

The Flame

William Sears
and
Robert Quigley

George Ronald
Oxford

First published in 1972
by George Ronald
46 High Street, Kidlington,
Oxford, England
Reprinted 1973
All rights reserved

ISBN 85398 030 6

Printed in Great Britain by
Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press), Ltd.,
Bungay, Suffolk

Contents

Foreword

Part I: The search

1. The three questions 10
2. Like mother, like daughter 10
3. God is everybody's business 13
4. Chicago is not Broadway 18
5. The flame is kindled 21
6. Return home: the precious gift

Part II: In the Holy Land

7. Lua arrives in the Holy Land 30
8. Lua meets the Master 32
9. A letter from Lua 36
10. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, father of the poor 40
11. 'Follow Me; be as I am' 44
12. The first martyr for women's rights 46
13. Lua leaves the Master: From sunlight into darkness 50

Part III: The West aids the East

14. The West shall replace the East 54
15. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh: The Dawn and the Sun 57

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-----|
| 16. | The flame begins to burn more brightly | 62 |
| 18. | Lua's mission to the King | 66 |
| Part IV: Herald of the Covenant | | |
| 18. | 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrives in America | 72 |
| 19. | Lua and the Master meet again | 77 |
| 20. | Lua's schemes go astray | 82 |
| 21. | The Faith is established in America | 84 |
| 22. | From the Holy Land to the Golden Gate | 89 |
| 23. | A standing ovation for the Herald of Peace | 91 |
| 24. | The flame ignites many fires | 95 |
| 25. | 'I appoint you, Lua, as a Herald of the Covenant!' | 99 |
| 26. | Mother-teacher of the West | 102 |
| 27. | 'Oh, Bahá'u'lláh! What hast Thou done?' | 105 |
| 28. | Farewell to America | 107 |
| Part V: In His footsteps | | |
| 29. | The flame spreads to other lands | 112 |
| 30. | Following in His footsteps | 114 |
| 31. | Lua sees the Master for the last time | 120 |
| 32. | War encircles the flame | 123 |
| 33. | The Angel of Death | 127 |
| 34. | 'Lua, who shall live through all the ages' | 131 |
| 35. | A martyr's crown | 134 |
| | A final tribute | 138 |

Lua Moore Getsinger

born 1 November 1871—died 1 May 1916
'Mother-teacher of the American Bahá'í Community'

Foreword

This tribute to the ‘immortal Lua’ has been written by two fellow-Americans who were privileged to visit her place of burial beside the Nile river in Egypt many years after her death.

Lua was given the title: ‘The Banner!’ She was the very first to plant the flag of the Bahá’í Faith in many parts of the West; eventually, of the world. Lua inspired thousands, in more than one generation, to take up the task after her. She gave her life in the process.

This is not an attempt to tell a complete and definitive story of so rich a life. Future historians will gather the full treasure from every source, and only then will there be a fitting description of this courageous and beautiful woman who was so loved and respected for her service to humanity on three continents. These are but a few episodes taken from her life, but they show plainly why she will come to be known in the future as one of the outstanding women of this age.

This account has been taken from magazines, newspaper articles, letters, books, *in memoriam* columns, and from personal interviews with those who knew her. It cannot stand as a completely accurate story of that precious life inasmuch as too much time has passed, too few records have been kept, too many doors were closed to us, and too many memories are lost to total recall. Yet, even

those who could not remember the words Lua spoke, never forgot the music of her presence. ‘There was something about her,’ they said. ‘Something special.’ They might have forgotten the details of many incidents, but they always recalled vividly the atmosphere that surrounded Lua. Their eyes glistened as they spoke of the tremendous impact Lua had upon those who met her.

There are now Bahá’ís in over fifty thousand centres in all parts of the world. National Bahá’í Assemblies represent more than three hundred countries, territories, islands and dominions. It is tragic that after nearly a century the people of the West should still be uninformed about this astonishing woman, and equally regrettable that countless numbers of new Bahá’ís have not yet heard of the ‘immortal Lua’, although they may have been given the ‘breath of life’ by one of her ‘children’. It is to remedy this lack that we have recaptured here the excitement of her beginning days.

May these brief eye-witness accounts of her contemporaries, these excerpts from her own correspondence, once again bring to life for you this ‘flame of God’.

Although a major part of the story comes from official records and books, still this account will have to remain mostly in that category known as pilgrims’ notes.

Even so, it is our hope that you will find in these pages some of the throbbing joy, wonder and awe which filled the hearts of those who met her in person.

William Sears
Robert Quigley

Part I

The search

1. The three questions

He looked at Lua. His eyes were filled with tender love.

‘What will you do if they persecute you?’

‘I shall know that it is a heavenly gift, and that the love of God is descending upon me.’

‘And what will you do if they put you into prison?’

‘I shall thank God that I have been permitted to follow in the footsteps of my beloved Master.’ Lua’s beautiful face glowed with compassion. ‘I shall then be sharing but a small portion of your suffering.’

‘And if they kill you?’

She did not hesitate.

‘I shall know that the very first wish I ever asked of you has been granted, and I have been privileged to give my life that men may hear the word of God.’

2. Like mother, like daughter

Across the deep green meadows, the happy musical laugh of the little girl could be heard by her father as he drew a dipper of water from the pump. He watched his daughter Lua go racing barefoot through the grass, carrying on a gay conversation with her friends the animals as she fled swiftly past them. Her father shook his head wonderingly.

He sighed, 'She's just like her mother.'

There was something strange and wonderful about them both. Something just beyond his reach.

He didn't understand it. Still, he could tell from the way they would at times smile at each other that they understood it.

It didn't really matter, he told himself, because he loved them both so very much.

Both Lua and her mother were born in rural upstate New York in the village of Hume. Both shared an outer life of delight in the farm with its green fields and growing things, but an inner life of unrest and dissatisfaction. There was no one to answer their questions. They hungered for knowledge of every kind, especially knowledge of God and His creation, but each cup seemed to be empty.

It all began with Lua's mother. Ellen McBride Moore imbibed these ideas with her mother's milk. She was but five when the call for the first woman's rights convention in all history was made in that same upper New York at Seneca Falls. Change was in the air.

Ellen McBride Moore was born in 1843. It was the year of the great comet. All eyes stared up at the night skies searching the heavens in fear of the great fiery tail millions of miles long. Some said it heralded the end of the world.

It was all part of a period of strange, growing millennial zeal. Bible scholars in three continents said their studies of Scripture pointed to the imminent return of Christ. People in the United States, Canada, England, Europe, even in Asia, were discussing and debating the issue in great

detail. Many confidently expected to see Him 'coming in the clouds of heaven' as He had promised. Some even sold their possessions, prepared ascension robes, and went up into the mountains to await Christ's coming.

In the nearby rolling hills where New York and Pennsylvania meet, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Faith, had had his vision of a great new day coming. He was to give his life for these beliefs in 1844, a year after Lua's mother was born.

Farther along these same Pennsylvania hills, William Miller and his flock had organized entire communities who were prepared for the coming of Jesus, the Christ. They finally decided this Event would take place in spring, 1844.

Lua's childhood was filled with such tales of wonder and awe. Her mother, Ellen McBride Moore, grew up with a great unquenched thirst to know the truth about those days. Why had Christ failed to return as everyone expected? Or had He come, and had everyone missed Him this time, too, as they did the first time? Had Christ fooled them all, and come as He promised 'like a thief in the night'? Without anyone recognizing Him? Was He perhaps living on the earth now? What an exciting thought!

But if so, where was He?

No one gave a satisfactory answer to these questions when Lua's mother asked them. Many became impatient with her. They told her not to 'tamper' with these mysteries. Ellen McBride Moore felt that

for every good question there should be a good answer. Her intense curiosity was often a source of acute distress to her family and her friends. Her husband and her minister especially felt the sting of her probing mind.

During the days when Mrs Moore carried Lua in her womb, her thirst for knowledge was directed towards religion. She wanted to know the truth about God and His Messengers, about man, about the Bible, about the soul, about everything connected with religion. Her zeal had reached its peak. At every opportunity, whether at home, in public, or in church, Lua's mother would speak out. She was frank and she was fearless. She demanded answers to her questions.

It is also suspected that she was a bit of a nuisance. Especially to her minister. There were a lot of her questions to which he, himself, would have liked a better answer. But he knew better than to ask such things during church service.

One day it reached a crisis.

3. God is everybody's business

There was a knock on the door.

Mr Moore admitted the minister of their local church. Both were embarrassed. Both knew why he was there.

'I have come to solicit your help,' the clergyman said.

He entered the house in a state of annoyance. He was distressed when he saw that Lua's mother was present.

‘Mr Moore,’ he began, ‘the last thing I want to do is complain about your wife. She’s a fine woman. But I’ll come right to the point. She must stop asking so many questions. Especially in the Bible Class. It’s disturbing. Most disturbing to the other people.’

Obviously it was disturbing to the country parson as well.

Mr Moore shrugged his shoulders. He was sympathetic. God knows, he too had felt the frustration of trying to satisfy his wife’s constant hunger for knowledge about things of the spirit.

‘What do you suggest?’ he asked.

‘There are some things that just can’t be answered,’ the clergyman said patiently.

‘I know,’ Mr Moore sighed. ‘I know. It disturbs me, too. She asks me the same questions. What can I tell her? I’m only a farmer. When she asks, “How is it possible to explain the Bible where it says that Christ will come down in a cloud? Everyone knows that scientifically clouds are vapours that rise up from the earth. They don’t come down. Is the Bible wrong?” What can I tell her? I don’t know myself.’

The clergyman was impatient. ‘It’s a pity that our women become involved in these new-fangled ideas.’

‘Perhaps,’ Mr Moore said. ‘But my wife feels that God is everybody’s business, not just the men’s. So that kind of answer will never satisfy her.’

Lua’s father would have been much happier furrowing a field behind his team than talking

about God and the Bible, but now that the parson was here, perhaps this was his chance. A minister should know the answers.

‘Tell me,’ he asked, ‘when the Bible says that all eyes shall see Christ when He comes down from heaven, my wife wants to know *how*? How will they all see Him? She says that with the curvature of the earth it would take Christ hundreds and hundreds of thousands of solo descents before He could get around to everybody in the world. Mind you, those are her ideas, not mine. But how can I answer that?’

‘There are some things that are very difficult to answer.’

‘Especially difficult questions.’

‘Many of these things must be taken on faith.’ Ellen McBride Moore could remain quiet no longer. She couldn’t resist putting in her own two cents’ worth. After all, they were her questions.

‘What about Christ walking on the water? What about all the dead coming out of their graves on the day of Resurrection? Where will we have room for them all?’

‘Those,’ the minister replied, speaking strictly to Lua’s father, ‘are exactly the sort of questions that your wife shouldn’t ask in public.’

‘Why not? If we’ve got good answers?’

‘They cause unrest in the congregation. Answers that satisfy one person don’t satisfy another.’

‘None of them satisfies my wife apparently.’ Lua’s mother held her tongue, and with great difficulty sat quietly through the rest of the conversation. She sighed. If they insisted that she

remain silent she would obey. But they couldn't stop her from thinking. And she thought to herself that if Christ *had* returned and if she knew where to find Him, at least He wouldn't make excuses. He would be able to answer her questions.

The following Sunday was almost unbearable to her. Question after question sprang unasked to her lips. If the rest of the congregation knew as little as she did about all these things, how could they be so satisfied. Yet, everyone else seemed perfectly content. They smiled and nodded as the minister spoke. She felt there must be something wrong with her, but the more the minister preached, the more questions Lua's mother had about everything he was saying. Only his fierce frown from time to time kept her silent. She wanted to shout out her doubts.

Were there really three Persons in the Trinity? Why were there so many different religions in the first place? Why was mankind repeatedly plagued with the ruin of war? Didn't God have some plan to end the differences and prejudice among races? Was it right for some to be so terribly rich and some so terribly poor, and be neighbours? Why couldn't the world have peace? Were all foreigners really dangerous? Why shouldn't everyone love the whole world and not only his own native land? Why?

Why? Why? Why?

Lua's mother kept her peace, but her heart was filled with anguish and sorrow. She didn't care if they ever became wealthy, all she wanted was the answers to her questions. She was sure that know-

ledge was the real wealth. In her agony of spirit, Ellen McBride Moore prayed fervently to Almighty God: 'If this child I am carrying in my womb is a girl, may she be given the chance to speak out and know the truth that has been so long denied to me, her mother.'

Her prayer was answered. At least the first part of her prayer. The child was a girl. She was named Lua. Lua Moore was born on 1 November 1871, the same day on which her father had been born and her parents married.

Her sister gives the following description of Lua during those early days:

'Lua had lovely reddish brown hair. It fell in waves about her face, and was so long she could sit on it. Her skin was fair. Her eyes were large and blue. She was as straight and slender as a white birch.'

Lua's education was the regular public school one. From the beginning, her sister said, Lua's teachers realized that they were dealing with a gifted child. Many an afternoon Lua spent together after school with her teacher learning more than the regular class could give her. She had an unusual eloquence that stirred her listeners even as a child. Her singing voice was sweet and true as well. Even in childhood there was a quality of the Lorelei about her that held a promise of some sweet distant mystery.

Lua grew more beautiful, eloquent and talented with the passing years. She was soon in need of a greater teacher. Lua's mother was urged to send her

to some place where those rare talents could be properly developed.

Eventually Lua's beautiful singing voice and natural gift for the theatre drew her to Chicago to study dramatic art. Her friends were puzzled. They wondered why, with her great gifts, Lua preferred Chicago to New York. There was far more opportunity for a dramatic future in New York, they told her. After all, *Broadway* was in New York, not Chicago.

Lua herself admitted that she really didn't know why she chose Chicago. She thought of going to New York, but each time she did, some inner force drew her to Chicago. Lua couldn't resist it. Lua's lifetime was to be filled with these strange inner promptings of the spirit. Lua invariably felt herself powerless to disobey them.

Her friends laughingly ridiculed what they called Lua's peculiar 'hunches'. Lua insisted that they were *not* 'hunches'. They were some sort of guidance, she said, and she was not able to help herself.

Lua never knew where these inner compulsions would lead, but she had to follow. One of the strongest she had ever experienced led her to Chicago.

4. Chicago is not Broadway

In Chicago Lua soon outgrew her teachers. This was to be her fate throughout life. Nothing seemed able to quench her thirst for greater skill and more knowledge. Her restless spirit drove her on and on,

always seeking something she could not find, winning new triumphs but soon finding them empty.

Gradually Lua realized that no career, however triumphant, would ever satisfy her. Her inner promptings told that her destiny lay in another direction, in the realm of the spirit. She suspected that her life was never to be one of outward wealth, fame, comfort and security.

Lua's entire life became a modern search for the Holy Grail.

Lua went from church to church, still seeking answers to those questions which her mother had planted in her heart so long ago. Like her mother, Lua always left empty-handed. Group after group disappointed her. She found these societies, movements and cults to be the mere shadow of reality. But the greater her disappointment, the greater became her hunger, and the more ardent became her search.

Lua was only twenty-two years old when the famous World's Fair began in Chicago in 1893. It was on that occasion that the World's Parliament of Religion was assembled and the first word came to the Western world about a wonderful new Faith which had arisen in the East.

A paper written by a Christian clergyman, Dr Henry H. Jessup of Beirut, was read. It said, in part, that 'just outside the Fortress of 'Akká, on the Syrian coast, there died a few months since, a famous Persian sage ... named Bahá'u'lláh—the "Glory of God" ... [He] gave utterance to senti-

ments so noble, so Christ-like, that we repeat them as our closing words:

“That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bond of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religions should cease and differences of race be annulled. What harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and ‘the Most Great Peace’ shall come ... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”

While this was taking place at the Parliament of Religion, Lua in the quiet of her room was praying to Almighty God: ‘Please help me to find the truth at last.’

Lua knew that some ‘inner prompting’ had led her to Chicago. She felt this force growing within her. Every impulse of her being was intensified. Lua was confident that somewhere, somehow, both her prayer and her mother’s would soon be fulfilled.

While reading the newspaper, Lua came upon the story about the World’s Parliament of Religion. In that article, her eyes fell for the first time upon the name of Bahá’u’lláh, the Founder of the Bahá’í Faith.

It was to be a day of even greater wonders for Lua.

She felt an irresistible urge to visit a friend whose brother was a professor. While Lua was there another guest arrived. Her host had met this stranger that very day. As they chatted, the professor had become impressed with the stranger’s knowledge

of the Near East. Suddenly, almost against his will, the professor told them, he had invited this stranger, a Persian, home for dinner.

The evening passed all too quickly as they discussed subject after subject. Then just before it ended, Lua found herself speaking to the stranger quite suddenly and spontaneously.

‘Do you know of the Persian, Bahá’u’lláh, and His Faith which was mentioned at the World’s Parliament of Religion?’

There was a long silent moment. The stranger looked at Lua, smiled as though he had been anticipating the question and said:

‘I am a follower of Bahá’u’lláh.’

5. The flame is kindled

Lua could learn no more that first night. The questions she *did* ask had all been answered with a simplicity and clarity which set her on fire.

Lua could hardly contain her excitement and eagerness.

The stranger asked Lua to be patient. He assured Lua that the day would come when she would learn more about this new Faith, and would have the answers to all her questions.

Lua returned to her room exhilarated. She couldn’t bear to wait. She was crushed when he refused to tell her any more that first night. But it was a wonderful beginning, and it carried her to new heights.

Lua prayed all that night and again the next morning. Always in her thoughts were those in-

spiring words of Bahá'u'lláh: 'All nations should become one in Faith.'

A stab-like thrill went through her body. If only her mother were here to share the greatness of this day. Lua said that instinctively she felt certain that this was the day the whole world had been waiting for, the day of the 'one fold and one shepherd', the day of 'the Kingdom of God on earth'. Lua was confident that she was nearing the end of her search.

