage-driver said: "You now see the reason why I would not take a private carriage. Why should I ride in luxury when so many are starving?"

The Master's habit of wearing cheap clothes troubles his family. I was told of a conspiracy a few months before to impose a cloak of better quality upon him without his knowledge. His wife procured the necessary money from her brother, who is in the habit of acting as banker for the family, and furnished a tailor with the required cloth, who proceeded to make the garment. They knew very well that the Master would not wear expensive clothes if he knew it, but, counting upon his inattention to such matters, hoped that he would not notice the quality.

But unfortunately the tailor bungled the cloak. It did not fit, had to be returned several times; and in the goings to and fro which ensued, its cost came to Abbas Effendi's knowledge. Thereupon he sent for his brother-in-law and said to him: "You must sell that cloak and charge me with whatever loss there may be upon it: such an amount of money will buy four cloaks, one of which is good enough for me; the others can be given away."

His daughter Ruha relates that when her sister was recently married she had no trousseau, and for the ceremony merely donned a clean dress. People asked her father why he had not given his daughter bridal garments. He replied, "My daughter is warmly clad and has all that she needs for her comfort. The poor have not. What my daughter does not need I will give to the poor rather than to her."

Early during my stay in Akka the following curious incident was related to me. The Master happened to have a fine cloak of

Persian wool which had been given to him, when a poor man applied to him for a garment. He sent for this cloak and gave it to the applicant. The man took it and demurred, saying that it was only of cotton. "No," said Abbas Effendi, "It is of wool;" and to prove it he lighted a match and burnt a little of the nap. The man still grumbled that it was not good. Abbas Effendi reproved him for criticising a gift and appeared not a little vexed at his ungrateful conduct. But he terminated the interview in this extraordinary fashion - by directing an attendant to give the man a *mejidi* (a coin worth about four francs). "If any one vexes him," continued my interlocutor, "he always gives him a present."

I was at a loss to understand this singular procedure at the time; but an incident which occurred later during my stay threw light upon it. One day the Master was distributing coats to poor men, in accordance with his custom, to which I have referred above (p. 5). In this distribution he carefully selected the donees, judging from his personal knowledge in each case whether the charity was merited, and making a record of those to whom coats were given. On this occasion there was one man who was very insistent in his demand for a coat, but whose application Abbas Effendi for some reason did not approve. The man continued to persist, and the Master to refuse, finally repulsing the beggar with a good deal of acerbity. After some time, however, what did he do but bring this same man into the large court where the coats were hung upon a line, and give him the choice of the lot! The man tried on three, and, finding one which suited him, took it away.

Madam Canavarro saw the incident and afterwards asked Abbas Effendi to explain it. He smiled and said: "Did you notice that?" - and then, calling her attention to the backs of his hands, which had been somewhat scratched and torn in managing the crowd, he continued: "My body is still under the law. You see how these people may injure it. It is necessary that I should control them - that I should put them down. But, having put them down, I must show them that I did not do it in unkindness. And so, too, if I find it necessary to display some temper, I must take care that my actions show my motive, in order that my example may not be misunderstood."

The Master has, as may be inferred from what I have already said, a very tender, sensitive, and sympathetic nature. To his appreciation of the suffering and discontent which it causes among women I chiefly attribute his dislike to the institution of polygamy, remarkable in one who has been all his life surrounded by those who practise it. This is shown not only by his persistent refusal to adopt it for himself, notwithstanding the very powerful influences (see above, p. 92) which have urged him to do so, but by the reticence which he habitually maintains when the subject is introduced. It is evidently a matter upon which, because of his surroundings, he does not wish to express himself with freedom.

Many things suggestive of his sympathy and tender-heartedness were told to me. I have referred to his habit of eating very simply and but once a day. This is not his invariable custom, since, when he has guests, he entertains them generously, in fact exquisitely, and eats with them. His family say, however, that he always prefers a simple repast; and if it happens that he has just come from visiting the poor, elaborately prepared food is especially distasteful to him.

Busy as he is, it would much relieve him to delegate distributing alms to some of his followers. This, in fact, he sometimes does, but rarely, for this reason. On these occasions the poor frequently resort to artifices, as by going away after receiving money and returning to secure double or triple alms. These artifices are likely to be met, by any one except himself, with impatience or harshness, and this the

Master does not like. To the poor and ignorant above all, he says, we should always be kind.

Once he was entertaining a wealthy lady who had her maid with her. The latter stood behind her mistress' chair at dinner. Abbas Effendi was uneasy. At length he called for a chair, placed it beside him, and asked the maid to be seated. Then he addressed his conversation to her, telling her, among other things, to be content; that those who served were often more loved by God than those whom they served.

I was told of the case of a consumptive who had been almost deserted by his friends, as frequently happens in Akka, Syrians having a superstitious fear of the disease. The mother and sisters of this young man hardly entered his room. His food was brought in by a servant, and he was left to reach it and otherwise to care for himself as best he could.

The house in which he lived was near that occupied by the Master, and the ladies of the latter's family saw this sad sight from their windows. No woman, of course, could offer assistance under the circumstances; but the Master heard of it from them, and thereafter went daily to the sick man, took him delicacies, read and discoursed to him, and was alone with him when he died.

In his dealings with men and in the relief of suffering, differences of religious opinion have no weight with the Master. Men of all faiths are absolutely the same to him. He commonly associates a Moslem and a Christian with him in regulating his charities. I usually noticed one or both of these faiths represented among those who were assisting him in the distribution of alms or clothing. The ideal of human life which he strives, first of all, to promote, is fraternal co-operation among all men.

