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BAHÄI
MARTYRDOMS
IN PERSIA

IN
THE YEAR 1903, A. D.

WRITTEN BY
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"In compliance to the holy command of Abdul-Baha, the following account of the recent martyrdoms in Persia, up to the present time, is herein written and submitted for the perusal of the beloved of God."

(Signed) HADJI MIRZA HEIDER ALI.

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Bahai Martyrdoms in Persia

AN ABBREVIATED ACCOUNT OF THE SORROWFUL EVENTS CONCERNING THE RECENT MARTYRDOMS IN YEZD AND ISPHAHAN.

HE IS GOD!

IN this enlightened period—which is the glorious century of the Supreme Lord God—the lights of civilization from the rays of the Sun of Reality are diffused throughout the world, and human perfections and divine virtues, like the dawn of the morning, are so spread in the East and the West that bloodshed and ferocity among mankind are abandoned; nay, rather, in civilized countries, they are entirely forgotten. Religious interference and the fanaticism of dark ages are abolished, and all peoples and races, reposing in the cradle of security, are protected against the cruelty of tyrants.

Yet, in Persia, when the divine proclamation was raised, the radiant morn appeared and the Sun of Truth arose, and many people were delivered from the lowest degrees of ignorance, and, attaining the highest human perfections, became the center of heavenly virtue, spirit incarnate and righteousness embodied—appearing in the world of humanity with spiritual characteristics and holy attributes—the old religious sects still adhered to their former teachings and superstitions, and day by day became more ignorant until they degenerated into ferocious wolves and mad dogs, even surpassing the ravenous man-eating beasts.

Thus, every day they began to oppose those holy souls, instigating persecution, hourly causing new oppressions, every moment kindling the fires of destruction, burning the sanctified ones in the flames of hatred and malice, setting their heads upon spears, torturing their children, plundering houses and property, looting wealth, and banishing women and children from their native land. The honorable were debased, the revered were despised, and the virtuous were taken captive.

Among such outrages are numbered the recent events of Yezd and Isphahan, which caused the hearts to burn and quake, and the people of compassion to beat their breasts and shed tears of blood.

Although the Bahais are brave and heroic, and their valor well proven in times past, yet, by the divine and certain decree of God, they are now commanded to endure all afflictions and maintain universal peace, and therefore, when tyrants extend to them the hands of cruelty, attacking them like blood-thirsty wolves, the friends of God must submit like lambs before them, without offering the least resistance, accepting the wounds of daggers and swords as babes accept the honey and milk from their mother's breasts, kissing the hand of the assassin while receiving a stab in the heart; and, while yielding their lives in the path of God, begging His forgiveness for the oppressors and asking for remission of their sins.

Before the manifestation of such steadfastness and endurance the ferocity of the oppressors has daily increased. Staining their hands with the blood of

their victims, they dealt out affliction without mercy. In such wise that these recent events of cruelty and violence surpass those of former times, and ancient atrocities are eclipsed.

The learned men of the Sheites (a religious sect of Persia) saw that the proclamation of God was raised and that the peoples of the East and of the West were moved. The light of the Sun of Reality beamed forth to such a degree that all eyes were brightened, the standard of the Cause was hoisted, and the people flocked in multitudes under the tent of His protection. Sheites were converted to Bahaism, and even the Israelites were so exalted that, ere long, none will be found in Persia who have not accepted this divine guidance. And so with the Zoroastrians (the ancient Persians who rejected all the prophets from Abraham to Moses as well as Christ Jesus and His Holiness Mohammed), a majority of whom now, through this Light, accept, believe and confess all holy scriptures and books of the prophets of God, and they are also recognized as Bahais in all sincerity and faithfulness. Thus the witnessing of all these things caused the wicked ullamas (clergy and learned men) to be so filled with hatred and jealousy that patience became exhausted, and now they are every moment kindling a new fire of animosity, instigating and inciting by all possible means the ignorant rabble and vicious idlers to shed the blood of these oppressed ones.

