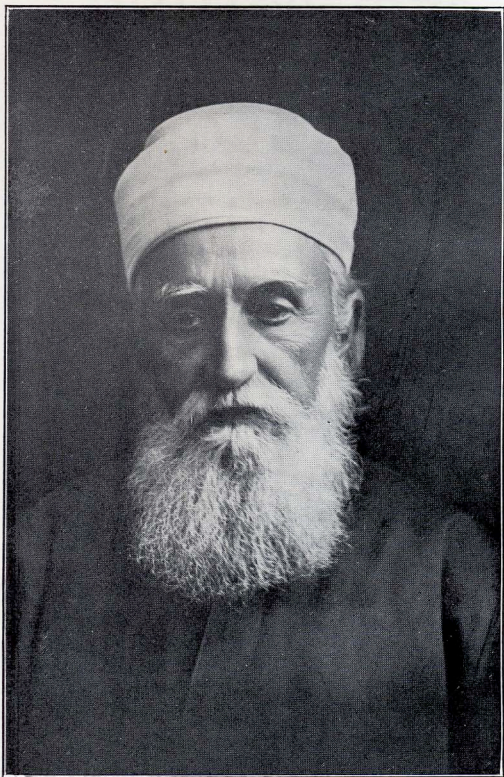


THE COMING OF "THE GLORY"



ABDUL BAHÁ
The Servant of "THE GLORY."

THE COMING
of
"THE GLORY"

(As described in the Bahai Writings)

By
FLORENCE E. PINCHON

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PREFATORY NOTE

IN this little volume is presented in a concise and picturesque form the story of a remarkable Movement which is attracting the attention of enlightened and progressive minds in every part of the world. Here live for us the Great Ones who were the channels for this vital message of peace, brotherhood, and world unity.

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THE COMING OF "THE GLORY"

CHAPTER I

THE ARGUMENT AND PROLOGUE

THERE were five of us gathered on the lawn beneath the shade of the old elm tree, on that summer afternoon, all students at the university, and, as it happened, representing in our more specific interests, Science, History and Religion, with Mary, perhaps, to personate Intuition or Heart. I was, so to speak, the odd man, and these were my special friends.

We had been idly discussing many things—sport, politics, literature and art; until, plucking up courage, I ventured to ask: "Have you fellows ever heard of the Golden Age?"

Their answer was a shout of laughter. But I was not dismayed, for I felt I had something to say on the subject.

"The Golden Age!" exclaimed Oliver, the budding scientist of our little party. "It makes me think of chasing butterflies on a day like this ;

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or of lambs—not lying down with the wolf—but frisking about among the daisies in the spring."

"The phrase," contributed Arthur, who was specializing in history, "always conjures up for me a vision of my old nursery—a guarded fire, a tawny rug, and a small boy poring over a brightly-coloured book of fairy tales. Curiously enough, I never can dissociate the Golden Age from the sailing of the Argo and the quest of the Holy Grail. It somehow seems to imply a spirit of romance and adventure; a childlike or poetic soul for belief in its possibility."

Peter, whose father had destined him for the Church, declared: "It makes me think of the Coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. How preposterous it sounds though, doesn't it? And some words in the Old Testament: 'The glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.' Perhaps that is a forecast of something of the kind, Ay?"

And the youngest, swinging gently in the hammock, concluded: "It may be just a myth; but one likes to believe that such a time might come some day, in some way, as one likes

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to believe in love and in survival after death."

"Well, Socrates, I think that you ought, first of all, to give us your pet version of the subject. How, to begin with, would you define this Golden Age?" demanded Oliver.

"The Golden Age seems to me," I answered, "like a new Spiritual Spring-time for the world. The dawn of a new day or of another cycle in human history, in which righteousness shall reign on the earth, and a new civilization, such as the world has never before known, replace the old. A time when universal peace shall be established, and the oneness of all mankind, irrespective of colour, class or creed, be recognised. When all religions shall have become purged of their materialism, dogma and superstition, and shall have realised that in essence they are one. When science, harmonizing with a purified religion, shall have become a great unifying, cleansing force. When liberty, justice, universal education and a universal language shall be the order of the day. When love and wisdom, gradually gaining dominance over our animal natures, shall eradicate social evils, poverty and disease, and solve

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our economic problems. When inventions, discoveries, science and art, directed to constructive, instead of destructive purposes, and inspired by noble ideals, shall unite to create a 'new earth.' "

"Humph! That's a truly wonderful picture, old man," exclaimed Oliver. "You have, in fact, sat with the poet 'in a golden chair, and splashed at a ten-leagued canvas with brushes of comet's hair.' But if you 'worked for an age at a sitting and never were tired at all,' you couldn't hope to produce anything like that in the world. For there are, I beg to point out, several simple facts that would make the realization of such a beautiful state of affairs impossible. Human nature would have to undergo a pretty drastic change to begin with. And in biology there is no evidence at all to prove that it can ever change—radically."

"Yet isn't change the law of life? Transmutation and change are requirements of life. Modern science teaches that even minerals are subject to this law. That changes, either slow or gradual, or seemingly sudden and dramatic, are going on continuously among creatures of all grades. Minerals

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melt at boiling point—the solid becomes a liquid, the liquid a gas, the seed germinates, the grub grows wings, the babe is born. And as you have read, I think, Professor Drummond's 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World,' I am sure you will be ready to admit that the same great law applies in the finer realms of being to the higher life of the soul of man. Under certain influences a person's whole life—view-point, desire and activity—has been known to radically alter. Our bodies completely change every seven years. Why should human nature alone be a static thing? "

" You mean," observed Peter, " that a man can become, as the Bible puts it, ' born again ' or converted into a higher type."

" Certainly. And the transformation with him also may be effected, either by the sudden flash that, for instance, transmuted a Saul into a Paul, or by the more gradual process that made an apostle of your (excuse me) somewhat cowardly namesake.

" Besides, religion and education are both based on the assumption that human nature *can* be changed, indeed completely transformed."

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"You seem to have forgotten, old chap, that we have had a world war and quite disproved your beautiful assumption," remarked Arthur. 'Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar' is true of us all. Neither psychology nor sociology support your argument. War, the outcome of fear and greed, is apparently an ingrained instinct—a kind of biological necessity. All the records of history teach one that."

"But history can show us the evolution of an idea. No doubt primitive man thought like you as he slew his brother. Then forced to realise that only by co-operation could he preserve his own life, he united with his kindred to form a tribe. Then tribes united for mutual safety, then countries, then nations. And now the late war has taught us that international co-operation and peace are absolutely essential to the maintenance of civilization itself. As a certain well-known writer has pointed out: to-day is a race between education in these ideals or complete world catastrophe."

"But shall we succeed in the race? Think of the changes that must be effected in human character and affairs

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before this one ideal can be realised, to say nothing of all the others ! ”

“ All these ideals I have outlined are really interdependent. The attainment of one involves and necessitates the attainment of the others. And, I frankly admit, apart from religion and the operation of spiritual forces within man himself, there is no hope of my Golden Age.”

“ True, my friend,” said Peter. “ But what is religion ? As you know, I’m destined for a Protestant Church. My chum at college expects, one day, to become a Rabbi. And the other, whenever we discuss religion, swears by the Koran. We all agree that we ought to love God and one another ; but beyond that we don’t know where we are. What we are taught appears out-of-date—a mixture of dogma and credulity, and some of it contrary to reason.”

“ Unhappily that is so. Love, itself is fundamental to all the world’s great Faiths. But the outward ordinances and laws alter according to the times in which they were given. For even religions, you know, are subject to that great law of creation—change. Take a flower. It comes forth from the seed in springtime ; it reaches a state of

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maturity, then dies. A man develops until he attains a certain age, then begins to decline. The same is true of the world's chief religions. They are initiated by a Moses, a Christ, a Mohammed. They blossom out, fulfil their guiding, educative, transforming mission, reach their zenith, then begin to fade away ; their pure outlines blurred by changing conditions of human need, by narrow conceptions and materialistic interpretations."

" You imply then that this must be the old age or winter, so to speak, of all religions, as we know them ? "

" Yes. But taking an analogy again from nature—if Winter comes, Spring must swiftly follow. Her seeds are already germinating warm beneath the snow, ready to burst forth simultaneously into new life of all kinds, when the sun shines again. Yet it is not so much a new life, as life renewed."

" I see," struck in Oliver, " that's what you mean by a spiritual Spring-time. A kind of re-birth of everything—like a bud bursting into flower, a caterpillar into a butterfly—old ideas and modes of life getting completely transformed, and things speeding up

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until humanity too bursts into what—
an angel ? ”

“ Into a finer, deeper state of consciousness quite different from the old. Into the flowers of human nature, which are spiritual qualities. Or, to put it scientifically, into a higher rate of vibration. This higher vibration implying a condition of aspiring energy, peace and harmony, goodwill and love.”

“ I have just been trying to remember,” came thoughtfully from the hammock, “ some of the various books I have read on the social conditions of the future ; books by Bellamy, Wells, Shaw and many modern prophets, to say nothing of the poets. I think Walt Whitman believed in the dawn of a new and finer social order ; Tolstoi said that all the faiths would, eventually, have to come into one humane universal faith.”

“ Yes,” added Arthur, “ and one naturally approves of much that is written by the idealists and thinkers of to-day. But the trouble is that they don't all agree in their ideas. Some of their ‘ forecasts ’ are positively alarming. While even the Utopias leave much to be desired—were their materialisation possible.”

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"That, I think, is only natural, because, however clear their vision may be they are but mortals and see 'through a glass darkly' or just through one small pane."

"Then take all the numerous societies and 'isms' that are working for constructive purposes. Yet how divergent their ideas! And each one seems so sure that their particular method is the best. But do you honestly think that, if to-morrow the whole world could turn, say—either Christian Scientist or Theosophist, New Thought or Spiritualist, Second Adventist or Socialist, Communist or Vegetarian, or join one of the Leagues for peace and freedom, that all its problems would thereby be solved?"

"No. Not by a long way," I answered. "For the simple reason that the panaceas and remedies each offer for the world's sickness are only partial ones, and the medicines themselves are often blended with undesirable elements. Or attention is focused upon only one or two of our vast modern problems, while others equally important, are neglected. Each reflects, as it were, more or less clearly some ray of Truth, but none the whole sun."

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"Then perhaps it needs," pursued Arthur, "what Sir Philip Gibbs in his 'Hope of Europe' suggests—a unification of all these progressive movements. Some focal point where all could find a common centre, as an axis is the focal point of a wheel. Some authoritative spiritual leadership to unite them, so that differences could merge in one supreme loyalty—a unity in diversity. But he does not see how it could be done—neither do I."

"Had we been left without clear guidance and to our own devices," I said, "there is no doubt that, for an indefinite period of time, we should continue to have this tangled mass of cross purposes in religion and education, in political, social and governmental affairs. Our leaders would maintain an endless struggle with overwhelming difficulties and no coherent policy. The garden of man would remain more or less a jungle."

"But where," demanded Peter, "is clear guidance to be found, and is there a way out?"

"Yes. I believe there is. But for it we shall have to come back to religion. You remember those words in Isaiah :—

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"My thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

"Oh," he exclaimed, "you do believe in the Bible then! I wish one could understand it better. Don't you think that Jesus predicted the last war and the other world troubles when he spoke of:—

"Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth."

"I could quote you, too," he continued eagerly, "ever so many passages in the Old and New Testaments, which seem to refer to some special period of time, or some particular event, but when or what nobody really knows—or if they think they do—their explanations are unconvincing. Joel, for instance, says:—'Verily the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?'

"And Jeremiah:—'Alas, for the

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day is great, so that none is like it.' Then there is that verse in Daniel which speaks of the Day of Preparation, and 'the time of the end' when 'many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.' Then there are all the predictions about the Jews going back to Palestine; and the signs by which we should know that a Second Advent was near, given by Christ Himself.

"Once I asked our Bishop whether these were those 'last days' referred to. 'Certainly,' he said, 'for we are living in most amazing times.'

" 'Then,' I replied, 'of course you are trying to prepare people for the Coming of the Son of Man. For didn't Christ say that by these things we should recognise that "the hour of your redemption draweth nigh."'

"He just stared at me in astonishment and remarked—'Oh, my dera boy, I am glad you know your Bible so well. It means that His Holy Spirit will come again in our hearts. "The kingdom of heaven is within you" you remember.'

"In a way, I suppose, he was right. But it didn't really explain anything. And when, the other evening, I heard that wonderful 'Hallelujah Chorus,' by

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Handel, and thought about the words afterwards, I simply couldn't see how they referred, as we are told, to Jesus. You all know them, of course.

It goes :—

. . . . "The Government shall be upon his shoulders. And his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." . . .

"For war has never ceased, nor its cessation even thought of since A.D.—until quite within recent years. Nor has it been His precepts that obtained governments and councils. Far from it!

"Anyway, I don't think orthodox Christians, as a whole, hold any definite ideas of or belief in the fulfilment of these prophecies. And of course, they are rather vague . . ."

He stopped abruptly, quite out of breath.

"Not so much 'vague' perhaps," I observed, "as 'veiled' by clouds—the clouds of preconceived and limited ideas. As a rule prophecy is never understood, save by a few, until after its fulfilment. Sometimes not even then. Take the Jews. You remember Christ said :

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"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he will take the things that are mine and reveal them unto you."

"There is to be a progressive revelation, you see. As a matter of fact, not only our own Bible, but all the sacred scriptures of all the world's chief religions contain references, both clear and veiled, to the 'Coming' of a new day or age, at the time of the advent of another Messiah or Messenger of God. And the adherents of these religions are, like ourselves, perplexed, at variance, expectant. In many hearts all over the world there is a genuine longing for some divine deliverance; a belief, although indefinite and blind, in its possibility."

"Now I come to think of it," observed Mary, "there is a kind of expectancy 'in the air'—a feeling that something might be going to happen on a big scale. Everything around us and we, ourselves, seem to be changing so quickly, we scarcely know where we are—so to speak."

"Those who care to do so," I replied, "can see that profound changes are

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rapidly taking place in all human ideas, relationships and institutions. For instance, H. G. Wells has recently pointed out that 'there is a biological revolution in progress of far profounder moment than any French or Russian revolution.' And this will ultimately have the effect of so preserving and prolonging life that it will alter our whole outlook. It is evident that there is a universal disturbance and awakening. New aspirations are inspiring every department of human activity. Religion is broadening and showing an inclination to become more unified. Indeed, all the signs point to the fact that we are entering into a stupendous, universal renaissance—the Springtime of a world."

