



# THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

## A BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL RECORD

Prepared under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada  
with the approval of Shoghi Effendi

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### III

## IN MEMORIAM

MRS. FANNIE LESCH

January 15, 1860—February 22, 1948

*By the Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of Chicago*

Mrs. Fannie Lesch came into the Bahá'í Faith in 1896. When quite young she married a very promising young lawyer, Mr. Frank Collier. The couple had one son, Mr. John Collier. Later, being widowed, she met through her Bahá'í associations, Mr. George Lesch, whom she married in 1898. Mr. Lesch was the brother of Miss Mary Lesch, deceased, and Mrs. Rose C. Robinson of Chicago.

As her husband, Mr. George Lesch, was secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of Chicago from its inception—it was known first as the Council Board, then the House of Justice, and later the House of Spirituality—Fanny Lesch made typewritten reports of the minutes of the meetings, which were sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá at 'Akká, and copies were preserved in what became the nucleus of the Bahá'í Archives. These are priceless historic documents of the Faith, not only in Chicago, but in the Western World. She was the first to make typewritten copies of the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from the original Persian and Arabic, and shared them with the friends. She also made copies of the talks of Mirzá Abu'l-Faḍl, the great oriental scholar and disciple of Bahá'u'lláh, sent by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' to America to enlighten and strengthen the earlier believers. Through the compilation of these records of the Tablets and talks, was established the Publishing Society, now known as the Publishing Committee, through which Bahá'í literature is being published and distributed to all points of Bahá'í activity throughout the world.



Fanny Lesch

'Abdu'l-Bahá gave His Unity Feast for the friends of Chicago at the home of Fannie Lesch. She started the first of those meetings, now called firesides, in her home. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her instructions to have them on a regular day each week, at the same hour. Her beginning was with one soul, and in due time grew to great proportions. She continued these meetings for forty years.

Mrs. Fannie Lesch served the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh into her eighty-eighth year, passing into the Abhá Kingdom, February 22, 1948. The Spiritual Assembly of Chicago, cooperating with the Chicago Bahá'í Community held a Memorial Service for their departed sister, at the request of her son, Mr.

John Collier, April 23, 1948 at the Jordan Chapel in Chicago. Mr. Albert Windust, a member of the Chicago Spiritual Assembly, was requested to conduct the service. Selections from the Words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, appropriate to the occasion, were read. No note of sadness was sounded, and the spirit manifested by the assembled guests was one of rejoicing that our beloved sister had ascended to the mansions of the Most Glorious.

A Cablegram from our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, was received, which read:

"Deeply sympathize loss loyal distinguished maid-servant Bahá'u'lláh, Fannie Lesch. Present with you in spirit memorial services. Praying ardently progress her soul Abhá Kingdom.—Shoghi"

#### WALTER OLITZKI

1899-1949

By MANZIEH GAIL

"The Bahá'ís of New York take pleasure in presenting a recital by Walter Olitzki, Metropolitan Opera Baritone . . ." "The Peninsula Bahá'ís present Palo Alto Bahá'í Fall Concert featuring Walter Olitzki, Baritone, member of Metropolitan Opera Company and San Francisco Opera Company. At the piano: Ludwig Altman, official Organist of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra . . ." "Under the auspices of the Public Meetings Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís . . ." "The Bahá'ís of Allentown request the honor of your presence . . ." "The Bahá'ís of Los Angeles present . . ." "The Bahá'ís of Berkeley, California, present . . ." "The San Francisco Bahá'í Assembly cordially invites you and your friends . . ." "The Annual Bahá'í Souvenir of New Jersey invites . . ." "The Bahá'ís of Syracuse present . . ." "Under the auspices of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. . . ." "Under the auspices of the National Spiritual

Assembly of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. . . ."

These quotations are taken from a handful of programs, typical of many more, souvenirs of many audiences and thousands of inquirers that Walter Olitzki's name drew to the Bahá'í Faith. Walter Olitzki did not only sing for people, he awakened their minds and hearts. He was among those rare creative personalities who dedicate their art to something that transcends it: his voice was his contribution to world peace.

Walter Olitzki was born March 17, 1899, in Hamburg, Germany, and grew up in Berlin. Both his parents were Jewish, his father of Russian, his mother of Polish descent. Both his grandfathers were well-known cantors of orthodox congregations. An aunt, Madame Rosa Olitzki, was a famous contralto and one time Metropolitan Opera star.

In 1936 Walter Olitzki was the leading baritone at the Jewish Kulturbund in Berlin. On December 14 of that year, he married Lili Maria Olitzki, whom he had met when the two were scheduled for a joint recital, and with whom he had sung at the opera in Monte Carlo and at the Jewish Kulturbund. In June, 1939, after seemingly endless racial and religious persecutions, the couple left for the United States.

The Olitzkis reached New York City with a total capital of two dollars. Lili supported herself and her husband by sewing, working some eighty hours a week. In September, at the rooming house where they lived, they met Madeline Humbert, who told them of Bahá'u'lláh. Walter knew no English and Lili only a little, but they understood that a great, new Prophet had come Who promised peace, and that Hitler would not invade America as was then generally feared.

On December 2, 1939, Walter made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera House as Beckmesser in "Die Meistersinger." His success was immediate, the critics being unanimous in their acclaim, and Olin Downes, music edi-

tor of the New York Times, stating: "in details of business, diction, song. Mr. Olitzki proved himself an artist."

The couple, their way of life now changed, soon left for California where they spent the summer months studying English. When they returned for the new Opera season in October, their first concern was to look up Madelaine Humbert to learn more about the new Prophet. Through Madelaine they attended classes at the home of Mildred and Rafi Mottahedeh, Lili translating for Walter, whose English was still undeveloped. What attracted him most to the Faith was, as Lili has since written, "the friendliness . . . and the absence of discrimination to which we had been subjected for such a long time and which had been the cause of so much suffering." In March 1941, although not yet a declared Bahá'í, Walter gave a recital at the New York Bahá'í Center.

That April the couple returned to California with a letter of introduction to Virginia Orbison, through whom they met many believers and attended the annual picnic held in Santa Paula. The hospitality of the friends made this one of the happiest summers of their life, and the book *Portals to Freedom* now laid the foundation of Walter's love for 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian. As Lili has written, "More intuitively than through studying, he felt the security for which Bahá'u'lláh has provided, the indivisibility of the Cause. . ." In September 1941, at the Feast of Mashíyyat in Los Angeles, the Olitzkis became declared Bahá'ís.

Walter always carried with him, in his prayer book, the following letter of welcome, sent them by the Guardian:

Haifa, May 4th, 1942

"Dear Bahá'í friends:

Your most welcome letter of April 1st was received by the Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf. He welcomes you into the world-wide Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and assures you that he will pray for you both that you may render His Cause many valuable services



Walter Olitzki

in the days to come. You have found now your true home—the Faith of God—and this is why you are so much happier than before. The Guardian hopes you will be able to guide other souls to it, who, like yourselves, have suffered and are seeking the Light. He advised you to both study the Teachings and teach others. The need is so great, the suffering so acute in the world today, that the Bahá'ís cannot be still, but must, in every way they can, seek to open the eyes of their fellow-men. He sends you his loving greetings, and will remember you in the Holy Shrines. . ."

The Guardian added, in his own hand, "May the Spirit that guides and animates this Faith be your shield and guide, and enable you to deepen your understanding of its essential verities and to proclaim far and wide its life-giving principles. Your true brother, Shoghi."

Walter Olitzki remained with the Metropolitan Opera Company for eight seasons, also singing with the San Francis-

co Opera Company and that of San Antonio, and appearing with the Charles Wagner Opera Production of "La Boheme." He was best known in the United States for his portrayal of Beckmesser in "Die Meistersinger," Alberich in "Der Ring des Nibelungen," and Klingsor in "Parsifal." In addition he had mastered about one hundred and fifty operatic roles of the Italian, French and Russian repertory, and had appeared in these at the Municipal Opera House in Königsberg, East Prussia, and the Berlin State Opera. He also scored successes for his original interpretations of such Modernists as Richard Strauss, Alban Berg, Hindemith and Kreneck. He had appeared in Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier" and Berg's "Wozzeck" in performances conducted by the composers themselves. He sang in five languages.

Besides his operatic work, Walter Olitzki sang in numerous recitals, oratorios and radio performances in the United States and Europe. A critic wrote, "The quality of voice is never hard, always melodious, with a rare richness."

From the day he accepted the Faith, Walter gave the Message wherever he went. Whether he was singing to the hundreds of persons he attracted to Green Acre, Maine, Bahá'í School; or in Harlem, at a Bahá'í-sponsored benefit for the United Negro College Fund; or at the New York Times Hall for a Bahá'í Peace Meeting; or at the Bahá'í-sponsored Woodrow Wilson Anniversary Program; or in Chicago at the great Bahá'í Centenary Banquet, or to a large public audience at the Bahá'í House of Worship itself—his purpose was always the same: to further the oneness of mankind.

Everyone knew he was a Bahá'í. He wrote about the Cause to all his friends—in Sweden, Holland, England, Palestine. Traveling throughout the United States on concert tours, he invariably met the Bahá'ís and spoke and sang for them. On a tour through the South, he stayed overnight on the campuses of all the Negro Colleges which he visited, and in each one taught the Faith. When he returned home his agent assured him that because he had remained in

these institutions overnight, he would never be permitted to sing in any of the white colleges of the South. Walter answered: "That's too bad for them."

He loved Negro Spirituals and always included them on his programs. Critics praised the rare simplicity of manner and purity of feeling of these renditions.

In addition to traveling, teaching, and contributing freely of his voice, Walter served on many Bahá'í administrative agencies, such as the New York Regional, New York Bahá'í Library and Bahá'í Feasts, and European Relief Committees. On this last committee he collected, made up and personally mailed packages to Europe over a period of years.

Walter Olitzki was invited to sing at the Bahá'í House of Worship for the Convention of 1948. He regarded this evening as the highlight of his life. It took place during his last, happy year on earth, a year when, Lili said afterward, all his dreams were realized.

Oli, as his intimates called him, was temperamental: before singing that night, he could speak to no one except Lili. As he paced the corridor outside the auditorium, he gestured to Lili. She conferred with him and then relayed his request to the speaker of the evening: He desired the speaker to include some element from the Biblical song he was about to sing. The following line was accordingly incorporated into the talk: "This is the generation of them that seek the Lord."

The last time Walter sang at the Opera House in San Francisco — as Beckmesser in "Die Meistersinger" — seventeen of his Bahá'í friends were in the capacity audience. The last time he sang for the Bahá'ís was on the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh at the Los Angeles Bahá'í Center in 1948. On this occasion he sang the prayer, admirably set to music, at Walter's request, by Charles Wolcott: "From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity give me to drink, O my God . . ."

He was ill of cancer seven and a half months. Much of this time he was in agony. His voice was destroyed. Meanwhile his spiritual stature greatly increased, and those who were close to

him recognized his ever-deepening love for God and man, and his great longing to serve both. He died in Los Angeles at the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, August 2, 1949.

Although Walter Olitzki's Bahá'í life on earth was relatively brief, he rose through his own merit to national prominence as a servant of the Faith, and in these still early years of the Faith in the United States, his dedication of his voice to Bahá'í communities was a particularly valuable gift. He seemed much younger than his age; as an artist he had not yet reached his prime. His fellow-Bahá'ís who loved him can only compensate their loss in redoubled service to the Cause he loved so well, remembering that while the singer is gone, the song remains.

#### FANNY A. KNOBLOCH

1859 - 1949

BY VIOLA IOANS TUTTLE

Miss Fanny A. Knobloch was born in Bautzen, Saxony, Germany on December 22, 1859.

She received the Bahá'í message from Mirzá Abu'l-Faḍl in Washington, D. C., and through her sister, Mrs. Pauline Hannen, accepted the Teachings in 1904, after having attended classes for two years.

Previously, she related, she had been an ardent Christian. Her married sister, Mrs. Hannen, with her two boys, would come to visit Miss Fannie's home every Sunday afternoon and would discuss the Bahá'í interpretation of the Scriptures with their beloved mother, who was well versed in the Bible. The constant conversation dealing with religion became quite trying to Miss Fanny, and she requested her sister to discuss anything but religion. The turning point came when one day Pauline, returning from a Bahá'í meeting, gave Mirzá Abu'l-Faḍl's explanation of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, for it was so different from the one given by the members of Miss Fanny's Bible class, many of whom were retired ministers who had taught the Bible for many years. "Yet here," she

later explained, "came one brought up in the Muḥammadan Faith and revealed this jewel of wisdom concealed in the parable of our New Testament." From that time she attended the Bahá'í meetings, eager for more light, and finally became a Bahá'í after two years of struggle. Eventually their entire family became ardent Bahá'ís.

So brilliant was the flame ignited within Miss Fanny by the Teachings, that she made it possible, out of her own earnings, to send her sister, Alma, to Germany as a pioneer in 1907 and to help her remain there until 1920, firmly establishing the Faith in that country. (See *The Bahá'í World*, Vol VII) She herself, traveled to Southernmost Africa as a pioneer, bringing the light to that far-off country!

In 1908 the three Knobloch sisters and Joseph Hannen (Pauline's husband) received permission from 'Abu'l-Bahá to make a never-to-be-forgotten pilgrimage to the prison city of 'Akká. Because of the death of their beloved mother, Mrs. Amalie Knobloch, it was decided that Fanny should go first, accompanied by Mrs. Ida Finch, a Bahá'í from Seattle, Washington. These two met Miss Alma Knobloch at Naples, en route to 'Akká. An hour's shore leave at Messina, half an hour at Port Said, and then Alexandria. There in the harbor flags of all nations fluttered from the various ships. On the wharf was a multitude of faces uplifted to the deck of the vessel. As they looked down at these faces, Miss Alma said, "Notice the man almost in the middle of the fifth row with a green scarf around his turban. Now count seven to the right. What do you see?" Mrs. Finch replied, "I see a very friendly face." They counted four friendly, illumined faces among that vast mass of men, and when they landed a gentle voice close to their shoulders said the Greatest Name, Alláh-u-Abhá, in an undertone, repeating it several times. Joyously they responded, but in an equally low tone, for in those days it was very dangerous to be known as a Bahá'í.

Among these four Oriental brothers who had come to meet the steamer was Prince Khurásání. A visit was

made to the home of Muḥammad Yazdí, the brother of Aḥmad Yazdí of Port Said, where a meeting was held, first with the men, and then with the women on the second floor. From these Bahá'ís the three pilgrims carried a supplication to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that He would bless Egypt with a visit. At that time no one thought He would ever be outside the prison walls of 'Akká. When they delivered the message to 'Abu'l-Bahá, He said, "Inshá'lláh," meaning "God willing," and true enough, He did bless Egypt with His presence not long after His liberation.

In describing Haifa, Miss Fanny wrote, "In our small hotel we occupied a second story front room, one door of which opened on to a small balcony. That night the glorious rays of a full moon revealed the white crested waves of the sea, rolling upon the sands of the Valley of Achor. The minaret of the mosque gleamed white above the walls of the prison city. In the distance was Mt. Carmel, illumined, while close at hand great rows of tall palms cast weird shadows upon the road."

She spoke of her great happiness in meeting Munirih Kḥánum, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who told her on one occasion that personal nearness to the Manifestation of God does not in itself imply a high spiritual station, for Jesus had sisters and brothers and there is no mention of them; that His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, had a brother who was far from God; likewise 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a brother who became an enemy of the Faith.

What joy to meet Shoghi Effendi (later to become Guardian of the Faith) and his little sister, and Bahíyyih Kḥánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, as well as the other members of the Holy Household. Of Bahíyyih Kḥánum, she wrote, "A strange and unknown feeling possessed me while in the presence of Bahíyyih Kḥánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf. Possibly it can be described as a feeling of awe, a feeling very unfamiliar to me. However, later, I realized that I had been in the presence of the greatest, the most holy woman in the history of the world—the Greatest Holy Leaf! the daughter of the Manifestation of God,



Fanny A. Knobloch

Bahá'u'lláh." Following are His words:

"Verily, We have elevated thee to the rank of one of the most distinguished among thy sex, and granted thee, in My court, a station such as none other woman hath surpassed. Thus have We preferred thee and raised thee above the rest, as a sign of grace from Him who is the Lord of the throne on high and earth below."

Only one who had visited 'Akká during the days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá could understand what it meant to be with Him. For nine days the three pilgrims experienced a happiness beyond expression because of their close contact with Him. When they were leaving, He said to them, "You are not weeping? Do not weep! Many friends weep because they wish to remain longer." Miss Fannie replied, "No, we have received so many blessings and are eager to go out and share them with all who are ready to listen."

Nodding His blessed head, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "The general does not love most the man in the back of the ranks. He loves most the man in front.



If you but knew the value of these days, you would not eat, you would not sleep, you would not walk. You would run and give to all the Glad Tidings!"

After leaving 'Akká, the three travelers went to Cairo, Egypt, to see once more their beloved teacher, Mírzá Abu'l-Faql, then living in that city. Upon their departure, he gave to Miss Fannie his most precious possession, his prayer beads, saying to her, "My Lord gave them to me."

Their steamer then took them to Marscilles. From there they sped on to Zurich, Switzerland, and then to Stuttgart, Germany, where Miss Alma had labored for two years and continued for yet another twèlve, serving the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The two sisters addressed a large meeting, bringing to the German friends 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message of love.

After several days Miss Fannie then hastened to Paris, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wish, then to London, to convey His greetings, and back again to America, after an absence of three months.

Upon her return to America, she shared her experiences with the friends in Washington, Baltimore and New York, always working for the establishment of the Faith. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to America in 1912, Fanny and her sister Pauline and husband were invited to Dublin, New Hampshire as His guests. While there they met Mrs. E. Hoagg and Mrs. Kline of California, who had come for the privilege of being near 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The last morning of their stay, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, speaking to George Latimer and graciously including Miss Fanny and her sister Mrs. Hannen, said, "I will reveal a prayer which you shall use wherever you go." That prayer is now known as the "Prayer of the Covenant."

