

" H E A V E N H A S B L E S S E D T H I S D A Y "

A Dramatic Script

by Hasan M. Balyuzi

- 1st Narrator Heaven has blessed this day.
- Spirit of Faith These were the words of the Master - Yes it was in London that He spoke these words. London - the first great capital of the Western World that He honoured with His presence.
- 2nd Narrator The Master - 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in London on September 4th 1911.
- Spirit of Faith Yes, it was on a Monday. In the evening His friends were gathered around Him, friends who had eagerly awaited His coming. There were two of them who had visited Him in the prison city of 'Akká: Maryam Thornburgh-Cropper and Ethel Rosenberg, the first two Baha'is of the British Isles. They had seen Him a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire, and now His majestic Figure moved in their midst in the great metropolis of the West. And I was there, for I was their Faith. I am the Faith of those who believe, those who recognise the Lord of the Age.
- 1st Narrator On that first day of their meeting, the Master told them:
- 2nd Narrator "I was tired when I went on board the steamer, but when I reached London and beheld the faces of the friends my fatigue left Me. Your great love refreshes Me. I am very pleased with the English friends."
- Spirit of Faith 97 Cadogan Gardens - the house that a devoted friend - Sara Louisa, Lady Blomfield to whom the Master gave the name - "Sitárih Khánum" - had prepared to receive Him.
- 1st Narrator To this home and its hostess came a cable from Irán - from the Spiritual Assembly of Tihiran - the city where the Lord of Hosts first looked upon the world - the first Spiritual Assembly, the first House of Justice of the Bahá'í World.
- 2nd Narrator "That the holy feet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá have crossed your threshold receive our felicitations. Blessed are ye."
- Spirit of Faith And to this home also came a tyrant from the same land - a tyrant at whose bidding the blood of martyrs had flowed in the far-off city of Yazd.
- 1st Narrator Prince Jalálu'd-Dawlih was the name of that tyrant - powerful and arrogant in his time.

- 2nd Narrator But now fallen from his seat of power and an exile. He entreated to be received by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- 1st Narrator And in the presence of the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, he threw himself on the ground.
- 2nd Narrator At the feet of the Master, he begged His pardon.
- Spirit of Faith Yes in that home, 97 Cadogan Gardens, we saw many a scene of supernal power, many a scene of divine compassion. Let Sitárih Khánum describe one such to you.
- Sitárih Khánum "One day a woman asked to be permitted to see the Master."
- Voice "Have you an appointment?"
- Woman's Voice "Alas! No."
- Voice "I am sorry, but He is occupied now with most important people, and cannot be disturbed."
- Sitárih Khánum "The woman turned away, feeling too humble to persist in her appeal, but oh! so bitterly disappointed. Before she had reached the foot of the stairway, she was overtaken by a breathless messenger from 'Abdu'l-Bahá."
- Voice "He wishes to see you, come back! He has told me to bring you to Him."
- Sitárih Khánum "We had heard His voice from the door of His audience room speaking with authority: 'A heart has been hurt. Hasten, hasten, bring her to Me!'"
- 1st Narrator Sitárih Khánum - Lady Blomfield - has also a moving story to tell of a visit to the barracks of 'Akká, in company of the Greatest Holy Leaf - the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh.
- Sitárih Khánum "Ágá Husayn, the cook, who had been with Bahá'u'lláh at Baghdád, and who had determined to accompany us, came to tell us reliable details about all the places, and scenes of the captivity. How can I convey the impression of this visit? The Saint Sister, daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Holy Mother, wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as they stood looking at the little, bare rooms, where their (and our) Beloved Ones were imprisoned. One imagined in what an intimate, poignantly heart-rending flood of memories they walked, as they gazed with grief-filled eyes upon this barrack building, the home for many years of those Two - destined to be the Great Educators of the world, West as well as East, the world which is also wet with tears The Greatest Holy Leaf, her eyes charged with memories, was with us while we listened. She had been there in that terrible time."
- 2nd Narrator This, Sitárih Khánum wrote down in May 1922. She had gone to the

Holy Land with Shoghi Effendi. It was ten years after that never-to-be-forgotten September of 1911, that the Master left His earthly Temple. Shoghi Effendi, His beloved grandson was in England and Sitárih Khánúm travelled with him to the Holy Land. There they came to know that he was the Guardian of the Cause of God, whose "shade shadoweth all mankind".

