

In the Footsteps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Master in the British Isles
4 September 1911 – 3 October 1911

Introduction

by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

A full century has passed since this land was first blessed by the precious footsteps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

With hearts overflowing with gratitude, we render thanks to our loving Master for having, in the words of the beloved Guardian:

... called into being this community ... at the time of the inception of His Father's Faith in the West, ... tenderly and vigilantly nursed it and guided its footsteps in the early years of its infancy, ... twice conferred upon it the inestimable blessings of personal contact with its members, ... sustained, from His station on high, its development in the course of no less than two decades, within the framework of a rising Administrative Order, ... enabled it to expand and consolidate itself within its island home, [and] launched it, subsequently, on its mission overseas ...

'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived on these shores on Monday 4 September 1911. Friends the length and breadth of the British Isles and beyond had gathered to welcome their revered Guest. We turn to the words of the immortal Lady Blomfield to transport us to that momentous occasion and to the presence of the Master:

A silence of love and awe overcame us, as we looked at Him; the gracious figure, clothed in simple white garment, over which was a light-coloured Persian aba; on his head he wore a low-crowned taj, round which was folded a small, fine-linen turban of purest white; His hair and short beard were of that snowy whiteness which had once been black; His eyes were large, blue grey with long, black lashes and well marked eyebrows; His face was a beautiful oval with warm, ivory-coloured skin, a straight finely modelled nose, and firm, kind mouth. These are merely outside details by which an attempt is made to convey an idea of his arresting personality... 'I am very much pleased with you all. Your love has drawn me to London. I have waited forty years in prison to bring the Message to you. Are you pleased to receive such a guest?' I think our souls must have answered, for I am not conscious that anyone uttered an audible word.

During the month that followed, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expended every ounce of His energy championing the Cause of God in London and Bristol, showering His love, His wisdom, His care on countless souls. In its message to the Bahá'ís of the world this Riḡván, the Universal House of Justice described in a profoundly moving way the manner in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá taught the Faith of His illustrious Father during His "epoch-making journeys" to Egypt and the West:

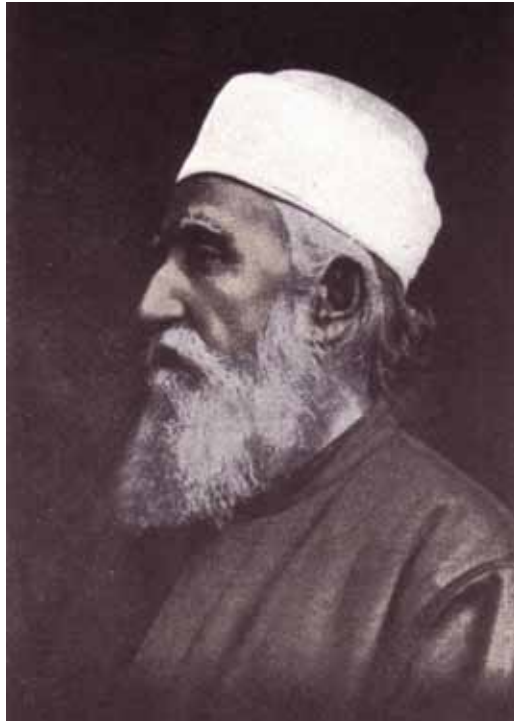


Photo: Lafayette

London

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tirelessly, He expounded the teachings in every social space: in homes and mission halls, churches and synagogues, parks and public squares, railway carriages and ocean liners, clubs and societies, schools and universities. Uncompromising in defence of the truth, yet infinitely gentle in manner, He brought the universal divine principles to bear on the exigencies of the age. To all without distinction - officials, scientists, workers, children, parents, exiles, activists, clerics, sceptics - He imparted love, wisdom, comfort, whatever the particular need. While elevating their souls, He challenged their assumptions, reoriented their perspectives, expanded their consciousness, and focused their energies. He demonstrated by word and deed such compassion and generosity that hearts were utterly transformed. No one was turned away. Our great hope is that frequent recollection, during this centennial period, of the Master's matchless record will inspire and fortify His sincere admirers. Set His example before your eyes and fix your gaze upon it; let it be your instinctive guide in your pursuit of the aim of the Plan.

To help us evoke the Master's presence in our lives and inspire "frequent recollection during this centennial period", the National Spiritual Assembly has commissioned the production of this booklet, *In the Footsteps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, which documents the events associated with the Master's visit to these shores in September and October 1911. It is offered as a commemorative gift to each Bahá'í home, and as a token of the National Assembly's love for each and every one of the Blessed Beauty's faithful followers in this land.

One hundred years ago the British Bahá'í community – who numbered just a handful of believers at that time – had the inestimable privilege and bounty of the physical presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in their midst. Today, the Master lives on in our hearts and minds, He continues to surround us with His unfailing protection and watches over us as we toil hard to lay the foundation of that glorious civilisation enshrined in the Revelation of His beloved Father. And as we press on with the tasks at hand, may we hold ever more tightly to our connection with the Centre of the Covenant, remembering His assurances that He is always close to those who love Him and who strive to walk the path of service that He trod so heroically every moment of His beautiful life:

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.

