

‘Abdu’l-Ghaffár of Iṣfáhán

Another of those who left their homeland to become our neighbors and fellow prisoners was ‘Abdu’l-Ghaffár of Iṣfáhán. He was a highly perceptive individual who, on commercial business, had traveled about Asia Minor for many years. He made a journey to ‘Iráq, where Áqá Muḥammad-‘Alí of Sád (Iṣfáhán) brought him into the shelter of the Faith. He soon ripped off the bandage of illusions that had blinded his eyes before, and he rose up, winging to salvation in the Heaven of Divine love. With him, the veil had been thin, almost transparent, and that is why, as the first word was imparted, he was immediately released from the world of idle imaginings and attached himself to the One Who is clear to see.

On the journey from ‘Iráq to the Great City, Constantinople, ‘Abdu’l-Ghaffár was a close and agreeable companion. He served as interpreter for the entire company, for he spoke excellent Turkish, a language in which none of the friends was proficient. The journey came peacefully to an end and then, in the Great City, he continued on, as a companion and friend. The same was true in Adrianople and also when, as one of the prisoners, he accompanied us to the city of Haifa.

Here, the oppressors determined to send him to Cyprus. He was terrified and shouted for help, for he longed to be with us in the Most Great Prison.ⁱ When they held him back by force, from high up on the ship he threw himself into the sea. This had no effect whatever on the brutal officers. After dragging him from the water they held him prisoner on the ship, cruelly restraining him, and carrying him away by force to Cyprus. He was jailed in Famagusta, but one way or another managed to

escape and hastened to Akká. Here, protecting himself from the malevolence of our oppressors, he changed his name to ‘Abdu’lláh. Sheltered within the loving-kindness of Bahá’u’lláh, he passed his days at ease, and happy.

But when the world’s great Light had set, to shine on forever from the All-Luminous Horizon, ‘Abdu’l-Ghaffár was beside himself and a prey to anguish. He no longer had a home. He left for Damascus and spent some time there, pent up in his sorrow, mourning by day and night. He grew weaker and weaker. We despatched Hájí Abbás there, to nurse him and give him treatment and care, and send back word of him every day. But ‘Abdu’l-Ghaffár would do nothing but talk, unceasingly, at every hour, with his nurse, and tell how he longed to go his way, into the mysterious country beyond. And at the end, far from home, exiled from his Love, he set out for the Holy Threshold of Bahá’u’lláh.

He was truly a man long-suffering, and mild; a man of good character, good acts, and goodly words. Greetings and praise be unto him, and the glory of the All-Glorious. His sweet-scented tomb is in Damascus.

¹Mírzá Yahyá had not been banished from Persia. Now, however, he was being exiled from Adrianople to Cyprus, and ‘Abdu’l-Ghaffár was one of the four companions condemned to go with him. Cf. Bahá’u’lláh’s Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 166, and God Passes By, p. 182.