

CHAPTER III

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CHAPTER III

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THE DECLARATION OF THE BAB'S MISSION

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The death of Siyyid Kazim was the signal for renewed activity on the part of his enemies. Athirst for leadership, and emboldened by his removal and the consequent dismay of his followers, they reasserted their claims and prepared to realise their ambitions. For a time, fear and anxiety filled the hearts of Siyyid Kazim's faithful disciples, but with the return of Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i from the highly successful mission with which he had been entrusted by his teacher, their gloom was dispelled.

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It was on the first day of Muharram, in the year 1260 A.H., that Mulla Husayn came back to Karbila. He cheered and strengthened the disconsolate disciples of his beloved chief, reminded them of his unfailing promise, and pleaded for unrelaxing vigilance and unremitting effort in their search for the concealed Beloved. Living in the close neighbourhood of the house the Siyyid had occupied, he, for three days, was engaged continually in receiving visits from a considerable number of mourners who hastened to convey to him, as the leading representative of the Siyyid's disciples, the expression of their distress and sorrow. He afterwards summoned a group of his most distinguished and trusted fellow-disciples and enquired about the expressed wishes and the last exhortations of their departed leader. They told him that, repeatedly and emphatically, Siyyid Kazim had bidden them quit their homes, scatter far and wide, purge their hearts from every idle desire, and dedicate themselves to the quest of Him to whose advent he had so often alluded. "He told us," they said, "that the Object of our quest was now<begin_page48>revealed. The veils that intervened between you and Him are such as only you can remove by your devoted search. Nothing short of prayerful endeavour, of purity of motive, of singleness of mind, will enable you to tear them asunder. Has not God revealed in His Book: `Whoso maketh efforts for Us, in Our ways will We guide them'?"

"Why, then," Mulla Husayn observed, "have you chosen to tarry in Karbila? Why is it that you have not dispersed, and arisen to carry out his earnest plea?" "We acknowledge our failure," was their reply; "to your greatness we all bear witness. Such is our confidence in you, that if you claim to be the promised One, we shall all readily and unquestionably submit. We herein pledge our loyalty and obedience to whatever you bid us perform." "God forbid!" exclaimed Mulla Husayn. "Far be it from His glory that I, who am but dust, should be compared to Him who is the Lord of Lords! Had you been conversant with the tone and language of Siyyid Kazim, you never would have uttered such words. Your first obligation, as well as mine, is to arise and carry out, both in the spirit and in the letter, the dying message of our beloved chief." He arose instantly from his seat, and went directly to Mirza Hasan-i-Gawhar, Mirza Muhit, and other well-known figures among the disciples of Siyyid Kazim. To each and all he fearlessly delivered the parting message of his chief, emphasised the pressing character of their duty, and urged them to arise and fulfil it. To his plea they returned evasive and unworthy answers. "Our enemies," one of them remarked, "are many and powerful. We must remain in this city and guard the vacant seat of our departed chief." Another observed: "It is incumbent upon me to stay and care for the children whom the Siyyid has left behind." Mulla Husayn immediately recognised the futility of his efforts. Realising the degree of their folly, their blindness and ingratitude, he spoke to them no more. He retired, leaving them to their idle pursuits.

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Mulla Husayn, having acquitted himself of the obligation he felt to urge and awaken his fellow-disciples, set out from Karbila for Najaf. With him were Muhammad-Hasan, his brother, and Muhammad-Baqir, his nephew, both of whom had accompanied him ever since his visit to his native town of Bushruih, in the province of Khurasan. Arriving at the Masjid-i-Kufih, Mulla Husayn decided to spend forty days in that place, where he led a life of retirement and prayer. By his fasts and vigils he prepared himself for the holy adventure upon which he was soon to embark. In the exercise of these acts of worship, his brother alone was associated with him, while his nephew, who attended to their daily needs, observed the fasts, and in his hours of leisure joined them in their devotions.

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This cloistered calm with which they were surrounded was, after a few days, unexpectedly interrupted by the arrival of Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, one of the foremost disciples of Siyyid Kazim. He, together with twelve other companions, arrived at the Masjid-i-Kufih, where he found his fellow-disciple Mulla Husayn immersed in contemplation and prayer. Mulla `Ali was endowed with such vast learning, and was so deeply conversant with the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad, that many regarded him as even superior to Mulla Husayn. On several occasions he

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He could not, however, tarry longer in Bushihr. Drawn as if by a magnet which seemed to attract him irresistibly towards the north, he proceeded to Shiraz. Arriving at the gate of that city, he instructed his brother and his nephew to proceed directly to the Masjid-i-Ilkhani, and there to remain until his arrival. He expressed the hope that, God willing, he would arrive in time to join them in their evening prayer.

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On that very day, a few hours before sunset, whilst walking outside the gate of the city, his eyes fell suddenly upon a Youth of radiant countenance, who wore a green turban and who, advancing towards him, greeted him with a smile of loving welcome. He embraced Mulla Husayn with tender affection as though he had been his intimate and lifelong friend. Mulla Husayn thought Him at first to be a disciple of Siyyid Kazim who, on being informed of his approach to Shiraz, had come out to welcome him.