Monday 4 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá had been resting for a few days at Thorton-les-Bains near Geneva before travelling to England. He went to the home of Lady Blomfield at 97 Cadogan Gardens, Chelsea which was to be the base for His stay in England.

The evening of his arrival in London, Monday, September 4th, 1911, 'Abdu'l-Baha said: Heaven has blessed this day. It was said that London should be a place for a great proclamation of the Faith. I was tired when I went on board the steamer, but when I reached London and beheld the faces of the friends my fatigue left me. Your great love refreshes me. I am very pleased with the English friends.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 53



97 Cadogan Gardens (today) where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the guest of Lady Blomfield

. . . Abdul-Baha was tired by the long journey but found his London quarters both comfortable and convenient. The rash and roar of the great metropolis have greatly interested him but at all times he gives one the impression of living a greater and fuller life, which takes little account of temporary material surroundings, recognizing instead the all-pervading power of the One Spirit pulsating throughout the whole universe.

Abdul-Baha receives all who come to him, whether great or small, providing they show a real interest in the Great Truths for which BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH stood. Countless press correspondents have been received and they usually retire from the interview greatly impressed by his noble dignity and spiritual simplicity. Many of the London dailies refer to him as the great Persian Prophet, but in *The Observer* (Sept, 10) and other papers, Abdul-Baha expressly states that he simply claims to be the Son of a Prophet and refers all enquirers to the Teachings and inspired life of his Father, BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH. Believers from the world over have gathered in London during the present month and express keen gratification at the tremendous wave of interest now being taken here in the Bahai Message. Abdul-Baha has been visited by many well-known leaders of thought now in this country.

Star of the West Vol. II No. 11

See also *The Christian Commonwealth* 4 Oct 1911, p. 11; *God Passes By* p. 280

The daily routine

The Master's custom was to receive the visitors by twos or by threes, or individually, during the early hours of the morning. Then, about nine o'clock, He would come into the dining-room whilst we were at breakfast to greet us. "Are you well? Did you sleep well?"

We tried to prevail upon Him to take some breakfast with us (we were always concerned that He ate so very little). At last one day He said He would like a little soup—then we had it brought in every morning. He smiled and said: "To please you I will take it. Thank you, you are very kind." Then to the servitor who offered it to Him: "I give too great trouble," He said.

In a few minutes He would go to His room, where He would resume the chanting of prayers and dictating of Tablets in reply to the vast number of letters which incessantly arrived.

Visitors having gradually gathered in the drawing-room (about ten o'clock), 'Abdu'l-Bahá would come to us, pausing just inside the door, smiling round at the guests with a look of joyous sympathy which seemed to enfold each and all who were present; they rose simultaneously, as though the kingship of this Messenger were recognized by an inner perception.

"How are you? My hope is that you are well. Are you happy?"

Speaking so to us, He would pass through our midst to His usual chair. Then He would talk rather *with* us than *to* us; so did He reply to unspoken questions, causing wonderment in those who were waiting to ask them—weaving the whole into a beautiful address, in the atmosphere of which all problems and pain and care and doubt and sorrow would melt away, leaving only happiness and peace.

Lady Blomfield in *The Chosen Highway*, pp. 157-158

Sara, Lady Blomfield (1859-1939), who was given the name Sitárih (meaning Star) by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was the widow of the architect Sir Arthur Blomfield. She was a supporter of the Women's Suffrage Movement, though not some of their actions, and worked with Eglantyne Jebb in the early days of Save the Children. She became a believer in Bahá'u'lláh in 1907.

Together with her two daughters and Beatrice Marion Platt, she made notes during the talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá while He was in Paris and these were published under the title *Paris Talks*. She produced a number of leaflets but is best known for her book *The Chosen Highway* which chronicles the history of the Bahá'í Faith, often through the recordings of the words of Bahá'u'lláh's own family members. It also has a substantial chapter about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visits to this county.



Tuesday 5 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá was interviewed by the editor of *The Christian Commonwealth*, Mr Albert Dawson, and later met with the Rev R. J. Campbell



The Christian Commonwealth was a weekly newspaper published every Wednesday. It was started in 1881 and had a very liberal outlook. On 13 September it printed, on its front cover, an article which included the interview between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Rev R. J. Campbell that had taken place on 5 September. The following week the front cover had another article, entitled 'The Vanishing of the Veil', about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to St John's, Westminster. Other issues also had substantial articles about His visits.

MEETING BETWEEN ABDUL BAHA AND MR. CAMPBELL.