She breathed a prayer: 'O Almighty God, make this be the end of my search. Do not let this cup be empty! Don't make my eager heart wait any longer.'

Lua's reverie was interrupted by a knock at the door. It was a dear friend, Madame Maartens. She had come to Lua with great news. Madame Maartens herself tells how she came to Lua that day full of enthusiasm:

'Lua,' she said, 'I have found a wonderful new religion. I think it is exactly what you have been searching for.'

Lua was grateful, but she was not to be deflected from her own exciting discovery. She told Madame Maartens that she had made an exciting discovery of her own. Lua refused to be side-tracked. Perhaps there might be a message from the stranger at any time.

Madame Maartens was insistent.

'There's a meeting this very night,' she told Lua.

'Please come and see for yourself.'

Lua was impatient, but Madame Maartens was such a kindly woman and had befriended her in that

lonely city; so Lua hid her disappointment and went to the meeting.

When she was introduced to the teacher, Lua's heart knotted in a brief spasm. There standing before her was the stranger!

Never was a heart so full of joy.

6. Return home. the precious gift

During the weeks of intensive study that followed, Lua was always among the first to arrive at the meetings and the last to leave.

To her joy and delight, she discovered that already there were followers of Bahá'u'lláh in America. They were called Bahá'ís. She was told that Bahá'í meant 'follower of Bahá'u'lláh' just as Christian meant 'follower of Christ'.

The Name Bahá'u'lláh when translated into English, Lua discovered, meant 'the glory of the Lord' or 'the glory of God'. The World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith was in the Holy Land on the very spot which Isaiah had prophesied would see 'the glory of God'.

What days of excitement they were!

Question after question was answered: Yes, Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Christ. Yes, He has fulfilled all the prophecies of the Bible. Yes, His followers believe in prayer and the immortality of the human soul. Yes, all the races are equal, one before God. Yes, yes, yes—answers to all those questions her mother asked while Lua was still a child in her womb. Gradually, all her doubts were removed.

Lua was carried aloft to new heights by the wholesome Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Each night in her room she would review the lesson, time and again.

Although Bahá'u'lláh had written over one hundred volumes, none of these was available yet in America; so it was necessary for Lua to memorize the wonderful words of His Faith. She repeated them over and over until His thrilling Teachings became a part of her being:

‘There is but one God and one religion. Moses, Christ, Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh, all the great Prophets and Messengers of God have taught the one same truth. We are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean. Though the Speakers are many, the Word is One.’

‘Prejudice of all kinds must be forever abandoned, and all men live as brothers. All men, whatever their country, creed or colour, are the children of one Father, God.’

‘The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice.’

During those early days Lua had the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh engraved on her mind. She absorbed every word, always seeking more understanding. This truth had struck her like a mighty thunderbolt. It had captured her soul.

As the months went by, the inevitable happened. Lua once again eclipsed her teacher. Her insistent demands for further information about this glorious Message were redoubled. Lua's intense longing craved for more nourishment than any teacher

could supply. Her thirst for knowledge was too great to be quenched at a mountain stream, her spirit cried out for the ocean.

Lua was told that there was a wonderful man in the Holy Land, the Son of Bahá'u'lláh. His name was 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He was the Source to which she could turn. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she was told, would be able to answer all the rest of her questions.

Lua was filled with inner serenity and happiness. This time she knew there would be no disappointment. She was being led to the fountain-head of this spiritual truth.

If only she could reach Him!

Lua knew in her heart that her long quest was ended. She thought at once of her mother, the courageous Ellen McBride Moore, who had sent her out on the sea of search. Lua knew that she must share this priceless treasure with her.

Lua left immediately for her farm home in upper New York, her face glowing with the Glad Tidings. Her family recognized at once that Lua's radiance came from some inner secret which she could hardly contain.

The words of her sister best describe that magical night when Lua told them the wonderful story of her discovery.

'One moonlight night, Lua, Mother, another of my sisters and myself went into the parlour. Whenever any momentous decisions were to be made in the Moore family, they were always made in the parlour.

'We were all breathless with excitement. Lua's

letters from Chicago had been full of hidden hints and suggestions of wonderful things to come. She had refused to tell us by mail. She had piqued our curiosity until it was at fever pitch. Now she was with us to tell us what had made her so radiant and ethereal.'

In the stillness of that room where so many questions had remained unanswered for such a long time, Lua recited a prayer. The words were new and wonderful. The very atmosphere was charged with anticipation. Lua's mother followed every gesture with her eyes.

Slowly Lua began to speak. She became more animated and excited as she went along. Her face shone with a wonderful light. She told her family many of the unforgettable things she had discovered about the Bahá'í Faith: This was the 'last day' foretold by Jesus. This was the day of the coming of the Promise of All Ages.

Little by little, one at a time, she answered those questions which her mother had asked during those long-ago days when a 'millennial zeal' had been sweeping their countryside.

Lua could read both the question and the hope in her mother's eyes, 'If only it could be true!'

Then, almost as if in answer to her mother's unasked question, Lua looked at her with a smile of joy and rapture. It was one of those 'exchanged glances' from her childhood which had been their special link with each other. Her mother's heart leaped.

'It is true,' Lua said. 'Christ *has* returned.'

Lua's sister, who later shared with Lua many

thrilling moments of victorious teaching, has said, 'It is impossible to describe the feeling of wonder that evening, and the excitement Lua's words generated in our hearts.'

Lua looked at them, her face radiating such beauty, such poignancy, such happiness, that they knew she was lost to them forever. Her delight in the future would lie in her service to her new-found family, mankind. There was a sweet sorrow in her enraptured countenance that spoke of suffering mingled with joy.

'Even now, as we talk here together,' Lua exclaimed, 'there are followers of this Faith in many parts of the world building the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth.'

She embraced her mother and her sisters, hugging them to her heart.

'I,' Lua told them, 'would give my life to be one of them.'

Part II

In the Holy Land

7. Lua arrives in the Holy Land

Lua remained with her family long enough to prove to them beyond a shadow of a doubt that, incredible as her announcement appeared, it was indeed the truth.

Lua cited proof after proof from both the Old and New Testaments.

She showed them prophecies in these holy Books which demonstrated clearly that Bahá'u'lláh was undoubtedly the Return of Christ. He was the 'Son' returned in the 'glory of the Father'.

Lua reminded her mother of those years immediately after her birth, when Christians all over the world had awaited the appearance of Christ, for 1844 was the year of the greatest expectancy. This very year, Lua told them, was the year of the beginning of the Bahá'í Faith.

In moments like these Lua's face would be transformed. She was like a visitor from another kingdom. She was but twenty-three years old when she became a follower of Bahá'u'lláh. She never seemed to age. Her spirit was a flame of youth, always burning with the same brilliant light.

In the words of Juliet Thompson, one of Lua's dearest friends: 'She always seemed to me to have flown down out of the nowhere of the sky and lit on earth for just a little while for the sole purpose of heralding her Lord.'

Lua's long-pent-up eloquence now had a channel for release. She became aflame with the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Lua set out on her teaching journeys, travelling from coast to coast in America. These were but a prelude to the visits she would make to the continents of the earth, never setting down her burden until the last hours of her life.

No wonder Lua was ablaze. Her entire life had been a preparation for this hour. She had been recreated. During her travels, her glowing spirit set many other souls on fire with the same enthusiasm. She attracted Jews, Christians, Muslims, even sceptics and atheists to this universal religion.

Among those she taught, some were to become the most famous of the early heroes and heroines of the Bahá'í Faith.

On one of her journeys, Lua helped the wife of a famous American Senator to embrace the Faith. Phoebe Hearst shared Lua's enthusiasm. Lua kindled a great desire in Mrs Hearst to go to the Holy Land and meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They all longed to visit the scene where these wonders had taken place and see them with their own eyes. What a bounty and privilege it would be to walk in those places where Bahá'u'lláh walked; to go to the prison-city of 'Akká, that sacred spot spoken of in Scripture by the prophet Hosea who said it would be given to man as 'a door of hope'.

Above all, they would be able to see and talk with Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who had shared His Father's exile and imprisonment for forty years.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was alive! He could be seen! He still lived in that same prison-city and was loved by all. He was known as ‘The Master’, a title given Him by His Father. They would be able to hear from His own lips the answers to their questions. He would tell them how they could best serve God in this day. They would see and talk with the Person to Whom Bahá’u’lláh said all mankind should turn if they sought truth and guidance. It would be a holy pilgrimage. No sacrifice could be too great.

They made plans to leave as soon as possible. We can only imagine the excitement Lua experienced during these days of preparation.

Several other Bahá’ís were invited to join them. In Paris a few more were added to the party. Among them was the illustrious May (Ellis Bolles) Maxwell whom Lua herself had won over to the Faith. Lua’s husband, Edward Getsinger, also accompanied the party.

In Egypt a few others joined the group. Finally, the pilgrims numbered fifteen. Because of the danger which still surrounded ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as a Prisoner and an Exile, they arrived gradually in three successive parties.

Lua was in the very first group. She reached the prison-city on 10 December 1898.

8. Lua meets the Master

It was truly an ‘historic’ pilgrimage upon which Lua had launched them. None of them would ever be the same.

Little did that handful of believers dream of the

significance of their journey and the world-wide consequences which would follow their entry into the prison-city of ‘Akká.

They were the first of a long line of pilgrims who would come in a ceaseless flow from all parts of the world, even down to the present day. Only two World Wars could interrupt this constant, and ever-increasing, movement of visitors to the Bahá’í World Centre.

Those first, unique pilgrims were forced to arrive in small numbers, and at irregular intervals, because they, like their beloved Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, were in effect ‘prisoners’ themselves when they were with Him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained to pilgrims, who came eight years later, a truth that was even more applicable to Lua and her companions.

‘This is a prison,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, ‘and in prison one cannot find rest. Whatever it may be, this is a prison and you will stay some days in this prison with us, and you will be counted as prisoners.

‘In fact, you are my companions in servitude to the world, and you are in prison as I am, and in everything we are partners.’

No words could bring greater happiness to the heart of a pilgrim. Imagine the joy of sharing, even on that pitifully small scale, the sorrows and imprisonment of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

When Lua and her friends met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the first time, their world became another world. All that had happened to them in the past was of no consequence. This was the moment of their rebirth.

Later they would perform acts which would astound the Bahá'ís of both East and West.

In concert with their fellow-believers from other countries, the spiritual children of these early Bahá'ís would settle in more than one hundred countries in eleven months, and plant the banner of Bahá'u'lláh in over fifty thousand places on the surface of the planet.

Only future historians will be able to adequately recount and properly assess the value of that matchless first pilgrimage, and its impact upon the history of the Bahá'í Faith and the fate of the world.

The days which those first pilgrims spent in the prison-city of 'Akká were precious moments they would treasure all their lives.

In this vicinity, Bahá'u'lláh spent nearly a quarter of a century as a Prisoner and an Exile. So foul was the atmosphere, so unsanitary and disease-ridden, that a proverb declared: 'If a bird flies over 'Akká, it dies!'

Yet in that unfragrant place these first pilgrims experienced nothing but happiness. They were prisoners where Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been Prisoners. They were surrounded by love each step of the way.

May Maxwell, Lua's dear friend, recalled their first visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in these words:

'During the three wonderful days and nights we spent in that sacred spot we heard naught but the mention of God; His Holy Name was on every tongue; His beauty and goodness were the theme of all conversation; His Glorious Cause [the Bahá'í

Faith] the only aim of every life. Whenever we gathered together in one of the rooms they spoke unceasingly of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh], relating incidents in the life of the Beloved, mentioning His Words, telling of His deeds and the passionate love and devotion of His followers until our hearts ached with love and longing.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá told the pilgrims not to be sad because He was a Prisoner.

'Anyone can be happy in the state of comfort, ease, success, health, pleasure and joy,' He said, 'but if one be happy and contented in the time of trouble, hardship and prevailing disease, that is the proof of nobility.'

This was the lesson 'Abdu'l-Bahá taught these pilgrims.

'Grieve not because of my imprisonment and calamity,' He wrote, 'for this prison is my beautiful garden, my mansioned paradise and my throne of dominion among mankind.'

Lua and her fellow pilgrims learned many a lesson at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's feet. His personal wants were few. He worked from early morning to late at night. Two simple meals a day were sufficient for Him. His wardrobe held only a few garments of inexpensive material. 'Abdu'l-Bahá could not bear to live in luxury while others were in want.

One of Lua's contemporaries has described those days of pilgrimage, saying:

'To 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as a teacher and friend, came men and women from every race, religion and nation, to sit at his table like favoured guests, questioning him about the social, spiritual or moral

program each had most at heart, and after a stay lasting from a few hours to many months, returning home, inspired, renewed and enlightened. The world surely never possessed such a guest-house as this.

‘Within these doors the rigid castes of India melted away, the racial prejudice of Jew, Christian and Muhammadan became less than a memory; and every convention save the essential law of warm hearts and aspiring minds broke down, banned and forbidden by the unifying sympathy of the master of the house. It was like a King Arthur and the Round Table ... but an Arthur who knighted women as well as men, and sent them away not with the sword but with the Word.’

Such was Lua who was to become the ‘mother-teacher of the West’ and a ‘herald’ of that new day soon to dawn in America. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave her the Persian title, *Livá*, *the Banner*. She would wave the flag of the Covenant in many lands.

9. A letter from Lua

Lua herself has left an account of her first meeting with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It is best told in her own words in a letter which she sent to America:

‘To my friends in Chicago, Greetings!

‘We reached Haifa, Thursday, 9 December, about 10.30 p.m. and were met by three of the Bahá’ís. We slept but little that night. Our minds were occupied with the thought that perhaps tomorrow we shall see our beloved Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. We arose early the next morning, our hearts

eagerly expectant, but all day no word came. In the evening a letter came stating that He would be pleased to welcome us on the morrow and that “His heart longed to see the first American pilgrims”.

‘As you may imagine, sleep was out of the question that night as well. The hours passed much too slowly until the dawn of the morrow should come. I arose early, dressing myself with much care, feeling the best I had was not half good enough to wear upon this first visit to the Holy City. Shortly after eight o’clock, the carriage drove us to the dwelling place of our Gracious Master.

‘It is about five miles from Haifa to ‘Akká along the road to the sea. Indeed the road is in the sea, for the horses were walking in the water and at times the waves dashed nearly to the top of the wheels. After riding for about a quarter of an hour we could see the city in the distance. It was a beautiful morning, and as we looked we could but think of a description in the Bible, “A city all of gold beside the crystal sea.” It was bathed in a flood of golden sunshine and the sea splashing up against its walls sparkled with splendour!

‘We gradually approached nearer and nearer until at last we entered the city by its solitary gate and drove straight to the house of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

‘We entered the garden, ascended one flight of stairs and were shown into a hall, or reception room, where we removed our wraps. By the violent beating of my heart, I knew I was soon to behold the Blessed Face of our Beloved Master. We

More nearly nine miles.

reached the door and stopped. Before us, in the centre of the room, stood a man clad in long raiment, with a white turban on His head. He stretched out His hand to us while His face was lighted by a rare sweet smile of joy and welcome. I stood there for a moment unable to move. Then my heart gave a great throb, and scarcely knowing what I was doing, I held out my arms crying, "My Lord, My Lord!" I rushed to Him, kneeling at His blessed feet, and sobbed like a child. He put His dear hand upon my bowed head and said in a voice that seemed like a strain of sweet music, "Welcome, welcome, my dear children, you are welcome; arise and be of good cheer." Then He sat down upon a low divan, and I sat on one side almost facing Him. Then He began to talk to us

...

'So swiftly did the time pass that we were quite astonished when dinner was announced ...

'He seated me on His right. I felt too happy to eat and sat with my eyes riveted upon His glorious face. He turned toward me and sweetly smiling, said, "The love of God burning in your heart is manifested upon your face and it gives us joy to look upon you."

'Later that night, He came again. One of the friends asked permission to sit near Him, which was granted. After a moment He turned toward me, smiled, and waved His hand that I also might come. I sat down at His blessed feet while He took my hand, looking down upon me tenderly as a loving father. He sat and conversed with us for nearly an hour. Then He arose and wished us good night, blessing us, and we all retired.

‘I couldn’t sleep. My heart was too full. I was too infinitely happy. I could only live over and over again the precious moments I had spent in His presence and longed to see Him once more. I fell into a sweet sleep just as morning was breaking.

‘That evening He sat us all at the table and dismissed the servants saying He would serve us Himself. He did not sit at the table with us, but waited upon us. At the conclusion of the meal, He said, “I have served you tonight that you may learn the lesson of ever serving your fellow creatures with love and kindness.”

‘The next morning He brought a beautiful bunch of white narcissus. He sat down and drank tea with us, then arose and bade us adieu. We were going back to Haifa that day and He had been called away. As we were leaving the city we saw Him standing by the gate. He smiled at us as we passed. Our hearts were both sorrowful and happy. Happy because we had seen Him, but sorrowful because we were leaving Him.’

Lua closed her letter to her American friends, saying:

‘These words are very weak and inadequate. But no one could describe this place and it is foolish to try. Each must see for himself. Therefore, pray God earnestly that the blessings of coming here may soon be bestowed upon you.

‘And now I send you all my love and pray God to bless you now and forever. May your hearts all be united and your souls become as one soul living in separate bodies. Thus you will resemble our Lord,

and draw nearer unto God the loving Father of us all!

‘Your loving sister and co-worker in the Cause,
Lua.’

10. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Father of the Poor

Lua wrote many letters to her friends in America. She told them all she could about the beautiful life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She described the many moving scenes by which she was surrounded in the Holy Land. She shared with them touching, heart-warming stories showing the special love which the people of Haifa and ‘Akká had for the Master.

Each of the pilgrims in Lua’s party experienced days of delight and joy, days which recalled the zeal and ecstasy of those who first met Jesus the Christ. Each received confirmations and was fired with great eagerness to serve the Cause of God. Each had his own story to tell. Perhaps we should see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá through their eyes as well.