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Mirza Ahmad-i-Qazvini, the martyr, who on several occasions had heard Mulla Husayn recount to the early believers the story of his moving and historic interview with the Bab, related to me the following: "I have heard Mulla Husayn repeatedly and graphically describe the circumstances of that remarkable interview: `The Youth who met me outside the gate of Shiraz overwhelmed me with expressions of affection and loving-kindness. He extended to me a warm invitation to visit His home, and there refresh myself after the fatigues of my

journey. I prayed to be excused, pleading that my<begin_page53>two companions had already arranged for my stay in that city, and were now awaiting my return. "Commit them to the care of God," was His reply; "He will surely protect and watch over them." Having spoken these words, He bade me follow Him. I was profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange Youth spoke to me. As I followed Him, His gait, the charm of His voice, the dignity of His bearing, served to enhance my first impressions of this unexpected meeting.

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"We soon found ourselves standing at the gate of a house of modest appearance. He knocked at the door, which was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant. "Enter therein in peace, secure," were His words as He crossed the threshold<begin_page54>and motioned me to follow Him. His invitation, uttered with power and majesty, penetrated my soul. I thought it a good augury to be addressed in such words, standing as I did on the threshold of the first house I was entering in Shiraz, a city the very atmosphere of which had produced already an indescribable impression upon me. Might not my visit to this house, I thought to myself, enable me to draw nearer to the Object of my quest? Might it not hasten the termination of a period of intense longing, of strenuous search, of increasing anxiety, which such a quest involves? As I entered the house and followed my Host to His chamber, a feeling of unutterable joy invaded

was greatly surprised, and politely observed: "He whose advent we await is a Man of unsurpassed holiness, and the Cause He is to reveal, a Cause of tremendous power. Many and diverse are the requirements which He who claims to be its visible embodiment must needs fulfil. How often has Siyyid Kazim referred to the vastness of the knowledge of the promised One! How often did he say: `My own knowledge is but a drop compared with that with which He has been endowed. All my attainments are but a speck of dust in the face of the immensity of His knowledge. Nay, immeasurable is the difference!'" No sooner had those words dropped from my lips than I found myself seized with fear and remorse, such as I could neither conceal nor explain. I bitterly reprovved myself, and resolved at that very moment to alter my attitude and to soften my tone. I vowed to God that should my Host again refer to the subject, I would, with the utmost humility, answer and say: "If you be willing to substantiate your claim, you will most assuredly deliver me from the anxiety and suspense which so heavily oppress my soul. I shall truly be indebted to you for such deliverance." When I first started upon my quest, I determined to regard<begin_page58>[Illustrations: VIEWS OF THE UPPER ROOM OF THE BAB'S HOUSE IN SHIRAZ WHERE HE DECLARED HIS MISSION.]<begin_page59>the two following standards as those whereby I could ascertain the truth of whosoever might claim to be the promised Qa'im. The first was a treatise which I had myself composed, bearing upon the abstruse and hidden teachings propounded by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. Whoever seemed to me capable of unravelling the mysterious allusions made in that treatise, to him I would next submit my second request, and would ask him to reveal, without the least hesitation or reflection, a commentary on the Surah of Joseph, in a style and language entirely different from the prevailing standards of the time. I had previously requested Siyyid Kazim, in private, to write a commentary on that same Surah, which he refused, saying: "This is, verily, beyond me. He, that great One, who comes after me will, unasked, reveal it for you. That commentary will constitute one of the weightiest testimonies of His truth, and one of the clearest evidences of the loftiness of His position."

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"I was revolving these things in my mind, when my distinguished Host again remarked: "Observe attentively. Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Kazim be none other than I?" I thereupon felt impelled to present to Him a copy of the treatise which I had with me. "Will you," I asked Him, "read this book of mine and look at its pages with indulgent eyes? I pray you to overlook my weaknesses and failings." He graciously complied with my wish. He opened the book, glanced at certain passages, closed it, and began to address me. Within a few minutes He had, with characteristic vigour and charm, unravelled all its mysteries and resolved all its problems. Having to my entire satisfaction accomplished, within so short a time, the task I had expected Him to perform, He further expounded to me certain truths which could be found neither in the reported sayings of the imams of the Faith nor in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. These truths, which I had never heard before, seemed to be endowed with refreshing vividness and power. "Had you not been My guest," He afterwards<begin_page60>[Illustrations: HIS BEDCHAMBER. HIS MOTHER'S ROOM. HIS SITTING ROOM. VIEWS OF THE BAB'S HOUSE IN SHIRAZ.]<begin_page61>observed, "your position would indeed have been a grievous one. The all-encompassing grace of God has saved you. It is for God to test His servants, and not for His servants to judge Him in accordance with their deficient standards. Were I to fail to resolve your perplexities, could the Reality that shines within Me be regarded as powerless, or My knowledge be accused as faulty? Nay, by the righteousness of God! it behoves, in this day, the peoples and nations of both the East and the West to hasten to this threshold, and here seek to obtain the reviving grace of the Merciful. Whoso hesitates will indeed be in grievous loss. Do not the peoples of the earth testify that the fundamental purpose of their creation is the knowledge and adoration of God? It behoves them to arise, as earnestly and spontaneously as you have arisen, and to seek with determination and constancy their promised Beloved." He then proceeded to say: "Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Surah of Joseph." He took up His pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire Surah of Mulk, the first chapter of His commentary on the Surah of Joseph. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen. Not once did He pause till the Surah of

Mulk was finished. I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation. At last I reluctantly arose from my seat and begged leave to depart. He smilingly bade me be seated, and said: "If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: `This poor youth has lost his mind.'" At that moment the clock registered two hours and eleven minutes after sunset. That night, the eve of the fifth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H., corresponded with the eve preceding the sixty-fifth day after Naw-ruz, which was also the eve of the sixth day of Khurdad, of the year Nahang. "This night," He declared, "this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals. Render thanks to God for having graciously assisted you to attain your heart's desire, and for having quaffed from the sealed wine of His utterance. `Well is it with them that attain thereunto."

