

Tahirih in the Dawnbreakers

References to Tahirih are highlighted **red**. Surrounding material in Dawnbreakers included.

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Listed in the Letters of the Living

As to those whose supreme privilege it was to be enrolled by the Bab in the Book of His Revelation as His chosen Letters of the Living, their names are as follows:

Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i,
Muhammad-Hasan, his brother,
Muhammad-Baqir, his nephew,
Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami,
Mulla Khuda-Bakhsh-i-Quchani, later named Mulla Ali
Mulla Hasan-i-Bajistani,
Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi,
Mirza Muhammad Rawdih-Khan-i-Yazdi,
Sa'id-i-Hindi,
Mulla Mahmud-i-Khu'i,
Mulla Jalil-i-Urumi,
Mulla Ahmad-i-Ibdal-i-Maraghi'i,
Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi,
Mulla Yusif-i-Ardibili,
Mirza Hadi, son of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Qazvini, <p81>
Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qazvini.[1]

Tahirih,[2]

Quddus.

These all, with the single exception of **Tahirih**, attained the presence of the Bab, and were personally invested by Him with the distinction of this rank. It was she who, having learned of the intended departure of her sister's husband, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, from Qazvin, entrusted him with a sealed letter, requesting that he deliver it to that promised One whom she said he was sure to meet in the course of his journey. "Say to Him, from me," she added, "The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth, and the rays of Thy visage arose on high. Then speak the word, "Am I not your <p82> Lord?" and "Thou art, Thou art!" we will all reply." [3]

[1 According to Samandar, who was one of the early believers of Qazvin (manuscript, p. 15), **Tahirih**'s sister, Mardiyih, was the wife of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, who was one of the Letters of the

Living, and who suffered martyrdom at Shaykh Tabarsi. Mardiyih appears to have recognized and embraced the Message of the Bab (p. 5). Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was the son of Haji Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab, to whom the Bab addressed a Tablet while in the neighbourhood of Qazvin.]

[2 According to the "Memorials of the Faithful" (pp. 291-8), **Tahirih** had two sons and one daughter, none of whom recognized the truth of the Cause. Such was the degree of her knowledge and attainment, that her father, Haji Mulla Salih often expressed his regret in the following terms: "Would that she had been a boy for he would have shed illumination upon my household, and would have succeeded me!" She became acquainted with the writings of Shaykh Ahmad while staying in the home of her cousin, Mulla Javad, from whose library she borrowed these books, and took them over to her home. Her father raised violent objections to her action and, in his heated discussions with her, denounced and criticised the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad. **Tahirih** refused to heed the counsels of her father, and engaged in secret correspondence with Siyyid Kazim, who conferred upon her the name of "**Qurratu'l-'Ayn**." The title of "**Tahirih**" was first associated with her name while she was staying in Badasht, and was subsequently approved by the Bab. From Qazvin she left for Karbila, hoping to meet Siyyid Kazim, but arrived too late, the Siyyid having passed away ten days before her arrival. She joined the companions of the departed leader, and spent her time in prayer and meditation, eagerly expecting the appearance of Him whose advent Siyyid Kazim had foretold. While in that city, she dreamed a dream. A youth, a Siyyid, wearing a black cloak and a green turban, appeared to her in the heavens, who with upraised hands was reciting certain verses, one of which she noted down in her book. She awoke from her dream greatly impressed by her strange experience. When, later on, a copy of the "Ahsanu'l-Qisas," the Bab's commentary on the Surih of Joseph, reached her, she, to her intense delight, discovered that same verse which she had heard in her dream in that book. That discovery assured her of the truth of the Message which the Author of that work had proclaimed. She herself undertook the translation of the "Ahsanu'l-Qisas" into Persian, and exerted the utmost effort for its spread and interpretation. For three months her house in Karbila was besieged by the guards whom the Governor had appointed to watch and prevent her from associating with the people. From Karbila she proceeded to Baghdad, and lived for a time the house of Shaykh Muhammad-i-Shibl, from which place she transferred her residence to another quarter, and was eventually taken to the home of the Mufti, where she stayed for about three months.]

[3 According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghiti" (p. 93), **Tahirih** was informed of the Message of the Bab by Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, who visited Karbila in the year 1260 A.H., after his return from Shiraz.]

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali eventually met and recognized the Bab and conveyed to Him both the letter and the message of **Tahirih**. The Bab forthwith declared her one of the Letters of the Living. Her father, Haji Mulla Salih-i-Qazvini, and his brother, Mulla Taqi, were both mujtahids of great renown,[1] were skilled in the traditions of Muslim law, and were universally respected by the people of Tihiran, Qazvin, and other leading cities of Persia. She was married to Mulla Muhammad, son of Mulla Taqi, her uncle, whom <p83> the shi'ahs styled Shahid-i-Thalith.[2] Although her family belonged to the Bala-Sari, **Tahirih** alone showed, from the very beginning, a marked sympathy and devotion to Siyyid Kazim. As an evidence of her personal admiration for him, she wrote an apology in defence and justification of the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad and presented it to him. To this she soon received a reply, couched in the most affectionate terms, in the opening passages of which the Siyyid thus addressed her: "O thou who art the solace of mine eyes (Ya Qurrat-i-Ayni!), and the joy of my heart!" Ever since that time she has been known as **Qurratu'l-'Ayn**. After the historic <p84> gathering of Badasht, a number of those who attended were so amazed at the fearlessness and outspoken language of that heroine, that they felt it their duty to acquaint the

Bab with the character of her startling and unprecedented behaviour. They strove to tarnish the purity of her name. To their accusations the Bab replied: "What am I to say regarding her whom the Tongue of Power and Glory has named **Tahirih** [the Pure One]?" These words proved sufficient to silence those who had endeavoured to undermine her position. From that time onwards she was designated by the believers as **Tahirih**.^[3]

[1 "One of the most distinguished families of Qazvin--and by this I mean most distinguished by the number of high offices which their various members held in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as well as by their reputation for science--was, without doubt, the family of Haji Mulla Salih-i-Baraqani who received after his death the title of 'Shahid-i-Thalith', that is to say, 'the third martyr.' We shall review their early history in order to make clear the role which they played in the religious dissensions of Persia, as well as in the catastrophe which was fatally to develop the arrogant character of the brother of Mulla Salih. When the great Mujtahid Aqa Siyyid Muhammad arrived at Qazvin, someone asked him if Haji Mulla Salih-i-Baraqani was a Mujtahid. 'Assuredly,' replied the Siyyid, and that all the more so since Salih was one of his former students who towards the last had followed the teachings of Aqa Siyyid Ali. 'Very well,' replied his questioner, 'but his brother Muhammad-Taqi, is he also worthy of the sacred title?' Aqa Siyyid Muhammad replied by praising the qualities and the science of Taqi but avoiding a precise answer to the direct question put to him. However, this did not prevent the questioner from spreading abroad in the city the news that Siyyid Muhammad himself acknowledged Taqi as a Master whom he had declared Mujtahid in his presence. "Now Siyyid Muhammad had gone to live with one of his colleagues, Haji Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab. The latter learned quickly of the news which was thus noised abroad and he immediately summoned before him the questioner of the Siyyid whom he reproached severely in the presence of witnesses. Naturally, the rumor spread from tongue to tongue until it reached Taqi, who became furious and declared each time he heard the name of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab,--'I only respect him because he is the son of my blessed Master.'" Siyyid Muhammad, having been informed of all these incidents and of all the rumors, and realizing that he had saddened the heart of Taqi, came one day to invite him to luncheon; he treated him with great respect, wrote for him his brevet of Mujtahid and, this same day, accompanied him to the Mosque. The prayer over, he sat down on the steps of the pulpit where he spoke the praises of Taqi and confirmed him in his new dignity, in the presence of the entire assembly. It happened that, a little later, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i passed through Qazvin. This personage, said to be the very pious author of 'Qisasu'l-'Ulama,' was declared impious because he had endeavored to reconcile philosophy and religious law, 'and everyone knows that in most cases to try to blend religious law with intelligence is an impossibility.' Be that as it may, Shaykh Ahmad rose high above his contemporaries, many men sharing his opinions. He had followers in all the cities of Persia and the Shah Fath-'Ali treated him with great deference, while Akhund Mulla Ali said of him, 'He is an ignorant man with a pure heart.' "While in Qazvin, he sojourned in the house of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab who was henceforth to be the enemy of the Baraqani family. He went to worship in the Mosque of the parish and the ulamas of Qazvin came to pray under his guidance. He naturally returned all the visits and courtesies extended to him by these holy men, was on good terms with them and soon it became known that his host was one of his disciples. One day he went to call upon Haji Mulla Taqi-i-Baraqani who received him apparently with profound respect, but took advantage of the opportunity to ask him some insidious questions. 'Regarding the resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgment,' he asked, 'do you share the opinion of Mulla Sadra?' 'No,' replied Shaykh Ahmad. Then Taqi, calling his youngest brother Haji Mulla Ali, said: 'Go to my library and bring me the Shavahid-i-Rububiyyih of Mulla Sadra.' Then, as Haji Mulla was slow to return, he said to Shaykh Ahmad: 'Although I do not agree with you on this subject, I am nevertheless curious to know your opinion on the matter.' The Shaykh replied, 'Nothing

would be easier. My conviction is that the resurrection will not take place with our material bodies but with their essence, and by essence I mean, for example, the glass which is potentially in the stone.' "Excuse me,' Taqi replied maliciously, 'but this essence is different from the material body and you know that it is a dogma in our holy religion to believe in the resurrection of the material body.' The Shaykh remained silent and it was in vain that one of his pupils, a native of Turkistan, endeavored to divert the conversation by starting a discussion which was likely to be a lengthy one, but the blow was dealt and Shaykh Ahmad withdrew, convinced that he had been compromised. It was not long before he realized that his conversation had been carefully related by Taqi for, that very day, when he went to the Mosque to pray he was followed only by Abdu'l-Vahhab. A misunderstanding was broiling and threatened to break, but Abdu'l-Vahhab, thinking he had found a way to smooth things over and remove all the difficulties, entreated his Master to write and publish a book in which he would affirm the resurrection of the material body. But he had not taken into account the hatred of Taqi. In fact, Shaykh Ahmad did write the treatise, which still may be found in his book entitled 'Ajvibatu'l-Masa'il' but no one cared to read it and his impiety was noised abroad increasingly from day to day. It came to the point where the Governor of the city, Prince Ali-Naqi Mirza Ruknu'd-Dawlih, considering the importance of the personages involved in the controversy and afraid being blamed for allowing this dissension to grow, resolved to bring about an agreement. "One night, he invited all the celebrated Ulamas of the city to a great banquet. Shaykh Ahmad was given the seat of honor and close to him, only separated by one person, was Taqi. Platters were brought, prepared for three people, so that the two enemies found that they were obliged to eat together, but the irreconcilable Taqi turned toward the platter of his neighbors on his right hand and to the great consternation of the Prince, he placed his left hand over the left side of his face in such a manner that he could not possibly see Shaykh Ahmad. After the banquet which proved rather dull, the Prince, still determined to reconcile the two adversaries, bestowed great praise on Shaykh Ahmad, acknowledging him as the great Arabian and Persian Doctor and saying that Taqi should show him the greatest respect; that it was not proper for him to give ear to the gossip of men eager to create conflict between two exceptional minds. Taqi interrupted him violently and declared with great contempt, 'There can be no peace between impiety and faith! Concerning the resurrection the Shaykh holds a doctrine opposed to the religion of Islam, (Islamic law) therefore, whoever holds such a doctrine is an impious one and what can such a rebel and I have in common?' "The Prince insisted and entreated in vain, but Taqi refused to yield and they all adjourned." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 263-267.)]

[2 Third Martyr.]

[3 "Mulla Salih had among his children a daughter, Zarrin-Taj (Crown of Gold), who had attracted attention from early childhood. Instead of taking part in games and amusements like her companions, she passed hours at a time listening to her parents discuss religious matters. Her keen intelligence quickly perceived the fallacies of Islamic science without succumbing to it and soon she was able to discuss points which were most obscure and confusing. The Hadiths (traditions) held no secrets for her. Her reputation soon became widely known in the city and her fellow-citizens considered her a prodigy, and justly so. A prodigy in science, also a prodigy of beauty, for the child, as she grew to girlhood, possessed a face which shone with such radiant beauty that they named her '**Qurratu'l-'Ayn**', which M. de Gobineau translates as 'The Consolation of the Eyes.' Her brother Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Qazvini who inherited the learning and reputation of his father, himself relates, in spite of the fact that he remained, at least in appearance, a Muhammadan: 'None of us, her brothers or her cousins dared to speak in her presence, her learning so intimidated us, and if we ventured to express some hypothesis upon a disputed point of doctrine, she demonstrated in such a clear, precise and conclusive manner that we were going astray,

that we instantly withdrew confused.' "She was present at her father's and uncle's classes, in the same room with two or three hundred students, but always concealed behind a curtain, and more than once she refuted the explanation that these two elderly men offered upon such and such a question. Her reputation became universal throughout all Persia, and the most haughty Ulama's consented to adopt some of her hypotheses and opinions. This fact is all the more extraordinary because the Shiite Muhammadan religion relegates the woman almost to the level of the animal. They consider that she has no soul and exists merely for reproduction. "**Quratu'l-Ayn** married, when still quite young, the son of her uncle, Muhammad-i-Qazvini who was the Imam-Jum'ih of the city and later she went to Karbila where she attended the classes of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti. She shared with enthusiasm the ideas of her Master, ideas with which she was already familiar, the city of Qazvin having become a center for the Shaykhi doctrine. "She was, as we shall see later, of an ardent temperament, of a precise and clear intelligence, of a marvellous presence of mind and indomitable courage. All of these qualities combined were to bring her to take interest in the Bab whom she heard speak immediately after his return to Qazvin. That which she learned interested her so vitally that she began corresponding with the Reformer and soon, convinced by him, she made known her conversion *urbi et orbi*. The scandal was very great and the clergy were shocked. In vain, her husband, her father and her brothers pleaded with her to renounce this dangerous madness, but she remained inflexible and proclaimed resolutely her faith." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 273-274.)]

A word should now be said in explanation of the term Bala-Sari. Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, as well as their followers, when visiting the shrine of the Imam Husayn in Karbila, invariably occupied, as a mark of reverence, the lower end of the sepulchre. They never advanced beyond it, whereas other worshippers, the Bala-Sari, recited their prayers in the upper section of that shrine. The Shaykhis, believing, as they did, that "every true believer lives both in this world and in the next," felt it unseemly and improper to step beyond the limits of the lower sections of the shrine <p85> of the Imam Husayn, who in their eyes was the very incarnation of the most perfect believer.[1]

[1 "This name comes to them," said Haji Karim Khan in his Hidayatu't-Talibin, 'from the fact that the late Shaykh Ahmad, being at Karbila during his pilgrimages to the holy tombs, and out of respect for the Imams, recited his prayers standing behind the Imam, that is to say, at his feet. In fact, for him there was no difference between the respect to be tendered to a dead Imam or a living Imam. The Persians, on the contrary, when entering into the tomb, placed themselves at the head of the Imam and consequently turned their backs to him when they prayed because the dead saints are buried with their heads towards the Qiblih. This is a disgrace and a lie! The apostles of Jesus pretending to have come to the assistance of God, were called 'Nasara,' a name which was given to all those who followed in their footsteps. It is thus that the name of Bala-Sari extended to all that follow the doctrine of those who pray standing at the head of the Imam.'" (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Essai sur le Shaykhisme," I, preface, pp. 5-6.)]

Mistaken for the Best Beloved

Shaykh Sultan-i-Karbila'i, whose ancestors ranked among the leading ulamas of Karbila, and who himself had been a firm supporter and intimate companion of Siyyid Kazim, was also among those who, in those days, had met the Bab in Shiraz. It was he who, at a later time, proceeded to Sulaymaniyyih in search of Baha'u'llah, and whose daughter was subsequently given in marriage to Aqay-i-Kalim. When he arrived at Shiraz, he was accompanied by Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, to whom we have referred in the early pages of this narrative. To him the Bab assigned the task of transcribing, in collaboration with Mulla Abdu'l-Karim, the Tablets which He had lately revealed. Shaykh Sultan, who had been too ill, at the time of his arrival, to meet the

Bab, received one night, while still on his sick-bed, a message from his <p190> Beloved, informing him that at about two hours after sunset He would Himself visit him. That night the Ethiopian servant, who was acting as lantern-bearer to his Master, was instructed to walk in advance at a distance which would keep away the attention of the people from Him, and to extinguish the lantern as soon as he reached his destination.