The first member of the Negro race ever to embrace the Bahá’í Faith in America was in that first party of pilgrims in 1898. Robert Turner became a faithful believer all the days of his life. He was ‘transported by the influence exerted by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the course of that epoch-making pilgrimage’. Nothing throughout his long life would ever again becloud the ‘radiance’ or ‘lessen the intensity of the emotions which the loving-kindness showered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá upon him had excited in his breast.’

Mrs Hearst, the friend who had been their

hostess on the journey, declared those days to be ‘the most memorable’ of her life. She described ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as ‘the most wonderful Being I have ever met or ever expect to meet in this world’. She alluded to the ‘spiritual atmosphere which surrounds Him and most powerfully affects all those who are blest by being near Him’ as something ‘indefinable’.

May Maxwell, who was to become the mother-teacher of Europe, and to open France and Canada to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, recorded for posterity her never-to-be-forgotten impressions of her first glimpse of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and her meeting with Him.

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

Let us share a glimpse of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the pen of one who was *not* a Bahá’, a famous American attorney. He also was a guest of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during those same years. His name was Myron H. Phelps.

Mr Phelps was so moved by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Christ-like life that he set down in deathless lang-

uage a picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as Lua herself had seen Him many times in the streets of the ancient city of ‘Akká. He wrote an entire book about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

On one occasion, Phelps described a typical day in the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

‘Some day at this season, ... you may see the poor of Akka gathered at one of the shops where clothes are sold, receiving cloaks from the Master. Upon many, especially the most infirm or crippled, he himself places the garment, adjusts it ... approvingly, as if to say, “There! Now you will do well ...”

‘On feast days he visits the poor at their homes. He chats with them, inquires into their health and comfort, mentions by name those who are absent, and leaves gifts for all ...

‘He himself eats but once a day, and then bread, olives, and cheese suffice him.

‘His room is small and bare, with only a matting on the stone floor. His habit is to sleep upon this floor. Not long ago a friend, thinking that this must be hard for a man of advancing years, presented him with a bed fitted with springs and mattress. So these stand in his room also, but are rarely used. “For how,” he says, “can I bear to sleep in luxury when so many of the poor have not even shelter ?” So he lies upon the floor and covers himself only with his cloak ...

‘He is the beloved of all the city, high and low. And how could it be otherwise? For to this man it is the law, as it was to Jesus of Nazareth, to do good to those who injure him ...

‘This Master [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] is as simple as his soul is great. He claims nothing for himself—neither comfort, nor honour, nor repose. Three or four hours of sleep suffice him; all the remainder of his time and all his strength are given to the succour of those who suffer, in spirit or in body. “I am,” he says, “the servant of God.”

‘Such is Abbas Effendi [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], the Master of Akka.’

May Maxwell described vividly the day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá unexpectedly told them to prepare to go from Haifa to ‘Akká. May was feeling ill.

‘On Tuesday night,’ May later wrote, ‘I told my spiritual mother [Lua] that the Master evidently did not realize how ill and weak I was or He would never have expected me to leave with the others on Wednesday morning. Oh! We of little faith! No wonder she smiled and shook her head, saying, “You will soon realize something of the power of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

‘It was about dawn when I awoke, feeling myself stirred by a breeze. I cannot describe what followed, but through my soul was flowing an essence; a mighty, unseen force was penetrating all my being, expanding it with boundless life and love and happiness, lifting and enfolding me in its mighty strength and peace.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá assured that first party of pilgrims that every soul, no matter how humble his station in life, could win great victories for the Cause of God.

‘We can all serve in the Cause of God,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, ‘no matter what our occupation is. No occupation can prevent the soul coming to God. Peter was a fisherman, yet he accomplished most wonderful things; but the heart must be turned always toward God, no matter what the work is; this is the important thing; and then the power of God will work in us. We are like a piece of iron in the midst of the fire which becomes heated to such a degree that it partakes of the nature of the fire and gives out the same effect to all it touches—so is the soul that is always turned toward God, and filled with the spirit.’

11. ‘Follow Me; be as I am’

When the day came for those first pilgrims to leave ‘that perfumed land which is forever blest and holy above all places’, their hearts were heavy. Soon they would be on the high seas sailing away from His wondrous presence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá called them to Him that final morning.

Lua’s beloved May Maxwell captured for all of them the spirit of that last interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá before their departure. May testified to the atmosphere of love that surrounded them all in these words:

‘In the might and majesty of His presence our fear was turned to perfect faith, our weakness into strength, our sorrow into hope and ourselves forgotten in our love for Him. As we sat before Him waiting to hear His words, some of the believers

wept bitterly. He asked them for His sake not to weep, nor would He talk to us or teach us until all tears were banished ...’

Among ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words of comfort and inspiration on that occasion were these:

‘You have come here among the first and your reward is great. There are two visits; the first is for a blessing; then ye come and are blest and are sent forth to work in God’s vineyard; the second ye come with music and the banners flying, like soldiers, in gladness and triumph to receive your reward.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá promised Lua, May Maxwell and their fellow-pilgrims that the ‘spirit’ which flooded through all of them in this day far exceeded that animating the great figures of past religions.

‘... I say unto you,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declared, ‘that anyone who will rise up in the Cause of God at this time shall be filled with the spirit of God, and that He will send His hosts from heaven to help you, and that nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith.’

What a wonderful promise. The souls of His listeners were galvanized. They were eager to rush forth into the vineyard.

‘And now I give you a commandment which shall be for a covenant between you and Me—that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock that no storms can move, that nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end; even should ye hear that your Lord has been crucified, be not shaken in your faith; for I am with you always, whether living or dead, I am with you

to the end. As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance—this is the balance—this is the balance.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá closed that interview, which was to change the Western world and ultimately the face of the globe, with these words of tender love:

‘Now the time has come when we must part, but the separation is only of our bodies, in spirit we are united ... Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land [America], but on one condition: that their hearts are filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony like one soul in different bodies. If they fail in this condition the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; look at Me, follow Me, be as I am; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all of these things ye must care not at all. Look at Me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.’

12. The first martyr for women’s rights

With such words and memories as these engraved on their hearts and minds, those first pilgrims went from the Holy Land—May to Paris, Lua to America.

Lua had now but one purpose in mind. She was determined to tell all the world about Bahá'u'lláh. The Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith had taken full possession of her soul.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had instructed Lua that in her teaching she must become as courageous as Táhirih, the greatest heroine of the early days of the Bahá'í Faith in Persia. Táhirih, like Lua, was also in her twenties when she first heard of the Faith.

Táhirih, a young poetess of outstanding beauty and intelligence, was called the Persian Joan of Arc. When she gave her life in martyrdom for this Faith, a famous European diplomat called her martyrdom 'one of the most affecting episodes in modern history'. Such was Táhirih's eloquence that 'when she spoke one felt stirred to the depths of ones soul, was filled with admiration, and was moved to tears'.

A professor from Cambridge University had written that 'the appearance of such a woman' as Táhirih was 'a prodigy—nay, almost a miracle'.

There were special historical links between these two heroines of the Bahá'í Faith, the matchless Táhirih, peerless and unequalled, and the one 'Abdu'l-Bahá said should be her counterpart in America, the immortal Lua.

When Lua's mother was five years old, in 1848, the first Woman's Rights Conference was held in upper New York, the beginning of the movement for women's suffrage in America. In the same year, in the tiny hamlet of Badasht in Persia, the early followers of the Bahá'í Faith held their first Conference

Dr T. K. Cheyne, a renowned Bible scholar at Oxford University, wrote of that gathering in his book, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*, saying that as a result of the coming of the Báb, Prophet-Forerunner of the Bahá'í Faith, the distinctions between 'races' and between 'male and female' were at an end. Such things were discussed on that historic occasion. It was then that Táhirih, casting off the 'veil' and breaking with the past Islamic subjugation of women, proclaimed: 'I am the bugle! I am the bell!' sounding an end to the fetters that bound her sex.

Only a short time later, Táhirih was to be slain for her beliefs. She was martyred in 1852, the year in which another Woman's Rights Convention was held in that same upper New York, just nineteen years before Lua's birth.

Táhirih has been called 'the first woman suffrage martyr'.

Dr Cheyne, in this same book, stated: 'If there has been any prophet in recent times, it is to Bahá'u'lláh that we must go.' He also declared that Táhirih's 'insight' came from Bahá'u'lláh, Who presided at that historic Conference in Badasht. Cheyne credited Táhirih with 'opening the catalogue of social reforms in Persia'.

This was the heroine whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá held up to Lua as the example she must follow.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said that Táhirih was 'a brand afire with the love of God'. He told Lua she must exert every effort to be like her. He gave her a prayer to recite so that she might achieve this goal.

Lua, who knew of the glory and greatness of

Táhirih, protested that she could not. 'It is beyond me,' she said. 'I am too weak, too filled with faults. If I pray to be like her, God will know that I am lying.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá said 'You must!'

He told Lua to pray always that she would be like Táhirih, who had broken with the past, cast off the veil and provided the trumpet-blast that had helped to herald this New Day of God.

Lua did her best to obey 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Her heart was surrendered in unswerving love and obedience to every Word of His instructions.

Lua fully accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the Messenger of God for this day. She believed in every Word He had written as a guide to mankind. Because of this complete and unquestioned dedication, her soul was infused with a divine quality of love for all human beings. This universal love gave Lua an unconscious and effortless ability to magnetize and inspire those with whom she came in contact.

One could never forget the picture of Lua standing straight as a lance before an assembly of people, her head thrown back, her eyes alight, opening her lips and pouring forth a stream of golden eloquence.

For 'Abdu'l-Bahá had bestowed a unique and special gift of eloquence upon Lua. Lua confided this secret to her friend Juliet Thompson, an American portrait painter. The Master, she said, had promised her that she would have this gift. All Lua had to do when facing an audience was to rely completely on the strong current of her Faith, turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and He would not fail her.

The fact that Lua did indeed possess this magic gift of eloquence was testified to repeatedly by her listeners. They would sit spellbound by Lua's voice, entranced by her astonishing words, so simple, so basic, and so moving. Her friend, Miss Thompson, often said that Lua reminded her of Táhírih and her ecstatic announcement before her death: 'I am the bugle! I am the bell!'

13. Lua leaves the Master: from sunlight into darkness

Lua's destiny was to carry her often between America and 'Akká. It was on one of her many visits to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that her impatience for spiritual growth caused her to exclaim, 'Oh, my beloved Master, I want to be perfected! I want to be perfected quickly!'

'Abdu'l-Bahá looked at her with a loving smile and gently shook His head.

Lua repeated her request more urgently.

'Quickly! I want to be perfected quickly so that I may truly serve Thee.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá warned her that she could not stand the process of being 'perfected quickly'.

'Oh, yes, I can,' she cried, 'if it will make me a better servant to Thee.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá was firm. The creation of Almighty God is perfect, but the perfections appear gradually. The seed comes to fruition through the growth of the tree. But Lua's impetuous spirit would not be stilled.

Patience, the Master educated this eager servant,

preparing her for the years of teaching that lay ahead.

The Message Lua was to carry to the world was simple: The religion of God is one religion, and all the Messengers have taught the same fundamental truth. In the Teachings of Moses we see the seed, in those of Christ the plant, in those of Muhammad the branches, in those of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh the fruit. All are part of the single, unfolding, progressively revealed Truth. All teach the same inward truths about God, the soul, immortality; but Their outward Teachings are adapted to the age in which These Messengers appear, and change according to the needs of society. All Their laws, principles, and institutions are for the betterment of mankind.

Mr Thornton Chase, the first person to accept Bahá'u'lláh in America, expressed these truths as he felt them after his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Thornton Chase became a Bahá'í just a few months before Lua. He followed her to the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and wrote:

'Five days we remained within those walls, prisoners with Him who dwells in that "Greatest Prison". It is a prison of peace, of love and service. No wish, no desire is there save the good of mankind, the peace of the world, the acknowledgment of the Fatherhood of God and the mutual rights of men as His creatures, His children.'

The hour came for Lua to leave 'Akká yet another time. She was being sent out into the 'vineyard of God'. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told her to put

into practice all that she had learned there at the heart of the Faith.

The instructions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were loving and tender. Yet, to Lua, leaving the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the worst possible disaster.

She felt she had been banished from her beloved Master. She felt that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was sending her away to teach her patience. She knew only too well how desperately she needed to learn this lesson, but leaving ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was like going from the sunlight into the darkness. A sudden transition from life to death. It was almost too much for Lua’s spirit.

But she bowed her head meekly and obeyed. She returned at once to America.

Part III
The West Aids the East

14. The West shall replace the East

Future historians will be both intrigued and fascinated by the many 'links' which bind the people of the West to the Bahá'í Faith, and have so united them ever since its birth in Persia in 1844.

In the very hour of that birth, the Báb, Who was the Herald of the Bahá'í Faith, called out to the people of the West, as well as to those of the East. He urged them to spontaneously seek their Lord, and to arise for the service of mankind.

In His first Book, begun on that night, the Báb 'directly addressed the "*peoples of the West,*" and significantly bade them "*issue forth*" from their "*cities*" to aid God, and "*become as brethren*" in His "*one and indivisible religion*".'

Bahá'u'lláh, in anticipation of this development of His Faith in the West, wrote: '*In the East, the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West the signs of His dominion have appeared.*'

And 'Abdu'l-Bahá was later to write, '*The day is approaching when ye shall witness how, through the splendour of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the West will have replaced the East, radiating the light of Divine guidance.*'

Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, therefore points out: 'The importance of so momentous a development in the evolution of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—the

establishment of His Cause in the North American continent—at a time when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had just inaugurated His Mission ... can in no wise be overestimated.’

Thus we begin to realize the significance of that historic first pilgrimage undertaken by Lua and her illustrious companions from the West.

The Blessed Báb was martyred in 1850, shot down by a firing-squad of 750 old-style muskets. The first volley failed to kill Him. It cut the cords that bound Him, thereby freeing Him. The French author M. C. Huart wrote: ‘It was a real miracle.’ The French historian A. L. M. Nicolas described that event as a thing ‘unique in the annals [of the history] of humanity’.

The Báb’s sacred remains were hidden from His enemies, and moved from place to place for fifty years until, at last, they arrived in the Holy Land to be entombed on the side of God’s holy mountain, Carmel, on the site chosen by Bahá’u’lláh Himself.

It was in the same period that Lua and her companions arrived as the first pilgrims from the West.

In that same year of 1899, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to Mount Carmel and there, with His own hands, laid the foundation-stone for the Edifice of the Shrine of the Báb which His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, had told Him to build on that exact spot. Within a few months He began its construction.

Ten years later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s royal enemy, Sultán ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd II, lost his throne. During

By the lunar calendar.

the intervening years, in spite of His enemies who had threatened to exile Him to Africa, cast Him into the sea, or hang Him on the gallows, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had serenely continued His work on the Shrine for the sacred remains of the Báb. Now it was finished.

The Sultán was overthrown. He became a prisoner and an exile. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself has said, ‘God took the chains from off my neck and placed them about the neck of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd.’ How Lua’s heart must have leaped for joy when, a decade after her first pilgrimage, she heard the news that her beloved Master was free at last! He had spent half a century as a prisoner and an exile, from the age of nine until, fifty–six years later, His imprisonment came to an end.

Almost immediately, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá prepared to place the remains of the Báb in the white marble sarcophagus which had been designed for that purpose and sent as a gift by the Bahá’ís of Rangoon, Burma. He was free to fulfil the sacred task given Him by His Father. The holy dust of the Báb would soon rest in the ‘vineyard of God’, Mount Carmel.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself has described this accomplishment as ‘one of the most signal acts’ of His Ministry. On more than one occasion, we are told by the Guardian, He ‘testified’ that ‘the safe transfer of these remains’, which had been hidden from enemies and moved from place to place for over half a century, the ‘construction of a befitting mausoleum to receive them’, and their interment with His own hands in their final and ‘permanent resting-place’ together constituted one of the ‘three

principal objectives' of His mission. His achievement has been called 'one of the outstanding events in the first Bahá'í century'.

15. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh: the Dawn and the Sun

Bahá'u'lláh Himself had chosen the site where the Shrine of the Báb was to be built. His tent had been pitched on the side of Mount Carmel, and, while seated near a clump of cypress trees which still stand as sentinels, He had pointed out the exact spot. It was Bahá'u'lláh Who gave to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the task of raising that noble structure and arranging for that sacred dust to be brought from Persia.

Now the time had come when 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arduous labour was reaching an end. All the sorrows, hardships and suffering were forgotten. The Blessed Báb, Who was the 'return of Elijah', would be laid to rest for all time within sight of the famous Cave of Elijah on Mount Carmel.

It was in 1909 that Lua was privileged to receive a letter from the Holy Land, announcing the good news of the final entombment of those sacred remains in the bosom of the 'holy hill'.

Lua and all the Bahá'ís in the West were deeply affected when they received a description of the moving events that took place on that occasion.

What a glorious moment it was! And in that moment the closeness between the East, the West, and the heart of the Bahá'í Faith in the Holy Land was strikingly demonstrated, as we shall see.

In order that we may fully appreciate the signify-

cance of this achievement, and experience with Lua the joy that surrounded her when she heard the news, we shall review briefly some of the events that led up to this victory. Lua herself had no doubt heard these stories many times from the lips of the Master and her fellow-pilgrims from Persia.

The Báb frequently told His followers that He, Himself, was merely ‘the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory [Bahá]’. It was the Báb’s wish that He should never be separated from Bahá’u’lláh in life or in death.

In the early days of His Ministry, the Báb journeyed toward Tihrán, the capital of Írán and the birthplace of Bahá’u’lláh. Tihrán has been described in the Bahá’í Writings as ‘the mother of the world’.

