

Farewell Reception

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



4

Farewell Reception

September 29th, 1911

Introduction

On the evening of St. Michael's day, a large farewell reception was given to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the hall of the Passmore Edwards' Settlement, which was filled to its utmost capacity with representative people of every profession, some coming from great distances.

On the platform surrounding 'Abdu'l-Bahá were men of different shades of thought, met to express their sympathy with the work and mission of their great visitor. Professor Michael E. Sadler was in the chair.

The meeting began with the Lord's Prayer spoken by the entire assembly; this was followed by the prayer for Unity of Bahá'u'lláh and a prayer of the fifth Century, ascribed to Pope Gelasius. Professor Sadler then spoke in words that will never be forgotten by those who heard them; and in his address used a quotation from a Universal Prayer, which had been submitted by an earnest Bahá'í to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the year before in Egypt and which had been completed by him and commended as one that could be used by peoples of all faiths in the East and West.

The Chairman was followed by Sir Richard Stapley, Mr. Eric Hammond, Mr. Claude Montefiore, Mrs. Stannard from Egypt, and others. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá left the hall, the poor people of the neighbourhood, crowded on the pavement to see him and an eager-faced little lame girl on crutches was specially brought to him.

Meeting of Farewell

Reprinted by kind permission, from the Christian Commonwealth Oct. 4th

AT the invitation of Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper about four hundred and sixty representative people met in the hall of the Passmore Edwards' Settlement, Tavistock Place, last Friday evening to bid farewell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás on the eve of his departure for Paris. Arriving in London on Monday evening, September the fourth, 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



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

mainly occupied in interviews with people who wish 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, and 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 Amír Alí Siyyid wrote regretting his inability to be present, and Archdeacon Wilberforce sent affectionate greetings.

After the Lord's Prayer and prayers for Unity of Bahá'u'lláh and Gelasius (fifth Century), Professor Michael Sadler spoke as follows: —

Speech of Professor Michael Sadler

We have met together to bid farewell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and to thank God for his example and teaching, and for the power of his prayers to bring Light into confused thought, Hope into the place of dread, Faith where doubt was, and into troubled hearts, the Love which overmasters self-seeking and fear.

Though we all, among ourselves, in our devotional allegiance have our own individual loyalties, to all of us 'Abdu'l-Bahá brings, and has brought, a message of Unity, of sympathy and of Peace. He bids us all be real and true in what we profess to believe; and to treasure above everything the Spirit behind the form. With him we bow before the Hidden Name, before that which is of every life the Inner Life! He bids us worship in fearless loyalty to our own faith, but with ever stronger yearning after Union, Brotherhood, and Love; so turning ourselves in Spirit, and with our whole heart, that we may enter more into the mind of God, which is above class, above race, and beyond time.

Professor Sadler concluded with a beautiful prayer of James Martineau.

Mr. Eric Hammond said the Bahá'í movement stood for unity; one God, one people; a myriad souls manifesting the divine unity, a unity so complete that no difference of colour or creed could possibly differentiate between one Manifestation of God and another, and a sympathy so all-embracing as to include the very lowest, meanest, shabbiest of men; unity, sympathy, brotherhood, leading up to a concord universal. He concluded with a saying of Bahá'u'lláh, that the divine cause of universal good could not be limited to either East or West.

Miss Alice Buckton said we were standing at one of the springtimes of the world, and from that assembly of representatives of thought and work and love, would go out all over the world influences making for unity and brotherhood. The complete equality of men and women was one of the chief notes of Bahá'í teaching.

Sir Richard Stapley pointed out that unity must not be sought in the forms and externals of religion, but in the inner spirit. In Persia there had been such an impulse towards real unity as was a rebuke to this so-called Christian country.

Mr. Claude Montefiore, as a Jew, rejoiced in the growth of the spirit of unity, and regarded that meeting as prophetic of the better time to come, and in some sense a fulfillment of the idea expressed by one who fell as a martyr to the Roman Catholic faith, Sir Thomas More, who wrote of the great Church of the Utopians, in which all varieties of creeds gathered together, having a service and liturgy that expressed the higher unity, while admitting special loyalties.