"Then you consider that these are all indications of the approach of an age called by some the Millennium?" asked Arthur.

"I believe them to be the effects of a great spiritual, but, as yet, generally unrecognised Cause and Dynamic; the beginning of a big advance by humanity; the coming in of the Golden Age.

"Then," I continued, "Nature provides us with endless analogies. Watch that moving amœba, how it projects

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forward on its pathway a finger-like filament! See the strain on that foremost point, as the whole body pulls forward to a definite, though to us, infinitesimal advance. Humanity is not unlike the amœba, time after time projecting out into its future path a great filament—a pioneer-idealist. The weight and strain of the body of humanity is laid upon him. And the advance can only be made if, on the one hand, he holds absolutely true to the Light within him, true to the goal desired; and on the other, binds closely to him with the bonds of love and compassion, the inert minds and hearts of men. If these conditions prevail, the world follows him.

“Thus it is with the Saviours of the race—with Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, and in a lesser degree, with all the pure souls who are their followers in spirit. They are the mighty Filaments of humanity, the Movers of mountains, the Leaders and Dynamic Force of progress.”

“You infer then,” remarked Oliver, “that great cycles in human history are always initiated by, or the result of some Manifestation of what you call

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GOD appearing in the world of men and acting as—a lever? "

" Just so. Moses, as you know, laid the foundations of Jewish law ; Jesus initiated the Christian era ; Mohammed made of savage tribes the mighty Arabian civilization."

" But," Peter objected, " we Christians have always understood that Jesus Christ was the one and only Saviour or Manifestation of God to men."

" And Moslems think the same of Mohammed," I replied, " the Jews also of Moses. But do you think it reasonable to believe that God, the Eternal Spirit, should have revealed his Will and Purpose only once throughout all the countless centuries of human evolution ? Did not the vast empire of China, whose beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity, need the wisdom and humane ethics of a Confucius ; the diverse peoples of India the illumination of a Buddha ; the ancient kingdoms of Persia the purity of a Zoroaster ; the wild Arabs the restraining influence of a Mohammed ? Might not all these have been sent by a Supreme Intelligence as Educators and Guides to mankind, leading them forward on the

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endless pathway of spiritual progress and development ? ”

“ But,” struck in Oliver, “ what you call GOD is not an Entity, but a great creative Energy—the vital essence of Life itself, and so quite beyond human knowledge and comprehension.”

“ Certainly. Both science and philosophy agree that to knowledge of this Divine Essence ‘ the way is barred and the road impassable.’ How dare one pretend to define or describe the infinite First Cause ? Yet are its effects everywhere apparent. Creation is a continuous emanation of the bounty of this originating Will ; and it is evident to science that throughout the universe one increasing and unchanging Purpose runs. Everything, in its degree, reflects this unknown Power, as material objects reflect the light of the sun. A stone reflects Him. In the savage we can trace the faculties that speak of a wonderful Creator. Geniuses, poets, saints—above all the Founders of world religions reveal His attributes. These last, as pure mirrors, transmit His Image to mankind in the highest and most perfect degree.”

“ Well then, my dear chap,” cried Arthur, “ where is this Mighty Fila-

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ment or Perfect Mirror of whom you speak? Where are we to find the guidance and leadership that a whole world could and would acknowledge—that focal point?"

"Why," exclaimed Peter, "for this it seems to me, we should need nothing less than Carlyle's 'fresh revelation,' and that in terms of a new world's understanding—a spiritual unifier, another educator, such as you described, but this time for all humanity—in fact a Universal Messiah!"

"You are right!" I said, "And what I want you to let me do now, is to give you a few facts of modern history, which will, I feel sure, convince any unprejudiced, reasoning mind, that to our weary, chaotic world God has already granted that 'fresh revelation.' That our mighty need has been met by a mighty supply. That a Messenger has come, as He was promised in our own and other scriptures. A divinely-inspired programme, and principles, capable of universal application, ideally practical, all-comprehensive, are laid before us. A new spiritual dynamic is pulsating through the arteries of mankind to-day, which will enable us to rise above former conditions of earth

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life, into a finer consciousness. And this will imply the incorporation of all these ideals and principles into every day life and activities.

“For to-day is, in truth, the ‘day of the Lord’ so long foretold, though the clouds of ignorance, prejudice, and indifference as yet hide His Glorious Face. He has come ‘as a thief in the night’ and we have forgotten or neglected to watch. The glory of the Golden Age already glimmers across the hilltops. And with your help, ‘ere you are old and grey and full of sleep,’ the visions of the poets, prophets, saints, this goal towards which humanity is journeying, these noble aspirations of the brightest and best among us, this ‘far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves’—will have begun to materialize. And the world will have, at least, entered the threshold of an era of unity, peace, happiness and progress such as it ‘hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.’

“Now I will let History speak for itself. The sun is the proof of its own shining.”

CHAPTER II

NIGHT

STANDING now, as we believe, in the morning hours of a new era in history, it is difficult, indeed almost painful, to glance backwards and recall the gloomy winter of materialism and discontent which lay over Europe and the world generally, during the 18th and the larger part of the 19th centuries. So quickly and drastically have conditions altered, that these past centuries seem already submerged in the ocean of oblivion.

But at this time, the world, by bitter antagonisms and prejudices, was riven, like the surface of a giant glacier, into innumerable and dangerous fissures. Fissures which threatened, even then, to widen into a world cataclysm. Herein lurked yawning abysses of wars, revolutions and agnosticism, into which humanity was constantly stumbling. Guides were few, and the lights that still shone were feeble and uncertain. Cold mists enveloped the minds of

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men—the mists of racial, religious, sectarian, patriotic and class hatred and prejudice.

Universal peace was, as yet, undreamt of as a possibility. Sympathies were confined within national bonds. The ideals of brotherhood in the social world and co-operation in the economic, were unrecognised. And education for the poorer classes was rudimentary or grossly lacking.

The discoveries of modern science had disclosed to thinking people the bigotry and superstitions enclosing, like a hard shell, the pure gem of religion. And, in disgust, they threw the gem itself away. As Carlyle, when writing of the 18th century pointed out :—

“ There was need once more of a Divine Revelation to the torpid and frivolous children of men, if they were not to sink altogether into the ape condition.”

Revolutions, strife, lust, greed, economic rivalries and bitter animosity between science and religion were denizens of this almost starless night.

How striking are the contrasts presented by even the material conditions of those days and ours! As we rise from

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the earth and spread our shining wings, or with lightning speed flash by in our motor-cars, we gaze back with pitying surprise at the lumbering stage-coach and the early railroads of the days of Dickens.

From the freedom of modern womanhood, we recall with a wondering smile, the foolish restrictions and conventions, the crinolines and manners of the early Victorian era.

Facing the marvels of radio and the recent astounding discoveries of science regarding ether and energy, vibration and light, we remember the days of the first telegraph and postal services. From our luxurious liners and express trains that seem almost to annihilate distance, we recall the times when to ordinary folk a journey anywhere was in the nature of an adventure!

With scarcely a track of land on the globe unexplored, to recall the days when intrepid men still sought pathways to the Poles, and Livingstone toiled through menacing jungles, where, to-day hover aeroplanes or rattles the Cape to Cairo "through."

Surely, during the last eighty years, the revolving wheel of Time has spun with amazing rapidity; set into a

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quickened and ever-increasing motion by that mysterious spiritual Power that is now revitalising and renewing the face of the whole earth.

PERSIA.

In Persia also, at this period, the night was at its darkest, as it always is just before the dawn. To most of us Persia seems a somewhat remote, unknowable land. It is, possibly, associated in our minds with a glamoured jumble of the colourful tales of the "Arabian Nights," a peacock throne, roses and nightingales, lovely carpets and Omar Khayyam.

Or perchance, recalling a little history, we remember the Pass of Thermopylæ; the ancient military glories of a vast and imperious empire; the fame and splendour of Xerxes and Darius, of Artaxerxes and Prince Cyrus; and the conquering Nadir Shah, who, in his last triumph, sweeping through India, brought back the most precious and glittering trophy ever wrenched from its rightful owners—the said peacock throne.

But alas! This famous land has fallen from all its former proud estate,

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and during the last century, had sunk to the depths of utter decadence and depravity. The country was governed by a feudal system similar to that of England in the Middle Ages. Government and the administration of justice were utterly inefficient and hopelessly corrupt. Pillage and robbery were of common occurrence and life everywhere was unsafe. Bribery and dishonesty pervaded all departments of social and political life. Education was shockingly neglected. Women were kept in ignorance and seclusion, and were not permitted in the streets unless enveloped in a heavy black veil covering the head and whole body, called a "chadur." As a certain writer has described them :—" Like black, shapeless phantoms they steal silently along in the shadow of the walls."

Yet are the Persians a naturally gay people, fond of meetings and fêtes, of music and flowers. They are fine horsemen and love sport ; they are hospitable and friendly, with charming manners and remarkable courtesy. That this charm can conceal treachery and even cold-blooded cruelty, earning the Persian the title of "courtly primitive" is due, very largely, to the

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decadence of his religion and the tyranny and corruption of his government. For the same reason lying had come to be "almost part of the instinct of self-preservation." An easy, somewhat natural process, for the Persian speech is extremely ornate, from our viewpoint, embellishment, amplification and beautiful poetical allusion forming part of its very fabric.

It is, therefore, a land where poets receive their full meed of appreciation ; the shrines of the most venerated being often places of pilgrimage. Among the most famous, one calls to mind the two poets of Shiraz—Hafiz, who gave to the world perfect models of lyrical composition ; Sa'di whose ghazals are rich in spiritual thought, sparkling wit and graceful expression. While the allegorical and mystical poems of Jeláhuddin-Rumi, the Sufi, are sublime in ideas and utterance.

But—and it is a very significant but—at the time of which I am writing, religion, which in the East is by far the most important factor in civilization, had become utterly degenerate. Religion is a source of inspiration and an integral part of Eastern life to an extent that we of the West can scarcely

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imagine. Mohammedanism, the prevailing religion, was split—like Christianity—into a number of rival sects, of which the Shi'ite was the principal or state form. The spirit of its Founder, and the pure essence of his teachings had become over-laid and lost beneath a mass of mere ritual and ceremonies, gross superstition and perversion. The priests were corrupt, bigoted and self-seeking ; but so great was their hold over the illiterate masses that even government had to submit to their dictates. The Moslem reviled and regarded as unclean all men of different faiths to his own. Picture him actually washing the money he had taken from a Jew or a Christian before putting it in his pocket ! Similarly the Jews hated and cursed the Moslems and Christians, while the Zoroastrians regarded their fellow-countrymen as unworthy of association. Thus was this unhappy country shrouded in intense moral and spiritual gloom.

These were the dark conditions prevailing in the land which had, at this time, been chosen by God in His inscrutable wisdom, as the stage whereon was to be enacted the sublimest Drama of the Ages. The very sombreness of

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the background serving but to enhance the Radiance which would illuminate it "above the brightness of the sun at noonday."

For, amid such a state of affairs as this, in some souls the flame of pure religion burnt brightly. Here and there throughout the country were to be found groups of people, many of them highly cultured and gifted, who had kept their spiritual vision clear. Men and women who longed for the coming of God's kingdom upon earth ; and who believed in the promises made in the Koran, as in our own Scriptures, that a Mahdi or Messiah would soon come to men in order to establish a reign of righteousness and peace. With hearts torn by the terrible materialism and corruption around them, they waited and watched for signs of the long-expected Coming. And in 1843, some among them set out, like the three wise men, on a long and definite search for this Master of a New Day, this Star of Guidance and of the Morning.

In the Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred writings of India, we read :—

. . . . " Whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and

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injustice in the world, then I incarnate from age to age, for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness."

And in the hour of the world's darkness, in the hour of Persia's midnight, there was a great cry heard:—

"Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him!"

FOREWORD

THURSDAY, 23rd May, 1844 (corresponding in the Mohammedan calendar to the 5th Jamadiul Awal, 1260 A.H.) was destined to be a memorable day in the history of Persia and of the world.

On the evening of this day, in the city of Shiraz—home of poets and ancient seat of Persian culture—the patient search of one of the wise men, the learned Mullah Husayn, came to a joyously successful end. For, behold! here he found a youth of twenty-four, whose utter purity of life, profoundly inspired utterances, intuitive knowledge and wisdom, brilliant writings and wonderful power of attraction, coupled with remarkable beauty of face and form, amply fulfilled everyone of the ten signs by which the Seekers were to recognise the new Prophet, His name was Mirza Ali Mohammed, and he was a Sayyid, that is, a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed.

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The same evening, at Teheran, in the household of Mirza Hussain Ali of Noor—afterwards known as Baha'u'llah—was born his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, afterwards known as Abdul Baha.

On the morning of the next day, as though the West made material response to the spiritual proclamation of the East, there flashed round the world the first telegraphic message in the words—"What hath God wrought!" but neither Persia nor the world knew then what infinite gift had been bestowed upon a warring, divided humanity. What all-encircling bond of Unity was even then streaming forth from the realms of Light and Love to bind "the whole round earth by gold chains about the feet of God."

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CHAPTER III

THE MORNING STAR

"Before the coming of each one of the Mirrors of Unity, the signs of that Manifestation appear in the outward heaven, as well as in the inward heaven, which is the station of the Sun of Knowledge, the Moon of Wisdom, and the Stars of Significances and Utterance. It is the appearance of a perfect man, before every Manifestation, to train and prepare the servants for the meeting of that Sun of Divinity and Moon of Unity."

(Bahai Scriptures, P. 22).

"And the glory of God came into the house by the way of the gate, whose prospect is towards the East."

(Ezekiel, Chap : 43, v. 4).

It is the month of December, 1844, and Mecca, the sacred centre of pilgrimage and holy city of Islam, is more than usually crowded. Streams of caravans have, for weeks past, been

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pouring in along all the main routes—from Cairo, Damascus, Irak, and from the Port of Jiddeh on the Red Sea, some 45 miles away.

The pilgrim bands are weary, weary also the heavily-laden camels and mules. For the journey along the scorching dusty highways and through the endless labyrinths of valleys and passes intersecting the rough ramparts of hills, has been for most of them a long and hazardous undertaking.

