

THE PASSING  
OF  
SHOGHI EFFENDI

THE PASSING OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

# THE PASSING OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

BY

AMATU'L-BAHÁ' RUHIYYIH KHANUM

in collaboration with

JOHN FERRABY

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING TRUST

27 Rutland Gate  
London, S.W. 7

© Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1958



ALL THOSE who were privileged to know the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi from the time of his childhood until his passing remember him as being incarnate with life; a dynamic, almost electric force seemed to radiate from him. He was always busy, restless, driving on to whatever goal he had set before his eyes. He was intense in all aspects of his nature: his phenomenal powers of concentration, his deep feelings of passionate attachment to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, his burning conscientiousness in carrying out his duties to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh as its appointed Guardian—these were all facets of the same wonderful nature which God endowed with those special qualities He wished to be uppermost in the one who was firmly to lay the administrative foundations of His Faith all over the world, and to plant the first ensigns of its victory in the four corners of the earth.

That the Cause of God has reached the point where it stands today is due to the self-sacrificing, constant, unsparing, truly herculean labours of its Guardian. That his heart should have stopped, with no warning, at the early age of sixty-one, is not so much due to this ceaseless, tireless work, but to the sorrows and afflictions which he endured, for the most part in reserved silence, from the stirrers-up of dissension and the Covenant-breakers, old and new. The early pilgrims, after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, remember standing at Shoghi Effendi's bedside, where he had called them to say goodbye, and looking at his face, so full of sorrow and despair, his eyes deep-sunken and heavily shadowed, and hearing him say he was going away, that it was too much for him, he could not bear it. He left the Holy Land, fought his inner battle, returned, took the helm of this Blessed Barque and steered it for over one-third of a century through every storm and shoal.

But the valiant heart and frail body were receiving blows which left their mark, and in the end took their toll.

The friends of God are well aware of the achievements of their beloved Guardian; what they do not realize fully is that by doing so many things personally over a period of so many years, he, and he alone, made it possible for the big victories to take place. The fact that he did every single thing himself saved the Cause tremendous sums of money; with what he thus saved he was able to go on and commence a new enterprise. For thirty-six years he held in his hands, with power of decision vested solely in him, the funds of the Faith at its World Centre; no expenditures were authorized, no bills were paid that had not been submitted to him. From the beginning of his ministry until about 1940, he saw in person the engineers, the architects, the lawyers, who were carrying out his instructions, as well as many high government officials; it was he who negotiated with them, supervised their work, kept down expenses with an ingenuity and insight truly inspired by God; it was he who instructed where every step should be built, the height of every wall, the spans between every planted tree, the diameter of every flower bed—even the colours of the flowers. It was Shoghi Effendi who, entirely aside from the glorious spiritual leadership manifested in his letters, his books, and his words to the pilgrims, so harboured the financial resources of the Faith that in his lifetime the Temple in Chicago, the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel, and the International Archives Building could be completed, as well as the extensive endowments of the Faith acquired in Haifa and 'Akká; he made the plans and paved the way for the Temples now being built; he was responsible for the purchase of the Temple sites, the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds and endowments, as well as many other things during these last five years; all these accomplishments were made possible by his vigilance and wisdom.



As the Faith grew and the years went by, the beloved Guardian received more able support from believers of capacity, serving him in the Holy Land and abroad, but his personal supervision of expenses, his personal decision as to what was befitting for the Bahá'í Holy Places at the World Centre, was never laid aside. He delegated to others interviews and negotiations locally, but the management, the ordering of objects and furniture for the Gardens and Holy Places, the arrangement of these, the designs and plans for extending them, he kept solely in his own hands, practising the same economy and showing the same genius as had characterized all his other services to the Faith entrusted to him by the Master in His Will.

On October 20th, 1957, the beloved Guardian arrived in London, accompanied by Ruhiyyih Khanum, for the purpose of ordering some furniture and objects for the interior of the International Archives Building and the Gardens above it. He chose London because it is an international centre where objects from every country can be found at much cheaper prices than probably in any other one city of the world. He planned to remain a few days and then proceed to Haifa. As was the invariable custom of the beloved Guardian during his absence from Haifa, no contact was made with any Bahá'í. Ruhiyyih Khanum attended to his mail and carried out his orders as she always did.