The Báb visited a nearby sacred Shrine. While in that neighbourhood, He revealed a Tablet which He instructed His followers to chant there. The love which the Báb had for Bahá’u’lláh is evident in the words which He addressed to that buried saint:

‘Well it is with you to have found your resting place ... under the shadow of My Beloved. Would that I might be entombed within the precincts of that holy ground!’

Following His martyrdom, the remains of the Báb, which had been cast into a moat outside the city of Tabríz, were rescued by His followers, brought to Tihrán, and for a time were entombed in that very Shrine within the shadow of Bahá’u’lláh. They were transferred from place to place, from

danger to safety, under the direction of Bahá'u'lláh, for nearly fifty years, until they reached the Holy Land where for all time the holy Dust of the Báb would rest 'under the shadow' of His Beloved.

Nabíl, the historian of those early days, enriches our understanding of the significance of the entombment of the remains of the Báb on Mount Carmel, by pointing to the unique love that had bound the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh together since the earliest days of the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh, Nabíl tells us, had such a love for the Báb that He would not let Him suffer any pain, indignity, or humiliation in which He, Bahá'u'lláh, did not share.

The Báb was first confined in the house of the Chief Constable of Shíráz in Persia. Shortly after this, Bahá'u'lláh was confined in the house of one of the religious leaders in Tihrán.

The Báb's second imprisonment was in the castle of Máh-Kú; that of Bahá'u'lláh followed when He was imprisoned in the residence of the governor of Amul.

The Báb was scourged in the prayer-house in Tabríz. The very same punishment was inflicted shortly after this upon Bahá'u'lláh in the prayer-house at Ámul.

The Báb's third imprisonment was in the castle of Chihríq; that of Bahá'u'lláh in the Black-Pit prison of Tihrán.

The Báb was struck in the face with missiles when paraded through the streets of Tabríz, beaten, ridiculed and humiliated; Bahá'u'lláh was pelted

with stones in the streets of Amul, again in Níyálá, still again while paraded in chains bareheaded and barefooted in the blazing sun *en route* to the Síyáh-Chál prison. He was beaten, ridiculed, humiliated, and cast into a deep underground pit, His feet in stocks. He was weighted down with hundred-pound chains that tore His flesh. He was chained to the floor and to His companions in that black darkness.

The Báb was slain in the public square of Tabríz; Bahá'u'lláh began a half century of persecution as a Prisoner and an Exile. He was poisoned in the Black-Pit prison. He was set upon by assassins in Baghdád. He was poisoned twice again in Adrianople. He was arrested and interrogated by soldiers on two separate occasions, and shut up in the fortress prison of 'Akká, the most dreaded prison in all the Turkish empire.

Nabíl recounts in his history: 'The Báb, whose trials and sufferings had preceded, in almost every case, those of Bahá'u'lláh, had offered Himself to ransom His Beloved [Bahá'u'lláh] from the perils that beset that precious Life; while Bahá'u'lláh, on His part, unwilling that He who so greatly loved Him should be the sole Sufferer, shared at every turn the cup that had touched His [the Báb's] lips. Such love no eye has ever beheld, nor has mortal heart conceived such mutual devotion, If the branches of every tree were turned into pens, and all the seas into ink, and earth and heaven rolled into one parchment, the immensity of that love would still remain unexplored, and the depths of that devotion unfathomed.'

There is yet another example of the unique oneness that bound together the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. It can be found by examining the calendar of Persia.

According to the 365-day solar calendar of the West, in which the days of the month never change, the Báb was born on 20 October and Bahá'u'lláh was born on 12 November. But, according to the 360-day lunar calendar in the land of Their birth, in which the days of the month change each year, the Báb was born on the first day of Muharram and Bahá'u'lláh on the second day of Muharram; One after the Other, first the Báb, then Bahá'u'lláh.

In Persia, these twin successive Holy Days are celebrated as one great joyous Festival.

Thus in every way Their Missions were bound together for all eternity. Now, even Their sacred remains were united forever in the Holy Land, and the promises in all the holy Scriptures were at last fulfilled. The wish of the Báb, Whose Name means 'the gate', had come true at last. He would rest forever 'in the shadow of His Beloved'. Today His golden-domed Shrine looks across the blue Bay of Haifa toward Bahjí, outside 'Akká, where Bahá'u'lláh, Whose Name means 'the glory of God', lies enshrined in a garden that has made the 'desert blossom as the rose'.

The *glory of God*, Bahá'u'lláh, had come to the Holy Land from the East through the gate, the Báb, as foretold by Ezekiel. That glorious *Kingdom of God on earth* promised by Christ would through them become a reality.

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were together at last in

that 'snow-white spot', the 'nest of all the Prophets of God'. They represented the 'return' of *Elijah and Christ* to Christianity; *Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben Israel* to Judaism; *the Mihdí and Jesus the Christ* to Sunní Islám; *the Qá'im, and the Imám Husayn* to Shí'ih Islám; *Úshidar-Máh and the Sháh-Bahrám* to Zoroastrianism. They were the first and second *Trumpet blasts* of the Qur'án; the second *Woe* and the third of the Book of Revelation; the Dawn and the Sun of the new Day.

When we realize Who the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were, we no longer wonder at the devotion, sacrifice and zeal of such heroines as Lua. We only marvel that thousands upon thousands more all over the world have not risen up to carry on her noble work.

Lua had the 'eyes to see' and 'ears to hear'. She was taught by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself. She was set ablaze by the knowledge that once again God had made Himself known to man, and that this time not one but two Messengers of God had walked on the face of the earth. This heavenly knowledge inspired her to travel, to pioneer, to teach, to accomplish such deeds as would win her the titles of 'immortal' and 'herald' and 'banner' of the Bahá'í Faith.

Lua was impatient to follow in the footsteps of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and her beloved Master.

16. The flame begins to burn more brightly

The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, has preserved for all time a picture of the moving

spectacle which took place in March 1909 when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, after overcoming half a lifetime of obstacles and opposition, finally placed the holy Dust of the Báb beneath the Shrine He had built to receive that precious Gift.

“Abdu’l-Bahá,’ he has written, ‘had the marble sarcophagus transported with great labour to the vault prepared for it, and in the evening, by the light of a single lamp, He laid within it, with His own hands—in the presence of believers from the East and from the West and in circumstances at once solemn and moving—the wooden casket containing the sacred remains of the Báb and His companion.

‘When all was finished, and the earthly remains of the Martyr-Prophet of Shíráz were, at long last, safely deposited for their everlasting rest in the bosom of God’s holy mountain, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Who had cast aside His turban, removed His shoes and thrown off His cloak, bent low over the still open sarcophagus, His silver hair waving about His head and His face transfigured and luminous, rested His forehead on the border of the wooden casket, and, sobbing aloud, wept with such a weeping that all those who were present wept with Him. That night He could not sleep, so overwhelmed was He with emotion.’

Once again we see the unique and mysterious tie that binds the Bahá’í Faith to its followers in the West.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent a Letter to the Bahá’ís of the world announcing this glorious victory. He also

told them that no sooner had He returned to His home than a cablegram was received, informing Him that the Bahá'ís of America had held their first official Convention and had decided on the site and construction of the first Bahá'í House of Worship in the West.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had written as far back as 1893, the year after Bahá'u'lláh's passing, that His Father's Faith would some day have great success in the North American continent. His enemies had hooted in derision at such words from a helpless, condemned Prisoner who might be executed at any hour.

Yet in that very year 1893, the Bahá'í Faith was first mentioned in the West at the World's Parliament of Religion. Lua was but one of many who were immediately intrigued by that announcement.

A year later, Thornton Chase became the first Bahá'í in the West. Lua followed rapidly upon his heels. Others quickly joined them.

Then, as we have seen, in December 1898, Lua and her fellow-pilgrims landed for the first time in the Holy Land.

Although those first pilgrims were as yet blind to the great significance of that event, 'Abdu'l-Bahá understood it only too well. What a flood of joy and gratitude to Bahá'u'lláh must have swept over Him as He looked upon their faces—the very first rays of a dawning light in the West.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was soon to write:

'The West hath acquired illumination from the East, but, in some respects, the reflection of the light hath been greater in the Occident.' He also

declared that ‘the East hath, verily, been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Ere long will this same light shed a still greater illumination upon the West.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá could well have been referring to such teachers as Lua when He said:

‘The Blessed Perfection [Bahá’u’lláh] knows that day and night—rather every hour—I am looking toward the East and toward the West, toward the North and toward the South, to see whether severed and attracted souls have arisen to teach the Cause of God ... whether enkindled hearts are raising their clarion voices in the assemblages of mankind ... These souls are my lost jewels. Whenever I find a trace of them, or someone gives me a clue about them, I become infinitely happy and, adding to my zeal, I continue my indefatigable search. I pray to God that He may give me many such jewels in America.’

Exciting new teaching victories were taking place on every front, but still Lua suffered greatly because her heart longed to be with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She was never truly happy away from Him.

The only way Lua could fill the agonizing loneliness of separation from her beloved Master, was to lose herself completely in the teaching work. She rededicated her entire life to spreading the glad tidings of Bahá’u’lláh’s coming. Lua knew that teaching was her only salvation, but little did she know that it would win for her the crown of ‘mother-teacher of the American Bahá’í community’.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had told Lua time and time again:

‘Day and night thou must engage in spreading the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. Nothing else will avail thee,’ He had said.

Lua longed to become one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ‘lost jewels’. Perhaps then it might be possible for her to return to the Holy Land. She forgot everything but teaching the Word of God. She began to plant the seeds in all parts of America.

Lua’s life became a living example of the Words of Bahá’u’lláh:

‘Be unrestrained as the wind, while carrying the Message [of God] ... It bloweth in every direction, as bidden by its Creator.’

Lua prayed constantly that her reckless and unsubdued spirit would quickly learn the lesson of patience. One of her colleagues said, ‘She was impatient to be patient.’

It was not an easy lesson for her. Lua felt certain that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was waiting for her to win this struggle, and if she could achieve this victory over herself, He would open before her eyes new doors of service.

17. Lua’s mission to the king

A short time later, a letter arrived from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It called upon Lua to undertake one of her most important missions. One of her friends was present when the letter arrived. The following is her account.

It not only describes the radiant joy and happiness of Lua, who now considered herself reunited with her beloved Master, but it also tells of the

dramatic and moving events that followed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s summons.

‘Lua was surprised when she opened her letter from the Master, to find that within was another letter. Suddenly her face drained of colour.

“What’s wrong ?” I asked.

‘Lua didn’t answer. She continued reading with increased agitation. Her manner told me that the letter contained some staggering news.

“It is a letter written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” she told me. “It is addressed to the Sháh, the King of Persia, who is in Paris!” Lua hesitated as if the thought were almost too much to bear. “The Master has asked me to take it to the Sháh and deliver it in person.”

‘The letter explained that once again the religious fanatics in Persia had begun persecuting the followers of the Bahá’í Faith. These shameless persecutions had taken place spasmodically since the earliest days of the Faith. Many believers, among them women and children, had been, and were still being killed for their belief.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to the Sháh on behalf of those helpless, tortured Bahá’ís. He asked the King to extend his protection to them. To make sure that His tablet to the King would be delivered, He arranged to send it by a special messenger. Although there were many Bahá’ís in Paris at that time, it was to America and to Lua that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned to seek this messenger. He asked Lua to be His representative and personally carry this important message to the Sháh. She was to deliver it to him with her own hands.

‘As soon as Lua arrived in Paris, she sought out the Prime Minister of Persia. She was turned away at his door. She was informed that His Excellency could see no one. The Prime Minister’s son was seriously ill and not expected to live.

‘But Lua would not be sent away defeated. She turned to the official’s secretary and said, “Would you take a message from me to His Excellency, and permit me to wait for his answer?”

“There is no purpose in your waiting for his answer,” the secretary insisted. “He will see no one.”

‘Lua gently persisted, “Will you ask him if I may see him tomorrow should his son be healed in the meantime?”

‘The secretary frowned impatiently, dismissed her and turned away. Lua did not leave. Finally the secretary looked at her once more. She smiled at him with loving patience. He shrugged his shoulders, sighed, and said, “Very well. You wait here.” He went into the next room. Immediately Lua began to pray quietly to herself.

‘Soon the secretary returned, a puzzled look in his eyes.

“The Minister will see you tomorrow. But only upon your own conditions!”

‘Lua thanked him and withdrew.

‘That night she gathered together as many of the Bahá’ís of Paris as possible. When they were assembled, she told them of her mission and asked them for their help.

“Let us sit up all night and pray for the little boy,” she urged. She told them how the Master

had taught her that any difficulty could be solved through prayer. All that was necessary was to be sincere.’

Both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá themselves resorted to the power of prayer in times of difficulty. Bahá’u’lláh, during the days of trial in Baghdád, when He was surrounded by enemies, directed His followers to recite over and over a prayer revealed by the Báb for just such times of crisis.

One of Bahá’u’lláh’s companions has himself testified to just such an occasion:

‘I stood rooted to the spot, lifeless, dried up as a dead tree, ready to fall under the impact of the stunning power of His [Bahá’u’lláh’s] words. Finally, He said:

“‘Bid them recite: ‘Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!’ Tell them to repeat it five hundred times, nay, a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping and waking, that haply the Countenance of Glory may be unveiled to their eyes, and tiers of light descend upon them.”

Bahá’ís throughout the world, as well as their friends and sympathizers, have found this simple prayer of the Báb a source of great comfort and assistance in time of need.

With such prayers, Lua called upon the Bahá’ís of Paris to assist her with her mission.

‘With Lua leading them,’ her friend’s report continues, ‘they began a vigil that lasted through the night.

‘The next morning Lua returned to the Prime

Minister's office. The secretary greeted her with a broad and welcoming smile. He said simply, "The Prime Minister will see you right away."

'Lua's eyes twinkled. "Is the little boy better?"

"The secretary nodded. "The crisis is passed. He is well on his way to recovery."

'The secretary then opened the door that led to the Prime Minister.'

Thus Lua was able to present one of the petitions through official channels, by which it eventually reached the Sháh.

Mrs Mariam Haney, another one of the stout hearted servants of Bahá'u'lláh in America, made the journey to Paris with Lua. She has recalled the events surrounding that mission.

'Two petitions reached His Majesty, the Sháh,' Mrs Haney wrote; 'one was presented in person by Lua on behalf of the Bahá'is in Paris, at the Élysée Palace Hotel where the Sháh and his entourage were staying.'

Muzaffari'd-Dín-Sháh left the hotel with his Prime Minister, 'stepped into his waiting carriage and drove away with the petition in his hand'.

For some time following the presentation of these two petitions, there was a remarkable cessation of persecution.

Part IV
Herald of the Covenant

18. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrives in America

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was still under confinement and close scrutiny when Lua made her first visit to the Holy Land in 1898. It was not until ten years later in 1908 that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was given His freedom.

Immediately He made plans to visit the West. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Exemplar of His Father’s Faith, was about to give His followers a personal example of what it meant to arise and teach the Cause of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was at this time broken in health. He suffered from several maladies brought on by the strains and stresses of a tragic life spent almost wholly in exile and imprisonment.’

First He laid to rest the holy Dust of the Báb in ‘a safe and permanent’ resting-place. He fulfilled this historic Mission given Him by His Father. Once that priceless ‘trust’ had been completed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘arose with sublime courage, confidence and resolution to consecrate what little strength remained to Him, in the evening of His life, to a service of such heroic proportions that no parallel to it is to be found in the annals of the first Bahá’í century’.

The Son of Bahá’u’lláh was soon to travel ‘first to Egypt, then to Europe and later to America’.

His grandson and Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, has written that these journeys would 'mark, if we would correctly appraise their historic importance, a turning point of the utmost significance in the history of the century'.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Lua's beloved Master, was free at last! He was on His way to ignite fires that would never be quenched. Except for a brief period during the First World War 'Abdu'l-Bahá would now enjoy to the end of His life a freedom which has never since been withdrawn from the Institutions of the Bahá'í Faith at its world centre.

'So momentous a change in the fortunes of the Faith was the signal for such an outburst of activity on His part as to dumbfound His followers in East and West with admiration and wonder, and exercise an imperishable influence on the course of its future history.'

One of the greatest days of Lua's life was 11 April 1912, when her dream came true, and the steamship *Cedric* sailed into New York harbour bringing 'Abdu'l-Bahá on His historic visit to the shores of America.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival was an occasion for excitement, not only among the Bahá'ís but for the press and the people of New York as well. Newspaper reporters and News Service representatives came aboard the *Cedric* at quarantine and interviewed 'Abdu'l-Bahá coming up the bay.

Versions of that historic interview appeared in newspapers all over America and around the world. It was the greatest single instance of the proclama-

tion of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh since the days of its birth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had truly, as promised by His Father, raised His voice in the West.

The following account is a description, both of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself, and the purpose of His Mission, written not by a Bahá'í but by a newspaper correspondent representing the New York City News Association.

The press was keenly interested in the words of an exile and a prisoner who, after half a century of such suffering, was free to speak at last to the world.

'He comes on a mission of international peace,' reporter W. P. Dodge explained in his press account, 'to attend and address the Peace Conference at Lake Mohonk the latter part of this month, and to address various peace meetings, educational societies, religious organizations ...

"Abdu'l-Bahá was found on the upper deck, standing where he could see the pilot, his long, flowing oriental robe flapping in the breeze. He was clothed in a long, black robe open at the front and disclosing another robe of light tan. Upon his head was a pure white turban, such as all eastern patriarchs wear.