But at length, from the summit of the Red mountain, which immediately overlooks the city, the vast courtyard of the Great Mosque, crowned with its seven minarets, bursts suddenly into view. For the great square, surrounded by numberless colonnades and spacious arcades, dominates all other features of Mecca, and is its sole centre and focus.

To-day the terraced roofs of the numerous houses enclosing this space are thronged, mainly with women; while a waving mass of white-robed humanity fills the square itself. For this is a day of special celebration, at the height of the pilgrim season.

An endless chain of new arrivals is passing round the Ka'ba—the chief sacred building—in order to kiss, as

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devout Catholics kiss the toe of the Pope, the venerated Black Stone, which is fixed into an exterior angle of the wall.

Mullahs and mendicants, sheikhs and dervishes, Persian and Arabian divines; poor, travel-worn devotees, merchants and hangers-on of the bazaars, jostle and crush one another in their efforts to get near the slender gilt spire, crowning the white marble pulpit. For rumour has it, that a Youth of Shiraz, gifted with extraordinary wisdom and knowledge, is to address the people and expound 'the Book.'

All eyes in that vast concourse, gathered from every part of the Moslem world, are turned towards the spot where stands the erect and majestic figure of the young Prophet. His beautiful face, in which the dark brown eyes shine like stars, radiates a nobility and purity of purpose, impressing all who are fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of him. And when Sayyid Ali Mohammed begins to speak, a profound hush falls over the whole assembly.

In a voice of wonderful sweetness and reverence, he reads some suras from the Koran. Familiar verses they are ;

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but, as he reads, the words seem to glow with a new meaning, conveying other, deeper significances. Some are prophecies uttered by the Prophet Mohammed relating to the coming of the long-expected Mahdi, and others to the people's reception of the divine Messengers of God.

"Whenever a messenger cometh unto you with that which your souls desire not, ye proudly reject him, accusing some of imposture and slaying others."

"O the misery of men! No messenger cometh unto them but they laugh him to scorn."

Then the Preacher closes the Book, and begins, as 2000 years ago, in an ancient synagogue of Palestine, began another youthful Preacher to say:—"This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." With irresistible argument and brilliant proof, he proceeds to unfold to his hearers the true interpretations of these prophecies, and how they are, at this time, beginning to find their fulfilment.

He explains that the "resurrection" spoken of in the Koran (as in our own Bible) is not a physical thing, but expresses in a pictorial way, the

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awakening of souls dead in materialism and out-worn ideas. That this awakening is to be the sign of, and accompany, the advent of a divine Messenger. Hell is not a place, but a condition of selfishness, bigotry, doubt and indifference. Paradise is the recognition of God's Manifestation to men, and life lived in accordance with the teachings He gives.

Then in burning words of eloquence, such as none present have ever heard, he denounces the degradation and corruption into which religion had fallen, and the gross dishonesty of the clergy. He exhorts the people to cleanse their hearts and minds of man-made dogmas, meaningless rituals and ceremonies, trivial superstitions, and prepare themselves for the coming of a glad new age.

To deliver such a message in the supreme stronghold of these very rituals, superstitions, priestcraft, demanded, as none can fail to recognise, a God-like conviction and courage.

But listen ! What amazing news is this ? For now in tones like a great bell, the Preacher is announcing that he, himself, has been sent by God as a herald, to prepare the way for the

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coming of a Great One, still behind the Veil. He is but the "Bab" that is the "Gate," for the entrance of this Greatest Glory. "He whom God would manifest" is soon to make His Appearance among men, to usher in a new era, an age of universal unity and love. For those bitterly antagonistic sects, a saying hard indeed!

And hark! Now the Youth of Shiraz is uttering an impassioned prayer to that Great One "by whose will he moved, and to the bonds of whose love he clung."

"O my Master! O my Lord! I have accepted every persecution in order to prepare the people for Thy coming, so that when Thou shouldst unveil Thyself, they might be ready to meet Thee."

The effect of the Bab's wonderful words upon that vast audience is as diverse as it is remarkable. For let us picture to ourselves what would happen if, one day, someone mounted the pulpit of one of our principal churches, and with unmistakable authority, delivered to us lucid and wholly new explanations of the well-known sayings of Christ. Threw a

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fresh light upon obscure or disputed passages in the Old Testament, in Daniel or in Revelations. Then picture him finally announcing that prophecy was now being fulfilled, in that another Advent was about to take place "in the glory of the Father." Why, the bigoted among us would be shocked, the indifferent aroused, and all truly humble hearts enraptured, according to our spiritual and mental capacities to receive fresh ideas and a progressive revelation.

It is as though a dazzling searchlight of Truth sweeps over the assembly, flashing into all hearts, revealing their inmost thoughts, testing their essential worthiness.

There are many in the throng who already know the Bab. Some remember the luminous face of the young devotee, who, a few years before, had appeared at Karbala. Where, at the holy shrine of Imam Hossein, the martyred grandson of Mohammed, he had, with the utmost humility and reverence, uttered prayers of such sublime beauty and inspiration, that all the worshippers had turned to listen.

And the priests murmur, as did the scribes and pharisees before them : " Is

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not this an orphaned youth engaged in trade at Shiraz, whose uncle and guardian we well know ? How comes he to declare himself a Messenger from God ? "

Others again call to mind the rare purity and holiness of his daily life; the amazing erudition he had shown since early childhood ; the brilliant essays he wrote in Persian and Arabic, that astonished the scholars and learned men, howbeit his schooling had been of the scantiest.

While in the hearts of the clergy leapt the fierce flames of jealousy and fear, as they see their influence waning, their power, and the sources of their wealth being destroyed. Already they are plotting against him.

But one of those present—a man of clear spiritual insight—recognises in the Bab the serene and unusual fellow-passenger he had met on the boat, crossing the Red Sea. A violent storm had then arisen, threatening imminent ship-wreck. But apart from the other travellers, who became frantic with fear, this young man had sat alone, sunk apparently in a deep meditation. His serenity had made a remarkable impression. And soon after, the storm

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had ceased and all again been calm. This man becomes one of the Bab's most devoted disciples.

And some there are who had waited, longed and prayed for just such a new revelation of Truth. Into these prepared minds and hearts the searchlight flashes so radiant a conviction of the divine origin and authority of the Messenger and his Message, such an assurance and faith, that subsequent trials and martyrdoms of unparalleled cruelty are utterly unable to shake.

Meanwhile, the followers of the Bab have already begun to travel throughout the length and breadth of Persia, appealing to their fellow-countrymen to purify their hearts from prejudice, and accept the glad tidings of the dawn of a new spiritual dispensation.

A group of disciples, of whom Mullah Husayn was, as we know, the first, gather round the Bab, and with himself are called the

NINETEEN

LETTERS of the LIVING.

These are sent forth with special instructions and epistles written by the Bab, to teach and enlighten the Moham-medan world. Fearless, full of energy and enthusiasm, these early pioneers

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sacrifice their careers, and every earthly possession, in order to obey the Divine Call. They are continually taken into custody, ridiculed, bastinadoed, tortured, martyred. All this they accept as though their enemies offer precious incense.

Among them is KURRATU'L-AYN a beautiful and highly-gifted poetess, who withstands the power of the Shah, and proclaims the Cause with such inspired utterance that she wins all hearts. Finally she suffered, with radiant acquiescence, a violent death.

Then Mullah Sadig, an eminent Mohammedan and head of a Mosque, reads from his pulpit the Bab's illuminating interpretations of the Koran. And when, from the turret, the mohazin's voice rings out the call to prayer—"Allah is great and Mohammed is his Prophet!"—the Mullah bids him add: "And behold! hath there appeared a great Gate of Knowledge!" The fanatical priests are, naturally, indignant. The Governor summonses him to answer for these startling innovations before a large concourse in a public hall. So noble and dignified is his mien that all rise to do him deference. Whereupon this brave old man

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cries :—" You are all asleep! Rouse yourselves ! Listen to this Divine Call ! The One of whom our Scriptures speak is here. This is his Message." Cruel torture and banishment alone answer him.

But one could fill many volumes with the records of those whose names will, one day, be accorded an honoured place in the long scroll of religious history. " Letters " indeed they were—inscribed in deeds of daring rectitude, in eloquent utterances, in sublime devotion, in their own red blood—known and read of all men !

At twenty-three years of age, the Bab marries a girl of beautiful character, a relative of his family, who is deeply attached to him. The son born to them lives but a few months. Then, one night, their bedroom is violently broken into by a fanatical mob, led by the Mayor of the town. The Bab is dragged from his bed and out of the house, without a word of explanation. And this is the last of her beloved husband the girl-wife is ever to see !

Now the Prophet, banished from his home at Shiraz, travels to Ispahan, an important town in the heart of the country. Although his coming has

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been unannounced, rumour precedes him, and the people run out to meet him and fall at his feet. The Governor, a truly religious man, welcomes him, afterwards becoming a believer.

Wonderful days for the Cause follow. Here, doors are thrown open and all who will are allowed to freely visit the Bab and listen to his glowing words. Many notables and divines arrive. Numberless questions are asked—both trivial and abstruse. But the Prophet answers all with such wisdom and insight that the inquirers are amazed, and can grasp but fragments of the rich feast of knowledge spread before them. Or, without a moment's reflection, the replies are written with the speed of lightning, and yet with a penmanship that exhibits the art in its perfection. For, we remember, that writing is regarded as an art in Persia, and admired, as we would, a fine painting in oils or water-colours.

But as the Bab's wisdom, knowledge and love attract more and more people to his adherence, the attitude of the mullahs grows increasingly threatening. At length, they compel the Governor to consent to his exile. So Manoucher Khan, a good man, but fearful,

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orders the guards escorting him to leave the city by one gate, but secretly bring their prisoner back by another. Therefore here, in the Governor's palace he remains a prisoner-guest for forty days. Then the kindly ruler dies and the Shah orders the Bab's removal to Tihiran, the capital.

But these repeated banishments serve but to spread the new message. A conflagration of divine fire sweeps through the land. No matter how secret the Bab's removal is kept by the authorities, rumour of his approach precedes him. The people, taking risks which daily increase, seek to attain his meeting. As strict orders are given that the Bab must not be allowed to enter the towns and villages passed on the long journeys from province to province, the guards strike camp outside. But whether by day or by night, believers are waiting to greet him; bribing the guards for permission to listen, but for a few minutes, to that beloved voice and to receive his precious blessing.

On one occasion, the band of wild, unlettered tribesmen, who had been selected to escort the Bab on a further banishment to northern Persia,

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become, ere the journey's end, his ardent adherents. When Christians are chosen, hoping that they will prove indifferent to a prophet of Islam, the same thing happens.

It is the Bab's great desire to be permitted to address the Shah himself. What grand opportunities for reform and enlightenment for the whole nation might result would the Persian court pay heed to the divine commands! Alas! enemies prevent the meeting. But Nasr-ed-din-Shah, although fiendishly cruel, was enterprising, as his numerous buildings and edifices in the capital bear witness. Resolved to obtain some reliable information concerning the young divine, he selects an eminent chief priest, in whom he has confidence, and dispatches him to investigate the matter.

But the old man, having heard the Bab speak, falls at his feet, enraptured, and humbly begs to be accepted as a follower. He had found a prisoner whose humiliations, scourgings, exiles, cannot conceal the majesty of his spiritual kingship, and for whom it was a privilege to live, or to die, as he does, a martyr.

Now set in a tide of persecution.

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Daily helpless Babis, in all parts of the country, suffer for their faith: be-headed, hanged, chopped to pieces, blown from the mouths of cannon, tortured in every conceivable form—of whom the world was not worthy. And, as ever, the blood of the martyrs is but the seed of their Cause.

There is a remarkable passage, regarded as authentic by the Shi'ite Mohammedans themselves, quoted in Prof. E. G. Browne's "New History of the Bab."

"In him shall be the perfection of Moses, the preciousness of Jesus, and the patience of Job. His saints shall be abased in his time, and their heads shall be exchanged as presents . . . they shall be slain and burned and shall be afraid, fearful and dismayed; the earth shall be dyed with their blood, lamentation shall prevail amongst their women; these are my saints indeed."

About this time occurs an event unparalleled in religious history, full as that history has been of cruelty and courage, bigotry and faith, bitter persecution and heroic endurance. We have but to recall to our minds the Covenanters hiding in the misty Scotch

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mountains, the Waldenses fighting guerilla wars among the Italian Alps, the early Christians burrowing in the catacombs of Rome, and now we see the Babis besieged in the jungles of Mazandaran.

For, as the latter's enemies grow more active, violent attacks upon them are constantly made. The Bab had forbidden armed opposition. "Force can accomplish nothing. In this day we must teach the people by faith and persuasion, self-sacrifice and non-resistance," he had said. But, at times, they are obliged to band together and defend themselves and their families from the ferocity of assault.

Accordingly, some 400 of them take refuge in a wild and mountainous country bordering the Caspian Sea. Here, in the fastnesses of a densely-wooded swamp, in the centre of which stands an ancient shrine, the little band has hidden. Thousands of guards, armed with guns and cannon, reinforced by a mass of the fanatical and easily-roused populace, surround them. While, within the jungle, the defenders kneel in prayer ; and pass the time in meditation and spiritual communion. For nine months this strange siege

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lasts. Starvation point is reached. The horses are consumed, then the leather of their harness, then the very grass. Still they hold the foe at bay. Finally, the General falls back on strategy. Upon the holy Koran he swears a covenant to spare their lives and allow them to quietly disperse, if they will leave their stronghold. Great is the joy and relief of the heroic little band! Obediently they file out and lay down their arms. A feast is spread before them, and as famished, they begin to partake, the soldiers spring upon them and massacre every one.

Meanwhile, where is their beloved Leader? In every direction his disciples go seeking him, anxious and sorrowing: but no trace can be found. At last it is whispered that the Government has secreted him far away in a remote and dreary fortress, in the northern extreme of Persia.

Confined under severe restrictions, shut away from all friends, often even from light, yet the undaunted Bab continues to write. And his works, comprising over twenty volumes, include elaborate commentaries, profound expositions, impassioned prayers. The key-note of them all being the praise

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of that Reality soon to be manifested to the world. For the young Prophet declares that he is "a letter out of that most mighty Book, a dewdrop from that limitless Ocean." The Beyan, his principal work, is left, like some grand symphony, unfinished. As though he knew that his book, like his mission, was only the prelude to those glorious, universal harmonies, that sublime literature that would be written by the Supreme Pen of "He whom God would manifest."