On Sunday afternoon, October 27th, Shoghi Effendi told Ruhiyyih Khanum that he had a pain across his knuckles in both hands; she asked him if he had any other pains, and he said no, that just his fingers pained him and were stiff. He added: "I feel so tired, so tired." She begged him to rest, saying that if he did not wish to go to bed, at least he should rest quietly because the probability was that he was getting the influenza which was sweeping through Europe and indeed all over the world. (She herself had been in bed with fever since Thursday night.) That night he had a fever and by the following day his temperature

had risen to thirty-nine degrees<sup>1</sup>. Ruhiyyih Khanum succeeded in finding an excellent doctor who had taken over the practice of a well-known Harley Street physician who had retired. This doctor was contacted and immediately prescribed medicine for the beloved Guardian and came to see him early in the evening when he was able to get away from his hospital. He examined his patient very carefully; heart, chest, temperature, pulse, etc., and said that he considered that both the Guardian and Ruhiyyih Khanum had cases of Asiatic influenza, the beloved Guardian's case being the more severe.

The constant stress of work, sorrows and anxieties to which Shoghi Effendi had been subjected had brought about a condition of high blood-pressure, which he had had for a number of years; he mentioned this himself sometimes to members of the International Bahá'í Council, but he was so strong and healthy, had such tremendous powers of endurance and vitality, that it was difficult to persuade him to devote time to caring for himself. However, for the past ten years he had been under the supervision of an excellent doctor, who saw him at least twice a year, and he had consented to take some special cures which were good for his general health and calculated to reduce his blood-pressure. His doctor often urged him not to overdo things when he returned to Haifa, to get more exercise and more rest. But the doctor could not visualize the Guardian's life in Haifa, or the nature of his responsibility; could not know that he had to read letters, reports, journals, and so on for between three to eight hours a day, just to keep abreast of his work; that he spent about four hours most afternoons and evenings, after being up and busy from early morning, giving out what strength he had left to the pilgrims, eastern and western; that he stood sometimes for hours, in all weathers, directing the work he had planned on Mount Carmel or at Bahjí; that when he was deeply

<sup>1</sup> 102·2° F.



distressed by some situation he would not feel able to eat and would lose much weight in a few days. About six weeks before the Guardian passed away, he was examined by this doctor who found him in very good health and his blood-pressure lower than in years. The doctor who took care of him in London likewise examined his blood-pressure and found it satisfactory and not high.

During the week of the beloved Guardian's illness—and indeed a number of times during the weeks before his illness—he complained that he had no appetite. He said: "I don't know what has happened to me. I have completely lost my appetite. I don't eat for twenty-four hours, but I still have absolutely no appetite whatever. It is now weeks that I have been like this. The same thing is happening to me that happened to Bahá'u'lláh when He lost His appetite after the death of Navváb."

On Tuesday, Ruhiyyih Khanum had recovered sufficiently for the doctor to allow her to go out on an important errand. As she had bronchitis following the 'flu, he would check on her condition when he had finished his visit to the beloved Guardian, and in this way she was able to find out from him exactly how he felt Shoghi Effendi was progressing. This same day a very heavy mail had been received, and as Shoghi Effendi's temperature was still high she persuaded him not to look at it; but the next morning he called for his mail and insisted on going over it personally, as he always did. A great many cables were received and answered by the beloved Guardian during this last week of his life. He said to Ruhiyyih Khanum toward the end of the week: "Do you realize that we have done nothing but work this week?"

He was anxious to leave London and carry out his original plan of returning to Haifa; however, the doctor was very severe on this point and told him frankly that he was quite free to call in another doctor if he wished to, but that as long as he was taking

care of him he could not give his consent to his departure until a week after his temperature had fallen. The Guardian accepted this.

The doctor was very careful of the beloved Guardian. When he came every day, instead of being in a hurry like some doctors, he would sit with the Guardian, examine him thoroughly, and stay usually a half-hour, and one evening he remained an hour to chat with his patient. He invariably found him sitting in bed reading, surrounded by papers, his brief-case beside him, and one evening he asked Ruhiyyih Khanum, privately, what was the Guardian's work? She replied that he was a religious leader and had many responsibilities. The doctor obviously liked his patient, and after he had been coming for three or four days, he told Ruhiyyih Khanum, after leaving the beloved Guardian's room, that "he was smiling tonight"; that beautiful smile had affected him too. The doctor told the Guardian that on Friday he could get up and sit in his arm-chair as a change from bed, and in order to get his strength back; but Shoghi Effendi did not want to do this, and he continued his work sitting in bed and resting every now and then. However, all during his illness, the Guardian had gotten up to wash, to get papers from his desk and so on. There was no time when he was too weak or ill to get out of bed, not even the days when he had high fever.