1st Narrator

And there Sitárih Khánúm heard from the lips of the Greatest Holy Leaf many a sorrow-laden story of harms and injuries which men inflicted upon their Lord. She heard of that long and hard journey over snow-clad peaks when Bahá'u'lláh first trod the road to exile.

Sitárih Khánúm

"Seeing tears in my eyes while listening to this story, the Greatest Holy Leaf said:

"This time is very sad, Ladyee. I shall make you grieve if I tell of it."

"Oh, I want to be with you in my heart through all your sadness," I said.

"Well, well! If I did not live in my thoughts all through the events of the sad days of our lives, I should have naught else in my life, for it has been all sorrow; but sorrow is really joy, when suffered in the path of God."

2nd Narrator

Twenty-three years had passed since the day when the first Bahá'í of the British Isles had come to the prison city of 'Akká to seek a Master of Whom she had heard but a few months before. Maryam Thornburgh-Cropper had come with fourteen others.

1st Narrator

Amongst them Louisa Gettsinger - the immortal "Livá", the mother teacher of the West, May Ellis Bolles - the illustrious May Maxwell - a martyr of future years, Robert Turner of imperishable memory - the first member of the Negro race to accept the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Spirit of Faith

I was there too, for I was their Faith. The Master lighted a torch in their hearts which shone ever bright, which shines ever bright throughout countless years.

2nd Narrator

Maryam Thornburgh-Cropper recounted many years after, that wonderful experience which was hers, to Sitárih Khánúm.

Maryam Thornburgh-Cropper

"We took a carriage after the night had fallen, and drove along the hard sand by 'way of the sea beyond Jordan', which led us to the gates of the prison city. There our trusted driver arranged for us to enter. Once inside we found the friends who were awaiting us, and we started up the uneven stairs that led to Him. Someone went before us with a small piece of candle, which cast strange shadows on the walls of this silent place. Suddenly the light caught a form that at first seemed a vision of mist and light. It was the Master which the candle-

light had revealed to us. His white robe, and silver, flowing hair, and shining blue eyes gave the impression of a Spirit, rather than of a human being. We tried to tell Him how deeply grateful we were at His receiving us. 'No,' He answered. 'You are kind to come.' Then He smiled, and we recognized the Light which He possessed in the radiance which moved over His fine and noble face. It was an amazing experience. We four visitors from the Western world felt that our voyage, with all its accompanying inconvenience was a small price to pay for such treasure as we received from the Spirit and words of the Master, Whom we had crossed mountains and seas and nations to meet. This began our work to 'spread the teaching', 'to mention the Name of Baha'u'llah, and acquaint the world with the Message'."

1st Narrator

And May Maxwell wrote of that epoch-making visit in 1898 - the first visit of Western pilgrims to the home of the Master.

May Maxwell

"Oh that first meeting! I can remember neither joy nor pain, nor anything that I can name. I had been carried suddenly to too great a height, my Soul had come in contact with the Divine Spirit, and this force, so pure, so holy, so mighty, had overwhelmed me.... We could not remove our eyes from His glorious face; we heard all that He said; we drank tea with Him at His bidding; but existence seemed suspended; and when He arose and suddenly left us, we came back with a start to life; but never again, Oh! never again, thank God, the same life on this earth."

2nd Narrator

Maryam Thornburgh-Cropper - the first Bahá'í of the British Isles - but the first of the English race to believe in Bahá'u'lláh, was Thomas Breakwell.

Spirit of
Faith

Thomas Breakwell - that pure flame of Spirit. "O my beloved, O Breakwell! Thou hast become a star in the most exalted horizon, a lamp among the angels of heaven, a living Spirit in the Supreme World and art established upon the throne of immortality!"

"O my adored one, O Breakwell! I mention thy name continually. I never forget thee. I pray for thee day and night and I see thee clearly and manifestly, O my adored one, O Breakwell."

So did the Master speak of him when he passed into worlds of light beyond the mortal sphere. He was young when he winged his flight.

1st Narrator

Thomas Breakwell - it was in Paris that he saw the light of the Faith of God, and the one who brought him to the light was May Maxwell.

