

Chapter 4

Rúhíyyih Rabbani

Original English



Chapter 4

Martha Root and Queen Marie of Rumania

Shoghi Effendi used to remark that out of his sufferings something always seemed to be born. He would go through these ordeals by fire — for indeed he seemed to fairly burn with suffering — and then some rain from heaven, in the form of good news, would shower upon him and help to revive him. I am afraid the mystery of sacrifice still remains a mystery to me, but certainly the Holy Ones of this world buy their victories dearly.

It was at this time, when affliction was literally engulfing the Guardian, that, on 4 May, the *Toronto Daily Star* published a highly appreciative statement made by Queen Marie of Rumania on the Bahá'í Faith, a statement, followed by others during the course of her visit to the United States and Canada, which was printed in about two hundred newspapers and constituted some of the widest and most spectacular publicity the Faith has ever received. In a confidential letter written on 29 May the Guardian refers to this as “this most astonishing and highly significant event in the progress of the Cause”.

The acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's station by the Rumanian Queen — the first crowned head to embrace the Faith — is a chapter in itself in the life of Shoghi Effendi and is inextricably bound up with the services of Martha Root, that “star-servant of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh” as Shoghi Effendi called her, and the part she played in his life — indeed no account of his life could ever be complete without mention of the relationship of this noble soul to him. Miss Martha Root was a journalist by profession and came of a distinguished American family. She met the Master during His visit to the United States, and, fired by His *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, arose in 1919 and commenced her historic travels in the service of the Cause, not only travelling longer and farther than any single Bahá'í has ever done since its inception, but often, as the Guardian said, “in extremely perilous circumstances”. At the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension she was already forty-nine years old, a plain, not to say homely, woman, but with singularly beautiful, frank blue eyes and a unique degree of faith which convinced her that Bahá'u'lláh could do anything, and would do everything if, as she used to put it, one just stood aside and let Him. It was her great teaching journeys — four of which took her entirely round the world — combined with her truly outstanding qualities, that so endeared her to Shoghi Effendi and led him to call her the “archetype of Bahá'í itinerant teachers”. The services of no other believer ever afforded him the satisfaction that her singular victories brought him. Of her Shoghi Effendi wrote in October 1926: “In her case we have verily witnessed in an unmistakable manner what the power of dauntless



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faith, when coupled with sublimity of character, can achieve, what forces it can release, to what heights it can rise.”

From the inception of Shoghi Effendi’s ministry she not only turned her great loving heart to him but constantly sought his advice as to her plans. It would not be exaggerating to say they had a partnership in all her undertakings, marked by a mutual love and confidence all too rare in the harassed life of the Guardian. They kept in close touch, a flow of letters and cables apprising him of her plans, her needs, her victories, her requests for guidance and his unfailing answers giving encouragement and advice. We find in his letters to her, whom he characterized, in 1923, as that “indomitable and zealous disciple of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”, over and over again phrases such as these, in which he expresses the warmth of his feelings, that he has read her letters with “pride and gratitude”, that they “have as usual gladdened my heart”, that “It is always a joy to hear from you, beloved Martha.” He wrote to her in July 1926, when she was making so many contacts with the royalty of Europe: “...write me fully and frequently for I yearn to hear of your activities and of every detail of your achievements. Assuring you of my boundless love for you...”, and in August he says “I hunger for every minute detail of your triumphal advance in the field of service...I am enclosing a copy of my letter to the Queen. Do not share its contents with anyone.” But he had hastened to share it himself with her who had taught that Queen. In September he wrote, “I am glad to share with you the contents of the Queen of Rumania’s answer to my letter. I think it is a remarkable letter, beyond our highest expectations. The change that has been effected in her, her outspoken manner, her penetrating testimony and courageous stand are indeed eloquent and convincing proof of the all-conquering Spirit of God’s living Faith and the magnificent services you are rendering to His Cause.”