Immediately Mr. Campbell entered the room Abdul Baha rose from his chair and advanced to meet him with smiling-face and arms extended; The elder man grasped both the hands of the younger, and, retaining them, warmly greeted him. His expression and manner showed that he regarded the occasion as no ordinary one. Standing face to face, linked hand in hand, in the centre of the room, these two spiritual leaders of world-wide fame—Eastern and Western, but essentially one in their outlook on life—formed an impressive picture that is stamped indelibly on the mind's eye of all who were privileged to be present. The meeting was so remarkable that I ventured to take notes of the conversation (conducted through an interpreter), and here reproduce them. It should be mentioned that the note-taking was quite unpremeditated. Neither speaker was aware that his words were being recorded. The conversation was private, and permission to publish was given with reluctance.

Abdul Baha first inquired after Mr. Campbell's health, and said he had been very anxious to meet him. The conversation then proceeded as follows:—

R. J. Campbell: I have long looked forward to this opportunity.

Abdul Baha: That is proof that both our hearts are at one.

R. J. C.: I think that is true.

A. B.: There is a Persian saying that hearts that are at one find their way to one another.

R. J. C.: I do not think that saying is peculiar to Persia.

...

The Christian Commonwealth, Wednesday, Sept 13, 1911

See also *Star of the West* Vol. II No. 11 and No. 12

Wednesday 9 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the home of Mrs Thornburgh-Cropper at
31 Evelyn Mansions, Carlisle Place, Victoria

On the Wednesday following Abdul-Bahá's arrival in London, Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper gave an "At Home" to the believers and between fifty and sixty were present to meet him. One of the friends, a Mrs. Drakoules, who founded The Humanitarian League over twenty years ago, brought with her a leaflet pertaining to the work of the League, which was handed to Abdul-Baha. Upon learning that kindness was its purpose, he highly commended her, and made it the theme of his discourse. He then said:

"You are all one family; you have grown out of one root. Each of you is like a branch, a flower, a fruit. You must look on no one as a stranger. You should try to show the greatest love to all men and to every creature. I have come to you as to my own people—brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. My bond is with all mankind; so should yours be. Try to follow the teachings of BAHÁ'O'LLAH, then each one will shine like a star. Since the time of Adam there has been no other teaching; until the end of time there will be no other."

Star of the West Vol. II No. 12



Portrait of Mrs Thornburgh-Cropper
when a young woman

Mary Virginia Thornburgh-Cropper – known to her friends as Minnie – first heard of the Bahá'í Faith in 1898 when she was 41. She was an American living in London and had been married to an Englishman.

Shortly after reading about the Báb in an encyclopedia, by coincidence, she was invited by her friend Phoebe Hearst to be part of the first group of Western Bahá'í pilgrims to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land.

She is considered to be the first person to become a Bahá'í in the UK and throughout her life was a very active member of the community. She was a member of the first elected National Spiritual Assembly of England (later Great Britain).

She made her motor-car available to 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His visits.

She passed away on 17 March 1938.

Friday 8 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the home of Miss Ethel Jenner Rosenberg for a Unity meeting at
White Lodge, 8 Sunnyside, Wimbledon (since demolished)

Discourse given at Miss E. J. Rosenberg's Unity Meeting, September 8th, 1911

Praise be to God, that such a meeting of purity and steadfastness is being held in London. The hearts of those present are pure, and are turned towards the Kingdom of God. . .

Bahá'u'llah then came and once more renewed the foundation of Faith. He brought back the teachings of God, and the humane practices of the time of Christ. He quenched the thirst of the thirsty, He awakened the careless and called the attention of the heedless to the Divine secrets. He declared the unity of humanity, and spread abroad the teaching of the equality of all men.

Therefore, all of you ought with your hearts and minds to endeavour to win the people with kindness, so that this great Unity may be established, that childish superstitions may pass away, and all may become one.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 44-5

Ethel Rosenberg (1858-1930) became a Bahá'í around 1899 and went on her first pilgrimage in 1901. While 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in London, Ethel Rosenberg was His social secretary, arranging appointments for the Master.

'Abdu'l-Bahá asked Ethel Rosenberg and a number of other people to form a committee to decide what to do about collecting funds and publishing Bahá'í books. Their first published book was *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*.

Ethel Rosenberg made her third pilgrimage in November 1921, but arrived just after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing. Shoghi Effendi sent her home with instructions to call for the election the first National Spiritual Assembly of England. She served on this body for a number of years.

Shoghi Effendi named her an 'Apostle of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



Saturday 9 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the home of Miss Anett Schepel and Miss Alice Buckton, Vanners, Byfleet, Surrey (since demolished)

At Byfleet.

On the afternoon of September 9th, a number of working women of the Passmore Edwards' Settlement, who were spending their holidays with Miss Schepel and Miss Buckton at Vanners, in Byfleet, a village some twenty miles out of London, had the great privilege of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They wrote a short record of his sayings to keep for themselves. The following is an extract:—

We gathered round him in a circle, and he made us sit beside him in the window seat. One of the members, who was ill, had a specially beautiful greeting from him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá began by saying, as he seated himself: "Are you happy?" and our faces must have shown him that we were. He then said: "I love you all, you are the children of the Kingdom, and you are accepted of God. Though you may be poor here, you are rich in the treasures of the Kingdom. I am the Servant of the poor. Remember how His Holiness Jesus said: 'Blessed are the poor!' If all the queens of the earth were gathered here, I could not be more glad!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá knew that we had a treasury box from which we try to help people less fortunate than ourselves. Presently he rose, and said: "You are dear to me. I want to do something for you! I cannot cook for you (he had previously seen us busy in the kitchen) but here is something for your fund." He went round the circle to each, with a beautiful smile, shaking hands with all, and giving the Bahá'í greeting: "Alláh'u'Abhá!"