2nd Narrator

The year was 1901 - Summer of 1901. The Master had told May that she was on no account to leave Paris. May's mother was indignant that the daughter would not accompany her to Brittany. She closed their home and left May alone in Paris.

1st Narrator

Thomas Breakwell was a young Englishman with a responsible post in a

cotton mill in South America. He came to Europe in that Summer of 1901, and a friend took him to visit May Bolles.

2nd Narrator

But let May tell you this strange story in her own words.

May Maxwell

"It was on a lovely summer day that, in response to a knock, I found Mrs. M. and Thomas Breakwell standing at my door, and my attention was riveted on this youth; of medium height, slender, erect and graceful, with intense eyes and an indescribable charm..... We spoke together for about half an hour of Theosophy - his work, his projected trip through Europe, and I discerned a very rare person of high standing and culture, simple, natural, intensely real in his attitude toward life and his fellowmen. Although no word of divine Revelation was spoken, and he assumed I was interested in Theosophy, yet he studied me with a searching gaze, and as they left, he asked me if he might see me the following day. He arrived the next morning in a strangely exalted mood, no veil of materiality covered this radiant soul - his eyes burned with a hidden fire, and looking at me earnestly he asked:

Breakwell

"Do you notice anything strange about me?"

May Maxwell

"Please be seated. You look very happy."

Breakwell

"When I was here yesterday, I felt a power, an influence that I had felt once before in my life, when for a period of three months I was continually in communion with God. I felt during that time like one moving in a rarefied atmosphere of light and beauty. My heart was afire with love for the supreme Beloved. I felt at peace, at one with all my fellow-men. Yesterday when I left you I went alone down the Champs Elysées. The air was warm and heavy; not a leaf was stirring, when suddenly a wind struck me and whirled round me, and in that wind a voice said with an indescribable sweetness and penetration:

Voice

"Christ has come again! Christ has come again!"

Breakwell

"Do you think I have gone crazy?"

May Maxwell

"No, you are just becoming sane."

1st Narrator

May told him of the advent of the Lord of Hosts, told him of the Master, of her own visit to the prison city of 'Akká, until -

May Maxwell

"His heart was filled with such longing that all his former life was swept away; he gave up his journey, cancelled his plans, and had but one hope in life - to be permitted to go himself and behold the face of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. And he wrote to the Master:"

Breakwell

"My Lord, I believe, forgive me. Thy servant, Thomas Breakwell."

May Maxwell

"That evening I went to the concierge of our apartment to get my

mail, and there lay a little blue cablegram from 'Abdu'l-Bahá! With what wonder and awe I read His words: 'You may leave Paris at any time'. Thus by implicit and unquestioning obedience in the face of all opposition, the Master's Will had been fulfilled, and I had been the link in the chain of His mighty purpose. How gratefully my heart dwells on the divine compassion of the Master, and the joy and wonder of my mother as I told her everything, and when she read the Master's cablegram she burst into tears and exclaimed:"

Voice

"You have indeed a wonderful Master."

2nd Narrator

Breakwell went to 'Akká and found all that he sought. He was no longer of this world. He gave up his post in South America. He returned to Paris to serve the Cause of God. And the love of the Cause consumed him. Let May Maxwell also conclude his wonderful story.

May Maxwell

"He was the first in the West to pay the Hugúg Living in a cheap and distant part of Paris he walked miles to the meetings and to the homes of friends to save his fare and make his contribution to the diffusion of the teachings. . . . He in the deepest sense shed his life for the Cause by which he was enthralled, and in a few brief months shattered the cage of existence and abandoned this mortal world."

Spirit of
Faith

"O my dear, O Breakwell! Where are thy bright eyes and where are thy smiling lips? Where are thy gentle cheeks and where thy graceful stature?"

"O my dearly beloved, O Breakwell! Thou hast been a divine bird and forsaking thy earthly nest, thou hast soared towards the holy rose-garden of the Divine Kingdom and obtained a luminous station there."

Thus did the Master speak of Thomas Breakwell.

1st Narrator

Thomas Breakwell - the first English believer; Maryam Thornburgh-Cropper - the first Bahá'í of the British Isles; and it was in her home during that memorable September of 1911, that the Master spoke of the Persian and the British nations.