I have heard Shaykh Sultan himself describe that nocturnal visit: "The Bab, who had bidden me extinguish the lamp in my room ere He arrived, came straight to my bedside. In the midst of the darkness which enveloped us, I was holding fast to the hem of His garment and was imploring Him: 'Fulfil my desire, O Beloved of my heart, and allow me to sacrifice myself for Thee; for no one else except Thee is able to confer upon me this favour.' 'O Shaykh!' the Bab replied, 'I too yearn to immolate Myself upon the altar of sacrifice. It behoves us both to cling to the garment of the Best-Beloved and to seek from Him the joy and glory of martyrdom in His path. Rest assured I will, in your behalf, supplicate the Almighty to enable you to attain His presence. Remember Me on that Day, a Day such as the world has never seen before.' As the hour of parting approached, he placed in my hand a gift which He asked me to expend for myself. I tried to refuse; but He begged me to accept it. Finally I acceded to His wish; whereupon He arose and departed.

"The allusion of the Bab that night to His 'Best-Beloved' excited my wonder and curiosity. In the years that followed I oftentimes believed that the one to whom the Bab had referred was none other than **Tahirih**. I even imagined Siyyid-i-Uluvv to be that person. I was sorely perplexed, and knew not how to unravel this mystery. When I reached Karbila and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, I became firmly convinced that He alone could claim such affection from the Bab, that He, and only He, could be worthy of such adoration."

Spontaneous Recognition of the Báb

The mother of the Bab failed at first to realise the significance of the Mission proclaimed by her Son. She remained for a time unaware of the magnitude of the forces latent in His Revelation. As she approached the end of her life, however, she was able to perceive the inestimable quality of that Treasure which she had conceived and given to the world. It was Baha'u'llah who eventually enabled her to discover the value of that hidden Treasure which had lain for so many years concealed from her eyes. She was living in Iraq, where she hoped to spend the remaining days of her life, when Baha'u'llah instructed two of His devoted followers, Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i and the wife of Haji Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shirazi, both of whom were already intimately acquainted with her, to instruct her in the principles of the Faith. She acknowledged the truth of the Cause and remained, until the closing years of the thirteenth century A.H.,[1] when she departed this life, fully aware of the bountiful gifts which the Almighty had chosen to confer upon her.

[1 The thirteenth century A.H. ended in October, 1882 A.D.]

The wife of the Bab, unlike His mother, perceived at the earliest dawn of His Revelation the glory and uniqueness of His Mission and felt from the very beginning the intensity of its force. No one except **Tahirih**, among the women of her generation, surpassed her in the spontaneous character of her devotion nor excelled the fervor of her faith. To her the Bab confided the secret of His future sufferings, and unfolded <p192> to her eyes the significance of the events that were to transpire in His Day. He bade her not to divulge this secret to His mother and counselled her to be patient and resigned to the will of God. He entrusted her with a special prayer, revealed and written by Himself, the reading of which, He assured her, would remove her difficulties and lighten the burden of her woes. "In the hour of your perplexity," He directed her, "recite this prayer ere you go to sleep. I Myself will appear to you and will banish your anxiety." Faithful to His advice, every time she turned to Him in prayer, the light of His unfailing guidance illumined her path and resolved her problems.[1]

[1 "The Bab's widow survived till A.H. 1300, only six years ago. She was the sister of my friend's maternal grandfather. The above particulars are derived from an old lady of the same family, so that there is every reason to regard them as reliable." (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 993.)]

Journey from Karbila to Khurasan

CHAPTER XVI

TAHIRIH'S JOURNEY FROM KARBILA TO KHURASAN

AS THE appointed hour approached when, according to the dispensations of Providence, the veil which still concealed the fundamental verities of the Faith was to be rent asunder, there blazed forth in the heart of Khurasan a flame of such consuming intensity that the most formidable obstacles standing in the way of the ultimate recognition of the Cause melted away and vanished.[1] That fire caused such a conflagration in the hearts of men that the effects of its quickening power were felt in the most outlying provinces of Persia. It obliterated every trace of the misgivings and doubts which had still lingered in the hearts of the believers, and had hitherto hindered them from apprehending the full measure of its glory. The decree of the enemy had condemned to perpetual isolation Him who was the embodiment of the beauty of God, and sought thereby to quench for all time the flame of His love. The hand of Omnipotence, however, was busily engaged, at a time when the host of evil-doers were darkly plotting against Him, in confounding their schemes and in nullifying their efforts. In the easternmost province of Persia, the Almighty had, through the hand of Quddus, lit a fire that glowed with the hottest flame in the breasts of the people of Khurasan. And in Karbila, beyond the western confines of that land, He had kindled the light of **Tahirih**, a light that was destined to shed its radiance upon the whole of Persia. From the east <p269> and from the west of that country, the voice of the Unseen summoned those twin great lights to hasten to the land of Ta,[2] the day-spring of glory, the home of Baha'u'llah. He bade them each seek the presence, and revolve round the person of that Day-Star of Truth, to seek His advice, to reinforce His efforts, and to prepare the way for His coming Revelation.

[1 "It will surprise no one to learn," writes Clement Huart, "that the new sect spread more rapidly in Khurasan than it had anywhere else. Khurasan has been singularly fortunate in that she has always offered to new ideas the most propitious field. It is out of this province that came many evolutions which caused fundamental changes in the Muhammadan Orient. It is enough to recall that in Khurasan the idea of the Persian renovation originated after the Arabian conquest. It was there likewise that the army was organized which, under the orders of Abu-Muslim placed the Abbassides upon the throne of the Khalifs by overthrowing the aristocracy of Mecca which had occupied it since the accession of the Umayyads." ("La Religion de Bab," pp. 18-19.)]

[1 Tihiran.]

In pursuance of the Divine decree, in the days when Quddus was still residing in Mashhad, there was revealed from the pen of the Bab a Tablet addressed to all the believers of Persia, in which every loyal adherent of the Faith was enjoined to "hasten to the Land of Kha," the province of Khurasan.[1] The news of this high injunction spread with marvellous rapidity and aroused universal enthusiasm. It reached the ears of **Tahirih**, who, at that time, was residing in Karbila and was bending every effort to extend the scope of the Faith she had espoused.[2] She had left her native town of Qazvin and had arrived, after the death of Siyyid Kazim, at that holy city, in eager expectation of witnessing the signs which the departed siyyid had foretold. In the foregoing pages we have seen how instinctively she had been led to discover the Revelation of the Bab and how spontaneously she had acknowledged its truth. Unwarned and uninvited, she perceived the dawning light of the promised Revelation breaking upon the city of Shiraz, and was prompted to pen her message and plead

her fidelity to Him who was the Revealer of that light.

[1 "It is believed," writes Lieut.-Col. P. M. Sykes, "that the twelfth Imam never died, but in A.H. 260 (873) disappeared into miraculous concealment, from which he will reappear on the Day of Judgment in the mosque of Gawhar-Shad at Mashhad, to be hailed as the Mihdi or 'Guide' and to fill the earth with justice." ("A History of Persia," vol. 2, p. 45.)]

[2 According to Muhammad Mustafa (p. 108), **Tahirih** arrived in Karbila in the year 1263 A.H. She visited Kufih and the surrounding district, and was engaged in spreading the teachings of the Bab. She shared with the people whom she met the writings of her Master, among which was His commentary on the Surih of Kawthar.]

The Bab's immediate response to her declaration of faith which, without attaining His presence, she was moved to make, animated her zeal and vastly increased her courage. She arose to spread abroad His teachings, vehemently denounced the corruption and perversity of her generation, and fearlessly advocated a fundamental revolution in the habits <p270> and manners of her people.[1] Her indomitable spirit was quickened by the fire of her love for the Bab, and the glory of her vision was further enhanced by the discovery of the inestimable blessings latent in His Revelation. The innate fearlessness and the strength of her character were reinforced a hundredfold by her immovable conviction of the ultimate victory of the Cause she had embraced; and her boundless energy was revitalised by her recognition of the abiding value of the Mission she had risen to champion. All who met her in Karbila were ensnared by her bewitching eloquence and felt the fascination of her words. None could resist her charm; few could escape the contagion of her belief. All testified to the extraordinary traits of her character, marvelled at her amazing personality, and were convinced of the sincerity of her convictions.

[1 "It was in her own family that she heard, for the first time, of the preaching of the Bab at Shiraz and learned the meaning of his doctrines. This knowledge, even incomplete and imperfect as it was, pleased her extremely; she began to correspond with the Bab and soon espoused all his ideas. She did not content herself with a passive sympathy but confessed openly the faith of her Master. She denounced not only polygamy but the use of the veil and showed her face uncovered in public to the great amazement and scandal of her family and of all the sincere Mussulmans but to the applause of many other fellow citizens who shared her enthusiasm and whose numbers grew as a result of her preaching. Her uncle the doctor, her father the jurist, and her husband tried in every way to bring her back at least to a conduct more calm and more reserved. She rebuffed them with arguments inspired by a faith incapable of placid resignation." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp. 137-138.)]

She was able to win to the Cause the revered widow of Siyyid Kazim, who was born in Shiraz, and was the first among the women of Karbila to recognize its truth. I have heard Shaykh Sultan describe her extreme devotion to **Tahirih**, whom she revered as her spiritual guide and esteemed as her affectionate companion. He was also a fervent admirer of the character of the widow of the Siyyid, to whose gentleness of manner he often paid a glowing tribute. "Such was her attachment to **Tahirih**," Shaykh Sultan was often heard to remark, "that she was extremely reluctant to allow that heroine who was a guest in her house to absent herself, though it were for an hour, from her presence. So great an attachment on her part did not fail to excite the curiosity and quicken the faith of her women friends, both Persian and Arab, who were constant visitors in her home. In the first year of her acceptance of the Message, she suddenly <p271> fell ill, and after the lapse of three days, as had been the case with Siyyid Kazim, she departed this life."

Among the men who in Karbila eagerly embraced, through the efforts of **Tahirih**, the Cause of the Bab, was a certain Shaykh Salih, an Arab resident of that city who was the first to shed his blood in the path of the Faith, in Tihran. She was so profuse in her praise of Shaykh Salih that a few suspected him of being equal in rank to Quddus. Shaykh Sultan was also among those who fell under the spell of **Tahirih**. On his return from Shiraz, he identified himself with the Faith, boldly and assiduously promoted its interests, and did his utmost to execute her instructions and wishes. Another admirer was Shaykh Muhammad-i-Shibl, the father of Muhammad-Mustafa, an Arab native of Baghdad who ranked high among the ulamas of that city. By the aid of this chosen band of staunch and able supporters, **Tahirih** was able to fire the imagination and to enlist the allegiance of a considerable number of the Persian and Arab inhabitants of Iraq, most of whom were led by her to join forces with those of their brethren in Persia who were soon to be called upon to shape by their deeds the destiny, and to seal with their life-blood the triumph, of the Cause of God.

The Bab's appeal, which was originally addressed to His followers in Persia, was soon transmitted to the adherents of His Faith in Iraq. **Tahirih** gloriously responded. Her example was followed immediately by a large number of her faithful admirers, all of whom expressed their readiness to journey forthwith to Khurasan. The ulamas of Karbila sought to dissuade her from undertaking that journey. Perceiving immediately the motive which prompted them to tender her such advice, and aware of their malignant design, she addressed to each of these sophists a lengthy epistle in which she set forth her motives and exposed their dissimulation.[1]

[1 According to Samandar (manuscript, p. 9), the main reason for the agitation of the people of Karbila which induced them to accuse **Tahirih** before the governor of Baghdad was her bold action in disregarding the anniversary of the martyrdom of Husayn which was being commemorated in the early days of the month of Muharram in the house of the late Siyyid Kazim in Karbila, and in celebrating instead the anniversary of the birthday of the Bab, which fell on the first day of that month. She is reported to have asked her sister and relatives to discard their mourning garb and wear instead gay attire, in open defiance of the customs and traditions of the people on that occasion.] <p272>

From Karbila she proceeded to Baghdad.[1] A representative delegation, consisting of the ablest leaders among the shi'ah, the sunni, the Christian and Jewish communities of that city, sought her presence and endeavoured to convince her of the folly of her actions. She was able, however, to silence their protestations, and astounded them with the force of her argument. Disillusioned and confused, they retired, deeply conscious of their own impotence.[2]

[1 According to Muhammad Mustafa (pp. 108-9), the following disciples and companions were with **Tahirih** when she arrived in Baghdad: Mulla Ibrahim-i-Mahallati, Shaykh Salih-i-Karimi, Siyyid Ahmad-i-Yazdi (father of Siyyid Husayn, the amanuensis of the Bab) Siyyid Muhammad-i-Bayigani, Shaykh Sultan-i-Karbila'i, the mother of Mulla Husayn and her daughter, the wife of Mirza Hadiy-i-Nahri and his mother. According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghita" (p. 94), the mother and sister of Mulla Husayn were among the ladies and disciples who accompanied **Tahirih** on her journey from Karbila to Baghdad. On their arrival they took up their quarters in the house of Shaykh Muhammad-ibn-i-Shiblu'l-Araqi, after which they were transferred, by order of the governor of Baghdad to the house of the Mufti Siyyid Mahmud-i-Aluri, the well known author of the celebrated commentary entitled "Ruhu'l-Ma'ani," pending the receipt of fresh instructions from the Sultan in Constantinople. The "Kashfu'l-Ghita" further adds (p. 96) that

in the "Ruhu'l-Ma'ani" references are reported to have been found to the conversations which the Mufti had had with **Tahirih**, to whom, it is reported, he addressed these words: "O **Qurratu'l-Ayn!** I swear by God that I share in thy belief. I am apprehensive, however, of the swords of the family of Uthman." "She proceeded directly to the house of the chief Mufti, before whom she defended her creed and her conduct with great ability. The question whether she should be allowed to continue her teaching was submitted first to the Pasha of Baghdad and then to the central government, the result being that she was ordered to leave Turkish territory." ("A Traveller's Narrative," Note Q. p. 310.)]

[2 According to Muhammad Mustafa (p. 111), the following accompanied **Tahirih** from Khaniqin (on the Persian frontier) to Kirmanshah: Shaykh Salih-i-Karimi, Shaykh Muhammad-i-Shibl, Shaykh Sultan-i-Karbila'i, Siyyid Ahmad-i-Yazdi, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Bayigani, Siyyid Muhsin-i-Kazimi, Mulla Ibrahim-i-Mahallati, and about thirty Arab believers. They tarried three days in the village of Karand, where **Tahirih** fearlessly proclaimed the teachings of the Bab and was highly successful in awakening the interest of all classes of people in the new Revelation. Twelve hundred persons are reported to have volunteered to follow her and do her bidding.]

The ulamas of Kirmanshah respectfully received her and presented her with various tokens of their esteem and admiration.[1] In Hamadan,[2] however, the ecclesiastical leaders <p273> of the city were divided in their attitude towards her. A few sought privily to provoke the people and undermine her prestige; others were moved to extol openly her virtues and applaud her courage. "It behoves us," these friends declared from their pulpits, "to follow her noble example and reverently to ask her to unravel for us the mysteries of the Qur'an and to resolve the intricacies of the holy Book. For our highest attainments are but a drop compared to the immensity of her knowledge." While in Hamadan, **Tahirih** was met by those whom her father, Haji Mulla Salih, had sent from Qazvin to welcome and urge her, on his behalf, to visit her native town and prolong her stay in their midst.[3] She reluctantly consented. Ere she departed, she bade those who had accompanied her from Iraq to proceed to their native land. Among them were Shaykh Sultan, Shaykh Muhammad-i-Shibl and his youthful son, Muhammad-Mustafa, Abid and his son Nasir, who subsequently was given the name of Haji Abbas. Those of her companions who had been living in Persia, such as Siyyid Muhammad-i-Gulpaygani, whose pen-name was Ta'ir, and whom **Tahirih** had styled Fata'l-Malih, and others were also bidden to return to their homes. Only two of her companions remained with her—Shaykh Salih and Mulla Ibrahim-i-Gulpaygani, both of whom quaffed the cup of martyrdom, the first in Tihran and the other in Qazvin. Of her own kinsmen, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, one of the Letters of the Living and her brother-in-law, and Siyyid Abdu'l-Hadi, who had been betrothed to her daughter, travelled with her all the way from Karbila to Qazvin.

[1 According to Muhammad Mustafa (p. 112), an enthusiastic reception was accorded her on her arrival in Kirmanshah. Princes, ulamas, and government officials hastened to visit her, and were greatly impressed by her eloquence, her fearlessness, her extensive knowledge, and the force of her character. The commentary on the Surih of Kawthar, revealed by the Bab, was publicly read and translated. The wife of the Amir, the governor of Kirmanshah, was among the ladies who met **Tahirih** and heard her expound the sacred teachings. The Amir himself, together with his family, acknowledged the truth of the Cause and testified to their admiration and love for **Tahirih**. According to Muhammad Mustafa (p. 116), **Tahirih** tarried two days in the village of Sahnih on her way to Hamadan, where she was accorded a reception no less enthusiastic than the one which had greeted her in the village of Karand. The inhabitants of the village begged to be allowed to gather together the members of their community and to join hands with the body of her followers for the spread and promotion of the Cause. She advised them, however, to remain,

extolled and blessed their efforts, and proceeded to Hamadan.]