The bond of confidence between Shoghi Effendi and Martha is clearly illustrated by this exchange of cables in October 1926: “Love do you approve that I continue original plan starting Portugal late November please wire” she cabled him. Nothing could be more tender and revealing of Martha’s nature than that intense term of endearment “love” at the beginning, which frequently slipped out so naturally and unselfconsciously to the Guardian she adored. He replied: “Do as Divine guidance inspires you. Tenderest love”. Shortly after this he sends her £50 “as my modest contribution towards the splendid work you are doing for our beloved Cause.” This was not an isolated act; every now and then we find he has sent her a sum for “your exemplary work in the Divine Vineyard”, to help with “your extensive travels, your increasing expenditures and your stupendous work”, as he put it, and once, at least when news reached him that she was ill. He also sent her money to help in the translation and publication of various foreign editions of Dr Esslemont’s book — which Shoghi Effendi referred to as the textbook of the Faith — a work in which she was actively engaged and one he was constantly urging her to promote, and more occasionally for some other purpose. The gifts were not onesided by any means. We find Shoghi Effendi writing: “I have received the gold ring which you sent me...and have offered it, after wearing it myself, to the Greatest Holy Leaf...you cannot realize what a moral assistance, what comfort and inspiration you are bestowing upon our harassed and sorely-stricken brethren in Persia. Great indeed will be your reward in the world to come! More power to your elbow!” In the postscript to this letter of February 1929 he adds: “I have received the beautiful handkerchief you have sent me and I am making full use of it as a cherished remembrance of your dear self.” So typical of Shoghi Effendi, that he should suddenly think, as he had given the ring away, that Martha might be hurt and hasten to assure her about the

handkerchief! They seem to have sent many things back and forth; he used to send her books for distribution, and in one letter he writes to her in 1931 that he is sending two packages of stationery stamped with the Greatest Name “for your correspondence with distinguished people”. We find her on one occasion remitting to him \$19 to cover the cost of cables he sent her in reply to questions she had asked him.

One of Martha’s cables to Shoghi Effendi says: “Tenderest love longing hear from you”; one of Shoghi Effendi’s letters to her says: “...Generations yet unborn will exult in the memory of one who has so energetically, so swiftly and beautifully paved the way for the universal recognition of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh.” He calls her the “peerless herald of the Cause”. What her services and her letters meant to Shoghi Effendi during the first ten years of his ministry, at a time when he himself wrote to her that the response of the believers to the needs in the teaching field was “so inadequate and scanty!”, is indescribable. “Your letters...”, he wrote to her on 10 July 1926, “have given me strength, joy and encouragement at a time when I felt depressed, tired and disheartened.” In 1927, in June, he assures her that correspondence with her is not a burden to him, “...on the contrary it refreshes my weary soul and revives in me the spirit of hope and confidence which oppressive cares and manifold anxieties at times tend to darken.” In December of that same year, when a copy of Princess Ileana’s letter to her was forwarded to Haifa, Shoghi Effendi assures Martha it had “brought tears of joy to the eyes of the Greatest Holy Leaf... I am sure you do not realize what you are doing for the Cause of God!” In another letter, written in September 1928, beginning: “My dearest and most precious Martha”, Shoghi Effendi, after mentioning how sad he is over the situation of the Faith in Russia, goes on to say: “I assure you that but for your letters I would feel completely broken-down and exhausted ... I must stop as I feel unable to write more as my nerves are shaken and tired. Your sad but grateful brother.” In November he acknowledges five letters from her — which gives us some idea of how often she wrote to him — and says: “It is such a comfort and encouragement to me in my work to be constantly reminded by your beautiful letters of the all-conquering power of Bahá’u’lláh shining forth through you in all your vast and sacred endeavours...”, and he sends her nine ring stones “to give to those whom you feel should possess them” and £30 “so unworthy and inadequate when compared to your stupendous efforts...”

She turned to him at all times, unhesitatingly making requests of him which she felt were in the interests of the Faith. The Guardian was well aware of both the purity of her motives and her good judgment and almost invariably acceded to these requests, which ranged from letters of encouragement to individuals to cabled messages to figures of great prominence. “I am enclosing, according to your request, the letters you have asked me to write” he informs her. He in turn made many requests of her, using her as an ever-willing instrument to promote the interests of the Faith, and to defend it from its enemies, encouraging her to attend, indeed sending her, sometimes, as his own representative to various international congresses and conferences whose interests and animating purposes were similar to those of the Bahá’ís. An example of this is his letter of 12 June 1929 addressed “To the Third Biennial Conference of the World Federation of Educational Associations” held in Geneva: “My dear co-workers for humanity: I am sending Miss Martha L. Root, American journalist and international Bahá’í speaker and teacher, as an international Bahá’í representative to your Congress in July. She will present to you my letter of greetings to your great Congress. With all best wishes for you in your noble undertaking, I am, your brother and co-worker, Shoghi.” Many of these were Esperanto

congresses, Martha Root being an accomplished speaker in that language. Cables such as this one, sent in April 1938, were not infrequent: "Martha Root, Bombay, Convey All Faiths League expression my best wishes for success deliberations. May Divine Guidance enable assembled representatives achieve their high purpose and extend range their meritorious activities."