The two sisters were blessed with the privilege of bidding farewell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá aboard the steamer upon His departure from America. Other Bahá'is were there, too, and as they waved goodbye to their Beloved, many eyes were wet with tears.

In 1913 Miss Fanny returned to Stutt-

gart, Germany, to recover her health and at the same time to assist Miss Alma in her work in that country and in Switzerland. While there, she received a telegram inviting her to Paris as the guest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In Paris, she, in company with Madam Holbach of Brittany, Mrs. Beede and Madam Blumenthal of New York, attended the meetings wherever 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke, in clubs, in large salons, in the homes of those interested, and elsewhere. She mentioned one particular evening when 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed a group of some eighty people. Monsieur Hippolyte Dreyfus acted as interpreter for the French people, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, upon the conclusion of His address, unexpectedly called upon Miss Beatrice Irwin (a young lady present) to repeat His address in English for the benefit of the American friends. The immediate obedience of Miss Irwin, although she was startled, was indeed beautiful to behold!

In 1923, Miss Fanny, dauntless and full of hope, went to Capetown, South Africa, to carry the light of Bahá'u'lláh to that country. From Capetown, she traveled to Kimberley, Johannesburg, Pretoria and other parts of South Africa, bringing the message of brotherhood and peace. For three years she worked steadfastly for the promotion of the Faith, giving many talks at teas and large public gatherings, enkindling many souls with the fire of the Teachings.

In 1926 it was necessary for her to come back to America because of ill health, but in 1928, at the age of sixty-eight, she found the courage to return to Africa, where she remained an additional two years. Thus she was able to give a fresh impetus to the Faith, encourage the groups already established and awaken many more people to the fact that a New Day had dawned. She worked tirelessly and devotedly, ever having in mind the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at their parting in 'Akká:

"If you but knew the value of these days, you would not eat, you would not sleep, you would not walk. You would run and give to all the Glad Tidings!"

In later years, Miss Knobloch lived

with her nephew, Carl Hannen, in Wilmette, Illinois, in sight of the beautiful Bahá'í House of Worship, which was always an inspiration to her. Carl's wife, Minneola, gave her much loving care. To the last, Miss Fanny was ever praying for an opportunity to render humble service to the Cause. "My spirit is eager," she would say, "but the physical body is weak."

When I visited her at the nursing home on her eighty-ninth birthday, she said, among other things, "if you thanked God on your knees every remaining hour of your life, you could never thank Him enough for having allowed you to live at this time." And again, "Now when the pain in my back becomes severe, I say it is only for a little while, and then I shall leave this body and see our Lord face to face. So will you and all your family, and all these early believers. It is wonderful, isn't it?"

She held my left hand tightly, and did not know that I was writing down with my right hand what she said, for her sight was almost gone.

Her release came on December 9, 1949. A little less than ninety years old at the time of her passing, she was the first born of the three illustrious Knobloch sisters, Fanny, Alma and Pauline; the last to pass away.

Funeral services were held in Washington, D.C. Her body was interred beside her sisters, as well as Pauline's husband, Joseph Hannen, and their beloved mother, Mrs. Amalie Knobloch. It was upon the death of her mother Mrs. Amalie Knobloch, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had written, "Happy are those souls who visit thy luminous resting place, and through thy commemoration receive and acquire spiritual powers."

At the time of Miss Fanny's passing, the *Guardian* cabled:

"Grieve passing dearly beloved distinguished exemplary pioneer Faith Fanny Knobloch. Memory her notable services imperishable, her reward Abhá Kingdom bountiful, assured, everlasting."

MARTA BRAUNS-FOREL

Zum 18. August 1948

**B**AHÁ'ULLAH spricht: „Mein erster Rat ist: besitze ein gutes, ein reines, ein erleuchtetes Herz, damit du das Königreich, das ewig, unsterblich und ohne Ende ist, besitzen mögest!-O Freund, dein Herz ist der Sitz des ewigen Geheimnisses, mache es nicht zum Gefäß sterblicher Gedanken und vergeude den Schatz deines kostbaren Lebens nicht! Du gehörest der Welt der Heiligkeit zu, hafte nicht an dem Staube! Du bist ein Bewohner des Hofes der Nähe, erwähle keine irdische Wohnung! — Hat der Wanderer die Höhen dieser Erkenntnis erstiegen, so mag er das Tal der wahren Armut und des völligen Vergehens betreten. Dies ist die Stufe, auf welcher das Ich stirbt und unsterblich in Gott, arm aus sich selbst und durch den Ersehnten reich wird. Wer diese Stufe erreicht hat, ist über alles, was in der Welt ist, geheiligt. Wenn darum die, welche zu diesem Meere der Vereinigung hingefunden, nichts mehr von den vergänglichen Dingen in dieser sterblichen Welt, sei es äusseres Gut oder eigene Meinung besitzen, so ist darin kein Harm, denn was immer der Mensch auch besitzt, ist begrenzt durch seine eigene Begrenzung, doch was Gottes ist, ist darüber geheiligt. Wenn du diese Stufe erreicht hast, wirst du den Freund schauen und alles andere vergessen. Dann hast du deines Lebens Tropfen geopfert und das Meer Gottes gewonnen. Das ist das Ziel, nach dem du gefragt hast. Möchte Gott dir geben, zu ihm zu gelangen. Wer in den Himmel der Einheit emporsteigt und zu dem Meer der Vergeistigung hinfand, dem ward die Stufe des — Lebens in Gott — zum letzten Ziel für die mit Wissen begabten und zum bleibenden Heim für die, welche lieben. — So verbleibe denn in deiner Liebe zu Mir, damit du Mich im Reiche des Lichts findest!“

Liebe Freunde, wir sind hier, um Abschied zu nehmen von einem geliebten, von einem liebenden Menschen, den Gott die Stufe zu Seiner Ebene hat überschreiten lassen. Dieser geliebte

Mensch, um den wir uns noch einmal versammelt haben, hat ein Leben vollendet, das wert war, gelobt zu werden. Ihr Leben war ein rastloses Streben, Bahá'í, d. h. Lichtträger zu werden. „Bahá'í, so sagt 'Abdu'l-Bahá, müssen die Diener des universalen Friedens werden, Arbeiter für die Einheit der Welt, die Verbreiter himmlischer Liebe unter den Menschen, die Verkünder der Prinzipien, die den Fortschritt der Menschheit bedeuten, die Zerstörer der Wolken religiöser, nationaler und politischer Vorurteile, und die Stützen für das fundamentale Recht der Gleichheit zwischen Mann und Frau. Sie müssen die Religion mit der Wissenschaft in Einklang bringen und alle Theorien, die dem Intellekt und dem erfahrungsgemässen Wissen nicht standhalten, ablegen.“

Wenn ich einen Menschen weiss, der diesen Forderungen nachlebte, so ist es die hier vor uns ruhende.

Hat sie doch z. B. zu einer Zeit, als die Pazifisten bespöttelt wurden, inbrünstig um den Frieden gerungen! Gab sie sich nicht, des mitleidigen Lächelns der Gebildeten nicht achtend, noch als Grossmutter dem Erlernen einer Welthilfssprache hin, um auch hier ihren Teil zur Völkerverständigung beizutragen! Ist sie nicht zu einer Zeit, in der die alkoholischen Sitten noch als Erziehungsfaktor galten, geradezu fanatisch gegen diese Unsitte Sturm gelaufen! Hat sie nicht mit untrüglicher Schärfe des Verstandes die Erkenntnisse der Wissenschaft mit der Religion zu vereinigen gewusst, und diese ihre Religion mit gläubigem Herzen und mit dem Mut des Bekenners vertreten zu einer Zeit, in der Männer des Staates glaubten, ihren geistigen Besitz durch Wegnahme ihrer Bücher beseitigen zu können! Hat sie nicht mit denen gelitten, als wären es ihre leiblichen Kinder, die das Opfer der rassistischen und politischen Vorurteile waren! Wie eine Löwin ihre Jungen, so suchte sie diese gehetzten Menschen zu verteidigen. Und wenn damals der eine oder andere von ihr abrückte aus Furcht, sich zu compromittieren, so durfte er feststellen, dass ihr Herz für ihn offen stand, sobald er ihrer Hilfe bedurfte. Und wenn sie spürte, dass ein Mensch Gefühle der

Entfremdung, vielleicht des Neides oder der Eifersucht gegen sie hegte, so betete sie für ihn und suchte, bis sie ihn fand, den Weg zur Versöhnung. Und bei diesem Leben lebte sie selbst das fundamentale Recht der Gleichachtung von Mann und Frau.

Mit dem unbestechlichen Intellekt ihres grossen Vaters und mit dem liebevollen Herzen ihrer über alles geliebten Mutter begabt, stand sie an Verantwortung und Zielbewusstsein ihrem noch in vieler Herzen verehrten, dem so früh von ihr gegangenen Mann nicht nach.

Ihr Leben glich einem Sturmwind, alle trüben Wolken verjagend, rastlos und durch nichts aufzuhalten, dem klaren Himmel, dem Licht Bahn zu brechen. Wo sie war, da wehte die klare Luft der Berge ihrer Heimat. Wer selbst stillstand, dem mochte in diesem Sturmwind frösten. Wer aber gleich ihr vorwärtsschritt, der wurde erfrischt.

Es war nicht ihre Art, beschaulich zu verweilen, wenn sie ein Stück Arbeit geleistet hatte. Zum Rückwärtsschauen hatte sie keine Zeit. War eine Arbeit getan, so eilte sie zur nächsten. So blieb auch in ihrem ausgefüllten Leben kein Platz für einen beschaulichen Lebensabend, wo sie in Betrachtung sich ihrer geleisteten Arbeit erfreut hätte. So wie ihr Leben war, so war auch ihr Tod: rasch und unerbitlich. Dies Leben war in Wahrheit vollendet.

In ihren letzten Bitten, die sie in einem Testament an uns Kinder richtete, schreibt sie „Ihr wisst, dass ich seine grosse Abneigung gegen Friedhofbesuche habe. Deshalb habe ich mir schon lange ausgedacht, dass ich in dem kleinen Hohenwettersbacher Friedhof begraben sein möchte, irgend an einem verborgenen Plätzchen, ohne den üblichen Grabschmuck. Ihr könnt Lonicerä darauf pflanzen, die schnell eine grüne Decke bilden und kein Unkraut durchlassen. Sucht mich nie dort! In Ettlingen, in unserem Steingärtle, Grossmutter's Hügel, wie sie immer selbst sagte, Eures Vaters Andenken, Jürgs geistige Stätte, da bin auch ich. Ich möchte niemandem die Mühe des Weges machen. Deshalb macht das Begräbnis still unter Euch. Ich möchte so gern, dass Ihr das tut, was ich nach

Eures Vaters Tod tat: Nicht trauern, kein Schwarz tragen, fröhlich sein und das Gute und Positive, das geistige Erbe meiner Eltern und Eures Vaters bewahren; meine Fehler und Schwächen braucht Ihr nicht zu vergessen, aber sie sollen das Positive nicht verdecken. Das Beste, was wir Euch gegeben haben, ist die Bahá'í-Lehre, Mehr brauche ich nicht zu sagen. Sie enthält alles, was ich Euch sagen möchte.“

Und sie schliesst mit den Worten: „Amor et labor omnia vincunt.“

Zuvor schreibt sie: „Wenn Ihr aus den Worten der Weisheit etwas lest, wäre es mir am liebsten. Lasst bitte alles andere weg.“

Lassen Sie mich also, ihrem Wunsche entsprechend, aus den Worten lesen, die ihr Leben bestimmten:

„Die Quelle alles Guten ist: Vertrauen in Gott, Gehorsam Seinen Geboten gegenüber und Zufriedenheit mit Seinem Heiligen Willen. — Das Wesen der Weisheit ist: Ehrfurcht vor Gott, das Erkennen Seiner Gerechtigkeit und die Anerkennung Seiner Verordnungen. — Das Wesen der Religion ist: das anzuerkennen, was der Herr offenbarte und zu befolgen, was Er verordnet hat. — Das Wesen der Liebe ist für den Menschen, sein Herz dem Geliebten zuzuwenden, sich loszulösen von allem ausser Ihm und nichts zu wünschen, ausser dem, was der Herr für ihn wünscht. Wahres Gedenken ist: den Herrn, den Hochgepriesenen zu erwähnen und alles ausser Ihm zu vergessen. — Wahres Vertrauen ist: Seinem Beruf und seiner Arbeit nachzugehen und nichts ausser Seiner Gnade zu suchen. Die Quelle des Mutes und der Kraft ist: Das Wort Gottes zu fördern und in Seiner Liebe standhaft zu bleiben. — Das Wesen des Reichtums ist: Die Liebe für Mich. Wer mich liebt, besitzt alles, und wer mich nicht liebt, ist in der Tat arm und bedürftig. — Das Wesen des Glaubens ist: wenig Worte zu machen und eine Fülle von Taten aufzuweisen. — Das Wesen von allem, was Ich für dich offenbarte, ist: die Gerechtigkeit. Sie ist die Befreiung des Menschen von Einbildung und Nachahmung. Sie lässt dich die Schöpfung mit dem Auge der Einheit und auf alle Dinge mit forschendem Auge blicken.“

Diese göttlichen Gebote waren die Quelle des Lichts, das den Weg unserer lieben Toten erhellte. So war ihr Leben hell und reich. — Wir nehmen Abschied von ihr ohne Trauer, wie sie es wünscht, aber Dank erfüllten Herzens für all das, was sie uns in ihrem Leben gegeben hat.

Gott gebe Dir, Du Liebe, die Du Dir im Leben nicht Ruhe noch Rast gegönnt hast, den ewigen Frieden. Habe Dank für all Deine Liebe. Verzeih uns, wenn wir Dich oft einsam liessen, weil wir nicht Schritt halten konnten. Du eiltest uns voraus. Lass Deine Liebe zu uns nicht verlöschen, so wie wir Dich in unserem Herzen bewahren wollen.

„Du bist Mein Licht, spricht der Herr, und mein Licht wird niemals vergehen. Warum befürchtest du sein Erlöschen? So verbleibe denn in deiner Liebe zu mir, auf dass du mich im Reiche des Lichts wiederfinden mögest.“

Wir wollen beten:

O Gott! O Gott! Du hast Dein Pfand in meine Hand gelegt und hast es nach Deinem Willen nun zu Dir zurückgerufen. Es steht mir, die ich Deine Dienerin bin, nicht zu, zu fragen, warum geschieht mir dies, da Du in all Deinem Tun verherrlicht wirst. Deine Dienerin, o mein Herr, hat ihre Hoffnungen auf Deine Gnade gesetzt. Gib, dass sie, erreichen möge, was sie Dir nahe bringt. Du bist der Vergebende, der Allgütige. Es ist kein anderer Gott ausser Dir, den Urewigen!

Alláh'u'Abhá!

Die vorstehenden Worte des Gedenkens wurden bei der Feier in der Totenhalle des Diakonissen-Krankenhauses in Ruppurr am 18. August 1948 von ihrem Schwiegersonn gesprochen. Zu dieser Feierstunde hatten sich viele, viele Menschen eingefunden, um von ihr Abschied zu nehmen. Zu Häupten des über und über mit Blumen und Kränzen bedeckten Sarges brannten neun Kerzen, Sinnbild der neun Lichter der Bahá'í-Einheit.

Im Rahmen der Feier legten Beauftragte der drei Vereinigungen, denen Marta Brauns-Forel vor allem angehört hatte, Kränze nieder. Herr Weber als Vorsitzender des Geistigen Rates der Bahá'í in Karlsruhe hob ihre Tätigkeit innerhalb der Bahá'í-Gemeinde und

innerhalb des Geistigen Rates hervor und legte mit einem Hinweis auf die Bedeutung einen Kranz nieder, der aus Blumen ihres Häusle-Grünstückes in Ettlingen gewunden war. Nach Herrn Weber legte Ursel Kohler aus Stuttgart einen Heidekranz nieder, den die Freunde auf der Bahá'i-Sommerschule in Esslingen gewunden hatten. Als Leiter des Kreises der Kronacher-Freunde legte Herr Dr. Nöldecke einen Kranz nieder, der aus Blumen der Gärten aller Freunde des Kreises gewunden war. Und im Auftrage des Aufsichtsrates der Gartenstadt sprach Herr Hils die Grüsse der Gartenstadt aus. Im besonderen erwähnte er, wie Marta Brauns in den Kriegsjahren die pflegelos gewordenen Vorgärten der Siedlung in ihre Betreuung genommen hatte und dass sie am 23. Mai 1948 (einem Bahá'i-Feiertage;) zum Mitglied des Aufsichtsrates und des Prüfungsausschusses gewählt worden war als erste Frau in der Geschichte der Gartenstadt.

Umrahmt von 2 Liedern des Kronacher Singkreises klang die Feier mit dem Musikstück aus, was die Tote am allermeisten geliebt hatte: der Bacharie „Mein gläubiges Herze, frohlocke, sing, scherze“, gespielt von Flöte, Violine und Cello.

Nach Beendigung der Feier wurde der Sarg von sechs der Freunden, unter ihnen ihrem Sohn Sven, und ihrem Schwiegersohn herausgetragen. Auf der Fahrt zu dem von ihr selbst ausgewählten Ruheplatz in Hohenwetttersbach begleiteten sie ausser ihren Kindern nur die allernächsten Freunde. Nachdem an dem offenen Grab das Totengebet gesprochen war, schaufelten die Angehörigen und Freunde das Grab selbst zu. Als der Grabhügel mit den Kränzen und Blumen bedeckt war, nahmen die Freunde mit einem Gebet von der Toten Abschied. Auf ihrer Grabplatte werden die Worte Bahá'u'lláhs stehen: „Du bist mein Licht, und Mein Licht wird niemals vergehen. Warum fürchtest du dein Erlöschen? So verbleibe denn in deiner Liebe zu mir, damit du Mich im Reiche des Lichts findest“. Diese Worte hatten der Verstorbenen in den schweren Kriegsjahren am meisten Trost and

Kraft gegeben.

