

ṬARÁZU'LLÁH SAMANDARÍ
as a young man.

MOMENTS WITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Memoirs of the Hand of the Cause of God Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí

translated by
Mehdi Samandari
and
Marzieh Gail

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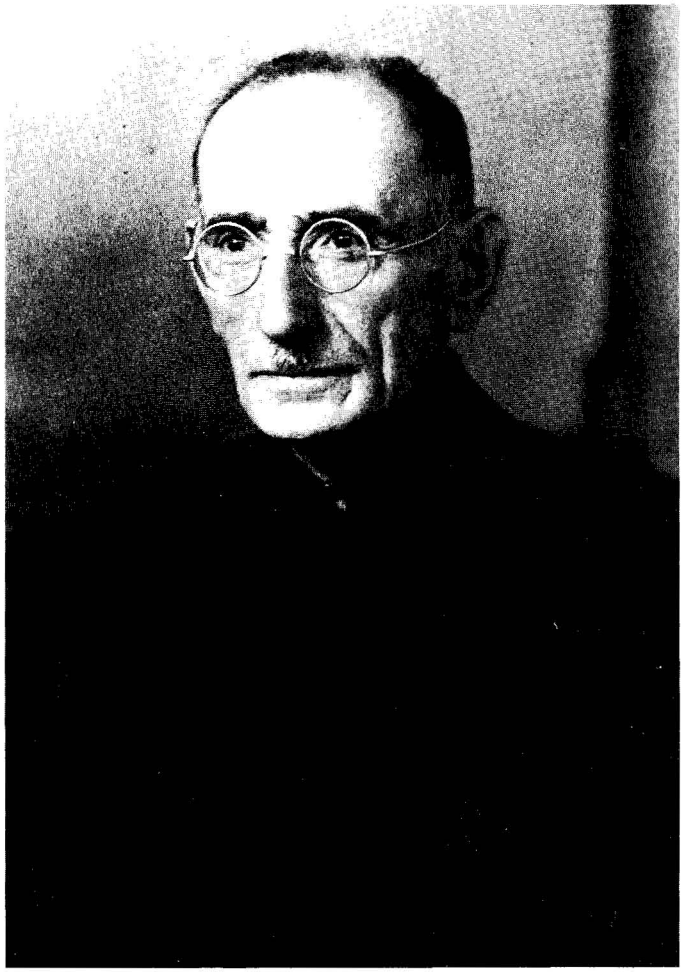
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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This book presents two versions, side by side, of the recorded memoirs of the Hand of the Cause of God Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí:

1) Passages from the unpublished, written memoirs of the Hand of the Cause, translated by his son, Dr. Mehdi Samandari: The original manuscript of these memoirs, in Persian, is deposited in the Bahá'í World Center Archives in Haifa, Israel. This translation has been edited for publication. Passages from these written memoirs are presented in *italics* below.

2) A talk given by the Hand of the Cause which was recorded on tape and later translated by Marzieh Gail: The recording was made on December 27, 1967, at the home of Curtis Kelsey, 3019 Bay Drive, Bradenton, Florida. All editorial changes made in the text of this translation have been indicated in footnotes. This talk is presented in standard roman type below.



ṬARÁZU'LLÁH SAMANDARÍ
Taken in Iran.

FOREWORD

Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí was born in 1874, to a distinguished Bahá'í family in Iran. His father, Shaykh Káẓim-i Qazvíní, was given the title Samandar by Bahá'u'lláh and later designated as one of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh by the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.[1] His mother, Ma'ṣúmih Khánum Farhádí, was the daughter of an early Bábí family, and his grandmother had been one of the companions of Ṭáhirih.

While still a youth, Mr. Samandarí was able to make the journey of pilgrimage to 'Akká and

[1]See *The Bahá'í World* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1930) Vol. 3, pp. 80-81.

to enter the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Accompanied by his sister and his aunt, he remained in the Holy Land for six months—the last months of Bahá'u'lláh's life, and for one month after His ascension. Mr. Samandarí's experiences on his first pilgrimage, in the presence of the Manifestation, are the subject of this short volume.

Six years later, in 1898, Mr. Samandarí was able to make another pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he remained for four months in the company of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In 1906, at the age of about thirty, he made a third pilgrimage. This was a time of great danger for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and for the Bahá'í community. A commission of investigation had been sent from the Ottoman government to interrogate 'Abdu'l-Bahá; they threatened him with imprisonment and exile. Meanwhile, the Covenant-breakers from among 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own family were seeking to undermine his authority in Iran.

It was on this third pilgrimage that 'Abdu'l-Bahá commissioned Mr. Samandarí to travel

throughout Iran in defense of the Covenant. He returned to Iran to travel and meet with the Bahá'ís all over the country, convincing them to pledge their allegiance to the Center of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These travels were to last five years, during which Mr. Samandarí rendered priceless services in consolidation of the Iranian community—along with other defenders of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, such as Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar Rafsanjání (with whom he traveled, at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's command) and Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí. In cities and in remote villages, these teachers traveled by horse, or mule, or donkey—or on foot, to raise the call of loyalty to the Covenant and to teach the Bahá'í Faith. (Even in his remarks in the talk recorded in this book, Mr. Samandarí offers proofs of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's station—an echo, perhaps, his work during the early years of this century.)

With this journey behind him, Mr. Samandarí made yet another pilgrimage to the Holy Land where, accompanied by 'Alí-Akbar Rafsanjání, 'Abdu'l-Bahá showered both of them with love and appreciation. He returned to his

native Qazvin, where he lived an active life of Bahá'í service for seventeen years. During the last of these years, he was able to collect, authenticate, and copy countless Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Báb, and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá held by individual believers in Iran, compiling eighteen volumes of priceless Bahá'í scripture.

In 1927, at the request of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Tehran, and with the approval of the Guardian of the Faith, Mr. Samandarí resumed his travel teaching. For the remaining forty-one years of his life he had no permanent home. For his outstanding services, Shoghi Effendi addressed him at different times in messages as: "an Apostle of the Crimson Ark," "a true herald of the Greatest Name," and "the shining lamp among Bahá'í teachers."

In 1940, Mr. Samandarí was able to make another pilgrimage, where he remained a guest of his beloved Guardian for fifty days. Upon returning to Iran, he resumed his journeys throughout the country, this time to encourage

the Persian Bahá'ís to arise and pioneer to other areas.

Mr. Samandarí, in recognition of his unique services, was appointed by Shoghi Effendi as a Hand of the Cause of God, one of twelve Hands in the first contingent, on December 24, 1951. After that, his world travels began. He was able to attend all four Intercontinental Conferences—in Uganda, the United States, Sweden, and India—at the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade in 1953. After the passing of the Guardian in 1957, and for the remainder of the Crusade, he traveled extensively in Africa and Asia, inspiring and encouraging the believers.

In 1963, he attended the first Bahá'í World Congress in London. There he astonished and delighted the thousands of Bahá'ís gathered at the Congress, Marzieh Gail acting as translator, with the memories of his first pilgrimage to Bahá'u'lláh. A few years later, in 1968, he spoke to the believers gathered at the Intercontinental Conference in Wilmette, Illinois. During that year he toured the United States,

Alaska, and Canada, gaining unprecedented publicity and respect for the Bahá'í Faith in the national press and other media.

In late August of 1968, he returned to the Holy Land to attend the commemoration of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival there one-hundred years before. A few days later, he passed away, on September 2, 1968, at the age of ninety-three. Having attained his expressed wish to die near the Holy Shrines, he is buried at the foot of Mt. Carmel beside his fellow-teacher Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí.[2]

I well remember well Mr. Samandarí's visit to Los Angeles in 1968. Then I was still a Bahá'í youth, and a student at UCLA. His

[2]For a more complete biography of Mr. Samandarí's life, see *The Bahá'í World* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976) Vol. 15, pp. 410-16.

presence fascinated the believers. He was a very short man, certainly less than five feet—thin and extremely agile. His stride, as he burst into the large meeting rooms where the Bahá'ís gathered to hear him, was forceful and direct. Not for an instant did he hesitate in direction or purpose as he walked. Even though he was weakened by a serious illness which stayed with him during his visit, his voice was always strong and loud. All his movements were quick, his posture erect. At the podium, he was an arresting figure.

The Bahá'í Club at UCLA was asked to arrange a public meeting for Mr. Samandarí on campus. This was an effort at teaching, and he would not relate his stories about Bahá'u'lláh here—only give an introductory talk on Bahá'í principles.

I made the arrangements for the meeting somewhat reluctantly, I admit. I had been born in a Bahá'í family, and I was only too familiar with sparsely attended proclamation events—empty halls with one or two seekers and a scattering of Bahá'ís which were usually

all we could muster after weeks of planning. They were routinely unsuccessful and embarrassing.

Nonetheless, Mr. Samandarí's visit was an opportunity for publicity which was not to be missed in those publicity-starved days of Bahá'í teaching. He had succeeded in capturing the attention of the religion editor of the *Los Angeles Times* who had given the Faith undreamed-of feature articles in the city's major newspaper. And so, a meeting was arranged and every effort made to announce it on campus—posters, ads in the *Daily Bruin*, and so forth.

I was still unhopeful. Mr. Samandarí spoke no English. His talk would have to be translated by his son, Mehdi Samandarí, who was traveling with him. I supposed that his approach to teaching would be traditionally religious. And, UCLA students of the late sixties were not much interested in traditional religion. Then there was the black jacket he always wore, much too close to a priest's collar for comfort.

The anxiety must have shown through in

my voice as I made final arrangements with his son, Mehdi, for the meeting, giving directions to the hall, warning him not to expect too large a crowd, and so forth. He reassured me, saying that I should have faith that all would go well—that his father's personality would attract the seekers.

Yet, when the time of the meeting arrived, the hall looked about as I had expected it to. We had been careful not to get a place that was too big. But even so, the three or four seekers and less than a dozen campus Bahá'ís offered a poor showing. Here was the Hand of the Cause of God come to give the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to a virtually empty room. I was mortified.