[2 According to the "Memorials of the Faithful" (p. 275), **Tahirih** tarried two months in Hamadan.]

[3 According to Muhammad Mustafa (p. 117), among those who had been sent from Qazvin were the brothers of **Tahirih**.]

On her arrival at the house of her father, her cousin, the haughty and false-hearted Mulla Muhammad, son of Mulla Taqi, who esteemed himself, next to his father and his uncle, the most accomplished of all the mujtahids of Persia, sent certain ladies of his own household to persuade **Tahirih** to transfer her residence from her father's house to his own. "Say to my presumptuous and arrogant kinsman," was her bold reply to the messengers: "If your desire had really been to be a faithful mate and companion to me, you would have hastened to meet me in Karbila and would on foot have <p274> <p275> guided my howdah+F1 all the way to Qazvin. I would, while journeying with you, have aroused you from your sleep of heedlessness and would have shown you the way of truth. But this was not to be. Three years have elapsed since our separation. Neither in this world nor in the next can I ever be associated with you. I have cast you out of my life for ever."

So stern and unyielding a reply roused both Mulla Muhammad and his father to a burst of fury. They immediately pronounced her a heretic, and strove day and night to undermine her position and to sully her fame. **Tahirih** vehemently defended herself and persisted in exposing the depravity of their character.[2] Her father, a peace-loving and fair-minded <p276> man, deplored this acrimonious dispute and endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation and harmony between them, but failed in his efforts.

[1 See Glossary.]

[2 "How could it be that a woman, in Persia where woman is considered so weak a creature, and above all in a city like Qazvin, where the clergy possessed so great an influence, where the Ulama, by their number and importance attracted the attention of the government and of the people,—how could it be that there, precisely under such untoward circumstances, a woman could have organized so strong a group of heretics? There lies a question which puzzles even the Persian historian, Sipihr, for such an occurrence was without precedent!" (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p. 474.)]

This state of tension continued until the time when a certain Mulla Abdu'llah, a native of Shiraz and fervent admirer of both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, arrived in Qazvin at the beginning of the month of Ramadan, in the year 1263 A.H.[1] Subsequently, in the course of his trial in Tihiran, in the presence of the Sahib-Divan, this same Mulla Abdu'llah recounted the following: "I have never been a convinced Babi. When I arrived at Qazvin, I was on my way to Mah-Ku, intending to visit the Bab and investigate the nature of His Cause. On the day of my arrival at Qazvin, I became aware that the town was in a great state of turmoil. As I was passing through the market-place, I saw a crowd of ruffians who had stripped a man of his head-dress and shoes, had wound his turban around his neck, and by it were dragging him through the streets. An angry multitude was tormenting him with their threats, their blows and curses. 'His unpardonable guilt,' I was told in answer to my enquiry, 'is that he has dared to extol in public the virtues of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. Accordingly, Haji Mulla Taqi, the Hujjatu'l-Islam, has pronounced him a heretic and decreed his expulsion from the town.'"

[1 August 13-September 12, 1847 A.D.]

I was amazed at the explanation given me. How could a shaykhi, I thought to myself, be regarded as a heretic and be deemed worthy of such cruel treatment? Desirous of ascertaining from

Mulla Taqi himself the truth of this report, I betook myself to his school and asked whether he had actually pronounced such a condemnation against him. 'Yes,' he bluntly replied, 'the god whom the late Shaykh Ahmad-i-Bahrayni worshipped is a god in whom I can never believe. Him as well as his followers I regard as the very embodiments of error.' I was moved that very moment to smite his face in the presence of his assembled disciples. I restrained myself, however, and vowed that, God willing, I would pierce his lips with my spear so that he would never be again able to utter such blasphemy.

"I straightway left his presence and directed my steps <p277> towards the market, where I bought a dagger and a spear-head of the sharpest and finest steel. I concealed them in my bosom, ready to gratify the passion that burned within me. I was waiting for my opportunity when, one night, I entered the masjid in which he was wont to lead the congregation in prayer. I waited until the hour of dawn, at which time I saw an old woman enter the masjid, carrying with her a rug, which she spread over the floor of the mihrab.[1] Soon after, I saw Mulla Taqi enter alone, walk to the mihrab, and offer his prayer. Cautiously and quietly, I followed him and stood behind him. He was prostrating himself on the floor, when I rushed upon him, drew out my spear-head, and plunged it into the back of his neck. He uttered a loud cry. I threw him on his back and, unsheathing my dagger, drove it hilt-deep into his mouth. With the same dagger, I struck him at several places in his breast and side, and left him bleeding in the mihrab.

[1 See Glossary.]

"I ascended immediately the roof of the masjid and watched the frenzy and agitation of the multitude. A crowd rushed in and, placing him upon a litter, transported him to his house. Unable to identify the murderer, the people seized the occasion to gratify their basest instincts. They rushed at one another's throats, violently attacked and mutually accused one another in the presence of the governor. Finding out that a large number of innocent people had been gravely molested and thrown into prison, I was impelled by the voice of my conscience to confess my act. I accordingly besought the presence of the governor and said to him: 'If I deliver into your hands the author of this murder, will you promise me to set free all the innocent people who are suffering his place?' No sooner had I obtained from him the necessary assurance than I confessed to him that I had committed the deed. He was not disposed at first to believe me. At my request, he summoned the old woman who had spread the rug in the mihrab, but refused to be convinced by the evidence which she gave. I was finally conducted to the bedside of Mulla Taqi, who was on the point of death. As soon as he saw me, he recognized my features. In his agitation, he pointed with his finger to <p278> me, indicating that I had attacked him. He signified his desire that I be taken away from his presence. Shortly after, he expired. I was immediately arrested, was convicted of murder, and thrown into prison. The governor, however, failed to keep his promise and refused to release the prisoners."

The candour and sincerity of Mulla Abdu'llah greatly pleased the Sahib-Divan. He gave secret orders to his attendants to enable him to escape from prison. At the hour of midnight, the prisoner took refuge in the home of Rida Khan-i-Sardar, who had recently been married to the sister of the Sipah-Salar, and remained concealed in that house until the great struggle or Shaykh Tabarsi, when he determined to throw in his lot with the heroic defenders of the fort. He, as well as Rida Khan, who followed him to Mazindaran, quaffed eventually the cup of martyrdom.

The circumstances of the murder fanned to fury the wrath of the lawful heirs of Mulla Taqi, who now determined to wreak their vengeance upon **Tahirih**. They succeeded in having her placed in the strictest confinement in the house of her father, and charged

those women whom they had selected to watch over her, not to allow their captive to leave her room except for the purpose of performing her daily ablutions. They accused her of really being the instigator of the crime. "No one else but you," they asserted, "is guilty of the murder of our father. You issued the order for his assassination." Those whom they had arrested and confined were conducted by them to Tihiran and were incarcerated in the home of one of the kad-khudas [1] of the capital. The friends and heirs of Mulla Taqi scattered themselves in all directions, denouncing their captives as the repudiators of the law of Islam and demanding that they be immediately put to death.

[1 See Glossary.]

Baha'u'llah who was at that time residing in Tihiran, was informed of the plight of these prisoners who had been the companions and supporters of **Tahirih**. As He was already acquainted with the kad-khuda in whose home they were incarcerated, He decided to visit them and intervene in their behalf. That avaricious and deceitful official, who was fully aware of the extreme generosity of Baha'u'llah, greatly exaggerated <p279> in the hope of deriving a substantial pecuniary advantage for himself, the misfortune that had befallen the unhappy captives. "They are destitute of the barest necessities of life," urged the kad-khuda. "They hunger for food, and their clothing is wretchedly scanty." Baha'u'llah extended immediate financial assistance for their relief, and urged the kad-khuda to relax the severity of the rule under which they were confined. The latter consented to relieve a few who were unable to support the oppressive weight of their chains, and for the rest did whatever he could to alleviate the rigour of their confinement. Prompted by greed, he informed his superiors of the situation, and emphasised the fact that both food and money were being regularly supplied by Baha'u'llah for those who were imprisoned in his house.

These officials were in their turn tempted to derive every possible advantage from the liberality of Baha'u'llah. They summoned Him to their presence, protested against His action, and accused Him of complicity in the act for which the captives had been condemned. "The kad-khuda," replied Baha'u'llah, "pleaded their cause before Me and enlarged upon their sufferings and needs. He himself bore witness to their innocence and appealed to Me for help. In return for the aid which, in response to his invitation, I was impelled to extend, you now charge Me with a crime of which I am innocent." Hoping to intimidate Baha'u'llah by threatening immediate punishment, they refused to allow Him to return to His home. The confinement to which He was subjected was the first affliction that befell Baha'u'llah in the path of the Cause of God; the first imprisonment He suffered for the sake of His loved ones. He remained in captivity for a few days, until Ja'far-Quli Khan, the brother of Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, who at a later time was appointed Grand Vazir of the Shah, and a number of other friends intervened in His behalf and, threatening the kad-khuda in severe language, were able to effect His release. Those who had been responsible for His confinement had confidently hoped to receive, in return for His deliverance, the sum of one thousand tumans,[1] but they soon found out that they were forced to comply with the wishes of Ja'far-Quli Khan without <p280> the hope of receiving, either from him or from Baha'u'llah, the slightest reward. With profuse apologies and with the utmost regret, they surrendered their Captive into his hands.

[1 See Glossary.]

The heirs of Mulla Taqi were in the meantime bending every effort to avenge the blood of their distinguished kinsman. Unsatisfied with what they had already accomplished, they directed their appeal to Muhammad Shah himself, and endeavoured to win his sympathy to their cause. The Shah is reported to have returned this answer: "Your father, Mulla Taqi, surely could not have claimed to be superior to the Imam Ali, the Commander of the

Faithful. Did not the latter instruct his disciples that, should he fall a victim to the sword of Ibn-i-Muljam, the murderer alone should, by his death, be made to atone for his act, that no one else but he should be put to death? Why should not the murder of your father be similarly avenged? Declare to me his murderer, and I will issue my orders that he be delivered into your hands in order that you may inflict upon him the punishment which he deserves."

The uncompromising attitude of the Shah induced them to abandon the hopes which they had cherished. They declared Shaykh Salih to be the murderer of their father, obtained his arrest, and ignominiously put him to death. He was the first to shed his blood on Persian soil in the path of the Cause of God; the first of that glorious company destined to seal with their life-blood the triumph of God's holy Faith. As he was being conducted to the scene of his martyrdom, his face glowed with zeal and joy. He hastened to the foot of the gallows and met his executioner as if he were welcoming a dear and lifelong friend. Words of triumph and hope fell unceasingly from his lips. "I discarded," he cried, with exultation, as his end approached, "the hopes and the beliefs of men from the moment I recognized Thee, Thou who art my Hope and my Belief!" His remains were interred in the courtyard of the shrine of the Imam-Zadih Zayd in Tihiran.

The unsatiable hatred that animated those who had been responsible for the martyrdom of Shaykh Salih impelled them to seek additional instruments for the furtherance of their designs. Haji Mirza Aqasi, whom the Sahib-Divan had succeeded in convincing of the treacherous conduct of the heirs <p281> of Mulla Taqi, refused to entertain their appeal. Undeterred by his refusal, they submitted their case to the Sadr-i-Ardibili, a man notoriously presumptuous and one of the most arrogant among the ecclesiastical leaders of Persia. "Behold," they pleaded, "the indignity that has been inflicted upon those whose supreme function it is to keep guard over the integrity of the Law. How can you, who are its chief and illustrious exponent, allow so grave an affront to its dignity to remain unpunished? Are you really incapable of avenging the blood of that slaughtered minister of the Prophet of God? Do you not realise that to tolerate such a heinous crime would in itself unloose a flood of calumny against those who are the chief repositories of the teachings and principles of our Faith? Will not your silence embolden the enemies of Islam to shatter the structure which your own hands have reared? As a result, will not your own life be endangered?"

The Sadr-i-Ardibili was sore afraid, and in his impotence sought to beguile his sovereign. He addressed the following request to Muhammad Shah: "I would humbly implore your Majesty to allow the captives to accompany the heirs of that martyred leader on their return to Qazvin, that these may, of their own accord, forgive them publicly their action, and enable them to recover their freedom. Such a gesture on their part will considerably enhance their position and will win them the esteem of their countrymen." The Shah, wholly unaware of the mischievous designs of that crafty plotter, immediately granted his request, on the express condition that a written statement be sent to him from Qazvin assuring him that the condition of the prisoners after their freedom was entirely satisfactory, and that no harm was likely to befall them in the future.

No sooner were the captives delivered into the hands of the mischief-makers than they set about gratifying their feelings of implacable hatred towards them. On the first night after they had been handed over to their enemies, Haji Asadu'llah, the brother of Haji Allah-Vardi and paternal uncle of Muhammad-Hadi and Muhammad-Javad-i-Farhadi, a noted merchant of Qazvin who had acquired a reputation for piety and uprightness which stood as high as that of his illustrious brother, was mercilessly put to death. Knowing <p282> full well that in his own native town they

would be unable to inflict upon him the punishment they desired, they determined to take his life whilst in Tihiran in a manner that would protect them from the suspicion of murder. At the hour of midnight, they perpetrated the shameful act, and, the next morning, announced that illness had been the cause of his death. His friends and acquaintances, mostly natives of Qazvin, none of whom had been able to detect the crime that had extinguished such a noble life, accorded him a burial that befitted his station.

The rest of his companions, among whom were Mulla Tahir-i-Shirazi and Mulla Ibrahim-i-Mahallati, both of whom were greatly esteemed for their learning and character, were savagely put to death immediately after their arrival at Qazvin. The entire population, which had been sedulously instigated beforehand, clamoured for their immediate execution. A band of shameless scoundrels, armed with knives, swords, spears, and axes, fell upon them and tore them to pieces. They mutilated their bodies with such wanton barbarity that no fragment of their scattered members could be found for burial.

Gracious God! Acts of such incredible savagery have been perpetrated in a town like Qazvin, which prides itself on the fact that no less than a hundred of the highest ecclesiastical leaders of Islam dwell within its gates, and yet none could be found among all its inhabitants to raise his voice in protest against such revolting murders! No one seemed to question their right to perpetrate such iniquitous and shameless deeds. No one seemed to be aware of the utter incompatibility between such ferocious deeds committed by those who claimed to be the sole repositories of the mysteries of Islam, and the exemplary conduct of those who first manifested its light to the world. No one was moved to exclaim indignantly: "O evil and perverse generation! To what depths of infamy and shame you have sunk! Have not the abominations which you have wrought surpassed in their ruthlessness the acts of the basest of men? Will you not recognize that neither the beasts of the field nor any moving thing on earth has ever equalled the ferociousness of your acts? How long is your heedlessness to last? Is it not your <p283> belief that the efficacy of every congregational prayer is dependent upon the integrity of him who leads that prayer? Have you not again and again declared that no such prayer is acceptable in the sight of God until and unless the imam who leads the congregation has purged his heart from every trace of malice? And yet you deem those who instigate and share in the performance of such atrocities to be the true leaders of your Faith, the very embodiments of fairness and justice. Have you not committed to their hands the reins of your Cause and regarded them as the masters of your destinies?"

The news of this outrage reached Tihiran and spread with bewildering rapidity throughout the city. Haji Mirza Aqasi vehemently protested. "In what passage of the Qur'an," he is reported to have exclaimed, "in which tradition of Muhammad, has the massacre of a number of people been justified in order to avenge the murder of a single person?" Muhammad Shah also expressed his strong disapproval of the treacherous conduct of the Sadr-i-Ardibili and his confederates. He denounced his cowardice, banished him from the capital, and condemned him to a life of obscurity in Qum. His degradation from office pleased immensely the Grand Vazir, who had hitherto laboured in vain to bring about his downfall, and whom his sudden removal from Tihiran relieved of the apprehensions which the extension of his authority had inspired. His own denunciation of the massacre of Qazvin was prompted, not so much by his sympathy with the Cause of the defenceless victims, as by his hope of involving the Sadr-i-Ardibili in such embarrassments as would inevitably disgrace him in the eyes of his sovereign.

The failure of the Shah and of his government to inflict immediate

punishment upon the malefactors encouraged them to seek further means for the gratification of their relentless hatred towards their opponents. They now directed their attention to **Tahirih** herself, and resolved that she should suffer at their hands the same fate that had befallen her companions. While still in confinement, **Tahirih**, as soon as she was informed of the designs of her enemies, addressed the following message to Mulla Muhammad, who had succeeded to the position of his father and was now recognized <p284> as the Imam-Jum'ih of Qazvin: "Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths: but God only desireth to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it.[1] If my Cause be the Cause of Truth, if the Lord whom I worship be none other than the one true God, He will, ere nine days have elapsed, deliver me from the yoke of your tyranny. Should He fail to achieve my deliverance, you are free to act as you desire. You will have irrevocably established the falsity of my belief." Mulla Muhammad, recognising his inability to accept so bold a challenge, chose to ignore entirely her message, and sought by every cunning device to accomplish his purpose.