One of the ullamas, living at present in Isphahan, whose father stained his hands with the blood of

Sultan-ul-Shohada and Mahboob-ul-Shohada, was entitled by His Holiness Baha'o'llah, Zeab (the wolf) and his son Ebn-i-Zeab (son of the wolf), which has caused every one to wonder concerning its significance.

Now at this time, the meaning of these names is revealed, as the following will testify: The beginning of this revolt, caused by the wicked ullahamas and their followers in Persia, took place in the city of Rescht in the month of March, 1903, corresponding to the Persian month Muharram. At first the clergy excited the common people, vagabonds and idlers to loot and rob the Bahais, and enticed them to commit persecutions, and these, filled with greed, assaulted the believers like wolves attacking the lambs of God. One of their deeds was the disinterring the body of a believer who had recently died, after which they cut it to pieces and burned it. During his life this man had shown great sincerity and kindness to all the people, who, including the enemies and even the ullahamas, testified to his moral character, trustworthiness and great love. They said: "This is a just, honorable and faithful man; but he is a Bahai." And really this was his only sin, "He was a Bahai!"—that is, from earthly he became heavenly, from material became spiritual, from worldly became holy.

O God! How astonishing! The clergy peruse the Koran, perceiving the counsels and testimonies of God, still they are fierce and blood-thirsty, and consider oppression to be one of the requirements of the sacred Law, thus defaming Mohammedanism in the sight of all other nations.

The Sultan of Persia, for the sake of Justice, endeavored to restrain them from their oppression, but found himself unable to do so. They plundered and pillaged the property of the Bahais, and tortured the friends of God. Therefore, the ullahamas began to excite the rabble to commit the same things in other cities of Persia.

One of them was Ebn-i-Zeab of Isphahan. He first confused the minds of the people by forging a telegram in the name of His Royal Highness, the Prime Minister of Persia, as follows: "Sheik Taki, Hujat-ul-Islam (High Priest) must protect the religion (of Islam)." He then ordered his confederates, under cover of night, to put four hundred copies of the same upon the walls of the city. Although this telegram was a fabrication, when morning came, the people seeing and hearing of it became aroused and excited and proceeded to the house of Sheik Taki, Ebn-i-Zeab (the wolf's son), who immediately sanctioned the massacre of the Bahais.

Thus, the chief of an ignorant populace having issued such a command, the following result was but a natural consequence. The ravenous mob invaded the shops and houses of the believers and began to destroy and to rob right and left. But the Bahais, knowing it to be unlawful to defend themselves without permission, were obliged to appeal to the Governor of the city, and finding him, for some reason, negligent in the matter thought it best to gather the dispersed Bahais in one place, in order that some course of action might be determined upon. They assembled

in the Russian Consulate, this being the only door opened to them. There they passed the whole night in prayer, calling: "Ya-Baha-El-Abha!" and at times they referred their difficulties to the Governor, hoping thereby the mob might be quieted.

The Governor inquired of Sheik Taki, Ebn-i-Zeab, the cause of the riot and asked concerning the telegram, what it was and whence it came. In answer he declared complete ignorance of the whole matter. He then went to the Russian Consulate, and, erecting a platform outside, began to incite the mob, which had assembled, to attack the believers and disperse them. The Governor then addressed a letter to the Bahais saying: "Be tranquil and at ease. The tumult has ceased. Now return to your homes and attend to your work, and pray meanwhile for his Imperial Majesty, the Sultan of Persia, for hereafter no one will molest you." The Governor's letter was registered in the Consulate, after which the Bahais came out of their retreat to go to their own homes. Then as the friends of God proceeded to their homes, the malicious multitude attacked them on the streets, capturing and beating them. Whomever they found, they tortured and wounded, in all seventy people, killing some outright.