Not so Mr. Samandarí. Unfazed in the least by the circumstances, he strode to the front of the hall with his usual quick and commanding motions. Standing in front, and ignoring the microphone, as was his custom, he delivered his talk in Persian at the top of his voice. He shouted each sentence aloud, followed by the softer translation of his son.

The effect was astounding! Everyone in the room bolted erect in their seats. Students from outside, hearing all the noise, came into the room to find out what all the commotion was. They stayed, hypnotized by the performance. By the end of the hour, the hall was full. There were many who wanted to stay longer, to question the holy man personally. We had to scramble to find an empty room that would accommodate them. Mr. Samandarí walked from the meeting hall serene and triumphant.



Of course, the Bahá'ís were attracted to Mr. Samandarí during his visit to Los Angeles because this was their chance to meet with the one who had met with Bahá'u'lláh. It was an enchanting prize—a priceless opportunity to gaze into the eyes that had seen the eyes of Bahá'u'lláh. In fact, the local Assembly had to explicitly request that the friends not make too

much of this. The unseemly efforts of many to look directly into his eyes at close range were disrupting some meetings and embarrassing the Hand of the Cause.

Beyond this, the believers were eager to hear the stories of his meetings with Bahá'u'lláh, to catch a glimmer of the majesty and power and love he must have felt. It was a powerful, an electric reminder that we were yet only one generation away from the days of the Manifestation and that—as we thought then—this was the last person on earth who had seen Him and could recall for us the memory of those moments in His presence.

The believers came in small meetings and in large ones. And Mr. Samandarí told his stories. Ignorant as we were of the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran, we neither asked nor wished to hear of his heroic travels in defense of the Covenant or his lifetime of service in consolidation of the Bahá'í community in his native land. Of the history of the believers' struggles there we cared not at all. Had the Iranian Bahá'í community expanded or waned

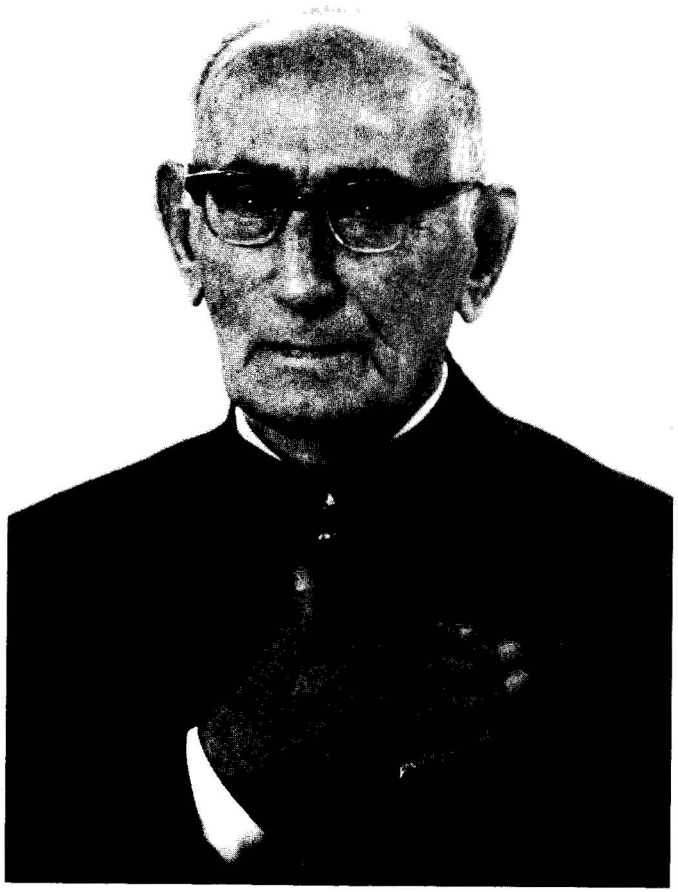
since his youth? Had the Bahá'ís of Qazvin triumphed or withered, or been scattered away? How were the enemies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá defeated? And who were the great minds from among the Bahá'ís in Iran? How had their ideas come to shape our understanding of this Faith? Such questions never occurred to us.

Nor did we ask about the early heroes of our Faith—neither his illustrious father, nor the noble Ṭáhirih, whom his grandmother had known. We had heard rumors that he had committed every one of Ṭáhirih's poems to memory. But it did not once occur to me, or to anyone else, to ask him to recite them. Our only thirst and hunger was for the stories about Bahá'u'lláh.

And Mr. Samandarí told his stories. Once—it was a youth meeting—he took great care to recount to us, his son translating, the history of some of the martyrs in Iran. Was it the story of Varqá and his twelve-year-old son Rúḥu'lláh, both hanged for their faith? Or was it the story of the King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of

the Martyrs, the two wealthy Bahá'í merchants denounced and executed by the mullas of Isfahan greedy to loot their property. I don't remember now. Perhaps he spoke of the martyrs of Yazd. But the whole mood and response of the young audience at the end of the talk was one of disappointment and continued anticipation. We cared little for stories of distant martyrs. The questions soon returned the topic of the meeting to the only one that we longed to hear. The stories about Bahá'u'lláh. And Mr. Samandarí told his stories.

Surely this must have been typical. During his years in Iran and his travels in the West, the Bahá'ís always clamored for his stories about the Blessed Beauty. He must have told the same stories to eager audiences hundreds, certainly thousands of times. The stories, as we heard them, were rehearsed, well-worn, encapsulated as vignettes, chiseled into cameos of moments with Bahá'u'lláh. They fascinated us as they were told and retold—each telling slightly different; here emphasizing a point,



ṬARÁZU'LLÁH SAMANDARÍ
in later years.

there forgetting a detail—or remembering one. He gave the impression that there must be more, and we waited for the next telling.

This book presents two versions of Mr. Samandarí's memoirs of his time with Bahá'u'lláh, produced on different occasions and under different circumstances. The two texts are published here side by side. It is hoped that they will compliment and reinforce one another.

The first version, printed in *italics*, gives translations of a few passages taken from the written memoirs of Mr. Samandarí. The original manuscript of these memoirs, which cover the whole of the author's life and service, is in Persian and is deposited in the archives of the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel. This translation was made by the son of the Hand of

the Cause, Dr. Mehdi Samandari, at the specific request of the Universal House of Justice for inclusion in this book.

The second version of the stories is much more informal. This is the transcript of a talk given by Mr. Samandarí in 1967, to a small gathering of Bahá'ís at the home of Curtis Kelsey in Bradenton, Florida. This talk appears in standard roman type in this book. Dr. Mehdi Samandari was also present on the occasion and prompted his father with questions. Since he knew his father's stories well, he could pull out every forgotten detail, when necessary—for which he deserves our unending gratitude. These remarks were recorded on tape and later translated by Marzieh Gail. The translation was circulated in typed and xeroxed form among the Bahá'ís at the time. This talk appears here in its original form and order, giving shape to the book. The quotations from the written memoir have been added as appropriate to supplement the talk.

Together these two versions of Mr. Samandarí's stories represent a portion of his legacy

to us. Of course, there is more. But this is the part that we wanted to hear most, the stories —told and retold—of his experiences in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

Anthony A. Lee
Los Angeles, 1995



ON A TEACHING TRIP, circa 1907,
in Isfahan, Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí is seated second from the left. Seated in the middle is Mírzá Asadu'lláh Khán Vaẓír, a distinguished believer who served as the deputy to the governor of Isfahan. Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar Rafsanjání is seated second from the right.

MOMENTS WITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Memoirs of the Hand of the Cause of God
Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí



THE HOUSE OF 'ABBÚD
The House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká.

THE FIRST AUDIENCE

It was, I think, on the third day after our arrival in 'Akká that I received the most great bounty and honor of being permitted by the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] *to attain His holy presence. Mírzá Hiybatu'lláh, a relative of my father who was residing in 'Akká, guided me to the House of 'Abbúd,*[1] *where Bahá'u'lláh was sojourning. I was dressed in*

[1]The house in 'Akká where Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned from 1873 to 1877, after which He left the walled city. Mr. Samandarí's visit took place in 1891, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his family continued to live in the House of 'Abbúd. Bahá'u'lláh would return there to visit them from time to time.—ED.

an 'abá,[2] *and only my hands were uncovered—a gesture of courtesy.*

Bahá'u'lláh was seated on His chair. I fell at His feet, and my fez fell off on the floor. The Blessed Beauty, in His grace, replaced it on my head, saying: "Marḥabá! Marḥabá!"[3] *He showered His limitless bounties upon me; but I was carried away with fear and excitement, as if there were no life in my body! I was shaking like a willow in the wind.*

He bade me be seated. Khádim[4] *was asked to serve tea to me. But my condition was beyond description: I could not lift my head from my chest, and I felt a strange trembling over my whole body. The cup of tea was shaking in my hand, and I had difficulty holding it still. Several times He repeated, with great kindness: "Bismu'lláh—you may drink!"*

[2]A loose outer garment or cloak, worn open in the front, which was the typical dress of well-to-do Iranian men at the time.—Ed.

[3]An Arabic word meaning, "Welcome!" or, in other contexts, "Bravo! Well done!"—Ed.

[4]Mírzá Áqá Ján, companion and amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh, was honored by Him with the title Khádimu'lláh (Servant of God). See Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980) pp. 109-112.—Ed.

I could not do it. I could not drink at all. When I took a sip, the noise sounded like a river crashing down from the summit of a mountain into a deep valley! This is how I felt.