In March 1936 she cabled him that the sister of Queen Marie had died; on the following day the Guardian cabled her: "...Assure beloved Queen deepest sympathy..." Both he and she were always keenly aware of the proper, the kind, the wise way of doing things. Martha was a natural, unaffected, warm and charming woman. No doubt it was this genuineness, this simplicity and nobility of nature that endeared her alike to Bahá'u'lláh's king, the Guardian, and to the first Queen to accept the Faith. In one of her cables to Shoghi Effendi, in 1934, she says "Our Marie sends you love thanks wonderful interviews."

On one occasion she cabled the Guardian: "...perhaps you will think wise send me immediately greetings President Hoover", to which Shoghi Effendi replied by cable the following day: "Kindly convey President Hoover on behalf followers Bahá'u'lláh world over expression their fervent prayers for success his unsparing efforts in promoting cause of international brotherhood and peace — a cause for which they have steadfastly laboured well nigh a century". Exactly one year before, during a visit to Japan in November 1930, we find a similar exchange of cables taking place; Martha's said: "Love beautiful you cable me greetings Emperor" to which Shoghi Effendi replied, the same day: "Kindly transmit his Imperial Majesty Emperor Japan on behalf myself and Bahá'ís world over expression of our deepest love as well as assurance our heartfelt prayers for his well-being and prosperity his ancient realm." Love begets love. Martha's great love for Shoghi Effendi called forth his love and his responses the way the capacity of a diamond to reflect light captures its rays and casts them back brilliantly.

In March of 1927 Shoghi Effendi wrote to Martha: "...I assure you, dearest Martha that wherever you be, in Scandinavia, Central Europe, Russia, Turkey or Persia, my fervent and continued prayers will accompany you and I trust that you may be protected, strengthened and guided to fulfil your unique and unprecedented mission as the exemplary advocate of the Bahá'í Faith."

Although it was never possible for Martha to go to Russia she did go to Persia for the visit the Guardian so much desired. On 22 January 1930 Shoghi Effendi cabled her: "May Beloved sustain you throughout triumphal progress Persia." In the beginning of April, when she had reached India, we find Shoghi Effendi writing to her, in acknowledgement of no less than twelve letters: "You fully deserved all the honour, the love and the hospitality which the Persian friends have so remarkably shown towards you. I have been so busy after my long and severe illness, that I have felt unable to answer promptly your letters, you have, however, been always in my thoughts, particularly during those hours when I visit the Holy Shrines and place my head on the sacred threshold." The years rolled by and Martha Root continued, white-haired, frail and indomitable, her ceaseless journeys, until she was stricken by "a deadly and painful disease", as Shoghi Effendi wrote, and in Honolulu on 28 September 1939 she passes away. She had been on fire with pain during the last weeks of a tour of the Antipodes and, on her way back to America, to assist in the prosecution of the first Seven Year Plan, she literally dropped in her tracks, yielding up a life the Guardian said might well be regarded as the fairest fruit the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh had yet produced.

I well remember the day the cable conveying the news of her death reached Shoghi Effendi. He himself was very ill with sand fly fever, had a high temperature (104° Fahrenheit) and, alas, should never have had to receive such news in such a condition! But there was no way we could withhold it from him. He was the Guardian, it was Martha Root who had died. Against the strong remonstrances of his mother, his brother and myself, he pulled himself up to a sitting position in his bed, white, terribly weak, and very shaken by this sudden news, and dictated a cable to America announcing her death. He said what else could he do — the whole Bahá'í world was waiting to hear what he would say. In that long message he said, amongst other things: "Martha's unnumbered admirers throughout Bahá'í world lament with me earthly extinction her heroic life...Posterity will establish her as foremost Hand ...first Bahá'í Century...first finest fruit Formative Age Faith..." He said he was impelled to share the expenses of building her grave with the American National Assembly, the grave of one whose "acts shed imperishable lustre American Bahá'í Community." It was the last money spent in that unique partnership that had lasted eighteen years. to the friend in whose home she had passed away he cabled: "...rejoice her assumption seat Supreme Concourse..."

