

## The visit to Bristol

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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'ABDU'L-BAHÁ spent the week end of September 23rd to 25th, at the Clifton Guest House at Clifton, Bristol.

On the first afternoon, while driving, he expressed much interest in rural England, marvelling at the century-old trees, and the vivid green of the woods and downs, so unlike the arid East. "Though it is autumn it seems like spring," he said. The houses with their little plots of ground, suggested a quotation which 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave from Bahá'u'lláh's writings in which the latter alludes to each family having a house with a piece of land. 'Abdu'l-Bahá likened the country to the soul and the city to the body of man, saying, "The body without the soul cannot live. It is good," he remarked, "to live under the sky, in the sunshine and fresh air." Observing a young woman who rode by on horseback with her hair flying free and several who bicycled past on their bicycles unattended, he said, "This is the age of woman. She should receive the same education as her brother and enjoy the same privilege; for all souls are equal before God. Sex, in its relation to the exigencies of the physical plane, has no connection with the Spirit. In this age of spiritual awakening, the world has entered upon the path of progress into the arena of development, where the power of the spirit surpasses that of the body. Soon the spirit will have dominion over the world of humanity."

In the evening greetings were cabled to the Bahá'ís of Tīhrán informing them of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence in Bristol. He sent his love and wished them to know that he was well and happy with the Clifton friends. This was sent in reply to a cablegram previously received from Tīhrán congratulating the people of the Guest House on his prospective visit.

Later on a general reception was held, ninety people coming to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá who spoke to them with impressive earnestness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "You are very welcome. I have come far to see you. I praise God that after forty years of waiting I am permitted at last to come and bring my message. This is an assembly full of spirituality. Those who are present have turned their hearts towards God. They are looking and longing for glad tidings. We have gathered here by the power of the Spirit, therefore our hearts are stirred with thanksgiving. 'Send out Thy Light and Thy Truth O God: Let them lead us to the Holy Mountains!' May we be refreshed by the holy springs that are renewing the life of the world! As day follows night, and after sunset comes the dawn, so Jesus Christ appeared on the horizon of this world like a Sun of Truth; even so when the people — after forgetting the teachings of



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Christ and His example of love to all humanity — had again grown tired of material things, a heavenly Star shone once more in Persia, a new illumination appeared and now a great light is spreading throughout all lands.”

“Men keep their possessions for their own enjoyment and do not share sufficiently with others the bounty received from God. Spring is thus changed into the winter of selfishness and egotism. Jesus Christ said ‘Ye must be born again’ so that divine Life may spring anew within you. Be kind to all around and serve one another; love to be just and true in all your dealings; pray always and so live your life that sorrow cannot touch you. Look upon the people of your own race and those of other races as members of one organism; sons of the same Father; let it be known by your behaviour that you are indeed the people of God. Then wars and disputes shall cease and over the world will spread the Most Great Peace.”

After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had retired Tamaddun’ul-Mulk and Mr. W. Tudor Pole gave short addresses in which references were made to the martyrdom of the faithful in Persia, special mention being made of the eminent poetess Qurratu’l-‘Ayn.

The next day was a bright Sunday and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went out with his friends driving and walking on the downs. Afterwards he gathered the servants of the house together, spoke of the dignity of labour and thanked them for their service, giving to each some remembrance of his visit. He went over the Guest house and blessed it as a centre for pilgrims from every part of the world, and said it would become indeed a House of Rest.

On the morning of the third day, a Canon of the Anglican Church met him at breakfast. The conversation turned on the reluctance of the rich to part with their possessions, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoting the saying of Jesus, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” He remarked that only when the true seeker finds that attachments to the material are keeping him from his spiritual heritage, will he gladly enter the way of renunciation. Then will the rich man joyfully share his worldly possessions with the needy. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá contrasted the unpretentious hospitality before him with the costly banquets of the wealthy, who too often sit at their feasts forgetting the hungry multitudes.

He urged his hearers to spread the light in their own homes so that finally it would illuminate the whole community.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then returned to London. It was the earnest wish of those who had the privilege of meeting him that his followers in other lands should know how much the Clifton people appreciated his visit and realized his spiritual power and love.

Thomas Pole.