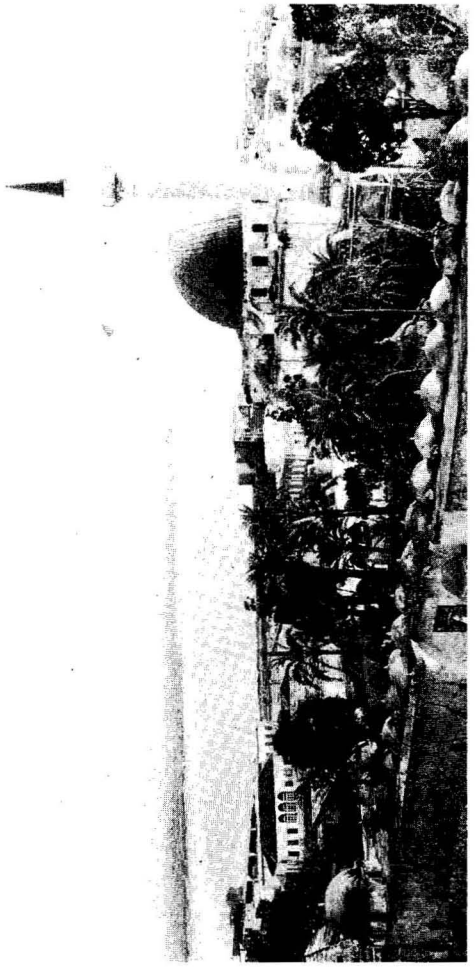
Bounties were showered on my beloved father, Samandar,[5] *and inquires made about him. The words Bahá'u'lláh spoke on this occasion, unfortunately, I have forgotten due to the shock of His ascension.*

In spite of His utmost kindness, I was so overwhelmed by His glory, His greatness, and His power that I was unable to raise my eyes to see His peerless face. He gave me permission to leave with these words: "Fí amánu'lláh—go in God's care."

Not many days passed before the Blessed Beauty left for the Mansion of Bahjí.[6] *After that, all my audiences took place in the Mansion of Bahjí, or out-*

[5]Shaykh Káẓim-i Samandar, later designated by Shoghi Effendi as one of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. See H. M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985) pp. 191-215.—Ed.

[6]The Mansion near 'Akká that was the last residence of Bahá'u'lláh. It now stands next to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.—Ed.



THE GREAT MOSQUE OF 'AKKÁ
The Mosque of Al-Jazzar, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá worshipped.

doors under a tent, or at the Garden of Riḍván, or at the Garden of Junayna.

(It should be remembered that whatever recollections remain in my mind after sixty years are only as a drop in the ocean, or an atom compared to the sun. Here I am only trying to produce a brief record of these events.)

VISIT TO THE MANSION AT BAHJÍ

You ask me to tell of the things that I heard with my own ears, things that I saw and knew, during the seven months that I was in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; for I was there six months during the "Days of God," and one month following the ascension [of Bahá'u'lláh].[7] Briefly, I will tell of these things.

[7]The ascension of Bahá'u'lláh took place on May 29, 1892. Ṭarázu'llah Samandarí seems to have arrived in

In the month of Ramaḍán,[8] the very month we are now in, on a certain day the Master[9] took me, around noon, to the mosque in 'Akká. There He asked me, "Do you know the prayer?"[10]

I answered, "No, may I be Thy sacrifice."[11]

He then told me, "Sit in the mosque, and we will enter soon. Then whatever I do, do the same."

I stayed with Him all that day. When the prayer was over, we went out of the mosque;

the Holy Land about six months before that, in November or December 1891.

The original manuscript reads: "However, you ask me to tell . . ." It has been edited for readability.—ED.

[8]The Muslim month of fasting.—ED.

[9]'Abdu'l-Bahá.—ED.

[10]The *salát*, the Muslim obligatory prayer, that requires certain prostrations. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at the request of Bahá'u'lláh, joined in the congregational prayers at the mosque of 'Akká every Friday until the end of his life. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944) p. 311.—ED.

[11]Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí was born and raised in a Bahá'í family. At this time he was a teenager, but it seems that he had never had occasion to learn the Muslim form of prayer.—ED.

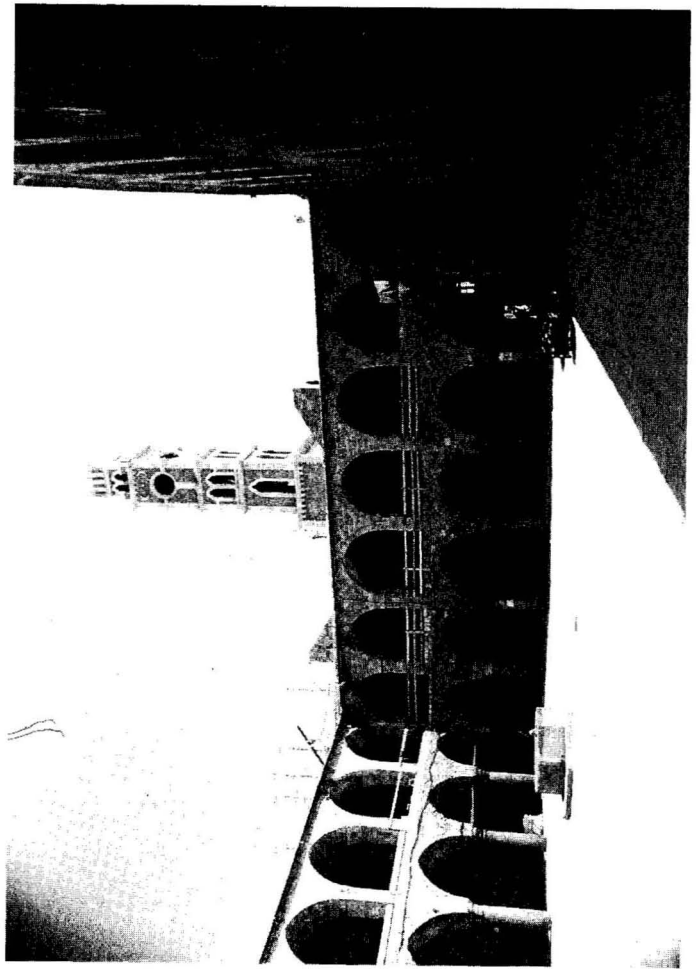
and as we approached the gate of 'Akká, the Master said, "I wish to go with you into the blessed presence of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí. Have you an umbrella?"

I said yes.

And as it was sprinkling a little, He told me: "Go, fetch your umbrella, I will be walking outside the gate until you come."

In those days, I was very fleet of foot. I ran like the wind to the caravanserai—it was a good distance, too—got my umbrella and took it back to 'Abdu'l-Bahá outside the gate. Alone with Him, I went to Bahjí. The moment that the Mansion of Bahjí came into view, 'Abdu'l-Bahá got down on His knees and bowed His forehead to the ground. Then He rose, and together we entered the Mansion. Later on, the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh occurred, and as a result many precious details I had treasured were blotted from my mind. Perhaps it was God's will.

Whenever 'Abdu'l-Bahá approached the Mansion, Bahá'u'lláh would be watching for His arrival from His latticed window. As soon



THE CARAVANSARI
in 'Akka that housed many Bahá'í pilgrims.

as He saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá coming, He would say, "His Excellency, Áqá, is coming. Go out and welcome Him." This matter was always current and known, and Bahá'u'lláh would make people mindful of it. Whenever He presented 'Abdu'l-Bahá to anyone—to women, men, to young or old, He would always refer to Him as "Sarkár Áqá—His Excellency, the Master." And when they were alone, He would naturally say, "Áqá."

Indeed, there are a number of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, addressed to certain special individuals, signed only with the one word: *Áqá*. And this is the word which issued from the lips of Bahá'u'lláh whenever He referred to 'Abdu'l-Bahá: the Master, absolute, unconditioned. For the sake of drawing attention to the great importance of this, in the Samandarí household and the related Farhádí household,[12] the words *Áqá* (Master) and *Khánum* (Lady)

[12]Tarázu'lláh's father was Shaykh Káẓim-i Samandar. (See note 5 above.) His mother was Ma'súmih Khánum Farhádí.—Ed.

were never used at all. Contrary to custom, the father was not called Áqá, nor the mother Khánum. Each would be known by some lesser name, for they would say that "Master" could designate none but 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and "Khánum," none but the Greatest Holy Leaf.[13] For a whole century in our family, the titles Master and Lady were never adopted.

HIS INFINITE FAVOR

During Ramaḍán, the Muslim month of fasting, one of the believers resident in 'Akká, Áqá Muḥammad-Ibrahím Mashhadí Faṭṭih, invited some of the

[13]Bahiyyih Khánum, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sister. She is designated by Shoghi Effendi as "the outstanding heroine of the Bahá'í Dispensation."

Gail's original translation reads: "Most Exalted Leaf," an alternate rendition of the title *Varaqiy-i 'Ulyá*.—Ed.

friends to dinner—including two of the sons of Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí[14] *(who was still known at that time by the title, the Greater Branch), some sons of Jináb-i Kalím,*[15] *the sons of Mírzá Javád,*[16] *and myself. Jináb-i Mishkín-Qalám,*[17] *a respected old man was present, and he was the life and soul of every gathering.*

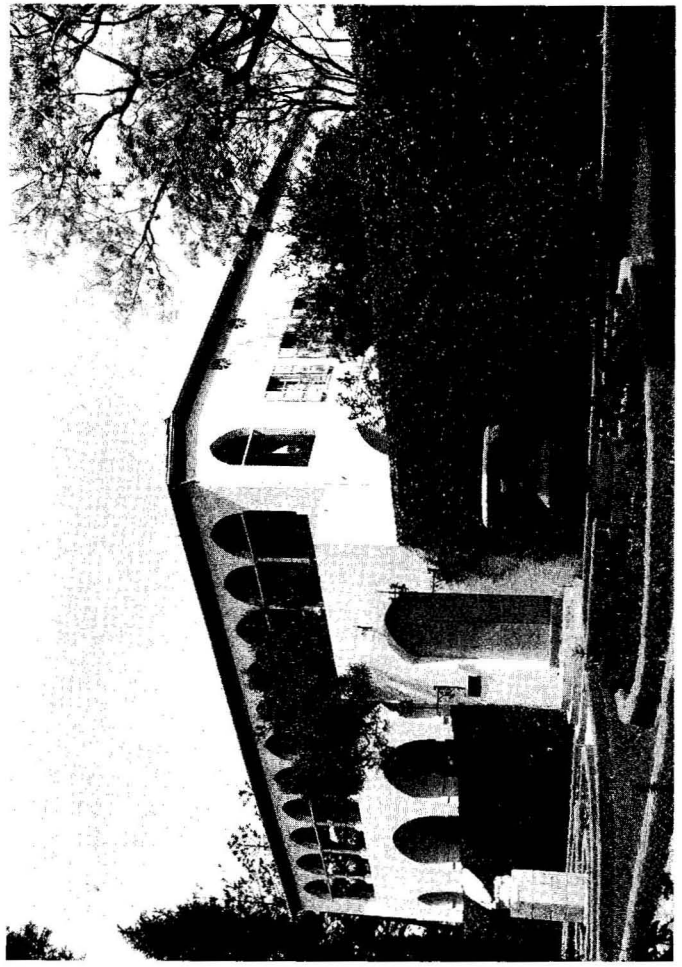
According to Persian customs of courtesy, and my father's standard, my demeanor was serious. I sat quietly while someone else made fun of the various

[14]One of the sons of Bahá'u'lláh, given the title Ghusn-i Akbar (the Greater Branch). After the passing of his Father, Mírzá Muḥammad-'Ali rebelled against the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and became the Arch-Breaker of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant.—Ed.