Seyid Abul Kasim Marnuni was one of the martyrs. This beautiful soul was about eighty years of age, and during his life was renowned for his piety, faith, knowledge and virtue; even his enemies bore record to his chastity and sanctity, testifying to his gen-

erosity and charity. He was in truth a help to the poor, refuge and support for the suffering and afflicted; his word was influential, honored and accepted by all the people. When they assaulted him he cried out: "Ya-Baha-El-Abha! We are from God and unto Him we are returning," and in the very moment of his expiration he called out in a loud voice with great joy and exultation these words: "You have done us no harm! You are only transmitting us to our Lord! Ya-Baha-El-Abha!"

While his tormentors, like wild beasts, were stoning him and chopping him with axes, this single helpless man of such venerable years, this holy soul, under the weapons of the persecutors, wounding and cursing him, suffered it all with a fortitude of grandeur and majesty, facing the Kingdom of Light as though he felt not a blow nor received a wound, but was rather perceiving the open gates of the Supreme Concourse, and yielded his life to his Beloved with utmost joy, happiness and exhilaration.

O that I had been with him to partake of his joy and to attain his great happiness!

Finally the Governor, His Royal Highness, the Prince, seeing the intense hostility, found no other means save to arrest the friends of God, and many were protected by being confined in prison. Behold how great was the outbreak and tumult that the prison house became the place of refuge and the dungeon a court of safety. Think upon this, and the graveness of the matter needs no further elucidation.

When the riot reached the culmination of violence, one, named Seyid Ibrahim, son of Imam Juma, High Priest of Yezd, returned from Kerbela and Nejef, two holy shrines, where he had received from Seyid Kazim Yazdi, chief leader of the religion (Islamism) a command and authority to shed the blood of the innocent. When he arrived at Isphahan, and perceived the flames of the fire of persecution, read the forged telegram and saw the excitement of the people, he determined to hasten on to Yezd. He received complete instructions from the Sheik Taki to do, upon his arrival, whatever would cause destruction to the Bahais. With these wicked intentions he reached the city of Yezd.

Upon his arrival he unfolded his designs to the Governor, who refused to tolerate such a violation, deeming it to be a cause of riot and revolt which might result in the destruction of Persia and the overthrow of the nation. Therefore he devised a stratagem. Having arrived by chance upon the birthday of His Holiness Mohammed—Upon Him be Peace—the people of the city, as is customary, came to visit him. To them he related incidents concerning the riots in Isphahan, describing in detail the courage and bravery of the people who had stood for the annihilation of the Bahais, looting their wealth and property, and at the same time he insinuated that the just Government would connive at such action and violations on the part of the transgressors. In reality, His Imperial Majesty, the Shah, and His Royal Highness, the Prime Minister, had not a thought save

that of justice and protection for their subjects. Yet this man began to commend the people of Isphahan who had committed those deeds of violence saying: "They were inspired by religious zeal and divine enthusiasm to eradicate Bahaism." In such ways he encouraged and provoked many, menaced others who refused to listen, and instigated the rabble to rob and plunder the believers.

As a result, the third day after his arrival, the mob assembled. A great multitude, armed with swords and daggers, invaded the house of a believer, a tin-smith by trade, beat his wife and babes, broke their household utensils, smashed the furniture and demolished their home. Then, arresting the helpless father, they paraded him through the streets until they arrived at a butcher's shop, where they set on him with meat axes. In this way they would have killed him, but a farash (footman) of the Governor arrived and rescued the poor victim from the hands of his tormentors. His wounds were so many and severe that he was unable to walk, and thus the farash was obliged to drag him to the court of the Governor, where he lay bleeding and motionless.

During this time, his little son, eleven years old, was at school. His school fellows, being urged by their teacher, attacked this innocent lad. The poor little fellow ran to his teacher for protection and he, having a stone in place of a heart, commanded him to curse and deny his religion. Thereupon, this holy child, with a fortitude and faith, majestic to behold, refused to do so, saying: "I am only a school-boy,

knowing nothing of the reality of things: How can I stain my lips with a curse!" Then that pitiless instructor committed a deed of cruelty which has caused hearts to burn and tears to run down the cheeks of friends and strangers. That inhuman monster with his pupils, tortured that dear boy, beating him with sticks, stabbing him with penknives, picking him with needles and awls in such a manner that the pen is unable to portray it, tongue and lip cannot utter it, nor can heart or mind imagine it.