'His face was light itself as he scanned the harbour and greeted the reporters ... He is a man of medium height, though at first sight he seemed to be much taller. He is strongly and solidly built, and weighs probably one hundred and sixty-five pounds. As he paced the deck, talking with the reporters, he appeared alert and active in every

movement, his head thrown back and splendidly poised upon his broad, square shoulders, most of the time. A profusion of iron grey hair bursting out at the sides of the turban and hanging long upon the neck; a large, massive head, full-domed and remarkably wide across the forehead and temples, the forehead rising like a great palisade above the eyes, which were very wide apart, their orbits large and deep, looking out from under massive overhanging brows; strong Roman nose, generous ears, decisive yet kindly mouth and chin; a creamy white complexion, beard same colour as his hair, worn full over the face and carefully trimmed at almost full length—this completes an insufficient word picture of this “Wise Man out of the East”.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke at length to the press representatives, answering all their questions about peace, war, the rights of women, freedom of the press, education, true liberty and true religion.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá displayed wisdom, love and a sense of humour as He chatted with the press reporters in His stateroom. He recalled an incident from the previous winter when a young Christian was about to set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The pilgrim was worried, feeling that he did not have the right spirit and sense of reverence.

‘The proper spirit in which to visit places hallowed by remembrances of Christ,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told His young visitor, ‘is one of constant communion with God. Love for God will be the telegraph wire, one end of which is in the Kingdom of the Spirit, and the other in your heart.’

‘I am afraid my telegraph wire is broken,’ the would-be pilgrim complained.

‘Then,’ said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, laughing heartily, ‘I told him: “You will have to use wireless telegraphy.”’

When the ship came abreast of the Statue of Liberty, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stood erect facing the Statue and held up His arms in salutation.

‘There is the new world’s symbol of liberty and freedom,’ He said. ‘After being forty years a prisoner I can tell you that freedom is not a matter of place. It is a condition ... When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed a release.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá waved farewell to the Statue as the ship turned towards Manhattan. To the reporters He said, ‘In former ages it has been said, “To love one’s native land is faith.” But the tongue in this day says, “Glory is not his who loves his native land, but glory is his who loves his kind—humanity.”’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gazed up at the jagged skyline of those stone-canyons of New York.

‘These,’ He said, ‘are the minarets of Western World commerce and industry.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggested to the reporters that just as these buildings reached heavenward, so should the people who occupied them be always striving for the betterment of humanity, for universal peace, and for the good of all nations and mankind in general.

‘The bricks make the house,’ He told them, ‘and if the bricks are bad the house will not stand ...

It is necessary for individuals to become as good bricks, to eradicate from themselves race and religious hatred, greed and a limited patriotism, so that, whether they find themselves guiding the government, or founding a home, the result of their efforts may be peace and prosperity, love and happiness.'

Such were the words first spoken by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America. Such were the scenes that greeted Him as He gazed for the first time upon this land which Bahá'u'lláh had addressed in His summons to the presidents and rulers of the Republics of the West. Now 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in one of those lands to help its leaders 'bind ... the broken with the hands of justice', words which Bahá'u'lláh Himself had directed to these same rulers.

19. Lua and the Master meet again

'Abdu'l-Bahá had been in America less than a month when He took one of the most historic actions of His entire journey.

The site of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, the 'holiest House of Worship ever to be raised to the Name of Bahá'u'lláh', was barren land on that chill, windy May day when 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with His own hands, laid the corner-stone of that prototype edifice that would sooner or later change the face of human society.

The Bahá'ís of America were gathered at a Convention in Chicago just preceding that great

event. Lua was addressing an assembled crowd of over a thousand. She had just returned from a triumphant teaching tour in California.

Lua's visit to California had been successful beyond all expectation, yet Lua was never fully aware of the influence she had on others. Her heart was always anchored in her love for 'Abdu'l-Bahá—results she left to God and to the future.

Her presence in San Francisco in 1911, just preceding 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to America, had been of great importance to another Bahá'í, John Henry Hyde Dunn. He has often told how he sought Lua out on every occasion for a private interview. She gave him generously of her time. No doubt one of Lua's 'inner promptings' told her that this was one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 'lost jewels'. Hyde Dunn, with his wife, Clara, would in a few years sail away to the Antipodes and open up the entire continent of Australia to the Bahá'í Faith.

John David Bosch, who with his wife, Louise, pioneered to Tahiti and opened those South Pacific Islands to the Cause of God, also made a gift of his beautiful Geyserville, California, property to the Faith. It became one of the first and most influential of the Bahá'í summer schools. It continues to function on an ever-expanding scale even until today. Mr Bosch has himself explained that it was the visit of Lua which inspired him to write to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and offer his land for the benefit 'of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh'.

These were a few of the teaching victories that Lua, the 'mother-teacher of the West', unwittingly brought to Chicago on that historic occasion, to

lay at the feet of her beloved Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

At the exact moment that this ‘herald’ of the Cause was addressing her fellow-Bahá’ís in Chicago, the exciting news was announced that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had arrived at the Convention!

Imagine, if you are a Christian, the happiness that would have flooded every heart in Rome if, not long after the beginning of Christianity, the Apostle Peter or Paul had appeared in person at a huge gathering of the followers of His Holiness Christ. Then magnify that feeling a thousandfold, for Bahá’u’lláh, the return of Christ, Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, had with His own Pen, in a written Will and Testament, appointed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as His Successor, the One to Whom the entire world should turn. There were no doubts. It was a Covenant for all time.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Son of the Promised One of all religions, was walking in their midst, on the face of the earth, here in Chicago. The moment His blessed countenance appeared in the doorway, a thrill of expectancy electrified the Convention hall.

‘At once, the vast concourse, as one person, arose’ in breathless silence as the One Whom they had so long awaited appeared. How many times Lua described that unforgettable moment to her friends. All eyes were on her beloved Master as He slowly made His way towards the front. Tears of joy flowed. His smiling, radiant countenance lifted their hearts into another kingdom. That reverent hush was broken only by the soft, whis-

pered prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving, and here and there a sob, torn from the depths of hearts which had longed so earnestly to witness this moment, but despaired of ever living to see it.

But it was true! He was here among them! 'Abdu'l-Bahá! The Master! The Mystery of God! The Son of Bahá'u'lláh!

They knew that such a moment would never come to them again.

No other Bahá'í Convention in the glorious future history of His Father's Faith would ever share the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Mighty Covenant with mankind. It was indeed a moment unique, precious, history-making. At long last 'Abdu'l-Bahá faced His dearly loved followers in the West and spoke words of encouragement and inspiration. He told them about the great significance of the Temple whose foundation-stone was to be placed the following day. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them that this edifice 'was founded for the unification of mankind ...'.

It is doubtful if many were able to take in His words until they read them later. Their hearts were too full of the majesty and magic of His presence among them. Words did not matter. It was the heart and soul that understood the joy and wonder of it all.

The spirit of that hour was captured by the chorus as it sang in joyous harmony of the 'Great Day of God'.

The following day, Bahá'ís from all over America gathered in Wilmette on the site of the future

Temple, a Temple which would be the most holy House of Worship ever to be raised in the Name of Bahá'u'lláh.

Lua was there on that occasion and heard her beloved Master say:

‘The power which has gathered you here today notwithstanding the cold and windy weather is indeed mighty and wonderful. It is the power of God, the divine favour of Bahá'u'lláh [Glory of God] which has drawn you together.’

‘Abdu'l-Bahá predicted that out of this Temple, thousands of other temples would be born in all parts of the world, but that this House of Worship would be the mother of them all.

‘It marks,’ He has written, ‘the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth,’

What a blessing for Lua and that relatively small group of Bahá'ís to be present on that memorable occasion with ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, to see and participate in the very earliest beginnings of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá called upon the people of the various races and nationalities who were there to participate and turn a bit of soil on behalf of their own people. Finally, at the end, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá set the stone in place on behalf of all the peoples of the world, and the Mother Temple was born.

To the Bahá'ís assembled on that occasion, relatively few in number, with very limited resources, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá said, ‘Make a beginning and all will come well.’ Their task was to raise up a Mother Temple, and to conquer the world with the sword of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings.

‘In the unseen world,’ He said, ‘the Temple is already built.’

20. Lua’s schemes go astray

It wasn’t always possible for Lua to follow ‘Abdu’l-Bahá everywhere He travelled, but she did her best.

In fact, one of Lua’s greatest joys was thinking up new ways by which she could be with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His journeys throughout America. She longed to be in His presence at all times. This took a great deal of scheming on her part. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was well aware of Lua’s love-inspired little plots. Once in Haifa, as she was preparing to leave Him, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is reported to have said laughingly, ‘Will you begin to scheme to find a way to return here as soon as you reach America?’

‘No, beloved Master,’ Lua answered honestly. ‘I shall begin scheming as soon as I am on the boat.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent the months of June and July in New York. These were days of delight for Lua. Late in June, however, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called Lua to Him and broke the news that He wanted her to go to California to do some teaching work for the Faith. Lua was frantic. She didn’t want to leave Him. She was so eager to be with Him, she would frequently forget the lesson of patience which He was trying to teach her.

Lua went to see her dear friend Juliet Thompson, her fellow-conspirator in these attempts to be near the Master. Lua explained another of her schemes. She knew that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had asked Juliet to paint her portrait. Since this was a portrait which

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had Himself requested, it was a wonderful indication of the great love He had for Lua.

Lua’s plot revolved around this painting.

‘Julie,’ she said, ‘the Master has told you to paint my portrait. Please, dear, tell Him that you can’t paint my portrait if I am in California.’

‘He *knows* that.’

‘But if you remind Him, perhaps He’ll think it’s more important for me to be here with Him.’

‘The important thing,’ Juliet said, ‘is to be obedient to the Master.’

‘I am obedient to the Master. I’m going to California. But a little later on when I can’t possibly be with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.’

‘Lua!’

‘*Please?*’

It was impossible for Juliet to refuse Lua when she was so persuasive. So Juliet went to the Master.

She told ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that she couldn’t paint Lua’s portrait if Lua were far off in California. The Master laughed heartily and told her to tell Lua that she would be back in New York again in a year and that her portrait could be painted then. His final instructions were, ‘Tell Lua to go to California.’

Juliet delivered this message. Lua sighed, and accepted the inevitable. But she didn’t go to California immediately because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was leaving the next day for Montclair, New Jersey, and Lua wanted to go there instead. For just this one last time. After all, New Jersey was west of New York and was on the way toward California.

‘Come on, Julie,’ Lua urged. ‘Let’s go to Montclair to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!’

Juliet was shocked. ‘But we can’t do that, Lua,’ she told her friend. ‘We haven’t been invited. Besides, we have to go—I mean you have to go to California.’

‘But we have a *perfect* excuse,’ Lua insisted. ‘You have all the proofs of those recent photographs which were taken of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He *should* see them so that He can approve of them.’

‘Do you *really* think so?’ Juliet asked. She was beginning to weaken herself. Lua was very persuasive.

‘Of course, dear,’ Lua assured her. And off they went to Montclair together.

The Master looked at the photographs, but He didn’t look at Lua.

21. The Faith is established in America

Lua began to think that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would *never* look at her again. At least not until she went to California. Still, she wouldn’t be Lua if she failed to make one last gallant attempt to remain in the East with her beloved Master.

Lua was obedient to the Master in all things except this longing desire never to leave Him during His visit to America. The Persian Bahá’ís in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s party were displeased with Lua because she didn’t leave immediately for California. To them such a delay was unthinkable.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá with His sin-covering eye must

often have been distressed by the lack of response even on the part of those who loved Him to arise to teach.

‘If the friends of God listen to my first word,’ He said, ‘they will find the success of this world and of the next world therein. But there are some who prefer their own thoughts above mine, and when they fall they beg me to save them. Progress and prosperity are in the first word. For example, should I say to so and so, “Go thou to America,” and he should reply, “I beg to remain a few days more,” I give him permission to do as he wishes. But this is not my thought; it is his thought.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, however, did not give Lua permission to stay. He insisted on her leaving for California. It was a match of wits and love, and Lua of course knew from the first that her beloved Master would win. She was only too well aware of her shortcomings as, on that occasion, were many of her fellow-Bahá’ís. They were annoyed and some were very put out with her. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was tender and patient.

Perhaps because Lua had arisen to teach. She had gone to America at the Master’s bidding, although with plaintive reluctance. She had travelled from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean. She had addressed a huge meeting in San Diego, on the deck of the United States battleship *California*, the flagship of the fleet. She had encouraged a fellow-Bahá’í and helped to inspire him to open up an entire continent. She had inspired another believer to offer a gift of land which began one of the first

Bahá'í schools in America. She had set ablaze another precious soul who opened up still another continent to the Faith. Her spiritual children were enlisting in the 'radiant army' of Bahá'u'lláh on every side. They were among the staunchest and most devoted 'soldiers' of the Covenant. No doubt this dedication outweighed her human frailties, and captured the Master's heart.

It was reminiscent of the story of Mary who so loved Christ that she anointed His precious feet with a whole pound of very costly ointment. It displeased some of His followers. Especially Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him, objected, saying it should be sold and the money given to the poor. Christ replied that Mary had saved this gift of love because He would soon leave them. 'For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.'

It is always more important to please God than to please one's fellow-believers.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's next visit was to Teaneck, New Jersey, to a property that became known in Bahá'í history as Evergreen Cabin.

'Abdu'l-Bahá invited all the Bahá'ís to join Him in a large unity Feast. This event has been commemorated every year since, even to the current day, as one of the happiest of Bahá'í occasions, and the single official annual commemoration of His visit.

Yes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá also invited Lua.

She was delighted, but to her chagrin she soon realized that, immediately the Feast was over,

‘Abdu’l-Bahá still expected her to leave for California.

Lua was lost in the wonder of His presence on that history-making occasion. During that ‘Unity Feast’ held on 29 June 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made it plain that the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh had, on that date, truly been established in America.

We can share through Lua’s eyes the excitement that stirred each of those American Bahá’ís who heard ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s voice that day. We can see Him yet, standing amidst the tall dark pines on that emerald green lawn. The scent of pine and the soft needles beneath the trees, the fragrant air and blue skies, made it a heavenly day. So many were the flowers which His loved ones had brought that they overflowed onto the grass, and it appeared as though the very earth beneath His feet had been embroidered into a multicoloured green carpet.

‘This assembly,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told them on that unforgettable day, ‘has a name and significance which will last forever. Hundreds of thousands of meetings shall be held to commemorate this occasion and the very words I speak to you today shall be repeated in them for ages to come. Therefore be ye rejoiced for ye are sheltered beneath the providence of God. Be happy and joyous because the bestowals of God are intended for you and the life of the Holy Spirit is breathing upon you ... for you are the ones who are called to uplift the cause of unity among the nations of the earth ...’

Many of the seeds sown that day were to blossom in a later age. Many of those listening were to arise

and become 'lions of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh'. Certainly Lua was among them.

When the Unity Feast was over, Lua discovered that she had a bad case of poison-ivy. She was overjoyed. The distress and swelling were such as to incapacitate her—especially for long-distance travel. She immediately notified her friend Juliet about her delightful affliction.

Miss Thompson came at once to Lua's hotel room. Juliet took one look at Lua's swollen ankles and said, 'It's a punishment.'

'No, it's a reward.'

Juliet was insistent. 'It's a test.'

Lua said, 'It's guidance.'

Juliet was not convinced.

'Please, Julie,' Lua begged. 'Go to the Master and tell Him my feet are all swollen up with poison-ivy, that I can't even walk. So I can't possibly leave for California until the poison-ivy is gone.'

Reluctantly Juliet carried the message.

The Master laughed again.

'I will cure Lua,' He said.

On the table near-by was a pot of cold tea. 'Abdu'l-Bahá pointed to it.

'Give Lua a drink from this pot of tea,' He said.

Juliet returned to Lua with the tea. Lua was obedient and drank it to the last drop.

In the late afternoon the Master came to visit her.

'Now,' He said laughing, 'you are well, Lua. You can leave for California.' With a mischievous twinkle, He added, 'I cured you with a cup of cold tea.'

After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had gone, Juliet rose from her chair, picked up Lua’s empty teacup and, standing where the Master had stood, looked first into the teacup and then at Lua. With the same mischievous twinkle that had lighted ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s eyes, Juliet said:

‘I see by the tea-leaves in your cup that you are going to go on a long journey!’

One account of this incident reported that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent Lua an apple and a pomegranate to eat, and that she gravely, steadily and thoroughly chewed them down to the last morsel: swallowing her ‘cure’ in which lay the seeds of her own defeat. Another declared that it was an apple and a glass of pomegranate juice. Lua’s sister who had heard Lua laugh over the story many times insisted that it was a cup of cold tea.

Perhaps it was all three. One thing is certain, and all agree, Lua was cured, and couldn’t think of another reason for not going to California. She had been cured both outwardly and inwardly. And to her intense delight, the journey turned out to be a blessing. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had sent her on ahead to prepare the way. Soon He and His party joined her in California.

22. From the Holy Land to the Golden Gate

‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed in America eight months. He travelled from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and back. He spoke in both Canada and the United States, proclaiming His Father’s Faith,

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s trip across America, undertaken at an age of nearly seventy, covered over five thousand miles. He spoke before all sizes and types of audience. These talks have filled two volumes.

David Starr Jordan, the President of Stanford University, introduced Him in these words: “Abdu’l-Bahá will surely unite the East and the West: for He treads the mystic way with practical feet.’

An account of the travels of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be a volume in itself! In New York City alone He delivered public addresses and made formal visits to no less than fifty-five places. He was engaged in spreading Bahá’u’lláh’s Message of fellowship and love from early dawn until late at night.

In view of the constant and concentrated travels of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in North America, how pathetic sound those excuses of the people in the West who repeatedly asked Lua, ‘Why haven’t I heard about the Bahá’í Faith before? It sounds wonderful, but it’s all so new.’

Lua told them frankly that it wasn’t new at all. It had begun nearly three-quarters of a century before. She explained that Bahá’u’lláh had written to the kings and rulers of the world in His day. She told them all the wonderful truths she had learned from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: How Bahá’u’lláh had addressed the heads of Christianity, Judaism and Islám. He also directed a special Message to the ‘elected representatives’ of the peoples in all countries.

Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed, in the clearest terms, His Mission as the return of Christ, the Promised One

foretold in all holy Books. He offered ample proof to support His claim.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote separate Messages to kings, emperors, and ministers of state in both the East and the West. He addressed the presidents and rulers of the Republics of the Western world, including the President of the United States.

Bahá'u'lláh directed His Teachings to leaders in the intellectual, political, literary, mystical, commercial and humanitarian spheres of activity.

He sent a special Letter to the Pope in Rome. He directed separate Messages to the entire hierarchy of Christianity: the patriarchs, the archbishops, the bishops, the monks, the priests, and the people of Christianity.

For nearly a quarter of a century, Bahá'u'lláh's Pen never ceased proclaiming to all humanity that the day so long awaited by all the great religions, the day of the one fold and one shepherd, had at last arrived.

23. A standing ovation for the Herald of Peace

What was it that 'Abdu'l-Bahá told the peoples of the West that enabled Him to 'recreate' so many of them, and lay the foundation for an enduring kingdom?

What was the *Call* that 'Abdu'l-Bahá urged Lua and her fellow-believers to raise in every land? Perhaps we shall understand their passionate devotion to Him and their remarkable zeal, if we examine, however briefly, the fundamental Teachings which 'Abdu'l-Bahá stressed during those months in America.

In *God Passes By* there is a moving account of these matchless journeys. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson, summarizes His potent Message to the people residing in the materialistic West. While 'Abdu'l-Bahá was teaching the world, He was also deepening the knowledge of His own followers.

'It was in the course of these epoch-making journeys and before large and representative audiences, at times exceeding a thousand people, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá expounded, with brilliant simplicity, with persuasiveness and force, and for the first time in His Ministry, those basic and distinguishing principles of His Father's Faith

...

These teachings, Shoghi Effendi declared, 'together with the laws and ordinances revealed in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* [Bahá'u'lláh's Most Holy Book] constitute the bedrock of God's latest Revelation to mankind'.

The Guardian then listed the most outstanding of the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which, after Him, Lua and her fellow-disciples were to proclaim in every state and province:

'The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of human kind is able to soar; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition

of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind—these stand out as the essential elements of that Divine polity which He proclaimed to leaders of public thought as well as to the masses at large in the course of these missionary journeys.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá also dealt with the current problems facing society. He predicted the inevitable coming of the First World War. He later warned about the coming of the Second World War. He said they were inevitable because mankind had failed to accept and enforce Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings. Bahá’u’lláh was the Messenger of God for this day, the Lawgiver and Guide, but the world had turned a deaf ear. It was now paying the price, and the sufferings were only beginning.

During those travels ‘Abdu’l-Bahá foretold the grave racial strife which would shatter the peace and well-being of America. There was only one remedy, He said. Her people must immediately put into practice Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings on the oneness and complete equality of all races. Blood would run in the streets of American cities if these healing principles were not used to prevent this tragedy.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá foreshadowed the radical changes

that would take place in Europe. He warned that if the statesmen did not unite to prevent it, the entire continent would be set ablaze.

He anticipated the terrible persecution of the Jews on European soil.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá talked to Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinet members, Mayors, Governors, Senators, Congressmen, members of Parliament, military leaders, religious leaders of all faiths.

‘Every morning,’ one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s followers has related, ‘according to His custom, the Master expounded the principles of the teaching of Bahá’u’lláh to those who gathered around Him, the learned and the unlearned, eager and respectful.’

People of all nationalities, creeds and backgrounds came to talk with Him. They came from East and West. They were theosophists, agnostics, atheists, materialists, spiritualists, Christian Scientists, social reformers, ‘militants, Hindus, Sufis, Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, church dignitaries, ambassadors, pashas, nobility and peasants. There was no end to it.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sat at breakfast with the Lord Mayor of London. He wrote in the Bible of the City Temple of London, ‘This book is the holy Book of God’. He addressed an overflowing congregation at St. John’s, Westminster. The Bishop’s chair was placed in a position of honour for Him.

The Prisoner, the exile, the despised, the One they had threatened to crucify on the gates of ‘Akká, was being acclaimed on all sides.

He spoke to presidents of universities, to Admiral Peary, Alexander Graham Bell, Theodore Roose-

vult, Rabbi Stephen Wise, Hudson Maxim the arms manufacturer, Andrew Carnegie, and to the destitute in the Bowery district of New York.

On several occasions, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke before as many as three and four gatherings in one day, addressing two and three thousand listeners who followed with keen eagerness His every word.

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered a Congregational Church in Chicago. The Rector of the church told the packed audience that he had been making plans to go to ‘Akká to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, when news came that the Master was en route to America.

‘Today,’ the Rector said, ‘God has conferred a great blessing upon us. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is here with us.’

The Rector then introduced Him as a beloved ‘Herald of Peace’.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to the pulpit, the audience rose in unison, and something unique in the history of that Protestant church took place. Although they were inside the church, the audience was so caught up in the spirit of His presence that they greeted ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with loud and prolonged cheers, until the walls of the building reverberated. Such was His effect upon those who saw Him.

24. The flame ignites many fires

Lua, as well as the other heroes and heroines of those early days, witnessed many such scenes of unforgettable beauty, majesty and tenderness as

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘recreated’ the spirits of the receptive believers He met. He kindled fresh fires of devotion and dedication in the hearts of almost all whom He encountered on His incredible American journeys. He was always on the move.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed peace conferences in several States. He spoke to students and professors at Columbia, Stanford, Howard and New York universities. He participated in the fourth annual conference of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá fearlessly asserted the truth of the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ before no less than two thousand Jews assembled in the Temple Emmanu-El, a Jewish synagogue in San Francisco. He boldly championed the mission of Muhammad before packed audiences in Protestant churches. He courageously upheld the divine character of the mission of Moses. He emphasized the oneness of *all* the Messengers of God.

With characteristic vigour and courage He proclaimed Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings on the complete equality of the races; not in ‘tolerance’ which is negative, but in the equality of opportunity for all races in every field of human endeavour, and in all parts of the world without exception.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself demonstrated the sincerity of Bahá’u’lláh’s principle of the ‘oneness of mankind’ by His own encouragement of, and participation in, an interracial marriage of Bahá’ís. He ‘united two of His followers’ of different nationalities and races. Louis G. Gregory, a Negro, was married to Louise Matthews of the white race.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá highly praised such marriages between the races, saying:

‘If it be possible, gather together these two races, black and white, into one assembly, and put such love into their hearts that they shall not only unite but even intermarry. Be sure that the results of this will abolish differences and disputes between black and white. Moreover, by the Will of God, may it be so. This is a great service to humanity.’

Louis G. Gregory was one of the early co-workers of Lua. This brilliant American Negro Bahá’í and teacher served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, the highest elective post to which any Bahá’í can attain in his own area. At the time of his death, a cablegram was sent to the entire Bahá’í world by Shoghi Effendi, World Head of the Bahá’í Faith, praising this colleague of Lua as the dearly loved, ‘noble-minded, golden-hearted Louis Gregory, pride (and) example’ to all.

The Bahá’í world was told that he, Louis Gregory, occupied a ‘unique position’ because of his dedicated services and that the ‘rising Bahá’í generation (in the) African continent’ would glory in his memory.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá also paid a touching tribute to Thornton Chase, the first Bahá’í in America. He visited the grave of Mr Chase in Inglewood, California, a suburb of Los Angeles. This was a special ‘pilgrimage’ by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the last resting-place of the very first soul to embrace the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh in the West.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá stopped beside the grave without

asking directions, praised the green verdure and flowers. He stood silent a few minutes, then taking the bouquet of flowers which had been brought with Him, He adorned the grave with His own hands, with a love, tenderness and affection that touched every heart.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá faced the Holy Land and chanted the Tablet of Visitation, a prayer read at the tomb of Bahá’u’lláh. He then spoke about the nobility, sacrifice and dedication of Thornton Chase, and before leaving, bowed to kiss the gravestone.

Lua, looking on, was but one of many who longed to attain such a station, such a place in the heart of the Master.

Thornton Chase, the first to accept Bahá’u’lláh in the West, and one of the first to lay down his life as a Bahá’í and consecrate the soil of the American continent, had spent five memorable days on pilgrimage as ‘a prisoner’ with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Now that pilgrimage was repaid.

Thornton Chase had been in the forefront of the battle since 1894, the year both he and Lua embraced the Faith. They exemplified words which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had spoken to a Western pilgrim:

‘The general does not love most the man in the back of the ranks. He loves most the man in front. If you 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!’

These words described the final years of Lua’s life. She increased her pace. She added new continents to her list of battle-fronts. In the happiness of

servicing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá she did indeed ‘run’ in all directions to give the Glad Tidings.

In the joy of the year of 1912, Lua, so full of youth, vitality and eagerness, never dreamed that so little time was left to her; that in four short years, in the midst of a world war, she would be struck down, a martyr.

25. ‘I appoint you, Lua, as a Herald of the Covenant!’

When the friends urged the Master to rest and conserve His energy, He told them that sometimes material rest could rob man of spiritual rest. The time was short, the hours precious. Whenever He thought of setting down His burden of work, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said He could hear the voice of His beloved Father, Bahá’u’lláh, calling to Him: ‘March! March!’

In the midst of this endless activity, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reluctantly agreed to the constantly repeated request of the believers that He permit Juliet Thompson to paint His portrait.

Miss Thompson has recorded her memory of that first sitting in her studio in New York City.

‘Never shall I forget that day the Master was posing for His portrait. He said to Lua, “This makes me sleepy.”

‘I said, “Tell the Master to go to sleep, Lua. I can paint Him while He sleeps.”

‘The Master closed His eyes. He sat perfectly upright, still as a statue. I was so awed that I could not paint. Suddenly His eyes flashed open. It

seemed to me that the room shook as He began to speak. I was shattered by His power as He unveiled to our eyes the meaning of “The Covenant of God”.’

During those awe-inspiring moments ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained the great Covenant that God made with mankind. He said that God will never forget man, but will always, from time to time, send down a Prophet to guide him. Moses was such a Prophet. So was Christ. And Muhammad. So was Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke of the great Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh, God’s Prophet for this day. He told them of Bahá’u’lláh’s Will and Testament, written in Bahá’u’lláh’s own hand, which appointed Him, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to be the Centre of His Faith to Whom all should turn.

In that city of New York, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke many times of the Covenant of God. It was the strong rope to which all believers could cling, confident that no human power could divide, dismember or break up the Bahá’í Faith in the future.

The enemies of this Cause, both within and without the Faith, would take their axes to chop at the roots of this sacred Covenant, but the blades would break off in their hands, the scars would heal over, and the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh would go on un-impaired and undivided, unlike the religions of the past which succumbed to division and sects.

In New York, during His visit, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá read before a general assembly of followers, Bahá’u’lláh’s newly translated *Tablet of the Branch*, in which Bahá’u’lláh had clearly and emphatically

appointed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as His Successor. New York City ‘henceforth became designated as the *City of the Covenant of God*’.

We can imagine the impact of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words upon such a prepared channel as Lua.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words unfolded before the eyes of both Lua and Juliet a fresh vision of the greatness of the Bahá’í Faith. They realized in a flash that this glorious Message was not for the Bahá’ís alone. It was for all mankind. They began to understand better just Who Bahá’u’lláh was. There would never be any doubt in their minds that the Promised One for all mankind had appeared on earth in their day, and that His Name was Bahá’u’lláh. They were now standing before His Son, spellbound and enraptured by His words.

Lua and Juliet both were to tell that moving story many times—how they were captivated by His voice, transported to another world. Juliet found herself still staring at her empty canvas. She had not touched her brush to it.

The magnitude of the meaning of the words spoken by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá paralyzed the women. They dared not look upon His face, they said. The light was blinding! The very walls vibrated! If ever human beings had heard the Voice of God on earth speaking through a perfect channel, they felt that they had heard it that wondrous day.

They admitted their inability to recapture the moment or to describe it. All either of them could do was to make a feeble attempt to describe the mystery of what took place. Human language was

entirely inadequate. Several times, they said, they were both on the verge of fainting away.

‘When I finally became aware of my surroundings,’ Juliet recalled, ‘I could hear the soft sobbing of Lua. Poor Lua! She had scarcely recovered from the awesome majesty of what had just taken place, when the Master looked directly into her eyes and proclaimed:

“I appoint you, Lua, as a Herald of the Covenant. Go forth and proclaim this truth!”

‘Lua’s tears vanished. She stood before us transfigured. In that moment I realized the great station to which she had been called by the Master. She was a flame of God! Like metal put into the fire, all that had been the Lua of the past was burned away, and she had now taken on the characteristics of the fire.

“Recreate me, O beloved Master!” she cried, “that I may truly herald Thy Faith.”

‘Then Lua looked at me. She could see the tears that filled my eyes. She did not know that they were being shed in happiness at the wonder and beauty of the scene I had been privileged to witness. She thought that my spirit was feeling deprived. Out of the tenderness of her heart, she turned to the Master and pleaded gently.

“Julie wants to be recreated, too.”

26. Mother-teacher of the West

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in New York He said to His followers:

‘This long voyage will prove how great is my

love for you. There were many troubles and vicissitudes, but in the thought of meeting you, all these things vanished ...’

Upon leaving them eight months later, His back-breaking labour completed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declared:

‘This is my last meeting with you, for now I am on the ship ready to sail away. These are my final words of exhortation. I have repeatedly summoned you to the cause of the unity of the world of humanity, announcing that all mankind are the servants of the same God; that God is the creator of all ... Therefore you must manifest the greatest kindness and love toward the nations of the world, setting aside fanaticism, abandoning religious, national and racial prejudice ... Direct your whole effort toward the happiness of those who are despondent, bestow food upon the hungry, clothe the needy and glorify the humble.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá expected great things of those early heroines and heroes such as Lua and May and others whose names have become legends.

‘I have planted the seeds in America,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told them. ‘You must nurture them and care for them. If you do this, they will yield an abundant harvest ... You must arise with superhuman strength to spread the Teachings, for the Cause is great; and whosoever shall arise in this day to teach, know that he will be assisted by the Divine Concourse ... It is the Day of the proclamation of the Kingdom! ... Erelong this Call shall yield the most glorious results and will fill the world with its fruits.’

The Bahá'ís of this present generation are now harvesting in every part of the globe the seeds planted by those pioneer-teachers in the days when 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked the streets of America.

We begin to understand the 'flame' that burned within Lua until she was consumed by the fire and heat of that Call.

These all too brief glimpses of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to America, which set ablaze Lua's heart and directed her future course, above all help us to grasp the deep significance of those apostolic journeys.

Shoghi Effendi has put these travels into their proper historic perspective:

"Abdu'l-Bahá's historic journeys to the West,' he wrote, 'and in particular His eight-month tour of the United States of America, may be said to have marked the culmination of His ministry, a ministry whose untold blessings and stupendous achievements only future generations can adequately estimate.'

This journey enabled 'Abdu'l-Bahá to complete triumphantly the last of the three most important objectives of His entire ministry: (1) erecting the Shrine for the sacred remains of the precious Báb, (2) inspiring and initiating the construction of the first Bahá'í House of Worship in 'Ishqábád, Russian Turkistán, and (3) planting the banner of His Father's Faith permanently in the soil of the West.

The last objective, Shoghi Effendi has told us, was the most important of all. It was a 'three-year-long mission to the Western world—a mission so

momentous that it deserves to rank as the greatest exploit ever to be associated with His ministry’.

Lua lived in those days and was privileged to witness the fulfilment of all three of these objectives, and the triumphs of her beloved Master.

Lua was a girl of but twenty-two when she first heard of the Bahá’í Faith; she was still in her twenties when she went on her unforgettable first visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; and she was in the full tide of her youthful beauty and eloquence when the Master came to America to complete the third, and crowning, triumph of His ministry. The flame which the Master had kindled in Lua’s heart would set ablaze other fires all over America, and would win for her the title ‘mother-teacher of the West’.

27. ‘Oh, Bahá’u’lláh! What hast Thou done?’

To Lua, the final week of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to America vanished as quickly as a mist before the sun. The joy of those days would soon be over. But what days of victory they had been.

Shoghi Effendi has captured the poignant contrast between those times of American triumph and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s early sufferings and persecution.

The Master’s American followers, for years to come, would radiate the happiness and wonder of the hours He had shared with them. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Himself, must have been stirred to His depths by the ever-increasing signs of the respect being shown to His Father’s Faith.

‘Who knows what memories stirred within Him,’ Shoghi Effendi writes of his beloved Grandfather,

‘as He stood before the thundering waters of Niagara, breathing the free air of a far distant land, or gazed, in the course of a brief and much-needed rest, upon the green woods and countryside in Glenwood Springs, or moved with a retinue of Oriental believers along the paths of the Trocadéro gardens in Paris, or walked alone in the evening beside the majestic Hudson on Riverside Drive in New York, or as He paced the terrace of the Hôtel du Parc at Thonon-les-Bains, overlooking the Lake of Geneva, or as He watched from Serpentine Bridge in London the pearly chain of lights beneath the trees stretching as far as the eye could see? Memories of the sorrows, the poverty, the overhanging doom of His earlier years; memories of His mother who sold her gold buttons to provide Him, His brother and His sister with sustenance, and who was forced, in her darkest hours, to place a handful of dry flour in the palm of His hand to appease His hunger; of His own childhood when pursued and derided by a mob of ruffians in the streets of Tihrán; of the damp and gloomy room, formerly a morgue, which He occupied in the barracks of ‘Akká and of His imprisonment in the dungeon of that city—memories such as these must surely have thronged His mind. Thoughts, too, must have visited Him of the Báb’s captivity in the mountain fastnesses of Ádhirbáyján [Persia], when at night time He was refused even a lamp, and of His cruel and tragic execution when hundreds of bullets riddled His youthful breast. Above all His thoughts must have centred on Bahá’u’lláh, Whom He loved so passionately and Whose trials He had witnessed

and had shared from His boyhood. The vermin-infested Síyáh-Chál [prison] of Tihrán; the bastinado inflicted upon Him in Ámul; the humble fare which filled His kashkúl while He [Bahá'u'lláh] lived for two years the life of a dervish in the mountains of Kurdistán; the days in Baghdád when He did not even possess a change of linen, and when His [Bahá'u'lláh's] followers subsisted on a handful of dates; His confinement behind the prison-walls of 'Akká, when for nine years even the sight of verdure was denied Him; and the public humiliation to which He was subjected at government headquarters in that city—pictures from the tragic past such as these must have many a time overpowered Him with feelings of mingled gratitude and sorrow, as He witnessed the many marks of respect, of esteem, and honour now shown Him ['Abdu'l-Bahá] and the Faith which he represented.'