[15]Mírzá Músá, also known as Áqáy-i Kalím, was a younger brother of Bahá'u'lláh who remained faithful to Him until the end of his life.—Ed.

[16]Mírzá Muḥammad-Javád-i Qazvíní was an important scribe of Bahá'u'lláh. He eventually broke the Covenant, after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, and followed Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí in rebellion against 'Abdu'l-Bahá.—Ed.

[17]Áqá Ḥusayn-i Iṣfahání, the famous Bahá'í calligrapher. He was one of the companions of Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople and later in 'Akká.—Ed.



THE MANSION AT BAHJÍ
The residence of Bahá'u'lláh during the last years of His life.

Persian accents and dialects that were heard, including that of Qazvin.[18]

The exaggerated and discourteous behavior of the other children, and especially that of Mírzá Shu'a' u'lláh,[19] *was shocking to me. His same attitude at the mosque, during the prayers with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, caused such a deep feeling of disgust in me that I never wanted to see Shu'a' again.*

This was the cause of my avoidance of the Mansion at Bahjí, so as to keep clear of seeing him. This deprivation caused me great unhappiness.

For two weeks, I did not go to the Mansion. I contented myself with meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Eventually, I went to Bahjí, where I saw a little girl, the daughter of Majdu'd-Dín.[20] *I asked her: "Is there anyone in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh now?"*

"He is alone," was the answer.

Then I asked: "What is He doing?"

"He is pacing the room," she replied.

[18]Ṭarázu'lláh and his family were from Qazvin.—Ed.
[19]One of the sons of Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí who joined his father in breaking the Covenant after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh.—Ed.
[20]One of the sons of Áqáy-i Kalím.—Ed.

Then I asked her to go to Him and say that Taráz is here and he has not had the honor of an audience for the last two weeks. May he be permitted to come now.[21]

She returned with the news: "Bismu'lláh—you are welcome."

I was trembling with excitement until I reached His holy presence.

He said: "Welcome, Ṭaráz Effendi." He approached me and expressed kindness and favor and stroked my hair and face with His bountiful hand. He enquired after my health, and then He said: "You have complained that you have had no audience with Me. Have you not been in the presence of Sarkár Áqá, the Master, in 'Akká?"

"Every day and every evening, I have this honor,"

He replied: "Then why have you complained?" And after some more words, He said: "You are always permitted to come here. Your real home is

[21]For the time and place, this was a shocking breach of Bahá'í custom and Persian etiquette. No one, and especially no one of Samandarí's youthful age, was expected to invite himself into Bahá'u'lláh's presence.—ED.

here. It is only for your own comfort that we have advised you to stay in 'Akká."

Then he gave me some sweets—gaz or nán-i birinjí.[22] *Then with words of love and generosity, which are beyond my power to describe, He allowed me to leave His presence, saying: "Fí amánu'lláh—go in God's care."*

I left feeling intoxicated—full of joy, ecstasy, and inspiration.

After Ramaḍán and during the month of Shubát [February] I was sick for a time. I could not go to Bahjí, to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, following the fast. Then one day I felt better, and I went alone from 'Akká to Bahjí. When I reached the foot of the Mansion steps—there are twenty-two steps—I saw a young child there and I asked that child: "Where is His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh?"

[22]Persian sweets: *gaz* is nougat; *nán-i birinjí*, rice cookies. —ED.



THE TWENTY-TWO STEPS
at the Mansion at Bahjí leading to the room of Bahá'u'lláh.

"He is in His own room," came the answer.

"And what," I asked, "is He engaged in?"

"He is pacing the floor," the child said.

"Who is in His presence?" I asked again.

"No one."

"Not even a servant?" I said.

"No."

I said, "Go. Say to Him, it is Ṭaráz. He has not been in your presence for several days. May he approach You now?"

The child left, speedily returned, and told me: "He says: 'Bismu'lláh—come in the name of God.'" When I heard the word *Bismu'lláh*, my limbs began to shake. I don't know how I climbed up those twenty-two steps to His room. He was still pacing the floor. I bowed low, then stood with my arms folded across my chest. He came over to me, and He drew His hand across my face and head, expressing infinite grace and favor.

Then He asked how I was, and after that He said, "In 'Akká, do you not seek out the presence of Sarkár Áqá, the Master?"

Until that day, I had never unsealed my lips

in His holy presence. Now I answered: "I attend upon Him day and night, may I be Thy sacrifice."

He smiled. "Then why do you complain," He said, "that you have not been in My presence? Why do you complain that you have not been in My presence? For your own comfort and well-being, We had you stay in 'Akká, but this is your home. You have permission to come here at any hour, at any time, morning, noon, or night." I was blessed by Him repeatedly that day, and truly it was He who sowed the love of the Covenant in my inmost heart, and wrote it there with the words of His holy mouth.

His Holiness the Báb wrote in His Tablets: "He who will appear after Him who will appear."[23] This is a reference to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, proved to be such by many Tablets of Bahá'-

[23]See, for example, a passage from The Seven Proofs (*Dalá'il-i Sab'ih*) in *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, trans. by Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1976) p. 126.—Ed.

u'lláh, especially the Tablet of the Branch,[24] that has been translated, the Tablet of Beirut,[25] the Tablet of Ḥájí Khalíl-i Qazvíní[26]; also the Kitáb-i Aqdas[27] and the Book of His Covenant[28]—all of these clearly establish the fact that this statement of the Báb: "He who will appear after Him who will appear," designates 'Abdu'l-Bahá.[29]

[24]See *Bahá'í World Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1943) pp. 204-207.—Ed.

[25]Lawḥ-i Ard-i Bá, the Tablet of the Land of Bá (Beirut). See *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1978) pp. 225-28.—Ed.

[26]Ḥájí Muḥammad Ibráhím-i Khalíl of Qazvin. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 242.—Ed.

[27]Bahá'u'lláh's Most Holy Book. *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1992).—Ed.

[28]The Kitáb-i 'Ahd. See *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 217-23.—Ed.

[29]This paragraph contains remarks that Mr. Samandarí made at the beginning of this talk. It has been moved to this position for readability.—Ed.

THE LEAVETAKING

Three times, on three different days, in the afternoons, I had the opportunity to enter the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in His blessed tent which was erected on the northern side of the Mansion of Bahjí. The field was covered with red wildflowers and the tent was pitched amidst them. Three memorable meetings were held in this place.

The first was held in memory of the late Áqá Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, the eldest son of the King of the Martyrs[30] *(may my life be a sacrifice to his pure dust). The second day, the meeting was held in memory of my beloved uncle, Nabíl ibn Nabíl*[31]*; and the third day in the name of Khátún-Ján of Qazvin,*

[30]Mírzá Muḥammad-Ḥasan, who was given this title by Bahá'u'lláh after he (along with his brother, Mírzá Muḥammad-Ḥusayn—the Beloved of the Martyrs) was was executed in Isfahan in 1879, for being a Bahá'í. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By,* pp. 200-201.—ED.

[31]Ḥájí Shaykh Muḥammad-'Alí Qazvíní. See Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1941) pp. 108-111; also, H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory*, pp. 383-402.—ED.

the wife of Áqá Hádíy-i Farhádí.[32] *On this day, a meal was served, halím—a porridge, a healthy food and a favorite in Qazvin. The meetings on these three days were held in the afternoons.*

The Most Pure Being, Bahá'u'lláh, was seated in a corner of the tent. There were not enough chairs. Some people sat in them at Bahá'u'lláh's bidding. Those left standing, He asked to sit. "Be seated, be seated," He insisted. They sat on the ground.

[32]Mírzá Áqá Hádíy-i Farhádí and his wife, Khátún-Ján, were close associates of Ṭáhirih during the early days of the Faith, and their home became a center of Ṭáhirih's teaching activities in Qazvin. Mírzá Hádí was entrusted by Bahá'u'lláh, at a time of great danger, with the task of rescuing Ṭáhirih from captivity in Qazvin and delivering her to the home of Bahá'u'lláh in Tehran. Ṭáhirih was a prisoner, watched on every side by attendants, guards, and enemies. Mírzá Hádí was charged by Bahá'u'lláh to bring a sealed letter to his wife, who was instructed to disguise herself as a beggar in order to make contact with Ṭáhirih and give her the letter. Both Mírzá Hádí and Khátún-Ján carried out their missions successfully. See Nabíl-i Aẓam, *The Dawn-Breakers* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932) p. 284 and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971) pp. 199-200.—ED.



THE TENT OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

His amanuensis—I think it was Mírzá Áqá Ján —had set up a small table for writing, facing Bahá'u'lláh in the tent. He was sitting on a chair, with Bahá'u'lláh's permission.

Bahá'u'lláh chanted some of the verses of the Muṣíbát-i 'Alíyát,[33] *the "Most Exalted Words." From time to time, He uttered some other verses. Unfortunately, I cannot remember any of them.*

Question: Tell more about your visits with Bahá'u'lláh.