This white blossom among martyrs, this first-fruit of the Garden of El-Abha, in the dawn of youth, showed forth such constancy and steadfastness in devotion, while laying his young life upon the divine altar of sacrifice, that strong and brave men were astonished and stupefied. The teacher himself and the pupils afterward said: "When we were stabbing him he only cried out, 'Ya-Baha-El-Abha!' (O Glory of the Most Glorious!); 'Ya-Mahboobe-El-Allah!' (O my Supreme Beloved!), never wavering an instant, but with greatest joy and delight he yielded up his life to his Beloved One." In this manner he attained the Presence of the Supreme Friend in advance of his noble father.

If there be but an atom of justice or compassion in this whole universe, it will testify that this constancy and firmness, this joy and exhilaration, manifested upon the Red Plain of Martyrdom, this cry of "Ya-Baha-El-Abha!" at the supreme moment of anguish and mortal pain, is beyond mere human power and endurance; and especially so when exhibited in a boy

of such tender years. Exalted is He who confirmed the heart of this child in His love, while he stood upon the threshold of Redemption! Mighty is He who caused him to utter: "Ya-Baha-El-Abha!" under the claws of the enemies. Extolled is He who caused his soul to rejoice when ascending to the Supreme Friend! Verily these are but the Signs of the Glorious God!

The blood of that innocent child was still flowing when the ravenous crowd killed his maternal uncle with utmost cruelty and torture, chopping his body until it was a mass of gaping wounds. And this Prince of Faithfulness, under the keen edges of their axes, was calmly saying: "I am content with the fate decreed by God, redeeming myself for the sake of His Glorious Cause."

The mob then with ropes tied together the feet of the benevolent father, the pure-hearted son and the sanctified uncle, and disgracefully hauled them over the ground around the city, beating and stoning their mutilated corpses, meanwhile clapping their hands and cheering hilariously, until they reached a circle in the center of the city, where they threw the bodies and left them.

The mother of that dearly loved boy, seeing her martyred son, her slain husband and her brother, all covered with blood and dust, began to weep and lament over their condition, and especially that of the child. Imagine, if you can, what was her own condition, while being held in custody by the mob, upon finding the bodies of her dear ones thus chopped to

pieces before her eyes. And when she only wanted to throw herself beside their mangled remains, to weep, she was beaten into insensibility by the human vultures surrounding her.

Such blood-thirstiness, ferocity and ruthless murder finds no parallel in ancient, medieval or modern time. Possibly barbarous tribes, in moments of revenge for massacres and severe losses in battle, might have produced deeds of similar character. That would be the mere returning of vengeance, but such tyranny and dire persecution has never been witnessed from bitterest foes, as was poured out upon these angelic, pure minded souls, lovers of humanity, renowned for all good actions, and even praised by their oppressors. If we refer to the histories of the world we will see that such oppression on the part of the enemies of God, toward the lovers of the Merciful One, is unparalleled. Especially so when we consider that not one of these martyrs ever stretched forth his hand in self-defense, or uttered an uncivil word, during the time of his execution. Nay, rather, with utmost humility, submissiveness, tenderness and exaltation of spirit, they were praying until they delivered their souls into the Hand of the Beloved.

Through the justice and extreme kindness of His Imperial Majesty, the Shah of Persia—May God protect his kingdom!—hunters are forbidden to kill birds during the spring time, the season of breeding, or even to discharge a gun into the air, it being considered cruel and unlawful that during the hatching period the young ones should be killed, or even

startled by the sound of a gun. But the Bahais, notwithstanding their innocence and good actions, approved by the Great Lord, are the victims of their own countrymen, who, during the time of the outbreak, when the fire of malice and hatred was raging, killed them with utmost cruelty, burned their gates and houses, and invaded their dwellings, plundering and destroying all their property. Consider the tenderness and equity of the Crowned Head (the Shah), and how stony hearted are the people of the old creed, over whom he sits as king.