During the fast of Ramedan considerable discomfort is caused among the poorer Mohammedans by the fact that, when exhausted by the long fast of the day (from sunrise to sunset), they have not the means to provide a sufficiently substantial meal to restore their strength. It was the Master's habit, while I was in Akka, to provide every second day a supper at sunset for many such persons.

A year or two ago a wealthy American lady, a friend of Abbas Effendi, spent some months in Haifa. On going away she asked permission to make him the donation of a sum of money, for his own use or for that of the Cause. He replied that he could not himself accept a gift from her; but that if she wished to do something for him, she should educate the two little girls of a Christian schoolmaster in Haifa, who had recently lost his wife, was very poor, and in much trouble. She accordingly sent these children to a school in Beyrout.

There are in Akka about ninety Beha'is of whom I think I have met all the men. The restrictions imposed by Mohammedan social customs, which, as I have said, the Beha'is here observe for the sake of peace and harmony, prevented me from meeting the women. These Beha'is are all Persians, living in Akka in voluntary exile in order to be near their "Master." The fact that, also for the sake of peace, they are not permitted by him to make propaganda within the dominions of the Sultan explains, no doubt, the absence of other nationalities among them. The attractions of their native country do not weigh as a straw against the privilege of living near Abbas Effendi; and nothing except his wish, which is absolute law to his followers, could induce them to leave him. This touching and eloquent tribute to the character of Abbas Effendi is only an expression of the fundamental characteristic of all Beha'is whom I have known - that is, the absolute devotion of themselves, their possessions, and their lives to the cause of their faith and its representative. I am told that it

is the dearest wish of the millions of Beha'is in Persia to make the pilgrimage to Akka, and that, if such a thing were possible, they would migrate there en masse for permanent residence. But at present even pilgrimage is, except in rare instances, forbidden by Abbas Effendi. In the earlier years of Beha Ullah's imprisonment there, when access to him, or even entrance into the city, was impossible for Beha'is from Persia, the pilgrimage was frequently made for the mere purpose of seeing him at the window of his room in the prison, from a point without the walls of Akka.

I have never known a community which seemed to enjoy such a general distribution of the sterling qualities and virtues of character. They are industrious and self-controlled; in appearance they are cleanly and thrifty. Their faces are all sincere, honest, kindly. Intelligent, and generally strong. Their school is attended by about twenty bright-looking boys (girls are excluded by Mohammedan custom), who are, among other things, industriously studying the English language, and have made considerable progress in acquiring it.

In their intercourse with each other, and, so far as I have had the opportunity to observe, with others, the Beha'is continually overflow with kindness and good-will. They seem like a single family whose members bear the liveliest affection for one another. I can even easily credit the statement made to me that when the persecutions were at their height in Persia, it happened more than once that a Beha'i, having been arrested by mistake in place of another who had been denounced, permitted the error to go undiscovered, and suffered execution rather than endanger his fellow-believer.

To a Beha'i there is no recommendation of character and trustworthiness equal to that of being a Beha'i. This confidence in the character of Beha'is extends also, as I have learned from conversation with other citizens of Akka, to those who are not of their faith. I am told that they are frequently chosen as fiduciaries¹⁹ and trustees by Moslems and Christians.

One observes among them a feeling of fellowship and complete equality as men, regardless of the distinctions of wealth and poverty or high and low degree. I saw this feeling expressed many times; as when, during the exposition of the doctrines by some teacher in my room, the boy who served my meals would enter without remark and respectfully take a seat before him.

There is also among them an atmosphere of intense religious conviction and spiritual life, - yet quite without apparent emotion or excitement, - which forcibly impresses one who is accustomed to the torpidity prevailing in Western lands in regard to those things. Professor Browne remarks (*A Traveller's Narrative*, introduction, p. xxxix.):

"The spirit which pervades the Babis (Beha'is) is such that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all subjected to its influence.... Let those who have not seen disbelieve me if they will: but should that spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an emotion they are not likely to forget."

Nothing could be more true. In the presence of a number of them, aglow, as they all are, with the fire of love, conviction, and determination, one feels - however he may believe, he feels - that scepticism about the reality of spiritual existence is a trifle absurd, and that things unseen must be as certain as things seen.

If we analyse this peculiar spirit of the Beha'is; if we seek to

penetrate that which marks them off from other men, the conclusion to which we are brought is that its essence is expressed in the one word Love. These men are Lovers; lovers of God, of their Master and Teacher, of each other, and of all mankind. This is the name which they are fondest of applying to themselves, and it is that which most intimately indicates their distinctive characteristics. Their love goes out in all these directions with the fervour of the lover's passion, but a passion free from all gross elements. It is this which has sustained them in their sufferings and martyrdoms, and now inspires their eager devotion to their cause. To some this fact will have an immense possible significance; for they will remember that seers have said that there is a Divine Love of which the ordinary human passion is but the darkened and corrupted shadow, and which, searching, strenuous, and pure, it is sometimes given to men to feel.

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Dedication

To

THE COUNTESS M. A. DE S. CANAVARRO

TO WHOM I SHALL ALWAYS FEEL A DEEP OBLIGATION FOR HAVING DIRECTED MY ATTENTION TO THE REAL CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BEHA'I MOVEMENT, AND TO THE ASSISTANCE OF WHOSE CLEAR INSIGHT SUCH SUCCESS AS I MAY HAVE HAD IN REACHING A CORRECT APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEACHINGS OF ABBAS EFFENDI IS VERY LARGELY DUE, THIS BOOK IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

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¹⁹ fiduciary - a person to whom property or power is entrusted for the benefit of another. [DM]