Eine Aufzählung ihrer Tätigkeiten innerhalb der öffentlichen Feier wäre ihrem Wunsche entgegengewesen. Darum sei eine kurze Zusammenfassung ihres Lebens hier angefügt.

Am 23. September 1888 in Zürich als Tochter des damaligen Chefarztes der Irrenanstalt Burghölzli, des Psychiaters Prof. Dr. Auguste Forel geboren, wuchs sie im Kreise von fünf Geschwistern von der besonderen Liebe ihrer Mutter, Emma Forel, geb. Steinheil, umsorgt, in der deutschsprachigen und später in der französischen Schweiz auf. Die Umwelt ihrer Jugend prägte ihr Wesen: Die Verbundenheit mit den Bergen, die sie als Sehnsucht ihr ganzes Leben hindurch begleitete, die glühende Freiheitsliebe und die Selbstverständlichkeit des übernationalenkenden Weltbürgers, das waren die Erbanlagen ihrer Heimat. Untrennbar verbunden sich mit ihnen die Grundsätze ihres Vaters: Die Grundanschauung, dass Leben Arbeit bedeutet, die fanatische Wahrheitsliebe und die Klarheit des Denkens. Diese Erziehungsprinzipien vereinigten sich mit dem Erbeil der Mutter: Der alles umfassenden Liebe und der angeborenen Güte.

Als sie Sekretärin ihres Vaters in Yvorne war, lernte sie ihren Mann kennen, den damaligen Medizinstudenten Artur Brauns, der als Studienfreund ihres ältesten Bruders Eduard seine Ferien dort verlebte. Mit diesem zusammen gründete sie die eigene Familie, zunächst in München.

Während sie mit ihren vier Kindern bei ihren Eltern in der Schweiz die vier Jahre des ersten Weltkrieges verbrachte, war ihr Mann als Militärarzt an der deutschen Ostfront. Unter diesem Zwiespalt zwischen Deutsch und Schweizer Empfinden, zwischen Krieg und Frieden, hat sie in jenen Jahren viel gelitten, und es reifte in jenen Jahren zugleich der Entschluss wo immer es möglich war, für den Frieden zu arbeiten.

1919 liess sich ihr Mann als praktischer Arzt und Psychiater in Karlsruhe nieder. In der noch im Entstehen begriffenen Gartenstadt-Siedlung fand die junge Arztfamilie eine geistesverwandte Umgebung vor, die ihr bald zur

zweiten Heimat wurde. In wenigen Jahren war Dr. Artur Brauns zum bekannten und begehrten Vertrauensarzt in Karlsruhe geworden, der auch als Stadtverordneter im Stadtrat durch seine Sozialarbeit in weiten Kreisen geschätzt wurde.

Als am 1. September 1925, dem Geburtstag ihres Vaters, ihr Mann bei einer Faltbootfahrt in der Rhöne verunglückte, stand sie als junge Witwe mit 5 kleinen Kindern inmitten eines Aufgabenkreises, dem gerecht zu werden die Hingabe der ganzen Persönlichkeit erforderte. So war sie nach dem Tode ihres Mannes zum Mittelpunkt der Bahá'í-Gruppe in Karlsruhe geworden, die sie als Delegierte und später als Mitglied des Nationalrates in der deutschen Bahá'í-Arbeit vertrat. In dem Kampf der Guttempler gegen den Alkohol war sie massgebend beteiligt. Bei der Verbreitung des Esperanto zusammen mit den Arbeiteresperantisten wirkte sie mit. In der Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit war sie tätig und in dem das Bild der Gartenstadt formenden Kreis der Kronacher Freunde war sie ein nicht wegzudenkendes Glied. Hinzu kam, dass die Bearbeitung des Gartens und des von ihrem Mann in Ettlingen angelegten Grundstückes allein in ihren Händen lag und sie derselben nachkam, als wäre Gärtnerin ihr eigentlicher Beruf. Viele Patienten ihres Mannes übertrugen ihr Vertrauen auf sie und wurden von ihr weiterbetreut und beraten. Die Korrespondenz, die sie mit allen Teilen der Welt verband, hätte allein genügt, einen Menschen zu beschäftigen. Bei all dem war sie ihren 5 Kindern eine Mutter, wie man sich überhaupt nur eine Mutter vorstellen und wünschen kann.

Eine hohe Zeit im Leben von Marta Brauns bedeuteten die Jahre 1934—1939, als ihre Mutter bei ihr in Karlsruhe wohnte. Wer zu jener Zeit im Hause Brauns sein durfte, war beglückt von dem strahlenden Frohsinn und der Atmosphäre aufopfernder Liebe. Die durch den 2. Weltkrieg bedingte Trennung von ihrer Mutter liess in ihr ein immer quälenderes Heimweh erwachen, dem sich viel Schweres in jenen Jahren noch zugesellte. So litt sie unter

den Ungerechtigkeiten des Dritten Reiches und unter der allgemeinen Freiheitsberaubung jener Zeit. Die Abschnürung Deutschlands von der Welt, die Verfolgung der Juden und das Verbot der Bahá'í-Glaubensgemeinschaft liessen sie viel leiden.

Der Krieg verlangte weitere Opfer von ihr: Im Jahre 1942 fiel ihr jüngster Sohn Jörg an der Ostfront. In der Standhaftigkeit, mit der sie den Tod dieses ihr am allernächsten stehenden Kindes trug, bewies sie ihre Religiosität. Auch die schwere Kriegsverletzung ihres ältesten Sohnes Wolf traf sie schmerzlich. Und als schliesslich im Jahre 1945 die von ihr so geliebte Anne, die Frau dieses Sohnes, plötzlich aus diesem Leben gerissen wurde, war sie für ihren Wolf eine feste Stütze.

Als zu Kriegsende die Franzosen auch in das kleine Dorf Hödingen am Bodensee, wohin sie mit ihrer Tochter evakuiert war, einzogen, hat sie an Selbstüberwindung Grosses geleistet. Um der armen Gemeindeverwaltung gegenüber den Forderungen der Sieger Hilfe zu leisten, tat sie Dolmetscher- und andere Hilfsdienste. So hat sie, um die jungen Mädchen zu schützen, selbst die Bedienung der Offiziere in dem Kasino übernommen. Was sie da als perfekt französisch sprechende Schweizerin und zum Schutz der deutschen Bevölkerung Dienst tuend auszustehen hatte, versteht nur der ganz, der weiss, wie sie den Kampf gegen den Alkohol als Lebensaufgabe aufgefasst hatte.

Dass Marta Brauns zum Tode ihrer Mutter und deren Beisetzung im Jahre 1946 die Ausreise nicht bewilligt wurde, bedeutete für sie mit das schwerste Leid, das ihr im Leben zugefügt wurde.

Nach ihrer Rückkehr nach Karlsruhe im Spätsommer 1945 hat sie alle ihre Kräfte neben Haus, Garten- und Sozialarbeit und neben der Weiterführung ihrer Korrespondenz vor allem auf die Bahá'í-Arbeit zu konzentrieren versucht. Ihrer Initiative ist die Neubelebung der Bahá'í-Gruppe in Karlsruhe zu verdanken, aus der dann im Frühjahr 1947 die Gemeinde erstand. Als Mitglied des Nationalen Geistigen Rates und als Delegierte bei der Nationaltagung ist sie allen Bahá'í in Deutschland ein Begriff geworden.

Der herzliche Briefwechsel mit Freunden in Palästina, Irán, 'frág, Afrika, Argentinien, USA, Kanada, England, Holland und in der Schweiz hat sie unter den Bahá'ífreunden in der Welt bekannt werden lassen. In der Bahá'í-Arbeit sah sie die Vollendung ihres Strebens und ihrer Arbeit. So sind auch die Worte ihres Testaments zu verstehen:

„Das beste was wir Euch gegeben haben, ist die Bahá'í-Lehre. Mehr brauche ich nicht zu sagen. Sie enthält alles, was ich Euch sagen möchte“.

MARTA BRAUNS-FOREL  
1888-1948

Marta Brauns-Forel was born September 23, 1888 in Zurich, the daughter of the famed scientist Dr. Auguste Forel, who was then chief physician of the mental hospital of Burghölzli. She grew up first in German-speaking and later in French-speaking Switzerland, in a family circle of five sisters and brother under the loving care of her mother, Emma Steinheil Forel. The environment of her youth left its imprint on her: the mountains, for which she longed all her life; the love of freedom; the capacity for thinking beyond national boundaries, which, as a world citizen, she took as a matter of course—these were the gifts of her homeland. Inseparably associated with them were her father's basic belief that life means work, his almost fanatical love of truth, and his ability to think with objectivity. These united in her with an all-embracing love and an inborn goodness inherited from her mother.

Working as her father's secretary in Yvorne, she met her future husband, Artur Brauns, a medical student who, as the friend of her eldest brother Eduard, spent his vacations there. After their marriage she and Artur lived at first in Munich.

During the four years of the First World War, Marta and her four children stayed with her parents in Switzerland, while her husband served as an



Marta Brauns-Forel

army doctor on the Eastern Front. She suffered a good deal from the conflict between her German and Swiss loyalties, between war and peace. There matured within her in those years the resolution to work for peace.

In 1919, Artur settled down as a practicing physician and psychiatrist in Karlsruhe. In the newly-developing garden-city, the young physician's family found a congenial intellectual environment. Within a few years, Dr. Artur Brauns had become a well-known and sought after physician in Karlsruhe, and highly esteemed for his social work as one of the town councilors. Together, the young couple studied the Bahá'í Faith.

On September 1, 1925, which was her father's birthday, her husband was drowned in a canoe accident in the Rhône river. She was left, a widow with five children, to face responsibilities that demanded all the resources of her nature.

After the death of her husband she became the center of the Bahá'í group in Karlsruhe and later a Convention delegate from the community and a

member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany. She was active in the fight of the Guttempler Association against alcohol; she cooperated with the Esperantists; she served in the "Women's League for Peace and Freedom"; she was an indispensable co-worker of the Kronach friends in their promotion of a garden-city. To this was added actual work on the garden and estate of her husband in Ettlingen, and she met these demands as if gardening were her real vocation. In addition, many patients of her husband transferred their confidence to her and came for advice, and the correspondence which she carried on with all parts of the world would in itself have been enough to keep one person busy. With all this she was an exemplary mother to her five children.

The years from 1934 to 1939 were a high point in the life of Marta Brauns, for during this period her mother lived with her in Karlsruhe. Anyone who was fortunate enough to be a guest in the Brauns household at that time never forgot its atmosphere of happiness and self-sacrificing love. The separation from her mother, brought about by the Second World War, added to many new sorrows, not the least of which was an ever more torturing homesickness. Marta suffered from the many injustices of the Third Reich and the general loss of freedom. The isolation of Germany from the rest of the world, the persecution of the Jews, the proscription of the Bahá'í community — all these caused her much anguish.

The war demanded further sacrifices from her. In 1942, her youngest son Jürg fell on the Eastern Front. The fortitude with which she bore the loss of this son who was really the closest to her showed her deeply religious nature. The serious war injury of her eldest son Wolf was a new calamity. In 1945 when the wife of this son, the beloved Anne, died suddenly, it was Marta who sustained him.

At the end of the war the French occupied the village of Hödingen on Lake Constance, to which Marta and her daughter had been evacuated. During the occupation she acted both as interpreter and mediator. To protect

the young girls, she herself served the officers at the Casino. One can only guess at the self-control such functions imposed on this French-speaking Swiss who had constituted herself the guardian of the German populace, and whose main task in life had been the fight against alcohol.

The direst sorrow of Marta Brauns' life was when she was not allowed a permit to go to the bedside of her dying mother in 1946.

After her return to Karlsruhe in the late summer of 1945, she tried to concentrate all her powers, beyond her home, garden and social duties, on activities for the Bahá'í Faith. The renewal of the Bahá'í group in Karlsruhe was due to her initiative. From this group the Bahá'í community arose in the spring of 1947. As a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, re-elected in 1946 following the eight-year suspension of Bahá'í activity, and as a delegate to the National Convention, she was an inspiration to all the Bahá'ís of Germany, while her correspondence with friends in Palestine, Persia, 'Irâq, Africa, Argentina, the United States, Canada, England, Holland and Switzerland, made her known to Bahá'ís throughout the world.

Marta's death was sudden; as her son-in-law commented in his address at the funeral, held August 18, 1948, in the memorial hall of the Diaconiss Hospital at Rüppurr, there was no place in her crowded life for a lingering and meditative old age. Many people gathered on that solemn occasion to pay their last respects. The Bahá'í Assembly of Karlsruhe, the Esslingen Bahá'í School, her Konach friends, the Board of the garden-city there (of which Board Marta had recently been elected the first woman member), were represented. Nine candles, emblems of the nine lights of Bahá'í unity, burned at the head of the lavishly beflowered coffin.

These words from the funeral address, which was accompanied by appropriate Bahá'í prayers and readings, summed up her life:

"At a time when pacifists were sneered at, she fought valiantly for peace. Disregarding the compassionate



smile of the intellectuals, she spent the days of her advanced years learning an international auxiliary language. Almost fanatically, she challenged the moral degeneration of her times, in a place where alcohol and its attendant practices were considered educational factors. She matched the conquests of science with the conquests of religion. She fought for the triumph of her religion when the authorities imagined they could destroy her spiritual treasure by confiscating her books. She suffered like a mother with all the victims of racial and religious prejudice; she tried to shield them; if one, fearing to compromise himself, turned away from her, he found her heart still open to him when he came back again for help. If she knew that someone was withdrawing from her out of coldness or jealousy, she prayed for him, seeking a way of reconciliation until she found it. She demonstrated the principle of woman's equality with man by her own life. She had her renowned father's incorruptible intellect, her mother's loving heart, a sense of responsibility and determination equaling that of her departed husband. Wherever she came, she brought with her the clear, bright mountain air of her native Switzerland, chilling the languid and the weak, perhaps, but refreshing the strong. Her whole life was a restless struggle truly to become a Bahá'í—"a bearer of light."

For her children, Marta Brauns-Forel wrote out her last wishes in a warm, human testament:

"You know that I have a great aversion to visiting cemeteries. For that reason I have long decided that I would like to be interred in the small cemetery of Hohenwetttersbach, at some small, hidden place and without the customary wreaths and flowers. However, you could plant *Lonicera* on it which grow quickly to a green cover without permitting weeds to come up. Never seek me there! Where I am is at Ettlingen, in our stone garden, grandmother's hill as she herself used to call it, there at your father's memorial place, and Jurg's spiritual abode. I don't want to trouble anyone with coming there. Therefore I ask

you to have the funeral proceed quietly with only you present. I would like you so much to do what I have done after your father's passing: no mourning, no wearing of black; rather being joyful and preserving the good and the positive, the spiritual heritage of my parents and of your father. You needn't forget my deficiencies and weaknesses, though they shouldn't entirely hide the positive. The best we have given you is the Bahá'í teaching. I needn't say more. It contains everything that I would want to tell you."

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#### FRED MORTENSEN<sup>1</sup>

Fred Mortensen's youth was turbulent. His environment was not of the best, and he played with boys grown hard and ruthless. Determined to be their match, he broke the law whenever he had a chance. Inwardly he felt guilty, but he wanted to be like the others and went on from bad to worse. Strange, that his very conflict with the law should have given him the opportunity which led him to embrace the Bahá'í Faith, and completely changed the course of his life.

The account of his early days and his first contact with the Faith, and especially of his memorable experiences when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the United States in 1912 is given with feeling and sincerity by Fred Mortensen himself in an article entitled: "When a Soul Meets the Master." This article was published in the March, 1924 issue of *Star of the West*. In it he writes:

"My dear mother had done everything in her power to make me a good boy. I have but the deepest love for her and my heart has often been sad when thinking how she must have worried for my safety as well as my future well-being. Through it all and in a most wonderful way, with godlike patience, she hoped and prayed that her boy would find the road which leadeth to righteousness and happiness. But environment proved a great barrier to her

<sup>1</sup>From material furnished by the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Chicago.

aspirations and every day in every way I became tougher and tougher. Fighting was a real pleasure, as welcome as a meal, and breaking a grocer's window to steal his fruit or what-not was, as I thought, a great joke.

It happened that one night the gang was strolling along, just doing nothing in particular (looking for trouble I guess), when one of the gang said, "Oh, look at the swell bunch of bananas." "Gee, I wisht I had some," another said. "Do you?" said I. About this time I heard a dog barking inside the store, and looking in, I saw a large bulldog. That seemed to aggravate me and to show my contempt for the watch-dog . . . I broke the window, took the bananas, passed them around and we merrily strolled up the street . . .

"Making the Jews feel that they were back in Russia was lots of fun. I can't begin to tell you how we enjoyed persecuting them, stealing their wine, breaking their windows, in fact doing everything but setting fire to their homes. I plainly remember that it cost me sixteen dollars to pay for broken windows to keep out of jail.

"The great evil that did so much to make us hard, was the saloon with its attendant evils. My! how tough I have seen fine young fellows become under the influence of liquor. I could tell you many things of a lawless nature, but I write these few to show what the power of Bahá'u'lláh can do in this day.

"I was a fugitive for four years, having walked out of jail while awaiting trial. Then, a young fellow was being arrested and I, of course, tried to take him away from the policeman. While this was going on a couple of detectives happened along and in my haste to get away from them I leaped over a thirty-five foot wall, breaking my leg, to escape the bullets whizzing around about and wound up in the 'garden at the feet of the Beloved' as Bahá'u'lláh has so beautifully written in the *Seven Valleys*.