[1 Qur'an, 9:33.]

In those days, ere the hour which **Tahirih** had fixed for her deliverance had struck, Baha'u'llah signified His wish that she should be delivered from her captivity and brought to Tihiran. He determined to establish, in the eyes of the adversary, the truth of her words, and to frustrate the schemes which her enemies had conceived for her death. Muhammad-Hadi-i-Farhadi was accordingly summoned by Him and was entrusted with the task of effecting her immediate transference to His own home in Tihiran. Muhammad-Hadi was charged to deliver a sealed letter to his wife, Khatun-Jan, and instruct her to proceed, in the guise of a beggar, to the house where **Tahirih** was confined; to deliver the letter into her hands; to wait awhile at the entrance of her house, until she should join her, and then to hasten with her and commit her to his care. "As soon as **Tahirih** has joined you," Baha'u'llah urged the emissary, "start immediately for Tihiran. This very night, I shall despatch to the neighbourhood of the gate of Qazvin an attendant, with three horses, that you will take with you and station at a place that you will appoint outside the walls of Qazvin. You will conduct **Tahirih** to that spot, will mount the horses, and will, by an unfrequented route, endeavour to reach at daybreak the outskirts of the capital. As soon as the gates are opened, you must enter the city and proceed immediately to My house. You should exercise the utmost caution lest her identity be disclosed. The Almighty will assuredly guide your steps and will surround you with His unfailing protection." <p285>

Fortified by the assurance of Baha'u'llah, Muhammad-Hadi set out immediately to carry out the instructions he had received. Unhampered by any obstacle, he, ably and faithfully, acquitted himself of his task, and was able to conduct **Tahirih** safely, at the appointed hour, to the home of his Master. Her sudden and mysterious removal from Qazvin filled her friends and foes alike with consternation. The whole night, they searched the houses and were baffled in their efforts to find her. The fulfilment of the prediction she had uttered astounded even the most sceptical among her opponents. A few were made to realise the supernatural character of the Faith she had espoused, and submitted willingly to its claims. Mirza Abdu'l-Vahhab, her own brother, acknowledged, that very day, the truth of the Revelation, but failed to demonstrate subsequently by his acts the sincerity of his belief.[1]

[1 According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghiti" (p. 110), Mulla Husayn is reported by Mulla Ja'far-i-Va'iz-i-Qazvini to have met **Tahirih** in Qazvin at the home of Aqa Hadi, who is probably none other than Muhammad Hadi-i-Farhadi, who was commissioned by Baha'u'llah to conduct **Tahirih** to Tihiran. The meeting is stated to have taken place prior to the murder of Mulla Taqi.]

The hour which **Tahirih** had fixed for her deliverance found her already securely established under the sheltering shadow of Baha'u'llah. She knew full well into whose presence she had been admitted; she was profoundly aware of the sacredness of the hospitality she had been so graciously accorded.[1] As it was with her acceptance of the Faith proclaimed by the Bab when she, unwarned and unsummoned, had hailed His Message and recognized its truth, so did she perceive through her own intuitive knowledge the future glory of Baha'u'llah. It was in the year '60, while in Karbila, that she alluded in her odes to her recognition of the Truth He was to reveal. I have myself been shown in Tihiran, in the <p286> home of Siyyid Muhammad, whom **Tahirih** had styled Fata'l-Malih, the verses which she, in her own handwriting, had penned, every letter of which bore eloquent testimony to her faith in the exalted Missions of both the Bab and Baha'u'llah. In that ode the following verse occurs: "The effulgence of the Abha Beauty hath pierced the veil of night; behold the souls of His lovers dancing, moth-like, in the light that has flashed from His face!" It was her steadfast conviction in the unconquerable power of Baha'u'llah that prompted her to utter her prediction with such confidence, and to fling her challenge so boldly in the face of her enemies. Nothing short of an immovable faith in the unfailing efficacy of that power could have induced her, in the darkest hours of her captivity, to assert with such courage and assurance the approach of her victory.

[1 Abdu'l-Baha relates, in the "Memorials of the Faithful" (p. 306), the circumstances of a visit paid by Vahid to **Tahirih**, while the latter was staying in the home of Baha'u'llah in Tihiran. "**Tahirih**," He writes, "was listening from behind the veil to the utterances of Vahid, who was discoursing with fervour and eloquence on the signs and verses that bore witness to the advent of the new Manifestation. I was then a child and was sitting on her lap, as she followed the recital of the remarkable testimonies which flowed ceaselessly from the lips of that learned man. I well remember interrupted him, and, raising her voice, vehemently declared: 'O Yahya! Let deeds, not words, testify to thy faith, if thou art a man of true learning. Cease idly repeating the traditions of the past, for the day of service, of steadfast action, is come. Now is the time to show forth the true signs of God, to rend asunder the veils of idle fancy, to promote the Word of God, and to sacrifice ourselves in His path. Let deeds, not words, be our adorning.'"]

A few days after **Tahirih's** arrival at Tihiran, Baha'u'llah decided to send her to Khurasan in the company of the believers who were preparing to depart for that province. He too had determined to leave the capital and take the same direction a few days later. He accordingly summoned Aqay-i-Kalim and instructed him to take immediately the necessary measures to ensure the removal of **Tahirih**, together with her woman attendant, Qanitih, to a place outside the gate of the capital, from whence they were, later on, to proceed to Khurasan. He cautioned him to exercise the utmost care and vigilance lest the guards who were stationed at the entrance of the city, and who had been ordered to refuse the passage of women through the gates without a permit, should discover her identity and prevent her departure.

I have heard Aqay-i-Kalim recount the following: "Putting our trust in God, we rode out, **Tahirih**, her attendant, and I, to a place in the vicinity of the capital. None of the guards who were stationed at the gate of Shimiran raised the slightest objection, nor did they enquire regarding our destination. At a distance of two farsangs [1] from the capital, we alighted in the midst of an orchard abundantly watered and situated at the foot of a mountain, in the centre of which was a house that seemed completely deserted. As I went about in search of the proprietor, I chanced to meet an old <p287> man who was watering his plants. In answer to my enquiry, he explained that a dispute had arisen between the owner and his tenants, as a result of which those who occupied the place had deserted it. 'I have been asked by the owner,' he

added, 'to keep guard over this property until the settlement of the dispute.' I was greatly delighted with the information he gave me, and asked him to share with us our luncheon. When, later in the day, I decided to depart for Tihiran, I found him willing to watch over and guard **Tahirih** and her attendant. As I committed them to his care, I assured him that I would either myself return that evening or send a trusted attendant whom I would follow the next morning with all the necessary requirements for the journey to Khurasan.

[1 See Glossary.]

"Upon my arrival at Tihiran, I despatched Mulla Baqir, one of the Letters of the Living, together with an attendant, to join **Tahirih**. I informed Baha'u'llah of her safe departure from the capital. He was greatly pleased at the information I gave Him, and named that orchard 'Bagh-i-Jannat.' [1] 'That house,' He remarked, 'has been providentially prepared for your reception, that you may entertain in it the loved ones of God.'

[1 "Garden of Paradise."]

"**Tahirih** tarried seven days in that spot, after which she set out, accompanied by Muhammad-Hasan-i-Qazvini, surnamed Fata, and a few others, in the direction of Khurasan. I was commanded by Baha'u'llah to arrange for her departure and to provide whatever might be required for her journey." <p289>

Badasht

CHAPTER XVI

THE CONFERENCE OF BADASHT

SOON after **Tahirih** had started on her journey, Baha'u'llah instructed Aqay-i-Kalim to complete the necessary preparations for His contemplated departure for Khurasan. He committed to his care His family and asked him to provide whatever might be conducive to their well-being and safety.

Quddus Learns of Tahirih's Release

With these words, Quddus bade farewell to his companions and, accompanied by Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qazvini, departed from Mashhad. A few days later, he encountered Mirza Sulayman-i-Nuri, who informed him of the circumstances attending the deliverance of **Tahirih** from her confinement in Qazvin, of her journey in the direction of Khurasan, and of Baha'u'llah's subsequent departure from the capital. Mirza Sulayman, as well as Mirza Muhammad-Ali, <p292> remained in the company of Quddus until their arrival at Badasht. They reached that hamlet at the hour of dawn and found there assembled a large gathering of people whom they recognized as their fellow-believers. They decided, however, to resume their journey, and proceeded directly to Shah-Rud. As they were approaching that village, Mirza Sulayman, who was following at a distance behind them, encountered Muhammad-i-Hana-Sab, who was on his way to Badasht. In answer to his enquiry as to the object of that gathering, Mirza Sulayman was informed that Baha'u'llah and **Tahirih** had, a few days before, left Shah-Rud for that hamlet; that a large number of believers had already arrived from Isfahan, Qazvin, and other towns of Persia, and were waiting to accompany Baha'u'llah on His intended journey to Khurasan. "Tell Mulla Ahmad-i-Ibdal, who is now in Badasht," Mirza Sulayman remarked, "that this very morning a light has shone upon you, the radiance of which you have failed to recognize." [1]

[1 Allusion to Quddus.]

No sooner had Baha'u'llah been informed by Muhammad-i-Hana-Sab of the arrival of Quddus at Shah-Rud than He decided to join him. Attended by Mulla Muhammad-i-Mu'allim-i-Nuri, He set out on horseback that same evening for that village, and had returned with Quddus to Badasht the next morning at the hour of

sunrise.

It was then the beginning of summer. Upon His arrival, Baha'u'llah rented three gardens, one of which He assigned exclusively to the use of Quddus, another He set apart for **Tahirih** and her attendant, and reserved the third for Himself. <p293> Those who had gathered in Badashat were eighty-one in number, all of whom, from the time of their arrival to the day of their dispersion, were the guests of Baha'u'llah. Every day, He revealed a Tablet which Mirza Sulayman-i-Nuri chanted in the presence of the assembled believers. Upon each He bestowed a new name. He Himself was henceforth designated by the name of Baha; upon the Last Letter of the Living was conferred the appellation of Quddus, and to **Qurratu'l-Ayn** was given the title of **Tahirih**. To each of those who had convened at Badashat a special Tablet was subsequently revealed by the Bab, each of whom He addressed by the name recently conferred upon him. When, at a later time, a number of the more rigid and conservative among her fellow-disciples chose to accuse **Tahirih** of indiscreetly rejecting the time-honoured traditions of the past, the Bab, to whom these complaints had been addressed, replied in the following terms: "What am I to say regarding her whom the Tongue of Power of Glory has named **Tahirih** [the Pure One]?"

Each day of that memorable gathering witnessed the abrogation of a new law and the repudiation of a long-established tradition. The veils that guarded the sanctity of the ordinances of Islam were sternly rent asunder, and the idols that had so long claimed the adoration of their blind worshippers were rudely demolished. No one knew, however, the Source whence these bold and defiant innovations proceeded, no one suspected the Hand which steadily and unerringly steered their course. Even the identity of Him who had bestowed a new name upon each of those who had congregated in that hamlet remained unknown to those who had received them. Each conjectured according to his own degree of understanding. Few, if any, dimly surmised that Baha'u'llah was the Author of the far-reaching changes which were being so fearlessly introduced.

Shaykh Abu-Turab, one of the best-informed as to the nature of the developments in Badashat, is reported to have related the following incident: "Illness, one day, confined Baha'u'llah to His bed. Quddus, as soon as he heard of His indisposition, hastened to visit Him. He seated himself, when ushered into His presence, on the right hand of <p294> Baha'u'llah. The rest of the companions were gradually admitted to His presence, and grouped themselves around Him. No sooner had they assembled than Muhammad-Hasan-i-Qazvini, the messenger of **Tahirih**, upon whom the name of Fata'l-Qazvini had been newly conferred, suddenly came in and conveyed to Quddus a pressing invitation from **Tahirih** to visit her in her own garden. 'I have severed myself entirely from her,' he boldly and decisively replied. 'I refuse to meet her.' [1] The messenger retired immediately, and soon returned, reiterating the same message and appealing to him to heed her urgent call. 'She insists on your visit,' were his words. 'If you persist in your refusal, she herself will come to you.' Perceiving his unyielding attitude, the messenger unsheathed his sword, laid it at the feet of Quddus, and said: 'I refuse to go without you. Either choose to accompany me to the presence of **Tahirih** or cut off my head with this sword.' 'I have already declared my intention not to visit **Tahirih**,' Quddus angrily retorted. 'I am willing to comply with the alternative which you have chosen to put before me.'

[1 According to the "Kashfu'l-Ghita," a decision had been previously arrived at between Quddus and **Tahirih**, in accordance with which the latter was to proclaim publicly the independent character of the Revelation of the Bab, and to emphasise the abrogation of the laws and ordinances of the previous Dispensation. Quddus, on the other hand, was expected to

oppose her contention and strenuously to reject her views. This arrangement was made for the purpose of mitigating the effects of such a challenging and far-reaching proclamation, and of averting the dangers and perils which such a startling innovation was sure to produce. (P. 211.) Baha'u'llah appears to have taken a neutral attitude in this controversy, though actually He was the prime mover and the controlling and directing influence throughout the different stages of that memorable episode.]

"Muhammad-Hasan, who had seated himself at the feet of Quddus, had stretched forth his neck to receive the fatal blow, when suddenly the figure of **Tahirih**, adorned and unveiled, appeared before the eyes of the assembled companions. Consternation immediately seized the entire gathering.[1] All stood aghast before this sudden and most unexpected <p295> apparition. To behold her face unveiled was to them inconceivable. Even to gaze at her shadow was a thing which they deemed improper, inasmuch as they regarded her as the very incarnation of Fatimih,[2] the noblest emblem of chastity in their eyes.

[1 "But the effect produced had been astounding! The assembly was as if struck by lightning. Some hid their faces with their hands, others, prostrated themselves, others covered their heads with their garments so that they could not see the features of her Highness, the Pure One. If it was a grievous sin to look upon the face of an unknown woman who might pass by, what a crime to let one's eyes fall upon her who was so saintly! The meeting was broken up in the midst of an indescribable tumult. Insults fell upon her whom they thought so indecent as to appear thus with her face uncovered. Some armed that she had lost her mind, others that she was shameless, and some, very few, took up her defense." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 283-284.)]

[2 Daughter of Muhammad, and wife of the Imam Ali.]

"Quietly, silently, and with the utmost dignity, **Tahirih** stepped forward and, advancing towards Quddus, seated herself on his right-hand side. Her unruffled serenity sharply contrasted with the affrighted countenances of those who were gazing upon her face. Fear, anger, and bewilderment stirred the depths of their souls. That sudden revelation seemed to have stunned their faculties. Abdu'l-Khalik-i-Isfahani was so gravely shaken that he cut his throat with his own hands. Covered with blood and shrieking with excitement, he fled away from the face of **Tahirih**. A few, following his example, abandoned their companions and forsook their Faith. A number were seen standing speechless before her, confounded with wonder. Quddus, meanwhile, had remained seated in his place, holding the unsheathed sword in his hand, his face betraying a feeling of inexpressible anger. It seemed as if he were waiting for the moment when he could strike his fatal blow at **Tahirih**.

"His threatening attitude failed, however, to move her. Her countenance displayed that same dignity and confidence which she had evinced at the first moment of her appearance before the assembled believers. A feeling of joy and triumph had now illumined her face. She rose from her seat and, undeterred by the tumult that she had raised in the hearts of her companions, began to address the remnant of that assembly. Without the least premeditation, and in language which bore a striking resemblance to that of the Qur'an, she delivered her appeal with matchless eloquence and profound fervour. She concluded her address with this verse of the Qur'an: 'Verily, amid gardens and rivers shall the pious dwell in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King.' As she uttered these words, she cast a furtive glance towards both Baha'u'llah and Quddus in such a manner that those who were watching her were unable to tell to which of the two she was alluding. Immediately <p296> after, she declared: 'I am the Word which the Qa'im is to utter, the Word

which shall put to flight the chiefs and nobles of the earth!"[1]

[1 Refer to page 15.]

"She then turned her face towards Quddus and rebuked him for having failed to perform in Khurasan those things which she deemed essential to the welfare of the Faith. 'I am free to follow the promptings of my own conscience,' retorted Quddus. 'I am not subject to the will and pleasure of my fellow-disciples.' Turning away her eyes from him, **Tahirih** invited those who were present to celebrate befittingly this great occasion. 'This day is the day of festivity and universal rejoicing,' she added, 'the day on which the fetters of the past are burst asunder. Let those who have shared in this great achievement arise and embrace each other.'"