When in the grim fortress of Maku, where a faithful disciple at length found him, the shadow of the approaching end falls, the Bab sends, by trusty messenger, to a young man afterwards known as Baha'u'llah. For although these two had never met on earth, in the realms of spirit they are one. And the Bab has recognised, in Mirza Hussain Ali, the ONE whose advent he had so steadfastly and courageously heralded.

Then comes the order to the Governor of Tabriz to bring forth the prisoner. An important meeting of officials and dignitaries is held. Bitterly he is questioned, condemned as a heretic, sentenced to death. He is also condemned

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to the bastinado. But the court servants, at the risk of their own lives, refuse to obey the order. However, one of the officials, mad with rage, perpetrates the cruel deed himself.

So in the early morning hours of the 9th July, 1850, the Prophet, with bare head and bastinadoed feet, is forced to tread his Via Dolorosa, to the place of execution in the barrack square. Excited thousands follow him. He, and a devoted disciple who has begged to be permitted to die with him, are suspended by ropes to the walls of the citadel in the open square. A regiment of soldiers is drawn up and ordered to fire. The volley rings out. But lo! when the smoke has cleared it is found that the ropes alone have been severed, so that the prisoners have dropped to the ground unhurt. And the Bab is not there. But where can he be? The soldiers find him in a little barrack room behind. Back he is brought, and the two again suspended. But the regiment, regarding the incident as a miracle, refuse to fire again. So another squad is summoned—and the bodies fall to the ground riddled with bullets.

And Time, itself, will but serve to hallow that barrack square of Tabriz, as

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it has kept in everlasting memory a cross at Calvary.

The Bab is dead. But the flame he has lighted will never know extinction.

* * * *

Now in the land of rose-gardens and nightingales, the hounds of hell are let loose upon the doves of holiness.

A youth, deranged with grief at the martyrdom of the Bab, fires at the Shah with a fowling-piece. This forms a convenient pretext whereby the enemies can seek to exterminate every adherent of the Cause.

During the ensuing years, across the lurid stage sweep scenes of unimaginable cruelty, unheard of refinements of revenge and torture. The bonfires of Nero, the terrors of the Inquisition, the flames of Smithfield pale before some of the deeds of darkness that are perpetrated—perpetrated too with the weak consent of the Persian Government. Deeds that, even at the time of writing, have not wholly ceased in that benighted country.

Over 20,000 men, women and children die for the sake of a glad new Message of purity, peace and love.

So strange, so blind, are the ways of men !

CHAPTER IV

THE SUN OF TRUTH

"O Son of Man!

How long wilt thou be asleep upon thy couch? Lift thy head from slumber, for verily the Sun hath already reached midday: that it may shine upon thee with the lights of beauty."

("Hidden Words")

"Shadows disappear when a Universal Lamp is lighted."

(Abdul Baha).

The Morning Star pales its radiance before the Rising Sun. The Herald has fulfilled his task. The Promised One is here.

AMID the confusion of this reign of terror, there emerged into the anguished arena another Leader—Mirza Hussain Ali of Noor—subsequently known as Baha'u'llah, i.e., Glory of God.

Born on the 12th November, 1817, Baha'u'llah, like the Lord Gautama, was reared in luxury and refinement, his family being one of the noblest and

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wealthiest in Persia. Like his great Forerunner also, he had, from infancy, exhibited signs of greatness, profound erudition, unerring wisdom. When only nine years old, he frequented the cabinet of ministers. At twelve, as Jesus in the Temple, he spoke in important assemblies on intricate metaphysical and religious problems, with a knowledge and inspiration to which all paid the greatest deference. When his father, a minister of state died, every position in the Government was open to his brilliant eldest son. But, like the Buddha, he forsook the riches of earth, and went forth fearlessly and alone, in order that once again to wandering men might be revealed the pathway of renunciation that leads to the Palace of Life.

Now that pathway had led him from the foot of the throne to the foulest of the imperial dungeons. Although his innocence regarding the attack on the Shah was indisputably proved, his house was sacked, his possessions confiscated, his family captured and stoned.

In a dark and filthy dungeon, already overcrowded with thieves and assassins, heavily chained about the neck, this gently-nurtured, heroic Man of God

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lay, with some of his followers, for four months. Almost every day one or more of them was taken out to torture or death. These would answer the dreadful summons with joy ; kiss the hands of Baha'u'llah, and hasten with eagerness to the place of martyrdom. Impossible ! No, for this gloomy prison-house was alight with such divine Love, enthusiasm and spiritual happiness that it had become to these souls the very gate of heaven !

Baha'u'llah relates how one night he had a dream, in which he heard voices all about him speaking marvellous words of comfort and assurance.

“ Grieve not for that which hath befallen thee and have no fear . . . Verily thou art of them who are secure . . . Verily We will aid thee to triumph by thyself and by thy pen.”

But it seemed as though the body of Baha'u'llah would not longer endure the frightful suffering, when he was summoned again before the Tribunal, and partly owing to the kindly intervention of the Russian Ambassador, sentence of death was commuted to one of exile.

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Oh, that long and terrible journey in the depths of winter to Baghdad! The insufficient food and clothing, the lack of vital necessities, the exposure and fatigue! Only the love of Baha'u'llah for the world he came to redeem, only the love that he inspired in his family and disciples made it possible to endure and survive.

Yet in one of his Tablets he wrote :—

"The more they heap persecutions upon us, the more our Cause will spread. If they drown us in the sea, my voice will be raised from the desert. If they throw me down from the mountains, my voice will be heard from the sea! Because I have come, not of myself, but by the command of God."

In those last words lay the source of the strength, the secret of this holy Messenger. "Not of myself . . . but of God." Did not Christ say the same? "I do the Will of Him that sent me."

BAGHDAD—to the Western mind what a glamour seems always to hang over that ancient city of the Tigris, whose yellow-red brick walls, terraced roofs, countless turrets and gleaming domes rise from the midst of its date-

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palms and pomegranates, olives and fig-trees. Baghdad—for five centuries the seat of the powerful caliphates. Baghdad of the cruel Tartars, the cause of constant rivalries and bloodshed. Baghdad—which the influence of Mohammedanism made the centre of the great Arabian civilization. Baghdad of Haroun-al-Raschid and his beloved Zobeida, when at the pinnacle of its prosperity and learning, through it poured the riches of India and Persia, Turkestan and Araby.

But when in the year 1853, the exhausted and destitute little band of exiles reached the shelter of its portals, the city had lost much of its former greatness. Yet, merchants and traders from every part of the Eastern and even from the Western world still thronged its fine bazaars. While Arabs and Turks, Persians and Indians, Jews and Christians, jostled each other in the narrow unpaved streets; and caravans laden with merchandise “took the golden road to Samarkhand.”

This banishment, thought the enemies of the Cause, would exterminate the Babi Movement in Persia, and effectually put an end to the influence of Baha'u'llah. But how foolish was

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their wisdom ! In this cosmopolitan centre the result was exactly opposite, and the field offered for the spread of the new Message was wider than ever. While for the historian of the future, the greatest glory of Baghdad will be that, for eleven years, it was the home of a Saviour of mankind.

Yet, even here, not for one moment did enemies leave him in peace ; among them now being a foe of his own household. Subh-i-Azal, a half-brother, arrived in the town, and instigated by jealousy, sought to undermine his influence.

So presently, Baha'u'llah, leaving both those who loved and those who hated him, went forth secretly into the mountains.

These times of withdrawal from all the world's turmoil and distraction, these spiritual breathing-spaces for uninterrupted communion with God, seem necessary to those upon whose divine humanity has been laid world responsibility. Moses sought the heights of Sinai, Buddha the Indian forests, Jesus the wilderness, Baha'u'llah the wilds of Kurdistan. Here in caves and grottoes, often without food or rest, clothed in poorest raiment,

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wandered the Prophet for two years. Of this period of his life little is known. Yet his influence made itself felt. Reports soon spread even through these isolated regions, that a man of remarkable knowledge and power of attraction was among them. Though in so poor and lowly a condition, affection and reverence followed him wherever he passed. As Abdul Baha, his son, tells us :—"An atmosphere of majesty haloed him as the sun at noonday" and "Kurdistan became magnetized with his love."

The holy confirmations that descended upon him during this period Baha'u'llah describes in the following wonderful words :—

"I was as one amongst mankind, slumbering upon my couch. The gales of the All-Glorious passed by me and taught me the knowledge of what hath been. This thing is not from me, but from One who is mighty and all-knowing. He bade me proclaim betwixt the earth and the heaven, and for this hath there befallen me that whereat the eyes of those who know overflow with tears

"This is a leaf which the breezes of the Will of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Ex-

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tolled have stirred. Can it be still when the rushing winds blow? . . . His decisive Command did come, causing me to speak for His Celebration amidst the worlds."

Then from the mountain-top Baha'u'llah descended again to the world of men at Baghdad. Oh! the joy of that reunion! Abdul Baha, the little son, falling overwhelmed at the feet of his Father and Lord.

During the remaining years passed in this city, Abdul Baha grew from boyhood into early manhood. His devotion to and care of his Father being wonderful to see. Indeed the son's will and understanding reflected always that of his Father's, as Baha'u'llah mirrored forth to men the Eternal Mystery and Perfect Will of God.

While still quite young, Abdul Baha tried to protect his Father from the visits of the merely curious or the insincere. He interviewed them first, answering questions and giving counsel with a sagacity that astonished all who met him. He assisted the family and assumed most of the household responsibilities.

This was a period of great activity

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for the Cause. Baha'u'llah bent his energy and attention to organising and directing the enthusiasm of the believers ; explaining to them the true significance of the Bab's mission and preparing them to recognise the Manifestation foretold. From far and near people of all nations and faiths, including many prominent men, came to visit Baha'u'llah, and hear his teachings. To them he revealed the Oneness of Mankind :—" Ye are all leaves of one tree, drops of one sea, flowers of one garden." This teaching lies at the very heart of this Revelation, inculcating in human beings a new keen sense of their identity.

He taught that the great founders of religions, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Mohammed, Christ, were all Messengers of God, perfect mirrors reflecting His attributes to men. The essence of the teachings they delivered is the same throughout the ages ; only the outward forms being changed according to the requirements of the times in which they were given. The Light is the same in whatever lamp it is burning ; the sun, whether it shines from the East or from the West. The Manifestation about to be revealed

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would bring to a riven world the divine gift of religious unity.

With irrefutable arguments that satisfied and illumined all sincere inquirers, Baha'u'llah expounded to the Moslems the prophecies and inner meanings of the Koran, and the clear declaration made by Mohammed as to the coming of a Mahdi in the day of resurrection. He reminded the Jew of the prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the long period of exile and oppression the Children of Israel would endure before the Lord of Hosts would appear to gather them from all nations. To the Christians he unfolded the sayings of Christ as to the many wars and afflictions which would occur until the coming of the Son of Man "in the glory of the Father." To the Zoroastrian and Sufi the warnings they had received as to the 3000 years of conflict that must pass before the coming of Shah Bahram to establish a reign of peace and righteousness.

He unfolded the meaning of Life, its essential unity and interdependence, and states of spiritual consciousness realised by the soul both here and hereafter. Such knowledge could only have been innate and inspired, acquired

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—even had it been possible—in no earthly college.

The envoys that the Mullahs, still plotting against him, sent to test him, returned, confounded, acknowledging the peerlessness of his wisdom and understanding.

A request was brought that Baha'u'llah should perform some miracle as proof of his prophethood. But he made answer that "miracles," so called, were not in themselves proofs of prophethood, being but the operation of laws, as yet, little known to man. But, whatever sign they desired and agreed upon, he was willing to give on condition that, if fulfilled, they would cease their opposition. From so fearless a challenge they shrank in dismay; realising that, in the open, they dared not meet him. Angry and baffled they persisted in their efforts to obtain his removal.

But while the dark intrigues and machinations of his foes and of the Persian and Turkish Governments were gathering round him, Baha'u'llah remained serene and confident. Always very happy with nature, he would walk in the evenings along the banks of the Tigris, where the quaint round

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boats of basket-work, covered with skins, plied busily their way, even as they did, perchance, in the days when Babylon and Nineveh were mighty cities of the land. Returning with radiant face, Baha'u'llah would proceed to write down verses of exquisite beauty and wisdom. Verses within which are enfolded meaning upon meaning of comfort, rebuke, illumination. The precious manuscripts had to be carefully concealed for a long time from the ever-present enemy; but now the translations from the original Persian and Arabic have been given to us in the little book known as "Hidden Words." from which the following few excerpts are quoted:

"O Son of Spirit !

"The first counsel is: Possess a good, a pure, an enlightened heart, that thou mayest possess a kingdom, eternal, immortal, ancient and without end."

"O Son of Being !

"By the hands of power I have made thee, and by the fingers of strength have I created thee. I have placed in thee the essence of my Light; therefore depend upon it and upon nothing else, for my Action is perfect, and my Command has effect."

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“ O Son of Spirit !

“ I have created thee rich, why dost thou make thyself poor ? Noble have I made thee, why dost thou degrade thyself ? Of the essence of knowledge I have manifested thee ; why searchest thou for another than me ? From the clay of love I have kneaded thee ; why desirest thou another ? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me, standing within thee, powerful, mighty and supreme ! ”

At length, in 1863, the long-anticipated blow fell. Baha'u'llah was summoned by the Sultan to Constantinople. Consternation reigned amongst the believers everywhere. They thronged his house dismayed and heart-broken. So great was the pressure that it was decided, while preparations were being made for the long journey, to camp outside the town in a garden belonging to a certain Pasha.

In this garden of Ridvan, during these twelve days, (April 21st to May 3rd) took place an important event in Bahai history. For Baha'u'llah announced to his immediate followers that he, himself, was the Promised One of all the faiths and ages—the Manifes-

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tation of God to men. As a great Physician he had come to heal a sin-sick world. As the sun in the spring-time to make all things new. He had come to establish an era of universal progress and enlightenment. He upon whose head any moment the sword might fall, yet showed himself dignified, assured, exalted—changing the sorrow of his followers into joy, their fears into confidence and enthusiasm. Friends from far and near crowded the gardens, even the Governor and officials coming to pay a last deference to the gracious and noble Exile.