Later on he walked in the village, and many poor children came to him, and mothers with sick babies and men out of work. He spoke to them all, through an interpreter. At tea-time other friends joined us. 'Abdu'l-Bahá liked the cottage garden at Vanners, the little orchard and the roses. He said: "This is like a Persian garden. The air is very pure."

On leaving for London he presented every one with a purple heartsease from the garden, and said again and again: "Good-bye" in English.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 85-6

Alice Mary Buckton (1867-1944) wrote many plays and poems. Her play *Eager Heart* was seen by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on His second visit to England. She became a member of the Froebelian Society which was formed to reform educational methods. She persuaded Anett Schepel who had worked at Pestalozzi-Froebel Haus in Germany to move to England and together they worked to improve child education, opening a school in St John's Wood.

Sunday 10 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the City Temple, Holborn Circus, to over 2,000 people. This was the first time He had addressed a Western audience.

Inscription in the Old Bible

Written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Persian

This book is the Holy Book of God, of celestial Inspiration. It is the Bible of Salvation, the Noble Gospel. It is the mystery of the Kingdom and its light. It is the Divine Bounty, the sign of the guidance of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbas



The City Temple as it is today. It was bombed in World War II and the pulpit Bible was destroyed. The church was rebuilt in 1958.

Address given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the City Temple

Sunday, September 10th, 1911

O Noble friends; seekers after God! Praise be to God! Today the light of Truth is shining upon the world in its abundance; the breezes of the heavenly garden are blowing throughout all regions; the call of the Kingdom is heard in all lands, and the breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful. The Spirit of God is giving eternal life. In this wonderful age the East is enlightened, the West is fragrant, and everywhere the soul inhales the holy perfume. The sea of the unity of mankind is lifting up its waves with joy, for there is real communication between the hearts and minds of men. The banner of the Holy Spirit is uplifted, and men see it, and are assured with the knowledge that this is a new day. . . .

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers. . . .

There is one God; mankind is one; the foundations of religion are one. Let us worship Him, and give praise for all His great Prophets and Messengers who have manifested His brightness and glory.

The blessing of the Eternal One be with you in all its richness, that each soul according to his measure may take freely of Him. Amen.

From The Christian Commonwealth 13 September 1911 quoted in 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 19-20

The above address was spoken by 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the city Temple pulpit and the translation was then read to the congregation by Wellesley Tudor Pole.

Wednesday 13 September 1911¹

Mrs Thornburgh-Cropper gave a reception for 'Abdu'l-Bahá at her home
31 Evelyn Mansions, Carlisle Place, Victoria for about 45 people.

'Abdu'l-Baha said:—Thanks be to God, this is a good meeting. It is very enlightened, it is spiritual.

As a Persian Poet has written:—“The Celestial Universe is so formed that the under world reflects the upper world.” That is to say whatever exists in heaven is reflected in this phenomenal world. Now, praise be to God, this meeting of ours is a reflection of the heavenly concourse; it is as though we had taken a mirror and had gazed into it. This reflection from the heavenly concourse we know as love.

As heavenly love exists in the supreme concourse even so it is reflected here. The supreme concourse is filled with the desire for God—thank God, this desire is also here.

Therefore if we say that this meeting is heavenly, it is true. Why? Because we have no other desire except for that which comes from God. We have no other object save the commemoration of God.

Some of the people of the earth desire conquest over others: some of them are longing for rest and ease; others desire a high position; some desire to become famous:— thank God *our* desire is for spirituality and for union with God.

Now that we are gathered here our wish is to raise the banner of the Unity of God, to spread the Light of God, to make the hearts of the people turn to the Kingdom, Therefore I thank God that He is causing us to do this great work.

I pray for all of you, that you may become celestial warriors, that you may everywhere spread the Unity of God and enlighten the East and West, and that you may give to all hearts the love of God. This is my utmost desire, and I pray to God that your desire may be the same.

I am very happy to be with you all. I am pleased with the English King and Government, and with the people.

You may thank God that in this land you are so free. You do not know what lack of freedom there is in the East. When anyone comes to this country he is content.

I wish God's protection for you all. Goodbye to you all.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 46-7



Possibly the first picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá taken in the West as He leaves a taxi.

1. *Star of the West* Vol. II No. 11, records this meeting as having taken place on 12th September.

Sunday 17 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá visited St John the Divine Church, Smith Square, Westminster, meeting also the Salvation Army who were singing outside.