"At this time I was defended by our departed, but illustrious Bahá'í brother, Albert Hall, to whom I owe many thanks and my everlasting good will for helping to free me from the prison of men and of self. It was he who

brought me from out the dark prison house; it was he who told me, hour after hour, about the great love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for all His children and that He was here to help us show that love for our fellowmen. Honestly, I often wondered then what Mr. Hall meant when he talked so much about love, God's love, Bahá'u'lláh's love, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love, love for the Covenant, love for us, from us to God, to His Prophets, etc. I was bewildered. Still, I returned, to become more bewildered, so I thought; and I wondered why. It was, as I now know, the power of the Holy Spirit drawing one, who wished to be drawn.

"Thus the Word of God gave me a new birth, made me a living soul, a revived spirit. I am positive that nothing else upon the earth could have changed my character as it has been changed. I am indeed a new being, changed by the power of the Holy Spirit . . . I have been resurrected and made live in the Kingdom of Al Abhá.

"Again through the attraction of the Holy Spirit I was urged, so it seemed to me, to go to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He was at Green Acre, Maine, at this time, and when I heard the rumor that He might go back to His home (Palestine) and not come west, I immediately determined to go and see Him. I wasn't going to miss meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá after waiting so long to see Him.

"So I left home, going to Cleveland, where I attended a convention of printers for a few days. But I became so restless I could not stay for adjournment. How often have I thought about that trip of mine from Cleveland to Green Acre! The night before leaving Cleveland I had a dream that I was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guest, that I sat at a long table, and many others were there, too, and of how He walked up and down telling stories, emphasizing with His hand. This, later, was fulfilled and He looked just as I saw Him in Cleveland.

"As my finances were low, I of necessity must hobo my way to Green Acre. The Nickel Plate Railway was my choice, for conveyance to Buffalo, New York. From Buffalo I again 'rode the rods' to Boston, a long ride from

around midnight until nine the next morning. The Boston Maine Railway was the last link between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the outside world, so it seemed to me, and when I crawled off from the top of one of its passenger trains at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, I was exceedingly happy. A boat ride, a street-car ride, and there I was, at the gate of Paradise. My heart beating double time, I stepped onto the soil of that to-be-famous center tired, dirty and wondering, but happy.

"I had a letter of introduction from Mr. Hall to Mr. Lunt, and in searching for him I met Mrs. Edward Kinney, who, dear soul, was kind enough to offer me a bed. She awakened me next morning about six o'clock saying I'd have to hurry if I wished to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

"Arriving at the hotel I found quite a number of people there on the same mission, to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Being one of the last arrivals, I was looking around, to make myself comfortable, when someone exclaimed, 'Here He comes, now.' . . . After greeting several others and when about to go to His room, He suddenly turned to me and said in a gruff voice (at least I thought so), 'Sit down,' and pointed to a chair—which I didn't care to do, as elderly ladies were standing. But what was I to do! I meekly obeyed, feeling rebellious over what had happened. Such a welcome, after making that difficult trip! My mind was in a whirl.

"The first man to receive an interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a doctor; he had written a book on love. It seemed but a minute until . . . 'Abdu'l-Bahá wishes to see Mr. Mortensen.' Why, I nearly wilted. I wasn't ready. I hadn't expected to be called until the very last thing. I had to go, and it was a strange feeling in my heart and wondering—wondering what would happen next. He welcomed me with a smile and a warm hand-clasp, telling me to be seated . . . His first words were, 'Welcome! Welcome! You are very welcome'—then, 'Are you happy?'—which was repeated three times. I thought, why do you ask me that so many times? Of course, I am happy . . .

"Then, 'Where did you come from?'



Fred Mortensen

"Answer: 'From Minneapolis.'

"Question: 'Do you know Mr. Hall?'

"Answer: 'Yes. He told me about the Cause.'

"Question: 'Did you have a pleasant journey?'

"Of all the questions I wished to avoid this was the one! I dropped my gaze to the floor—and again He put the question. I lifted my eyes to His eyes and His were as two . . . sparkling jewels, which seemed to look into my very depths. I knew He knew and I must tell . . .

"I answered: 'I did not come as people generally do, who come to see You.'

"Question: 'How did you come?'

"Answer: 'Riding under and on top of the railway trains.'

"Question: 'Explain how?'

"Now as I looked into the eyes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá I saw they had changed and a wondrous light seemed to pour out. It was the light of love and I felt relieved and very much happier. I explained to Him I rode on the trains, after which He kissed both my cheeks, gave me much fruit, and kissed the

dirty hat I wore, which had become soiled on my trip to see Him.

"When He was ready to leave Green Acre I stood nearby to say goodbye, and to my astonishment He ordered me to get into the automobile with Him. After a week with Him at Malden, Massachusetts, I left for home with never-to-be-forgotten memories of a wonderful event—the meeting of God's Covenant, The Branch of that Pre-Existent Root . . .

"A few weeks later I again had that wonderful privilege to be near the Covenant for a few moments.

"These events are engraved upon the tablet of my heart and I love every moment of them. The words of Bahá'u'lláh are my food, my drink and my life. I have no other aim than to be of service to His pathway and to be obedient to His Covenant.

"This is the Power of His Spirit, His Love and His mercy to me."

Fred Mortensen was born February 7, 1887, at Fort Dodge, Iowa. He died June 13, 1946, at 6:10 p.m. of cerebral hemorrhage at the Chicago Hospital, Chicago. He spent many years teaching throughout the country; at one period of his life, he pioneered in Montana, personally financing publicity for the Faith in various newspapers throughout the state, particularly in Helena and Butte. In 1916 he was the authorized representative of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, and was its agent in carrying out plans for relief in Haifa, Syria and Turkey. For twenty-one years he was a member of the Chicago community. His daughter, Mrs. Kathryn Mortensen Penoyer, writes, "My father lived and practiced the Bahá'í Religion to a degree beyond possible explanation . . . on the very eve before his death he spent his last time teaching the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. His devotion cannot be measured in mere words, they are not powerful enough. It might be of interest to know that he was also preparing to depart for Austria with the Guardian's blessings and wishes as his guide. 'Abdu'l-Bahá truly named him well when He said, 'My son.'"

He was buried in Cedar Park Cemetery. As he had requested, his auto-

biographical account "When a Soul Meets the Master" was read at the memorial services. Not long before his passing he had written to the Guardian: "I am happy that you chose to include the story of my visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Green Acre in *God Passes By*,<sup>2</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote me . . . from Ramleh, Egypt, September 12, 1913 . . . 'That trip of thine from Minneapolis to Green Acre will never be forgotten. Its mention will be recorded eternally in books and works of history. Therefore, be thou happy that, praise be to God, thou hast an illumined heart, a living spirit, and art vivified with merciful breath.'"

When the Guardian received the news of Fred Mortensen's death he cabled the family: "Grieve passing beloved Fred. Welcome assured Abhá Kingdom by Master. Praying progress his soul. His name forever inscribed Bahá'í history."

#### HAJ TAHA EL-HAMAMSI<sup>1</sup>

On July 8, 1946, the Bahá'ís of Egypt and Sudan were grieved at the passing away of Haj Taha El-Hamamsi, a sincere believer of Tanta. He was a Bahá'í who distinguished himself by the sacrifices he made ceaselessly throughout his life of service.

First awakened by the persecutions of the Bahá'ís of Port Said in 1920 and later impressed by the integrity of the persecuted, he began to inquire into the Bahá'í Faith. By 1923 he was thoroughly attracted to the Cause and made his first pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines on the second Commemoration Day of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, subsequently making the same trip almost every year. He adapted himself to the development of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh as it evolved, and he made the adaptation in deeds rather than in words.

Haj Taha distinguished himself particularly by his generous contributions to every institution of the Cause, the

<sup>2</sup>*God Passes By*, p. 290.

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt, Sudan and Abyssina.



Haj Taha El-Hamamsi

last of which was the plastering of the interior of Ḥaẓiratu'l-Quds of Cairo, where his name appears in the records. A sacrifice which places him among the pioneers was his immediate response to the proposal for emigration introduced by the beloved Guardian following the success achieved by the Bahá'is of Egypt on the occasion of the Centenary celebrations in 1944; he emigrated to Tanta, the capital of the biggest province of Egypt.

At Tanta persecutions began and disturbances broke out there. The few Bahá'is in that city were exposed to real danger and underwent many hardships, but the presence of Haj Taha seemed to assure them that the mercy of Bahá'u'lláh was with them, and through his steadfastness, sacrifice, and enthusiasm, they could remain firm and undaunted by the threats of their enemies. Their reward from the Abhá Kingdom was success in the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of that city in 1945.

Through the sacrifice and zeal of Haj Taha, the same year recorded a very

important achievement for the Cause in Khartoum—the first Spiritual Assembly was established in Sudan. Haj Taha had enabled his daughter and her husband to emigrate to Khartoum, where they accomplished this wonderful task so desired by the beloved Guardian.

In June, 1946 Haj Taha fell ill while in Port Said, and on July 8, he passed away at the age of fifty-eight. As there is yet no Bahá'í burial ground in Port Said, his coffin was transferred to Ismá'ílyyih where it was buried next to that of his wife.

His life of service and sacrifice gained him the title of "Zealous servant and symbol of faithfulness," which the beloved Guardian conferred upon him in his cable.

#### FRIEDRICH SCHWEIZER<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Schweizer, the husband of the well-known and active German Bahá'í teacher, Mrs. Annemarie Schweizer, was born in Esslingen, September 12, 1884. He adopted the career of a topographer. In 1910 he was introduced into our Faith by Miss Alma Knobloch, at that time a pioneer in Germany. In November, 1911 our well-beloved Master invited Mr. and Mrs. Schweizer, who were then new believers, to come to Paris. They were both very anxious to see Him. Mrs. Schweizer tells about it: "During the trip from Stuttgart to Paris and the morning of our visit we prayed that our hearts and souls might be purified to receive the blessings of the meeting with Him. Scarcely had we arrived when He summoned us to His presence. Lady Blomfield had entered the room before us; we saw that she bent her knees before 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Friedrich said, 'That I cannot do—kneel down before a man!' We entered—and the first one to kneel down was Friedrich, so greatly was he overwhelmed by the majesty and glory of His sanctity. " 'Abdu'l-Bahá lifted him up and embraced him. He was greatly moved. On another occasion

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Germany and Austria.

'Abdu'l-Bahá called him to His side and kept his hand during His speech. How happy he was, and we all with him! All the friends present congratulated him on this honor.'

In April, 1913, when the Master, on His trip through Germany, stayed a few days in Stuttgart, Friedrich again had the privilege of meeting Him. His attachment to the Holy Cause grew, and he became one of the early pioneers for our Faith in Germany.

Friedrich Schweizer always put aside his own desires when it was necessary to sacrifice his interests to serve the Holy Cause or to help a believer in distress. But he never uttered many words. Silent, solid, and wholly reliable, he did his duty. In the same spirit he performed good, accurate work during the years he was the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly (from about 1930 to 1935) and as a member of the local Spiritual Assembly in Stuttgart.

The 13th of July 1946, he suffered an attack of pneumonia and passed away.

All who were close to our dear friend will know that when he passed away a life filled with labor, care, and the observance of duty combined with affection, love, and benevolence to everybody, came to its earthly conclusion. When enumerating his high qualities, we remember not only his professional activity and all the concern he displayed as a father for the welfare of his family, but also we remember especially a work not so obvious to the public: his labor for peace, his struggle for the conquest of national, racial, religious, and social prejudice and antagonism and his endeavors for the prosperity of all mankind. Very early he was enlightened by the divine beam emitted by the eternal Light, the call of Bahá'í'u'lláh sent down again to the world through His love to redeem humanity. And it was this beam of the supernal Light which radiated from our friend's heart.

His name will always be connected with the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Germany. The German Bahá'ís, and those from Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen in particular, owe him a great deal of



Friedrich Schweizer

gratitude for his abundant love, knowledge, and advice, for his generosity and his readiness to sacrifice, and for the home we found with him. We know what he would say to us: "do your duty; work for the Cause of God."

#### JOHN DAVID BOSCH

1855 — 1946

By CHARLOTTE M. LINFOOT<sup>1</sup>

At the gate of the garden some stand and look within, but do not care to enter. Others step inside, behold its beauty, but do not penetrate far. Still others encircle this garden, inhaling the fragrance of the flowers, but having enjoyed its full beauty, pass out again by the same gate. But there are always some who enter, and becoming intoxicated with the splendor of what they behold, remain for life to tend the garden.—'Abdu'l-Bahá

<sup>1</sup>From material furnished by Ella Goodall Cooper and Bijou Straun.

Such a gardener was John David Bosch. And the flowers he tended were the men, women and children in whose hearts he had, at one time or another, planted the seeds of spiritual truth. When he spoke of spiritual things and of Bahá'u'lláh, there was a light in his clear blue eyes that seemed to be a reflection of a splendor that few others have had the joy of beholding, and when he looked into the eyes of a fellow human being a glow of friendliness lighted up his face, crinkled his eyes at the corners and brought a quick smile to his lips.

Although there are many friends who remember him as a young man and possibly somewhat different in appearance, most of us who knew him only in his later years were sure that he must always have been a distinctive individual. He was tall and straight. His hair was white and he wore a well-trimmed white beard. In the summertime, when he dressed in his spotless white serge and Panama hat, he had the look of a man of noble rank.

He was a person of few words; he did not need to speak. His handclasp was warm and firm, and one was instantly at ease in his company. His every action was an expression of love and kindness, and he was never happier than when serving his beloved Faith and Bahá'í friends. To hear him tell of his precious experiences with 'Abdu'l-Bahá was to feel that one had inhaled a bit of the fragrance of the Master's presence, and be drawn more closely both to Him and the John He loved so dearly.

John David Bosch (Johannes David Bösch) was born August 1, 1855, in New Sankt Johann in the Kanton of St. Gallen, Switzerland. His parents and grandparents were followers of the reformer Zwingli, a contemporary of Martin Luther. In the year 1621 twelve fathers of families in the Toggenburg of Switzerland had established a fund of two thousand florins to provide financial assistance every year to any two male descendants who cared to study theology. John, a direct descendant of one of the founders, was entitled to the benefits of this fund, but

evidently God had other plans for him. One of several children, he was but eleven years old when his mother died. She had been a woman of culture and deep spiritual insight and he felt her loss very keenly. His father married again. The second wife was a follower of Swedenborg, and before long John became familiar with the books of that renowned philosopher. Considering this exceptional religious background, it is not surprising that his impressionable young mind was influenced to want to know more about spiritual matters—a desire which was to be ultimately satisfied years afterward in another part of the world.

His formal education ended at the age of fourteen. He soon left home, going to Germany where for a few years he worked at and studied wine-making. From there he went to France and spent five years in its famed wine districts; then to Spain to further acquaint himself with his chosen business.

In 1879 he came to America with his sister Louisa and her husband, Johann Zuberbühler, who planned to farm in Nebraska. For a while he worked on railroad construction. He began to learn English, and having decided that America should be his permanent home he made application for citizenship, which was granted in due time.

He did not remain long in Nebraska. Like many other young men of that era, he heard the call of the West and determined to wend his way to California. In Oklahoma he worked for four months on a large ranch where he had charge of a thousand head of cattle and had to ride the range. The ranch was owned by a Chickasaw Indian in whom he found a true and lasting friend. But the lure of California was too strong to resist and so he set out again, finally reaching Sacramento in 1881. During the next ten years he was occupied in various branches of the wine trade in the southern part of the state.

In 1889 he paid a brief visit to his native land. Some time after his return he moved to northern California to become superintendent of the large winery at Windsor in Sonoma County.

In 1899, under the direction of the

California Wine Association, he superintended the erection and equipment, at Geyserville, of the largest and most modern winery in the country for the manufacture of dry and sweet wines and brandies. He made his home there but retained his position as superintendent of both wineries until his retirement from the business. He also organized and managed the California Grape Nectar Company for the production, by an improved process of sterilization, of a superior quality of unferrimented grape juice. This company he eventually turned over to the Association. Between 1909 and 1936 he acquired extensive properties in Sonoma, Mendocino, and Contra Costa Counties, on which were grown varied agricultural crops. As there were many olive and prune trees on his Geyserville land, he at one time experimented in the making of high grade olive oil, and built a plant for prune-drying on a commercial scale; and a hobby of his had been the raising of pure breed Swiss goats.

Incidentally, it was in 1900 that he completed his progress in the Masonic Order, receiving the thirty-second degree and becoming a member of San Francisco Scottish Rite Consistory No. 1.

Throughout all these years Mr. Bosch persisted in his ardent search for truth. Referring to his passing, a friend recalled that when he had first met him he was investigating the claims of spiritualism and occult sciences. "He was an unusual seeker after truth," the friend wrote, "in that he was not urged because of misery or dissatisfaction in his life, nor by curiosity. I saw him grasp the fact of the immortality of man, and that seemed sufficient for him."

Mr. Bosch had not heard of the Bahá'í Faith until early in 1905 when, traveling by train from San Francisco to Geyserville, he chanced to meet an old acquaintance, a Mrs. Beckwith of Chicago. She was reading the book, *Abbás Effendi, His Life and Teachings*, by Myron H. Phelps. He picked it up, glanced over a few pages, and asked: "Where did you get this book? It is good enough for me and I want to buy a copy." She referred him to

Mrs. Helen Goodall of Oakland, upon whom he called three months later and learned of the history and principles of the Faith. Having found what seemed to be the truth for which he had been seeking, he endeavored to attend the meetings in her home at least once a month. As these meetings were of the afternoon tea party variety, there were seldom any men but himself present, and sometimes he would stand with one foot on the ferry and the other on the wharf, hesitating whether to join the ladies or remain in San Francisco; but always, when the whistle blew, he would be aboard bound for Oakland and the Goodall home.