That memorable day and those which immediately followed it witnessed the most revolutionary changes in the life and habits of the assembled followers of the Bab. Their manner of worship underwent a sudden and fundamental transformation. The prayers and ceremonials by which those devout worshippers had been disciplined were irrevocably <p297> discarded. A great confusion, however, prevailed among those who had so zealously arisen to advocate these reforms. A few condemned so radical a change as being the essence of heresy, and refused to annul what they regarded as the inviolable precepts of Islam. Some regarded **Tahirih** as the sole judge in such matters and the only person qualified to claim implicit obedience from the faithful. Others who denounced her behaviour held to Quddus, whom they regarded as the sole representative of the Bab, the only one who had the right to pronounce upon such weighty matters. Still others who recognized the authority of both **Tahirih** and Quddus viewed the whole episode as a God-sent test designed to separate the true from the false and distinguish the faithful from the disloyal.

Tahirih herself ventured on a few occasions to repudiate the authority of Quddus. "I deem him," she is reported to have declared, "a pupil whom the Bab has sent me to edify and instruct. I regard him in no other light." Quddus did not fail, on his part, to denounce **Tahirih** as "the author of heresy," and stigmatised those who advocated her views as "the victims of error." This state of tension persisted for a few days until Baha'u'llah intervened and, in His masterly manner, effected a complete reconciliation between them. He healed the wounds which that sharp controversy had caused, and directed the efforts of both along the path of constructive service.[1]

[1 "It was this bold act of **Qurratu'l-Ayn** which shook the foundations of a literal belief in Islamic doctrines among the Persians. It may be added that the first-fruits of **qurratu'l-Ayn**'s teaching was no less than the heroic Quddus, and that the eloquent teacher herself owed her insight probably to Baha'u'llah. Of course, the supposition that her greatest friend might censure her is merely a delightful piece of irony." (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions," pp. 103-4.)]

The object of that memorable gathering had been attained.[1] The clarion-call of the new Order had been sounded. <p298> The obsolete conventions which had fettered the consciences of men were boldly challenged and fearlessly swept away. The way was clear for the proclamation of the laws and precepts that were destined to usher in the new Dispensation. The remnant of the companions who had gathered in Badashst accordingly decided to depart for Mazindaran. Quddus and **Tahirih** seated themselves in the same howdah [2] which had been prepared for their journey by Baha'u'llah. On their way, **Tahirih** each day composed an ode which she instructed those who accompanied her to chant as they followed her howdah. Mountain and valley re-echoed the shouts with which that enthusiastic band, as they journeyed to Mazindaran, hailed the extinction of the old, and the birth of the new Day.

[1 "It has been suggested that the true cause of the summoning of that assembly was anxiety for the Bab, and a desire to carry him off to a place of safety. But the more accepted view—that the subject before the Council was the relation of the Babis to the Islamic laws—is also the more probable." (Ibid., p. 80.) "The object of the conference was to correct a widespread misunderstanding. There were many who thought that the new leader came, in the most literal sense, to fulfil Islamic Law. They realised, indeed, that the object of Muhammad was to bring about an universal kingdom of righteousness and peace, but they thought this was to be effected by wading through streams of blood, and with the help of the divine judgments. The Bab, on the other hand, though not always consistent, was moving, with some of his disciples, in the direction of moral suasion; his only weapon was 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' When the Qa'im appeared all things would be renewed. But the Qa'im was on the point of appearing, and all that remained was to prepare for his Coming. No more should there be any distinction between higher and lower races, or between male and female. No more should the long, enveloping veil be the badge of woman's inferiority. The gifted woman before us had her characteristic solution of the problem... It is said in one form of tradition, that **Qurratu'l-Ayn** herself attended the conference with a veil on. If so, she lost no time in discarding it, and broke out (we are told) into the fervid exclamation, 'I am the blast of the trumpet, I am the call of the bugle,' i.e. 'Like Gabriel, I would awaken sleeping souls.' It is said, too, that this short speech of the brave woman was followed by the recitation by Baha'u'llah of the Surih of the Resurrection (75). Such recitations often have an overpowering effect. The inner meaning of this was that mankind was about to pass into a new cosmic cycle, for which a new set of laws and customs would be indispensable." (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions," pp. 101-3.)]

[2 Refer to Glossary.]

Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Badashst lasted two and twenty days. In the course of their journey to Mazindaran, a few of the followers of the Bab sought to abuse the liberty which the repudiation of the laws and sanctions of an outgrown Faith had conferred upon them. They viewed the unprecedented action of **Tahirih** in discarding the veil as a signal to transgress the bounds of moderation and to gratify their selfish desires. The excesses in which a few indulged provoked the wrath of the Almighty and caused their immediate dispersion. In the village of Niyala, they were grievously tested and suffered severe injuries at the hands of their enemies. This scattering extinguished the mischief which a few of the irresponsible among the adherents of the Faith had sought to kindle, and preserved untarnished its honour and dignity.

I have heard Baha'u'llah Himself describe that incident: <p299> "We were all gathered in the village of Niyala and were resting at the foot of a mountain, when, at the hour of dawn, we were suddenly awakened by the stones which the people of the neighbourhood were hurling upon us from the top of the mountain. The fierceness of their attack induced our companions to flee in terror and consternation. I clothed Quddus in my own garments and despatched him to a place of safety, where I intended to join him. When I arrived, I found that he had gone. None of our companions had remained in Niyala except **Tahirih** and a young man from Shiraz, Mirza Abdu'llah. The violence with which we were assailed had brought desolation into our camp. I found no one into whose custody I could deliver **Tahirih** except that young man, who displayed on that occasion a courage and determination that were truly surprising. Sword in hand, undaunted by the savage assault of the inhabitants of the village, who had rushed to plunder our property, he sprang forward to stay the hand of the assailants. Though himself wounded in several parts of his body, he risked his life to protect our property. I bade him desist from his act. When the tumult had subsided, I

approached a number of the inhabitants of the village and was able to convince them of the cruelty and shamefulness of their behaviour. I subsequently succeeded in restoring a part of our plundered property."

Baha'u'llah, accompanied by **Tahirih** and her attendant, proceeded to Nur. He appointed Shaykh Abu-Turab to watch over her and ensure her protection and safety. Meanwhile the mischief-makers were endeavouring to kindle the anger of Muhammad Shah against Baha'u'llah, and, by representing Him as the prime mover of the disturbances of Shah-Rud and Mazindaran, succeeded eventually in inducing the sovereign to have Him arrested. "I have hitherto," the Shah is reported to have angrily remarked, "refused to countenance whatever has been said against him. My indulgence has been actuated by my recognition of the services rendered to my country by his father. This time, however, I am determined to put him to death."

He accordingly commanded one of his officers in Tihiran to instruct his son who was residing in Mazindaran to arrest <p300> Baha'u'llah and to conduct Him to the capital. The son of this officer received the communication on the very day preceding the reception which he had prepared to offer to Baha'u'llah, to whom he was devotedly attached. He was greatly distressed and did not divulge the news to anyone. Baha'u'llah, however, perceived his sadness and advised him to put his trust in God. The next day, as He was being accompanied by His friend to his home, they encountered a horseman who was coming from the direction of Tihiran. "Muhammad Shah is dead!" that friend exclaimed in the Mazindarani dialect, as he hastened to rejoin Him after a brief conversation with the messenger. He drew out the imperial summons and showed it to Him. The document had lost its efficacy. That night was spent in the company of his guest in an atmosphere of undisturbed calm and gladness.

Tabarsi

In this manner they reached the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi. The first words that fell from the lips of Quddus after he had dismounted and leaned against the shrine were the following: "The Baqiyyatu'llah [1] will be best for you if ye are of those who believe." [2] By this utterance was fulfilled the prophecy of Muhammad as recorded in the following tradition: "And when the Mihdi [3] is made manifest, He shall lean His back against the Ka'bih and shall address to the three hundred and thirteen followers who will have grouped around Him, these words: 'The Baqiyyatu'llah will be best for you if <p353> ye are of those who believe.'" By "Baqiyyatu'llah" Quddus meant none other than Baha'u'llah. To this testified Mulla Mirza Muhammad-i-Furughi, who related to me the following: "I myself was present when Quddus alighted from his horse. I saw him lean against the shrine and heard him utter those same words. No sooner had he spoken them than he made mention of Baha'u'llah and, turning to Mulla Husayn, enquired about Him. He was informed that unless God decreed to the contrary, He had signified His intention to return to this place before the first day of Muharram. [4]

[1 Literally "Remnant of God."]

[2 Qur'an, 11:85.]

[3 See Glossary.]

[4 November 27, 1848 A.D.]

"Shortly after, Quddus entrusted to Mulla Husayn a number of homilies which he asked him to read aloud to his assembled companions. The first homily he read was entirely devoted to the Bab, the second concerned Baha'u'llah, and the third referred to **Tahirih**. We ventured to express to Mulla Husayn our doubts whether the references in the second homily were applicable to Baha'u'llah, who appeared clothed in the garb of nobility. The matter was reported to Quddus, who assured us that, God willing, its secret would be revealed to us in due time. Utterly unaware, in

those days, of the character of the Mission of Baha'u'llah, we were unable to understand the meaning of those allusions, and idly conjectured as to what could be their probable significance. In my eagerness to unravel the subtleties of the traditions concerning the promised Qa'im, I several times approached Quddus and requested him to enlighten me regarding that subject. Though at first reluctant, he eventually acceded to my wish. The manner of his answer, his convincing and illuminating explanations, served to heighten the sense of awe and of veneration which his presence inspired. He dispelled whatever doubts lingered in our minds, and such were the evidences of his perspicacity that we came to believe that to him had been given the power to read our profoundest thoughts and to calm the fiercest tumult in our hearts.

[1 Reference to the year 1280 A.H. (1863-4 A.D.), in which Baha'u'llah declared His Mission in Baghdad.]

"Many a night I saw Mulla Husayn circle round the shrine within the precincts of which Quddus lay asleep. How often did I see him emerge in the mid-watches of the night from his chamber and quietly direct his steps to that spot and whisper the same verse with which we all had greeted <p354> the arrival of the beloved visitor! With what feelings of emotion I can still remember him as he advanced towards me, in the stillness of those dark and lonely hours which I devoted to meditation and prayer, whispering in my ears these words: 'Banish from your mind, O Mulla Mirza Muhammad, these perplexing subtleties and, freed from their trammels, arise and seek with me to quaff the cup of martyrdom. Then will you be able to comprehend, as the year '80 [1] dawns upon the world, the secret of the things which now lie hidden from you.'"

Bahá'u'llah's Incarcerations

Baha'u'llah's intention to throw in His lot with the defenders of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi was destined to remain unfulfilled. Though Himself extremely desirous to lend every possible assistance in His power to the besieged, He was spared, through the mysterious dispensation of Providence, the tragic fate that was soon to befall the chief participators in that memorable struggle. Had He been able to reach the fort, had He been allowed to join the members of that heroic band, how could He have played His part in the great drama which He was destined to unfold? How could He have consummated the work that had been so gloriously conceived and so marvellously inaugurated? He was in the heyday of His life when the call from Shiraz reached Him. At the age of twenty-seven, He arose to consecrate His life to its service, fearlessly identified Himself with its teachings, and distinguished Himself by the exemplary part He played in its diffusion. No effort was too great for the energy with which He was endowed, and no sacrifice too woeful for the devotion with which His faith had inspired Him. He flung aside every consideration of fame, of wealth, and position, for the prosecution of the task He had set His heart to achieve. Neither the taunts of His friends nor the threats of His enemies could induce Him to cease championing a Cause which they alike regarded as that of an obscure and proscribed sect.

The first incarceration to which He was subjected as a result of the helping hand He had extended to the captives of Qazvin; the ability with which He achieved the deliverance of **Tahirih**; the exemplary manner in which He steered the course of the turbulent proceedings in Badasht; the manner in which He saved the life of Quddus in Niyala; the wisdom which He showed in His handling of the delicate situation created by the impetuosity of **Tahirih**, and the vigilance He <p377> exercised for her protection; the counsels which He gave to the defenders of the fort of Tabarsi; the plan He conceived of joining the forces of Quddus to those of Mulla Husayn and his companions; the spontaneity with which He arose to support the exertions of those brave defenders; the magnanimity which prompted Him to offer Himself as a substitute for His companions who were under the threat of

severe indignities; the serenity with which He faced the severity inflicted upon Him as a result of the attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah; the indignities which were heaped upon Him all the way from Lavasan to the headquarters of the imperial army and from thence to the capital; the galling weight of chains which He bore as He lay in the darkness of the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran—all these are but a few instances that eloquently testify to the unique position which He occupied as the prime Mover of the forces which were destined to reshape the face of His native land. It was He who had released these forces, who steered their course, harmonised their action, and brought them finally to their highest consummation in the Cause He Himself was destined at a later time to reveal. <p378>

Inspires Eloquence in Others

"The late Haji Mirza Jani writes: 'I myself met him [Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, the younger brother of Mulla Husayn] when he was bringing his mother and sister from Karbila to Qazvin and from Qazvin to Tihiran. His sister was the wife of Shaykh Abu-Turab of Qazvin, who was a scholar and philosopher such as is rarely met with and believed with the utmost sincerity and purity of purpose, while such was his love and devotion to the Bab that if anyone did so much as mention the name of His Supreme Holiness (the souls of all beside him be His sacrifice) he could not restrain his tears. Often have I seen him, when engaged in the perusal of the writings of His Supreme Holiness, become almost beside himself with rapture, and nearly faint with joy. Of his wife he used to say: 'I married her three years ago in Karbila. She was then but an indifferent scholar even in Persian, but now she can expound texts from the Qur'an and explain the most difficult questions and most subtle points of the doctrine of the Divine Unity in such wise that I have never seen a man who was her equal in this, or in readiness of apprehension. These gifts she has obtained by the blessing of His Holiness the Supreme and through converse with her holiness the Pure (**Qurratu'l-Ayn**). I have seen in her a patience and resignation rare even in the most self-denying men, for during these three years, though I have not sent her a single dinar for her expenses and she has supported herself only with the greatest difficulty, she has never uttered a word; and now that she has come to Tihiran, she refrains altogether from speaking of the past, and though, in accordance with the wishes of Jinab-i-Babu'l-Bab, she now desires to proceed to Khurasan, and has literally nothing to put on save one well-worn dress which she wears, she never asks for clothes or travelling-money, but ever seeks reasonable excuses wherewith to set me at my ease and prevent me from feeling ashamed. Her purity, chastity, and virtue are boundless, and during all this while no unprivileged person hath so much as heard her voice.' But the virtues of the daughter were surpassed by those of the mother, who possessed rare attainments and accomplishments, and had composed many poems and eloquent elegies on the afflictions of her sons. Although Jinab-i-Babu'l-Bab had warned her of his approaching martyrdom and foretold to her all the impending calamities, she still continued to exhibit the same eager devotion and cheerful resignation, rejoicing that God had accepted the sacrifice of her sons, and even praying that they might attain to this great dignity and not be deprived of so great blessedness. It is indeed wonderful to meditate on this virtuous and saintly family, the sons so conspicuous for their single-minded devotion and self-sacrifice, the mother and daughter so patient and resigned. When I, Mirza Jani, met Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, he was but seventeen years of age, yet I observed in him a dignity, gravity, composure, and virtue which amazed me. After the death of Jinab-i-Babu'l-Bab, Hadrat-i-Quddus bestowed on him the sword and turban of that glorious martyr, and made him captain of the troops of the True King. As to his martyrdom, there is a difference of opinion as to whether he was slain at the breakfast-table in the camp, or suffered martyrdom with Jinab-i-Quddus in the square of Barfurush.'" (The "Tarikh-i-Jadid," pp. 93-5.) The sister of Mulla Husayn was surnamed "Varaqtu'l-Firdaws" and was intimately associated, while in Karbila, with **Tahirih**. ("Memorials of the

Faithful," p. 270.)) <p384>

Names Tabarsi Martyr "Dhabih"

It would be appropriate at this juncture to place on record the names of those martyrs who participated in the defence of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi, in the hope that generations yet to come may recall with pride and gratitude the names, no less than the deeds, of those pioneers who, by their life and death, have so greatly enriched the annals of God's immortal Faith....

121. Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq, who cut his throat in Badasht and whom **Tahirih** named Dhabih.

Tahirih Confined in the Kalantar's House 1

During those days I was informed that **Tahirih**, who, ever since the dispersal of the gathering at Badasht, had been living in Nur, had arrived at Tihiran and was confined in the house of Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar, where, although a prisoner, she was treated with consideration and courtesy.

Tahirih Confined in the Kalantar's House 2

The circumstances of the martyrdom of my arrested brethren in Tihiran—for such was their fate—I now proceed to relate. The fourteen disciples of the Bab, who had been captured, remained incarcerated in the house of Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar from the first to the twenty-second day of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani.[1] **Tahirih** was also confined on the upper floor of that same house. Every kind of ill treatment was inflicted upon them. Their persecutors sought, by every device, to induce them to supply the information they required, but failed to obtain a satisfactory answer. Among the captives was a certain Muhammad-Husayn-i-Maraghiyi, who obstinately refused to utter a single word despite the severe pressure that was brought to bear upon him. They tortured him, they resorted to every possible measure in order to extort from him any hint that could <p446> serve their purpose, but failed to achieve their end. Such was his unswerving obstinacy that his oppressors thought him to be dumb. They asked Haji Mulla Isma'il, who had converted him to his Faith, whether or not he could talk. "He is mute, but not dumb," he replied; "he is fluent of speech and is free from any impediment." He had no sooner called him by his name than the victim answered, assuring him of his readiness to abide by his will.