St. John's Westminster: Introduction

On September 17th, 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the request of the venerable Archdeacon of Westminster addressed the congregation of Saint John the Divine after evening service. With a few warm words characteristic of his whole attitude Archdeacon Wilberforce introduced the revered Messenger from the East, who had crossed seas and countries on his Mission of Peace and Unity for which he had suffered forty years of captivity and persecution. The Archdeacon had the Bishop's chair placed for his Guest on the Chancel steps, and standing beside him read the translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address himself. The Congregation was profoundly moved, and following the Archdeacon's example knelt to receive the blessing of the Servant of God—who stood with extended arms—his wonderful voice rising and falling in the silence with the power of his invocation. As the Archdeacon said: “Truly the East and the West have met in this sacred place tonight.” The hymn “O God our help in ages past” was sung by the entire assembly standing, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Archdeacon passed down the aisle to the vestry hand in hand.

Outside the Church, Salvationists were holding their meeting and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was deeply impressed and touched at the sight of the men, women and children gathered together in the night, at the street corner, praying and singing.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 21



Archdeacon Albert Basil Orme Wilberforce (1841-1916) was an Anglican priest and an author. He was educated at Eton and Oxford and ordained in 1866. He was appointed Chaplain of the House of Commons in 1896 and Archdeacon of Westminster in 1900.

See also *Star of the West* Vol. II No. 12, p. 12.

Friday 22 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the home of Misses Marion Jack and Elizabeth Herrick, 137a High Street, Kensington. About 80 people were present.



Marion Jack (1866-1954) was a Canadian painter who had encountered the Faith in Paris at the start of the Twentieth Century. For a short while she taught English to the Master's family in 'Akká and 'Abdu'l-Bahá nicknamed her 'General Jack'. At the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit she shared an apartment with Elizabeth Herrick and 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited her studio in Stratford Mews, Oxford Street. In 1931 she pioneered to Bulgaria refusing to leave before the start of the Second World War. She is buried in Sophia.

Discourse by 'Abdu'l-Bahá given at the Unity Meeting of Misses Jack and Herrick

It is a cold and miserable day but as I was anxious to see you I came here. For a man who has love, effort is a rest. He will travel any distance to visit his friends.

Thank God I see you spiritual and at rest; I give you this message from God; that you must be turned toward Him. Praise God that you are near Him! The unworthy things of this world have not deterred you from seeking the world of Spirit. When in harmony with that world, you care not for the things that perish; your desire is for that which never dies and the Kingdom lies open before you. I hope that the teaching of God will spread throughout the world, and will cause all to be united.

. . . This day the countries of Europe are at rest; Education has become widespread. The light of liberty is the light of the West, and the intention of government is to work for truth and justice in Western countries. But ever the light of spirituality shines from out of the East. In this age that light has become dimmed; religion has become a matter of form and ceremony and the desire for God's love has been lost.

In very age of great spiritual darkness, a light is kindled in the East. So once again the light of the teachings of God has come unto you. Even as education and progress travel from West to East, so does the spiritual fire travel from East to West.

I hope that the people of the West may be illumined by the light of God; that the Kingdom may come to them, that they may find eternal Life, that the Spirit of God may spread like a fire among them, that they may be baptized with the Water of Life and may find a new birth.

This is my desire; I hope by the will of God, He will cause you to receive it, and will make you happy.

In the same way that you have education and material progress so may the light of God be your portion.

God keep all of you in safety.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 53

Saturday 23 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled by train from London to Bristol going from Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads. He stayed at the Clifton Guest House at 17 Royal Crescent which was owned by Major Wellesley Tudor Pole.

Abdul-Baha arrived here from London mid-day on Saturday, Sept. 23rd, and was much pleased with the glorious Clifton views from the Guest House windows and balcony, and with the splendid air. After a short rest carriages were ordered and an extensive drive was taken, through some of the world-renowned beauty spots around Bristol and neighbourhood. Abdul-Baha was much, pleased with, everything and indeed has been radiating joy and happiness among us all. At the evening meal nineteen, sat down with the Master and he spoke of the great joy he found in freedom and in the growing interest now being taken in the Cause of Unity and Peace throughout this country. He told us that this supper was a great and holy occasion and would be recorded in history. The meal itself, partaken of in love and harmony, was indeed a sacrament and a mark of unity and fellowship that would bring the blessing of BAHÁ'ULLAH upon all gathered round the board.

After the meal Abdul-Baha addressed a gathering of about 80 friends in the Guest House Salon and Tammadon-ul Molk translated. The meeting was a most remarkable one and a wonderful spirit of unity pervaded the whole assembly. The Master spoke vigorously and with great fire, especially in reference to the New Age now dawning and our individual responsibilities in both East and West [see *The Christian Commonwealth* issue of the 27th, following]. He then blessed the whole assembly in the name of BAHÁ'ULLAH and shook hands with everyone.

Sept, 25th. Wellesley Tudor-Pole
Star of the West Vol. II No. 12

Major Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884-1968) was a businessman— active in many fields — who also had a strong interest in the occult and considered himself to be a 'seer'. He first met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Ramleh in Alexandria in 1908, having heard of Him earlier.