On May 29, 1905, he wrote his first letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The acknowledgement, received through Mrs. Goodall, enjoined: "O thou John Bosch: Raise the call of the Kingdom and give the Glad-Tidings to the people; guide them to the Tree of Life, so that they may gather the fruits from that Tree and attain that great Bounty."

That was the first of many Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Some were addressed to him alone, and some to him and another believer together. One was written June 23, 1912, to him and his friend, the famous Mr. Luther Burbank of Santa Rosa. In this Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá called them: "Ye two roses in the Garden of the Knowledge of God," and expressed the hope that: "In the utmost of freshness and beauty ye may become manifest; that is, ye may arise to serve the Kingdom of God."

And in an earlier message 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "With the utmost humility I pray at the Kingdom of Abhá that that soul [Mr. Bosch] may become holy, find capacity to receive the outpouring of Eternity and become a luminous star in the West."

Upon learning that the use of alcoholic liquor as a beverage is forbidden in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, Mr. Bosch—a professional wine taster, though a non-drinker of spirituous liquors—became troubled about what he should do in regard to his wine business. Therefore, in a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he asked for advice. In reply, 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggested that it would be better



to engage in another business, but gradually. Consequently he severed his connection with the Association in 1916 and applied himself to the further development of his properties.

Mr. Bosch attended the first Bahá'í Temple Unity Convention in Chicago, in 1909, as a delegate from the Pacific Coast and Hawaii. While there he met many of the early Bahá'ís, and in a short time his home became a point of attraction for traveling teachers, including Mr. Thornton Chase, Mr. Charles Mason Remey, and Mrs. Isabella D. Brittingham; also Mrs. Lua Getsinger, whose visit inspired him to write 'Abdu'l-Bahá, December 1, 1910. "May this simple place on the hills be dedicated to the universal spirit of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh."

When the news came that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was on the way to America, Mr. Bosch had such an overwhelming desire to see Him he started for New York on April 12, 1912. At Chicago, hearing that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Washington, he went there instead, only to find that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had not yet left New York. So he hurried on to that city, arriving very early on a cold and snowy morning. As soon as he had secured his room in the Hotel Ansonia he stole to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's suite and was admitted almost immediately. Relating his experience to a friend, Mr. Bosch said:

When I entered the room I had a pocketful of questions to ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but when I saw Him I suddenly felt quite empty. I never took the questions out. Eventually 'Abdu'l-Bahá told me all that I had wanted to ask Him. Foolishly I remarked that I had come three thousand miles to see Him, and He smilingly replied, "I came seven thousand miles to see you." I told Him that I, being a foreigner, had not the capacity of a speaker and that my work so far had been to circulate books and a few pamphlets. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "You are doing very well; you are doing better than talking. With you it is not words or the movement of the lips; with you it is the heart that speaks. In your presence silence speaks and radiates." Then tea was brought in and after we had both



John David Bosch

partaken of it 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "You are now one of the family. You may come and go as you please."

I remained with 'Abdu'l-Bahá while He received many visitors. Then I went for a walk, and when I returned after an hour I was amazed to see about two hundred people in the lobby. In a few minutes 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed through. Noticing the respect that these people paid Him, the assistant manager of the hotel, who was standing near me, remarked, "That must be a man of God."

Three automobiles were awaiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His party to take them to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Kinney for luncheon. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stepped into the first one with two of the Persian friends. There was a vacant seat and one of the attendants beckoned me to come. As I reached the door, 'Abdu'l-Bahá seized me by the hand and pulled me into the car, seating me at His right. He seemed very tired. Immediately He put His arm around my waist, dropped His

head on my left shoulder, and with a deep sigh went to sleep. During the entire hour's drive, while the friends in the automobiles looked at the sights, 'Abdu'l-Bahá slept.

When we arrived at the Kinney home a chair was placed in the center of the room for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but He did not sit in it. Instead, He walked about among the people, shaking hands. When He came to me He passed right by without seeing me, and for a moment I felt hurt. Then I remembered that in the morning He had told me that I was "one of the family," and I knew then that there had been no need to say anything to me.

'Abdu'l-Bahá departed for Washington five days later and Mr. Bosch went in the same car; eight days afterward he again traveled in the same car with Him to Chicago. It was on this trip that 'Abdu'l-Bahá bestowed upon him the name "Núrání," writing it out in His own hand and explaining, through an interpreter, that it meant "full of light." Mr. Bosch humbly expressed the wish that 'Abdu'l-Bahá might find time to visit his unpretentious home in Geyserville, to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "With you,"—and repeating—"with you, I would sleep in the basement."

Mr. Bosch remained in Chicago for the Annual Bahá'í Convention and was present when 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid the foundation stone of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, May 1, 1912.

The story of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to California cannot be told here, but suffice it to say that Mr. Bosch spent every possible moment in His presence.

In San Francisco, on January 19, 1914, Mr. Bosch married Mrs. Louise Sophia Stapfer of New York, being the second marriage for each of them. She, too, was a native of Switzerland, and from that time forward, in all their activities, the names of "John and Louise" were inseparable.

When the Teaching Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were released, Mr. and Mrs. Bosch were eager to respond at once. As both spoke fluent French, they chose Tahiti of the Society Islands in which to pioneer, and in 1920 they

taught for five months in Papéiti. One whom they met was a minister, and he later thanked 'Abdu'l-Bahá for sending these emissaries to his people. On the day of their departure, the islanders showered them with gifts and, in accordance with a Tahitian custom, bestowed upon Mr. Bosch a title meaning "First king of the great family of Bahá'is arrived among us."

In April of the next year Mr. and Mrs. Bosch left Geyserville for Haifa to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. After visiting and teaching in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, they reached Haifa on November 14, 1921. Only their spoken words could adequately describe the joy and happiness they had being with 'Abdu'l-Bahá for two heavenly weeks. But no words could portray the depth of the sorrow that descended upon them, and upon the household, and upon all the Bahá'is of the world, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away on November 28, 1921.

Two days before His passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had walked in the garden with Mr. Bosch, giving him fruit from the orange trees. He was the last Westerner to have this great blessing. Also to him was given the sacred privilege of assisting the family with the preparations for the burial of the Servant of God; and the shoulder upon which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had slept in New York, helped in Haifa to carry His casket to its final resting-place on Mt. Carmel.

At the request of Bahfyyih Khánúm, the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mr. and Mrs. Bosch remained in Haifa for the customary forty days of mourning. During this period, the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, returned from England to become the first Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. When Mr. and Mrs. Bosch took their leave, he handed them the first copy of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to deliver to the Bahá'í Convention in Chicago in April 1922.

En route to the United States they revisited Germany, and it was then that Mr. Bosch was instrumental in bringing about one of the first Bahá'í meetings in Berlin.

Upon their return to Geyserville they were soon engrossed in teaching work.

Frequently they made trips to southern California. In the winter of 1927-1928 Mr. Bosch visited Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, in the latter city aiding in the formation of the first local Spiritual Assembly in 1928. Wherever he went he carried to the friends the spirit of love and devotion to the Faith that motivated his own life. Mrs. Bosch, meanwhile, was doing her part, traveling from place to place, striving to spread the Faith in Sonoma County. But the greatest of all testimonials to their unremitting labors is the Bahá'í School at Geyserville.

On August 1, 1925, more than a hundred Bahá'ís from the San Francisco Bay area, besides other guests, congregated at Geyserville to celebrate the seventieth birthday of Mr. Bosch. It proved to be such a happy affair it was repeated the succeeding year, and at that time the idea of a western school for the training of Bahá'í teachers began to take shape.

In the spring of 1927 the National Spiritual Assembly appointed a committee of three—John Bosch, Leroy Ioas, and George Latimer—to find a location for a western states Bahá'í summer school. Mr. Bosch recalled that he had written 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1919, offering his Geyserville property for "a Bahá'í community home or co-operative institution and Bahá'í school." Hence it was but natural that he should again offer the facilities of his ranch for this purpose. Thus the first Bahá'í school in the West came into being, the first session opening on his seventy-second birthday, August 1, 1927. In subsequent letters the Guardian stressed the hope that this school would "flourish and attract an increasing number of spiritually-minded, capable souls" who would "in time unreservedly accept the Bahá'í Revelation in its entirety and thus reinforce the work that is being achieved for our beloved Cause."

In 1936 Mr. and Mrs. Bosch deeded their property to the National Spiritual Assembly, thereby establishing the school as a permanent institution of the American Bahá'í community. In previous years they had been personal hosts to the friends, housing them with-

out cost, and demonstrating that unique spirit of hospitality which from the very beginning they had poured out in a veritable flood upon Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike. Particularly was this true at the Unity Feasts, that each year marked the opening of the sessions, at which they so warmly welcomed everyone. From 1927 on, the success of the school became the all-compelling purpose of their lives, and they liked nothing better than to share with the friends, at four o'clock tea under the "Big Tree," their recollections of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the believers of former days.

Mr. Bosch lived to see the school grow from a small, informal gathering to an efficiently operating institution, from which many young people went forth to take the teachings to countries in which he had once traveled and taught.

His last appearance at the school was on the festive occasion of his eighty-ninth birthday when students and invited guests assembled in the evening at Bahá'í Hall to do him honor. An enormous cake, bearing eighty-nine lighted candles, was brought in and placed upon the table at which Mr. and Mrs. Bosch were seated. Then a long line of children marched in, singing "Happy Birthday" as they laid their handfuls of flowers on the table until it was entirely covered—evidence of the love cherished by both old and young for these two selfless souls. Mr. Bosch, amid much advice and laughter, at last succeeded in blowing out the candles. After individual greetings and felicitations, the whole party moved down to the "Big Tree" to partake of the cake and elaborate refreshments the hostesses had prepared.

Following a lingering illness, Mr. Bosch passed quietly away on July 22, 1946, just at the end of the twentieth session of the Bahá'í School, and nine days before his ninety-first birthday.

On July 24, at two o'clock in the afternoon, funeral rites were held in Bahá'í Hall where the body had lain in state since midmorning. Masses of floral pieces bore silent witness to the affection, esteem and respect of Bahá'ís,

neighbors, and business associates. During the impressive ceremonies conducted by Mr. Leroy Ioas, an intimate Bahá'í friend, the village stores remained closed. The pallbearers were neighbors and Bahá'ís representing several nationalities. A beautiful spot in Olive Hill Cemetery, overlooking peaceful Sonoma Valley and shaded by the trees so dear to him, is now his resting-place.

A cablegram sent by the Guardian from Haifa was received by the National Spiritual Assembly July 29:

"Profoundly grieve passing dearly-beloved, great-hearted, high-minded, distinguished servant of Bahá'u'lláh, John Bosch. His saintly life, pioneer services, historic contribution of institution of summer school, entitle him to rank among outstanding figures of the closing years of heroic, and opening years of formative age of the Bahá'í Dispensation. Concourse on high extol his exalted services. Assure his wife and valiant companion of my deepfelt sympathy. Advise hold special gathering in Temple as tribute to his imperishable memory."

As befitting one of such lofty station, the earthly chapter of his life closed with a memorial service in the Bahá'í House of Worship at Wilmette, on Sunday, November 24, 1946, to pay homage to his immortal memory.

#### 'ALÍ SABOOR'

Saboor, the patient, so addressed by the beloved Guardian, was a faithful believer of Baghdád. He passed away in Sulaymáníyyih on August 3, 1946. In a letter of tribute and consolation from the Guardian dated October 27, 1946 we read these words: "He was a sincere servant, gallant and faithful, . . . patient in adversities, content with what had been ordained for him by his Creator."

Saboor had recognized the greatness of the Cause when as a boy he read the following in a verse from the Qur'án (5:59): "O ye who believe! . . . God will then raise up a people loved by



'Alí Saboor

Him, and loving Him . . . For the cause of God will they contend, and not fear the blame of the blamer."

In his youth he decided to bear from the enemies even a "rain of arrows," as he wrote from Baghdád to his father in Karbilá, who criticized him for his open declaration of his Faith and advised him to conceal it. Saboor remained firm and wrote 'Abdu'l-Bahá asking Him for His Divine Confirmations. In His kind and encouraging reply, 'Abdu'l-Bahá alluded to his future and described "the absence of the believer from his native land for the sake of God" as "the cause of divine mercy and the source of rest and delight in both worlds." Accordingly Saboor devoted himself to the diffusion of the divine fragrances in the Bahá'í meetings or whenever he met a soul searching after truth. He suffered insults and even stoning from the enemies. He defended the interests of the Cause notably when he was a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Baghdád, which

repelled in 1922 the assaults of the Covenant-breakers.

Although Saboor had no high secular education, he drank deeply of the divine outpourings. His only happiness was in extracting from the Holy Books the Glad-Tidings of "the coming of the Lord" and in telling people about the new Revelation. He collected the verses alluding to the "Lordship of Bahá'u'lláh" because he was dazzled by the signs of the greatness of Bahá'u'lláh.

Between 1924 and 1934 Saboor was greatly distressed by economic circumstances and by the death of his wife and children. He continually sought the prayers of the beloved Guardian, and received several comforting replies promising future blessings. These divine promises were later fulfilled.

Though old and weak he gave the last years of his life to pioneering the Bahá'í Faith in new areas. He joined the pioneers in establishing the first local Assembly in Kirkuk in 1942. Then in 1945 the National Spiritual Assembly of 'Irâq sent him to Amara in the south to join the Bahá'í Group there. Here the people were fanatical. They stoned him, and the police called him for investigation. Returning to Baghdád he was honored to receive his last letter from the Guardian dated May 23, 1946 which alluded to his last days. At this time, Saboor became radiant and had the beauty of a mature soul.

On June 28, 1946, he traveled to Sulaymáníyyih to join the Bahá'í Group. A month later his life ended peacefully on August 3, 1946.

He is buried on a high rocky hill overlooking the city, his grave covered with shadowy bougainvillea. The Guardian's tribute is engraved on white marble at his resting place, so that the friends will read and remember that he was the first Bahá'í pioneer to die in Sulaymáníyyih.

ORCELLA REXFORD<sup>1</sup>

Orcella Rexford (Louise Cutts-Powell) was born June 12, 1887 in Tracy, Minnesota. Planning in her youth to become a college professor, she attended the University of California at Berkeley, where she studied four languages and majored in education and domestic science. On receiving her Bachelor of Science degree, she took graduate work in philosophy and psychology, found her interests changing, and became a writer and lecturer.

The name "Orcella Rexford" is a cryptogram, made up of letters chosen for her by an acquaintance in New York City. To Orcella this name symbolized her wish to link her personality to cosmic forces for good, which would give her the greatest impetus for development.

Orcella first heard of the Bahá'í Faith from Mrs. Myrta Sandoz of Cleveland, Ohio, and was later confirmed by Dr. Edward Getsinger in Boston, Massachusetts. She became a believer in 1918-1919.

Since belief and action were inseparable to her, while studying the Faith with Dr. Getsinger she brought along two students from her own classes. These, too, became Bahá'ís. Soon she began to organize classes for Dr. Getsinger. In order to serve the Faith with maximum efficiency, Orcella now took stock of her educational equipment and capacities; she even investigated her genealogy, to appraise possible inherited tendencies and thus fully to obey the commandment, "Know thyself". As a child she had often been told of her second great-grandfather, William Jarvis, appointed by Jefferson as consul and charge d'affaires at Lisbon, who gave his services without cost to the then young and impecunious American Government for nine years (1802-1811). Orcella felt that her tendency to pioneer, and to contribute her services to a righteous Cause, might have come down to her from this ancestor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's newly-revealed Tablets of the Divine Plan called for pioneers to spread the Faith. In response,

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of 'Irâq.

<sup>1</sup>From material furnished by Willard P. Hatch and others.

Orcella set out for Alaska in 1922. Some of her forbears had joined the gold rush to the Yukon; she determined to find the gold of souls receptive to her Message. The first Alaskan to accept the Faith through Orcella was Gayne V. Gregory, who soon became the husband of his teacher and within two years gave up his extensive dental practice at Anchorage to serve as business manager of Orcella's lecture tours. Orcella continued to be a lecturer by profession; while conducting classes on various subjects (among other topics, such as diet, she did much to popularize the use of color in clothing and in household furnishings and utensils, at that time traditionally drab) she would refer her students to a lecture that would follow the paid series of talks, and would bring them a knowledge that was beyond price. This final talk was on the advent of Bahá'u'lláh. Invariably, she left a Bahá'í study class, which was then conducted by other Bahá'í teachers. That her method was successful is proved by the large number of Bahá'ís who first learned of the Faith through Orcella. In Denver, for example, eighteen hundred people attended the Denham Theater on each of two nights to hear Orcella speak on the Cause, and a study class of four hundred and thirty-five people resulted. When, toward the close of her life, a serious accident ended her professional lecture career, giving her the freedom she had longed for, she found that she had been deprived of her best teaching medium.

In 1925 the Gregorys left Alaska for Honolulu, and after teaching there, returned to the mainland where they traveled from west to east and north to south; then crossing the Atlantic and taking their car with them, they motored through Europe. While here (in 1926), they received permission to visit Shoghi Effendi in Haifa. Returning spiritually reinvigorated to the United States, Orcella continued her constant travels; at one time or another she taught in Oakland, Milwaukee, Denver, New York, Omaha, Seattle, Spokane, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Flint, Detroit, Butte, Phoenix, St. Paul, Minneapolis,—in Florida, Texas, Okla-

homa, beyond the frontier in Mexico—the list seems endless.

While visiting Phoenix, Orcella was injured in a fall, which ended her professional career as a lecturer. In Hollywood to regain her health, she was active in teaching and administrative work. Then she left California on what was to be the last of so many journeys for the Faith; alone, she attended the thirty-eighth Annual Bahá'í Convention at Wilmette, teaching in various cities and at the Geyserville Bahá'í School on her way home. On Sunday morning, August 11, 1946, she died suddenly in her bath.