و در آنوقت ساعت دو ساعت و یازده دقیقه
بعد از غروب آفتاب ثبت شد. آن شب، شب
پنجمین روز جمادی اول، در سال ۱۲۶۰ هجری
موافق بود با شب پیش از شصت و پنجمین روز
پس از نوروز، که همچنین شب ششمین روز
خرداد، در سال ناهنگ بود. "این شب،" او
اعلام کرد، "این ساعت در روزهای آینده،
به عنوان یکی از بزرگترین و مهم‌ترین جشن‌ها
تقدیر خواهد شد. تشکر کنید از خداوند
که شما را در رسیدن به آرزوی قلبی‌تان
و نوشیدن از جام هدیه‌ش یاری داد. «خوب
است برای آن‌هایی که به آن دست می‌یابند.»

- در آنوقت ساعت دو ساعت و یازده دقیقه
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و در آنوقت ساعت دو ساعت و یازده دقیقه
بعد از غروب آفتاب ثبت شد. آن شب، شب
پنجمین روز جمادی اول، در سال ۱۲۶۰ هجری
موافق بود با شب پیش از شصت و پنجمین روز
پس از نوروز، که همچنین شب ششمین روز
خرداد، در سال ناهنگ بود. "این شب،" او
اعلام کرد، "این ساعت در روزهای آینده،
به عنوان یکی از بزرگترین و مهم‌ترین جشن‌ها
تقدیر خواهد شد. تشکر کنید از خداوند
که شما را در رسیدن به آرزوی قلبی‌تان
و نوشیدن از جام هدیه‌ش یاری داد. «خوب
است برای آن‌هایی که به آن دست می‌یابند.»

- در آنوقت ساعت دو ساعت و یازده دقیقه
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"Sleep had departed from me that night. I was enthralled by the music of that voice which rose and fell as He<begin_page63>chanted; now swelling forth as He revealed verses of the Qayyumu'l-Asma, again acquiring ethereal, subtle harmonies as He uttered the prayers He was revealing. At the end of each invocation, He would repeat this verse: "Far from the glory of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, be that which His creatures affirm of Him! And peace be upon His Messengers! And praise be to God, the Lord of all beings!"

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"He then addressed me in these words: "O thou who art the first to believe in Me! Verily I say, I am the Bab, the Gate of God, and thou art the Babu'l-Bab, the gate of that Gate. Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognise the truth of My Revelation. Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to find Me. And when their number is complete, one of them must needs be chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. There I shall deliver the Message of God to the Sharif of Mecca. I then shall return to Kufih, where again, in the Masjid of that holy city, I shall manifest His Cause. It is incumbent upon you not to divulge, either to your companions or to any other soul, that which you

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"That same morning, at sunrise, soon after my return from the home of the Bab, Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, accompanied by the same number of companions as indicated to me, arrived at the Masjid-i-Ilkhani. I immediately set about to provide the means for their comfort. One night, a few days after their arrival, Mulla `Ali, as the spokesman of his companions, gave vent to feelings which he could no longer repress. "You know well," he said, "how great is our confidence in you. We bear you such loyalty that if you should claim to be the promised Qa'im we would all unhesitatingly submit. Obedient to your summons, we have forsaken our<begin_page67>homes and have gone forth in search of our promised Beloved. You were the first to set us all this noble example. We have followed in your footsteps. We have determined not to relax in our efforts until we find the Object of our quest. We have followed you to this place, ready to acknowledge whomsoever you accept, in the hope of seeking the shelter of His protection and of passing successfully through the tumult and agitation that must needs signalise the last Hour. How is it that we now see you teaching the people and conducting their prayers and devotions with the utmost tranquillity? Those evidences of agitation and expectancy seem to have vanished from your countenance. Tell us, we beseech you, the reason, that we too may be delivered from our present state of suspense and doubt." "Your companions," I gently observed, "may naturally attribute my peace and composure to the ascendancy which I seem to have acquired in this city. The truth is far from that. The world, I assure you, with all its pomp and seductions, can never lure away this Husayn of Bushruih from his Beloved. Ever since the beginning of this holy enterprise upon which I have embarked, I have vowed to seal, with my life-blood, my own destiny. For His sake I have welcomed immersion in an ocean of tribulation. I yearn not for the things of this world. I crave only the good pleasure of my Beloved. Not until I shed my blood for His name will the fire that glows within me be quenched. Please God you may live to witness that day.

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On the third night of his retirement, whilst wrapt in prayer, Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami had a vision. There appeared before his eyes a light, and, lo! that light moved off before him. Allured by its splendour, he followed it, till at last it led him to his promised Beloved. At that very hour, in the mid-watches of the night, he arose and, exultant with joy and radiant with gladness, opened the door of his chamber and hastened to Mulla Husayn. He threw himself into the arms of his revered companion. Mulla Husayn most lovingly embraced him and said: "Praise be to God who hath guided us hither! We had not been guided had not God guided us!"