But in reality Shoghi Effendi had long since paid his finest tribute to the "incomparable" Martha Root, the "leading ambassadress of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith", as he had called her, in a general letter to the Bahá'ís of the West, written in 1929: "And in conclusion, I wish, in a few words, to pay a tribute, however inadequate, to the magnificent services rendered by the exemplary and indefatigable teacher of the Cause, our dearly-beloved sister, Miss Martha Root. Her international travels on behalf of the Bahá'í Faith, so wide in their range, so extensive in their duration, so inspiring in their results, will adorn and enrich the annals of God's immortal Faith. Her earliest journeys to the southernmost limits of the American continent, to India and to South Africa, to the eastern confines of Asia, to the islands of the Southern Seas and the Scandinavian countries of the North; her more recent contact with the rulers and crowned heads of Europe and the impression which her undaunted spirit created in royal circles in the Balkan Countries; her close affiliation with international organizations, peace societies, humanitarian movements and Esperanto circles; and her latest victories in the university circles in Germany — all constitute a compelling evidence of what the power of Bahá'u'lláh can achieve. These historic labours, pursued single-handed and in circumstances of financial stringency and ill-health, have been characterized throughout by a spirit of fidelity, of self-effacement, of thoroughness and vigour that none has excelled." She had been the "nearest approach to the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself to His disciples in the course of His journeys throughout the West".

Martha Root was firmly convinced that in her possession was the most priceless gem the world had ever seen — the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. She believed that in showing this gem and offering it to anyone, king or peasant, she was conferring the greatest bounty upon him he could ever receive. It was this proud conviction that enabled her, a woman of no wealth or social prestige, plain, dowdily dressed and neither a great scholar nor an outstanding intellectual, to meet more kings, queens, princes and princesses, presidents and men of distinction, fame and prominence and tell them about the Bahá'í Faith than any other Bahá'í in the history of this Cause has ever done. As this story is concerned with the Guardian of the Faith and his life and not with others, it is impossible to go into the details, amply provided elsewhere in Bahá'í writings, of Martha Root's many interviews and the reactions of these prominent people to the Message she brought them. Our primary concern must be with the relationship of Queen Marie to Shoghi Effendi.

Martha Root reported to Shoghi Effendi the account of the first of her eight interviews with Queen Marie of Rumania, which took place on 30 January 1926 in Controceni Palace in Bucharest, at the request of the Queen herself, after she had received Dr Esslemont's book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, sent to her by Martha. The Queen had evidently been attracted to the Teachings and when it was bruited about that she might visit North America Shoghi Effendi wrote to the American National Spiritual Assembly the following instructions, conveyed in the writing of his secretary, on 21 August 1926: "We read in *The Times* that Queen Marie of Rumania is coming to America. She seems to have obtained a great interest in the Cause. So we must be on our guard lest we do an act which may prejudice her and set her back. Shoghi Effendi desires, that in case she takes this trip, the friends will behave with great reserve and wisdom, and that no initiative be taken on the part of the friends except after consulting the National Assembly."

It was during this visit that Her Majesty, her heart deeply stirred by the teachings of the Faith which she had been studying, testified, "in a language of exquisite beauty", as Shoghi Effendi put it, "to the power and sublimity of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, in open letters widely circulated in newspapers of both the United States and Canada". As a result of the first of these letters Shoghi Effendi was "moved by an irresistible impulse" to write to the Queen of the "joyous admiration and gratitude" of himself and the Bahá'ís of both the East and the West for her noble tribute to the Faith. On 27 August 1926 the Queen responded to this first communication from the Guardian and wrote to him what he described as a "deeply touching letter":

Bran August 27th 1926

Dear Sir,

I was deeply moved on reception of your letter.

Indeed a great light came to me with the message of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It came as all great messages come at an hour of dire grief and inner conflict and distress, so the seed sank deeply.

My youngest daughter finds also great strength and comfort in the teachings of the beloved masters.

We pass on the message from mouth to mouth and all those we give it to see a light suddenly lighting before them and much that was obscure and perplexing becomes simple, luminous and full of hope as never before.

That my open letter was balm to those suffering for the cause, is indeed a great happiness to me, and I take it as a sign that God accepted by humble tribute.

The occasion given me to be able to express myself publically, was also His Work, for indeed it was a chain of circumstances of which each link led me unwittingly one step further, till suddenly all was clear before my eyes and I understood why it had been.

Thus does He lead us finally to our ultimate destiny.

Some of those of my caste wonder at and disapprove my courage to step forward pronouncing words not habitual for Crowned Heads to pronounce, but I advance by an inner urge I cannot resist.

With bowed head I recognize that I too am but an instrument in greater hands and rejoice in the knowledge.

Little by little the veil is lifting, grief tore it in two. And grief was also a step leading me ever nearer truth, therefore do I not cry out against grief!

May you and those beneath your guidance be blessed and upheld by the sacred strength of those gone before you.