So the great drama unfolds itself. Slowly the caravan, consisting of the Prophet, his family and some seventy followers who refused to leave him, moved forward on the long trek to Constantinople. Throughout the day, by the side of his Father's wagon rode Abdul Baha. At night he guarded his tent, never all through that journey relaxing in the most watchful vigilance.

Now scene after scene of suffering and persecution followed. Confinement in utterly inadequate quarters. Questioning and hostility from the clergy and authorities. Then further banishment through the heavily-falling

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snow, again in a state bordering on destitution, to Adrianople.

Here in this important city of Roumelia, imprisonment in verminous, overcrowded rooms. But through it all the majesty of the Prisoner shone more and more clearly. As calamities increased, only the brighter grew his radiance, spiritual influence and authority. An authority that even his bitter enemies acknowledged and feared.

As Baha'u'llah wrote :—

“I am not impatient of calamities in His way, nor of afflictions for His love and at His good pleasure. God hath made afflictions as a morning shower to His green pasture, and as a wick for His lamp, whereby earth and heaven are illumined.”

At length came a little relief from the acute hardships ; the gathering together again of a large following ; the writing of many important works, and among them his now famous Epistles to the Kings. In language eloquently appealing, yet authoritative, he, their prisoner, addressed the Shah of Persia and the Sultan of Turkey, rebuking their tyrannies, summoning

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them to righteousness and just government. He also wrote other Letters to the crowned heads of Europe, proclaiming his station as a Messenger from God ; exhorting them to establish justice in their countries and international peace. Many of the startling prophecies contained in these Epistles have already found fulfilment.

Then Baha'u'llah made a public declaration of his mission ; and from this time on his followers became known as Bahais, i.e., followers of the Light. The Cause began now to assume a universal significance. Not only the East needed to be illumined, guided, purified, but also the West. As a great trumpet call the voice of God's Messenger rang across the world, and is ringing to-day with ever increasing insistence.

"This is the hour of unity of the sons of men All nations should become one in faith, and all men as brothers ; the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened ; diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled. . . .

"So it shall be ! These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass

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away, and the MOST GREAT PEACE shall come."

To-day these ideas are alive in the world and steadily growing in importance. But sixty years ago they would have been considered, except by a few, impossible dreams.

Then came the enemies' final challenge—banishment to a penal colony in northern Palestine, a place to which only criminals of the worst type were sent to die—to "the most great prison" of Akka.

AKKA—on the last day of August, 1868—its cold, grim fortifications frowning at the shrinking group of harassed prisoners, some seventy in number, men, women and children, whose jail it was to be till kindly death should set them free. And as the gates of "this most desolate of cities and metropolis of the owl" closed behind them, this must have been the tragic end, had Baha'u'llah's mission not been of divine Origin and Mandate. But instead of defeat, it became the crowning glory of his long passion and travail for the souls of men.

On arrival, the whole company were,

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at once, flung into two indescribably foul rooms ; deprived of proper drinking water, beds and food. Consequently malaria, dysentery, typhoid and other sicknesses befell them all. Even their dead were treated as dogs. No one was allowed outside the prison door except under guard. So pestilential was the climate and prevailing conditions, that it was said, " a bird could not fly over Akka and live."

For two years they suffered these appalling miseries. But during all the time the little company remained in great spiritual happiness, rejoicing to share in the afflictions of their beloved Leader and Lord. And many of them lived to see even the climate undergo a wonderful transformation ; and the Governor of Akka, in willing obedience to Baha'u'llah's request, repair the old Roman aqueduct ; thus supplying the town with clean, fresh water. Abdul Baha's loving skill and care for them, especially during the times of grave sickness, was also a source of infinite solace. While the Prophet wrote :—

" Fear not. These doors will be opened. My tent shall be pitched on Mt. Carmel and the utmost joy shall be realised."

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Yet communication with the outside world and with the believers in Persia and other countries was entirely cut off. Picture the soldiers even splitting open the loaves of bread brought in to the prisoners, lest they should contain a message !

But look ! Far away on a moat encircling those forbidding walls ; walls which once had echoed to the victorious shouts of the Crusaders, stand a group of pilgrims from Persia. They had travelled on foot all the way—a journey of six months—enduring great hardships, running grave risks, in order to obtain a glimpse of their Master. He stands at the barrack window. They gaze upon him and weep. Then turn reluctantly away, filled with renewed strength for service and sacrifice. A proof of spiritual attraction surely rare in the annals of history !

During the long years of confinement in this gloomy prison-house, Baha'u'llah penned numberless Tablets, dealing with every department and phase of life, both material and spiritual. In them he laid down the great principles that are to serve as foundation-stones whereon to erect the new edifice of a divine civilization.

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To Baha'u'llah "religion is not one of life's several aspects, but the predominant spirit which expresses itself through all aspects, producing in its purity, harmony among the diverse elements of will, imagination, feeling and thought. First, the realization of God ; then the realization of self ; then the realization of one's relation to his fellowmen and to the world."

(Paper read at World Conference on Religions, in 1924).

Some of these writings would make an appeal to the most simple, others to the most profound minds. The principles one can grasp at once ; the teachings and their application demand the study and the devotion of a lifetime. Indeed, the true significance of the mission and station of Baha'u'llah none can fully grasp ; while the meaning and purpose of the new Revelation only future centuries will unfold.

"For through Him appeared all that was hidden and invisible from all eternity . . . Through Him the standard of knowledge is planted in the world, and the banner of unity is raised among the nations. The meeting of

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God cannot be obtained save through meeting Him. . . .

“The One who hath come from the heaven of Pre-existence with the Greatest Name, and with a power that the hosts of the earth fail to withstand.”

(Bahai Scriptures, P. 153).

Baha'u'llah is the voice of God. In his writings it is clear that sometimes he speaks as a man, entirely submissive and obedient to the Will of God. At other times he speaks as God, Himself, and writes as the Supreme and Eternal Pen.

“There hath not been in my soul but the Truth, and in myself naught could be seen but God.”

(Suratu'l-Haykel).

So passed the years, until one day, Baha'u'llah expressed a longing to gaze again upon the beauties of nature he had always so greatly loved. He said:—“I have not gazed on verdure for nine years. The country is the world of the soul, the city the world of bodies.”

Abdul Baha determined that his Father's implied wish should be fulfilled, and at once set about trying to

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find means for its accomplishment. In wonderful ways these were discovered. And Abdul Baha, in spite of the repeated orders forbidding prisoners to venture outside the city walls, was able to leave the town and arrange for the residence of his Father and the family in a beautiful mansion a few miles distant. So Baha'u'llah, regardless of man-imposed restrictions, at length threw his prison-bonds aside and passed out to the freedom of a home at Bahji.

And now, although still nominally a prisoner, he lived as a prince among men. Not with outward magnificence and luxury, but in a blessed state of exemption from privations and confinement, and as a spiritual King among his devoted followers.

Now from every quarter poured in a continuous stream of pilgrims, devotees and seekers after Truth. The offerings of hundreds of thousands of loyal and ardent disciples were laid at his feet. Prominent people, Governors and officials constantly sought for admission to his presence. But Abdul Baha, guarding as ever his beloved parent, admitted very few, undertaking the duty and responsibilities of meeting

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and talking with all comers. When those in official authority came, they were either refused admittance, or when allowed to enter, were almost overcome with reverence and awe.

In the light of these events, it is interesting to recall an ancient Moham-medan saying which runs :—" Blessed is he who has visited Akka, and blessed is that one who has visited the Visitor of Akka."

The following remarkable and well-known description of a visit paid to Baha'u'llah by the late Prof. Browne of Cambridge, is taken from " A Travel-ler's Narrative."

. . . " A second or two elapsed ere with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called 'taj' by dervishes, but of unusual height and make, round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul ; power and authority sat on that ample brow ; while the deep lines on the fore-

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head 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."

On the 28th May, 1892, at the age of 75, Baha'u'llah passed out from his earthly tabernacle and ascended to the realms of the Supreme Concurrence from whence he had come to be the Guide and Teacher of men. He was laid to rest in a beautiful tomb on the plain of Akka, close to the mansion of Bahji.

So once again in the story of the ages, a Divine Being has known crucifixion and exaltation, humiliation and adoration in the sacred land of Palestine. Upon the Mount of Elijah he pitched his tent of glory, even as he predicted. And from the top of Carmel, as from the prison of Akka, Baha'u'llah is making his voice heard throughout the world to-day.

For to-day is the "day of resurrection" from material conceptions, effete ideas, worn-out customs. This is the great "day of judgment" so often

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spoken of in the Bible, which was to come in the "last days,"—that is, at the end of the age, or world-cycle. For the Coming of the Glory of God in Baha'u'llah has been, and still is, a time of supreme trial and testing, both for individuals and for every nation on earth.

But now "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the Light shined."

"Unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Yes, with healing for all the sickness, physical, mental and spiritual of a sinful, discordant, weary world.

With unmistakable clarity Baha'u'llah has stated his mission and offered irrefutable proofs of his claim.

"Surely the Father hath come and hath fulfilled that which you were promised in the kingdom of God."

"Verily He hath come from heaven as He came from it the first time."

"Fear God . . . follow Him who hath appeared unto you with manifest knowledge and evident certainty."

(Bahai Scriptures).

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With "evident certainty"—for by the fulfilment of prophecy; by the creative power of his words, which can change and transform all hearts, from the most cultured to the most ignorant, from the highest to the most lowly; by his marvellous life of suffering and forty years of imprisonment, through which His majesty shone undimmed; lastly, by his teachings, he has proved the validity of his claim to all who will investigate. There is no greater proof than these Teachings. They are the spirit of this cycle, the light of this age. And from Baha'u'llah has appeared such a cleansing, unifying, revivifying power that it cannot but ultimately succeed in redeeming the whole world.

CHAPTER V

THE MOON OF WISDOM AND GUIDANCE

“ Verily, He is Myself, the shining place of my Identity, the East of my Cause, the Heaven of my Bounty, the Sea of my Will, the Lamp of my Guidance.”

(Baha’u’llah).

ABBAS EFFENDI, afterwards known as Abdul Baha, i.e., Servant of the Glory, was appointed by Baha’u’llah’s will to interpret, expound and promulgate, both in the East and the West, his Father’s message and teachings. One Manifestation is as the sun, the other as the moon reflecting the sun’s light.

Baha’u’llah wrote :—

“ When the ocean of my Presence hath ebbed and the Book of Revelation hath been completed, turn your faces towards Him whom God hath purposed, who hath branched from this ancient Root.”

In Persia the eldest son of a family is often called “ the greatest branch,”

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and Bible prophecies contain many passages in which this term is significantly used. One of the most striking is to be found in the 11th chapter of Isaiah, beginning :

" And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots."

Among the Bahais, Abdul Baha is frequently referred to by this title.

The life story of Abdul Baha is the life story of Baha'u'llah, in all of whose sufferings, imprisonments, and labours he fully shared from a very early age. He constituted himself, as we have seen, his Father's helper and protector, assuming the duties and responsibilities of the household ; and later of the necessary financial and business arrangements of the life at Bahji, and during the long years following Baha'u'llah's ascension. Thus proving that efficiency in material matters is an essential part of the spiritual life ; that work performed in a spirit of love and service is an act of worship and a form of prayer.

It was, for instance, owing to his wise foresight and energy in personally

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organising extensive agricultural operations near Tiberias, that, during the years of the Great War, famine was averted, not only for Haifa and Akka, but for all the neighbouring districts. The fruitful, practical work he performed during these trying years, as also his efforts for conciliation, his generosity, hospitality and unique wisdom, so impressing the British government that, after their occupation of the country, a knighthood was conferred upon him.

Abdul Baha was a perfect Exemplar of absolute devotion to the Cause of his Father, of complete service and self-sacrifice.

The story of his marriage, while still a prisoner in Akka, with a girl of the utmost purity and spirituality, who was born in a remarkable way through the blessing of the Bab, is told by Moneereh Khanum herself.

After a long journey from Persia, which had involved much risk and secrecy, she stood in the blessed presence of Baha'u'llah, whose first words were :—

“ We have brought you into the prison at such a time, when the door of meeting is closed to all the believers.

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This is for no other reason than to prove to everyone the power and might of God."

But the marriage was delayed because of the lack of even a separate bedroom ; till a kindly friend removed the partition between his own house and Baha'u'llah's, and so added to the latter another room.

"Then the night of union, preferable to a hundred thousand years, drew nigh . . . About nine o'clock in the evening. . . . I was permitted to stand in the presence of Baha'u'llah. He said :—'Thou must be very thankful, for thou hast attained to this most great favour and bestowal.'

After that blessed hour and fortunate time, I dwelt in the paradise of eternity with a world of longing, attraction, humility and submission. I entered the room prepared for the Greatest Branch, and experienced his favour, his affection, his glory and his grandeur.

If I were to write the details of the fifty years of my association with the Beloved of the world, of his love, mercy and bounty, I would need fifty years more of time and opportunity to write it."

Of this marriage four daughters have survived the hardships and imprison-

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ment and are, to-day, still offering loving and selfless service in the Cause.

For thirty years after the passing of Baha'u'llah, Abdul Baha continued the work ; applying in his own life the precepts given and establishing them as facts before giving them to the world. Before teaching that 'the Foundation of all Religions is one,' he gathered together in his home at Haifa, men of every race and creed and created between them the utmost harmony and sympathy.

As Mr. Horace Holley writes in his "Modern Social Religion."

"The world surely never possessed such a guest-house as this. Within its doors the rigid castes of India melted away, the racial prejudices of Jew, Christian and Mohammedan became less than a memory ; and every convention save the essential law of warm hearts and aspiring minds broke down, banned and forbidden by the unifying sympathy of the Master of the house. It was like a King Arthur and the Round Table . . . but an Arthur who knighted women as well as men and sent them away not with the sword but with the word."

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When the revolution in Turkey released, in 1908, all political and religious prisoners in the Ottoman Empire, Abdul Baha was, at last, set free.