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That very morning, at break of day, Mulla Husayn, followed by Mulla `Ali, hastened to the residence of the Bab. At the entrance of His house they met the faithful Ethiopian servant, who immediately recognised them and greeted them in these words: "Ere break of day, I was summoned to the presence of my Master, who instructed me to open the door of the house and to stand expectant at its threshold. `Two guests,' He said, `are to arrive early this morning. Extend to them in My name a warm welcome. Say to them from Me: "Enter therein in the name of God.""

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The first meeting of Mulla `Ali with the Bab, which was analogous to the meeting with Mulla Husayn, differed only in this respect, that whereas at the previous meeting the<begin_page69>proofs and testimonies of the Bab's mission had been critically scrutinised and expounded, at this one all argument had been set aside and nothing but the spirit of intense adoration and of close and ardent fellowship prevailed. The entire chamber seemed to have been vitalised by that celestial potency which emanated from His inspired utterance. Everything in that room seemed to be vibrating with this testimony: "Verily, verily, the dawn of a new Day has broken. The promised One is enthroned in the hearts of men. In His hand He holds the mystic cup, the chalice of immortality. Blessed are they who drink therefrom!"

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Each of the twelve companions of Mulla `Ali, in his turn and by his own unaided efforts, sought and found his Beloved. Some in sleep, others in waking, a few whilst in prayer, and still others in their moments of contemplation, experienced the light of this Divine Revelation and were led to recognise the power of its glory. After the manner of Mulla `Ali, these, and a few others, accompanied by Mulla Husayn, attained the presence of the Bab and were declared "Letters of the Living." Seventeen Letters were gradually enrolled in the preserved Tablet of God, and were appointed as the chosen Apostles of the Bab, the ministers of His Faith, and the diffusers of His light.

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One night, in the course of His conversation with Mulla Husayn; the Bab spoke these words: "Seventeen Letters have thus far enlisted under the standard of the Faith of God. There remains one more to complete the number. These Letters of the Living shall arise to proclaim My Cause and to establish My Faith. To-morrow night the remaining Letter will arrive and will complete the number of My chosen disciples." The next day, in the evening hour, as the Bab, followed by Mulla Husayn, was returning to His home, there appeared a youth dishevelled and travel-stained. He approached Mulla Husayn, embraced him, and asked him whether he had attained his goal. Mulla Husayn tried at first to calm his agitation and advised him to rest for the moment, promising that he would subsequently enlighten him. That youth, however, refused to heed his advice. Fixing his gaze upon the Bab, he said to Mulla Husayn: "Why seek you to hide Him from me? I can recognise Him by His<begin_page70>gait. I confidently testify that none besides Him, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth. None other can manifest the power and majesty that radiate from His holy person." Mulla Husayn marvelled at his words. He pleaded to be excused, however, and induced him to restrain his feelings until such time as he would be able to acquaint him with the truth. Leaving him, he hastened to join the Bab, and informed Him of his conversation with that youth. "Marvel not," observed the Bab, "at his strange behaviour. We have in the world of the spirit been communing with that youth. We know him already. We indeed awaited his coming. Go to him and summon him forthwith to Our presence." Mulla Husayn was instantly reminded by these words of the Bab of the following traditional utterance: "On the last Day, the Men of the Unseen shall, on the wings of the spirit, traverse the immensity of the earth, shall attain the presence of the promised Qa'im, and shall seek from Him the secret that will resolve their problems and remove their perplexities."

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dwelling upon the ingratitude and malice which characterised the treatment of Joseph by his brethren, to predict what Baha'u'llah was destined to suffer at the hands of His brother and kindred? Was not Quddus, although besieged within the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi by the battalions and fire of a relentless enemy, engaged, both in the daytime and in the night-season, in the completion of his eulogy of Baha'u'llah --that immortal commentary on the Sad of Samad which<begin_page71>had already assumed the dimensions of five hundred thousand verses? Every verse of the Qayyumu'l-Asma, every word of the aforementioned commentary of Quddus, will, if dispassionately examined, bear eloquent testimony to this truth.

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The acceptance by Quddus of the truth of the Bab's Revelation completed the assigned number of His chose disciples. Quddus, whose name was Muhammad`Ali, was, through his mother, a direct descendant of the Imam Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. He was born in Barfurush, in the province of Mazindaran. It has been reported by those who attended the lectures of Siyyid Kazim that in the last years of the latter' life, Quddus enrolled himself<begin_page72>as one of the Siyyid's disciples. He was the last to arrive, and invariably occupied the lowliest seat in the assembly. He was the first to depart upon the

conclusion of every meeting. The silence he observed and the modesty of his behaviour distinguished him from the rest of his companions. Siyyid Kazim was often heard to remark that certain ones among his disciples, though they occupied the lowliest of seats, and observed the strictest silence, were none the less so exalted in the sight of God that he himself felt unworthy to rank among their servants. His disciples, although they observed the humility of Quddus and acknowledged the exemplary character of his behaviour, remained unaware of the purpose of Siyyid Kazim. When Quddus arrived in Shiraz and embraced the Faith declared by the Bab, he was only twenty-two years of age. Though young in years, he showed that indomitable courage and faith which none among the disciples of his master could exceed. He exemplified by his life and glorious martyrdom the truth of this tradition: "Whoso seeketh Me, shall find Me. Whoso findeth Me, shall be drawn towards Me. Whoso draweth nigh unto Me, shall love Me. Whoso loveth Me, him shall I also love. He who is beloved of Me, him shall I slay. He who is slain by Me, I Myself shall be his ransom."