Spirit of
Faith

Yes, it was on the 13th day of September. The master said:

"My coming here is the cause of amity between Persia and Britain. Perfect relationships will be established to such a degree that soon individual Persians will sacrifice their lives for the sake of Britain and in the same way the British will sacrifice themselves for Persia. . . I beseech God to make these two nations as brothers, that their relationships be such as to be eternal. Originally the Persians and the British were the same people; they were of the Aryan tribe and lived on the banks of the river. . . They moved into Persia and filled the land. The population increased,

and thence they journeyed to Caucasia. There again they increased in numbers and migrated to Europe. The British and the Persians are brothers. Thus there are many words of Persian origin in the English tongue. This fact indicates that they were one people. Now God has provided the means that these two nations should return to their original condition. Assuredly this will come to pass."

2nd Narrator

And now way back in time, there to find an Englishman, meeting the first Central Figure of the Bahá'í Dispensation - "the Primal Point", the Glorious Bab. Perhaps he was the only one from the West ever to meet the Martyr-Prophet of Shiráz.

1st Narrator

His name was Cormick, and he was a physician practicing his art of healing in Tabríz. There they brought the Báb to inflict upon Him the indignities of a mock trial.

2nd Narrator

Then they sent three physicians to report on his state of mind. Two of them were Persian, and one was Dr. Cormick, the English physician of Tabríz.

1st Narrator

Many years after this event, Dr. Cormick wrote of it to Dr. Benjamin Labanee of the American Presbyterian Mission in North Persia. He wrote:

Dr. Cormick

"..... The Báb was aware of my having been sent to see whether he was of sane mind or merely a madman, to decide the question whether to put him to death or not. With this knowledge he was loth to answer any questions put to him. To all enquiries he merely regarded us with a mild look, chanting in a low melodious voice some hymns, I suppose ... He only once deigned to answer me, on my saying that I was not a Musulman and was willing to know something about his religion, as I might perhaps be inclined to adopt it. He regarded me very intently on my saying this, and replied that he had no doubt of all Europeans coming over to his religion... He was a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious, soft voice, which struck me very much.... In fact his whole look and deportment went far to dispose one in his favour."

2nd Narrator

And it was also an Englishman who left on record the only pen-portrait of Bahá'u'lláh.

1st Narrator

Edward Granville Browne of the University of Cambridge. There were times when Edward Granville Browne made grave errors. Many a time he was misled by the Judas of this Dispensation. Many a time he failed to distinguish between truth and falsehood. And yet that pen-portrait which he drew of the Lord of the Day of Judgement has attained immortality.

2nd Narrator

He met Bahá'u'lláh in April 1890 in the Mansion of Bahjí. And to-day a visitor to that hallowed room where that meeting took place, can before entering the chamber, read the document which Browne has

bequeathed to posterity, as it is affixed to the wall, by the behest of the Guardian of the Cause.

Browne

"My conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going, and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner, where the divan met the wall, sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called 'táj' by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!"

1st Narrator

And now back again to that memorable September of 1911, when the Master - 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Son of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Centre of His Covenant - chose London, the vast metropolis of a vast Empire, to give His first public address to a Western audience.

2nd Narrator

That was on the 10th day of September - on a Sunday - and the scene was a Christian house of worship - the City Temple.

1st Narrator

The City Temple in High Holborn - now lying in ruins, a victim of the holocaust of the Second World War.

2nd Narrator

The holocaust which the world would have been spared, had it heeded the warnings of the Centre of Baha'u'llah's Covenant.

1st Narrator

There in the City Temple, the Master spoke. Do you recall His words?

Spirit of
Faith

Yes, yes, they reverberate through the corridors of time. He said: "O noble friends; seekers after God! Praise be to God! Today the light of Truth is shining upon the world in its abundance; the breezes of the heavenly garden are blowing throughout all regions; the call of the Kingdom is heard in all lands, and the breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful."

2nd Narrator

"The breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful."

Spirit of
Faith

And the Master declared from that pulpit: "This is a new cycle of human power... It is the hour of the unity of the sons of men

and the drawing together of all races and all classes... The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion... There is one God; mankind is one; the foundations of religion are one."