The Blessed Beauty, in the month of Shavvál,[34] after Ramaḍán, directed that His tent be

[33]A long Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh revealed in eight parts; also known as *Ḥurúfát-i 'Allín*, and as *Muṣíbát-i Ḥurúfát-i 'Alíyát*. In the Tablet Bahá'u'lláh discusses death and the immortality of the soul. See Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh: Baghdád 1853-63*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1974) pp. 122-25.—ED.

[34]Of the year 1309 A.H. (1892).—ED.

pitched beside the Mansion. For three days, every afternoon, He would sit in the tent, and He had invited all the friends to come there and visit Him. Both the settlers[35] and the travelers[36] came to Him there. Let it be said that none knew, at the time, what His purpose was. Later they realized that this was His leavetaking from His companions and friends.

Question: Forgive me, Father. For what outward reason did Bahá'u'lláh summon the people during those three days?

The friends who were there, including myself, came because the first of the three days was a memorial for the departed Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, eldest son of the King of the Martyrs. The second day was to commemorate the passing of Nabíl ibn Nabíl, Ḥájí Shaykh Muḥammad-'Alí Qazvíní, my uncle on my father's side—

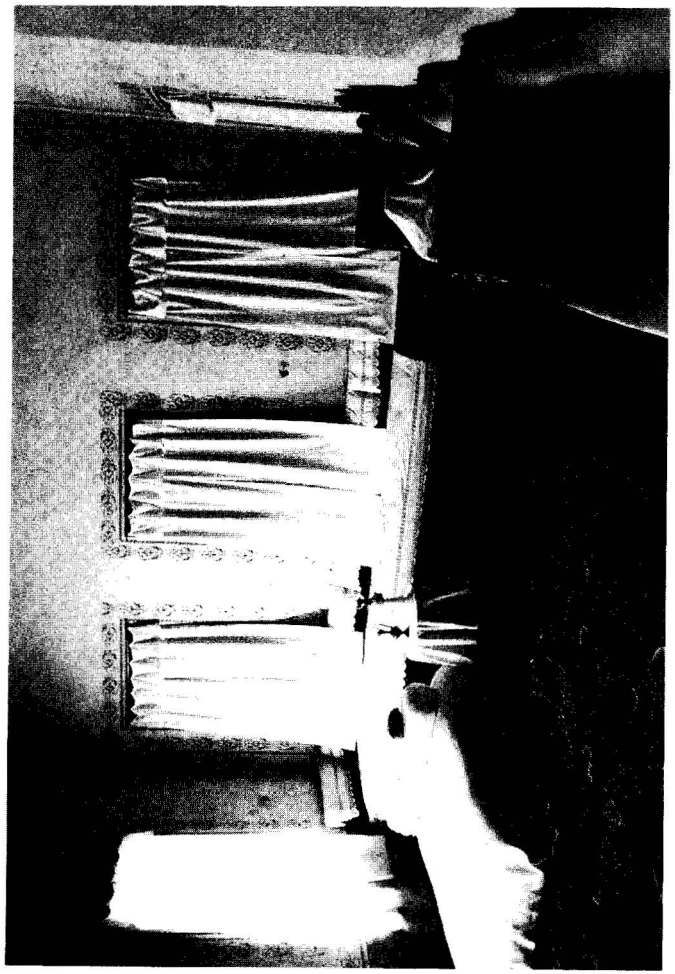
[35]Those Bahá'ís who had moved to Palestine to be near Bahá'u'lláh.—Ed.
[36]The Bahá'í pilgrims.—Ed.

who two years before in Constantinople had sacrificed himself, in 1307 A.H. (1889 A.D.); this day was dedicated to him. And the third day was a memorial for Khátún-Ján, wife of Áqá Hádí, the noted Áqá Hádí of Qazvin, who has come down in history.

When these three days were past, it was only a few more days till Bahá'u'lláh was taken somewhat ill. Little by little, His condition worsened, and He asked that doctors be called in. The doctors would come and go. They would feel His pulse and listen to His heart, with its steady, regular beat. Nothing. But they noticed that He was running a fever.

Jináb-i 'Andalíb[37] was there at that time, and during the days of Bahá'u'lláh's sickness he composed an ode in which he says:

[37]Áqá 'Alí-Ashraf of Láhíján, known as 'Andalíb (Nightingale). He was a well-known Bahá'í teacher and poet who happened to be on pilgrimage at the time. See H. M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 60-74.—Ed.



THE ROOM OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
in the Mansion at Bahjí, restored as it appears today. Bahá'u'lláh's bed is on the floor. His táj is covered on the divan.

O Thou,
Doctor of the ailing soul,
Why suffer these doctors
And all that they claim?
Weep now for the Branches
From this mighty Bole!
Weep now for the meekness
Of the Lord we extol!
Keep us,
These servants of Thine in our grief,
Ever true to Thy love,
Ever speaking Thy name.

THE LAST DAYS

On May 23, 1892, on the fifteenth day of His illness, while I was with 'Andalíb and the servants in the Mansion at Bahjí, we again received the honor of attaining the presence of the Blessed Beauty. Áqá

Sayyid Asadu'lláh Qúmí[38], *upon him be the grace of God, was another believer who was present. It was at the hour of sunset. We were suddenly informed that, by His command, anyone—whether pilgrim or resident—was permitted to enter His presence. We seized the opportunity and hastened to the Beloved of the world.*

His bed was in the middle of the room. The mattress and quilt were covered with white sheets, and He was propped up on two or three pillows. Mírzá Díyá'u'lláh[39] *and Mírzá Badí'u'lláh*[40] *were fanning Him. His body was extremely frail, and his voice was weak—though He spoke clearly. He revealed words of separation and departure, em-*

[38]A believer who later accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá on his journeys to Europe and America. See H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh* (London: George Ronald, 1971) pp. 134 and passim.—ED.
[39]One of the sons of Bahá'u'lláh. He eventually rebelled against 'Abdu'l-Bahá after his Father's passing and became a Covenant-breaker.—ED.
[40]The younger son of Bahá'u'lláh. After the passing of his Father, he vacillated between loyalty to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and rebellion. In the end, he joined the ranks of the Covenant-breakers.—ED.

phatically commanding unity and love among the believers.

The following verses from the Kitáb-i Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, were read to us:

> Say: Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.[41]

And:

> Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the day-star of My beauty is set, and

[41]Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, K53, pp. 38-39.—ED.

> the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.[42]

Bahá'u'lláh spoke further of the importance of unity, love, and friendship and urged us to avoid disunity, discord, and schism.

As we heard these words and clear verses from the mouth of the Beloved of the world, the effect on us can be imagined. 'Andalíb was utterly distraught; his heart broke. With tears in his eyes, he cried out: "Yá Bahá! Yá Bahá!" expressing his grief.

Bahá'u'lláh dismissed us from His presence, saying: "Go in God's care." Every one of us prostrated at His blessed feet and circumambulated His bed. We left the room in deepest sorrow, burning from

[42]Ibid., K38, pp. 32-33.—Ed.

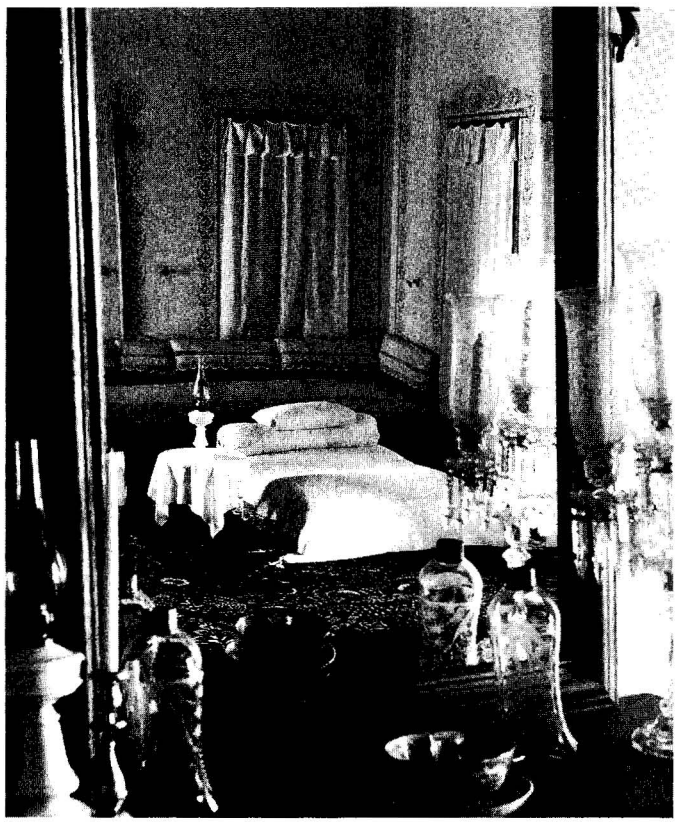
separation from the Beloved. No pen can describe the sadness and grief that encompassed my soul on that day. After this, I contracted a fever and became ill.

This was the last visit of this feeble one to the holy presence of the Blessed Beauty—glorified be His majesty and His power!



His discomfort continued; little by little, it went on. Then came a day, seven days before His ascension would take place.[43] It was in the afternoon. I too was there, at Bahjí. Yes. Suddenly, one of the servitors came down from upstairs in the Mansion and announced: "The Blessed Beauty directs whoever is in the Mansion to come upstairs." Jináb-i 'Andalíb was there, I was there, Áqá Sayyíd Asadu'lláh called Qumí was there, the same one who

[43]Or perhaps, six days. Cf. *God Passes By*, p. 222. See also, Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 4 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1987) pp. 416-17.—Ed.



THE MIRROR IN THE ROOM
of Bahá'u'lláh in the Mansion at Bahjí.

[later] accompanied the Master on His journeys. The others were servitors—I don't remember exactly—there were not more than eight or nine of us who went up.