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The Bab, whose name was Siyyid `Ali-Muhammad, was born in the city of Shiraz, on the first day of Muharram, in the year 1235 A.H. He belonged to a house which was renowned for its nobility and which traced its origin to Muhammad Himself. The date of His birth confirmed the truth of the prophecy traditionally attributed to the Imam `Ali: "I am two years younger than my Lord." Twenty-five years, four months, and four days had elapsed since the day of His birth, when he declared His Mission. In His early childhood He lost His father, Siyyid Muhammad-Rida, a man who was known throughout the province of Fars for his piety<begin_page73>[Illustrations: THE RUINS OF THE QAHVIYIH-AWLIYA THE BAB ATTENDED IN SHIRAZ. ENTRANCE DOOR OF RUINS OF THE QAHVIYIH-AWLIYA.]<begin_page74>[Illustrations: TREE MARKING THE RESTING PLACE OF THE BAB'S INFANT SON IN BABI-DUKHTARAN, SHIRAZ. GRAVE OF THE BAB'S WIFE IN SHAH-CHIRAGH, SHIRAZ.]<begin_page75>and virtue, and was held in high esteem and honour. Both His father and His mother were descendants of the Prophet, both were loved and respected by the people. He was reared by His maternal uncle, Haji Mirza Siyyid `Ali, a martyr to the Faith, who placed Him, while still a child, under the care of a tutor named Shaykh Abid. The Bab, though not inclined to study, submitted to His uncle's will and directions.

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Shaykh Abid, known by his pupils as Shaykhuna, was a man of piety and learning. He had been a disciple of both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. "One day," he related, "I asked the Bab to recite the opening words of the Qur'an: `Bismi'llahi'r-Rahmani'r-Rahim.' He hesitated, pleading that unless He were told what these words signified, He would in no wise attempt to pronounce them. I pretended not to know their meaning. `I know what these words signify,' observed my pupil; `by your leave, I will explain them.' He spoke with such knowledge and fluency that I was struck with amazement. He expounded the meaning of `Allah,' of `Rahman,' and `Rahim,' in terms such as I had neither read nor heard. The sweetness of His utterance still lingers in my memory. I felt impelled to take Him back to His uncle and to deliver into his hands the Trust he had committed to my care. I determined to tell him how unworthy I felt to teach so remarkable a child. I found His uncle alone in his office. `I have brought Him back to you,' I said, `and commit Him to your vigilant protection. He is not to be treated as a mere child, for in Him I can already discern evidences of that mysterious power which the Revelation of the Sahibu'z-Zaman alone can reveal. It is incumbent upon you to surround Him with your most loving care. Keep Him in your house, for He, verily, stands in no need of teachers such as I.' Haji Mirza Siyyid `Ali sternly rebuked the Bab. `Have You forgotten my instructions?' he said. `Have I not already admonished You to follow the example of Your<begin_page76>fellow-pupils, to observe silence, and to listen attentively to every word spoken by Your teacher?' Having obtained His promise to abide faithfully by his instructions, he bade the Bab return to His school. The soul of that child could not, however, be restrained by the stern admonitions of His uncle. No discipline could repress the flow of His intuitive knowledge. Day after day He continued to manifest such remarkable evidences of superhuman wisdom as I am powerless to recount." At last His uncle was induced to take Him away from the school of Shaykh Abid, and to associate Him with himself in his own profession. There, too, He revealed signs of a power and greatness that few could approach and none could rival.

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Some years later the Bab was united in wedlock with the sister of Mirza Siyyid Hasan and Mirza Abu'l-Qasim. The child which resulted from this union, He named Ahmad. He died in the year 1259 A.D., the year preceding the declaration of the Faith by the Bab. The Father did not lament his loss. He consecrated his death by words such as these:<begin_page77>"O God, my God! Would that a thousand Ishmaels were given Me, this Abraham of Thine, that I might have offered them, each and all, as a loving sacrifice unto Thee. O my Beloved, my heart's Desire! The sacrifice of this Ahmad whom Thy servant `Ali-Muhammad hath offered up on the altar of Thy love can never suffice to quench the flame of longing in His heart. Not until He immolates His own heart at Thy feet, not until His whole body falls a victim to the cruelest tyranny in Thy path, not until His breast is made a target for countless darts for Thy sake, will the tumult of His soul be stilled. O my God, my only Desire! Grant that the sacrifice of My son, My only son, may be acceptable unto Thee. Grant that it be a prelude to the sacrifice of My own, My entire self, in the path of Thy good pleasure. Endue with Thy grace My life-blood which I yearn to shed in Thy path. Cause it to water and nourish the seed of Thy Faith. Endow it with Thy celestial potency, that this infant seed of God may soon germinate in the hearts of men, that it may thrive and prosper, that it may grow to become a mighty tree, beneath the shadow of which all the peoples and kindreds of the earth may gather. Answer Thou My prayer, O God, and fulfil My most cherished desire. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful."