1st Narrator City Temple - September 10th, 1911. The Church of St. John the Divine, Westminster - September 17th.

2nd Narrator There the Master addressed the evening congregation at the request of Archdeacon Wilberforce. And after the address, the Archdeacon and following him the entire congregation, knelt to receive the Master's benediction.

1st Narrator Then they all stood singing the hymn, "O God our help in ages past", while the Master and the Archdeacon walked hand in hand down the aisle.

Spirit of Faith London! London! The great metropolis! What scenes, what scenes of abiding glory didst thou witness, which only generations to come will truly understand.

2nd Narrator And it was to this London where the Master first appeared before a Western audience, that grave news came in 1918.

1st Narrator News came that the Master's life was in danger.

2nd Narrator That same devoted hostess of 1911 - Sitárih Khánúm arose to avert that danger.

1st Narrator With the aid of Lord Lamington, the Foreign Office was apprised of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's position. And the same day, Lord Balfour, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs sent a cable to the General Assembly.

Voice "Extend every protection and consideration to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His family and His friends."

2nd Narrator And when forces under the command of General Allenby, reached Haifa, he cabled to London:

Voice "Notify the world that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is safe."

1st Narrator Then General Allenby visited Haifa and the Master. He and Lady Allenby were the Master's guests at a luncheon in Bahjí.

2nd Narrator The Master conducted them Himself to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

1st Narrator And let us recall another renowned British General who came to know of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and who righted a wrong of thirteen years standing.

2nd Narrator Gordon, the famous Gordon of Khartoum. There in Khartoum he found

innocent Bahá'ís who had suffered imprisonment and torture for the sake of their Beloved Lord.

- 1st Narrator Amongst them was the great teacher, the illustrious Háji Mírzá Haydar 'Alí whom in later years, the Western pilgrims to the Holy Land named the "Angel of Mount Carmel".
- 2nd Narrator At the instigation of enemies in Cairo, Háji Mírzá Haydar 'Alí and seven others had been arrested and sent in chains to Khartoum. They had suffered greatly.
- 1st Narrator As outcasts they had marched them into Khartoum, but theirs had been the triumph at the end. Friend and foe alike saw in Háji Mírzá Haydar 'Alí a man of God.
- 2nd Narrator He worked hard by his talents which were considerable, and became a rich man. But still, he and his companions were prisoners.
- 1st Narrator General Gordon set them free, and won such laurels that never fade.
- 2nd Narrator Khartoum in Sudan - Sudan in Africa. Khartoum enshrines memories of bitter suffering, also of joy and triumph.
- 1st Narrator And today it is to Africa that the energies of five National Bahá'í Communities are bent, by the guidance, the unerring guidance of the Guardian of the Cause of God.
- Spirit of Faith The followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the British Isles and His followers in the land of His birth, in the cradle of His Faith, the soil of which is drenched with the blood of the glorious Báb, the blood of twenty thousand martyrs, have joined hands to implant the banner of God in a Continent that has already been the scene of sufferings and triumphs in the path of Bahá'u'lláh. And the heavenly concourse rejoices.
- 2nd Narrator And amongst this immortal band of martyrs who gave up their precious lives with smiles on their lips, that the Will of God be done on this Earth as it is in Heaven, amongst them, amongst their cries of agony and their paeons of joy, hear the words of a child of twelve.
- 1st Narrator They tore open his father's chest in front of his eyes, and told him to recant. He only wished to join his father, to drink to its dregs the cup of martyrdom.
- 2nd Narrator He had already voiced that intense desire in a poem of tender beauty.
- Voice Happy the day when in the field of love,
I offer my life for the Beloved of my love.
O blissful time when I openly proclaim
The name of my King, the name of Bahá, on the hangman's gallow.

1st Narrator Rúhu'llah Vargá, a child martyr of twelve. He foresaw the day when the Army of Life would march with standards aloft over the five continents of the globe.

2nd Narrator Listen to his words, listen to his call.

Voice O Friends, use the time opportune,
And rally to the aid of the Cause of Truth.
Strive, O Friends, that the signs of the Lord of Might
Would spread over the face of the Earth.

O Friends of Bahá! Face the world,
With banners of guidance raised.

1st Narrator Heaven Has Blessed This Day!

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