During the First World War Major Tudor Pole was instrumental in the rescue of 'Abdu'l-Bahá when, in 1918, His life had been threatened by the Ottoman leader, Djemal Pasha.

Although an ardent follower of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Major Tudor Pole found it difficult to accept the more formal way that Shoghi Effendi was shaping the Bahá'í Faith and so did not become a Bahá'í.

A substantial part of his book *Writing on the Ground*, published in 1968, is devoted to the Bahá'í Faith and his memories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



Sunday 24 and Monday 25 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to London from Bristol by train and went to Lady Blomfield's home.



In front of the Clifton Guest House in Bristol.

On Sunday, 24th, the Master rose early, as is his custom, and from 5a.m. to 8a.m. dictated letters and cablegrams. He then breakfasted with us all and said what great joy it afforded him to be among so many good friends. Another country drive followed and then he gave several private interviews to friends who had just arrived from London, Edinburgh and elsewhere.

After lunch the Master went all over the Guest House blessing and dedicating each room to the service of BAHÁ'ULLAH and promising that the house would become a centre of peace and rest for pilgrims from East and West. He also blessed the Oratory and all the workers in the house, calling them all into his presence and telling them of the dignity of labour and true service. Again we sat down nineteen to supper, and again, the Master blessed the gathering and showed great joy and animation. After the smoke and noise of London, Abdul-Baha greatly enjoyed the pure Clifton air and evidently benefited by it. He slept well and spent several hours on Monday morning in short discourses and in silent prayer.

About mid-day the Master returned to London after expressing the intention of returning again some day. He wrote a beautiful prayer and blessing in the Visitors' book, and his presence here will make the Guest House a centre of peace and unity for all comers.

Sept, 25th. *Wellesley Tudor-Pole*

Star of the West Vol. II No. 12

Thursday 28 and Friday 29 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá motored to Vanners, Byfleet.

On the 28th September, 'Abdu'l-Bahá again visited Vanners, the little farm house on the old royal manor that dates back to the time of Edward II. He motored down from London and stayed over night, returning on the evening of the second day.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was much struck during the drive by two detachments of Boy Scouts tramping the road. When told of the Scouts' motto, "Be Prepared," and that an act of kindness each day is one of their laws and that some of these boys put out a fire and assisted at a recent railway accident, he said. "This makes me very happy."

Arriving at Vanners, he found a strangely mixed crowd, assembled about the gate to welcome him, from the quite poor to the wealthy who had motored over from their country places. A great number followed him and as many as could do so pressed into the garden and sat down around him. The silence was most impressive. The same attention and eagerness to hear was noticed among the people each time 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared in the village.

After expressing his joy at being with them, he began to speak to the little group in answer to a question about the elaborate civilization of the West. . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 86

The morning of the second day, a neighbour sent over her car asking if 'Abdu'l-Bahá would not like to take his guests to the Brooklands aviation ground. Though it was windy, an aviator was on the track, when he heard who the visitor was offered to fly for him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá left his friends and walked out into the middle of the course, where he stood alone watching the biplane making wide circles above him.

A Hindu who was learning to fly at the school joined 'Abdu'l-Bahá's friends and asked: "Who is the man in Eastern dress?"

When told, he exclaimed, "Oh I know him very well through his teachings, which I have studied," and immediately he went to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

They talked together for some time in Arabic, the young man showing great joy at being in his presence. He afterwards said that for many years he had longed for this moment.

While having tea out of doors, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the young Hindu, sitting at the head of the long benches that has been arranged, talked merrily to everyone.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 99

Friday 29 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a farewell address at the Passmore Edwards' Settlement, Tavistock Place

At the invitation of Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper about two hundred¹ representative people met in the hall of the Passmore Edwards' Settlement, Tavistock Place, last Friday evening to bid farewell to Abdul Baha Abbas on the eve of his departure for Paris. Arriving in London on Monday evening, September 4, he has spent a happy and busy four weeks in our midst. Except for a brief visit to Bristol last week, he remained at 97, Cadogan Gardens. His time was mainly occupied in interviews with people who wished to meet him. These included not a few whose names are household words in this country, and some travelled long distances to see him.

A beautiful spirit prevailed on Friday evening. The atmosphere was very different from that of an ordinary meeting or religious gathering. Everyone present was enriched by the lofty spiritual tone of the proceedings; the notes struck were all in the direction of Brotherhood, unity, peace. While a report of the speeches would give a very inadequate idea of the effect produced, yet they were so well-conceived, so sincere, so exquisitely phrased as to be all worthy of reproduction. Among others Ameer Ali Syed wrote regretting his inability to be present, and Archdeacon Wilberforce sent, affectionate greetings.

The Christian Commonwealth of Wednesday Oct, 4, 1911



1. The reprint of this article in 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London's gives this figure as 460.

Saturday 30 September 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá was invited to visit the Theosophical Society by Annie Besant.