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The days which the Bab devoted to commercial pursuits were mostly spent in Bushihr. The oppressive heat of the summer did not deter Him from devoting, each Friday, several hours to continuous worship upon the roof of His house. Though exposed to the fierce rays of the noontide sun, He, turning His heart to His Beloved, continued to commune with Him, unmindful of the intensity of the heat<begin_page78>and oblivious of the world around Him. From early dawn till sunrise, and from midday till late in the afternoon, He dedicated His time to meditation and pious worship. Turning His gaze towards the north, in the direction of Tihiran, He, at every break of day, greeted, with a heart overflowing with love and joy, the rising, sun, which to Him was a sign and symbol of that Day-Star of Truth that was soon to dawn upon the world. As a lover who beholds the face of his beloved, He gazed upon the rising orb with steadfastness and longing. He seemed to be addressing, in mystic language, that shining luminary, and to be entrusting it with His, message of yearning and love to His concealed Beloved. With such transports of delight He greeted its beaming rays, that the heedless and<begin_page79>ignorant around Him thought Him to be enamoured with the sun itself.

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Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i,
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Muhammad-Hasan, his brother,
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Muhammad-Baqir, his nephew,
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Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami,
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Mulla Khuda-Bakhsh-i-Quchani, later named Mulla `Ali
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Mulla Hasan-i-Bajistani,
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Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi,
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Mirza Muhammad Rawdih-Khan-i-Yazdi,
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Sa'id-i-Hindi,
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Mulla Mahmud-i-Khu'i,
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Mulla Jalil-i-Urumi,
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Mulla Ahmad-i-Ibdal-i-Maraghi'i,
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Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi,
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Mulla Yusif-i-Ardibili,
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Mirza Hadi, son of Mulla Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Qazvini,
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<begin_page81>Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qazvini.
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Tahirih,
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These all, with the single exception of Tahirih, attained the presence of the Bab, and were personally invested by Him with the distinction of this rank. It was she who, having learned of the intended departure of her sister's husband, Mirza Muhammad-`Ali, from Qazvin, entrusted him with a sealed letter, requesting that he deliver it to that promised One whom she said he was sure to meet in the course of his journey. "Say to Him, from me," she added, "'The

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A word should now be said in explanation of the term Bala-Sari. Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim, as well as their followers, when visiting the shrine of the Imam Husayn in Karbila, invariably occupied, as a mark of reverence, the lower end of the sepulchre. They never advanced beyond it, whereas other worshippers, the Bala-Sari, recited their prayers in the upper section of that shrine. The Shaykhis, believing, as they did, that "every true believer lives both in this world and in the next," felt it unseemly and improper to step beyond the limits of the lower sections of the shrine

of the Imam Husayn, who in their eyes was the very incarnation of the most perfect believer.

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Mulla Husayn, who anticipated being the chosen companion of the Bab during His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, was, as soon as the latter decided to depart from Shiraz, summoned to the presence of his Master, who gave him the following instructions: "The days of our companionship are approaching their end. My Covenant with you is now accomplished. Gird up the loins of endeavour, and arise to diffuse My Cause. Be not dismayed at the sight of the degeneracy and perversity of this generation, for the Lord of the Covenant shall assuredly assist you. Verily, He shall surround you with His loving protection, and shall lead you from victory to victory. Even as the cloud that rains its bounty upon the earth, traverse the land from end to end, and shower upon its people the blessings which the Almighty, in His mercy, has deigned to confer upon you. Forbear with the `ulamas, and resign yourself to the will of God. Raise the cry: `Awake, awake, for, lo! the Gate of God is open, and the morning Light is shedding its radiance upon all mankind! The promised One is made manifest; prepare the way for Him, O people of the earth! Deprive not yourselves of its redeeming grace, nor close your eyes to its effulgent glory.' Those whom you find receptive to your call, share with them the epistles and tablets We have revealed for you, that, perchance, these wondrous words may cause them to turn away from the slough of heedlessness, and soar into the realm<begin_page86>of the Divine presence. In this pilgrimage upon which We are soon to embark, We have chosen Quddus as Our companion. We have left you behind to face the onslaught of a fierce and relentless enemy. Rest assured, however, that a bounty unspeakably glorious shall be conferred upon you. Follow the course of your journey towards the north, and visit on your way Isfahan, Kashan, Qum, and Tihiran. Beseech almighty Providence that He may graciously enable you to attain, in that capital, the seat of true sovereignty, and to enter the mansion of the Beloved. A secret lies hidden in that city. When made manifest, it shall turn the earth into paradise. My hope is that you may partake of its grace and recognise its splendour. From Tihiran proceed to Khurasan, and there proclaim anew the Call. From thence return to Najaf and Karbila, and there await the summons<begin_page87>of your Lord. Be assured that the high mission for which you have been created will, in its entirety, be accomplished by you. Until you have consummated your work, if all the darts of an unbelieving world be directed against you, they will be powerless to hurt a single hair of your head. All things are imprisoned within His mighty grasp. He, verily, is the

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The Bab then summoned to His presence Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, and addressed to him words of cheer and loving-kindness. He instructed him to proceed directly to Najaf and Karbila, alluded to the severe trials and afflictions that would befall him, and enjoined him to be steadfast till the end. "Your faith," He told him, "must be immovable as the rock, must weather every storm and survive every calamity. Suffer not the denunciations of the foolish and the calumnies of the clergy to afflict you, or to turn you from your purpose. For you are called to partake of the celestial banquet prepared for you in the immortal Realm. You are the first to leave the House of God, and to suffer for His sake. If you be slain in His path, remember that great will be your reward, and goodly the gift which will be bestowed upon you."