Messages soon began to arrive from many parts of the Bahá'í world from the grieving spiritual children of Orcella. Johanne Sorensen Hoeg wrote from Denmark, "It was through hearing her lecture about the Bahá'í Faith that I became a Bahá'í (in Honolulu, 1925) . . . I will always be thankful to Orcella Rexford that she could not keep her great love of Bahá'u'lláh by herself but wanted to bring the loving message of God to her fellow men." And Ophelia B. Crum: "I was among the audience of about a thousand who heard Orcella say: 'I have been teaching you about these outer subjects in which you are interested, but now I will tell you of the greatest truth that you should know today . . .' The next night we met to form study classes and for three months we would meet . . . At the end of that time some forty students became members of the New York Bahá'í community." Victoria E. Roberts, who introduced Gayne Gregory to Orcella, writes: "Orcella Rexford was an outstanding woman, one of the few persons whom I ever met who never said an unkind or critical word of another . . . her one great desire was to establish the Bahá'í Cause over the world." From Boston, Helen L. Archambault states, "In 1931 . . . she had been holding her Health Lectures whereby many were helped physically and mentally . . . out of that group eleven became declared believers . . . In 1939 Orcella came again to Boston . . . out of this group nine have since declared their belief; . . . my husband Victor Archambault and I

were among the first eleven and are grateful beyond words to our 'spiritual mother.'" Mrs. Wetzel Ingold of Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin: "My life has been deeply blessed by knowing her." Mariam Haney, Washington D.C., early Bahá'í teacher, says, "It was so easy for her to make contacts with her fellow human beings . . . she had a precious and sweet sympathetic understanding of life and people. Orcella was a born optimist. . . . This optimism drew people to her. She had an intense desire to really know the Bahá'í teachings. . . . At one of our annual conventions there were twenty-two believers present who were the spiritual children of Orcella." Mamie L. Seto of San Francisco, one of the Bahá'í teachers who assisted Orcella with follow-up classes, writes of the study group which Orcella left in Honolulu, and adds, "She maintained that we must meet people on the personal plane, help them with their personal problems, and then take them to the universal or world aspect of our Faith . . . she gave one of the most convincing opening talks on the Faith I have ever heard. . . . She could in the shortest time create, and with the greatest ease devise and formulate plans for any project . . . and no task seemed too difficult. . . . She looked forward eagerly to the coming of each day as an opportunity for further development. . . . I can think of few people who loved a new idea as much as Orcella did. . . . She was born to conquer and overcome those obstacles which stand between one and his goal. I have seen her leave a sick bed to speak at a public meeting."

Orcella Rexford was laid to rest August 14 at Inglewood Park Cemetery, near the grave of Thornton Chase. Friends filled the chapel: Paul Schoeny, who learned of the Faith through Orcella, traveled from Phoenix, Arizona to sing at the memorial service, and Mrs. India Haggarty, Mrs. Florence Holsinger, and Mrs. Emily Schiemann spoke. Winston Evans read the prayer at the grave. The Guardian's cable to Dr. Gregory was read: "Deplore loss indefatigable, gifted promoter Faith. Heartfelt sympathy. Fervent prayers. Shoghi."



Orcella Rexford

A letter from the Guardian, through Rúhíyyih Khánum, to the local Assembly of Los Angeles says in part: "She was one of the most devoted teachers of the Cause in the States, and responsible for bringing it to the attention of a great many people, as well as for the confirmation of many souls. Her radiant devotion will not be forgotten, and her example should certainly be an inspiration to her fellow believers. It is a great pity the Cause should lose her services just as the new Seven Year Plan is getting under way. He asks you to particularly convey to dear Mr. Gregory his profound sympathy for the loss of such a wonderful woman and to assure him he will pray for her happiness in the next world, a world in which she will find many of her old fellow teachers awaiting her. . . ."

A record of Orcella's last day on earth was set down by her friend, Mrs. Edith Weston:

That last morning Mrs. Weston drove Orcella and other friends up from Hollywood to the Fiesta in Santa Barbara. Orcella, true to her love of colors,



was wearing a striped green cotton dress and a dark emerald-green sweater, and her hat and coat were two shades of purple; with her soft hair and fresh skin, she looked radiant and youthful.

They went up by the Coast road; the wind blew, the smell of fish was in the air, the spray stung their faces. In Santa Barbara Orcella guided them to the old Spanish mission—the "Queen of the Missions"—and then took them to call on a resident Bahá'í family, the Mattesons, explaining on the way that Bahá'ís are hospitable and that they could doubtless eat their picnic lunch in the Matteson home. Mrs. Weston discovered that Mr. Matteson had built his house with his own hands, using sections of old buildings, packing cases and new lumber. Above the mantelpiece they saw a green, sculptured square of rosewood, on which was painted the symbol of the Greatest Name. The visitors spread their lunch out on the long dining-room table. When they left, Orcella promised to come and spend a week-end in the little guest house Mr. Matteson was building.

After that they watched the Fiesta parade, which depicts the city's history from Indian times. Orcella and Mrs. Weston sat in the curbing along the line of march; they saw babies in flower-decorated carts, young men and women in the costumes of long ago, Spanish dons on Arab horses—bright colors, shiny harness, tooled-leather saddles heavy with silver. Warner Brothers was taking pictures. The sun was hot, but Orcella did not complain. Later they drove around a bit, started to window shop, ended by shopping in earnest—and Orcella was delighted with her purchases. At six she suggested they go over to the Samarkand, the Persian hotel; here they walked through the long twilight gardens with their light-blue alabaster vases. They looked down across the city. "See, before the Government took over this hotel for the soldiers, water used to flow down this broad decline clear to the bottom of the dell," Orcella said. "This is really Persian, with its sunken gardens, its flowers, its running waters. I'm going to Persia. It is the one place

I have missed, and I have always wanted to go."

It got dark and they started for home. This was Orcella's very last journey; she devoted it to teaching her friend:

"She talked Bahá'í, she radiated it; she seemed like some spiritual elf, trying to share with us the ethereal joy of her religion. 'Bahá'ís love peace,' she explained. 'They are hospitable. No one has too much, for all share. Children must get the consent of both parents before they marry. Those who come into the Faith receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This comes always with a new Manifestation. Oh, if I could be your spiritual mother, and bring you into the peace, the happiness, the utter contentment, that the Faith has given me.'

"After awhile she was silent. I asked if she was tired. 'Oh no,' she replied, and once again she became her old alert wonderful self. At 10:30 we said good-by. 'The doctor—my husband—' she said reflectively, 'was my only regret on this perfect day. I wish he could have been with us.'"

#### ABUL-FETOUH BATTAH<sup>1</sup>

On October 15, 1945, the Bahá'ís of Egypt received with sorrow the news of the passing away of Abul-Fetouh Battah, an early Egyptian Bahá'í, and a true servant of the Faith.

He followed his father in embracing the Cause during the historic sojourn of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt in 1910-1911, and had the privilege of being in His Holy Presence.

He devoted himself to the service of the Faith, and was never daunted by threats or persecutions. Bravery in defending the Cause was his distinction, and his thorough study of the teachings enabled him to meet the various arguments of the opposition with a dominant power, and to surprise his adversaries with sound and convincing proofs.

In 1914 and 1935, when persecutions raged in Port-Said and Alexandria re-

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt, Sudan and Abyssinia.





Abul-Fetouh Battah

spectively, he accomplished much in behalf of the Bahá'ís by interviewing high officials and giving sound statements on the truth of the Bahá'í Faith. As a government employee, he was transferred to Nag-Hammadi, Upper Egypt, where in 1941 he attended a course on civil defense against air raids, and made his first lecture on Universal Peace as ordained by Bahá'u'lláh. Observing the tumult his lecture caused, especially among the Muslim clergy present, he published an invitation to them as well as to certain eminent persons of the town to hold a meeting to discuss the Bahá'í Faith. He was soon transferred, however, to the more remote city of Luxor, and was warned by his chief, the Judge of the Tribunal, against continuing such activities. In Luxor he resumed his activities, delivering the Message to a few souls and supplying one of the biggest hotels with Bahá'í literature for its reading library. Feeling that he could serve the Cause better as a free agent, he retired and settled in Cairo. He continued his service with great

zeal and energy until he passed away. His loss was deeply regretted by the beloved Guardian.

#### 'ALÍ SAID-EDDIN'

On February 19, 1947 the Bahá'ís of Egypt were shocked at the irreparable loss of a staunch believer, and a sincere servant of the Cause, 'Alí Said-Eddin.

His knowledge of the Cause went back to the early days of the Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá, when at the age of sixteen he noticed in one of his school teachers at Beirut certain characteristics and virtues which he greatly admired. When he learned that that teacher was a Bahá'í, it was sufficient to attract him wholly to the new Faith. Later he was brought into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by his teacher, and the moment his eyes fell upon the Holy Countenance he recognized at once the Divine Resplendency shining from the Beloved Master and became devoted to Him.

Some years later he lived in Palestine where he received the blessings of the Master. On various occasions he served the Cause under circumstances which for a long period of his life were very hard, as the hatred and enmity of the Covenant-breakers were raging.

The ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a deep shock to him, but he soon found his consolation in the Guardian. Being wholly devoted, he sought the advice of Shoghi Effendi in every undertaking, and so in 1931 he proceeded to Egypt to settle permanently in Port Said.

Not only those fellow believers who had the privilege of seeing him at the Holy Shrines on every commemoration and festival occasion, but the entire Bahá'í community of Egypt will remember how great was his faithfulness and how amazing was his love and devotion.

Although he was ill from 1940 until his death, he participated in all Bahá'í activities, and indeed his sick-

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt, Sudan and Abyssinia.

ness seemed to give him greater spiritual power.

His sacrifices are beyond calculation. "Villa Safwan," bequeathed by him to the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt, stands as a monument to his generosity, and his gift of land to the Holy Shrines at Carmel ranks him among those whose names and deeds are imperishable.

The following cable was received from the beloved Guardian: "Deeply grieve (the) passing (of the) beloved staunch servant (of the) Faith, 'Alí Effendi Sa'id-Eddin. His exemplary services enriched Bahá'í endowments in both Egypt and the Holy Land. Advise friends hold memorial gatherings (in) memory (of) his imperishable services."



#### MUḤAMMAD TAQÍ IŞFÁHÁNÍ<sup>1</sup>

'Alí Sa'id-Eddin

On December 13, 1946, the Bahá'is of Egypt learned with deepest sorrow and grief of the passing of MuḤammad Taqí Işfáhání, the last survivor of the age of Bahá'u'lláh. His loss is irreparable, not only to his friends in Egypt, who had received from him true fatherly love and kindness, but also to those innumerable friends in both the East and West who knew him well, greatly valued his services, and appreciated his help on their visits to and from the Holy Land.

He grew up in Persia where he first glimpsed the light of truth shining from the horizon of Bahá'u'lláh. This was in the early days of His Declaration, when the fire of hostility toward the Faith was being lit by its enemies, who were drawn from among the various classes and dignitaries of Persia. He heard the 'Ulamás (Moslem leaders) addressing the masses from their pulpits, arousing them and inciting them to rise against the believers of the new Faith, to destroy them, and to uproot their movement; and he witnessed the patience, forgiveness, serenely, uprightness, and steadfastness of those men whom the

'Ulamás cursed and accused of heresy. He was horrified when Mullá MuḤammad Báqir (surnamed "the Wolf" by the Supreme Pen), and Imám-Jum'ih killed the two brothers, MuḤammad Ḥasan (surnamed the Sulṭán of Martyrs) and MuḤammad Ḥusayn (surnamed the Beloved of Martyrs), not because they were Bábis, nor because they were regarded as apostate, but because Imám-Jum'ih was indebted to them for LE 8000 and sought to free himself from debt by this savage and brutal crime.

In 1878 MuḤammed Taqí Işfáhání left for Egypt. During this voyage he met many believers in various countries and thus learned more of the new Faith. He stopped at 'Akká, the city of the Prison, where he was welcomed by the friends of the Faith, and where the brothers' murder was much discussed. The first day he had the honor of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the second morning he was privileged to make his first visit to the Holy Presence of Bahá'u'lláh, when the Tablets revealed in honor of the two martyrs were being chanted by Áqá Ján,

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Egypt, Sudan and Abyssina.

(surnamed the Servant of God). After thirteen days stay he resumed his journey to Egypt. Later, he made four more trips to the Holy Land; the second one initiated his career, because on that visit Bahá'u'lláh advised him to settle in Egypt, and his last visit was in 1891, just a year before the ascension of the Blessed Beauty.

His devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of the Covenant, was very sincere, and he had the privilege of receiving His blessings on many visits to the Holy Spot, the last being on February 4, 1919. The historic visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Egypt in 1910-1912 gained Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání fresh grace as he devoted himself to His service as well as to the service of the pilgrims.

On November 28, 1921, he was deeply shocked by the news of the ascension of the Beloved Master, announced by the Greatest Holy Leaf by a cablegram. He proceeded to Haifa immediately and there he felt that the world had become devoid of life. On the fortieth day he left Haifa, when the sighs of sorrow and grief of the bereaved, both Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís, were suddenly transformed into delight and happiness on reading the "Will and Testament," in which the Beloved Master directed His followers to turn their faces towards the light shining from the Distinguished Branch, the Beloved Guardian of the Cause of God, Shoghi Effendi.

The progress of the Cause in Egypt is associated with the services of Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání. There were only a few believers when he first came to Egypt, but through his activities many souls came to embrace the Cause, and many centers were established.

His house was dedicated to Bahá'í activities and many meetings were held there. It was honored by the visit of the Beloved Master during His sojourn in Egypt. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and Mrs. L. M. Getsinger spent their last days on earth in that house, receiving all hospitality and care.

His spirit of faithfulness shone with full brightness when the Covenant-breakers began their activities and



Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání

sought through their agents in Egypt to mislead the believers. His steadfastness and zeal disclosed their conspiracy and protected the Cause of God against their mischief.

In the field of literature Taqí Effendi took a notable part. He knew by heart almost all the general Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and he could recount most of the outstanding historical events as if they were yet fresh. As chief member of the Publishing Committee, he helped to translate into Arabic many books and Tablets, such as the *Iqán* and *Some Answered Questions*. He also wrote articles demonstrating the truth of the Cause and promoting its teachings and principles.

Years did not dim the brightness of his spirit, although they laid upon him and increasing burden of sorrows and disasters. The deaths of his sons, followed by the death of his wife, left

him alone, but his spirit never faltered nor felt loneliness, as his true comfort was found in his Beloved Bahá'u'lláh.

His kindness and hospitality were extended to everybody, and his innumerable services are graven upon the hearts of the believers of the East and West.

As a Hand of the Cause of God, Muḥammad Taqí Isfáhání served, underwent hardships, and passed away with a smile of peace. Memorial gatherings were held by the believers in various centers, and a suitable resting place is in course of construction in the Bahá'í Cemetery. Nothing can better express the measure of this rich life and its blessed termination than the following cablegram received from the Beloved Guardian:—

"Hearts (are) grief stricken (by the) passing (away of) beloved, outstanding, steadfast promoter (of the) Faith, Muḥammad Taqí Isfáhání. Long record (of) his magnificent, exemplary services (is) imperishable (and) deserves rank (him among the) hands (of the) Cause (of) God. Advise hold befitting memorial gatherings (by) Egyptian centers. (I am sending a) contribution (of) two hundred pounds (for the) construction (of a) grave.

(Signed) Shoghi."

#### ḤAJÍ MAHMÚD QASSABCHÍ<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of September 13, 1947 the friends of 'Iráq were deeply grieved by the news of the loss of the well-known believer, Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchí, that faithful, steadfast and devoted Bahá'í who loved and served the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh until the last days of his life on earth.

The Guardian paid tribute to him in the following telegram to the National Spiritual Assembly dated September 17, 1947: "Deeply grieved loss dearly-beloved, illustrious promoter Faith, Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchí. His precious, historic services in 'Iráq, Persia, Holy Land, unforgettable, exemplary. Advise centers hold befitting

memorial gatherings to commemorate his high achievements which Concourse on High extol, for which I feel deeply grateful. . . . Shoghi."

Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchí, who was a descendant of a very old family of Baghdád embraced the Bahá'í Faith in 1911 through reading *The Star of the West* which then published reports of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in Europe. His addresses, His photographs, and accounts of the deep and widespread interest He created among the various classes of the Western world. The issues of this Bahá'í magazine were presented to him by a certain Bahá'í merchant of Jewish extraction, the late Joseph Moshi, who later gave Qassabchí, at his request, a copy of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, which served to reinforce and consummate his faith in the new Revelation. The Master, in a Tablet revealed in his honor in this connection, blessed him for having attained the summit of being and believed in the revealed signs of the secret of existence. From then on he continued to offer to thirsty souls the celestial Water of Life of which he had been given to drink.

Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchí's services to the Cause of God started soon after World War I when, by permission of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he undertook the restoration of the blessed House of Bahá'u'lláh. Although he had expressed his readiness to do this important work at his own expense, the Master and a number of believers participated in contributing to this end.

In 1925 when the case of the House of Bahá'u'lláh was being considered and decided upon by the law courts of Baghdád, and the Shí'ih populace were causing a great agitation about the disputed case, thus rendering the situation of the believers in Baghdád very critical, Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchí not only stood firm and faithful to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh but encouraged other friends to do likewise. Meantime, he expended freely to defray the fees of the lawyers who were engaged to defend the Bahá'í case.

A few years later, he was privileged to play the leading part in the purchase

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of 'Iráq.

and establishment of the first Ḥazīratu'l-Quds of Baghdád, and when the friends undertook to construct the present National Ḥazīratu'l-Quds his contributions were very generous. Qassabchi was also among the first believers who participated in no small measure in the erection of the Ḥazīratu'l-Quds of the village of Avashiq, the first of its kind to be built in 'Irāq.