On September 30th, 'Abdu'l-Bahá met the Theosophical society at their new Headquarters at the express request of their president Mrs. Annie Besant. After a general history of the movement and sympathetic words of welcome by Mr. A. P. Sinnett, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose and delivered to the crowded assembly an address upon the distinctive notes of the Bahá'í teaching, warmly commending the eagerness of the Society in its search for Truth.



'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 26

Discourse of 'Abdu'l-Bahá given at the Theosophical Head Quarters.

September 30th, 1911

O Respected Assembly! O friends of Truth! The inherent nature of fire is to burn, the inherent nature of electricity is to give light, the inherent nature of the sun is to shine, and the inherent nature of the organic earth is the power of growth. . .

Bahá'u'lláh, like a bright star, rose from the horizon of Persia and shone with the great Light of Guidance, giving heavenly radiance and establishing the new Teaching. . .

Firstly: He lays stress on the search for Truth. This is most important, because the people are too easily led by tradition. . .

Secondly: Bahá'u'lláh taught the Oneness of humanity; that is to say, all the children of men are under the mercy of the Great God. . .

Thirdly: Bahá'u'lláh taught, that Religion is the chief foundation of Love and Unity and the cause of Oneness. . .

Fourthly: Religion and Science are inter-twined with each other and cannot be separated. These the two wings with which humanity must fly. . .

Fifthly: The Reality of the divine Religions is one, because the Reality is one and cannot be two. All the prophets are united in their message, and unshaken. . .

Sixthly: Equality and Brotherhood must be established among all members of mankind. This is according to Justice. . .

Seventhly: The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, . . .

Eighthly: Bahá'u'lláh declared the coming of the Most Great Peace. All the nations and peoples will come under the shadow of the Tent of the Great Peace and Harmony

Ninthly: Bahá'u'lláh taught that hearts must receive the Bounty of the Holy Spirit, so that Spiritual civilization may be established.

This is a short summary of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. To establish this Bahá'u'lláh underwent great difficulties and hardships. . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 27-30

Sunday 1 October 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá blessed a marriage and later gave a short address at the Higher Thought Centre, 10 Cheniston Gardens, Kensington.

Quite an oriental note was struck toward the end of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's London visit, by the marriage of a young Persian couple who had sought his presence for the ceremony, the bride journeying from Baghdad accompanied by her uncle in order to meet her fiance here and be married before 'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure. The bride's father and grandfather had been followers of Baha'u'llah during the time of his banishment.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 77

The subjoined notes are taken from "The Quarterly Record of 'Higher Thought' Work," November 1911.

One of the most interesting and significant events which have taken place, has been the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to London. The Persian Mage whose life, passed in prison, has been spent in promoting peace and unity by the one certain method of aiding individual spiritual development, must in a very real sense have "tasted of the travail of his soul and been satisfied". Not only was he visited privately by nearly every earnest truth-seeker and leader of high thought in London, but his message was made known to thousands who had but dimly heard his name before.

The Higher Thought Centre was well known to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the place where the Bahá'ís held their weekly meetings under the direction of Miss Rosenberg, and an invitation to the Centre was accepted by him just two days before his departure. Through his interpreter 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a kindly greeting and a short impressive address, dwelling on the blessedness of such an assembly gathered in a spirit of unity and spiritual aspiration. He concluded with a lowly uttered fervent prayer in his own tongue, and a benediction which all present felt to be very real.

On the following day a message was conveyed to the Centre from 'Abdu'l-Bahá signifying the fullest appreciation of all kindness shown to the Bahá'ís, and concluding with these words; "it matters not what name each calls himself – The Great Work is One."

"Christ is ever in the world of existence. He has never disappeared out of it. . . . Rest assured that Christ is present. The Spiritual beauty we see around us today is from the breathings of Christ."

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 40-41

In October 1902 the Kensington Higher Thought Centre passed this resolution: *That the Centre stands for the definite teaching of absolute Oneness of Creator and Creation – Cause and Effect – and that nothing which may contradict or be in opposition to the above principles be admitted to the 'Higher Thought' Centre Platform.*

By Oneness of Cause and Effect is meant, that Effect (man) does consist only of what Cause is; but a part (individual personality) is not therefore co-extensive with the whole.

Monday 2 October 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá breakfasted with the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House, City of London.



The Lord Major of London at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit was Sir Thomas Vezey Strong (1858-1920). He was a teetotaler and a temperance advocate. He traded in paper and was the holder of a number of honours.

The Mansion House as it is today

Visit to the Lord Mayor

At the express wish of the Lord Mayor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá paid him a visit early one morning at the Mansion House. The talk turned chiefly upon the social conditions of great cities, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that London was the best regulated city he had seen.