[1 February 14, March 15, 1850 A.D.]

Bahá'u'llah's Comments to Nabil in Submitting his Narrative

At this stage of my narrative I was privileged to submit to Baha'u'llah such sections of my work as I had already revised and completed. How abundantly have my labours been rewarded by Him whose favour alone I seek, and for whose satisfaction I have addressed myself to this task! He graciously summoned me to His presence and vouchsafed me His blessings. I was in my home in the prison-city of Akka, and lived in the neighbourhood of the house of Aqay-i-Kalim, when the summons of my Beloved reached me. That day, the seventh of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani in the year 1306 A.H.,[1] I shall never forget. I here reproduce the gist of His words to me on that memorable occasion:

[1 December 11, 1888 A.D.]

"In a Tablet which We yesterday revealed, We have explained the meaning of the words, 'Turn your eyes away,'[1] in the course of Our reference to the circumstances attending the gathering at Badasht. We were celebrating, in the company of a number of distinguished notables, the nuptials of one of the princes of royal blood in Tihiran, when Siyyid Ahmad-i-Yazdi, father of Siyyid Husayn, the Bab's amanuensis, appeared suddenly at the door. He beckoned to Us, and seemed to be the bearer of an important message which he wished immediately to deliver. We were, however, unable at that moment to leave the gathering, and motioned to him to wait. When the meeting had dispersed, he informed <p460> Us that **Tahirih** had been placed in strict confinement in Qazvin, and that her life was in great danger. We

immediately summoned Muhammad-Hadiy-i-Farhadi, and gave him the necessary directions to release her from her captivity, and escort her to the capital. As the enemy had seized Our house, We were unable to accommodate her indefinitely in Our home. Accordingly, We arranged for her transference from Our house to that of the Minister of War,[1] who, in those days, had been disgraced by his sovereign and had been deported to Kashan. We requested his sister, who still was numbered among Our friends, to act as hostess to **Tahirih**.

[1 According to Islamic traditions, Fatimih, Muhammad's daughter, will appear unveiled as she crosses the bridge "Sirat" on the Day of Judgment. At her appearance a voice from heaven will declare: "Turn your eyes away, O concourse of people!"]

[1 Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri, who succeeded the Amir-Nizam as Grand Vazir of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.]

"She remained in her company until the call of the Bab, bidding Us proceed to Khurasan, reached Our ears. We decided that **Tahirih** should proceed immediately to that province, and commissioned Mirza [1] to conduct her to a place outside the gate of the city, and from thence to any locality she deemed advisable in that neighbourhood. She was taken to an orchard in the vicinity of which was a deserted building, where they found an old man who acted as its caretaker. Mirza Musa returned and informed Us of the reception which had been accorded to them, and highly praised the beauty of the surrounding landscape. We subsequently arranged for her departure for Khurasan, and promised that We would follow within the space of a few days.

[1 Aqay-i-Kalim, brother of Baha'u'llah.]

"We soon joined her at Badasht, where We rented a garden for her use, and appointed the same Muhammad-Hadi who had achieved her deliverance, as her doorkeeper. About seventy of Our companions were with Us and lodged in a place in the vicinity of that garden.

"We fell ill one day, and were confined to bed. **Tahirih** sent a request to call upon Us. We were surprised at her message, and were at a loss as to what We should reply. Suddenly We saw her at the door, her face unveiled before Us. How well has Mirza Aqa Jan [1] commented upon that incident. 'The face of Fatimih,' he said, 'must needs be revealed on the Day of Judgment and appear unveiled before the eyes of men. At that moment the voice of the Unseen <p461> shall be heard saying: "Turn your eyes away from that which ye have seen."

[1 Baha'u'llah's amanuensis.]

"How great was the consternation that seized the companions on that day! Fear and bewilderment filled their hearts. A few, unable to tolerate that which was to them so revolting a departure from the established customs of Islam, fled in horror from before her face. Dismayed, they sought refuge in a deserted castle in that neighbourhood. Among those who were scandalised by her behaviour and severed from her entirely were the Siyyid-i-Nahri [1] and his brother Mirza Hadi, to both of whom We sent word that it was unnecessary for them to desert their companions and seek refuge in a castle.

[1 Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri.]

"Our friends eventually dispersed, leaving Us at the mercy of Our enemies. When, at a later time, We went to Amul, such was the turmoil which the people had raised that above four thousand persons had congregated in the masjid and had crowded onto the roofs of their houses. The leading mulla of the town denounced Us bitterly. 'You have perverted the Faith of Islam,' he cried in his mazandarani dialect, 'and sullied its fame! Last night I saw you in a dream enter the masjid, which was thronged by an eager

multitude that had gathered to witness your arrival. As the crowd pressed round you, I beheld, and, lo, the Qa'im was standing in a corner with His gaze fixed upon your countenance, His features betraying great surprise. This dream I regard as evidence of your having deviated from the path of Truth.' We assured him that the expression of surprise on that countenance was a sign of the Qa'im's strong disapproval of the treatment he and his fellow-townsmen had accorded Us. He questioned Us regarding the Mission of the Bab. We informed him that, although We had never met Him face to face, yet We cherished, none the less, a great affection for Him. We expressed Our profound conviction that He had, under no circumstances, acted contrary to the Faith of Islam.

The mulla and his followers, however refused to believe Us, and rejected Our testimony as a perversion of the truth. They eventually placed Us in confinement, and forbade Our <p462> friends to meet Us. The acting governor of Amul succeeded in effecting Our release from captivity. Through an opening in the wall that he ordered his men to make, he enabled Us to leave that room, and conducted Us to his house. No sooner were the inhabitants informed of this act than they arose against Us, besieged the governor's residence, pelted Us with stones, and hurled in Our face the foulest invectives.

"At the time We proposed to send Muhammad-Hadiy-i-Farhadi to Qazvin, in order to achieve the deliverance of **Tahirih** and conduct her to Tihiran, Shaykh Abu-Turab wrote Us, insisting that such an attempt was fraught with grave risks and might occasion an unprecedented tumult. We refused to be deflected from Our purpose. That Shaykh was a kind-hearted man, was simple and lowly in temper, and behaved with great dignity. He lacked courage and determination, however, and betrayed weakness on certain occasions."

1852 Martyrdoms

Each of those days of terror witnessed the martyrdom of two companions of the Bab, one of whom was slain in Tihiran, whilst the other met his fate in Shimiran. Both were subjected to the same manner of torture, both were handed over to the public to wreak their vengeance upon them. Those arrested were distributed among the various classes of people, whose messengers would visit the dungeon each day and claim their <p612> victim.[1] Conducting him to the scene of his death, they would give the signal for a general attack upon him, whereupon men and women would close upon their prey, tear his body to pieces, and so mutilate it that no trace of its original form would remain. Such ruthlessness amazed even the most brutal of the executioners, whose hands, however much accustomed to human slaughter, had never perpetrated the atrocities of which those people had proved themselves capable.[2]

[1 "It was on this occasion that Mirza Aqa Khan, the Grand Vazir, in order to distribute the responsibility of punishment and to lessen the chances of blood-revenge, conceived the extraordinary idea of assigning the several criminals for execution to the principal ministers, generals, and officers of the Court, as well as to representatives of the priestly and merchant classes. The Foreign Secretary killed one, the Home Secretary another, the Master of the Horse a third, and so on." (Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question," p. 402, note 2.)]

[2 "His Excellency resolved to divide the execution of the victims among the different departments of the state; the only person he exempted was himself. First came the Shah, who was entitled to Qisas, or legal retaliation, for his wound. To save the dignity of the crown, the steward of the household, as the Shah's representative, fired the first shot at the conspirator selected as his victim, and his deputies, the farrashes, completed the work. The Prime Minister's son headed the Home Office, and slew another Babi. Then came the Foreign Office. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a pious, silly man, who spent his time in conning over the traditions of Muhammad, With averted face

made the first swordcut, and then the Under-Secretary of State and clerks of the Foreign Office hewed their victim into pieces. The priesthood, the merchants, the artillery, the infantry, had each their allotted Babi. Even the Shah's admirable French physician, the late lamented Dr. Cloquet, was invited to show his loyalty by following the example of the rest of the Court. He excused himself, and pleasantly said he killed too many men professionally to permit him to increase their number by any voluntary homicide on his part. The Sadr was reminded that these barbarous and unheard-of proceedings were not only revolting in themselves, but would produce the utmost horror and disgust in Europe. Upon this he became very much excited, and asked angrily, 'Do you wish the vengeance of all the Babis to be concentrated upon me alone?' The following is an extract from the 'Tihiran Gazette' of that day, and will serve as a specimen of a Persian 'leader': 'Some profligate, unprincipled individuals, destitute of religion, became disciples of the accursed Siyyid Ali-Muhammad Bab, who some years ago invented a new religion, and who afterwards met his doom. They were unable to prove the truth of their faith, the falsehood of which was visible. For instance, many of their books having fallen into our hands, they are found to contain nothing but pure infidelity. In worldly argument, too, they never were able to support their religion, which seemed fit only for entering into a contest with the Almighty. They then began to think of aspiring to sovereignty, and to endeavour to raise insurrections, hoping to profit by the confusion, and to pillage the property of their neighbours. A wretched miserable gang, whose chief, Mulla Shaykh Ali of Turshiz, styled himself the deputy of the former Bab, and who gave himself the title of High Majesty, collected round themselves some of the former companions of [the] Bab. They seduced to their principles some dissolute debauchees, one of whom was Haji Sulayman Khan, son of the late Yahya Khan of Tabriz. In the house of this Haji it was their practice to assemble for consultation, and to plan an attempt on the auspicious life of his Majesty. Twelve of their number, who were volunteers for the deed, were selected to execute their purpose, and to each of them were given pistols, daggers, etc. It was resolved that the above number should proceed to the Shah's residence at Niyavaran, and await their opportunity.' Then follows an account of the attack, which I have already given in sufficient detail. 'Six persons, whose crimes were not so clearly proved, were condemned to perpetual imprisonment; the remainder were divided among the priesthood, the doctors of the law, the chief servants of the court, the people of the town, merchants, tradesmen, artisans, who bestowed on them their deserts in the following manner: The mullas, priests, and learned body slew Mulla Shaykh Ali, the deputy of [the] Bab, who gave himself the title of Imperial Majesty, and who was the author of this atrocity. The princes slew Siyyid Hasan, of Khurasan, a man of noted profligacy, with pistol-shots, swords, and daggers. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, full of religious and moral zeal, took the first shot at Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin of Yazd, and the secretaries of his department finished him and cut him in pieces. The Nizamul-Mulk (son of the Prime Minister) slew Mulla Husayn. Mirza Abdu'l-Vahhab, of Shiraz, who was one of the twelve assassins, was slain by the brother and the sons of the Prime Minister; his other relations cut him in pieces. Mulla Fathu'llah, of Qum, who fired the shot which wounded the royal person, was killed thus: In the midst of the royal camp candles were placed in the body (by making incisions) and lighted. The steward of the household wounded him in the very place that he had injured the Shah, and then the attendants stoned him. The nobles of the court sent Shaykh Abbas of Tihiran to hell. The Shah's personal attendants put to death Mulla-Baqir, one of the twelve. The Shah's master of the horse and the servants of the stable horse-shod Muhammad-Taqi of Shiraz, and then sent him to join his companions. The masters of the ceremonies and other nobles, with their deputies, slew Muhammad of Najaf-Abad with hatchets and maces, and sent him to the depths of hell. The artillerymen first dug out the eye of Muhammad-'Ali of Najaf-Abad and then blew him away

from a mortar. The soldiers bayoneted Siyyid Husayn, of Milan, and sent him to hell. The cavalry slew Mirza Rafi'. The adjutant-general, generals, and colonels slew Siyyid Husayn." (Lady Sheil's "Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia," pp. 277-81.) "On that day, a spectacle was witnessed in the streets and bazaars of Tihiran which the people can never forget. Even to this very day, it remains the topic of conversation; one still feels a shocking horror which the years have not been able to lessen. The people saw marching, between executioners, children and women with deep holes cut into their flesh in which lighted wicks were inserted. The victims were dragged with ropes and goaded on with whips. Children and women went forth singing this verse: 'In truth, we come from God and unto Him do we return.' Their voices were raised triumphant above the deep silence of the crowd, for the citizens of Tihiran were neither mean nor great believers in Islam. When one of the victims fell to the ground and they prodded him up with bayonets, if the loss of blood which dripped from his wounds had left him any strength, he would begin to dance and to cry out with even greater enthusiasm: 'In truth, we come from God and unto Him do we return!' "Some of the children expired on the way. The executioners would throw their bodies under the feet of their fathers and sisters, who proudly walked over them without giving it a second thought. When the cortege reached the place of execution near the New Gate, the victims were given the choice between life and abjuration of their faith; they were even subjected to every form of intimidation. One of the executioners conceived the idea of saying to a father that, unless he yielded, he would cut the throats of his two sons on his very breast. The sons were quite young, the oldest about fourteen. Covered with blood, their flesh scorched, they were listening stoically to the threats. The father replied, while laying himself down, that he was ready and the older of the boys, claiming a prior right, requested to be the first to die. It may be that the executioner denied him even that last comfort. "At last, the tragedy was over and night fell upon a heap of formless bodies; the heads were tied in bundles to the posts of justice and the dogs on the outskirts of the city were crowding about. That day won for the Babis a larger number of secret followers than much exhortation could have done. "As I have said above, the impression caused by the terrifying impassibility of the martyrs was deep and lasting. I have often heard eye witnesses describe the scenes of that fateful day, men close to the government, some even holding important positions. While listening to them, one could easily have believed that they were all Babis, so great was their admiration for the events in which Islam played so inglorious a part, and so high a conception did they entertain of the resources, the hopes and the means of success of the new religion." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," pp. 248-250.) "These executions were not merely criminal, but foolish. The barbarity of the persecutors defeated its own ends, and instead of inspiring terror, gave the martyrs and opportunity of exhibiting a heroic fortitude which has done more than any propaganda, however skilful, could have done to ensure the triumph of the cause for which they died.... The impression produced by such exhibitions of courage and endurance was profound and lasting; nay, the faith which inspired the martyrs was often contagious, as the following incident shows. A certain Yazdi rough, noted for his wild and disorderly life, went to see the execution of some Babis, perhaps to scoff at them. But when he saw with what calmness and steadfastness they met torture and death, his feelings underwent so great a revulsion that he rushed forward crying, 'Kill me too! I am also a Babi!' And thus he continued to cry till he too was made a partaker in the doom he had come out only to gaze upon." (E. G. Browne's "A Year amongst the Persians," pp. 111-12.)] <p613>

Sulayman Khan

Of all the tortures which an insatiable enemy inflicted upon its victims, none was more revolting in its character than that which characterised the death of Haji Sulayman Khan. He was the son of Yahya Khan, one of the officers in the service of the Nayibu-Saltanah, who was the father of Muhammad Shah. He retained

that same position in the early days of the reign of Muhammad Shah. Haji Sulayman Khan showed from his earliest years a marked disinclination to rank and office. Ever since the day of his acceptance of <p614> the Cause of the Bab, the petty pursuits in which the people around him were immersed excited his pity and contempt. The vanity of their ambitions had been abundantly demonstrated in his eyes. In his early youth, he felt a longing to escape from the turmoil of the capital and to seek refuge in the holy city of Karbila. There he met Siyyid Kazim and grew to be one of his most ardent supporters. His sincere piety, his frugality and love of seclusion were among the chief traits of his character. He tarried in Karbila until the day when the Call from Shiraz reached him through Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili and Mulla Mihdiy-Ku'i, both of whom were among his best-known friends. He enthusiastically embraced the Message of the Bab.[1] He had intended, upon his return from Karbila to Tihiran, to join the defenders of the fort of Tabarsi, but arrived too late to achieve his purpose. He remained in the capital and continued to wear the kind of dress he had adopted in Karbila. The small turban he wore, and the white tunic which his black aba [2] concealed, were displeasing to the Amir-Nizam, who induced him to discard these garments and to clothe himself instead in a <p615> military uniform. He was made to wear the kulah,[3] a head-dress that was thought to be more in accordance with the rank his father held. Though the Amir insisted that he should accept a position in the service of the government, he obstinately refused to comply with his request. Most of his time was spent in the company of the disciples of the Bab, particularly those of His companions who had survived the struggle of Tabarsi. He surrounded them with a care and kindness truly surprising. He and his father were so influential that the Amir-Nizam was induced to spare his life and indeed to refrain from any acts of violence against him. Though he was present in Tihiran when the seven companions of the Bab, with whom he was intimately associated, were martyred, neither the officials of the government nor any of the common people ventured to demand his arrest. Even in Tabriz, whither he had journeyed for the purpose of saving the life of the Bab, not one among the inhabitants of that city dared to lift a finger against him. The Amir-Nizam, who was duly informed of all his services to the Cause of the Bab, preferred to ignore his acts rather than precipitate a conflict with him and his father.