One evening as He was being driven to fulfil His third engagement in one day, in the nation's capital at Washington, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was heard to exclaim:

'O Bahá'u'lláh! What hast Thou done? O Bahá'u'lláh! May my life be sacrificed for Thee! ... How full were Thy days with trials and tribulations! How severe the ordeals Thou didst endure! How solid the foundation Thou hast finally laid, and how glorious the banner Thou didst hoist!'

28. Farewell to America

The morning of 5 December 1912, was the day of yet another parting for Lua and her beloved

Master. The S.S. *Celtic* lay in the New York harbour ready to carry 'Abdu'l-Bahá away from these shores forever. He was saying farewell to all of His American friends. His face was a mosaic of beauty.

Suddenly a hush came over the crowded deck. Newspaper men, photographers and friends all turned their gaze on that one lone figure. In the silence, all that could be heard was the sound of distant ships, the occasional blast of a tug whistle, the distant rush of the great city, and the cry of the birds.

Then the Master began to speak.

The following eyewitness account of these last minutes aboard the *Celtic* was written by an American clergyman of the Unitarian Church, Howard Colby Ives. So great was the spiritual impact of his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so intense was the love which the Master kindled in his heart, that he left his church, and dedicated the remaining days of his life to teaching the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

For the last time in America, Howard Ives later wrote, that wonderful voice resounded across the deck of the S.S. *Celtic*:

'When the Master had finished speaking,' Ives recorded, 'He requested all present to come to Him that He might take their hands in a parting expression of love. How impressive that scene! How filled with a significance beyond words to express. The Master's majestic yet tender figure stood framed in the great circle of flowers with which the friends had surrounded Him as their parting gifts. How fragrant and beautiful it was with its atmosphere of

a world far removed from that of the sordid material world which encircled us on every side.

‘We slowly passed in front of him. To each He gave a handful of flowers, bestowing the last of the flowers upon the very last friend. To each ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke a few words of love and encouragement.’

For a still, still moment, the ship was a silent island as the friends looked longingly for the last time upon that wonderful face. The quiet rapture of that moment was shattered by a cry that stabbed every heart, ‘All visitors ashore!’

No one wanted to be the first to leave. Each one tried to be among the very last to go down the gangplank.

The friends gathered on the wharf. They looked up at the figure of their Master as the ship slowly moved out into the great river. The sun broke through the clouds like a giant searchlight from heaven flooding the deck. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stood at the rail. His silvery white hair and beard moved gently in the breeze. His erect, majestic figure was outlined clearly against the sky.

Farther and farther He was drawing away from them. Every one of them could feel the pull of his heart toward the ship with its precious cargo. As He moved slowly out of their sight, it seemed to those lonely, heart-broken onlookers as though the sun had ceased to shine and all of the birds had stopped their singing.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá looked back at that great stone city with its man-made mountains crowding the sky.

Who will ever know the thoughts that filled His heart as the ship drew away from America.

He, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, after forty years as a prisoner, had at long last fulfilled the prophecy His Father had made so many years before. Bahá’u’lláh had told Him that one day He would raise His voice in the Western world to summon its people to God. Every victory, every unexpected door that opened, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá attributed to Bahá’u’lláh, not to Himself. His Blessed Father had sustained and inspired Him at every step along that arduous path.

Now it was finished! Finished!

Perhaps ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s lips moved in a quiet prayer of thanksgiving: ‘God is Most Glorious! God is Most Glorious!’

Part V
In His footsteps

29. The flame spreads to other lands

For many long months Lua was separated from her beloved Master by an ocean. She prayed each day that she might be made worthy to serve Him.

One day when she returned home depressed with her lack of accomplishment in the pathway of the Cause of God, a letter was awaiting her. It was postmarked Palestine! The moment Lua touched it, she felt an 'inner prompting' toward some great event.

It held an exciting assignment from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Just as 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sailed from the East to the West to spread the Faith, He now summoned Lua to travel from West to East to do the same thing. He called upon Lua to carry the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to India.

She obeyed immediately.

When her assignment was completed, Lua, to her complete joy, returned not to America but to the Holy Land to be in the presence of the Master.

She had successfully accomplished her mission. Whatever 'Abdu'l-Bahá wanted undertaken, Lua was prompt to volunteer. The Master praised Lua's work in India and wrote to the West of her victories.

Because of her ceaseless teaching and travelling, particularly in Europe and America where she

planted the flag of the Faith in many hearts, the Master proclaimed her 'The Banner'.

Lua often sat at that 'blessed table' in the Holy Land. She sat at the feet of the Master and drank in as much as she could contain from the ocean of His wisdom. Following her teaching victories in India, Lua remained for seven months in the presence of her beloved Master.

On one occasion it is said that the Master told Lua that Bahá'u'lláh had chosen her for His work when she was but a little girl on the farm. He also said that in the days to come, her home in Hume, New York, would be a place of pilgrimage. And some time in the future, thousands would one day journey to that farm in upper New York where she had once run barefoot as a child.

'Abdu'l-Bahá showered her with such kindness and love that Lua felt her life had been too richly blessed with happiness. She felt an increasing need of participating in some of the suffering which had been the lot of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for half a century. His whole life had been a living martyrdom. Within Lua there now grew a great longing to share this martyrdom. After all, she was one of the 'spiritual descendants' of those heroic Dawn-Breakers of the Faith in Persia. More than twenty thousand of them had given their lives and stained the sands of Persia red with blood. Of what value was one small life?

Lua's spirit hungered, not to weep away its life in drops but, like a giant sky-rocket, to spill its treasures to the night in some great sudden sacrifice that might win new glories for the Faith.

Lua went to the Master and asked Him if He would permit her to become a martyr. The account of her constant pleading is told movingly and amusingly in the diary of Dr Yúnis Khán Afrúkhtih, a secretary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in those days. So eagerly did Lua desire to become a martyr to her Faith that she enlisted the help of some of the friends in the Holy Land.

Lua could no longer call upon her dear friend Juliet Thompson to plead with the Master, so she used her eloquence and charm to try and influence some of the Persian Bahá’ís who were with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to intercede for her. Those who refused to intercede, she asked to pray in the holy Shrines that she might be privileged to die for the Faith.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá heard her first request, he laughed with enjoyment. He looked upon her with much tenderness and love. When Lua persisted in her request, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá became silent and would not answer her. Finally, Lua entreated no more.

She wrote to some of her friends in America and spoke laughingly herself of her own intensity at this time. She said, ‘I made such a nuisance of myself with everyone, in my great desire to give my life for the Faith, that eventually every one of the friends was earnestly praying that I might in truth be granted my request, and the sooner the better.’

30. Following in His footsteps

One of the deepest longings of Lua’s life was that some day she might be permitted to follow in the

Master's footsteps, even if only for the shortest distance.

There is a touching story told in pilgrims' notes, although we could not find the original to substantiate it, which tells of the day that Lua was walking with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and some of the friends on the white sands of the sea near 'Akká.

Lua, it is said, suddenly became aware of the Master's tracks in the soft sand. She was walking a pace or two behind Him. Quite spontaneously she stepped behind 'Abdu'l-Bahá and began to trace His footsteps by placing her shoes one at a time in each of His footprints.

Perhaps it is only a fable, as Lua soon became a legend in her own time, and it is difficult to sort fact from fiction, but there is a lesson we all can learn from the story, whatever its origin.

Without turning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said sharply, 'What are you doing?'

Lua replied cheerily, 'I am following in your footsteps.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá was silent for some time. Then He repeated more forcefully, 'Lua, what are you doing?'

She said, 'I am walking in your footsteps, beloved Master.'

Without a word, 'Abdu'l-Bahá strode on.

Lua, it is said, felt a chill as she realized the utter futility and presumptuousness of such a weak instrument as herself ever daring to aspire to walk in the footsteps of the 'Mystery of God'.

Suddenly Lua felt an agonizing pain in her ankle. She looked down. She had been stung by a scorpion.

She cried out, but the Master did not turn or slow His stride.

Lua walked on with the utmost difficulty. Her ankle was swelling rapidly. The pain was becoming intense. But she clenched her teeth and forced herself to continue.

When the suffering had become almost unbearable, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned and came back.

‘This,’ He told her, ‘is what it means to walk in my footsteps.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá touched her head gently with His hand. Lua’s eyes were brimming with tears. She understood the lesson.

The Master turned and continued on His way, Lua limping after Him as best she could. She felt the pain gradually diminishing as she tried to keep up with her beloved Master.

It was at this time that one of the Bahá’ís staying in the Holy Land told Lua the story of a youthful Bahá’í named ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb. He, too, had longed earnestly to walk in the footsteps of his Beloved. About this story there could be no doubt, for it was verified by the Pen of Bahá’u’lláh Himself.

Lua listened with enraptured interest.

‘Abdu’l-Vahháb was from Shíráz. When he was living in Kázimayn, his love for Bahá’u’lláh became so overpowering that he left home and followed Bahá’u’lláh to Tihrán. He longed to be in Bahá’u’lláh’s presence once more. ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb yearned to walk in the footsteps of his Beloved.

Before ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb arrived in Tihrán, Bahá’u’lláh had been seized and arrested. Although history proved Him to be innocent of any wrongdoing, Bahá’u’lláh was paraded bareheaded, barefooted, and in chains for miles under the blazing sun. His hat was knocked off and His garments stripped from His body. He was stoned along the route. He was beaten by the mounted guards who escorted Him to prison. Finally they cast Him into a black sunless pit underground. There He was chained to the floor. His feet were put in stocks. His shoulders were weighted down by a huge heavy one-hundred-pound chain which tore His flesh and scarred Him for life.

When ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb arrived in Tihrán searching for Bahá’u’lláh, he, too, was arrested as a follower of this new religion. He was thrown into prison.

‘Abdu’l-Vahháb was heart-broken. His prayers had not been answered. Now he would remain a prisoner or—who knows—perhaps be slain as an innocent victim of prejudice, never again to look upon the face of Bahá’u’lláh. ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb feared that his longing to walk in the footsteps of that Blessed Beauty would never be realized. Surely, God had forsaken him.

‘Abdu’l-Vahháb was shoved down the stone steps of the Black Pit prison into that impenetrable darkness. He was chained to the other prisoners.

When ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb’s eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness, he turned to look at the prisoner beside him.

He looked into the eyes of Bahá’u’lláh!

He was chained to his Beloved, and that terrible dungeon with its awful stench of accumulating filth, its vermin, chains and threat of death, became a fragrant paradise.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself wrote of those hours spent with 'Abdu'l-Vahháb in the Síyáh-Chál (Black Pit) prison:

Every day Our gaolers, entering Our cell, would call the name of one of Our companions, bidding him arise and follow them to the foot of the gallows ...

We were awakened one night, ere break of day, by 'Abdu'l-Vahháb, who was bound with Us to the same chains. ... He asked Us whether We were awake, and proceeded to relate to Us his dream. 'I have this night,' he said, 'been soaring into a space of infinite vastness and beauty. I seemed to be uplifted on wings that carried me wherever I desired to go. A feeling of rapturous delight filled my soul. I flew in the midst of that immensity with a swiftness and ease that I cannot describe.'

Bahá'u'lláh looked with love upon 'Abdu'l-Vahháb. He said to him:

Today it will be your turn to sacrifice yourself for this Cause. May you remain firm and steadfast to the end. You will then find yourself soaring in that same limitless space of which you dreamed, traversing with the same ease and swiftness the realm of immortal sovereignty, and gazing with that same rapture upon the Infinite Horizon.

Bahá'u'lláh's words came true. That morning when the door was opened to let a shaft of sunlight down into the deep black pit, the gaoler made his way down the steps and called out a name.

“Abdu'l-Vahháb!”

Bahá'u'lláh wrote of ‘Abdu'l-Vahháb’s joy when he heard that fatal name called out, and was freed of his chains.

Bahá'u'lláh said:

Throwing off his chains, he sprang to his feet, embraced each of his fellow-prisoners, and, taking Us into his arms, pressed Us lovingly to his heart. That moment We discovered that he had no shoes to wear. We gave him Our own, and, speaking a last word of encouragement and cheer, sent him forth to the scene of his martyrdom. Later on, his executioner came to Us, praising in glowing language the spirit which that youth had shown.

‘Abdu'l-Vahháb had not only fulfilled his longing to walk in Bahá'u'lláh’s footsteps, to share His suffering. ‘Abdu'l-Vahháb had walked to his death in Bahá'u'lláh’s very shoes.

He had given up friends, fame, wealth, family, and finally life itself.

‘This,’ the Persian Bahá’ís told Lua, ‘is what it means to walk in the footsteps of your Beloved.’

To Lua, such a sacrifice was not a deterrent, it was a spur. The taste of affliction was as sweet as honey. She longed to share the countless agonies of Bahá'u'lláh and her beloved Master.

Instead of quenching her fire, the story of ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb poured oil on the flames. After all, she was a spiritual descendant of that illustrious Dawn-Breaker. If martyrdom was good enough for him, it was good enough for Lua.

Lua hoped that some day, somewhere, if only in the tiniest measure, her tribulations would, as Bahá’u’lláh has said of His own suffering, help lift the yoke of tyranny from off the necks of men.

31. Lua sees the Master for the last time

Lua was in the Holy Land with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for seven wonderful months in 1915, during the First World War.

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called Lua to Him. With great gentleness He told her that she must leave at once for America. Soon Germany would be at war with her country and she would no longer be able to receive His protection in Haifa.

Lua felt a chill of premonition when she heard His words. She knew they would never meet again.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá understood the anguish in Lua’s heart. He softened the pain of parting by reminding her once again of her great responsibility. It was her duty to awaken a sleeping America. She must be a Herald of the Covenant of God among the people of the West. She must return to America, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told her, and ceaselessly teach the Cause of God. This, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, was His dearest wish.

Lua knew there was no escape from this com-

mand. It was for this very purpose that she had been taught and trained by the Master. To whom much is given, from him much is expected. All of the love and the knowledge the Master had showered on Lua was not really hers at all. It belonged to those whom she had already taught and must yet teach.

Painfully aware of her own weaknesses, Lua asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to grant her the bounty of taking upon herself the sins of her children in the Faith. Perhaps in this way she could purify herself and release them from bondage.

‘Let me bear the weight of their sins,’ Lua begged ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘that they may be freed of this burden and be able to teach with pure spirit.’

Lua had learned her lesson of detachment. One precious conversation with the Master would remain with her always, locked forever in her memory, words spoken to Lua and a companion before they set off on their teaching journey to India. Lua has preserved that conversation in her own pilgrim notes.

‘What will you do if they dispute these teachings?’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked Lua.

‘I shall turn to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and call upon Him for spiritual confirmation. After repeating the Greatest Name of Bahá’u’lláh, I shall open my mouth and say what is given me to say.’

‘What will you do if they persecute you?’

‘I shall know it is a heavenly gift, and that the love of God is descending upon me.’

‘What will you do if they put you in prison?’

‘I shall thank God that I have walked in His path, and have at last been permitted to share what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has suffered for years.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was silent for a moment. He asked:

‘And what will you do if they kill you?’

‘I shall know that the first wish that I ever asked of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had been granted, and that I have been privileged to give my life that men may hear the Word of God.’

Lua’s eyes were filled with tears. She looked at her Beloved and said, ‘And the minute my soul is freed from my body, I shall fly to God from Whom I hope I shall never be separated through all eternity.’

There was a long silence. The Master’s eyes were closed. At length He said:

‘When one goes forth to teach, he should think of all these things. He must be prepared at all times, for whatever comes in the path of God.’

Lua clung to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s hand that last day, draining courage from it. Her eyes lingered on that countenance she loved more than all else on earth. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew her heart. His eyes were especially kind that day. His words were particularly tender and loving. His smile was surpassingly sweet.

Lua turned and sobbing quietly left His presence, but her heart remained. She would never again look upon that beloved face, nor hear that wondrous voice, nor drink in that matchless wisdom, nor be sheltered by the warmth of that protecting spirit. She was leaving. She was leaving her beloved

Master, never to see Him in this world again. Never again!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá demonstrated the confidence He had in Lua in a special Tablet [Letter] which He addressed to America. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá commented on Lua’s successful work in India, and called upon the American Bahá’ís to show her their love.

He wrote:

‘To the beloved of God in America—On them be glory and bounty!

‘The maid-servant of God, Lua, was a long time occupied in India in spreading the fragrances of the love of God. She is now ready to return to the regions of America. Show her every consideration. She is firm in the Covenant of love. In reality she worked vigorously during her sojourn in India, and she is worthy of love.

‘Haifa, 27 August 1915

(signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás.’

Lua carried that precious Tablet with her as she hurried to her ship. She was rushing into the future, toward America, impatient to teach and teach and teach.

Lua knew that this alone could help to fill the utter loneliness and hunger for the days that were never to return again.

32. War encircles the flame

As that ‘land of unfading splendour’ disappeared into the haze of the sea, perhaps Lua relived her long-ago visit when she looked upon the Master

for the first time. Was it possible that it had all happened eighteen years ago? It seemed like yesterday.

Prominent among her memories must have been the excitement and drama of those first Bahá'í meetings in Paris which followed that pilgrimage, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent May Maxwell to open Europe to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Imagine!