On Saturday morning, the beloved Guardian told Ruhiyyih Khanum that he wanted a large table placed in his room, big enough so that he could lay on it the map of the world on which he had been working. He had prepared one of those beautiful maps he used to make showing the progress of the work, and this one he called *The Half-Way Point of the Ten-Year Crusade*, in other words, the progress made, and the victories won, during five years. He had already worked a great deal on this map; indeed it seems a strange coincidence that the first time and the last time he worked on it should both have been occasions on which



he was ill, symbolic of the great sacrifice of his life and strength that went into the conception and prosecution of the World Crusade. About two months before he passed away, the beloved Guardian had had a cold, with a temperature the first night; the next day he had no fever, but it was understood he would remain in bed and rest. It was that day that he worked on his map for the first time, for about ten hours, and it was on Saturday, November 2nd, that he worked on it for the last time. He told Ruhiyyih Khanum that he wanted her to check over carefully with him the figures and said that except for adding a few extra details and making sure that what was on the map agreed with his various lists, the work was finished. She remonstrated with him and begged him not to work, saying that in a few days he would be stronger and could then complete it, but he said: "No, I must finish it; it is worrying me. There is nothing left to do but check it. I have one or two names to add that I have found in this mail, and I will finish it to-day." In the early afternoon he stood in front of the table and worked for about three hours. The table was strewn with pencils and files of papers which constituted the Guardian's lists of languages, tribes, countries, Temples, Ḥazīratu'l-Quds, work completed, work being carried out, and a tremendous amount of data. At one time, while Ruhiyyih Khanum was checking over with him the various lists and totals, he said to her, as he had said many, many times during the last year: "This work is killing me! How can I go on with this? I shall have to stop it. It is too much. Look at the number of places I have to write down. Look how exact I have to be!"

The beloved Guardian looked tired after working on his map that day. He went back to bed and continued reading the many reports he had received. He had only had a mouthful to eat at lunch-time, and he refused to eat any dinner at all. That evening he spoke with great depression. He had made many plans for his winter's work in Haifa, and many times he discussed these with

Ruhiyyih Khanum, outlining to her some of the work he was going to do on Mount Carmel in the Gardens above the Archives, how he was going to furnish the International Archives Building itself with the things that had been ordered, and that upon his arrival his first act would be to go over to Bahjí and himself give instructions for the demolition of the buildings inhabited for so many years by the Arch-breakers of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant who had caused the beloved Master so much sorrow. He talked about the disposition he intended to make of the stones and rubble of these houses and of his ideas for extending the Garden at Bahjí. Many times during the past months he had spoken with enthusiasm of these plans he was going to carry out, but this evening he said to her: "Who is going to go back and do all these things? I have no strength left. I am like a broken reed. I can't do anything more. I have no spirit left to do anything more. Now we will be going back—who is going to go up that mountain and make all those plans and stand for hours and supervise the work? I can't do it. And I am not going to do anything about the houses in Bahjí. Let them stay like that until I see how I feel. And I am not going to furnish the inside of the Archives this winter. It can wait another year, until everything that is needed to furnish it is collected. I shall just see the pilgrims and stay in my room and rest and do the few things that I have to do. I am not even going to take the telegrams back from Jessie and make copies of them and keep all the receipts the way I have done all these years. She did this in the summer, she can go on doing it in the winter. I am too tired." He was very, very sad and depressed, and spoke words such as these for a long time. It was not the first time that Ruhiyyih Khanum had heard him speak in this vein, but it was with far greater intensity and in more specific detail than she had ever heard before, and it distressed her very deeply.

That evening when the doctor came he was satisfied with the



Guardian's condition and said he could certainly leave on Tuesday morning. He told him he could go out if he wanted to and get some fresh air. He also told the Guardian that he had heard over the radio that well over two hundred people had died of influenza during the week, and they discussed this a little together. When the doctor left that night, after staying quite a while, the Guardian said: "I like him very much. He is a fine man, and a good doctor."

