

or three months on the journey. They would be carried to a spot on the seashore from which a view could be obtained of the barred window on the sea wall of Acca, through which a glimpse of their venerated leader could be obtained.

Although unable to be present on such occasions, I have secured reliable evidence to the effect that many remarkable healings, even of so-called incurable diseases, took place solely as the result of these pilgrimages of faith.

The patients would be carried on to a small rock in the sea which gave the best view of the window behind which Abdul Bahá would stand to give his blessing. I have spoken with one of those who was completely cured in this way. He had been bedridden for twenty years and was both dumb and paralysed. His sons had carried him on a stretcher all the way from Tabriz to Acca by road and mule track. He told me that so soon as he saw his beloved master, standing behind these prison bars, with his hands held out in blessing, he felt new life surging throughout his body. (It should be mentioned that there was a distance of over sixty yards between the wall of the prison and the seagirt rock on which the pilgrims were wont to gather.) Within a few minutes of receiving Abdul Bahá's blessing, the healing happened. The paralysed man found his voice, stood up and was able to carry his own stretcher back on to the shore. When I met him some years later he told me this story, and one of his sons (who was present when this miracle took place) was able to assure me of its truth in every particular.

After his release in 1908 Abdul Bahá went to live on the slopes of Mount Carmel at Haifa, where I often

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visited him. Later, he was twice my honoured guest in England.

The following incident is worth recording. In the spring of 1910 I went out to Alexandria, where Abdul Bahá was staying at the time. I had been entrusted with gifts from his English friends to take to him. I had travelled from Marseilles on a steamer called the Sphinx and intended to return overland via Damascus, Smyrna, Constantinople and Vienna. My return ticket and reservations for the round trip were arranged before I left London. On arrival at Alexandria I lost no time in visiting my revered friend and in carrying out the commission with which I had been entrusted. I speak no Persian and my knowledge of Arabic is rudimentary, and so our conversation was carried on through Abdul Bahá's grandson, acting as interpreter. At one point the latter was called away, but Abdul Bahá continued the conversation and I found myself replying! When the interpreter returned, my ability to do so ceased. To make sure that I had understood correctly, I asked for a translation of what Abdul Bahá had been saying in his absence, and this confirmed the fact that I had been able to understand and to reply accurately in a language of which I was completely ignorant. (This curious experience was repeated some years later when visiting Abdul Bahá in Paris.)

On returning the next day for another interview, I asked the master to give me his blessing for the journey that lay ahead of me. This he did, adding casually that I should be returning to Marseilles on the following day on the same steamer from which I had so recently disembarked. I then explained to the interpreter that I had made other arrangements and that all my overland bookings had been made. He replied to the effect that if the Master said I had to return to Marseilles now, then that was what would happen.

I went back to my hotel in a state of considerable

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annoyance because I saw no good reason for changing my plans. During the night, a very restless one, I found myself in two minds as to what I should do. Next morning, when I went to say goodbye, and much to my own surprise, I told Abdul Bahá that in fact I was leaving on the Sphinx for Marseilles later on that same day. He took this for granted and then requested me to carry out a commission for him on reaching Paris. He said that there I should meet a certain Persian student who was nearly blind, and he gave me R^2 in gold to pay his fare to Alexandria. (Travelling was much cheaper in those days!) I was to tell this young man, whose name was Tammadun ul Molk, to lose no time and to present himself to his master as soon as he arrived. I accepted this commission with very bad grace because it seemed a poor reason for upsetting all my previous plans. When I asked for the student's address in Paris I was told that this was unknown, but that a way would be found for bringing me into contact with him.

On reaching Paris I went to the Persian Consulate, only to find that Tammadun ul Molk was unknown to the officials there. I then visited the students' quarter on the left bank of the Seine and spent the whole day there and elsewhere in a task that yielded no results whatever. When one's mind is fearful or depressed, no interior guidance can be expected. This I have found to be true on many occasions throughout my life. In the present instance I gave up the search and set out for the Gare du Nord, where my luggage was already deposited in readiness for the return to England. En route I crossed the Seine by the Pont Royale. Happening to look across the bridge to the opposite pavement, I saw, among a crowd of pedestrians, a young man, evidently of Eastern origin, who was using a stick to tap his way along. I dodged through the traffic and accosted him. In reply to my question, he told me he was of Persian origin. I then enquired whether by chance

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he knew a certain Tammadun ul Molk. In surprise he replied 'C'est moi', adding that he had only arrived in Paris from Vienna that very morning. In a Vienna clinic three serious operations on his eyes had been undertaken, but the results were negative and he had been told by the surgeon that his sight could not be saved.

I then gave Abdul Bahá's message and the [?] for his ticket to Alexandria.

To watch the profound joy on his face was more than sufficient reward for all my previous disappointments, including the abandonment of my European tour. Tammadun duly reached Alexandria and visited his master at once. Those present told me later that Abdul Bahá poured a few drops of attar of roses into a glass of water. He then gave the youth his blessing whilst anointing his eyes with the water in question. Immediately full sight was restored, and when I met Tammadun some years later he was still enjoying perfect vision.

The further sequel was both significant and instructive. I crossed to England late that night and on reaching my office the next day discovered that I was only just in time to avert a very serious crisis in my affairs. The change in my plans had indeed turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

On many other occasions the prophetic insight of the Bahá'í leader was made clear to me. As an instance of this, I recall that when visiting him at Haifa, just after the Armistice in November 1918, I spoke of the thankfulness we all must feel that the war 'to end all wars' had been fought and won. Sorrow came into the master's eyes. He laid his hand upon my shoulder and told me that a still greater conflagration lay ahead of humanity. 'It will be largely fought out in the air, on all continents and on the sea. Victory will lie with no one. You, my son, will still be alive to witness this tragedy and to play your part. Beyond and follow-

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ing many tribulations, and through the beneficence of the Supreme One, the most great peace will dawn.'

Abdul Bahá left us some years ago and his mortal remains lie buried in a mausoleum on Mount Carmel, specially built for the purpose by devoted followers from many countries.[1]

Note

[1] Readers who would care to hear more about the Bahá'í Faith can obtain such information from the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 27 Rutland Gate, London, S.W,7.

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