Perhaps the most distinguished and imperishable service he was privileged to render to the Bahá'í Faith was the construction of the three additional rooms adjoining the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel. These rooms now contain the International Bahá'í Archives. The beloved Guardian, who personally supervised the work, repeatedly extolled this meritorious service of Ḥájí Mahmúd.

With the approval of the Guardian, Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchi participated through his contribution, in the purchase of the land which is to be the site of Persia's Mašbriq'u'l-Adhkár. A few years before his passing, Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchi donated to the Cause three small houses adjoining the House of Bahá'u'lláh.

Concerning one of his recent contributions to the Faith, Ruhíyyih Khánum writing to a friend in Baghdád, stated: "Please inform Mr. Qassabchi when you give him the enclosed receipt that the Guardian has decided, in view of his great affection for him, to use this loving contribution of his to the Faith for work on completing the superstructure of the Báb's blessed Temple, whenever circumstances permit this historic enterprise to be commenced."

In 1931 Qassabchi with the approval of the Guardian traveled to Bahá'u'lláh's native land, where he was very delighted to meet large numbers of devoted and zealous believers in Tíhrán, Khurásán, and other cities and towns. There he lost no chance to contribute to various Bahá'í enterprises and undertakings.

In 1932 Qassabchi had the honor to visit the beloved Guardian and the Bahá'í Holy Shrines. Later in the year, while spending the summer in Damascus, Syria, he received the shocking



Ḥájí Mahmúd Qassabchi

news of the ascension of the Greatest Holy Leaf, whereupon he hurried back to the Holy Land where he took part in the funeral of Bahíyyih Khánum.

In 1933 Qassabchi suffered a severe attack of paralysis which he narrowly survived and as a result of which he could hardly move or speak for the rest of his life. On September 11, 1947 Qassabchi, who had already grown frail and weak, fell ill, and two days later winged his flight to the Abhá Kingdom. He was buried at Salman Pak, about thirty miles southeast of Baghdád.

#### BEULAH STORRS LEWIS

By WILLARD P. HATCH

Mrs. Beulah Storrs Lewis was born of a well-known Mormon family in Springville, Utah, on January 21, 1881. She died in Los Angeles, California, on November 9, 1947. Her life had been a tree that bore much fruit. As Miss Beulah Storrs, she married Albert E. Lewis. They had no physical children,

but Mrs. Lewis had a spiritual family that was indeed numerous. For Mrs. Lewis was an eloquent speaker, a fluent writer and an active Bahá'í teacher. For approximately twenty-eight years she had devoted an increasing amount of her time and her unique capacities to spreading the "Glad-Tidings" of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

According to her brother, Kindred L. Storrs, Beulah became a follower of the Bahá'í Faith in California. He writes: "As I remember it, Beulah first became a Bahá'í in 1919. I became a Bahá'í almost instantaneously when I first learned of it through Beulah. My mother followed soon after that. My father never declared himself to be a Bahá'í, but talked Bahá'í to practically everyone he met. Beulah . . . attended the Brigham Young University at Provo, Utah, and later studied in England. . . . She had a varied experience in dramatics, and had been in the movies in Hollywood in the silent days. . . . I do know that she gave up everything, including her ambition in the field of dramatics to serve Bahá'u'lláh."

Mrs. A. C. Platt relates that, while Beulah was acting in the silent moving pictures, she met with an accident and was taken for recuperation to the home of Mother Wright, a Bahá'í and a competent character actress. But it was at the home of Mrs. Platt that a Bahá'í study class was conducted. Two members who attended the class regularly and expressed keen interest in the teachings were a little girl and her mother. That girl was Carole Lombard who later became a world-famous actress, and a close friend of Beulah Lewis. In the spring of 1938, Carole Lombard Gable, already a Bahá'í at heart, was encouraged by Mrs. Lewis to appear before the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Los Angeles and to declare her belief. She joined the Bahá'í World Faith and became a member of the Los Angeles community.

Mrs. Lewis was active in civic affairs. In 1930 she was president of the Cadman Club. She had also served as president of the City Women's Breakfast Club.

When on a visit to New York City, Mrs. Lewis devoted her time to spread-



Beulah Storrs Lewis

ing the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. After a lecture, one of the members of the audience who came to speak to her was Dr. Mayo, of the well-known Mayo Brothers of Minnesota. He told her that he was impressed by her efforts to serve humanity spiritually without financial return. He said that he had noticed in her symptoms of a kidney ailment, which if treated in time, could be greatly benefited, if not cured. Then he added that he too was trying to aid mankind in the field of physical health, and that he would like to offer her the facilities of the Mayo Brothers Clinic without cost. Though his kind and unselfish offer was deeply appreciated, she decided she could not accept it.

It was also in New York City that an enemy of the Faith came to Mrs. Lewis and offered to establish her as a minister in a church of her own, saying that from this position she could obtain both wealth and fame. Her refusal was immediate and definite.

A close friend of Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Martin G. Carter, who lived in Los Angeles, opened her hospitable home

for many years to classes that Mrs. Lewis taught of the Bahá'í Faith. Mrs. Carter actively interested herself in inviting the open-minded and progressive among those she contacted to attend and study in these classes. She states that in her opinion possibly one hundred souls became awakened and declared themselves Bahá'ís through the effective teaching of Mrs. Lewis, either directly or indirectly.

As to the spirit which animated Mrs. Lewis as a Bahá'í teacher, her brother has written from Salt Lake City: "She was extremely humble and grateful to Bahá'u'lláh for the inspiration which she received and for the good that so many people derived from it."

From Miss Clara E. Weir, a close friend of Mrs. Lewis, comes this statement: "I knew Beulah in the days of her robust vitality. . . . By her eloquence she could warm and inspire her listeners with the love of God and stimulate them to rise to heights of service. . . . My earnest prayer for her is that doors of service may open to her in all the worlds of God."

#### ḤASAN MAR'Í ṬANTÁWÍ

The passing of our dear brother, Ḥasan Mar'í Ṭantáwí on the twenty-eighth of August, 1949, terminated a period of heroism in the annals of the Cause in Egypt. He was one of the four heroes of Kawmu's-Sa'á'yidih, the historic village in Upper Egypt, who, undeterred by the forces of terror, appeared before the Muslim Court and courageously and unreservedly declared their faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Taking into consideration the times, and how great has been the evolution in the thinking of their countrymen in the course of the twenty-five years since that first charge was brought against the Bahá'ís in Egypt, the championship of the Cause which he and his fellow-believers displayed appear incomparably greater than similar events recorded later.

That championship stands in the annals closely associated with their sacrifices and sufferings and marks the



Ḥasan Mar'í Ṭantáwí

turning point in the history of the Cause in Egypt. Through this championship, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh was for the first time, declared by Muslim religious authorities to be an independent Faith, so that a Bahá'í could not be regarded as a Muslim, nor a Muslim as a Bahá'í.

Upon the issuance of that historic verdict, Ḥasan Mar'í moved from his village and settled in Cairo. His hardships did not cease, but his spirit continued to grow stronger. At last he was appointed a teacher by the Ministry of Education, and was thus afforded a comparatively peaceful life.

As a graduate of the thousand-year old Muslim University, al-Azhar, he exerted his knowledge, strength and skill in assisting in translating into Arabic many of the Bahá'í Writings.

In August, 1949, he visited the friends of Alexandria during his summer holiday. His regular attendance at their meetings caused mutual delight and happiness.

On the evening of his passing he attended a local symposium of the Bahá'í youth of Alexandria. It is said that his

joy, happiness and thankfulness to Bahá'u'lláh were so great that he seemed to feel as if it were the last occasion for him to express his deep affection, love and appreciation to his beloved fellow-believers! Just as he reached his home, he began to suffer heart failure and within fifteen minutes he passed away. He was fifty-six years of age.

His body was interred in the Bahá'í burial ground in Cairo.

May his soul abide in eternal rest in the Kingdom of Abhá!

(National Spiritual Assembly  
of Egypt and Sudan)



#### NÚRÍ'D-DÍN 'ABBÁS

[Written by Robert Gulick from data supplied by 'Abdu'r-Razzáq 'Abbás.]

Toward the close of 1949, violent death claimed Núri'd-Din 'Abbás, one of the most active and enthusiastic Bahá'ís of 'Iráq. He was born in August 1902, the son of 'Abbás Riḡá Maṣḥadi 'Abbás who had four years earlier embraced the Cause.

Núri'd-Din was one of those blessed souls who thirst after righteousness. Although Bahá'í literature was very scanty during the days of his youth, he loved to read whatever he could find about the Faith. He spared no effort to seek out every manuscript in his eagerness to master the Teachings. He shared his father's perseverance and devotion to the Cause. Attacks and persecution only served to strengthen his efforts, and his loyalty and self-sacrifice reached their zenith in the face of opposition.

In his library he kept every available Bahá'í book, including many published in other parts of the world. His time and money were consecrated to Bahá'í service, his one consuming interest in life. His love for the Cause and for Shoghí Effendi was further expressed

Núri'd-Din 'Abbás

in many trips, perhaps a dozen, to Haifa.

A teacher by profession, he spent most of his life in the employ of the Ministry of Education of 'Iráq. The inspectors knew of his allegiance to the Faith and because of this sent him to distant and uncoveted places in 'Iráq. This discriminatory treatment enabled him to render unusual services to the Faith as a pioneer settler and teacher.

During the last seven years of his earthly existence, he and his wife taught school in Sulaymáníyyih, a town in 'Iráqí Kurdistán which will forever be remembered because of the sojourn there of Bahá'u'lláh. Núri'd-Din 'Abbás loved the Kurds and his affection was reciprocated. He performed the historic service of securing the translation into Kurdish by Maḥmúd Jawdat of Dr. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. Not only did he succeed in getting the volume translated but he also distributed it widely among the Kurds. He personally translated into Arabic George Townshend's pamphlet about Queen Marie's conversion to the Faith,



publishing and distributing hundreds of copies and presenting a goodly supply to the Bahá'í library in Baghdad.

He was loved by his students and by all who knew him intimately.

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**JULIA CULVER**

February 8, 1861-January 22, 1950

By SHIRLEY WARDE

Julia Culver, after forty-seven years of devoted, generous and sacrificial service to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, was released from this world of limitations on January 22, 1950 in East Oakland, California, and passed to broader horizons at the age of eighty-nine.

Born in 1861, Julia Culver spent four years as a child in Germany. When the family returned to the United States, they lived in Chicago. At twenty-six, Julia returned to Europe. It was in Munich, in 1903, sixteen years later, that she first heard of the Bahá'í Faith from an American woman who was there at the time.

In those days there were few persons in the United States or in Europe who knew about Bahá'u'lláh, much less recognized Him as the Manifestation of God for our time. Julia Culver, however, was one of those rare souls who seemed to have been spiritually prepared to recognize the Prophet on learning of His coming. No sooner had she heard of His Message and perused what little was available to the Western world at that time of His Teachings, than she accepted their validity and dedicated her life to the promotion of His Cause. Back in the United States in 1904, she went to Green Acre, in Maine, where Sara Farmer, through her Green Acre Conferences, was spreading the Glad Tidings of Bahá'u'lláh's coming. There she deepened her knowledge of the Divine Teachings.

In about 1920 Julia Culver joined forces with Martha Root, that intrepid Bahá'í teacher who won such a crown of glory by her tireless efforts and



Julia Culver

achievements. Together they labored in Europe for five years and did outstanding teaching work in Breslau and in Budapest at the Esperanto Congresses held in those cities. Julia contributed large sums of money at this time so that the teaching work might go forward and throughout the following years continued to aid greatly the activities of Martha Root and other Bahá'í teachers.

Early in 1927, the failing health of Mrs. Stannard, who had established the Bahá'í International Bureau in Geneva at the request of the Guardian, made it imperative to find someone to take over the burden. Julia Culver, familiar with the Continental peoples and languages, seemed the ideal choice and was heartily approved by the Guardian.

With Mrs. Stannard no longer able to assume the expenses of the Bureau, Julia Culver, by that October, was faced with the choice of seeing this important, though embryonic, international center closed, or of taking upon herself the full responsibility for it. She

elected the latter, and with a contribution of six English pounds a month from Shoghi Effendi, (later increased to nine pounds), Julia Culver supplied the remaining and major share of the necessary funds to keep the Bureau functioning and expanding.

In the early summer of 1928, Emogene Hoagg, at Julia's suggestion, came to Geneva to help and together they built the Bureau Library, initiated a bulletin and arranged lectures, teas and other activities designed to make the Bureau a meeting ground for all persons and groups who were working for peace and the betterment of the world. Many notable persons visited the Bureau in those years and attended its functions. Among those who have openly voiced their sympathy with and appreciation of the Bahá'í Faith and proclaimed it as perhaps the greatest force in the world for the unification of mankind, was the late Eduard Beneš, then Minister of Foreign Affairs for Czechoslovakia.

Under the direction of Julia Culver, the International Bureau thus cooperated with all organizations in Geneva that were striving towards goals similar to those of the Bahá'ís, maintained contact with the activities of the Faith throughout the world and did all in her power to make it an auxiliary nerve center to Haifa, as the Guardian wished, in all that pertained to the Faith. This was no small task, but with the aid of Bahá'í travelers from all parts of the world, both the Bureau and the number of Swiss believers steadily grew.

One of those Bahá'í travelers to visit Geneva in those days, was the eminent George Townshend, Canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and Archdeacon of Clonfert (positions he has recently renounced to devote his entire time to the teaching of the Bahá'í Faith). On his return to Ireland in October 1929, Dr. Townshend wrote to Julia Culver:

"Geneva is to me a haven of spiritual beauty . . . an echo of Haifa. I have seen Geneva and felt there a spiritual power I had not felt elsewhere. I hope that more and more

the Bahá'í Bureau will increase in power and will gather round it the other movements represented there (all of them less complete, less informed, less inspired than it) until it becomes, by the sheer force of its own merit and character, the acknowledged Center of all the constructive energies of that International city. This of course will happen. Nothing can stop it. May it be soon. How great a privilege is yours and Mrs. Hoagg's to be so bravely and successfully upholding there this great Cause through these difficult times. . . ."

Nor was the development of the International Bureau the only service that Julia Culver offered her beloved Faith. It was she who arranged for the French translation of Dr. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, and she who shared her own limited resources to help any and all who were in need. Her diary discloses but a few of the host of deeds and contributions which flowed from her loving, generous heart and purse: a hundred dollars to help educate a Persian youth; eighty dollars to aid someone else; a check to a mother whose daughter had suffered the amputation of a leg; checks to Bahá'í teachers in Europe whose means were too limited—everywhere the helping hand.

Small wonder that George Townshend wrote at this period (July 1930): "The bugles of heaven are blowing strains of thankfulness for your faithful, staunch and determined efforts to obey the Center of the Covenant and keep the Geneva Bureau going. Listen to the bugles and do not mind the yappings of mortals. . . . My thoughts and prayers will be with you and your brave, lonely and invaluable work for God and His Cause."

In January 1931, on the eve of her seventieth birthday, her physical strength failing, Julia Culver wrote to Shoghi Effendi asking permission to return to the United States. His answer came saying she might go home. Emogene Hoagg was to return to Geneva to replace her. In June, Julia wrote to her to say that she was putting aside

funds to maintain the Bureau until the following May. But due to unforeseen circumstances Emogene Hoagg was not able to leave for Europe, and the next spring found Julia Culver still in Geneva, still hoping to be relieved and, at that time, planning to arrive in Geyserville, California, in good season for the Bahá'í Summer School sessions there. In August, she was "hoping to go in September." But it was May 1933 before it was possible for Julia Culver to leave for California.

Even then she could not be idle. After a short rest she was busy once more promoting the Teachings of the Cause she loved so well. In California she spread the Divine Message in various cities and in Chemeketa Park was planning to open a children's school. But failing health and finances frustrated her purpose and she was at last forced to sell her property and live quietly with her sister in Berkeley until it became necessary to place her in a rest home in East Oakland where she passed away.

Julia Culver, in her forty-seven years of Bahá'í service, gave of her substance until she had no more to give, either physically or materially. Surely as she entered the Abhá Kingdom she was greeted by "the bugles of heaven . . . blowing strains of thankfulness" for her "faithful, staunch and determined efforts" for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

On receiving news of her passing, the Guardian cabled this message:

"Grieve passing devoted pioneer (of) Faith, Julia Culver. Her exemplary spirit, unshakable loyalty, generous contributions unforgettable. Fervently praying (for) progress (of) her soul (in) Abhá Kingdom."

#### MOUNTFORT MILLS

By HORACE HOLLEY

The passing of Mountfort Mills on April 24, 1949, deprived the American Bahá'í community of the influence and experience of a very distinguished believer. He had been a follower of Bahá'u'lláh since 1906.



Mountfort Mills

Before the end of 1909, Mountfort Mills had made two pilgrimages to 'Akká. His third pilgrimage to visit the Master was made early in 1921. In 1922, with Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm, he was invited by Shoghi Effendi to go to Haifa for conference with the Guardian on matters related to the new conditions created for the Faith by the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

During the Master's visits in New York during 1912, Mr. Mills served on the Bahá'í reception committee which arranged public addresses for 'Abdu'l-Bahá in that city.

First chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada when formed in 1923 in accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament left by the Master, Mountfort Mills was elected a member of that body for seven terms between 1922 and 1937. As trustee of Bahá'í Temple Unity he had served annually from its inception in 1909.

The final draft of the Declaration of Trust and By-Laws adopted by the National Assembly in 1927 was prepared by Mills.

It would be impossible in brief space to report his activities for the New York Bahá'í community throughout the years of his residence there, for the national Bahá'í community, or in Europe. He was a winning public speaker and his personality gained many influential friends for the Faith in some of its most difficult days in the West. His devotion to the Master was impressive.

