



*Visits with
'Abdu'l-Bahá*

—True Freedom

For those who aspire
to lasting change,
His example guides
the way...

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Learn more about 'Abdu'l-Bahá:



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Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, collected and edited by
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Other stories may also have been modified slightly.



Introduction

A unique figure in human and religious history, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the perfect example in word and deed of all His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, taught.

After a lifetime of persecution and imprisonment for His religious beliefs, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá embarked in 1911 from the Holy Land on an extended trip to share His Father’s message in Egypt, Europe and North America, including nine days in Canada.

“The accounts of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s travels and of the effect He had on those who met Him are legion. Some went to extraordinary lengths to enter His presence—going by boat, by foot, or even under railway trains—and, by the urgency of their desire to see Him, imprinted themselves on the consciousness of future generations of adults

and children. The testimonies of those who were transformed by even a brief, sometimes near wordless encounter with their beloved Master remain deeply stirring. In the wide array of visitors He received—rich and poor, black and white, indigenous and émigré—the universal embrace of His Father’s Faith was unmistakably in evidence.”¹

November 28, 2021, marks the one hundredth anniversary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing. In His memory, friends the world over are sharing stories of His inspiring life as a gift with their families, neighbours and co-workers, with the conviction they will contribute to a spirit of hope in these turbulent times. As He assured us: “that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed.”

¹ *5 December 2013 message of the Universal House of Justice*



On August 20, 1912, a young man, bedraggled and shaky, arrived at Green Acre, Maine, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was staying. His name was Fred Mortensen. Here is his story:

In my youth, my environment was not of the best and being around boys of hard character I guess I determined to be as tough as any. I violated any law I saw fit, man's or God's. Strange as it seems to me at times, it was through coming into contact with these laws that I received the opportunity to be guided into this most wonderful Revelation.

My dear mother had done everything in her power to make me a good boy. I have but the deepest love for her and my heart has often been sad when thinking how she must have worried for my safety as well as for my future well-being. Through it

all and in a most wonderful way, with a god-like patience, she hoped and prayed that her boy would find the road which leads to righteousness and happiness. But environment proved a great barrier to her aspirations and every day in every way I became tougher and tougher. Fighting was a real pleasure, as welcome as a meal, and breaking a grocer's window to steal his fruit or what-not was, as I thought, a great joke...

...I was a fugitive for four years, having walked out of jail while awaiting trial. Soon after, a young fellow was being arrested and I, of course, tried to take him away from the policeman. While this was going on a couple of detectives happened along, and in my haste to get away from them, I leaped over a thirty-five-foot wall, breaking my leg,

to escape the bullets whizzing around.

At this time, I was defended by our departed, but illustrious Bahá'í brother, Albert Hall, to whom I owe many thanks and my everlasting good will for helping to free me from the prison of men and of self. It was he who brought me from out the dark prison house; it was he who told me, hour after hour, about the great love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for all his children and that he was here to help us show that love for our fellowmen. Honestly, I often wondered then what Mr. Hall meant when he talked so much about love, God's love, Bahá'u'lláh's love, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love... love for the Covenant... I was bewildered. Still, I kept returning, to become more bewildered, so I thought; and I wondered why... Thus the Word of God gave me a new birth...

Again, through the attraction of the Holy Spirit I was urged, so it seemed to me, to go to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. I had heard a rumor that he might go back to his home [in the Holy Land] and not come west, so I immediately determined to go and see him. I wasn’t going to miss meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after waiting so long to see him.

As my finances were low I of necessity must hobo my way to Green Acre. The Nickel Plate Railway was my choice, for conveyance to Buffalo, New York. From Buffalo I again rode the rods to Boston, a long ride from around midnight until nine next morning. The Boston and Maine Railway was the last link between ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the outside world so it seemed to me, and when I crawled off from the top of one of its passenger trains at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, I was exceedingly happy.

A boat ride, a street car ride, and there I was, at the gate of Paradise. My heart beating double time, I stepped onto the soil... tired, dirty, and wondering, but happy...

Arriving at the hotel I found quite a number of people there, on the same mission, to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Being one of the last arrivals, I was looking around, to make myself comfortable, when someone exclaimed, “Here he comes, now”...

...It seemed but a minute until Ahmad came down and said, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá wishes to see Mr. Mortensen.” Why, I nearly wilted. I wasn’t ready. I hadn’t expected to be called until the very last thing. I had to go, and it was with a strange feeling in my heart and wondering, wondering what would happen next. He welcomed me with

a smile and a warm hand-clasp, telling me to be seated, he sitting before me. His first words were, “Welcome! Welcome! You are very welcome,”—then, “Are you happy?”—which was repeated three times. I thought, why do you ask me that so many times? Of course, I am happy; didn’t I tell you so the first time?

Then, “Where did you come from?”

Answer: “From Minneapolis.”

Question: “Did you have a pleasant journey?”

Of all the questions I wished to avoid this was the one!

I dropped my gaze to the floor—and again he put the question. I lifted my eyes to his and his were as two black, sparkling jewels,

which seemed to look into my very depths. I knew he knew and I must tell.

I answered: “I did not come as people generally do, who come to see you.”

Question: “How did you come?”

Answer: “Riding under and on top of the railway trains.”

Now as I looked into the eyes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá I saw they had changed, and a wondrous light seemed to pour out. It was the light of love and I felt relieved and very much happier. I explained to him how I rode on the trains, after which he kissed both my cheeks, gave me much fruit, and kissed the dirty hat I wore, which had become soiled on my trip to see him.

When he was ready to leave Green Acre

I stood nearby to say goodbye, and to my astonishment he ordered me to get into the automobile with him. After a week with him at Malden, Massachusetts, I left for home with never-to-be forgotten memories of a wonderful event.

—*'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*,
by H. M. Balyuzi, pp. 247-251



In October of 1911, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the home of some Bahá’í friends in Paris. He told them: “Last night, when I returned home, I did not sleep. I lay awaking thinking and I said to myself: ‘Here am I in Paris. O my God! What is Paris and who am I?’ I never thought from the darkness of my prison I would come here and be among you, for I was condemned to perpetual imprisonment. When I read the document which told me of my sentence, I said to the officials: ‘It is impossible!’ And they were astonished. Then I said to them: ‘If Abdul-Hamid [sultan of the Ottoman Empire] were immortal and I myself were immortal, then would it be possible for him to condemn me to prison forever, but as we are not immortal, then it is impossible. My spirit is free and that no man can imprison.’”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *Their Midst*, by Earl Redman, p. 47



When He reached England, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá faced a condition which troubled Him greatly, because it was beyond His power to ease the misery He saw constantly about Him. Housed luxuriously at Cadogan Gardens, London, He knew that within a stone’s throw of Him were people who had never had enough to eat—and in New York there was exactly the same situation. These things made Him exceedingly sad, and He said: “The time will come in the near future when humanity will become so much more sensitive than at present that the man of great wealth will not enjoy his luxury, in comparison with the deplorable poverty about him. He will be forced, for his own happiness, to expend his wealth to procure better conditions for the community in which he lives.”

—*Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, by Annamarie Honnold, pp. 67-68



A Prayer by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O Thou beloved of my heart and soul!
I have no refuge save Thee. I raise no voice at dawn save in Thy commemoration and praise. Thy love encompasseth me and Thy grace is perfect. My hope is in Thee.

O God, give me a new life at every instant and bestow upon me the breaths of the Holy Spirit at every moment, in order that I may remain steadfast in Thy love, attain unto great felicity, perceive the manifest light and be in the state of utmost tranquillity and submissiveness.

Verily, Thou art the Giver, the Forgiver, the Compassionate.

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