

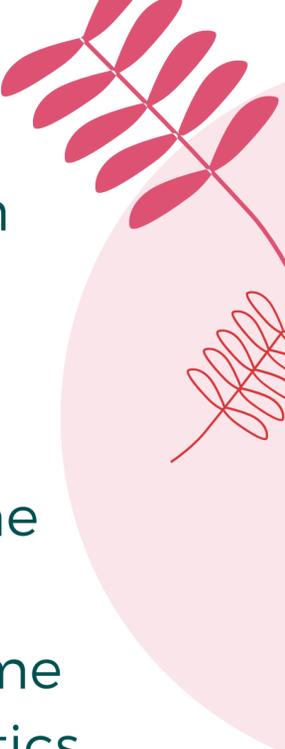
STORIES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Being Unperturbed

During the Caliphate of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, the Sulṭán of the Ottoman Empire, the central government encouraged an atmosphere of hatred and confrontation among the various peoples of the Empire in the entire region of Syria and Palestine, especially between the Muslims and the Christians. Most of the people ordinarily went about armed with pistols and one of their everyday pastimes was to fire their guns. At weddings and circumcision parties, firing shots in the air was quite customary and if by accident a passerby was injured in the process, bad luck would be considered the true culprit. The smallest argument between two individuals could easily erupt into gunplay, with bullets flying back and forth between the two belligerents and at times striking innocent bystanders...

... The lack of security in the town was a continuous burden on the minds of the friends. Walking about town where the sound of gunfire was a routine matter was not without danger, especially considering the many threats that were consistently received by the friends. It was for this reason that despite His clear instructions to the contrary, Ustád Muḥammad-'Alí, who was a builder and a shoemaker and was also considered a loyal and devoted servant, walked a few steps behind 'Abdu'l-Bahá all the way to the house. Sometimes I assumed this secretive duty and followed 'Abdu'l-Bahá from a distance on His return to the house. Once at His door, if He was pleased with me, He would honour me with the words, "Well done! God go with you." ...

One night I began my usual walk, following a few steps behind 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We had not quite reached the midpoint when suddenly I saw three shots fired at Him from the alley to our right. At first I remained unconcerned, for I had become accustomed to the sound of gunshots at night.



However, on the second shot I saw the flash of fire coming from the barrel of a gun being fired in the direction of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. I ran toward the alley. The third shot was fired before I reached the intersection but I saw someone fleeing. A second person who was halfway up the alley also ran away. Both ran toward the beach. At this moment I was but a few steps from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The Master's gait did not change. He strolled along with the same dignity and stateliness that were the distinguishing characteristics of that radiant and heavenly Being. Unperturbed, He continued His steady strides without paying the least attention to what had just transpired. He seemed to be praying and I did not wish to disturb Him with my expressions of concern and anxiety at a time when the whole of His attention was focused on the world of the spirit.

As soon as we reached the house, He turned His blessed face around in the darkness and said, "May God go with you,"

- *Youness Afroukhteh, "Memories of Nine Years in ‘Akká"*