The Governor tried as far as possible to protect the believers, but he was unable to do so. The above-mentioned Seyid Ibrahim, Imam Juma, chief of the oppressors, went to the Governor's house, followed by some of his allies, and there they apparently denied being the instigators of the revolt, while they secretly provoked the rabble and incited them with the prospect of booty and spoils. The next day the merciless mob made a greater assault, robbing and spoiling more than ever, and martyred six holy souls with dire tortures, cutting their bodies to pieces, after which they rode horses over their mutilated corpses and crushed them under the hoofs of the steeds, mixing their blood and flesh with the dust.

O God! How wonderful! During the period of one thousand years, the Persians, especially the Sheites, have been lamenting and loudly weeping over the tragedy of Seyid-ul-Shuhad, Imam Hussein, who was martyred upon the plain of Kerbela, and saying: "The

army of the malicious Yazid mercilessly ran their horses over the body of that Holy Soul!"

Jesus Christ said: Your fathers killed the prophets of God, but you are building their tombs and kissing them in worship. ("Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say: If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"—Matt. XXIII:29-33.

And now this passage is parallel with the present condition of the Persians. It was some of them who martyred His Holiness Imam Hussein, with great wickedness, and now the children of those murderers are mourning and lamenting, building and adorning his tomb, and also those of other martyrs. How heedless and negligent are the people!

To sum up, the idlers and vagabonds of the city of Yezd, daily advancing in lawlessness, became more and more bold. We have not the report in detail, but we heard that on one Friday more than one hundred persons were killed. A special reporter, in a brief letter, written in great sorrow, said:

"Alas! Alas! and again—Alas! Our hearts are burning! Our breasts are heaving! The cry of lamentation is heard. My hand is trembling as I

write. My heart is throbbing, my eyes are overflowing, and my ears are unable to hear the accounts of the great persecution; for every day there is a greater uprising, and every moment brings forth a greater outcry.

"In the city of Yezd there are nearly five thousand houses belonging to Bahais, in which, at this time, there is not one moment of rest or peace. The inmates have no dinner by day, and no supper at night. Their food is sorrow, and for water they drink their tears, expecting at each moment the attack of the pillaging enemies, to persecute and take captive the women and children, the majority of whom are already hungry, thirsty and naked. The women especially are suffering so keenly on account of the slaughter of their fathers, husbands and brothers, and in such despair that they know not how to care for their suckling babes.

"In fact, on the morning of that Friday, the mob suddenly assembled from all quarters, crying: 'Alas! Our religion! Alas! Our faith! Alas! Our creed!' Previous to this they had killed five or six persons every day, but on that day the soldiers of the guard, instigated by the mullahs, allied themselves with the rabble and began to kill, rob and destroy. They murdered several of the Bahais, beat the women with clubs and looted the things of value from the shops and houses of the friends. Many children became fatherless, many parents childless, many sisters brotherless, and the houses being completely destroyed, many families were scattered and made helpless and

homeless. In that day many who had been rich became penniless, many who been reared in beds of comfort with pillows of down were compelled to sleep upon the cold, black earth; many were wounded and sick with none to care for them or dress their wounds.

"In the time of their execution some were saying: 'Is there no one to witness how I offer up my life!' And others: 'Do you kill us for having believed in God and His signs?' Alas! There has appeared no prophet who has not been mocked and reviled by the people!' Others were crying 'I witness there is no God but God!' 'Ya-Baha-El-Abha!' And still others: 'We have found Baha for whose Baha (Glory) we pay the price of our blood!' One was loudly chanting the poem of His Holiness Vargha, called *Servitude*, while another, with joy and delight, was bidding farewell to his assassin, saying: 'Goodbye! May God preserve you!'—upon the utterance of which he was struck so violently upon the mouth that from the blow he yielded up his life. And yet another, in the time of assault, seeing himself surrounded by the people, who were shouting and cheering, said: 'No king has ever been accorded such majestic pomp and glory!' A tall, handsome youth, at the moment of death, cried out joyously: 'Oh, to-night is my wedding, and I am to obtain the Beloved of my heart and the Desire of my soul!'"