Then, in response to urgent appeals, he started out, at 67 years of age, and after life-long suffering and imprisonment, to tour through Europe, including the British Isles, and America, delivering Baha'u'llah's message to audiences representing Western civilization in every aspect and phase. During these remarkable journeys he met and conversed with men and women of every type, nationality and creed. He addressed University students, women's suffrage societies, peace organizations, Esperantists, Socialists, Agnostics, Mormons, Christians, Jews, and churches of almost all denominations, giving the universal Teachings from the particular point of view most suited to the understanding of each.

A special correspondent of the *New York World* in December, 1921, thus describes him :

" Having once looked upon Abdul Baha, his personality is indelibly impressed upon the mind : the majestic venerable figure clad in the flowing aba, his head crowned with a turban white

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as his head and hair: the piercing deep-set eyes whose glances shake the heart; the smile that pours its sweetness over all. . . .”

And the character and work of this gentle, illuminating Teacher is now known to great numbers of people scattered throughout the world. Countless are the stories related by eye-witnesses; stories told with deep emotion by those who knew and loved him, of his amazing kindness, sympathy, unerring intuitions, sparkling humour, humility and all-comprehending knowledge.

“Yes, I have met Abdul Baha,” remarks one here and there with brightening face, as at the remembrance of a most precious experience. But how great was the privilege, how golden the opportunity presented to them, few could realise at the time. No one who attained to that meeting could ever be quite the same after. For the meeting with a Holy One of God is in the nature of a test, a test of a soul’s spiritual perceptions. The capacity to perceive the significance and station of the Messenger was not given to all. But none could fail to feel the radiation of his personality, his all-embracing love.

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Now shall we touch very briefly on one or two of the outstanding Principles given by Abdul Baha, which when practically applied, would form a solution to all the present-day problems.

We have already spoken of the Principle that 'the Foundation of all Religions is one' and how this was exemplified. Also the emphasis laid by Baha'u'llah on the essential Oneness of Mankind. When men realise that they are all parts of one organism, of one spiritual "Grand Man of the Heavens" as Swedenborg has expressed it, whose cells or atoms, so to speak, we are, then they will substitute co-operation for conflict, mutual service for one of selfish competition; then will the powers and possibilities of human nature become increasingly manifest. "Be," says Abdul Baha, "as one soul in many bodies." An idea startling in its inference as to our intimate, essential relationship to one another.

The Search for Truth must be fearless and unbiased. We must not be content to accept any teaching or tradition contrary to reason, nor believe doctrines that we cannot understand. True independent search for Reality leads to the investigation of

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one's own inner processes of thought, and to the ultimate realisation that true independence and freedom is severance from passion and personal desire.

Religion must be in accord with reason and science. And the man of science must appreciate religion that is purified from dogma and superstition. An unprejudiced scientist enquiring into the Bahai teachings on the nature of God, creation, evolution, body and soul, etc., will not only find himself in perfect agreement with the explanations given, but on many a perplexing and abstruse problem receive glorious enlightenment.

“Faith and reason are like the two wings of the Bird of Humanity. It cannot fly with one wing alone. If it tries to fly with the wing of religion alone it will land in the slough of superstition; if it tries to fly with the wing of science alone it will end in the dreary bog of materialism.”

(Paris Talks by Abdul Baha).

An organic, universal Principle is also the Equality of Men and Women. The solution of our spiritual and social problems can only be reached when this is realised and attained. It is

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interesting indeed to watch with what rapidity this idea is growing to-day. Even in the East great changes are evident in the status and education of women.

Again, Abdul Baha declares that religion in its universal aspect must produce a solution of the Economic problems. He teaches that useful work should be performed by all. That wealth, whether it is material, mental or spiritual should be voluntarily shared; that the extremes of wealth and poverty must be abolished and destitution made impossible, as also all forms of industrial slavery. He provides the key to the solution of our labour troubles and lays the foundation-stones whereon may be erected by an enlightened humanity a new and divine social order and world civilization.

But the Principle by which Abdul Baha is most widely known at present, is that of Universal Peace. Over 60 years ago, Baha'u'llah advocated the establishment of a League of Nations and Supreme International Tribunal. He also advised that, by general agreement, all the governments of the world should disarm simultaneously. To-day we see this idea creating great agencies

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and institutions which are tending to bind the hearts and minds of humanity in ever closer relationships. But this world federation can only be realised through properly constituted democratic selection, and by fulfilling among individuals and among nations the spiritual conditions for the establishment of real justice and peace. The legislative function is not an affair of politics, influence, money, but a spiritual function of enlightened and perfectly qualified men.

Another aid to peace will be the promulgation of a universal auxiliary language. About the time that Baha'u'llah announced this Principle, Dr. Zamenhof, the founder and inventor of Esperanto was born in Poland. And this wonderfully simple and adaptable language has, during the last 35 years, proved a useful medium for international intercourse. The introduction of some auxiliary language into all the schools of the world would remove one of the greatest obstacles to international and interracial understanding and peace.

Abdul Baha returned to Haifa from his strenuous tours in 1913. In his

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home here during the Great War, and after its close, up to the last day or two of his life, he continued to work with unabated energy.

Countless were the letters and tablets of inspiration and counsel he wrote to Bahais both collectively and individually all over the world. Letters that are the recipients' most priceless possessions ; tablets that are now being carefully collected and published.

Day after day, in his guest house and at his hospitable table, visitors from every quarter of the globe were entertained. Questions relating to every conceivable subject were presented for his solution or exposition—social and individual, scientific and metaphysical problems ; questions regarding creation, life, future states of existence ; parables, obscure passages, prophecies in various sacred scriptures, and in the Bible. Thus was fulfilled Christ's promise that :—" When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all Truth, for he will take the things that are mine and reveal them unto you." Notes of the replies given were frequently taken down and now form a veritable fount of information as they have been published in "Some Answered

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Questions " and in other books and literature.

Then would the visitors return to their own countries, or go forth on the travelling missions assigned to them, filled with a deep spiritual joy and understanding and with a new humility; fired with renewed determination to live more nobly, work more earnestly to spread these Teachings, realising ever more clearly that, in them alone now lies the world's hope of salvation and path of progress.

Not only did Abdul Baha manifest an amazing capacity for work, but he lived always in an attitude of praise and gratitude to God, which is, essentially, an attitude of prayer. At midnight and in the early morning, he would often awake and pray; sometimes passing a whole night in meditation and 'in conversation with God.'

Prayers have been written by both Abdul Baha and by Baha'u'llah of unique power and beauty—prayers which meet every occasion and need. Prayers for healing, for those who have passed 'within the veil,' for knowledge, guidance, prosperity and illumination. Prayers, whose effectiveness may only

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be realised in their constant, earnest, daily use. Prayer is the language of the spirit ; it enlarges the capacity to receive ; brings into action higher forces, of which, as yet, little is known. Even a feeble pressure is often able to release a great power, as the lifting of a sluice gate may regulate mighty waters, or as the opening of a little window may let in a flood of sunshine.

Abdul Baha, like Jesus Christ, taught his followers the divine way of forgiveness of all personal enemies and injuries ; his own life being a perpetual example.

As an instance, may be mentioned the story of a certain Moslem at Akka who, for over twenty years, persisted in showing towards the Master the bitterest antagonism. He reviled him when they passed in the street, sullenly resenting the unfailing gentleness and courtesy with which he was treated. But at last the man fell sick. Then Abdul Baha sent him medicine, a doctor, and even went to visit him. Overwhelmed by such an enduring, forgiving love, the enemy was turned finally, into a devoted friend. Would that we, too, in our relationships with our fellows knew how to forgive unto

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‘seventy times seven,’ placing our reliance upon this most effective force in the universe, upon Love, which is God manifested.

In Abdul Baha was revealed, as in his great Father, the personification of positive, constructive, universal Love, which radiating out to all created beings, quickened in their consciousness a responsive longing for a universal oneness and peace.

Constantly the Master visited among the poor and the sick. The stories of his power to heal, to comfort, to transform hearts would require many books to relate them. He loved to laugh and make those around him happy. One of the signs by which we were to recognise the Great One, said Abdul Baha, was that “He must be a joybringer and the herald of the kingdom of happiness.”

He loved flowers and sweet perfumes, animals and especially horses ; and he instructed his followers to treat the animal creation with the utmost kindness. From Nature in all its aspects he would draw analogies rich in beauty and significance.

With regard to what is commonly called ‘miracle-working’ Abdul Baha

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taught that this may be incidental to, but is not alone, a proof of prophethood, being but the outworking of laws little known or understood by men. But, naturally, around his household wonderful and inexplicable things constantly occurred. And in lives that are purified and dedicated to his service, a divine Power manifests itself in many mysterious ways. For the promise has been given that those who rise up in the Cause of God, at this time, shall be filled with the Spirit. And "He will send his hosts from heaven to help you, and nothing shall be impossible to you, if you have faith." For "the moth shall become as the eagle, and the drop as the rivers and seas." In the world of dreams, in visions, in flashing intuitions, illumination, warning, guidance is afforded, as well as in the more normal or more generally recognised channels of everyday living. But Abdul Baha advised his followers not to seek to develop the psychic faculties, but to let them unfold gradually as their souls become attuned to higher vibrations, and to breathing the purer, more rarefied air of the realms of spirit.

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Thus were spent the tireless days of the nearly eighty years of this Prophet of God, until Monday, November 28th, 1921, when he passed away so swiftly and quietly that his daughters, watching by his bed, thought he had but fallen asleep.

The funeral which, according to Eastern custom, took place on the following day, is unique in the records of all such events. Ten thousand mourners, even in that brief time, gathered together, representing many religions, races, tongues, and all ranks of society—from the High Commissioner of Palestine and the Governor of Jerusalem, to the poorest beggars in Haifa. The heads and prominent men of religious communities were there—Jews, Christians, Moslems, Druses, Egyptians, Greeks, Turks, Kurds, and American, European and native friends. Amid the wailing of “O God! our Father has left us, our Father has left us!” the vast concourse slowly wended its way up Mt. Carmel to the tomb of the Bab, wherein the body of Abdul Baha was also to be enshrined. In the garden here, nine representative speakers paid such sincere and fervent tribute to the purity and nobility

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of the life that had just closed, and to the ideals for which he had so suffered and laboured, that no more fitting proof could have been offered that these labours had not been in vain. Here on the Mount of God it was made manifest that the Bahai Revelation had already begun to permeate and transform the world.

The following are just a few sentences culled from the speeches delivered on this occasion and at a memorial feast that was held 40 days later, and from papers which recorded the event. They will convey more clearly than any words I can write, the impression, made by Sir Abdul Baha Abbas on all who had ever come within the sphere of his influence.

A Moslem Priest, on behalf of his co-religionists :—

... "What am I to set forth the achievements of this Leader of Mankind? They are too glorious to be praised, too many to recount. Suffice it to say, that he has left in every heart the most profound impression, on every tongue the most wondrous praise. And he that leaveth a memory so lovely, so imperishable, he indeed, is not dead."

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Spoken by a Christian.

... "O bitter is the anguish caused by this heart-rending calamity! It is not only our country's loss but a world's affliction! He hath lived for well-nigh 80 years the life of the Messengers and Apostles of God. Fellow Christians . . . we say farewell to the material body of our Abbas . . . but his reality, our spiritual Abbas will never leave our minds, our thoughts, our hearts, our tongues."

... "A Voice summoning mankind to love, to unity and peace; a Voice the source whereof, had it been anything but pure in motive, could in no wise have succeeded in sending its waves with the swiftness of lightning throughout the world."

The Morning Post of England concluded its report:—

"His persistent messages as to the divine origin and unity of mankind were as impressive as the Messenger himself."

The *Times* of India in its editorial article gave an account of the Bahai Movement and wrote:—

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. . . "It is not for us now to judge whether the purity, the mysticism and the exalted ideas of Bahaism will continue unchanged after the loss of the great Leader, or to speculate on whether Bahaism will some day become a force in the world as great, or greater than Christianity or Islam . . . but we would pay tribute to the memory of a man who wielded a vast influence for good . . . who showed the West that religion is a vital force that can never be disregarded."

From among Abdul Baha's words of counsel and farewell, I can only quote a few phrases. Like Christ, he comforted his disciples with the fragrant promise :—

"Remember whether or not I be on earth, my Presence will be with you always."

In a letter of infinite pathos he wrote :—

"Friends ! . . . the time is coming when I shall be no longer with you . . . I have served the Cause of Baha'u'llah to the utmost of my ability. I have laboured night and day all the years of my life. . . .

"O how I long to see the loved ones

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taking upon themselves the responsibilities of the Cause! Now is the time to proclaim the Kingdom of Baha. Now is the hour of love and union. The spirit of my life is the welcome tidings of the unity of the people of Baha."

"The mystic nightingale is warbling for them all,

Will they not listen?

The bird of paradise is singing;

Will they not heed?

The angel of Abha is calling to them;

Will they not hearken?

The herald of the Covenant is pleading;

Will they not obey?"

One of the sections of his Testament closes with this prayer:

"O God, my God! I call Thee, thy Prophets and thy Messengers, thy Saints and thy Holy Ones, to witness that I have declared conclusively thy proofs unto thy loved ones, and set forth clearly all things unto them, that they may watch over thy Faith, guard thy straight path, and protect thy resplendent Law. Thou art verily the All-knowing, the All-wise!"

CHAPTER VI

THE GUARDIAN OF THE CAUSE

"Not until the dynamic love we cherish for Him is sufficiently reflected in its power and purity in all our dealings with our fellowmen, however remotely connected and humble in origin, can we hope to exalt in the eyes of a self-seeking world the genuineness of the all-conquering love of God. Not until we live ourselves the life of a true Bahai can we hope to demonstrate the creative and transforming potency of the Faith we profess."

(SHOGHI EFFENDI.)

AND now that six years have passed since the memorable event on Mt. Carmel, how stands the Bahai Cause to-day?

We find that its appeal has become world-wide; that in the short space of eighty-three years, since the Bab's proclamation in 1844, the Message has been carried to practically every country and land.

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In Persia, itself, the blood of the martyrs has not been shed in vain, for adherents are to be found in a quite considerable number of the villages and towns. The radiance of the Sun of Truth illumines the mystic East, the energetic West ; for through the Bahai Message pulsates a magnetic power that attracts all intelligent men and women. The teachings it offers are "the spirit of this age, the essence of all the highest ideals of this century."