The next day the Guardian appended a few lines to all the English letters that had been written for him, and went over other matters regarding his work, dictating to Ruhiyyih Khanum some instructions to be mailed, and telling her to write two other letters herself that afternoon. He did not wish to get up, preferring to remain in his room, mostly reading his papers in bed, or attending to things on his desk. He later read over the letters that she had written and appended something to one of them. In one of the reports, he read something that caused him intense indignation, and he spoke to her about it. He had also been upset during these past few days by some news given him concerning the activities of some of the Covenant-breakers, and referred to it more than once. Such things always distressed him.

As Sunday was the doctor's day of rest, the Guardian had said the day before that he did not think it was necessary for him to come; however, the doctor telephoned that evening to inquire how Shoghi Effendi was and expressed his willingness to come if he was needed. Ruhiyyih Khanum, who was speaking on the telephone beside the Guardian's bed, conveyed this message to him, but he said he felt better, and that there was no need for the doctor to come. It was then agreed that he would make his last call the following afternoon. Ruhiyyih Khanum sat in the room with the Guardian and they talked for a while about everyday things. At half-past nine she asked him if he would not like to go to sleep, as she was sure he was tired. He asked her: "What time is

it?" and she said, "Nine-thirty". He said: "It is too early to go to sleep now; if I go to sleep now I shall wake up early and then I won't be able to go to sleep again. Stay a little while longer and talk." About ten o'clock she again asked him if he did not wish to go to sleep, and he said yes. She did the last few things to make him comfortable before retiring, and after saying goodnight, left the room, asking him before she went to be sure and call her in the night if he needed anything.

Both Saturday and Sunday nights Ruhiyyih Khanum did not sleep well, lying awake in the middle of the night for long hours. It would not be correct to say that she had the slightest premonition of what was to come, but she did not sleep well, and her heart was heavy and sad.

On the morning of Monday, November 4th, she went to the door of the Guardian's room, knocked gently, and, when she received no answer, entered the room. The curtains were drawn over the windows and the room was in twilight. She saw the beloved Guardian lying on his left side facing her, with his left hand folded over towards his right shoulder and his right arm over his left one, in a most relaxed and comfortable position. His eyes were three-quarters open and she thought he was drowsy—in that state when people wake up and lie comfortably beginning to think of their day's work. She asked him how he had slept, and if he felt better. When he neither moved nor replied, and he seemed unnaturally still, a wave of agonizing terror swept over her; she leaned over him and seized his hand. He was ice-cold and absolutely rigid; as the window was not open and the room was very warm, he must have ascended several hours earlier. In spite of her own condition, within two minutes she had reached his doctor by phone at the hospital, and had told him that she was afraid that his patient had passed away, and begged him to come instantly, in case there was something that could still be done. The doctor arrived shortly. In order to calm Ruhiyyih



Khanum he gave heart injections to the beloved Guardian and massaged his heart, but of course it was absolutely useless. A few minutes later a second physician arrived and confirmed that there was nothing to be done. The diagnosis was "Death caused by coronary thrombosis". Nothing in the world could have saved the beloved Guardian's life. If the best physicians had been standing beside him, they could not have prevented his passing away from the clot of blood that suddenly entered into one of the heart-vessels.

The beloved friends, heart-broken, desolate and orphaned as they are, must be grateful that this Shoghi Effendi of ours, this sacred and so-dearly-loved Trust left us by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, passed away with no illness or pain; indeed it was clear from his position and the expression in his eyes that he had not even had a spasm. His eyes bore no look of surprise, although they were open. They say such deaths are reserved for the just.