A few outstanding events will serve to indicate the unusual scope of his Bahá'í activities.

At the Conference of Living Religions Within the British Empire, held in London, Mills represented the Bahá'ís on the public platform.

His appeal of the case of the House of Bahá'u'lláh at Baghdád to the League of Nations, whose verdict was favorable to the Faith, is historic. The case is documented in earlier volumes of this biennial record. Mills made two journeys to Baghdád while studying the facts pertaining to the Bahá'í rights to possession of a sacred Bahá'í shrine confiscated by leaders of Islám. During this mission, acting on behalf of the Guardian, Mountfort Mills had audiences with the late King Feisal of 'Irâq, who assured him that the government would carry out the terms of the decision rendered by the League, an intention the King's untimely death made it impossible for him to fulfill. Mysteriously attacked while in Baghdád, Mr. Mills suffered a brutal assault the effects of which lingered for many years.

Mountfort Mills prepared the Resolution adopted by the National Spiritual Assembly for presentation to President Roosevelt with an engrossed copy of the Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh for the heads of the Republics throughout America and a copy of the Master's Prayer for America. This document was reproduced in *The Bahá'í World* at the time.

In Geneva, Switzerland, Mills spent much time during sessions of the League of Nations, serving as an unofficial observer and interested friend of its public proceedings, and exerted a good influence among many of its leaders on behalf of the Bahá'í principles and ideals.

He was a member of the committee which appeared before the Wilmette Village Board to apply for a building permit for the House of Worship, at a time when the Bahá'ís owned land and possessed Mr. Bourgeois' design but from a worldly point of view seemed incapable of carrying out so impressive and costly a structure.

Characteristic of his influence upon people was his discussion with the late Professor Edward Browne of Cambridge University, translator of *A Traveller's Narrative: the Episode of the Báb*, the Persian text of which had been presented to Professor Browne by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the time of his famous visit to Bahá'u'lláh. After hearing Mr. Mills' explanation of the evolution of the Faith from the Báb to Bahá'u'lláh, and its subsequent stages under the Center of the Covenant and the terms of His Testament, Professor Browne realized that he had been veiled by the preoccupation with conflicting claims and disturbances which followed the Martyrdom of the Báb. He expressed his desire to translate later Bahá'í works, but died before this contribution to the Faith could be made.

Mills brought into the Bahá'í community a trained mind, a gracious presence, a rare quality of friendly relationship and a keen awareness of the need of our time for the inspiration and guidance of a new Revelation.

"As already intimated," the Guardian wrote on October 18, 1827, "I have read and re-read most carefully the final draft of the By-Laws drawn up by that highly-talented, much loved servant of Bahá'u'lláh, Mountfort Mills, and feel I have nothing substantial to add to this first and very creditable attempt at codifying the principles of general Bahá'í administration."

In his letter dated March 20, 1929, reporting the favorable verdict pronounced by the League of Nations, the Guardian said: "I must not fail in conclusion to refer once again to the decisive role played by that distinguished and international champion of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, our dearly-beloved Mountfort Mills, in the negotiations that have paved the way for the signal success already achieved. The text of the

Bahá'í petition, which he conceived and drafted, has been recognized by the members of the Mandate Commission as 'a document well-drafted, clear in its arguments and moderate in tone.' He has truly acquitted himself in this most sacred task with exemplary distinction and proved himself worthy of so noble a mission. I request you," (addressing the American Bahá'ís) "to join me in my prayers for him, that the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh may continue to guide and sustain him in the final settlement of this most mighty issue."

### GEORGE ORR LATIMER

BY HORACE HOLLEY

The Centenary of the Declaration of the Báb brought forth in North America a notable All-America Convention. Representatives chosen by the Latin American communities assembled with the delegates elected for the United States and Canada, and a Latin-American co-chairman was appointed to serve with the Convention chairman during the sessions.

George Orr Latimer as chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly convened the Convention and continued to preside when elected Convention chairman by the delegates.

Perhaps in each active life there is one episode which seems to stand out as a culmination, a climax, in which all the person's capacity and experience are given their supreme fulfillment. If that is so, many American Bahá'ís will associate George Orr Latimer with the Centenary Convention in 1944, when the Latin American teaching work had become firmly established, when a local Assembly had been formed in every State and Province of North America, and when the completed exterior ornamentation of the House of Worship made possible a floodlighted Temple which impressed every observer with a sense of exalted beauty.

Mr. Latimer was born into and grew up with a family of pioneer Bahá'ís. His spiritual environment from youth



George Orr Latimer

was Bahá'í. Around him he could see daily evidences of the working of an indomitable spirit of faith. Here was no static belief in a past and finished revelation, providing slumber for souls too fearful to confront reality, but a crusade undertaken by staunch and vigilant personalities who had to build their own path of progress from day to day through the wilderness of the world.

His life-span coincided with the unprecedented impetus which 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to the concept of religion. Religion had been revealed truth, majestic law, glorious hope and sublime sacrifice, but never in any previous dispensation had religion been community, socialized in terms of civilization attuned to a valid manifestation of the divine Will. This mighty transformation of religion from universal truth to community was the providential mission of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, fulfilling the aims and conveying the powers flowing from Bahá'u'lláh to mankind. 'Abdu'l-Bahá inspired in the understanding and practice of religion its final dimension in

human relationships and the relationships of social institutions created for an ordered world.

We did not know what 'Abdu'l-Bahá was doing in those years, but those who heeded Him, remained faithful to the Covenant and following in His road were participating in the very miracle of human experience. Of these was George Orr Latimer, from his youth to his sudden and unexpected death in June, 1948.

Latimer lived deeply in the Bahá'í community on many levels: as teacher, lecturer, author and administrator. His devotion expressed itself in work for the Bahá'í schools, in writing pamphlets and magazine articles, in the development of local and national Bahá'í institutions, in extensive travel among communities in America and Europe, and in the legal work of the Cause. He died while a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, entering his fourteenth year of service in that capacity since 1922.

"Greatly deplore passing of distinguished disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, firm pillar of the American Bahá'í community, George Latimer. His outstanding services in the closing years of the Heroic and first stages of the Formative Ages of the Faith are imperishable," the Guardian declared in his cablegram to the National Assembly received June 23, 1948.

From a brief memorial prepared for the Portland Assembly, this summary is quoted:—

"His firmness in the Covenant established with the Bahá'ís of all the world by Bahá'u'lláh in the Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, joined with that of the other members of that company (of early believers), constituted the axis around which revolved the spiritual opening of the West to the new Message of the oneness of God and the oneness of mankind.

"Hence in our vivid appreciation of the value of George Latimer's faith and work, we gratefully recall these salient events: development of a local Bahá'í community from the days of the first pioneer teachers to the days of a worldwide Bahá'í religious society; capacity to apprehend the social meaning and

application of truths which could not be previously applied in the East; assistance to the work of establishing a Bahá'í corporate body in America, first as Bahá'í Temple Unity, later as National Spiritual Assembly; aid in the work of the construction of the Bahá'í House of Worship; travel to distant lands to teach the Bahá'í principles and to strengthen the bonds of fellowship uniting the believers of all lands; pilgrimage to 'Akká and Haifa for association with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and prayer at the Shrines consecrated to the Herald and the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; initiation of orderly development of Bahá'í properties held in trust as national endowments; personal services at the schools founded in Eliot, Maine and Geyserville, California; contribution of legal knowledge to the important task of incorporating fifty or more local Bahá'í communities in the United States and Canada."

Through the Guardian's tribute we can perceive the great and lasting monument which George Orr Latimer's accomplishments have raised up in the Bahá'í community.

#### MANI MEHTA<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of February 4, 1947, Mani Mehta, son of a leading industrialist of Bombay, was driving home, tired and sleepy, when his car crashed into a lamp post. He was taken to a hospital, but in spite of the best medical care, he died two days later without having regained consciousness.

Mani Mehta first heard accidentally of the Bahá'í Faith but he was immediately attracted to it and delved into a study of its teachings with intensity and zeal. In 1942 he formally accepted the Faith. Propelled by boundless devotion, he launched with all the fervor of his soul and the warmth of his heart into carrying to others the Glad-Tidings he had received. His enthusiasm was unrestrained. He would have the whole world know of the Truth and share with him the Priceless Pearl he had obtained. Disregarding position,

<sup>1</sup>By the Bahá'ís of India, Pakistan and Burma.

wealth and even safety—which traditional and vested interests in his community, apprehending the menace to their stronghold implied in his championship of the Cause, were bound to threaten—he arose to demonstrate the truth of the Cause with remarkable vigor.

He felt that the principles of the Faith had but to be presented to an audience for its members to acknowledge and accept their truth. Under such an impression, he organized a public lecture at Bombay where he invited his former coreligionists, the Zoroastrians, to prove to them the validity of the claim of Bahá'u'lláh to be the Promise of all Ages. The meeting broke up in confusion for the majority of the audience had come, not to listen, but to oppose. The protection offered by a few Bahá'ís and sympathizers prevented him from falling a victim to the premeditated plan of assault on his person by the baser elements of the community who constituted a section of the crowd.

Before the intense, persistent and organized opposition which Mani Mehta had thereafter to face, a spirit less stout would have quailed, but his did not falter. His own relatives opposed him; those within his immediate circle of acquaintances called him bigoted; those without thought him demented. But he went straight on in his path, swerving neither to left nor right. His attachment to the Cause was well demonstrated during this period. The storms of trials that beat against him, failed to subdue him. They tended but to fan into a fiercer blaze his love for the new Faith. Shortly after his enrollment, he received a copy of *The Promised Day is Come* by our Guardian. A study of its contents raised his enthusiasm to fever pitch. He was instrumental in bringing out an edition in Bombay. He presented copies to the eminent men in the country and received testimonies from a few as to the greatness of the Bahá'í Faith.

Mani Mehta's passion for speaking to all, without exception, about the Cause is well known. To the general across the table or the coachman whose carriage he has hired, he would without

any preliminary ado plunge into a talk of the Cause and give the Message. On one occasion, five people were traveling in a railway car; one, unknown to the others, was a Bahá'í. As they passed a factory which had been recently acquired by Mr. Mehta's father, the talk turned to the family and the capacity of the sons to carry on the vast interests of the father. Mani came in for his share of their comments. "He is all right, you know, but he is so crazy. All his talk is about Bahá'í".

Mr. J. S. Harper, who met Mr. Mehta on his Kashmir trip and participated with him in his teaching activities on that trip, writes in his report: "Many English Bahá'ís will know the great Mr. Mehta of Bombay, and of his fine and direct approach in teaching the Cause. I found him at my hotel after five days, having also come for a holiday from Bombay. It was no holiday though for Mani, for he had come solely to set Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, on 'fire' with the word Bahá'í. I was quickly to learn of his ambitious and far-reaching plan and to learn to my great surprise that I was to be a part of it. . . .

"We visited all sorts of people whom I never knew existed, and from the Prime Minister down; and we talked Bahá'í in cafes, in tongas and in the street. We sought platforms at several schools and I helped to address the girls at a convent and the boys at a Protestant school. . . . We printed and distributed five thousand leaflets advertising a public meeting. I had to keep away from this, being subject to military law, but the high light of this experience was the Press Conference at the largest hotel in Srinagar. All press delegates were present and also several leading businessmen and schoolmasters. Mr. Mehta introduced the meeting after tea and then called upon me to outline the principles of the Cause, which I did in a talk lasting forty minutes. The meeting was successful from the start and I would say that 'tolerance' was the keynote of its success."

In spite of the handicaps under which, due to his very position in life, he had to labor, he was always ener-

getic in service to the Faith. In fact, the exuberance of feeling he had on the matter often led him to complain of the slow progress we were making in the Cause in this country, and to suggest diverse ways and means for the capture of the attention of the masses.

Mani Mehta went to Europe and the Middle East during 1945 and he visited the friends in London, Manchester, Beirut, Tíhrán, Baghdád and Egypt. He was keenly disappointed that he could not meet our beloved Guardian. He was on the local Assembly of Bombay as well as on the National Spiritual Assembly for two years, and was vice-chairman of both these Assemblies at the time of his passing.

He was humble, and of a forgiving disposition. He loved the truth and held to it tenaciously. He was frank and simple. He was affable towards his subordinates. "We shall all be terribly cut up if our master passes away," sobbed his chauffeur when Mani Mehta was lying unconscious in the hospital. "He never treated us who served him as inferiors. Sometimes he used to get angry with me and disclose to me what was in his mind, and sometimes it was the other way about. At such times, he would listen with patience and forbearance and never reply in a manner as to remind me that I was his subordinate."

A few passages from the press obituary notices throw further light on his character.

"The death of Mr. Mani H. Mehta, eldest son of Sir Homi Mehta, the well-known industrialist, this morning following injuries sustained in a motor accident on Tuesday removes a prominent figure from Bombay's business circles," writes *The Evening News of India*. It adds, "Mr. Mehta, after his education joined his father's business. He was a partner in Messrs. H. M. Mehta and Co., and was a director of the Mill Stores Trading Co. of India Ltd., and several other companies. He took keen interest in the Bahá'í movement and was president of the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly of Bombay. He was also associated with the war effort and was Honorary Secretary of the Gifts Fund, and in recognition of his serv-



Mani Mehta

ices, was awarded the M.B.E. in 1945.

"Quiet and unassuming in manners and abstemious in habits, Mr. Mani Mehta had a genial disposition and was charitably inclined."

"Mr. Mehta", writes the *Bombay Sentinel*, "who leaves behind him a widow and a daughter, was comparatively young, being only fifty-two years old, was well-known in Bahá'í circles of Bombay and other parts of India, for the active interest he took in the movement.

"Many journalists knew him personally, as a friendly, unpretentious and humble man. In spite of the fact that he was harnessed to multifarious business activities of his father, he always remained a dreamy idealist, with an unworldly look about him."

"Bombay lost one of its finest young workers in the untimely and tragic



death, as a result of a motor accident, of Mr. Mani H. Mehta," writes *The Blitz* on February 8, 1947. "Although blessed with wealth, Mani was one of those few men of his class who felt pain for the sufferings of the common people and worked towards their emancipation in many different fields . . . What really marked him out was his honesty, independence, convictions—and the courage to implement those convictions in his life and work. A competent organizer, convincing orator, writer of rare literary merit, at home equally in the business, social and spiritual world, Bombay will take long to forget Mani Mehta."

And finally this warm tribute from the pen of a literary figure in the *Rast Rahbar* of February 9:

"Memory holds back the door and I see your thin eager form consumed by a mighty faith, courting persecution and championing a cause by which, in a worldly sense, you had nothing to gain and everything to lose. . . . You lived your convictions. No man can do more. Your faith was reviled as the stuff that dreams are made of, but you were the stuff that martyrs are made of. So to your home in the falling daylight. . . ."

"Your fine intelligence, your deep capacity for friendship, your warm affection and your social position, could have ensured for you a life on velvet. But ten years ago a great faith entered your life. Then you could only perceive the heavens brightened and the sound of a rushing mighty breath of fresh air that filled all the world. Thenceforth life was for you no stage play but a hard campaign. . . . You gave up all, sacrificed all, for what you believed to be a new civilization of world-wide brotherhood of justice and love."

Mr. Mani Mehta attended the National Spiritual Assembly meeting at Poona on the 26th of January, 1947. He presided at a public meeting in the Bombay Bahá'í Hall on the 2nd of February when an editor of a local Urdu paper spoke on the Cause. These were his last official acts for the Cause he loved so deeply and served so well.

MAULVI MUHAMMAD  
'ABDU'LLÁH VAKÍL<sup>1</sup>

Ever since he accepted the Faith, Maulvi M. A. Vakíl was assiduous in its service. Simple in his ways, indifferent to worldly fame, detached from material things, he devoted the last years of his life to teaching the Faith with a zeal that neither adversity, old age nor infirmities could diminish. Selfless and sincere, his patience and perseverance were chiefly responsible for the formation and consolidation of several Assemblies and groups in Kashmir.

Despite the respect he commanded in his community by virtue of his knowledge and sincerity, his letters to the National Spiritual Assembly breathed a spirit of humility which was truly Bahá'í, and in a man of his age and position, worthy of remark.

Maulvi 'Abdu'lláh Vakíl was indefatigable in his labors for the Cause even unto the last. His writings were constantly directed towards guiding his former co-religionists, the Qadíyáns, to the truth. Among his published pamphlets, the best known is the *Maqbariy-i-Kháníyár*.

Maulvi 'Abdu'lláh Vakíl was taken ill on the evening of the 9th of April, 1948 and on the morning of the 12th he passed away. The *Guardian* was informed of his passing and he replied by cable: "Grieve passing notable promoter Faith Maulvi Vakíl. Ardently praying progress his soul. Urge Kashmir friends persevere meritorious labors."

As there was no Gulistan in Srinagar, Maulvi Muhammad 'Abdu'lláh Vakíl was buried with Bahá'í rites in his own grounds at Srinagar. The friends at Srinagar, and specially Chaudhri 'Abdu'l Rahman, are to be thanked for the steadfast stand that they took on this matter and their reasoning which led the late Maulvi's wife and son to agree to such a burial.

It speaks of the popularity of our late brother that in spite of his being an avowed Bahá'í, a group of the Lahore

<sup>1</sup>By the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, Pakistan and Burma.

Ahmadíyyih, the Qádiyánís of Srinagar and other Muslims as well as Hindus attended the burial ceremony. This gave the Bahá'ís an opportunity to speak on the oneness of religion and the Message of the Bahá'í Faith.

Maulví 'Abdu'lláh Vakil's passing

leaves a gap which it will be hard to fill. His life will inspire other Bahá'ís in this country to emulate his example and serve the Cause with the same traits of selflessness, ardor and steadfastness that Maulví 'Abdu'lláh Vakil so conspicuously displayed.