The new phase into which the work of the Cause entered at the Passing of "the Master," required systematic organization in order to more closely unite its followers, make more efficient the promulgation of its principles. This had been provided for, in that Abdul Baha, in his will, appointed his grandson, the eldest son of his eldest daughter, to take up the unique and responsible position of Guardian of the Cause.

A body called the 'Hands of the Cause' co-operates with the Guardian in his noble task. And wherever in any town or district, those who sincerely believe in the Message and are prepared to obey its commands exceed nine in number, a body called a Spiritual Assembly is formed. The

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plan adopted is as simple as it is effective. The body of the believers in every country elect delegates who in turn elect the members of the National Assembly for that country. The members of this Assembly elect directly the members of the International House of Justice, at the head of which stands the Guardian. This system is intended to be a prototype, and to form the framework, as it were, of that new social order which is destined to come into manifestation with the dawn of a divine civilization.

By means of news-letters sent out regularly by these assemblies, by visiting teachers, by the publication of magazines, the widely-scattered followers of the Movement are kept in sympathetic touch with one another, and informed of all its diverse activities and progress.

Yet regarding this, listen to the admonition that comes from the eloquent pen of the youthful Guardian of the Cause, Shoghi Effendi :—

"Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching—no matter how world-wide and elaborate in

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its character—not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age, the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation. One thing, and only one thing, will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth, in their manifold aspects, the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Baha-'u'llah."

When Abdul Baha passed away in 1921, Shoghi Effendi was only twenty-five years of age, and a student at Balliol College, Oxford. A recent visitor to Haifa (which is still the home of Abdul Baha's family, the headquarters and centre of the Cause), writing in the *Star of the West*, November, 1926, describes the stupendous task laid upon his shoulders.

"The unique and outstanding figure in the world to-day is Shoghi Effendi. Unique, because the guardianship of this great Cause is in his hands, and his humility, modesty, economy, and self-effacement are monumental. Outstanding, because he is the only person,

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we may safely say, who, entrusted with the affairs of millions of souls, has but one thought and one mind—the speedy promulgation of peace and goodwill throughout the world. His personal life is absolutely and definitely sacrificed. . . .

The ladies of the household (Abdul Baha's four daughters, the wife and sister) typify the Cause as Love and Faith. Shoghi Effendi adds to this the élan of the New Day—Action and Progress.

So to comprehend and administer all the relationships in a huge organization that only satisfaction and illumination result . . . to clarify with a word the most obscure situations ; to release in countless souls the tides of energy that will sweep the cargoes of these Tidings round the world ; to remain so poised in God as to be completely naturalized into His attributes—these are some of the characteristics of Shoghi Effendi . . . And this without reference to his surpassing mental capacities . . . The world, its politics, social relationships, economic situations, schemes, plans, aspirations, programmes, defeat, successes, lie under his scrutiny like infusoria beneath a microscope."

And as I close this brief and all too

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inadequate outline of this, the greatest of modern Movements, the most momentous series of Events in human history, maybe you are asking yourselves—" If this is true, what should be my personal attitude towards it ? "

When a dazzling noonday sun is flooding earth and sky, why remain fast shut within the House of Doubt ? Why close the windows of the soul to the new light of understanding ; reclining upon the couch of negligence, with the blinds of prejudice or the curtains of indifference drawn against the spiritual sunshine which is waiting to enter and flood your whole being with glad, new life ? " Arise ! shine ! for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ! "

If the import of these Teachings has been grasped ever so slightly, one is impelled to recognize in them universal Truth ; and in the sublime Messengers through whom they were revealed, yet another and fuller Manifestation of the Logos to men. Increasing numbers, all over the world, are finding in them the answer to every intellectual inquiry, satisfaction for every longing of the heart, guidance for every phase and aspect of life.

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Bestowing upon them a new spirit, a new power, it brightens the intellect, enlarges the horizon, expands the comprehension, provides a fresh and noble purpose and stimulus, and a joy and strength that will never fade away, but grow to all Eternity. "Happy is he," says Abdul Baha, "who penetrates the mysteries, and who takes his share from the world of life."

In these Teachings lies the Divine Plan for this present age and for many ages to come. Herein is our own priceless opportunity to become all and far more, than we had ever hoped or dreamed we could be. Herein is shown our supreme path of service to humanity. Herein is the ultimate goal of this life and the life beyond. Herein lies the brilliant pearl of cosmic consciousness and the shining star of our spiritual destiny.

CHAPTER VII

A GLIMPSE OF THE GOLDEN AGE

"Now in the world of being the hand of divine power hath firmly laid the foundations of this all highest bounty and this wondrous gift. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest; for now is but the beginning of its growth and the day-spring of the revelation of its signs. Ere the close of this century and of this age, it shall be made clear and evident, how wondrous was that springtide and how heavenly was that gift."
(Abdul Baha).

ERE I had finished speaking, the sun had set in a blaze of burnished copper, and the twilight was slowly deepening into night. Yet no one stirred. Mary, still lying in her hammock, looked as though she had passed into a happy trance. An early moon gleamed through the dusky branches of the trees upon the four rapt faces of the listeners.

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Arthur was the first to break the reverent silence. His voice held a new note of humility.

"If this wonderful story you have told us is true—and I do not doubt but that it can all be authenticated—why have we heard nothing of it before?"

"That is a very natural question. But, you see, the Movement is given no advertisement in the ordinary way. It progresses only by means of individual influence, literature, and where opportunity occurs, by public lectures. If you remember, it was a hundred years after Christ's ascension, before the world began to hear of Christianity. It is only six years since that of Abdul Baha's Passing, yet there are numbers of Bahais throughout the world to-day. Also the Light is being reflected by many pure minds, and the new ideals upheld by many progressive institutions that remain unconscious of the true source of their guidance and illumination."

From Oliver came a meditative murmur—

"Science and Religion—at last—hand in hand. One with its clearness and purity—the other with its power and passion. What possibilities . . .!"

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Then questioned Peter, a trifle wistfully—

“Since this Revelation is a written one, and so everybody can read and understand for themselves, my profession will no longer be needed, I suppose?”

“In this Universal Religion there is neither room nor need for elaborate rites and ceremonies. All are to be missionaries and teachers, according to their capacities—‘kings and priests unto God’—not one particular class. And the teachings will be given for the love and joy of it, not to earn a livelihood. Monks and nuns are advised to live a spiritual life *in* the world, not apart from it. Those who wish to greatly serve their fellow men must show it by their deeds, not by their peculiar style of dress.”

Then Mary remarked softly:

“It is all and infinitely more than I could ever have hoped or dreamed. I can feel that it is Truth.”

“For the love of God is broader than the
measures of man’s mind;
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.”

* * * * *

Then across the moonlight drifted a

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curious shadow, like giant wings outspread above us, over the garden trees. A strange humming filled the air, causing our hearts to beat with an intense and awed anticipation. Presently through the breathless silence stole a Voice, far, sweet and compelling.

"O Sons of Desire: How long wilt thou soar in the realms of passion? Wings have I bestowed upon thee, that thou mayest fly.

"Come! Come and see! . . . the things which God hath prepared . . . hath prepared for them that love Him . . ."

And before we were aware of what was happening, Imagination, like some great spiritual aeroplane, had caught us up, and spreading her swift, shining wings, had swept us forward, with the rapidity of thought, through a hundred years or more of world history. Through the vast phantasmagoria of world events; of earthquake, fire and flood, which wrought their shattering changes in the planet's surface. Through yet another devastating war; through revolutions, labour troubles, the turmoils of Bolshevism, economic rivalries and disputes. Through the mighty phantoms of anarchy and chaos

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cast by wide-spread irreligion, when the doors of hope and happiness were closed to large sections of mankind. Yet, while as in a titanic cinematograph these dark shapes and shadows of sin, and its consequent affliction, chased each other across the world screen, above it all there shone with an undimmed, steadily growing radiance, the light of the Glory of God. Like the Shekinah of old that gleamed over the Mercy-seat, it shed its glow of guidance upon all the problems and complexities of individual and national life ; its assurance and comfort throughout all the greatest tribulations.

“ For through affliction hath His Light shone, and His praise been bright unceasingly ; this hath been His method through past ages and by-gone times.”

But now, at length, the Sun had melted and dispersed these gloomy clouds of prejudice, greed and ignorance, veiling the true nature of man ; and this nether world, like the surface of some clear, calm lake, had become the very mirror of the Realms on High. The Plan of the ages, unfolded by the heavenly Architect, having been at

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last accepted and put into execution by the builders, humanity had begun to rear the new and glorious edifice of a Divine Civilization.

"For every plan is in need of a power for its execution. The penetrative power in the world of existence is the confirmation of the Kingdom of Abha. Every plan and system which is assisted by this Power will be established . . . and will be realised among men."

As our ethereal aeroplane, poised like a bird in the fleckless blue, swept downwards into the lower belts of the earth's atmosphere, we became aware of subtle changes, as though some new element had entered into the planet's aura ; a new clarity and brightness pervaded it, as if in correspondence with and a radiation from a higher and purer state of consciousness on the part of its inhabitants.

Extremes of heat and cold appeared to be less severe ; the temperatures were more equable, the climates more agreeable. So marvellously and intimately are man's thoughts and actions interwoven with the finer forces of Nature and the vast Unseen.

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"Look!" cried Oliver, pointing admiringly below, where, heading in all directions of the compass, sped great argosies of the air. While other craft of strange shapes and sizes soared, like winged insects into the sky, generating their motive power from the inexhaustible stores of the ether itself.

And our scientific friend, who in these matters was far keener than the rest of us, exclaimed at a kind of invisible network of communication, swift as light, more perfect than radio, that covered the earth from pole to pole, transmitting not only sound, but form and colour.

Rules and regulations governed all these extensive and varied intercommunications. But everywhere there appeared to be right of way. For, although still existed boundaries and border-lines, the old barriers and restrictions between nations and countries had been totally abolished. In vain we sought for the old fortifications that once had grimly frowned on frontiers; for the huge battleships that had jealously guarded dividing seas, for official spies, imposing custom-houses. These things evidently belonged now to the tales of the past.

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"For in this age the boundaries of terrestrial things have extended ; minds have taken on a broader range of vision ; realities have been unfolded and the secrets of being have been brought into the realm of possibility. What is the spirit of this age ? What is its focal point ? It is the establishment of universal peace, the establishment of the knowledge that humanity is one family."

And mankind, guided by this principle of Oneness, and the different attitude such a realisation had involved, had discovered the means whereby all could become partners in the earth's surface, and in the exploitation of its natural resources and treasures. Co-operation and mutual trust, an interracial sense of fellowship and good-will had made possible free and abundant interchange of both material and mental wealth ; while spiritually—

"Each to Truth's rich market brings,
Its bright, divine imaginings,
In rival tribute to surprise
The world with native merchandise."

The motto of this amazingly pros-

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perous and happy age was : " Glory is not his who loves his native land alone, but glory is his who loves his kind." No heavy boom of cannon, therefore, no sharp rattle of musketry, no piercing cries of pain and death greeted our ears, as we hovered above this erstwhile planet of sorrow. For with the dawn of a New Day, the nightmare of war and strife had passed away, and universal Peace had been gloriously enthroned.

" But how," eagerly questioned Arthur, " can such a state of affairs be maintained ? "

In answer to his question, lower and lower we dropped towards a magnificent pile of buildings, situated in a great central city, which, both geographically and spiritually had been found most favourable to intercommunication with all the races of men.

" Oh," he cried, " I think I can guess ! It is a similar idea to that initiated by certain nations after the War of 1914."

Yes, he was right. On closer inspection, we discovered that the dream of many a noble statesman had, at last, materialised. For this was indeed a Parliament of Man at the apex of the world, a Supreme International Tri-

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bunal and World Court. Here, in constant conclave assembled the wisest, the most far-sighted, the most sagacious representatives and leaders of every nation on earth. It was the centre towards which all peoples turned their gaze, receiving therefrom guidance and justice. It functioned as the mighty brain of mankind. Its members were the Elect of the Elect, having been chosen from the national Parliaments or Houses of Justice representing every country. These in their turn were the delegates chosen by a body of secondary electors chosen by the mass of the people. Every portion of mankind was thus, in all international affairs, fairly represented at and controlled by the decisions of this World Court. To it were brought all controversial problems, and any nation instigating war would be resisted by all the others. Thus was war rendered impossible.

Only a small force guarded each land; only an international marine police patrolled the peaceful oceans, and regulated the merchant fleets plying from coast to coast.

And memory recalled to us visions of the seers in by-gone ages, of Isaiah,

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John of Patmos and many an ancient bard. And Abdul Baha's prediction :—

“ Universal peace will raise its tent in the centre of the earth ; and the blessed tree of life will grow and spread to such an extent that it will overshadow the East and the West. Strong and weak, rich and poor, antagonistic sects and hostile nations, which are like the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and kid, the lion and the calf, will act toward each other with the most complete love, friendship, justice and equity.”

“ I am longing to see things in more detail,” cried Mary. “ Do you think we could take a peep, say, at the little islands of Britain ? I used to worry about the unemployment and labour problems there, and wonder if she would revive.”

Swiftly we skimmed the intervening distances of sea and land ; noticing as we did so, how the earth had robed herself in fresh lovelinesses of colour and perfume. Many wide stretches of grey desert and wilderness had been reclaimed, and were blossoming with verdure and grain. For in every land agriculture was receiving, it appeared,

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the skill and attention it had so long required. Prosperous farms and settlements abounded. Huge and ugly cities had been to a large extent decentralised, and now that heavy transport was conveyed by air, and science had learnt how to eliminate unpleasant sounds, the rush, noise and dirt characterising the cities of former times had vanished completely. People lived in greater simplicity, yet in more real comfort and refinement, because science had solved, by means of electricity and ether, all the old difficulties of heat and light. These now were abundant, beautiful, and within the reach of all.

We decided that we would alight at the next landing-place and try to study more closely the life now existing in a district once known to some of our party as "England's hop-fields."

No smell of hops, however, greeted us as we walked between the tall, fragrant hedgerows, because this new world had proved "how much the renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium gives health, strength, intellectual enjoyment, penetration of judgment and physical vigour." Instead, the fields were sown with grains of all kinds, with

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orchards of fruit and nuts, with sweet-scented herbs and flowers. Medical science having discovered that man's natural food grows out of the ground, much less animal food was consumed than in former times.