O God! What ignorance is this: that the people who killed these wondrous souls, take their last heavenly utterances, weave them into verses, describing in what place this one was killed, what was his con-

dition, and what he said, and how such a young man chanted such a verse from the Koran, while being chopped to pieces, and then sing and chant these things as further means of mocking and deriding the beloved.

There were two pure women who, while mourning for their martyred dead, were attacked by cruel men, who first beat and tortured them, and then dragged them, still alive, out of their houses, after which they stabbed them and chopped them to pieces in the presence of the blood-thirsty crowd. When the audacity of the rabble reached this point, the Governor, finding himself powerless to stand against the rioters, fled from the city and retired to the citadel for self-preservation.

It is reported that a baker was captured and that his body was chopped to pieces with meat axes, and that during the time of his torture he was proclaiming with great joy: "For ten years I have been longing for this! I ask God to forgive and to pour out upon you His mercy and blessings, that you may prosper; for through you I have attained the desire of my heart and the only wish of my soul!"

It is reported that the number of those killed, up to that day, is more than one hundred and fifty persons within the walled city of Yezd. In the surrounding small villages many people were martyred in each place, but we have not yet the account in detail. A telegram was received in Teheran to the effect that the Governor, being pressed by the rioters, was compelled to blow one of the friends of God from

the mouth of a cannon, and to behead another in the circle of the city. The mob put a woman in a sugar sack, over which they poured petroleum, and burned her alive. They tied and nailed another believer to a tree, poured naptha and oil over him and burned the tree and the man together.

In a village near the city there lived Jenab Sadre, Jenab Nutamed-u-Shariah, Jenab Nezam-u-Shariah, Jenab Ziah-u-Shariah, with all their families and kinsmen. They were venerable ullamas and seyids, and all had received titles from the Shah; yet the mullahs sanctioned the massacre of all these honorable and revered souls. The mob, excited by the clergy, attacked them with guns, swords, etc. Though these noble souls were sufficient in number to stand against them, and were provided with ample means of defense, yet, in accordance with the command of the Blessed Perfection, Baha'o'llah: "Let yourselves be killed rather than to kill," they yielded their lives without resistance to the blood-thirsty wolves who, stretching out their claws of tyranny, killed seventeen persons with such awful cruelty that the pen cannot describe it. Among the victims there was a little child who, during the attack, fell into a well, and, being rescued, is the only surviving soul left of these noble people. The palace and garden in which they resided was utterly destroyed, the trees were uprooted, and all that could be pillaged was taken away, including a considerable amount of wealth.

The number of martyrs in that place was nineteen, and in the village of Taft the number was twenty-

eight. In Manshad there were ten. In Deh-Bala they threw a believer, alive, into a baker's oven and roasted him to death. Up to date, six women have been martyred and many have been captured and wounded.

His Holiness Jesus Christ—May the souls of all creatures be His ransom!—has clearly pointed out the pathway to the Kingdom of God, showing clearly the shortest road to be that of redemption. Therefore these sanctified souls have but followed Christ, who was the Dawn of Sacrificial Lights, and through this path have they proceeded to the Kingdom of Mysteries. For the sake of such as these He said:

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake." "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