He said: "Every man walking in the street is free as if he were in his own kingdom. There is a great spiritual light in London. The effort made for justice is real and in this country the law is the same for the poor as for the rich." He took great interest in hearing of the care that is taken of prisoners as they leave jail, and spoke of the land being happy where the magistrates are as fathers to the people.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 109-10

On his last afternoon in London, a reporter called to ask him of his future plans, finding him surrounded by a number of friends who had called to bid him good-bye. When, in answer to this query, 'Abdu'l-Bahá told in perfect English of his intention to visit Paris and go from there to Alexandria, the press representative evinced surprise at his faultless pronunciation. Thereupon 'Abdu'l-Bahá proceeded to march with a free stride up and down the flower-scented drawing room, his Oriental garb contrasting strangely with his modern surroundings; and, to the amusement of the assembly, uttered a string of elaborate English words, laughingly ending, "Very difficult English words I speak!" Then, a moment later, with the swift transition of one who knows both how to be grave and gay, he showed himself terribly in earnest.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, pp. 110-11

Tuesday 3 October 1911

'Abdu'l-Bahá left London from Victoria Station for Paris, with a fairly large party accompanying Him.

The last morning came. The secretaries and several friends were ready to start for the train.

'Abdu'l-Bahá sat calmly writing. We reminded Him that the hour to leave for the train was at hand. He looked up, saying:

"There are things of more importance than trains," and He continued to write.

Suddenly in breathless haste a man came in, carrying in his hand a beautiful garland of fragrant white flowers. Bowing low before the Master, he said:

"In the name of the disciples of Zoroaster, The Pure One, I hail Thee as the 'Promised Sháh Bahrám!'"

Then the man, for a sign, garlanded 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and proceeded to anoint each and all of the amazed friends who were present with precious oil, which had the odour of fresh roses.

This brief but impressive ceremony concluded, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, having carefully divested Himself of the garland, departed for the train.

We had witnessed a solemn act in the Mysterious Sacred Drama of the World.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in London was ended.

We stood bereft of His presence.

Lady Blomfield in *The Chosen Highway* pp. 174-5

The Farewell

On the last morning of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's stay in London many friends gathered both at Cadogan Gardens and at the station to bid him farewell. An impressive and interesting ceremony was performed at the house by a Zoroastrian (a physician), who sent an elaborate telegram to some Parsis in Bombay, saying: "The Torch of Truth has been lighted again in the East and the West by 'Abdu'l-Bahá." Instructed by his brethren, this follower of one of the most ancient religions in the world had brought with him a sacred oil of a rare perfume, with which he anointed the head and breast of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, afterwards touching the hands of all present. He then placed around 'Abdu'l-Bahá's neck and shoulders an exquisite garland of rose-buds and lilies.

The last glimpse which the friends had at Victoria Station was that of the venerable face and form standing at the window, gazing out with a look of benevolence and wonderful tenderness on those he was leaving.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in *London*, p. 113

Other events

After 100 years it is not always possible to give an exact date of an event if that date was not recorded.

A spirited conversation due to the visit of an ardent suffragist will long be remembered by those who had the privilege of being present. . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá turned to the visitor: "Give me your reasons for believing that woman today should have the vote?"

Answer: "I believe that humanity is a divine humanity and that it must rise higher and higher; but it cannot soar with only one wing." 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed His pleasure at the answer, and smiling, replied: "But what will you do if one wing is stronger than the other?" *Answer:* "Then we must strengthen the weaker wing. . ."

'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled and asked: "What will you say if I prove to you that woman is the stronger wing?"

The answer came in the same bright vein, "You will earn my eternal gratitude!" at which all the company made merry.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in *London*, pp. 102-03

Two ladies had written from Scotland asking if it were possible that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would spare them one evening. . . .

Everybody was feeling elated at the prospect of a wonderful evening, unmarred by the presence of any but the most intimate and the most comprehending of the friends. Not more than half an hour had passed, when, to our consternation, a persistent person pushed past the servitors, and strode into our midst. Seating himself, and lighting a cigarette without invitation, he proceeded to say that he intended writing an article for some paper about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, superciliously asking for "Some telling points, don't you know." He talked without a pause in a far from polite manner. We were speechless and aghast at the intrusion of this insufferable and altogether unpleasant bore, spoiling our golden hour! Presently 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose and, making a sign to the man to follow Him, . . . We looked at one another. The bore had gone, yes, but alas! so also had the Master!

. . . Being the hostess, I was perturbed and perplexed. Then I went to the door of the audience room, and said to the secretary: "Will you kindly say to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that the ladies with whom the appointment has been made are awaiting His pleasure." . . .

Almost immediately we heard steps approaching along the corridor. They came across the hall to the door. The sound of kind farewell words reached us. Then the closing of the door, and the Beloved came back.

"Oh, Master!" we said.

Pausing near the door, He looked at us each in turn, with a look of deep, grave meaning. "You were making that poor man uncomfortable, so strongly desiring his absence; I took him away to make him feel happy."

Truly 'Abdu'l-Bahá's thoughts and ways were far removed from ours!

Lady Blomfield in *The Chosen Highway* pp. 162-3

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The words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as quoted in this booklet were recorded by people who were with Him at the time. Since these words were spoken rather than written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá they cannot be taken as authentic but rather should be considered in the same way as ‘pilgrim’s notes.’