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No sooner were these words uttered than Mulla `Ali arose from his seat and set out to prosecute his mission. At about a farsang's distance from Shiraz he was overtaken by a youth who, flushed with excitement, impatiently asked to speak to him. His name was Abdu'l-Vahhab. "I beseech you," he tearfully entreated Mulla `Ali, "to allow me to accompany you on your journey. Perplexities oppress my heart; I pray you to guide my steps in the way of Truth. Last night, in my

dream, I heard the crier announce in the market-street of Shiraz the appearance of the Imam `Ali, the Commander of the Faithful. He called to the multitude: `Arise and seek him. Behold, he plucks out of the burning fire charters of liberty and is distributing them to the people. Hasten to him, for whoever receives them from his hands will be secure from penal suffering, and whoever fails to obtain them from him, will be bereft of the blessings of Paradise.' Immediately I heard the voice of the crier, I arose and, abandoning my shop, ran across the market-street of Vakil to a place where my eyes beheld you standing and distributing those same charters to the people. To everyone who approached to receive them from your hands, you would whisper in his ear a few words which instantly caused him to flee in consternation and exclaim: `Woe betide me, for I am deprived of the blessings of `Ali and his kindred! Ah, miserable me, that I am accounted among the outcast and fallen !' I awoke from my dream and, immersed in an ocean of thought, regained my shop. Suddenly I saw you pass, accompanied by a man who wore a turban, and who was conversing with you. I sprang from my seat and, impelled by a power which I could not repress, ran to overtake you. To my utter amazement, I found you standing upon the very site which I had witnessed in my dream, engaged in the recital of traditions and verses. Standing aside, at a distance, I kept watching you, wholly unobserved by you and your friend. I heard the man whom you were addressing, impetuously protest: `Easier is it for me to be devoured by the flames of hell than to acknowledge the truth of your words, the weight of which mountains are unable to sustain!' To his contemptuous rejection you returned this answer: `Were all the universe to repudiate His truth, it could never tarnish the unsullied purity of His robe of grandeur.' Departing from him, you directed your steps towards the gate of Kaziran. I continued to follow you until I reached this place."

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sin. I<begin_page89>was one among the favoured in the court of the sons of the Farman-Farma, the governor of the province of Fars. Such was my position that none dared to oppose or harm me. No one questioned my authority or ventured to interfere with my freedom. Immediately I heard that my son Abdu'l-Vahhab had forsaken his shop and left the city, I ran out in the direction of the Kaziran gate to overtake him. Armed with a club with which I intended to beat him, I enquired as to the road he had taken. I was told that a man wearing a turban had just crossed the street and that my son was seen following him. They seemed to have agreed to leave the city together. This excited my anger and indignation. How could I tolerate, I thought to myself, such unseemly behaviour on the part of my son, I, who already hold so privileged a position in the court of the sons of the Farman-Farma? Nothing but the severest chastisement, I felt, could wipe away the effect of my son's disgraceful conduct.

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"I continued my search until I reached them. Seized with a savage fury, I inflicted upon Mulla `Ali unspeakable injuries. To the strokes that fell heavily upon him, he, with extraordinary serenity, returned this answer: `Stay your hand, O `Abdu'l-Majid, for the eye of God is observing you. I take Him as my witness, that I am in no wise responsible for the conduct of your son. I mind not the tortures you inflict upon me, for I stand prepared for the most grievous afflictions in the path I have chosen to follow. Your injuries, compared to what is destined to befall me in future, are as a drop compared to the ocean. Verily, I say, you shall survive me, and will come to recognise my innocence. Great will then be your remorse, and deep your sorrow.' Scorning his remarks, and heedless of his appeal, I continued to beat him until I was exhausted. Silently and heroically he endured this most undeserved chastisement at my hands. Finally, I ordered my son to follow me, and left Mulla `Ali to himself. "On our way back to Shiraz, my son related to me the dream he had dreamt. A feeling of profound regret gradually seized me. The blamelessness of Mulla `Ali was vindicated in my eyes, and the memory of my cruelty to him continued long to oppress my soul. Its bitterness lingered in my heart until the time when I felt obliged to transfer my residence<begin_page90>from Shiraz to Baghdad. From Baghdad I moved to Kazimayn, where Abdu'l-Vahhab established his business. A strange mystery brooded over his youthful face. He seemed to be concealing from me a secret which appeared to have transformed his life. And when, in the year 1267 A.H., Baha'u'llah journeyed to Iraq and visited Kazimayn, Abdu'l-Vahhab fell immediately under the spell of His charm and pledged his undying devotion to Him. A few years later, when my son had suffered martyrdom in Tihiran and Baha'u'llah had been exiled to Baghdad, He, with infinite loving-kindness and mercy, awakened me from the sleep of heedlessness, and Himself taught me the message of the New Day, washing away with the waters of Divine forgiveness the stains of that cruel act."

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Haji Hashim, surnamed Attar, a prominent merchant, who was well versed in the Scriptures of Islam, recounted the following: "I was present at Government House on one occasion when Mulla `Ali was summoned to the presence of the assembled notables and government officials of that city. He was publicly accused of being an infidel, an abrogator of the laws of Islam, and a repudiator of its rituals and accepted standards. When his alleged offences and misdeeds had been enumerated, the Mufti, the chief exponent of the law of Islam in that city, turned to him and said: `O enemy of God!' As I was occupying a seat beside the Mufti, I whispered in his ear: `You are as yet unacquainted with this unfortunate stranger. Why address him in such terms? Do you not realise that such words as you have addressed to him will excite the anger of the populace against him? It behoves you to disregard the unsupported charges these busybodies have brought against him, to question him yourself, and to judge him according to the accepted standards of justice inculcated by the Faith of Islam.' The Mufti was sore displeased, arose from his seat, and left the gathering. Mulla `Ali was again thrown into prison. A few days later, I enquired about him, hoping to achieve his deliverance. I was informed that, on the night of that same day, he had been deported to Constantinople. I made further enquiries and endeavoured to find out what eventually befell him. I could not, however, ascertain the truth. A few believed that on his way to Constantinople he had fallen ill and died. Others maintained that he had suffered martyrdom." Whatever his end, Mulla `Ali had by his life and death earned the immortal distinction of having been the first sufferer in the path of this new Faith of God, the first to have laid down his life as an