In the *Tablet of Akdas*, revealed by Baha'o'llah, it also says: "Blessed is the sleeper who is awakened by My Breeze! Blessed are the dead who are vivified by My Breaths! Blessed is the eye which is enlightened by My Beauty! Blessed is the ear which hears My Melodies! Blessed is the affrighted one who hastens to the shelter of My Name. Blessed is the thirsty one who seeks the nectar of My Benedictions! Blessed is the hungry one who, forsaking his desires, ascends to My Realm, presenting himself at the Table

of Sanctity which I have caused to descend from the heaven of My Holiness for the sake of My Chosen Ones! Blessed are the ignorant who seek the spring of My Knowledge, and the lowly who grasp the robe of My Grandeur! Blessed are the heedless who maintain My Commemoration! Blessed is the spirit resurrected by My Breath, and thereby entering My Kingdom! Blessed is the soul who is shaken by the fragrance of My Nearness and attracted by the Kingdom of My Command! Blessed is the eye which has seen, the ear which has heard, and the heart which has known the Lord, the possessor of Glory, and the Kingdom of Grandeur and Might! Blessed are they who have attained! Blessed is he who is brightened by the Sun of My Word! Blessed is he whose head is adorned with the crown of My Love! Blessed is he who has heard my afflictions, and arose to assist Me among My Nations. Blessed is he who is convinced by My Word! Blessed is he who has redeemed his soul in My Path! Blessed is he who has suffered hardships for My Name's sake, and was not prevented by the world from entering My Court!

"Blessed is he who enters My Kingdom, perceiving the dominion of My Power and Might, drinking from the sea of My Utterances, being informed of My Command and what is concealed in the treasury of My Words, and who has shown forth from the Horizon of Significances My Commemoration and My Praise! Verily he is from Me, and upon him be My Mercy, My Bounty, My Favor and My Benediction!"

This is the ransom for the blood of the martyrs!

This is the utmost desire of the chosen ones! This is the eternal life of the spiritual ones! This is the pathway of Jesus Christ! This is the way of the divine Manifestations of God in all times, both ancient and modern!

In a Tablet addressed to Zeab, father of Sheik Taki, Baha'o'llah said: "Hast thou imagined We are afraid of thy cruelty? Know ye and be assured, from the first day upon which the sound of the Supreme Pen arose, we gave up our lives, our souls and our children in the path of God, the Supreme, the Great! And over this fact we boast in glory among all creatures and the Supreme Concourse, and to this what hath befallen us in this straight path, beareth witness. In truth, hearts are melted, bodies are crucified, blood is shed, while the eyes are gazing toward the horizon of the bounty of their Lord, the Seer, and the Omniscient! With the increase of calamity the people of Baha grow in love. And to their sincerity bears witness that which the Merciful One has revealed in the Koran, saying: 'If ye be sincere, seek death!'

"Which one is better: he who conceals himself to preserve his life, or he who sacrifices his life in the path of God? Be just, and not of those who are lost in the wilderness of falsehood. Verily they are intoxicated with the wine of His divine love, to such an extent that the guns of the world cannot prevent them, nor the swords of the nations hinder them, from turning to the ocean of the gifts of their Lord, the Tender, the Generous. By the Truth of God! Calamity has not weakened Me, nor have the objections

of the ullamas enfeebled Me. I declared, and am declaring in the face of all the world: 'Verily the gates of bounty are opened, the sun of justice has appeared with evident signs and clear proofs from the pen of God, the Omnipotent, the Self-Existent' "

In brief, the steadfastness of these souls under the swords of persecution, their self-resignation and submissiveness while facing thousands of their enemies, the joy and exhilaration of these luminous realities at the divine altar, the constancy of the confirmed women, the strength and faith of the holy maid-servants during suffering, massacre, beating, plunder, and the slaying of their offspring, and the firmness and constancy of the young children, are all greatest proofs of the sincerity and faithfulness of the beloved of God. Especially when we consider that in the time of great oppression and tyranny, they raised not a hand in self-protection, but rather considered self-sacrifice a great blessing and self-redemption as a mighty power in the world of humanity. They drank the overflowing cup of martyrdom as one would quaff a glass of delicious wine.