For the first time on this planet, an entire continent was being introduced, in terms it could understand, to a Faith which was soon to encircle the world. People were being told that Christ had returned. The Promised One of all religions had appeared!

These noble souls, heroines and heroes, were the forerunners in the West of a tidal wave of teaching that in little over half a century was to establish centres in some fifty thousand places in the world.

Their spiritual children, and their children's children, would soon raise up over one hundred National Spiritual Assemblies representing more than three hundred countries, territories and dominions. These two partners, the communities of believers from *the cradle of the Faith in Persia and the cradle of its Administrative Order* in America, would be leaders in establishing on a local, national and international foundation the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth.

They, with their fellow Bahá'ís in all lands, would participate in the first Bahá'í World Convention, and the election of the Universal House of

Justice, that Supreme Administrative Body called for by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh Himself.

The excitement of those early days in Paris became even more enthralling when 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent them one of the most gifted and brilliant teachers of the East, Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl. His task was to deepen and strengthen 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 'western children'.

This peerless messenger from 'Abdu'l-Bahá opened new horizons of understanding, and helped prepare them for their world-encircling mission of teaching.

Who would have foreseen this mighty harvest during those beginning days in Paris? Lua certainly, and May Maxwell, and perhaps a handful of those other God-intoxicated teachers who made the capital city of France sing with their song of the kingdom.

One can almost hear Lua, as she stands at the rail of her ship, looking back for the last time at Mount Carmel, and dreaming of those early days—the first pilgrimage; the night she told her mother about the Faith; above all, the Master's visit to America. Down the corridors of time we can hear her quietly whisper: 'Such days! Such days!'

Agnes Alexander, one of only three believers to be mentioned by name in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, was there at the Paris meetings. She soon left for the Orient to ignite the light of the Bahá'í Faith in Hawaii and Japan. She wrote with a special tenderness of those days of rapture:

'An atmosphere of pure light pervaded the Paris

meetings, so much so that one was transported, as it were, from the world of man to that of God.’

Juliet Thompson, Lua’s dear friend Julie, also attended and told of the love that bound Lua, May—all of them—together:

‘That Paris group was so deeply united in love and faith—so carried away, so intoxicated with love for the beloved Master; our great teacher, Mírzá Abu’l-Fadl, so heavenly wise—that those days were the days of miracle, of all but incredible confirmations.’

Who would have dreamed that in such a short time the earthly dust of the ‘immortal Lua’ and that of the ‘illustrious’ Abu’l-Fadl—they who had met each other in Paris—would lie beneath a single monument along the shores of the silver Nile in Egypt.

Or, that the brilliant, eloquent child of Lua’s heart and tongue, May Maxwell, would also win a martyr’s crown in far off Argentina, a country so remote from her native land.

Both Lua and May, obedient to the summons of their beloved Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, had arisen to teach the Cause of God with every breath of their lives. They had become ‘pieces of iron’ in ‘the midst of the fire’, filled with the spirit. Their candles had wept away their lives, drop by drop, and ‘shed imperishable lustre’ upon the American Bahá’í community.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was later to write:

‘Among the miracles which distinguish this Dispensation is this, that women have evinced a greater

boldness than men when enlisted in the ranks of the Faith.'

Both Lua and May had been privileged to return to that 'blessed spot' on a 'second visit' with their 'banners flying, like soldiers, in gladness and triumph'. They went out again into the battle for a final time, both to lay down their lives on behalf of their precious Faith so that people in all lands might know about Bahá'u'lláh, the Redeemer of men, the only hope for present-day society.

Such memories of the past and visions of the future must have inspired and encouraged Lua as she sailed away that final time from the land of her heart's desire, from that 'snow-white spot', that 'nest of all the Prophets of God'.

Lua never reached America. She sailed from Haifa with two hundred and ninety refugees on board the United States cruiser *Des Moines* and finally reached Egypt via the Island of Crete.

When Lua reached Egypt, she became desperately ill, and was forced to leave the ship. While she was in Egypt the war encircled her.

But Lua's heart, impatient to be off this planet now that it could no longer be with the Master, braved every danger.

33. The Angel of Death

Lua's sister writes the following account of those last days in Cairo, Egypt:

'There she nursed the sick and wounded with every bit of her limited strength. The soldiers

adored her and called her “the Lady in Blue”.’ Because of her dress.

In the last years of her life, Lua always wore a simple costume, blue in colour and very conservative. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had earlier suggested a more moderate dress and Lua had obeyed at once, never to change the style.

A friend whom Lua had introduced to the Faith in California described Lua’s ethereal look with her large blue eyes, brown hair, fair skin. The impact was softened by her temperate dress and often proved a ‘safeguard to her during many hazardous experiences in many countries as she travelled in her service to the Faith’.

This friend has written: ‘Later in San Francisco Lua gave me a pair of long white kid gloves, the last remnant of her finery which she had enjoyed so much.’

The days during which Lua had lived in both worlds were gone. For years, her heart had been anchored only in the Kingdom.

Lua kept her failing health a secret from all. She had been violently stricken with fever while in India. This proved too much for an always frail body. Lua’s strong spirit had hidden her delicate health from almost everyone throughout her life. But the Master was always aware of Lua’s acute suffering. She rose above illness and pain to carry out His command to teach. At one particularly desperate time of illness in Lua’s life, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is reported to have said, ‘I told the Angel of Death to stay away.’

The fever now had greatly sapped her strength and gravely afflicted her heart. While working at intense pitch during those last hectic weeks in a world gone mad with war, Lua contracted pneumonia.

She rallied for a short while, but her spirit would not let her rest. She felt too keenly the shortness of time. She could think of but one word: 'Teach!'

One day Lua said to some of her friends, 'I am sure that until the last days of our lives we shall be learning lessons, for this world is a school from which we graduate only when we leave it. I shall be glad when the last days come, and the school is forever (as far as I am concerned) dismissed.'

Then she looked at the picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which hung on the wall and said, 'But His will, not mine, be done: For all I ever want to do is His will and to be severed from all save God.'

During those days, Lua was busily writing 'an account of my last months with 'Abdu'l-Bahá'. She wrote to her fellow-Bahá'ís in America telling them that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was well.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had given Lua the assignment of carrying the latest news to the Bahá'ís in Africa, Europe and America.

'Now is the time,' He told her, 'for you to go and give news to the friends in Egypt, Europe and America. It is a long time that they are without any word, and I desire to send you to them, after which you are to go and teach.'

Lua reached Egypt, was delayed by the war, so at once she began her teaching work there in Africa. She wrote to America, apologizing for her delay.

‘I do not just yet know when I shall reach America,’ she told them, ‘as I have some work to do in France first ...

‘I am sent forth again “to herald the Covenant” by its holy Centre [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], and I shall do it with His divine assistance better and more powerfully than I have ever done ...

‘Please say to all the friends that I love them all, and I am ready to meet them in the spirit of the Centre of God’s holy Covenant which is naught save pure, spiritual divine love! I wish everybody success in the service of His Great Cause, and ask them to pray for me—the least and most unworthy of all His faithful servants ...

‘Yours in the service and love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,
(signed) Lua
Port Said, Egypt
21 Sept. 1915.’

Although her health was failing, Lua increased the tempo of her teaching activities. The poorer she felt, the more intense became her determination to serve.

Lua’s friends pleaded with her to rest. She smiled and said, ‘The Master does not rest. He said, “Sometimes material rest can deprive us of spiritual rest.”’

Late one spring day in Cairo, Lua returned to her home. She had spent many long hours instructing some students who were eager to hear more about the Bahá’í Faith. Lua was very weak and tired, but in spite of this she had never looked more radiant and gay.

Lua bade her friends a loving good night and went to her room. A short time later they heard a sharp cry of pain. Lua was in great anguish. Even then she thought of only one thing, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She called out loudly three times: ‘God is Most Glorious! God is Most Glorious! God is Most Glorious!’

This time the Angel of Death did not stay away. Lua was not quite forty-five when she died, so very young and so very beautiful.

34. ‘Lua, who shall live through all the ages’

Lua had written often to her dear friend ‘Julie’ during those last days. When Miss Thompson received word of Lua’s passing it brought back memories of that joyous day long past when both she and Lua had been with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in New York. She has recorded that moment for history:

‘Lua knelt before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and offered our lives for the Faith. “From this moment on,” Lua told the Master, “Julie and I dedicate our lives to Thee. And we beg at last to die in Thy path. Don’t we, Julie?”

Julie never had a chance to answer. Lua was sweeping them both onto the field of martyrdom. Lua couldn’t conceive of a Bahá’í who didn’t long to shed that ‘crimson ink’ in the path of Bahá’u’lláh.

Juliet tells how eagerly Lua offered both their lives for the Master.

“We want to drink the cup of martyrdom. Don’t we, Julie?” Before I could answer, Lua continued: “O beloved Master, it would be so good for

the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh if two Americans could die for the Faith! Please grant it!" She turned to me and said, "Take hold of His robe, Julie, and beseech!"

The Master said, "Very good." But this did not satisfy Lua. "Say yes, Master!" she begged. "Oh, Julie, beg Him to say yes!"

"I accept the dedication of your lives now," 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them. "The rest will be determined later."

'Now it has been determined. 'Abdu'l-Bahá once said to me, "Lua has a tender heart." That tender heart, too anguished, suddenly ceased to beat.'

In one of the last letters she ever wrote, Lua addressed these words to May Maxwell whom she had brought into the Faith in Paris in 1898:

"Thus let him who is in the house-top not come down, and him who is in the field not turn back." For each one must begin in whatever place he finds himself to face facts and conditions as they are, and know that the present environment is the best for his future, be it in the fields, all fresh and green, or the desert with the dreary burning sands. The final goal to be attained is "Severance from all else save God". And in His great mercy He puts each one in the place where the painful process may be quickest and best accomplished. Hence I am in Egypt, and you are among the snowdrifts of Canada ... My only hope, aim, or ambition was to go to America and to do what 'Abdu'l-Bahá desired me to do. No one will ever know save Him in this world what it would have meant had I accom-

plished it ... It seems that God does not accept my life as a sacrifice in His path, yet I long for it with all my soul ... If I cannot attain it, all I ask is that you may all succeed where I failed.’

The link that bound Lua’s heart to that of May Maxwell was unique and precious. It is small wonder that when the first word of Lua’s death reached her, May wrote an eloquent tribute to this great Bahá’í teacher and Herald of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Great and wonderful were [Lua’s] qualities—in her own person she bore the sins and weaknesses of us all, and redeeming herself she redeemed us. She broke the path through the untrod forest: ... she cast her soul and body into the stream and perished making the bridge by which we cross ... The passion of Divine love that consumed her heart shall light the hearts of mankind forever and forever.’

‘For hours I have seen Lua, the woman, the child,’ May wrote, ‘all love and tenderness, dying far away—alone. Far from the land where she sowed the seed from the Atlantic to the Pacific—from the land where she arose like the dawning star heralding the light of Bahá’u’lláh in those days when the Occident lay frozen in the grasp of materialism—and far from all those who should have loved her and cherished her as a priceless gift from God.’

‘I believe,’ May wrote, ‘that the last time Lua left her Beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá she died to all save God and took the “step of the soul” by which the spirit of truth and reality dawned in the Cause in America.’

May saw a ‘victorious Lua, majestic in her death—the Lua who shall live through all ages’ and at the same time saw Lua, the woman, the eager child of the Covenant hungering for ways, however small, in which she could serve her beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. May’s pen was tender and sad as she wrote:

‘I could only see her frail form, her lovely, sensitive face, her pleading child’s eyes. I could only hear the cry of her soul, her yearning for sacrifice in the Path of God. Without home, money, or any earthly hope or refuge—after her years of suffering, service and sacrifice, she attained her supreme desire and lay, at last, a martyr!’

35. A martyr’s crown

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was filled with great sorrow when the news of Lua’s death reached Him.

The Master was walking one afternoon along the shores of the Sea of Galilee when He received the tragic ‘news of the death of the beloved Lua’.

One of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s secretaries has recalled the deep sorrow the Master felt at the passing of this great Bahá’í teacher.

‘He was deeply affected,’ he wrote, ‘and felt more than any of us this great loss. Since that day I have heard Him more than a hundred times exclaiming with a moving voice: “What a loss! What a loss! What a loss!”

In a letter which this same secretary of the Master sent to America it was pointed out how ‘unique’ a teacher Lua had been.

She was one of the very earliest Bahá’ís in

America to travel extensively and raise the call of the Kingdom.

She was one of the very first pilgrims from the West to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in ‘Akká.

She ‘travelled throughout the continents of America, Europe, Asia and Africa to spread the Word of God.’

She brought many outstanding souls into the Faith, both men and women, who themselves carried on her work with skill and enthusiasm in all parts of the world.

She was the only ‘believer who visited the Sháh of Persia years ago in Paris and interceded’ on behalf of the Bahá’ís in that land, as instructed by the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Lua was a disciple of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She was ‘taught by Him, educated by Him, and sent out by Him’ to proclaim the Bahá’í Faith to the world.

Lua was ‘one of the very few souls who visited the Holy Land seven or eight times, lived in the blessed household for months at a time, and was considered as one of the members of the holy family, one of the daughters of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.’

All those who knew Lua’s true worth were to echo those words of the Master: ‘What a loss!’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá cabled to her friends in America:

‘The maid servant of God, Lua, enkindled with the fire of His love, has passed away. In the latter days of her life, the heart disease with which she had been afflicted became greatly aggravated.’ He prayed that God would grant the soul of Lua a palace for a home.

Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called upon the American believers to rise up and follow Lua’s example. He called her a ‘Herald of the Covenant’, and praised her highly for following His command to ‘Go forth and proclaim this Faith’.

‘Lua, that blessed leaf,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, ‘has been the cause of guidance to many a soul, for she was endowed with a heart that was attracted, a tongue that was eloquent, and she spent her time day and night teaching. At present she is calling from the Kingdom saying, “O ye my children! Do ye know what bounty I have attained?”’

When her remains were transferred to their final resting-place, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, announced to the entire Bahá’í world this event, describing her in these terms:

‘The immortal Lua, mother-teacher of the American Bahá’í community, herald of the dawn of the Day of the Covenant ...’

And still today her voice calls out from every land. It speaks through those whose hearts were touched by her, the mother-teacher of the West. Her spiritual children, and her children’s children, enkindled by her flame lift up their heads in love and delight whenever her name is spoken. They have taken up the torch and will hold it aloft enkindling new fires of teaching in every land, until the entire planet is illumined with the light of Bahá’u’lláh.

So it is that Lua still teaches on earth through hearts which she awakened. They can hear her voice call out that echo of Táhirih: ‘I am the bugle! I am the bell!’

Lua, homeless on earth, now has in the world on high her 'palace'. This is the promise of her beloved Master.

Silent in her shrine, her golden eloquence forever stilled on earth, Lua sleeps beneath the dust of a quiet hill in Egypt. Her simple monument looks across the silver Nile to where the setting sun disappears behind the ancient pyramids, those tombs of long-forgotten kings.

Far from her native land, this restless spirit, this flame of God, the 'immortal Lua' achieved her heart's desire and won a martyr's crown.

A final tribute

One hundred years ago, 1 November 1871, that ‘herald’ of the Bahá’í Faith, the ‘immortal Lua’ was born. In 1971, Bahá’ís throughout America and Canada honoured her memory in thanksgiving for the gift of ‘life’ she bestowed upon so many of them.

It is only fitting that this all too inadequate account of her dramatic life should close with this final tribute from the Pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Master Lua loved so dearly.

The following are the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which will remain forever as the balance in which we may weigh the life of this heroine of God:

‘Supplication for the attracted maid-servant of God, Lua, who ascended to the Supreme Concourse—Upon her be greeting and praise!’

‘He is God!

‘O Lord! O Lord! Verily Thy maid-servant who was attracted with the fragrances of Thy Holiness, enkindled with the fire of Thy Love, the herald of Thy Name, the spreader of Thy Signs among Thy people, ascended to Thee with humility and lowliness, trusting in Thee with all her heart, liberated from all worldly ties and attractions, hoping for Thy Universal Favour and Mercy, desiring to

enter Thy radiant Presence, supplicating Thy all-encircling Bounty, and begging for the descent of Thy glorious Bestowals!

‘O Lord! Exalt her station, submerge her in the ocean of Thy Compassion and establish her in the midst of the Paradise of Immortality, in the Universe of Lights, the Centre of the Beatific Mysteries.

‘O Lord! She believed in Thee, chanted Thy verses, turned her face toward Thee with all her heart; her spirit was rejoiced through Thy glad-tidings and her soul was purified through the fire of Thy Love. Then amidst the concourse of humanity, she arose in the promotion of Thy Word, suffered every thirsty one to drink from the goblet of Thy Guidance and healed every sick one with the antidote of Thy Knowledge. In Thy Path she travelled to distant countries and remote regions and gave the good-news of Thy Kingdom throughout vast and spacious continents—until through the difficulties that she endured in Thy Path, her very flesh and bones were melted, diseases and sicknesses attacked her, her frail body failed her, her nerves and muscles weakened their functions and her heart became the target of conflicting ailments. Then while hoping for the immortal life, the eternal existence, she abandoned this mortal, ephemeral world.

‘O Lord! Grant her a palace in the neighbourhood of Thy Most Great Mercy; cause her to dwell in the gardens of Thy paradise, the Most High; illumine her countenance with the effulgence of Thy good-pleasure, in the Kingdom of Thy Glory; usher her into the heaven of Thy Meeting and

suffer her to live everlastingly in the assemblage of transfiguration, whose refulgent lights are shining upon the world of hearts and the realm of consciousness.

‘Verily, Thou art the Forgiving, verily Thou art the Pardoner, and verily Thou art the Merciful of the Most Merciful!

‘(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás.’

Quotations are reproduced as in the original texts.