It devolved upon Ruhiyyih Khanum, half-mad herself with grief, to think of a way of conveying this terrible and agonizing news to the Bahá'ís. She thought of the two British Hands of the Cause, so recently elevated to this high rank in the last Message from the beloved Guardian. She first turned to Hasan Balyuzi, an Afán cousin of his. Within about an hour he was able to join her, and he telephoned John Ferraby, enjoining him to silence and telling him to come quickly. A telephone call was then put through to the Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery in Rome, and he said he would take the next plane for London. He arrived that same night about eight o'clock. Another call was put in for the Hand of the Cause Leroy Ioas in Haifa, and he was reached late in the afternoon. Already, earlier in the afternoon Ruhiyyih Khanum had cabled the following message to Haifa, "Beloved Guardian desperately ill Asiatic flu tell Leroy inform all National Assemblies inform believers supplicate prayers divine protection Faith." She could not bear to deal the naked blow to the

hearts of other Bahá'ís which she herself had received and had been forced to inflict on three of the Hands, so she sent the above message, in the hope of preparing the Guardian's lovers, the ill, the old, and the feeble, to receive the full news. In spite of this effort to protect the friends from the full shock of this cataclysm that had overtaken them, her first cable did not reach Haifa before her telephone message, and the news reached many Bahá'ís in different parts of the world over the radio. A second cable was sent later in the day to Haifa with the request that it be cabled to all National Assemblies, as she felt that the announcement of his passing should go out officially from the World Centre of the Faith. The text was as follows:

SHOGHI EFFENDI BELOVED OF ALL HEARTS SACRED TRUST GIVEN  
BELIEVERS BY MASTER PASSED AWAY SUDDEN HEART ATTACK IN  
SLEEP FOLLOWING ASIATIC FLU STOP URGE BELIEVERS REMAIN  
STEADFAST CLING INSTITUTION HANDS LOVINGLY REARED RE-  
CENTLY REINFORCED EMPHASIZED BY BELOVED GUARDIAN STOP  
ONLY ONENESS HEART ONENESS PURPOSE CAN BEFITTINGLY TESTIFY  
LOYALTY ALL NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES BELIEVERS DEPARTED GUAR-  
DIAN WHO SACRIFICED SELF UTTERLY FOR SERVICE FAITH.

RUHIYYIH

The customs in the West are different from the customs in the East, and the ascension of the blessed Guardian in such a vast city as London posed many problems. Very careful instructions were given to the undertaker by Ruhiyyih Khanum, explaining that in our religion we have no embalmment, that no injections of any kind to preserve the body must be given, and that nobody must be allowed to wash it, as provision would be made for this by us according to our Faith. He fully understood this, as London is a great world metropolis, where people of many religious customs live and die. The friends must bear in mind that in all the arrangements made after the passing of the beloved Guardian, the



Laws of the Aqdas, which he himself had so repeatedly stressed and constantly upheld, had to be obeyed. The size of London, and the fact that the only suitable burial grounds lie in its outskirts, had to be constantly remembered, so that no mistake would be made in transporting his precious remains more than an hour's journey. It was the longing of the four Hands, who from the very day of his ascension became responsible for all the pressing matters that had to be attended to in such a short space of time, to have him transported to the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds where the friends could gather and pray, until the funeral took place. Investigation, however, showed that the journey from the part of London where the beloved Guardian had passed away to the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, and from there back again in the same general direction to the burial place, would take more than an hour, and the plan had to be abandoned.

On Tuesday morning a telephone call was put through to the Hand of the Cause Adelbert Muhlschlegel, as Ruhiyyih Khanum had decided that he, a physician, one of the Guardian's own appointed Hands, and a man known for his spirituality, would not only be able to endure the sorrow of performing the last service for the beloved Guardian of washing his blessed body, but would do it in the spirit of consecration and prayer called for on such a sacred occasion. He accepted immediately, with deepest gratitude for this inestimable privilege, and arrived, accompanied by the other German Hand of the Cause Hermann Grossmann, on Tuesday night at the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds in London. It was decided that because of the Laws of our Faith which are against embalming, the funeral should be held as soon as possible, preferably on Friday. Investigation and consultation, however, showed that this would not allow enough time to settle the formalities involved in purchasing a site for the grave and constructing a suitable vault. The time was therefore set for noon on

## *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi*

---

Saturday, 9 November, and the following cable was sent from London to all National Assemblies:

BELOVED ALL HEARTS PRECIOUS GUARDIAN CAUSE GOD PASSED  
PEACEFULLY AWAY YESTERDAY AFTER ASIATIC FLU STOP APPEAL  
HANDS NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES AUXILIARY BOARDS SHELTER BE-  
LIEVERS ASSIST MEET HEARTRENDING SUPREME TEST STOP FUNERAL  
OUR BELOVED GUARDIAN SATURDAY LONDON HANDS ASSEMBLY  
BOARD MEMBERS INVITED ATTEND ANY PRESS RELEASE SHOULD  
STATE MEETING HANDS SHORTLY HAIFA WILL MAKE ARRANGEMENT  
TO BAHAI WORLD REGARDING FUTURE PLANS STOP URGE HOLD ME-  
MORIAL MEETINGS SATURDAY.