The Blessed Beauty lay in His bed. Two were seated, one to either side of Him, and He leaned against them. They had fans in their hands, and they were fanning him. Then, He Himself began to speak. He addressed gracious and loving words to those about Him, spoke of His indisposition and recited some verses from the Kitáb-i Aqdas:

> *Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the day-star of My beauty is set, and the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men.*[44]

Since He recited these verses, it became clear to us that He would ascend. Following these utterances, He vehemently counseled us

[44]Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, K38, pp. 32-33.—Ed.

to abstain from dissension and strife. Although His blessed body was feeble, He voiced this with great power, distinctly measuring out the words: "Shun disharmony. Strive that no discord should arise among the friends. Let the friends avoid contention." This is a matter repeatedly referred to in His Tablets; there are, however, some who by nature love discord, and they bring about disharmony among the friends. In any case, such were the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh along these lines.

And suddenly Jináb-i 'Andalíb could endure no more. He broke down, and Bahá'u'lláh dismissed us saying, "Go, in God's care."[45]

[45]Mírzá Ismá'íl, one of the servitors present in that last audience with Baha'u'llah, has recorded: "Tears flowed from my eyes and I was overcome with feelings of grief and sorrow after hearing these words. At this moment the Blessed Perfection bade me come close to Him, and I obeyed. Using a handkerchief which was in His hand, Baha'u'llah wiped the tears from my cheeks. As He did so, the words of Isaiah [25:8], '. . . and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces . . .', involuntarily came to my mind." (Quoted in 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, *Stories of Bahá'u'lláh* [Oxford: George Ronald, 1986] p. 109.)—Ed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was present too; as I recall He was standing. He directed us to circumambulate the bed. Those of us in our group simply walked around Bahá'u'lláh's bed, and He said to us: "Fí amánu'lláh—go in God's care." We went out of the room. That was the very last time that I was present at the meeting with God.[46]

THE STORY OF THE ORANGE

On one of those days, I was standing in the tent, facing the Blessed Beauty, but I could not hear Him well. Some of the other friends were also standing, and He asked them to be seated. I decided that the

[46]That is, the Manifestation of God. See Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán: The Book of Certitude* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1931) p. 142: "By attaining, therefore, to the presence of these holy Luminiaries [the Manifestations], the 'Presence of God' Himself is attained."—Ed.

small storeroom of the tent was the best and nearest place to the seat of the Blessed Beauty. So I managed to move quickly from the back of the tent into that small room. I was there alone, and from that place —while standing there—I could see His blessed face and hear His words clearly.

(As I said before, the blow that I suffered upon learning of the ascension of the Blessed Beauty had a severe effect on my memory. So, regretfully, I cannot remember any of the precious words of Bahá'u'lláh on those occasions.)

The meeting ended with oranges served to those present. Bahá'u'lláh rose from His seat. I came out quickly from my place in the storeroom and reached the door of the tent as He was going out. My arms were folded across my chest in reverence, like a statue. As His Most Pure Being passed out of the tent, His blessed eyes fell upon this worthless gnat, standing by the door. He addressed me in His sweet voice, "Marḥabá!" Showing His utmost kindness, He presented me with the orange that was in His hand. He then proceeded toward the Mansion.[47]

[47]The Mansion at Bahjí.—ED.

Some of the youth who were present saw that the orange in the hand of the Blessed Beauty had been given to me. So they ran after me in an effort to take it away from me. I ran round and round the Mansion; and as they ran after me I ate the orange and finished it before they caught me. I gobbled it all down and was not generous to any of them!

Question: Please, would you tell us how you received the orange from His hand. What day was it? It was during those days when there were memorial gatherings in His tent. Which of the days was it?

I don't know but what it was the last day.

Question: The last day?

It was the third day.

Question: Could you tell us about that too, and how it was?

They direct me to tell of the day when I received the orange from His blessed hand, during those three days when, in the tent, I was present at the meeting with God. There was a great multitude present on that day, and it was the last day. Over and over He kept saying, "Be seated. Be seated." There were not enough chairs.

A few were seated on the available chairs, while the rest sat on the floor. When He said to sit down, I realized that if I did, because I was small (I was seventeen then) perhaps I would not be able to see Him clearly. It occurred to me that I should go to a certain corner of the tent, the part called the closet.[48] So I quietly slipped out of the tent, went around to the back, and got into the closet. There I was not more than a meter away from Bahá'u'lláh.

[48]Marzieh Gail's original translation reads: wardrobe.—ED.

From that vantage I could see Him clearly, and should He speak, I could hear Him as well.

I was there while Mírzá Áqá Ján chanted Muṣíbát-i 'Alíyát. When he had finished, a tray of baklava and a tray of oranges which had stood prepared was passed around. First, the Blessed Beauty took one, then the others were distributed. But no one knew about me being in the back of the tent; and since nobody knew it, I did not get an orange.

After the meeting was over, Bahá'u'lláh arose. I hastily came out of my corner and entered the tent, standing there, arms folded across my chest. As He issued forth, I bowed low before Him and He gave me the orange which He still held in His hand. He proceeded then to the Mansion.

But the youth had discovered the fact that Bahá'u'lláh had given me His own orange! And they came after me to wrest it away. So I ran and ran, dodging here and there outside the Mansion, devouring the orange as I went.

And this is the story of the orange.

Question: Begging pardon, was this the day of the memorial for Khátún-Ján?

Yes, it was that day—the third day.

Question: Could you explain what her kinship was to you?

Yes. She was the wife of Áqá Hádí, who was the paternal uncle of my mother.

Question: That is, she was your grandmother's sister?

Yes. Yes.[49]

[49]The manuscript includes the following at the end of this section: "*Question*: The grandmother of Sáhib Khánum." No answer follows.—ED.

THE NAW-RÚZ GIFT

On the morning of Naw-Rúz, the Abhá Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] *sent me a gift, from the Mansion at Bahjí to the caravansarai where I was staying. It included a qabá*[50]*—of silk, striped with cotton, and made in Syria—a shirt, undergarments, a sash of linen, and a pair of socks. You can imagine what joy and happiness possessed this feeble servant! That qabá still exists and is preserved.*[51]

NAW-RÚZ IN JUNAYNA

A number of pilgrims and friends resident in the Holy Land were permitted to attain His sanctified

[50]A long robe worn under the 'abá.—ED.
[51]Cf. *The Bahá'í World: An International Record*, Vol. XV (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976) p. 411.—ED.

presence on Naw-Rúz[52] *in the Garden of Junayna. The court of His holy presence was thrown open to the faces of the rank and file of all the believers. This servant had gone to Haifa the day before, in the company of some of the believers from 'Akká. But as soon as the good news reached us, that Bahá'u'lláh would receive all of the believers on Naw-Rúz, on the next day we left Haifa in the morning by horse carriage. We went to Bahjí, and from there to Junayna.*

That was one of the most blessed days. Some of the well-known Bahá'í poets—Nabíl-i 'Azam[53] *and 'Andalíb—were present. They recited poems in honor of that wonderful day.*

[52]The first day of spring, the traditional Persian New Year's Day; also celebrated as the Bahá'í New Year. —ED.

[53]The author of *The Dawn-Breakers*, a Bahá'í poet of note.—ED.

Question: Would you please tell us if it was during those days when, with Bahá'u'lláh riding on His donkey, you accompanied Him, returning to Bahjí. Or was it on another occasion?

That was on Naw-Rúz.

Question: Then perhaps you might tell us about that as well.

Well, one day I was in Haifa. I had gone there for a short stay. I don't remember exactly how it happened. Toward morning, we were told that Bahá'u'lláh would be visiting Junayna that day, and that he had summoned all the settlers and pilgrims to that spot. They provided us with conveyances and brought us there. It is quite a long way from Haifa to Junayna, and in those days people went by carriage. Junayna is near the mansion at Mazra'ih; not far from there, in fact, quite near.

We came to Junayna, where we found Bahá'u'lláh. So there, too, I entered His presence. About thirty of us, perhaps, were guests



THE POETS
(l. to r.) 'Andálíb, Nabíl-i A'ẓam, Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alíy-i Salmání.

at luncheon: among the poets were, it seems to me, Jináb-i 'Andalíb, Ustád Muḥammad-'Alí [Salmaní][54] was there, and Nabíl-i A'ẓam. The last-named and 'Andalíb sang verses that day, from an ode. Lunch had been made ready for us.

Question: Please repeat this.

They had prepared a lamb for our luncheon; cooked it in the stove; and brought it in on a large tray, which they placed on the table in Bahá'u'lláh's room. I was at that moment standing near Him, with my arms folded across my chest. He touched the lamb with His finger and said, "Take it away."

They took it out to the other room where they had laid the luncheon cloth on the floor. We had bread too, with the lamb. We all ate

[54]One of the companions of Bahá'u'lláh, His barber and bath attendant; also a well-known Bahá'í poet. His memoirs have been published as *My Memories of Bahá'u'lláh* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1982).—ED.

luncheon there. Following the meal, it seems to me there was also a revelation of verses. I listened a little from outside the door; I heard a little. Then, that afternoon, Bahá'u'lláh was to return to the Mansion of Bahjí. There was a white donkey which, I know, Ḥájí Ghulám-'Alí Káshání[55] had brought to Bahá'u'lláh at that time. The Blessed Beauty mounted, and a servant held an umbrella over Him, for a light rain was falling. I also accompanied Him. On His right hand [side], the servant held up the umbrella, while I was on His left. And thus we came from Junayna to the Mansion of Bahjí.

Question: Do you remember any more of His utterances from that day?

Not at all; not at all. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

[55]A prominent Bahá'í of Káshán who later migrated to Tehran. He visited Bahá'u'lláh a total of eleven times, in Baghdad, Edirne (Adrianople), and 'Akká.—Ed.

THE STORY OF THE ROSES

On the First Day of Riḍván, at the Mansion, 'Andalíb, and Ḥájí Abú'l-Ḥasan,[56] and one other friend whose name I cannot remember, and this abased servant were honored to be in His blessed presence. He was seated on His chair, and we were sitting in a row, according to His command, facing His blessed Person. He showered his grace upon us.