Marie

Among the things Queen Marie, who was not only a famous beauty, but an authoress and a woman of character and independence, wrote in her "open letters" published during 1926, on 4 May and 28 September in the *Toronto Daily Star* and 27 September in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, were words such as these: "A woman brought me the other day a Book. I spell it with a capital letter because it is a glorious Book of love and goodness, strength and beauty...I commend it to you all. If ever the name of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá comes to your attention, do not put their writings from you. Search out their Books, and let their glorious, peace-bringing, love-creating words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have into mine. One's busy day may seem too full for religion. Or one may have a religion that satisfies. But the teachings of these gentle, wise and kindly men are compatible with all religion, and with no religion. Seek them, and be the happier." "At first we all conceive of God as something or somebody apart from ourselves...This is not so. We cannot, with our earthly faculties entirely grasp His meaning — no more than we can really understand the meaning of Eternity...God is all, Everything. He is the power behind all beginnings. he is the inexhaustible source of supply, of love, of good, of progress, of achievement. God is therefore Happiness. His is the voice within us that shows us good and evil. But mostly we ignore or misunderstand this voice. Therefore did He choose His Elect to come down amongst us upon earth to make clear His Word, His real meaning. Therefore the Prophets; therefore Christ, Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh, for man needs from time to time a voice upon earth to bring God to him, to sharpen the realization of the existence of the true God. Those voices sent to us had to become flesh, so that with our earthly ears we should be able to hear and understand."

Shoghi Effendi wrote to Martha Root on 29 May, after he had just received from Canada a copy of the first of the Queen's "open letters", that this was "a well deserved and memorable testimony of your remarkable and exemplary endeavours for the spread of our beloved Cause. It has thrilled me and greatly reinforced my spirit and strength, yours is a memorable triumph, hardly surpassed in its significance in the annals of the Cause." In that same letter he asks her to ponder the advisability of approaching Her Majesty with news of the Jahrum martyrdoms and possibly enlisting her sympathy in the cause of the Persian persecutions. That this consideration influenced the Queen in making her further courageous statements on the Faith there can be no doubt, as her letter to Shoghi Effendi indicates that this was the case. The news of this victory had reached Shoghi Effendi on the eve of the commemoration of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh in

Bahjí, at a time when, as he described it in one of his general letters, "...His sorrowing servants, had gathered round His beloved Shrine supplicating relief and deliverance for the down-trodden in Persia" and Shoghi Effendi goes on to say: "With bowed heads and grateful hearts we recognize in this glowing tribute which Royalty has thus paid to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh an epoch-making pronouncement destined to herald those stirring events which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has prophesied, shall in the fullness of time signalize the triumph of God's Holy Faith."

This marked the inception of a relationship not only with the Queen, but with other crowned heads and royalty in Europe on the part of Martha Root, and in a few instances of Shoghi Effendi himself. He not only greatly encouraged and guided her in these relationships but, always staying within the bounds of dignity and good breeding, always sincere in the human relationship, he nevertheless used these contacts to serve the interests of the Cause through heightening its prestige in the eyes of the public and through seeing that they were pointedly brought to the attention of the enemies of the Faith.

Until the time of the Queen's death, in 1938, Martha Root kept in close touch with her, keeping her informed of Bahá'í activities and receiving from her letters, written in her own hand, that were both friendly and reflected her attachment to the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. There was also an exchange of letters and cables between Shoghi Effendi and the Queen; but more often he sent her messages through Martha, which was a more intimate way of contacting her and less demanding of the high position both he and the Queen occupied in their respective spheres. There was another factor that could not be lightly put aside and this was the constant pressure on the Queen, who occupied such an exalted rank in her nation — a nation so storm-tossed politically during her own reign and during her period as Dowager Queen, from both ecclesiastical and political factions — to keep silent about a religion which was not then widely known as it is today, which was viewed by the ignorant as Islamic in nature, and her open sponsorship of which they not only heartily disapproved but considered impolitic in the highest degree.

The Queen herself mentions, in her very first letter to the Guardian, that "Some of those of my caste wonder at and disapprove my courage to step forward pronouncing words not habitual to Crowned Heads to pronounce..." It required outstanding courage and deep sincerity for her to repeatedly write testimonials of her personal feelings on the subject of the Bahá'í Faith and grant permission for these to be made public — indeed Her Majesty wrote some of these deliberately for publication in *The Bahá'í World*. On 1 January 1934 she wrote to Martha, enclosing one of her precious tributes and giving personal news of herself and her family: "Will this do for Vol. V? The difficulty is to not repeat myself..."