Thus it appeared that humanity had evolved a keener mentality, a finer sensitiveness, since it had ceased to consume coarse food, artificial stimulants, poisons and narcotics.

Arthur glanced with open admiration at some graceful, dignified women who passed us on the road. Their sun-tanned faces shone with health and happiness. Their raiment was extremely simple, but of lovely texture and colouring.

"Beautiful as Greek models," I heard him remark, "but far more spiritual in expression."

By this time we had reached, apparently, the centre of the district we were inspecting, which was occupied by a kind of market square, flanked on one side by a large building. This proved to be the local House of Justice; in reality a kind of central storehouse and distributing centre established for the benefit of the farmer and all the members of that particular community. These in turn supported the House of

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Justice, the members of which were elected by the district for their wisdom, experience and administrative ability. The House had definite revenues, such as an income tax, a tax on animals and inheritance, on treasures of the earth, mines, oil-wells, etc. At harvest time a General Board appropriated a certain percentage of the entire harvest for this central storehouse. There were, of course, expenditures also—the running costs of the institution, salaries, administration of public safety and hygiene, tithes to the government of the country, support of orphans, cripples, of educational establishments, supplying deficiencies in the incomes of the poor. This last method had entirely supplanted and made unnecessary those always hated institutions known, in the past, in this country, as "work-houses."

"I am disappointed to find an income-tax still existing," observed Mary.

But we found, on inquiry, that the tax was a graduated one, only levied in cases where the income exceeded all necessary expenditure ; the percentage of tax increasing with the surplus of income. On the other hand, if anyone through misfortune were unable to

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earn enough to meet his expenses for the year, what he lacked for the maintenance of himself and his family was supplied from public funds. So were the extremes of destitution on the one hand, and useless extravagance on the other, avoided.

Yet it was not so much new laws, as the new spirit abroad in the world that had made possible these just and humane conditions. For this generation had grasped the great principle of Voluntary Sharing ; had realised that all the love, beauty, truth, justice, science on earth was the result of this sharing ; and that wealth of gold or possessions was but a talent on the material plane to be likewise used for the benefit of one's fellows. The experiments of Socialists, Communists, and others had, at last, convinced men that equality among them there can never be—but that mutual dependence is the essence of all material, as well as mental and spiritual progress and happiness. Thus had humanity become released from captivity to nature ; from that ceaseless struggle for existence which constituted in former times so supreme an affliction.

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Coming out of this simple yet effective House of Justice, we found our eyes attracted to a building through whose wide windows issued sounds of children's voices singing. All the rooms, as well as the pretty gardens and playgrounds adjoining, seemed filled with the clearest and most delicate colours. The science of colour being now understood and developed and used for both healing and educational purposes. Every device that an enlightened humanity could supply for the development of the child was combined in the sunshiny edifice before us. These boys and girls were indeed in the Golden Age, when 'education' was a word possessing new and delightful meanings. No longer was a child considered as wax to be moulded indifferently to any shape; no longer must it strain to conform to a standard utterly at variance with its natural capacities. Indeed it was encouraged to develop its peculiar abilities, character and individuality to the best possible advantage. The teacher, like a wise gardener, protecting, pruning, supplying nourishment and assistance as needed. Above all, the children were taught that obedience

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to God's commands, and service to humanity are the highest aims in life ; and to regard their innate powers and faculties as gifts to be developed for the good of all.

As Baha'u'llah taught :

“ Knowledge is like unto wings for the being of man, and is like a ladder of ascending. To acquire knowledge is incumbent upon all, but of those sciences which may profit the people of the earth, not such as begin in mere words and end in mere words. The possessors of sciences and arts have a great right among the people.”

The advance that humanity had made was not only in knowledge, but in power to practice that knowledge. No wonder that a new order of being, a race of supermen and women, was now rapidly being evolved.

An educational system that had become universal had, we learnt, been established by the Supreme International Tribunal, and this included instruction in an international auxiliary language, thus giving to all nations, both in the Occident and Orient, the priceless boon of one common tongue.

As Teaching was now regarded as such highly important work, demanding

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only the best and most qualified type of men and women, the profession carried adequate remuneration. In taxes on inheritance estates, teachers were given a share—regarded as heirs in an owner's will. The schools, themselves, being built and supported by community funds.

"But is nobody out of work?" demanded Peter. "Nobody idle or drifting about aimlessly?"

No, because mankind now had realised the dignity of labour. The Bahai law of "work for all" had put to use the splendid potentialities of human energy, and had guided this energy and creative power into channels of natural expression, free from coercion, free from fear. Education had enabled men to find the work for which each was best fitted. The hours of labour were shortened, till all, however humble, could enjoy sufficient leisure and recreation. Also the general attitude to work had changed. Fear of poverty now removed, monetary gain was no longer the chief incentive.

"Nobody worked for money, and nobody
worked for fame,
But each for the JOY of the working."

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Work had become identical with worship.

“ The best of men, said Baha’u’llah, are they who gain by work, and expend for themselves and their kindred in the love of God.”

But look ! What is that cluster of buildings standing somewhat removed from the rest of the township, out of which young men and women are pouring for their noonday meal and rest, or games in the fields adjoining ?

Factory workers ? Yes. For factories too have been revolutionised, and built where possible out in the open country. The establishment of industrial democracy had eliminated the old distinctions between capital and labour, and the bitter feelings that once so often prevailed between master and man. Workers now received not only their wages, but a definite share both in profits and management. Thus making employees’ and employers’ interests identical. Friendly co-operation and consultation had replaced the industrial slavery, strikes and lock-outs of a chaotic and perplexed by-gone age.

That group of houses and gardens

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yonder are their homes, where, no longer huddled in tenements and dark streets, every man may "sit under his own fig tree."

"And these little homes," queried Mary, "I wonder if they are really happier than in past centuries?"

How could it be otherwise? In woman's particular domain were reflected all the new factors promoting the welfare of society, of the child and the worker. The vital changes regarding her status in the world, which had begun to manifest at the end of the 19th century, had come now to full fruition—her equality with man having been completely established in every department of life. Physical and mental force had lost its dominance, and the more spiritual qualities characterising the feminine nature, such as intuition, mental alertness, love and service, daily gained in strength. The East especially had made amazing strides in prosperity and power since the emancipation and education of its women. Monogamy was practically universal, and the ideas and ideals involved in the marriage contract purified and spiritualised. So that divorce was seldom used; but when necessary, it was, after

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a year's separation, done quietly by mutual agreement. The miseries and indecencies of 'divorce courts' being now quite unknown.

But Peter was naturally anxious to see the kind of churches in which people worshipped now-a-days. So, lightly skimming the intervening distance, we arrived in a large and populous town where many nations met. High above the tree-tops we caught sight of a beautiful, shining white dome. We alighted at a convenient aerodrome adjoining a remarkable collection of buildings, enclosed in fine, park-like estates. One of nine avenues led our wandering footsteps among gardens filled with choice shrubs and lovely flowers towards some point in the centre. The splashing of fountains, the songs of birds made happy music everywhere. Soon we stood before a fine, polygon edifice, to whose nine doors of entrance the avenues had converged, and which like some exquisite architectural bouquet, was the focal-point and crown of the whole. But who could hope to describe in mere words, the majestic dome and springing columns, the beauty and

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strength of this embodiment and externalization of the great spiritual truth of religious Unity! Surely it might have been such a vision that Tennyson beheld when he wrote:—

"I dreamed
That stone by stone I reared a sacred
fane,
A temple, neither pagod, mosque nor
church,
But loftier, simpler, always open-
doored
To every breath from heaven, and
Truth and Peace,
And Love and Justice came and
dwelt therein."

In the spacious rotunda beneath the dome were assembled people belonging to every race, nation or creed. Beside the black-browed representative of Mosaic law knelt the once despised follower of Jesus of Nazareth; the devout and prayerful Moslem bowed himself with that Bahai brother whom once he had so bitterly persecuted; while an Indian Buddhist, his dark eyes shining with mystic joy, stood clasping the hand of a Christian to whom he had formerly been a "heathen."

Up in a wide, encircling gallery,

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children's voices were chanting. Music, rich, sweet, soul-entrancing filled the air. Words floated down to us :

“ O God ! This is a day, the Light of
which

Thou hast made holy above the sun and
its effulgence.”

“ Glory be unto Thee, O Thou God of
the world

And desire of nations.

O Thou who hast become manifest in
the Greatest Name.”

It was the morning hour of worship,
and the common aspiration of all
hearts found expression in the words of
a beautiful old hymn.

“ Gather us in, Thou LOVE that
fillest all !

Gather our rival faiths within thy
fold !

Rend each man's temple-veil and bid
it fall,

That we may know that Thou hast
been of old ;

Gather us in.”. . . .

But now we turned from religion in
its aspect of praise and prayer, to
examine the numerous buildings by
which this Temple of Unity was sur-

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rounded, and of which it appeared to be the centre.

There stood a university for the study of the higher sciences ; science in this enlightened age having become the handmaid of religion, and their co-operation making possible achievements undreamt of by scientific experts of former times. Here a hospital had been erected, whose services for the healing of the body went hand-in-hand with mental and spiritual processes of cure. Although perfect physical health had not, as yet, been attained by men, diseases were rapidly disappearing as the material and divine worlds came more and more into harmony with each other. Science having proved that Light in all its varied forms was Life—light and colour, herbs and diet, were increasingly employed instead of drugs, and operations. Indeed, the quality of the light everywhere, we noticed, seemed softer, yet clearer and more diffused. For the greatest physical exemplar of the Spirit of God is light, and the increase in its use and understanding was but the natural correspondence to the new outpouring upon the world of humanity of spiritual Light.

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There was a joy too in the faces of people, as though they had discovered a meaning and purpose in Life. They moved with springing step, as though Nature's conquerors, instead of her slaves, they trod air rather than earth. Thus it was that, by purity of thought and harmonious living, by right use of all the means to health revealed by science, the power of God was turning sorrow into happiness, disease into well-being. As Abdul Baha had promised : " When the Divine Message is understood, all troubles will vanish."

We were also interested to observe a marked increase in longevity. Apparently, nobody now was too old at sixty for any business or occupation. For the middle period of life had greatly extended and come to be regarded as the most valuable ; while the first twenty years were mainly devoted to education and physical development.

Numerous were the other buildings we saw, including a fine guest-house, opened to all men ; buildings where feasts and conventions were held, and others of a philanthropic and educational nature.

But our time was fast drawing to a

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close. Had time calculations too been changed to meet the requirements of this New Era?

To our surprise, we discovered that it was New Year's Day—the first day of the first month, called Baha, i.e., Splendour of God, that we in Western Europe used to know as the Spring Equinox, March 21st. No longer, it appeared, were men divided and perplexed by varying systems and methods of calculation. A new, universal calendar had been established by the Supreme Tribunal. A year now consisted of 19 months of 19 days each, i.e., of 361 days, with the addition of certain intercalary days, in order to adjust it to the solar year; the New Era having begun in that wonderful year of the Bab's declaration of his mission, and of Abdul Baha's birth, 1844.

So on this radiant day of Spring—this New Year's Day of 2044—two hundred years since the Dawn first broke over a dark, discordant world, we glided upwards once more into the sky, to pay our final visit to a world which had so marvellously been made anew.

On the wings of that most wonderful

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gift of God to men—a purified imagination—we sped over ocean and land, over snowy mountain-tops and dark fringed forests, till we paused, hovering above the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

Below us ocean-liners, merchant-craft, giant airships and winged vessels of all kinds were heading in a continuous procession eastwards. We followed where they led, till we found ourselves poised above one of the chief ports and emporiums of the world. Daylight was failing, but we were able to descry the noble curve of a mountain, magnificent buildings and mansions, colleges and institutions, orchards, gardens and parks adorning all its slopes and the adjoining plain. In the spacious semi-circular harbour rode at anchor the ships of many nations. For into this mighty centre was being poured the wealth and culture, the service and honour, the love and devotion of the finest products of every civilization. Here in the cause of the reconciliation and brotherhood of mankind, met the earth's noblest and best.

Between two ports that formed the terminals of one great city, blazed a pathway of illumination. Electricity

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turned night into day ; while from the heights above, immense searchlights began to sweep the darkening waters of the surrounding ocean.

But our eyes followed groups of people who, chanting, wended their way across a wide and gracious expanse, shaded by trees and adorned with flowers, towards a lovely garden, where tall cypresses stand sentinel about the noble Shrine that holds the sacred dust of God's Tabernacle with men, and now constituting earth's most hallowed spot.

Other pilgrims could be seen ascending the slopes of the mountain, where rises from out the trees the beautiful Shrine of the heroic Bab and the world's most beloved "Servant" of the Glory. Out of every country, race and religion these pilgrims come to meet in the love and light of a New Jerusalem, to kneel together in this holy place in peace and joy, in fellowship made perfect ; like the vision granted to the inspired writer of the Apocalypse, of the tribes that came from the East and the West, from the North and the South, to sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Enthralled we gazed upon the moun-

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tain, robed in its mantle of light, while gratitude and awe, reverence and exaltation almost overwhelmed our senses. Of all the cycles of human history, surely this was the sublimest spectacle, the most divine consummation !

Almost we thought we could hear Isaiah as he sang :

. . . " Of the increase of His Government and of peace there shall be no end."

" The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it : the glory (Baha) of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the excellency of the Lord and the glory (Baha) of our God."

And with him joined, it seemed, a multitude of the heavenly host, singing above the plains of Akka, as they did above those of Bethlehem : " Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." And with them that glad multitude of the Redeemed—which no man could number—of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues, saying :

" Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and

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might be unto our God for ever and
ever ! "

While toward them earth lifted her
most melodious voices in anthems of
praise. " Glory be unto thee, O God, for
thy Manifestation of Love to mankind."
" Hosanna ! Peace on earth and Glory
in the Highest ! " And then it seemed
as though the whole round globe, the
surging seas, the very stars above us
united in the joyous harmonies of one
grand cosmic symphony, and all the
leaves of the forests clapped their hands.

* * * * *

But the radiance grew dim ; the
celestial strains rose fainter and fainter
on the listening air ; imagination fal-
tered before the splendour of that
vision. And as once more around us
closed the clouds of Time and Space, our
hearts within us burned with inexpress-
sible longing, to take our place and
have our share, no matter however
humble, in that glad and glorious Com-
ing of the Glory of God.