Tea was served in His luminous presence. He chanted the Lawḥ-i Sulṭán[57] for about half an hour. This, with such supreme majesty and power that it is beyond my capacity to describe. Depending on the subjects of the Tablet, He gestured with His hands and feet, and the tone of His voice reflected the power and meaning of the words He chanted. The words, "Yá Sulṭán!—O King!" were uttered in such a

[56]Ḥájí Abú'l-Ḥasan Bazzaz, a prominent Bábí (and later Bahá'í) of Shiraz. See Balyuzi, *The Báb* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973) pp. 69-71.—Ed.

[57]Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to Náṣíru'd-Dín Sháh, the King of Iran. See *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1967) pp. 55-60. Also, Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory*, pp. 293-310.—Ed.

vibrant voice! On that day, our joy passed beyond description. It was indeed unique.

After He finished His chanting and reading, Bahá'u'lláh said: "Ṭaráz Effendi, stand up and give one of these roses to each person here." The roses had been brought from the garden of Junayna and were resting on a pure white sheet that covered His mattress. I obeyed at once and gave one rose to each person.

Then He said: "And give Us Our share."

So, I took one rose and presented it to Him, the One Who spoke from Mt. Sinai, with my own hand!

Then He said: "Take one for yourself, also."

And I picked one for myself.

Then He said: "Fí amánu'lláh—go in God's care!" This was the usual expression that was used by Bahá'u'lláh, and later by 'Abdu'l-Bahá—a most sweet expression—to indicate that the audience was at an end.



Question: Please, father, tell us about the red roses which had been brought to Him and how He told you to distribute them to those who were present. What day was that?

That was on the Most Great Festival—Riḍván.[58]

Question: Yes?

It was the first day of Riḍván. Yes, on the first. To begin with, He gave us candies, which they brought down from upstairs and passed around. We ate all the candies. Then . . . We were five people—the first group to come out and pay our respects on the Riḍván Festival. I was one, and the late 'Andalíb, and Ḥájí Abú'l-Ḥasan Shírází (the father of Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir Khán Dihqán[59]), one of the

[58]The holiest days of the Bahá'í year; the twelve-day anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration of His Mission, celebrated from April 21 to May 2.—Ed.

[59]A very wealthy and prominent Bahá'í of Shiraz.—Ed.

companions of the Báb. For when the Exalted One, the Báb, was on the ship traveling to Mecca, Ḥájí Abú'l-Ḥasan was also on board, knowing nothing of the Faith. But from what he saw of the Báb on that ship, his heart was strongly attracted and stirred. And when the Báb declared His mission in Mecca, he heard and heeded it. Afterward, when he arrived in Shiraz, he had the honor of accepting the Faith. I have heard the circumstances of his acceptance but cannot recall them now. I don't know how it came about, but he bowed down. In any case, he was one of our number, and there were two others that I cannot call to mind.

When we arrived, we knelt before Bahá'u'lláh and remained seated on the floor in that position. The Blessed Beauty was seated on a chair. His room was carpeted with a mat woven of marsh reeds; there was nothing else in the room. He addressed us lovingly. After His expressions of loving-kindness, which I am no longer able to recall, He began to chant the

Lawḥ-i Sulṭan, the Tablet to the Shah—some part of it.

Truthfully, at that time I did not have sufficient capacity to experience those delights which were there to enjoy; but according to my degree of comprehension, such capacity as I had, on that day, I too—from His chanting, from His ways . . . Today, when I am at this age of ninety-two years, I feel it all.

That day I witnessed in Him two states of being: one was His overwhelming meekness, and no meekness greater than His can be conceived—a condition of evanescence and meekness referred to by Him in many Tablets. The other was the condition of might, of the power and authority of the Supreme Pen. When He would address the king, with what might He intoned, "Yá Sulṭán!" At times He would gesture with His hand, at times He would move His foot, and with all majesty and power He would pronounce the words, "O King!" When He came to: "The invisible King standeth revealed in a visible temple and saith,

'Fear not. Relate unto His Majesty the Shah that which befell Thee . . .'"[60] at that moment, as He unfolded the tale of His calamities and trials, He manifested in His Person the very essence and spirit of ineffable meekness.

Then He brought the reading to a close and said, with that heavenly music of His voice: "Ṭaráz Effendi, stand up!" I stood up. They had brought a quantity of roses from Junayna, red roses, fresh from the bush, perhaps thirty or forty in all, and placed them on a mat or cushion in His room, on a white cloth. He said, "Give a rose to each one present here."

I took them up, and I gave one rose to each. Then I stood waiting.

He said, "And what about My share?"

I took one and offered it to Him.

Then He said, "Take one yourself, as well."

[60]Quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1941) p. 41; also, Bahá'u'lláh, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 58.—Ed.

I took one myself. And He dismissed us, saying, "Go in God's care—Fí amánu'lláh."

Question: Was this in the Mansion of Bahjí?

It was in the Mansion of Bahjí. The Mansion of Bahjí.

ANOTHER CELEBRATION OF RIḌVÁN

During the Festival of Riḍván, the Blessed Beauty decided to visit the Garden of Riḍván[61] *near 'Akká. By this, a further blessing was brought to that exalted Paradise, a place mentioned in the holy books*

[61]This garden was purchased by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1881, as a place of rest and beauty for Bahá'u'lláh to visit. He went there frequently and it became one of His "favorite retreats." Bahá'u'lláh renamed it Riḍván (Paradise), and designated it as the "New Jerusalem" and "Our Verdant Isle." See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 193.



THE GARDEN OF RIḌVÁN
in the Holy Land. Circa 1920.

of the past. All of the friends and believers in the vicinity, and all the pilgrims, with faces of joy, rushed to that everlasting Paradise—the envy of all the gardens on earth. This feeble servant also had the honor of sharing in that meeting.

'Andalíb (upon him be the Glory of God) had composed an ode, and he read it in the presence of the Blessed Beauty, who was standing on the veranda of His room in the garden. All the friends, disciples, pilgrims, and guests fixed their eyes on the face of the Beloved. We were standing in rows. He showered unlimited bounties upon all of us. With His own hands, He gave rose water, sweetmeats, and an orange to each one.

'Andalíb received the distinction of being given a bottle of rose water and two oranges!—a special prize for his poetry, for the ode he had read.

I was among those who were assembled there and received these bounties. But to become worthy of such mercy, what was my duty? It was incumbent upon this servant, and upon all those who received the blessing of attaining the presence of the Forgiving Lord [Bahá'u'lláh], *that we should accept the education we received and never forget the bounty and*

grace showered upon us—abandoning all selfishness, and devoting all the days of our lives entirely to promoting the verses and teachings of the Beloved, manifesting our faithfulness to Him—never forgetting those heavenly signs, but appreciating them by realizing their greatness and never deviating from the standard of His good pleasure, even to a hair's breadth.

This writer feels abashed in the presence of God that he has never been able to show forth his thankfulness for what he has seen with his own eyes or heard with his own ears. He can offer nothing but a shamed face, and can claim no achievements but his errors and wrongdoing. Na'ím, the great Bahá'í poet, says—addressing the believers in America:

> *"No worthy service could we render,*
> *Unto you we turn our eyes."*



THE GARDEN OF RIḌVÁN
Showing the bench where Bahá'u'lláh sat (center).

IN HIS PRESENCE

One day, I was in His blessed room in the Mansion when the famous poet 'Andalíb and his fellow pilgrim, Ḥájí Abú'l-Ḥasan Shírází, were also present —and no one else.

The Blessed Beauty was pacing the room and uttering His wonderful words. We stood and enjoyed listening to His voice. His words were mostly giving guidance to the above-mentioned Ḥájí.

DIVINE REVELATION

Twice I had the honor of being present in His room during the revelation of the Holy Verses. No one was there except His secretary, Mírzá Áqá Ján—and another time, Mírzá Badí'u'lláh was there copying Tablets.

On these two precious occasions, as the Essence of Glory and Dignity [Bahá'u'lláh] *paced the room*

and chanted verses, I could gaze upon Him and contemplate His luminous face, and behold the vision of the majesty of God and His divine Kingdom. This was indeed a great blessing. As He revealed the verses of God, His face was radiant. Sometimes, He would gesture with His hands while He looked through the window onto the sea.

It was His custom to drink water while revealing the verses when His lips became dry. Mírzá Áqá Ján was occupied in taking down the revealed words. The floor of the room was covered with papers from the dictation. One might guess that they amounted to about one-fifth of the Qur'an, revealed during those few hours.

The verses were revealed sometimes in a melodious voice, and sometimes with majesty and power—depending on the content of the revealed words. For instance, when the subject was prayer, a heavenly melody was heard; while admonitions and words of warning were uttered with the power of the Lord of lords!



Question: Please, would you tell us how many times you were present when Tablets were being revealed, and what your feelings were on those occasions?

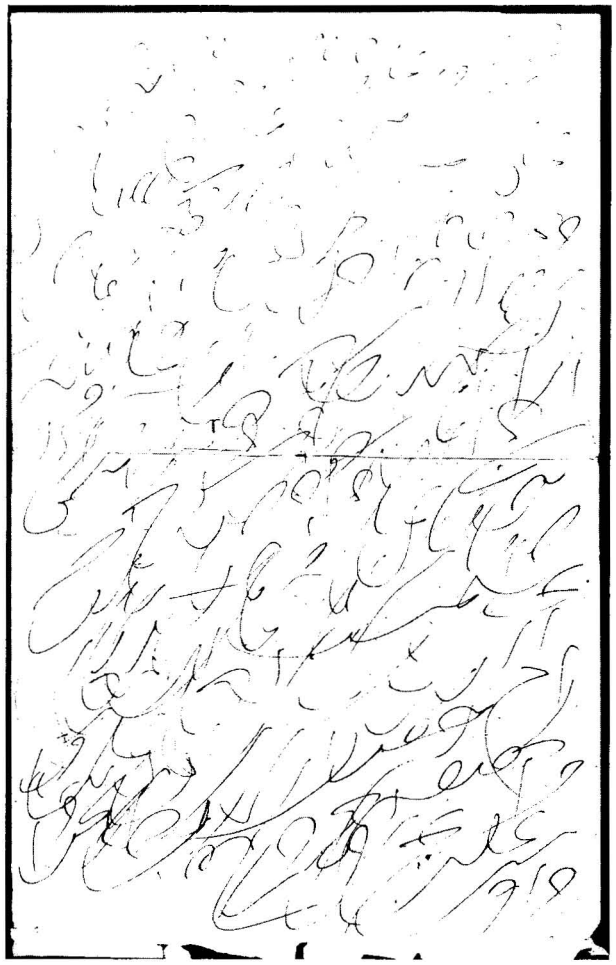
Twice in the days of Bahá'u'lláh, I was present when He was revealing verses. And Khádimu'lláh—once it was Khádim and the other time it was someone else—they were seated in His presence while He paced about as He spoke, and they wrote down His utterances. Twice I was there during the actual revelation of verses. This question of Divine Revelation[62] is a momentous one; it has to be felt and understood through a clear conscience and an unsullied heart. Otherwise, there is no way to explain it or commit it to words.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself tells us that day and night the verses descended like torrential rain. From this, whoever is mindful will ask: What can He mean, that the verses descended like torrential rain? This means, without thought.