Mrs. Stannard dwelt on what that meeting and the sentiments expressed meant to the East, especially to the women, whose condition it was difficult for the West to understand.

Tamaddun'ul-Mulk testified to the unifying effect the Bahá'í movement had had in Persia, and of the wonderful way in which it had spread to America and other countries.

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose to give his farewell address. An impressive figure, the face rather worn but the eyes full of animation, he stood for about fifteen minutes, speaking in soft musical Persian. With hands extended, palms upwards, he closed with a prayer.

Farewell words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O NOBLE friends and seekers for the Kingdom of God! About sixty years ago in the time when the fire of war was blazing among the nations of the world, and bloodshed was considered an honour to mankind; in a time when the carnage of thousands stained the earth; when children were rendered fatherless; when fathers were without sons and mothers were spent with weeping; when the darkness of inter-racial hatred and animosity seemed to envelope mankind and blot out the divine light; when the wafting of the holy breath of God seemed to be cut off — in that time Bahá'u'lláh rose like a shining star from the horizon of Persia, inspired with the message of Peace and of Brotherhood among men.

He brought the light of guidance to the world; He kindled the fire of love and revealed the great reality of the True Beloved. He sought to destroy the foundations of religious and racial prejudice and of political rivalry.

He likened the world of humanity to a tree, and all the nations to its branches and the people to its leaves, buds and fruits.

His mission was to change ignorant fanaticism into Universal love, to establish in the minds of His followers the basis of the unity of humanity and to bring about in practice the equality of mankind. He declared that all men were equal under the mercy and bounty of God.

Then was the door of the Kingdom set wide and the light of a new heaven on earth revealed unto seeing eyes.

Yet the whole of Bahá'u'lláh's life was spent in the midst of great trial and cruel tyranny. In Persia He was thrown into prison, put into chains, and lived constantly under the menace of the sword. He was scorned and scourged.

When He was about thirty years old He was exiled to Baghḍád, and from Baghḍád to Constantinople, and from there to Adrianople and lastly to the prison of 'Akká.

Yet under chains and from His cell He succeeded in spreading His cause, and uplifting the banner of the oneness of humanity.

Now, God be praised, we see the light of Love shining in the East and in the West; and the tent of fellowship is raised in the midst of all the peoples for the drawing together of all hearts and souls.

The call of the Kingdom has been sounded, and the annunciation of the world's need for Universal Peace has enlightened the world's conscience.

My hope is that through the zeal and ardour of the pure of heart, the darkness of hatred and difference will be entirely abolished, and the light of love and unity shall shine; this world shall become a new world; things material shall become the mirror of the divine; human hearts shall meet and embrace each other; the whole world become as a man's native country and the different races be counted as one race.

Then disputes and differences will vanish, and the Divine Beloved be revealed on this earth.

As the East and the West are illumined by one sun, so all races, nations, and creeds shall be seen as the servants of the One God. The whole earth is one home, and all peoples, did they but know it, are bathed in the oneness of God's mercy. God created all. He gives sustenance to all. He guides and trains all under the shadow of His bounty. We must follow the example God Himself gives us, and do away with all disputations and quarrels.

Praise be to God! the signs of friendship are appearing, and as a proof of this I, today, coming from the East, have met in this London of the West with extreme kindness, regard and love, and I am deeply thankful and happy. I shall never forget this time I am spending with you.

Forty years I endured in a Turkish prison. Then in 1908 the Young Turks "Committee of Union and Progress" shook the gates of despotism and set all prisoners free, myself among them. I pray that blessing may be upon all who work for Union and Progress.

In the future untrue reports will be spread regarding Bahá'u'lláh in order to hinder the spread of Truth. I tell you this, that you may be awake and prepared.

I leave you with prayer that all the beauty of the Kingdom may be yours. In deep regret at our separation, I bid you good-bye.



The translation of the valedictory having been read by Professor Sadler, 'Abdu'l-Bahá closed the meeting by giving his blessing in undulating rhythmic tones.

By the time these lines appear 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás will have left our shores, but the memory of his gracious personality is a permanent possession. His influence will be felt for many days to

come, and has already done much to promote that union of East and West for which many have long yearned.