In 1927, on 25 October, Shoghi Effendi wrote to Martha: "I am in receipt of your most welcome letters...and I am thrilled by the news they contained, particularly your remarkable and historic interview with the Queen and princess. I am sending you a number of Bahá'í stones...to be presented by you on my behalf to the Queen, the princess and any other members of the Royal Family whom you think would appreciate and prize them...Please assure the Queen and princess of our great love for them, of our prayers for their happiness and success and of our warm and cordial invitation to visit the Holy Land and be received in the Beloved's home."

Behind this interview with the Queen, which Shoghi Effendi refers to in the above letter, undoubtedly lay his own influence and the confirmations which flowed from his instruction to Martha in a letter written on 29 June of that same year in which he said: "I hope you will succeed in meeting not only the Rumanian Queen but her daughter the Queen of Serbia and King Boris of Bulgaria as well and I trust you will not hesitate to send me all particulars and details regarding your work in such an important field." That the Queen of Rumania received the gift of the ringstones and the invitation of the Guardian to visit Haifa is evidenced in her cable to him, sent from Sinaia Palace on 27 July 1927:

Shoghi Effendi, Haifa

Grateful thanks you and all yours with whom I feel spiritually so closely in touch.

Marie

Martha Root succeeded also in following the other instruction of Shoghi Effendi, for in May 1928 he writes to her: "...Your marvellous and historic interviews with members of the Rumanian and Serbian Royal Families have inspired and thrilled us all..."

Earlier, in April, Queen Marie and her daughter Ileana were on a visit to Cyprus and the Guardian says, in his letter to Martha Root, that the papers have published the news that the Queen intended to visit Haifa and he wonders "whether they had in mind such a visit and whether these premature disclosures deterred them from accomplishing their intended pilgrimage..." During the Queen's visit to Cyprus the Guardian cabled Sir Ronald Storrs, the Governor of Cyprus, with whom the royal party was staying, the following message: "Kindly convey to Her Majesty Queen of Rumania and her royal Highness Princess Ileana on behalf 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family and friends our heartfelt appreciation of the noble tribute paid by them both to the ideals that animate the Bahá'í Faith. Pray assure them of our best wishes and profound gratitude." Sir Ronald transmitted the appreciative reply of the Queen and Princess to Shoghi Effendi.

The following draft, in the Guardian's own hand, of a long letter he wrote to the Queen is of historic interest:

Haifa,
December 3, 1929

Palestine,

Her						Majesty
The	Dowager	Queen	Marie	of		Rumania
Bucarest						

Your Majesty

I have received through the intermediary of my dear Bahá'í sister Miss Martha Root, the autograph portrait of Your Majesty, bearing in simple and moving terms, the message which Your Majesty has graciously been pleased to write in person. I shall treasure this most excellent portrait, and I assure you, that the Greatest Holy Leaf and the Family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá share to the full my feelings of lively satisfaction at receiving so strikingly beautiful a photograph of a Queen whom we have learned to love and admire.

I have followed during the past few years with profound sympathy the disturbed course of various happenings in your beloved country, which I feel must have caused you much pain and concern. But whatever the vicissitudes and perplexities which beset Your Majesty's earthly path, I am certain that even in your saddest hours, you have derived abundant sustenance and joy from the thought of having, through your glowing and historic utterances on the Bahá'í Faith as well as by your subsequent evidences of gracious solicitude for its welfare, brought abiding solace and strength to the multitude of its faithful and long suffering adherents throughout the East. Yours surely, dearly beloved Queen, is the station ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in the realms beyond to which the strivings of no earthly power can ever hope to attain.

I have immediately upon the publication of the second volume of the Bahá'í World, by the American Bahá'í Publishing Committee, forwarded directly to Bucarest, to the address of Your Majesty and that of Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana, copies of this most recent and comprehensive of Bahá'í publications. I will take the liberty of presenting in the course of the coming year the III Volume of this same publication which I trust will prove of interest to Your Majesty.

May I, in closing, reiterate the expression of profound appreciation and joy which the Family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'ís in every land universally feel for the powerful impetus which Your Majesty's outspoken and noble words have lent to the onward march of their beloved Faith.

The Family also join me in extending to Your Majesty, as well as to Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana, a most cordial welcome should Your Majesty ever purpose to visit the Holy Land to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home in Haifa as well as to those scenes rendered so hallowed and memorable by the heroic lives and deeds of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Shoghi

In 1930 her Majesty visited Egypt with her daughter Ileana. Shoghi Effendi, having had the unfortunate experience of indiscreet publicity during her visit to Cyprus, wired Alexandria on 19 February: "Advise Assembly in case Queen visits Egypt convey only written expression of welcome and appreciation on behalf Bahá'ís. Letter should be briefly carefully worded. No objection sending flowers. Individual communications should be strictly avoided. Inform Cairo."