[62]Arabic: *vahy*—M.G.

This means, without deliberation. This means that, first the revelation comes down—and only then is it read. This question deserves much, much, much, meditation. The rule always was that when the letters came in from the friends, Khádim would be directed by Bahá'u'lláh to read Him the letters. Then, at Bahá'u'lláh's direction, he would make ready paper and pen, and an answer would be vouchsafed. To one after the other, upon each of those who had written, He would bestow an answer.

As to this question of revelation, I am unable to record what one then observes. At the highest possible speed, without any premeditation, these utterances would be revealed [by Bahá'u'lláh]. At such a speed that it would be impossible to conceive any swifter, he [Khádim] would write them down. No one could read that "Revelation-writing," with the exception of a very, very few early believers who had some familiarity with it. Perhaps they could read some of the verses so recorded—but not the whole. Even Mírzá Áqá Ján, the Revelation



REVELATION WRITING
in the hand of Mírzá Áqá Ján.

scribe himself, was sometimes unable to read this writing, and he would then take it to Bahá'u'lláh, and Bahá'u'lláh would solve the problem.

Yes, this is how it was. And this is the first attribute of the holy Manifestations, which differentiates them from all other beings. As the Blessed Beauty says: "This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing."[63] All these holy verses come down through Divine Revelation out of the heaven of the will of God, and they light upon the heart and the tongue of Him Who is the Dayspring of Revelation, the Dawning-point of splendors.

Question: How many times were you present when the revelation was in process?

Twice.

Question: Both times at Bahjí?

Both times at Bahjí.

[63]Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 11.—ED.

Question: And Bahá'u'lláh would pace the floor?

Yes, He would pace about.

Question: And Khádim was seated?

Once it was Khádim; another time it was somebody else.

THE STORY OF THE DATES

Once—it was sunset—I had the honor of being in His presence. Javád-i Qazvíní was there, and he was asking certain questions and receiving answers. Bahá'u'lláh extended to us His utmost care and grace. He always called me Ṭaráz Effendi.

There was a tin of dates from Basra. The Blessed Beauty took one. He gave the seed to Javád, saying: "Look how small the seed is." Then He gave me a handful of dates. When He reached for the tin a

second time, I quickly lifted the hem of my robe to take more. But He said: "If you take too much, it will cause you harm. This place is the Most Great Prison!" He then gave the dates to Javád.

We then had the honor of hearing His words: "Fí amánu'lláh—go in God's care," and we left the Holy Presence overwhelmed with joy.

Question: If, now, you would tell us of the time when you were in His holy presence and He gave you the dates, these recorded memories of yours would be complete.

It was late one afternoon, at sunset. I went to His presence. One of those who had emigrated to 'Akká, a greatly celebrated believer, was there, and the Blessed Beauty was conversing with him. Then the believer finished what he had to say, and the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh were at an end. Bahá'u'lláh had, under

the couch which was in His room, a small tin box. I think it had been sent Him as a present from Basra: a tin box of dates. The Blessed Beauty was sitting on His heels; He ate one of the dates, after which He gave the pit to that individual. "See," He said, "how small it is."[64] Then He reached for a handful of the dates and gave them to me. I took them in my two cupped hands.

When He reached for the tin a second time, I thought He wished once again to give some to me; and so this time I held out the skirt of my garment.

He smiled and said, "This place is the Most Great Prison. If you eat too much, you will come to grief."

Yes . . .

[64]Gail's original translation reads: "See, . . . how delicate it is."—ED.

THE ANOINTING

Question: We are most grateful to you. It will rejoice the friends to hear these accounts.

Yes. On another occasion, one of the believers, a woman greatly blessed and favored by the Blessed Beauty, passed away. It was heard that at the hour of dawn prayer, He had gone to her bedside. Then He directed that all should attend her burial, and all should first come into His presence. Here each of us was anointed with rose water by His hand. I was the last to be anointed by Him that day; I received the attar from His holy hand, and touched His hand. Yes.

Question: Where was this? Was it at Bahjí—the great court at Bahjí?

It was at Bahjí in the great court. He stood in front of a curtain. It was there that I received the rose water. Then He commanded us, "Go, all of you, to the burial."

Question: You have said that this lady who died was the mother of Muḥammad-Ṭáhir Málmírí.[65]

She was the mother of Muḥammad-Ṭáhir Málmírí, the writer of the history.[66] Alláh-u Abhá!

THE WEAK AND THE HELPLESS

Question: Could you just tell us that part about Amínu'd-Dawlih?

[65]Ḥájí Muḥammad-Ṭáhir Málmírí was one of the prominent Bahá'ís of Yazd. He is the author of a history of the Bahá'í martyrs of Yazd, *Táríkh-i Shuhadá Yazd*, and other works. See Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 1, pp. 320-24, and *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956) pp. 692-94.—Ed.
[66]Sáhib-i Táríkh.—M.G.

Yes, I will tell it. We are on the point of departure [from this world]. I am broken, weak, failing; still, I am relating these memories, whatever our dear host asks, so that they may be recorded here. Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí, December 28, 1967.

On one of the journeys, when I was in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—I think it was my third journey to the Holy Land—Jináb-i Ḥaydar Qabl-i 'Alí[67] was also present there. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked me how I was. I humbly responded. Then the question of the leaders of Persia came up and the name of the late Sipah-Sálár[68] was mentioned. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí, whenever such persons have been raised up to champion and serve the Cause of God, the Blessed Beauty has removed them by death.

[67]Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí, known as the Angel of Carmel; a renowned Bahá'í teacher. See his memoirs: *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, trans. A. Q. Faizi (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1980).—Ed.
[68]Mírzá 'Alí-Asghar Khán, the Amínu's-Sulṭán (or Amínu's-Dawlih), the Prime Minister to Náṣiru'd-Dín Sháh at the time of his assassination.—Ed.

"Manúchihr Khán[69] arose in Isfahan, defending and reinforcing the Cause of God with all his might. The Blessed Beauty killed him.[70] This He did so that, at a later time, no one should claim that the Cause was established through the riches and power of Manúchihr Khán.

"And later, Amínu'd-Dawlih[71] was raised up to serve and defend the Faith. He wrote me three letters, and I had the ink of his letters washed off and poured into a glass vial and directed that the liquid be sprinkled on the Holy Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine.

[69]The Governor of Isfahan, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, who became a Bábí and concealed the Báb from the enemies of the Faith. After his conversion, Manuchihr Khán offered the Báb his huge fortune and the full resources of his office. He died in February 21, 1847, while the Báb was still under his protection. See Nabíl-i A'ẓam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 199-214 passim; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 14-16; and, Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 108-117.—Ed.

[70]Meaning, of course, that he died prematurely of natural causes.—Ed.

[71]See note 68 above. See also, Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 4, pp. 185-88.—Ed.

"In one of those letters, Amínu'd-Dawlih wrote: 'At the time when I had reached the station of Sipah-Sálár, of Prime Minister; that is, when I had become Atábak-i A'ẓam,[72] and I was the first man in Persia, I knew nothing of the Advent and Teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. I could render no services then. If, however, it should be God's will, and if I should, once again, sit in that lofty place, I will officially proclaim the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh throughout Iran.'"

'Abdu'l-Bahá continued: "Ḥaydar-'Alí, he promised many a would-have-done.[73] But Bahá'u'lláh took him.

"In recent days as well, a great personage has been raised up to serve. He has written me a letter, an excellent letter. It is not yet apparent what Bahá'u'lláh will do about this. But the Blessed Beauty has desired that His holy Faith be spread by us who are weak and helpless. This was His last utterance.

[72]One of the titles of the prime minister.—Ed.

[73]Persian: *míkard-há míkard*—M.G.

"It is certain that the Manifestations are fully able to raise up important personages, leaders of men, to promulgate their Cause. But God has willed otherwise, so that invariably the Holy Manifestations have [prevailed] through the helpless, the lowly, the poor—like the disciples of Jesus, Son of Mary; like the companions of the noble Prophet [Muḥammad]. It is the same in the days of the Supreme Manifestation. He has desired that the Law of God should be spread abroad through us, helpless as we are, and weak."

There was an occasion on my fourth journey—my last journey to the Master; following that time, I was bereft of His holy presence—when He made a number of diverse comments with regard to teaching the Faith. Once He said, "What blessed souls we have in Persia, who came into the Faith through individuals who never even learned the alphabet." His meaning was that teaching the Faith has nothing whatever to do with learning, or learned accomplishments, or an understanding of history. He explicitly said, "Teaching is through



PROBABLY THE EARLIEST PHOTO ever taken of Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí. This group picture was taken circa 1901, in 'Ishqabád, in the Southern Russian Empire. Those shown (right to left) are: Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí, Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqi Vakílu'd-Dawlih Rabbání (Afnán-i Akbar, the Great Afnán), Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar Rafsanjání, and Ḥájí Mírzá Maḥmúd ibn Vakílu'd-Dawlih (the son of the Afnán).

sincerity and strong attraction to the Faith. Teaching is through sincerity and strong attraction to the Faith. In Persia, by persons who had never even learned the alphabet, great victories were won."