"O My beloved friends! You are the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery. It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness, His power and glory. The very members of your body must bear witness to the loftiness of your purpose, the integrity of your life, the reality of your faith, and the exalted character of your devotion. For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book: 'On that day will We set a seal upon their mouths yet shall their hands speak unto Us, and their feet shall bear witness to that which they shall have done.' Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God. In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission: 'Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain-top. Let your light shine before the eyes of men. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognise and be drawn closer to the heavenly Father who is the Source of purity and grace. For none has seen the Father who is in heaven. You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify His virtues, and witness to His glory. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? Such must be the degree of your detachment, that into whatever city you enter to proclaim and teach the Cause of God, you should in no wise expect either meat or reward from its people. Nay, when you depart out of that city, you should shake the dust from off your feet. As you have entered it pure and undefiled, so must you depart from that city. For verily I say, the heavenly Father is ever with you and keeps watch over you. If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world.' O My Letters! Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old. Nay, immeasurable is the difference! You are the witnesses of the Dawn of the promised Day of God. You are the partakers of the mystic chalice of His Revelation. Gird up the loins of endeavour, and be mindful of the words of God as revealed in His Book: 'Lo, the Lord thy God is come, and with Him is the company of His angels arrayed before Him!' Purge your hearts of worldly desires, and let angelic virtues be your adorning. Strive that by your deeds you may bear witness to the truth of these words of God, and beware lest, by 'turning back,' He may 'change you for another people,' who 'shall not be your like,' and who shall take from you the Kingdom of God. The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him. 'The good word riseth up unto Him, and the righteous deed will cause it to be exalted before Him.' You are the lowly, of whom God has thus spoken in His Book: "And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make them Our heirs.' You have been called to this station; you will attain to it, only if you arise to trample beneath your feet every earthly desire, and endeavour to become those 'honoured servants of His who speak not till He hath spoken, and who do His bidding.'

You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point, the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation. Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I, who am now instructing you, may, before the mercy-seat of<begin_page94>God, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements. The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age. Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming. Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. Has He not, in past days, caused Abraham, in spite of His seeming helplessness, to triumph over the forces of Nimrod? Has He not enabled Moses, whose staff was His only companion, to vanquish Pharaoh and his hosts? Has He not established the ascendancy of Jesus, poor and lowly as He was in the eyes of men, over the combined forces of the Jewish people? Has He not subjected the barbarous and militant tribes of Arabia to the holy and transforming discipline of Muhammad, His Prophet? Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.'

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With such words the Bab quickened the faith of His disciples and launched them upon their mission. To each He assigned his own native province as the field of his labours. He directed them each and all to refrain from specific references to His own name and person. He instructed them to raise the call that the Gate to the Promised One has been opened, that His proof is irrefutable, and that His testimony is complete. He bade them declare that whoever believes in Him has believed in all the prophets of God, and that whoever denies Him has denied all His saints and His chosen<begin_page95>[Illustration: THE MADRISH OF NIM-AVAR, ISFAHAN]<begin_page96>ones. With these instructions He dismissed them from His presence and committed them to the care of God. Of these Letters of the Living, whom He thus addressed, there remained with Him in Shiraz Mulla Husayn, the first of these Letters, and Quddus, the last. The rest, fourteen in number, set out, at the hour of dawn, from Shiraz, each resolved to carry out, in its entirety, the task with which he had been entrusted.

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To Mulla Husayn, as the hour of his departure approached, the Bab addressed these words: "Grieve not that you have not been chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Hijaz. I shall, instead, direct your steps to that city which enshrines a Mystery of such transcendent holiness as neither Hijaz nor Shiraz can hope to rival. My hope is that you may, by the aid of God, be enabled to remove the veils from the eyes of the wayward and to cleanse the minds of the malevolent. Visit, on your way, Isfahan, Kashan, Tihran, and Khurasan. Proceed thence to Iraq, and there await the summons of your Lord, who will keep watch over you and will direct you to whatsoever is His will and desire. As to Myself, I shall, accompanied by Quddus and My Ethiopian servant, proceed on My pilgrimage to Hijaz. I shall join the company of the pilgrims of Fars, who will shortly be sailing for that land. I shall visit Mecca and Medina, and there fulfil the mission with which God has entrusted Me. God willing, I shall return hither by the way of Kufih, in which place I hope to meet you. If it be decreed otherwise, I shall ask you to join Me in Shiraz. The hosts of the invisible Kingdom, be assured, will sustain and reinforce your efforts. The essence of power is now dwelling in you, and the company of His chosen angels revolves around you. His almighty arms will surround you, and His unfailing Spirit will ever continue to guide your steps. He that loves you, loves God; and whoever opposes you, has opposed God. Whoso befriends you, him will God befriend; and whoso rejects you, him will God reject."

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