[1 According to Samandar (manuscript, p. 2), Sulayman Khan attained to the presence of the Bab in the course of His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.]

[2 See Glossary.]

[3 See Glossary.]

Soon after the martyrdom of a certain Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin-i-Yazdi, a rumour was spread that those whom the government intended to put to death, among whom were Siyyid Husayn, the Bab's amanuensis, and **Tahirih**, were to be released and that further persecution of their friends was to be definitely abandoned. It was reported far and wide that the Amir-Nizam, deeming the hour of his death to be approaching, had been seized suddenly with a great fear and, in an agony of repentance, had exclaimed: "I am haunted by the vision of the Siyyid-i-Bab, whom I have caused to be martyred. I can now see the fearful mistake I have made. I should have restrained the violence of those who pressed me to shed his blood and that of his companions. I now perceive that the interests of the State required it." His successor, Mirza Aqa Khan, was similarly inclined in the early days of his administration, and was intending to inaugurate his ministry with a lasting reconciliation between him and the followers of the Bab. He was preparing to <p616> undertake that task when the attempt on the life of the Shah shattered his plans and threw the capital into a state of unprecedented confusion.

Martyrdom of Sulayman Khan

Among those who, in the midst of the general confusion, were

seized and thrown into prison was Haji Sulayman Khan, the circumstances of whose martyrdom I now proceed to relate. The facts I mention have been carefully sifted and verified by me, and I owe them, for the most part, to Aqay-i-Kalim, who was himself in those days in Tihiran and was made <p617> to share the terrors and sufferings of his brethren. "On the very day of Haji Sulayman Khan's martyrdom," he informed me, "I happened to be present, with Mirza Abdu'l-Majid, at a gathering in Tihiran at which a considerable number of the notables and dignitaries of the capital were present. Among them was Haji Mulla Mahmud, the Nizamu'l-'Ulama, who requested the Kalantar to describe the actual circumstances of the death of Haji Sulayman Khan. The Kalantar motioned with his finger to Mirza Taqi, the kad-khuda [1] who, he said, had conducted the victim from the vicinity of the imperial palace to the place of his execution, outside the gate of Naw. Mirza Taqi was accordingly requested to relate to those present all that he had seen and heard. 'I and my assistants,' he said, 'were ordered to purchase nine candles and to thrust them, ourselves into deep holes we were to cut in his flesh. We were instructed to light each one of these candles and to conduct him through the market to the accompaniment of drums and trumpets as far as the place of his execution. There we were ordered to hew his body into two halves, each of which we were asked to suspend on either side of the gate of Naw. He himself chose the manner in which he wished to be martyred. Hajibu'd-Dawlih [2] had been commanded by Nasiri'd-Din Shah to enquire into the complicity of the accused, and, if assured of his innocence, to induce him to recant. If he submitted, his life was to be spared and he was to be detained pending the final settlement of his case. In the event of his refusal, he was to be put to death in whatever manner he himself might desire.

[1 See Glossary.]

[2 His name was Haji Ali Khan. (See "A Traveller's Narrative," p. 52, note 1.)]

"The investigation of hajibu'd-Dawlih convinced him of the innocence of Haji Sulayman Khan. The accused, as soon as he had been informed of the instructions of his sovereign, was heard joyously exclaiming: "Never, so long as my life-blood continues to pulsate in my veins, shall I be willing to recant my faith in my Beloved! This world which the Commander of the Faithful [1] has likened to carrion will never allure me from my heart's Desire." He was asked to <p618> determine the manner in which he wished to die. "Pierce holes in my flesh," was the instant reply, "and in each wound place a candle. Let nine candles be lighted all over my body, and in this state conduct me through the streets of Tihiran. Summon the multitude to witness the glory of my martyrdom, so that the memory of my death may remain imprinted in their hearts and help them, as they recall the intensity of my tribulation, to recognize the Light I have embraced. After I have reached the foot of the gallows and have uttered the last prayer of my earthly life, cleave my body in twain and suspend my limbs on either side of the gate of Tihiran, that the multitude passing beneath it may witness to the love which the Faith of the Bab has kindled in the hearts of His disciples, and may look upon the proofs of their devotion."

[1 The Imam Ali.]

"Hajibu'd-Dawlih instructed his men to abide by the expressed wishes of Haji Sulayman Khan, and charged me to conduct him through the market as far as the place of his execution. As they handed to the victim the candles they had purchased, and were preparing to thrust their knives into his breast, he made a sudden attempt to seize the weapon from the executioner's trembling hands in order to plunge it himself into his flesh. "Why fear and hesitate?" he cried, as he stretched forth his arm to snatch the knife from his grasp. "Let me myself perform the deed and light the candles." Fearing lest he should attack us, I ordered my men to resist his attempt and bade them tie his hands behind his back. "Let me," he pleaded, point out with my fingers the places into which I wish them to thrust their dagger, for I have no other

request to make besides this."

"He asked them to pierce two holes in his breast, two in his shoulders, one in the nape of his neck, and the four others in his back. With stoic calm he endured those tortures. Steadfastness glowed in his eyes as he maintained a mysterious and unbroken silence. Neither the howling of the multitude nor the sight of the blood that streamed all over his body could induce him to interrupt that silence. Impassive and serene he remained until all the nine candles were placed in position and lighted.

"When all was completed for his march to the scene <p619> of his death, he, standing erect as an arrow and with that same unflinching fortitude gleaming upon his face, stepped forward to lead the concourse that was pressing round him to the place that was to witness the consummation of his martyrdom. Every few steps he would interrupt his march and, gazing at the bewildered bystanders, would shout: "What greater pomp and pageantry than those which this day accompany my progress to win the crown of glory! Glorified be the Bab, who can kindle such devotion in the breasts of His lovers, and can endow them with a power greater than the might of kings!" At times, as if intoxicated with the fervour of that devotion, he would exclaim: "The Abraham of a bygone age, as He prayed God, in the hour of bitter agony, to send down upon Him the refreshment for which His soul was crying, heard the voice of the Unseen proclaim: 'O fire! Be thou cold, and to Abraham a safety!'[1] But this Sulayman is crying out from the depths of his ravaged heart: 'Lord, Lord, let Thy fire burn unceasingly within me, and suffer its flame to consume my being.'" As his eyes saw the wax flicker in his wounds, he burst forth in an acclamation of frantic delight: "Would that He whose hand has enkindled my soul were here to behold my state!" "Think me not to be intoxicated with the wine of this earth!" he cried to the vast throng who stood aghast at the sight of his behaviour. It is the love of my Beloved that has filled my soul and made me feel endowed with a sovereignty which even kings might envy!"

[1 Qur'an, 21:69.]

"I cannot recall the exclamations of joy which fell from his lips as he drew near to his end. All I remember are but a few of the stirring words which, in his moments of exultation, he was moved to cry out to the concourse of spectators. Words fail me to portray the expression of that countenance or to measure the effect of his words on the multitude.

"He was still in the bazaar when the blowing of a breeze excited the burning of the candles that were placed upon his breast. As they melted rapidly, their flames reached the level of the wounds into which they had been thrust. We who were following a few steps behind him could hear distinctly the sizzling of his flesh. The sight of gore and fire <p620> which covered his body, instead of silencing his voice, appeared to heighten his unquenchable enthusiasm. He could still be heard, this time addressing the flames, as they ate into his wounds: "You have long lost your sting, O flames, and have been robbed of your power to pain me. Make haste, for from your very tongues of fire I can hear the voice that calls me to my Beloved!"

"Pain and suffering seemed to have melted away in the ardour of that enthusiasm. Enveloped by the flames, he walked as a conqueror might have marched to the scene of his victory. He moved through the excited crowd a blaze of light amidst the gloom that surrounded him. Arriving at the foot of the gallows, he again raised his voice in a last appeal to the multitude of onlookers: "Did not this Sulayman whom you now see before you a prey to fire and blood, enjoy until recently all the favours and riches the world can bestow? What could have caused him to renounce this earthly glory and accept in return such great

degradation and suffering?" Prostrating himself in the direction of the shrine of the Imam-Zadih Hasan, he murmured certain words in Arabic which I could not understand. "My work is now finished!" he cried to the executioner, as soon as his prayer was ended. "Come and do yours!" He was still alive when his body was hewn into two halves with a hatchet. The praise of his Beloved, despite such incredible sufferings, lingered upon his lips until the last moment of his life.'[1]

[1 "The extraordinary heroism with which Sulayman Khan bore these frightful tortures is notorious and I have repeatedly heard it related how he ceased not during the long agony which he endured to testify his joy that he should be accounted worthy to suffer martyrdom for his Master's cause. He even sang and recited verses of poetry, amongst them the following: 'I have returned! I have returned! I have come by the way of Shiraz! I have come with winsome airs and graces! Such is the lover's madness!' 'Why do you not dance,' asked the executioners mockingly, 'since you find death so pleasant?' 'Dance!' cried Sulayman Khan. 'In one hand the wine-cup, in one hand the tresses of the Friend. Such a dance in the midst of the market-place is my desire!'" ("A Traveller's Narrative," Note T, pp. 333-4.) He was martyred in August, 1852. "When they arrested Sulayman Khan, and strove, in consideration of his faithful service and loyalty, to induce him, by promises of rewards from the king, to abandon the creed which he had adopted, he would not consent, but answered firmly: 'His Majesty the King has a right to demand from his servants fidelity, loyalty, and uprightness; but he is not entitled to meddle with their religious convictions.' In consequence of this boldness of speech, it was ordered that his body should be pierced with wounds, and that into each of these wounds a lighted candle should be inserted as an example to others. Another victim was similarly treated. In this state, with minstrels and drummers going in advance, they led him through the bazaars, and he, meanwhile, with smiling countenance, kept repeating these verses: 'Happy he whom love's intoxication So hath overcome that scare he knows Whether at the feet of the Beloved It be head or turban which he throws!' Whenever one of the candles fell from his body, he would with his own hand pick it up, light it from the others, and replace it. The executioners, seeing in him such exultation and rapture said: 'If thou art so eager for martyrdom, why dost thou not dance?' Thereat he began to leap, and to sing, in verses appropriate to his condition: 'An ear no longer dulled with ignorance And self-subdued entitles one to dance. Fools dance and caper in the market-place; Men dance the while their life-blood flows apace. When self is slain, they clap their hands in glee, And dance, because from evil they are free.' In such fashion did they lead these two forth through the gate of Shah Abdu'l-Azim. When they were preparing to saw that brave man asunder, he stretched out his feet without fear or hesitation, while he recited these verses: I hold this body as of little worth; A brave man's spirit scorns its house of earth. Dagger and sword like fragrant basil seem, Or flowers to deck death's banquet with their gleam.'" (The "Tarikh-i-Jadid," pp. 228-30.)]

"That tragic tale stirred the listeners to the very depths of their souls. The Nizamu'l-Ulama, who was listening intently <p621> to all its details, wrung his hands in horror and despair. How strange, how very strange, is this Cause!" he exclaimed. Without adding a further word of comment, he, immediately after, arose and departed."[1]

[1 "If one conclusion more than another has been forced upon our notice by the retrospect in which I have indulged, it is that a sublime and unassuming devotion has been inculcated by this new faith, whatever it be. There is, I believe, but one instance of a Babi having recanted under pressure or menace of suffering, and he reverted to the faith and was executed with two years. Tales of magnificent heroism illumine the blood-stained pages of Babi history. Ignorant and unlettered as many of the votaries are, and have been, they are yet prepared to die for their religion, and the fires of Smithfield did not kindle a nobler courage than has met

and defined the more refined torture-mongers of Tihiran. Of no small account, then, must be the tenets of a creed that can awaken in its followers so rare and beautiful a spirit of self-sacrifice.... It is these little incidents, protruding from time to time their ugly features, that prove Persia to be not as yet quite redeemed, and that somewhat stagger the tall-takers about Iranian civilization." (Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question," vol. 1, p. 501.)]

Martyrdom of Tahirih

Those days of unceasing turmoil witnessed the martyrdom of yet another eminent disciple of the Bab. A woman, no less great and heroic than **Tahirih** herself, was engulfed in the storm that was then raging with undiminished violence throughout the capital. What I now begin to relate regarding the circumstances of her martyrdom has been obtained from trustworthy informants, some of whom were themselves witnesses of the events I am attempting to describe. Her stay in Tihiran was marked by many proofs of the warm affection and high esteem in which she was held by the leading women of the capital. She had reached, indeed, in those days, the high-water mark of her popularity.¹ The house where she was confined was besieged by her women admirers, who thronged her doors, eager to enter her presence and to seek the benefit of her knowledge.² Among these ladies, the wife of Kalantar³ distinguished herself by the extreme reverence she showed to **Tahirih**. Acting as her hostess, she introduced into her presence the flower of womanhood in Tihiran,

¹ "She remained in Tihiran a long time receiving numerous visitors both men and women. She aroused the women by showing them the abject role which Islam assigned to them and she won them over to the new religion by showing them the freedom and respect which it would bestow upon them. Many domestic disputes followed, not always to the advantage and credit of the husband. These discussions might have continued at length, if Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Nuri had not been appointed Sadr-i-A'zam. The premier ordered Haji Mulla Muhammad Andirmani and Haji Mulla Ali Kini to call on her in order to examine into her belief. They held seven conferences with her in which she argued with much feeling and affirmed that the Bab was the promised and expected Imam. Her adversaries called her attention to the fact that, in accordance with the prophecies, the promised Imam was to come from Jabulqa and Jabulsa. She retorted feelingly that those prophecies were false and forged by false traditionalists and, as these two cities never existed, they could only be the superstitions of diseased brains. She expounded the new doctrine, bringing out its truth, but always encountered the same argument of Jabulqa. Exasperated, she finally told them: 'Your reasoning is that of an ignorant and stupid child; how long will you cling to these follies and lies? When will you lift your eyes towards the Sun of Truth?' Shocked by such blasphemy, Haji Mulla Ali rose up and led his friend away saying, 'Why prolong our discussion with an infidel?' They returned home and wrote out the sentence which established her apostasy and her refusal to retract, and condemned her to death in the name of the Qur'an!" (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," pp. 446-447.)

² "While a prisoner in the house of the Kalantar, the marriage of the son of the family took place. Naturally, the wives of all the prominent men were invited; but, although the host had gone to a great deal of expense to provide the customary entertainment, the women loudly demanded that **Qurratu'l-Ayn** be brought before the company. She had hardly appeared and begun to speak when the musicians and dancers were dismissed. The ladies, forgetful of the sweets of which they were so fond, had eyes only for **Qurratu'l-Ayn**." (Ibid., p. 448.)

³ Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar, in whose custody she was placed.

served her with extraordinary enthusiasm, and never failed to contribute her share in deepening her influence among her womenfolk. Persons with whom the wife of Kalantar was intimately connected have heard her relate the following: "One night, whilst **Tahirih** was staying in my home, I was summoned to her presence and found her fully adorned, dressed in a gown of snow-white silk. Her room was redolent with the choicest perfume. I expressed to her my surprise at so unusual a sight. 'I am preparing to meet my Beloved,' she said, 'and wish to free you from the cares and anxieties of my imprisonment.' I was much startled at first, and wept at the thought of separation from her. 'Weep not, she sought to reassure me. 'The time of your lamentation is not yet come. I wish to share with you my last wishes, for the hour when I shall be arrested and condemned to suffer martyrdom is fast approaching. I would request you to allow your son to accompany me to the scene of my death and to ensure that the guards and executioner into whose hands I shall be delivered will not compel me to divest myself of this attire. It is also my wish that my body be thrown into a pit, and that that pit be filled with earth and stones. Three days after my death a woman will come and visit you, to whom you will give this package which I now deliver into your hands. My last request is that you permit no one henceforth to enter my chamber. From now until the time when I shall be summoned to leave this house, let no one be allowed to disturb my devotions. This day I intend to fast—a fast which I shall not break until I am brought face to face with my Beloved.' She bade me, with these words, lock the door of her chamber and not open it until the hour of her departure should strike. She also urged me to keep secret the tidings of her death until such time as her enemies should themselves disclose it.