They sought not to save their lives from the sword, nor their throats from the dagger. They watched the destruction of their houses and dwellings, and yielded their wealth to the hands of the plunderers. They were taken, leaving their women and children helpless and homeless, and with utmost joy and gladness poured out their lives at the feet of the divine Beloved, and without uttering a single word at which their murderers could take offense. Rather, they begged inter-

cession, asking God's forgiveness and blessing upon their persecutors.

Had they tried, a single soul could have manifested great power of resistance, but in compliance with the command of God, they offered no defense; as was written by one of the friends from Yezd, his own words being as follows: "God has tied the hands of all, giving no permission for self-protection; otherwise no one would be able to attack us; but, knowing that we never transgress His Holy Ordinances, by raising the hands of resistance, the enemies are able to massacre, rob, and shed our blood with great audacity. Had they thought we would protect ourselves, the leaders and their followers would not have dared to breathe or utter a single word against us. But we yearn for martyrdom in the path of God, and ask it with all our hearts and souls. Only do we implore a refuge for our wives and children. Should we not do so, we fear we would be accused of neglect; otherwise, life itself has no merit and is not worthy to be offered as ransom in the path of God. If it be accepted, it is our greatest honor and glory."

If such sacrifice, such submission to plunder and loss of home and property, such helplessness, the captivity of women and children, the giving up of life with all joy, such crying out in the throes of martyrdom—"Ya-Baha 'o'llah!" "Ya-Rabbi-El-Abha!" (O my Supreme Lord!)—the shouting, "You have done us no harm, you have only transmitted us to our Lord!"—the cry, "Is there no one to witness how I offer up my life?" If all these things do not prove

steadfastness and constancy, and show forth the greatest evidence of faithfulness, spirituality and love in these holy souls; then from what shall we produce the evidence of stability and firmness! Thus the words, "If ye be sincere, seek death!" are herein fulfilled. Should they write the description of their condition with the ink of their blood, surely the pages of the leaves of the world would not be sufficient to record it.

If these souls be condemned and rejected, then from what shall we prove the steadfastness of the prophets, the firmness of the saints, and the constancy of the believers of God during past centuries and cycles? For the greatest virtue, for which His Holiness Mohammed was commended, was only his ability to "stand as commanded."

The last information from Yezd, written by His Holiness Seyid Mehde-Afnan, the offspring of the Holy Tree, is as follows: "The number of the martyrs is one hundred and seventy pure souls, and those whom we have not counted, God knows. Thousands of houses and shops have been robbed and destroyed, and many have been burned. Women and children are left helpless and nurseless, naked, hungry and homeless, without kind friends or associates. They are going from door to door seeking shelter, the while thanking God, day and night, for their calamities, saying: 'Praise be to God, that we have received such affliction and hardship in the path of His love! We have been the targets for a thousand shafts of oppression, but this is the utmost desire of our hearts and souls; this is our comfort and repose, for verily

we are content with all that He decrees for us in His way.' "

It was known that these events would take place, and it was heard from the lips of Abdul-Baha several times. In an assembly of the believers last year He said: "Yezd is in great danger; pray for it." By the will of God we hope the fulfillment of the following passages, written by the pen of Abdul-Baha, will also appear.

"Soon, by the command of God, the veils will be raised from the face of His Cause, and its refulgence will be reflected upon the horizons of all countries. The teachings of the religion will be promoted, the standards of your Glorious Lord will wave from the highest edifices; the base of superstitions will be shaken; the veils of darkness will be rent; the morn of evidences will appear; the Kingdom of Heaven on earth will shine with the lights of signs. Then you shall see the banners of the opposing nations hauled down, the faces of the enemies metamorphosed, the doctrines of the mis-leaders of the world abolished, and the rejectors shall be in great loss, while the beloved of God shall be in great joy."

(Translated by (Signed) MIRZA YOUNESS KHAN, Acca, Syria, September 19, 1903. *Attested*: Dr. Mirza Arastoo S. Hakim.)

This copy is changed from the original translation received in Chicago, October 29, 1903, only as far as required for a slightly smoother English reading, and by the addition of a quotation from the New Testament, apparently required by the text, on page 16.

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