

STORIES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

All-embracing love, forgiveness and understanding

Not long after that great first experience with 'Abdu'l-Baha I [Howard Colby Ives] was again talking with Him. It was in the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. Kinney, a family of the friends who seemed to feel that the gift of all which they possessed was too little to express their adoring love...

In this home I had become a constant habitu . I could not keep away. One day 'Abdu'l-Bah , the interpreter and I were alone in one of the smaller reception rooms on the ground floor. 'Abdu'l-Bah  had been speaking of some Christian doctrine and His interpretation of the words of Christ was so different from the accepted one that I could not restrain an expression of remonstrance. I remember speaking with some heat:

"How is it possible to be so sure?" I asked. "No one can say with certainty what Jesus meant after all these centuries of misinterpretation and strife."

He intimated that it was quite possible. It is indicative of my spiritual turmoil and my blindness to His station, that instead of His serenity and tone of authority impressing me as warranted it drove me to actual impatience. "That I cannot believe." I exclaimed.

I shall never forget the glance of outraged dignity the interpreter cast upon me. It was as though he would say: "Who are you to contradict or even to question 'Abdu'l-Bah !"

But not so did 'Abdu'l-Baha look at me. How I thank God that it was not! He looked at me a long moment before He spoke. His calm, beautiful eyes searched my soul with such love and understanding that all my momentary heat evaporated. He smiled as winningly as a lover smiles upon his beloved, and the arms of His spirit seemed to embrace me as He said softly that I should try my way and He would try His.

It was as though a cool hand had been laid upon a fevered brow; as though a cup of nectar had been held to parched lips; as though a key had unlocked my hard-bolted, crusted and rusted heart. The tears started and my voice trembled, "I'm sorry," I murmured.

Often since that day have I pondered on the tragic possibilities of the effect of an expression of the face. I have even thought I should like to write a book on The Glance that Saved the World, taking as a theme the way Jesus must have looked upon Peter after the three-fold denial. What could that glance have carried to the fear-stricken, doubting, angry Peter? Surely not the self-righteous, dignified look in the eyes of the interpreter for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As surely it must have been something in the nature of the expression of all-embracing love, forgiveness and understanding with which 'Abdu'l-Bahá calmed and soothed and assured my heart.

- *Howard Colby Ives, "Portals to Freedom"*