"The great love I cherished for her in my heart, alone enabled me to abide by her instructions. But for the compelling desire I felt to fulfil her wishes, I would never have consented to deprive myself of one moment of her presence. I locked the door of her chamber and retired to my own, in a state of uncontrollable sorrow. I lay sleepless and disconsolate upon my bed. The thought of her approaching martyrdom lacerated my soul. 'Lord, Lord,' I prayed in my despair, 'turn from her, if it be Thy wish, the cup which her lips desire to drink.' That day and night, I several times, unable to contain myself, arose and stole away to the threshold of that room and stood silently at her door, eager to listen to whatever might be falling from her lips. I was enchanted by the melody of that voice which intoned the praise of her Beloved. I could hardly remain standing upon my feet, so great was my agitation. Four hours after sunset, I heard a knocking at the door. I hastened immediately to my son, and acquainted him with the wishes of **Tahirih**. He pledged his word that he would fulfil every instruction she had given me. It chanced that night that my husband was absent. My son, who opened the door, informed me that the farrashes⁴ of Aziz Khan-i-Sardar were standing at the gate, demanding that **Tahirih** be immediately delivered into their hands. I was struck with terror by the news, and, as I tottered to her door and with trembling hands unlocked it, found her veiled and prepared to leave her apartment. She was pacing the floor when I entered, and was chanting a litany expressive of both grief and triumph. As soon as she saw me, she approached and kissed me. She placed in my hand the key to her chest, in which she said she had left for me a few trivial things as a remembrance of her stay in my house. Whenever you open this chest,' she said, 'and behold the things it contains, you will, I hope, remember me and rejoice in my gladness.'

"With these words she bade me her last farewell, and, accompanied by my son, disappeared from before my eyes. What pangs of anguish I felt that moment, as I beheld her beauteous form gradually fade away in the distance! She mounted the steed which the Sardar had sent for her, and, escorted by my son and a number of attendants, who marched on each side of her, rode out to the garden that was to be the scene of her martyrdom.

⁴ See Glossary.

"Three hours later my son returned, his face drenched with tears, hurling imprecations at the Sardar and his abject lieutenants. I tried to calm his agitation, and, seating him beside me, asked him to relate as fully as he could the circumstances of her death. 'Mother,' he sobbingly replied, 'I can scarcely attempt to describe what my eyes have beheld. We straightway proceeded to the Ilkhani garden,⁵ outside the gate of the city. There I found, to my horror, the Sardar and his lieutenants absorbed in acts of debauchery and shame, flushed with wine and roaring with laughter. Arriving at the gate, **Tahirih** dismounted and, calling me to her, asked me to act as her intermediary with the Sardar, whom she said she was disinclined to address in the midst of his revelry. 'They apparently wish to strangle me,' she said. 'I set aside, long ago, a silken kerchief which I hoped would be used for this purpose. I deliver it into your hands and wish you to induce that dissolute drunkard to use it as a means whereby he can take my life.'

"When I went to the Sardar, I found him in a state of wretched intoxication. 'Interrupt not the gaiety of our festival!' I heard him shout as I approached him. 'Let that miserable wretch be strangled and her body be thrown into a pit!' I was greatly surprised at such an order. Believing it unnecessary to venture any request from him, I went to two of his attendants, with whom I was already acquainted, and gave them the kerchief with which **Tahirih** had entrusted me. They consented to grant her request. That same kerchief was wound round her neck and was made the instrument of her martyrdom. I hastened immediately afterwards to the gardener and asked him whether he could suggest a place where I could conceal the body. He directed me, to my great delight, to a well that had been dug recently and left unfinished. With the help of a few others, I lowered her into her grave and filled the well with earth and stones in the manner she herself had wished. Those who saw her in her last moments were profoundly affected. With downcast eyes and rapt in silence, they mournfully dispersed, leaving their victim, who had shed so imperishable a lustre upon their country, buried beneath a mass of stones which they, with their own hands, had heaped upon her.

I wept hot tears as my son unfolded to my eyes that tragic tale. I was so overcome with emotion that I fell prostrate and unconscious upon the ground. When I had recovered, I found my son a prey to an agony no less severe than my own. He lay upon his couch, weeping in a passion of devotion. Beholding my plight, he approached and comforted me. 'Your tears,' he said, 'will betray you in the eyes of my father. Considerations of rank and position will, no doubt, induce him to forsake us and sever whatever ties bind him to this home. He will, if we fail to repress our tears, accuse us before Nasir'i-d-Din Shah, as victims of the charm of a hateful enemy. He will obtain the sovereign's consent to our death, and will probably, with his own hands, proceed to slay us. Why should we, who have never embraced that Cause, allow ourselves to suffer such a fate at his hands? All we should do is to defend her against those who denounce her as the very negation of chastity and honour. We should ever treasure her love in our hearts and maintain in the face of a slanderous enemy the integrity of that life.'

"His words allayed my inner agitation. I went to her chest and, with the key she had placed in my hand, opened it. I found a small vial of the choicest perfume, beside which lay a rosary, a

⁵ "Across from the English Legation and the Turkish Embassy stretched a rather vast square which since 1893 has disappeared. Toward the center of this square, but in line with the street, stood five or six trees which marked the spot where the Babi heroine had died, for in those days the garden of Ilkhani extended that far. On my return in 1898 the square had entirely disappeared overrun by modern buildings and I do not know whether the present owner has saved those trees which pious hands had planted." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Bab," p. 452.)

coral necklace, and three rings, mounted with turquoise, cornelian, and ruby stones. As I gazed upon her earthly belongings, I mused over the circumstances of her eventful life, and recalled, with a throb of wonder, her intrepid courage, her zeal, her high sense of duty and unquestioning devotion. I was reminded of her literary attainments, and brooded over the imprisonments, the shame, and the calumny which she had faced with a fortitude such as no other woman in her land could manifest. I pictured to myself that winsome face which now, alas, lay buried beneath a mass of earth and stones. The memory of her passionate eloquence warmed my heart, as I repeated to myself the words that had so often dropped from her lips. The consciousness of the vastness of her knowledge, and her mastery of the sacred Scriptures of Islam, flashed through my mind with a suddenness that disconcerted me. Above all, her passionate loyalty to the Faith she had embraced, her fervour as she pleaded its cause, the services she rendered it, the woes and tribulations she endured for its sake, the example she had given to its followers, the impetus she had lent to its advancement the name she had carved for herself in the hearts of her fellow-countrymen, all these I remembered as I stood beside her chest, wondering what could have induced so great a woman to forsake all the riches and honours with which she had been surrounded and to identify herself with the cause of an obscure youth from Shiraz. What could have been the secret, I thought to myself, of the power that tore her away from her home and kindred, that sustained her throughout her stormy career, and eventually carried her to her grave? Could that force, I pondered, be of God? Could the hand of the Almighty have guided her destiny and steered her course amidst the perils of her life?

"On the third day after her martyrdom,⁶ the woman whose coming she had promised arrived. I enquired her name, and, finding it to be the same as the one **Tahirih** had told me, delivered into her hands the package with which I had been entrusted. I had never before met that woman, nor did I ever see her again."⁷

The name of that immortal woman was Fatimih, a name which her father had bestowed upon her. She was surnamed Umm-i-Salmih by her family and kindred, who also designated her as Zakiiyyih. She was born in the year 1233 A.H.,⁸ the very year which witnessed the birth of Baha'u'llah. She was thirty-six years of age when she suffered martyrdom in Tihiran. May future generations be enabled to present a worthy account of a life which her contemporaries have failed adequately to recognize. May future historians perceive the full measure of her influence, and record the unique services this great woman has rendered to her land and its people. May the followers of the Faith which she served so well strive to follow her example, recount her deeds, collect her writings, unfold the secret of her talents, and establish her, for all time, in the memory and affections of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.⁹

⁶ August, 1852 A.D.

⁷ See Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, article 6, p. 492.

⁸ 1817-18 A.D.

⁹ "Beauty and the female see also lent their consecration to the new creed and the heroism of the lovely but ill-fated poetess of Qazvin, Zarrin-Taj (Crown of Gold; or **Qurratu'l-Ayn** (Solace of the Eyes), who, throwing off the veil, carried the missionary torch far and wide, is one of the most affecting episodes in modern history." (Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question," vol. 1, p. 497, note 2.) "No memory is more deeply venerated or kindles greater enthusiasm than hers, and the influence which she wielded in her lifetime still inures to her sex." (Valentine Chirol's "The Middle Eastern Question," p. 124.) "The appearance of such a woman as **Qurratu'l-Ayn** is in any country and any age a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Persia it is a prodigy--nay, almost a miracle. Alike in

virtue of her marvellous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence her fearless devotion, and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen. Had the Babi religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient—that it produced a heroine like **Qurratu'l-'Ayn**." ("A Traveller's Narrative," Note Q, p. 213.) "Almost the most remarkable figure in the whole movement was the poetess **Qurratu'l-'Ayn**. She was known for her virtue, piety, and learning, and had been finally converted on reading some of the verses and exhortations of the Bab. So strong in her faith did she become that although she was both rich and noble she gave up wealth, child, name and position for her Master's service and set herself to proclaim and establish his doctrine... The beauty of her speech was such as to draw guests from a marriage feast rather than listen to the music provided by the host. And her verses were among the most stirring in the Persian language." (Sir Francis Younghusband's "The Gleam," pp. 202-3.) "Looking back on the short career of **Qurratu'l-'Ayn**, one is chiefly struck by her fiery enthusiasm and by her absolute unworldliness. This world was, in fact, to her, as it was said to be to Quddus, a mere handful of dust. She was also an eloquent speaker and experienced in the intricate measures of Persian poetry. One of her few Poems which have thus far been made known is of special interest, because of the belief which it expresses in the divine-human character of some one (here called Lord), whose claims, when once adduced, would receive general recognition. Who was this Personage? It appears that **Qurratu'l-'Ayn** thought Him slow in bringing forward these claims. Is there any one who can be thought of but Baha'u'llah? The poetess was a true Baha'i." (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions," pp. 114, 115.) "The harvest sown in Islamic lands by **Qurratu'l-'Ayn** is now beginning to appear. A letter addressed to the "Christian Commonwealth" last June informs us that forty Turkish suffragettes are being deported from Constantinople to Akka (so long the prison of Baha'u'llah): 'During the last few years suffrage ideas have been spreading quietly behind in the harems. The men were ignorant of it; everybody was ignorant of it; and now suddenly the floodgate is opened and the men of Constantinople have thought it necessary to resort to drastic measures. Suffrage clubs have been organised, intelligent memorials incorporating the women's demands have been drafted and circulated; women's journals and magazines have sprung up, publishing excellent articles; and public meetings were held. Then one day the members of these clubs—four hundred of them—cast away their veils. The staid, fossilised class of society were shocked, the good Muslims were alarmed, and the Government forced into action. These four hundred liberty-loving women were divided into several groups. One group composed of forty have been exiled to Akka, and will arrive in a few days. Everybody is talking about it, and it is really surprising to see how numerous are those in favour of removing the veils from the faces of the women. Many men with whom I have talked think the custom not only archaic, but thought-stifling. The Turkish authorities, thinking to extinguish this light of liberty, have greatly added to its flame, and their high-handed action has materially assisted the creation of a wider public opinion and a better understanding of this crucial problem.'" (Ibid., pp. 115-16.) "The other missionary, the woman to whom I refer, had come to Qazvin. She was without doubt, at the same time, the object of the Babis highest veneration and one of the most strikingly fascinating manifestations of that religion." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 136.) "Many who have known her and heard her at different times have stated that, for a person so learned

Martyrdom of Siyyid-Husayn (Amanuensis)

Another distinguished figure among the disciples of the Bab who met his death during the turbulent time that had overwhelmed Tihiran was Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi, who was the Bab's amanuensis both in Mah-Ku and Chihriq. Such was his knowledge of the teachings of the Faith that the Bab, in a Tablet addressed to Mirza Yahya, urged the latter to seek enlightenment from him in whatever might pertain to the sacred writings. A man of standing and experience, in whom the Bab reposed the utmost confidence and with whom he had been intimately associated, he suffered, after the martyrdom of his Master in Tabriz, the agony of a long confinement in the subterranean dungeon of Tihiran, which confinement terminated in his martyrdom.

...

The hand of Aziz Khan-i-Sardar, which had struck down **Tahirih**, was the hand that dealt the fatal blow to the Bab's amanuensis and sometime fellow-prisoner in Adhirbayjan. I need not expatiate upon the circumstances of the death which that murderous Sardar inflicted upon him. Suffice it to say that he too, like those who went before, drank, in circumstances of shameful cruelty, the cup for which he had so long and so deeply yearned.

Summary of the State of the Cause of the Báb

Of all those who had shown themselves capable of carrying on the work which the Bab had handed down to His followers, Baha'u'llah alone remained.[1] All the rest had fallen by the sword of the enemy. Mirza Yahya, the nominal leader of the band that survived the Bab, had ingloriously sought refuge in the mountains of Mazindaran from the perils of the turmoil that had seized the capital. In the guise of a dervish, kashkul[2] in hand, he had deserted his companions and fled the scene of danger to the forests of Gilan. Siyyid Husayn, the Bab's amanuensis, and Mirza Ahmad, his collaborator, who were both well-versed in the teachings and implications of the newly revealed Bayan and, by virtue of their intimacy with their Master and their familiarity with the precepts of His Faith, were in a position to enlighten the understanding, and consolidate the foundations of the faith, of their companions, lay in chains in the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran, cut off entirely from the body of the believers who so greatly needed their counsel, both doomed to suffer, at an early date, a cruel martyrdom. Even His own maternal uncle, who, ever since His childhood, had surrounded Him with a paternal solicitude that no father could have surpassed, who had rendered Him signal services in the early days of His sufferings in Shiraz, and who, had he been allowed to survive Him by only a few years, could have

and so well read, the outstanding characteristic of her discourse was an amazing simplicity and still, when she spoke, her audience was deeply stirred and filled with admiration, often in tears." (Ibid., p. 150.) "Although the Muhammadans and Babis speak in the highest terms of the beauty of 'Consolation of the Eyes,' it is beyond dispute that the intelligence and character of this young woman were even more remarkable than has been related. Having heard, almost daily, learned conversations, it seems that, at an early age, she had taken a deep interest in them; hence it came about that she was perfectly able to follow the subtle arguments of her father, her uncle, her cousin and now her husband, and even to debate with them and frequently to astonish them with the power and keenness of her mind. In Persia, one does not frequently see women engaged in intellectual pursuits but, nevertheless, it does sometimes occur. What is really extraordinary is to find a woman of the ability of **Qurratu'l-'Ayn**. Not only did she carry her knowledge of Arabic to an unusual degree of perfection, but she became also outstanding in the knowledge of the traditions of Islam and of the varied interpretations of the disputed passages of the Qur'an and of the great writers. In Qazvin, she was rightly considered a prodigy." (Ibid., p. 137.)

rendered inestimable services to His Cause, languished in prison, forlorn and hopeless of ever continuing the work that was so close to his heart. **Tahirih**, that flaming emblem of His Cause who, alike by her indomitable courage, her impetuous character, her dauntless faith, her fiery ardour and vast knowledge, seemed for a time able to win the whole womanhood of Persia to the Cause of her Beloved, fell, alas, at the very hour when victory seemed near at hand, a victim to the wrath of a calumnious enemy. The influence of her work, the course of which was so prematurely arrested, seemed to those who stood near as they lowered her into the pit that served as her grave, to have been completely extinguished. The Bab's remaining Letters of the Living either had perished by the sword or were fettered in prison, or again were leading an obscure life in some remote corner of the realm. The body of the Bab's voluminous writings suffered, for the most part, a fate no less humiliating than that which had befallen His disciples. Many of His copious works were utterly obliterated, others were torn and reduced to ashes, a few were corrupted, much was seized by the enemy, and the rest lay a mass of disorganised and undeciphered manuscripts, precariously hidden and widely scattered among the survivors of His companions.

[1 Mirza Abu'l-Fadl quotes in his "Fara'id" (pp. 50-51), the following remarkable tradition from Muhammad, which is recognized as an authentic utterance of the Prophet and to which Siyyid Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Sha'rani refers in his work entitled "Kitabu'l-Yavaqit-iva'l-Javahir": "All of them [the companions of the Qa'im] shall be slain except One who shall reach the plain of Akka, the Banquet-Hall of God." The full text is also mentioned, according to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, by Shaykh Ibnu'l-'Arabi in his "Futuhât-i-Makkiyyih."]

[2 "A hollow receptacle of about the size and shape of a coconut, round the orifice of which two chains are attached at four points to serve as a handle. It is used by dervishes as an alms-basket." ("A Traveller's Narrative," p. 51, note 3.)]

The Faith the Bab had proclaimed, and for which He had given His all, had indeed reached its lowest ebb. The fires kindled against it had almost consumed the fabric upon which its continued existence depended. The wings of death seemed to be hovering above it. Extermination, complete and irremediable, appeared to be threatening its very life. Amidst the shadows that were fast gathering about it, the figure of Baha'u'llah alone shone as the potential Deliverer of a Cause that was fast speeding to its end. The marks of clear vision, of courage and sagacity which He had shown on more than one occasion ever since He had risen to champion the Cause of the Bab, appeared to qualify Him, should His life and continued existence in Persia be ensured, to revive the fortunes of an expiring Faith.