In the hope that at last the Queen would be able to visit the Bahá'í Holy Places in Palestine the Guardian had had Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to her grandmother, Queen Victoria, copied in fine Persian calligraphy, and illuminated in Tehran. On 21 February he cabled Tehran: "Illuminated Tablet Queen Victoria should reach Haifa not later than March tenth on one or several pages." This was to be his gift to Her Majesty. Hearing no news of the Queen's plans once she had reached Egypt he wired to her direct on 8 March: "Her Majesty, the Dowager Queen Marie of Rumania, aboard Mayflower, Aswan. Family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá join me in renewing the expression of our loving and heartfelt invitation to your gracious Majesty and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana to visit His home in Haifa. Your Majesty's acceptance to visit Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine and prison-city of 'Akká will apart from its historic significance be a source of immeasurable strength joy and hope to the silent sufferers of the Faith throughout the East. Our fondest love, prayers and best wishes for Your Majesty's happiness and welfare."

Receiving no reply to this communication Shoghi Effendi sent another wire on 26 March to the Queen at the Hotel Semiramis in Cairo: "Fearing my former letter and telegram in which Family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá joined me in extending invitation to Your Majesty and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana may have miscarried, we are pleased to express anew the pleasure it would give us all should Your Majesty find it feasible to visit Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Shrines and the prison-city of 'Akká. Deeply regret unauthorized publicity given by the Press." Two days later the Rumanian Minister in Cairo wired Shoghi Effendi: "Her Majesty regrets that not passing through Palestine she will not be able to visit you."

The reaction this situation produced on the Guardian is recorded by him in a letter he wrote to Martha Root on 2 April 1930 in which he says: "I am now writing to you quite confidentially regarding the projected visit of the Queen to Haifa. Unfortunately it did not materialize. The reason, I absolutely ignore." He goes on to say that in spite of his written invitation to her, and his two telegrams sent to her in Egypt (which he quotes in full) all he received was the wire from the Rumanian Minister (which he also quotes). It seems that the unauthorized publicity mentioned by Shoghi Effendi in his telegram to the Queen had been wide-spread, appearing in Palestine, England and America. He informs Martha that: "Reporters who called on me representing the United Press of America telegraphed to their newspapers just the opposite I told them. They perverted the truth. I wish we could make sure that she would at least know the real situation! but how can we ensure that our letters to her Majesty will henceforth reach her. I feel that you should write to her, explain the whole situation, assure her of my great disappointment." He requests her to regard all this as strictly confidential and says: "I cherish the hope that these unfortunate developments will serve only to intensify the faith and love of the Queen and will reinforce her determination to arise and spread the Cause." Obviously the Guardian was very distressed over this unhappy event, but he comforts Martha: "Be not sad or distressed, dearest Martha. The seeds you have so lovingly, so devotedly and so assiduously sown will germinate..."

The cancellation of the visit of the Queen and her daughter to the Bahá'í Holy Places, which she had definitely set her heart upon, was a source of deep disappointment not only to the Guardian but also to the Queen herself. Behind the scenes there must have taken place a real struggle between the courageous and independent Queen and her advisers for, after a long silence, she wrote to Martha Root, in her own hand, describing at least a little of what had taken place. In a letter dated 28 June 1931 she stated: "Both Ileana and I were cruelly disappointed at having been prevented going to the holy shrines and of meeting Shoghi Effendi, but at that time were going through a cruel crisis and every movement I made was being turned against me and being politically exploited in an unkind way. It caused me a good deal of suffering and curtailed my liberty most unkindly. There are periods however when one must submit to persecution, nevertheless, however high-hearted one may be, it ever again fills one with pained astonishment when people are mean and spiteful. I had my child to defend at that time; she was going through a bitter experience and so I could not stand up and defie the world. But the beauty of truth remains and I cling to it through all the vicissitudes of a life become rather sad...I am glad to hear that your traveling has been so fruitful and I wish you continual success knowing what a beautiful message you are carrying from land to land." This letters ends with a sentence, after Her Majesty's signature, that was perhaps more significant of her attitude and character than anything else: "I enclose a few words which may be used in your Year Book." On

receipt of this letter Martha immediately cabled Shoghi Effendi the gist of its contents and he cabled back he was delighted and to send him the letter.

I remember Shoghi Effendi a number of times describing to me how the Greatest Holy Leaf had waited, hour after hour, in the Master's home to receive the Queen and her daughter — for Her Majesty had actually sailed for Haifa, and this news encouraged Shoghi Effendi to believe she was going to carry out the pilgrimage she had planned; time passed and no news came, even after the boat had docked. Later the Guardian learned that the Queen and her party had been met at the boat, informed her visit was impolitic and not permissible, been put in a car and whisked out of Palestine to another Middle Eastern country. It is no wonder she wrote to Martha that people had been “mean and spiteful”.

The loyalty of this “royal convert”, as Shoghi Effendi styled her, in the face of her increasing isolation, advancing age and the political trends in Europe which were gradually to engulf so many of her royal kin, deeply touched Shoghi Effendi. In 1934, on 23 January, he wrote to her again:

Your Majesty,

I am deeply touched by the splendid appreciation Your Majesty has graciously penned for the Bahá'í World, and wish to offer my heartfelt and abiding gratitude for this striking evidence of Your Majesty's sustained interest in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

I was moved to undertake its translation in person, and feel certain that the unnumbered followers of the Faith in both the East and the West will feel greatly stimulated in their unceasing labours for the eventual establishment of the Most Great Peace foretold by Bahá'u'lláh.

I am presenting to Your Majesty, through the care of Miss Martha Root, a precious manuscript in the handwriting of Bahá'u'lláh, illumined by a devoted follower of His Faith in Tihiran.

May it serve as a token of my admiration for the spirit that has prompted Your Majesty to voice such noble sentiments for a struggling and persecuted Faith.

With the assurance of my prayers at the threshold of Bahá'u'lláh for Your Majesty's welfare and happiness,

I am yours very sincerely,

Shoghi

After sending the Queen a copy of his recently translated *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, and receiving from her a letter conveying her “most grateful thanks”, which she

ends by saying “May the Great Father, be with us in spirit, helping us to live and act as we should”, Shoghi Effendi wrote to her as follows:

Haifa, Feb. 18, 1936

Your Majesty,

Miss Root has transmitted to me the original copy of the appreciation penned by Your Majesty for the forthcoming issue of Bahá'í World. I am deeply touched, and feel truly grateful for this further evidence of Your Majesty's sustained interest in and admiration for the Bahá'í Teachings.

Bahá'í Communities the world over will ever recall, with feelings of pride and gratitude, these beautiful, impressive and historic testimonies from the pen of Your Majesty — testimonies that will no doubt greatly inspire and hearten them in their continued labours for the spread of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

I am so pleased and encouraged to learn that Your Majesty has derived much benefit from the reading of the Gleanings and I feel that my efforts in translating these extracts are fully rewarded.

I am presenting to Your Majesty through the kindness of Mrs. McNeill the latest photograph recently received from America showing the progress in the construction of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette.

May the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh ever bless and sustain Your Majesty in the noble support you are extending to His Cause.

With deepest affection and gratitude,
Shoghi

The Mrs. McNeill mentioned in this letter lived near Akka in the Mansion at Mazra'ih once occupied by Bahá'u'lláh. She had known the Queen as a child in Malta and when she learned through the Guardian of the Queen's interest in the Faith she informed her of own interest and the associations of the house she lived in. The Queen had written to her: “It was indeed nice to hear from you, and to think that you are of all things living near Haifa and are, as I am, a follower of the Bahá'í teachings...the house you live in... made precious by its associations with the Man we all venerate...”

Her Majesty's last published tribute to the Faith, in 1936, two years before she died, seemed to aptly describe what Bahá'u'lláh's Message had meant to her: “To those searching for light, the Bahá'í teachings offer a star which will lead them to deeper understanding, to assurance, peace and good will with all men.” She had won for herself, Shoghi Effendi, wrote, “imperishable renown...in the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh” through her “bold and epochal confession of faith in the Fatherhood of Bahá'u'lláh” “this illustrious Queen may well deserve to rank as the first of those royal supporters of the Cause of God who are to arise in the future, and each of whom, in the

words of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, is to be acclaimed as *‘the very eye of mankind, the luminous ornament on the brow of creation, the fountainhead of blessings unto the whole world.’*”

One sees from all this, which began early in 1926, that the severe crises which followed upon the inception of Shoghi Effendi’s Guardianship, released, as ever, the spiritual forces inherent in the Faith and brought about such victories as the conversion of the first Bahá’í Queen.