RUHIYYIH

The first thought of those concerned with making arrangements for a befitting burial of the beloved Guardian's remains had been to secure a piece of land especially for this purpose; however, this proved an impossibility. An appointment with the Home Office had been fixed to discuss this with John Ferraby, but it was soon found to be impracticable because of laws restricting the use of land near London for burials. On Tuesday afternoon, Ruhiyyih Khanum, Hasan Balyuzi, and Ugo Giachery were taken out to inspect possible sites for the grave in cemeteries within an hour's journey from London. It was raining, and the first cemetery visited had only one plot remotely suitable for the purpose available, which was opposite the massive, depressing vault of a family of the British nobility, and prohibitively expensive, in addition to being very near the entrance gate. Although in the eyes of the world this cemetery must have importance, to the Hands present it was unbefitting and out of the question in every way, and their hearts sank with fear lest they should not find a proper place for their so-dearly-loved Guardian. God had other plans however, for on motoring in the twilight to inspect the second cemetery, they entered a beautiful, peaceful spot on a hill, surrounded by rolling country,



where birds sang in the trees and which had an entirely different atmosphere from the pomp and worldliness of the first. The Superintendent escorted them to the best piece of land he had, on the highest part, and in the centre of the cemetery. It adjoined one of the roads and was bounded by three great trees which cast their shade over it. The peaceful woods of the countryside, where birds will make their nests in spring, lay close to it on one side. It was over thirty metres square, and Ruhiyyih Khanum made arrangements to purchase it immediately, instructions being given to build a strong, deep vault. The Hands then proceeded to the undertaker's, to choose a suitable casket for the precious remains of the beloved Guardian. After much deliberation it was decided that for the present, as well as the future, the wisest course would be to have a lead coffin which could be hermetically sealed, and that this should be placed in a beautiful bronze casket, the most dignified, costly and enduring that could be found. By doing this the Hands were assured that in the future, when the means of transport become so rapid that the journey from London to Haifa can be accomplished in an hour, it would be possible to convey the sacred remains of the Guardian to the Holy Land.

On Tuesday night the Hand of the Cause Amelia Collins, who had only arrived in Haifa on Sunday, having made a special effort to get home in time to greet the Guardian when he returned, joined Ruhiyyih Khanum in London and was able to give her at this grievous time her much-needed, warm, motherly love and support. Already all European Hands of the Cause were in London. On Wednesday the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles communicated to all the believers the heart-breaking news, and invited them, as members of the community in which this great calamity had occurred, to be present at the funeral of the beloved Guardian, which was to take place on their soil. That afternoon, Ruhiyyih Khanum,

accompanied by Amelia Collins, drove out to the cemetery and made arrangements with a florist in the neighbourhood for the decoration of the Chapel, and for the sheath of flowers which was to cover the coffin. On Thursday at two o'clock Ruhiyyih Khanum and Adelbert Muhlschlegel drove to the place where the body of the blessed Guardian was to be washed. She had already purchased nine yards of the heaviest and finest white silk available and nine yards of a slightly lighter weight for the first shroud, as well as towels and cloths and soap to wash the body. These she delivered to Dr. Muhlschlegel, keeping the second shroud with her. She waited in an ante-room while he washed the precious remains and wrapped them in the first shroud, anointing the body with attar-of-rose which the Guardian himself had given to Ugo Giachery, who had brought it from Italy with him. It was over an hour-and-a-half before Adelbert Muhlschlegel came to call Ruhiyyih Khanum, and to inform her that he had completed his sacred task. Let him say in his own words—as he afterwards wrote them to her—what he felt during that time:

“Something new happened to me in that hour that I cannot, even after a few days, speak of, but I can mention the wisdom and love that I felt pour over me. In that room—which to worldly eyes would have appeared so different—there was a tremendous spiritual force such as I have only felt in my life in the holy Shrines. My first impression was the contrast between the body left behind and the majestic, transfigured face, a soul-stirring picture of the joyous victory of the eternal over the transient. My second impression, as I prayed and thought and carefully did what I had to do, was that in this degree of consecration to the work of God I should work all my life, and mankind should work a thousand years, in order to construct “the Kingdom” on earth; and my third thought was, as I washed each member of his body and anointed it,



that I thanked those beloved hands which had worked and written to establish the Covenant, those feet that had walked for us, that mouth that had spoken to us, that head that had thought for us, and I prayed and meditated and supplicated that in the short time left to me, the members of my body might hasten to follow in his path of service; and my last thought was of my own distress because I felt how unworthy my hands were to anoint that blessed brow with attar-of-rose as the Masters of old were wont to do to their pupils; and yet what privileges, what duties fall to us, the living, to watch over what is past and mortal, be it ever so exalted. A great deal of mercy, love, and wisdom were hidden in this hour."

Ruhiyyih Khanum asked to be alone with the beloved Guardian to say her own last farewell. Bahá'u'lláh says: "*At this point the pen broke and the ink gave forth nothing but blackness.*" So a veil must be drawn over her feelings alone with her Lord for the last time. But she did tell the friends afterwards:

"He was our Guardian, King of the world. We know he was noble because he was our Guardian. We know that God gave him peace in the end. But as I looked at him all I could think of was—how beautiful he is, how beautiful! A celestial beauty seemed to be poured over him and to rest on him and stream from him like a mighty benediction from on high. And the wonderful hands, so like the hands of Bahá'u'lláh, lay softly by his side; it seemed impossible the life had gone from them—or from that radiant face."

After a little while she called Adelbert Muhlschlegel back into the room; the coffin, padded with soft white silk, was brought; she arranged the second shroud in it and the beloved Guardian was laid inside. The flowers from the threshold of the Báb's Shrine, which Amelia Collins had brought from Haifa, she spread over that treasured form, covering it from feet to chin,

a sacred carpet of love, and the last shroud she folded gently about him, closing away for all time from men's eyes the face on which the Bahá'ís had gazed with so much love.

The coffin was then closed, a pall of purple and gold was spread over it, and a bouquet of flowers Ruhiyyih Khanum had brought with her was placed on the top.

All the next day, in a room full of flowers, the various Hands of the Cause from Persia, Europe, Africa, and America kept vigil and prayed near the mortal remains of their Beloved.

On Friday evening, Ruhiyyih Khanum and Amelia Collins drove out to the cemetery to inspect the Chapel and the grave. The florist was following his instructions very carefully and making every effort to create an atmosphere of beauty worthy of this sacred occasion. Indeed, all the non-Bahá'ís concerned with the death of and the funeral arrangements made for this stranger who had passed away in their country so suddenly, seemed deeply touched and stirred by the great reverence and love that accompanied the still form of God's Great Guardian as he passed from life to the grave. They outdid themselves in showing sympathy and co-operation. At the four corners of the grave the florist had already planted four beautiful small cypress trees which Ruhiyyih Khanum had ordered in memory of the hundreds of cypress trees that the beloved Guardian had planted, during his lifetime, around the Holy Places in Bahjí and Haifa. At the top of the Chapel, which was entirely non-denominational and used for services of all religions, was an arched alcove filled with a bank of chrysanthemums and asters, beginning with deep shades of purple and running up through violet, lavender and orchid tones to white at the top. Like two arms reaching out, garlands of lavender chrysanthemums ran along a cornice which framed the raised upper part of the Chapel. Above this, from wall to wall, was a beam of wood, in the centre of which a framed Greatest Name was hung. Beneath



this, in front of the alcove of flowers, the coffin was to rest on a low catafalque covered by a rich green velvet pall, the colour to which the descendants of Muḥammad are entitled by their illustrious lineage, and which the Guardian, as a Siyyid himself, through his kinship to the Báb, had every right to bear with him to the grave. Seating arrangements were made for the following day, placing the Hands of the Cause on the right and on the left side of the coffin, facing it. A hundred more chairs had to be ordered as the Chapel normally could only seat about eighty people.

That evening all the Hands of the Cause who were in London, now numbering thirteen, met to discuss appropriate readings for the funeral the next day. The Israeli authorities had instructed the *Chargé d'Affaires* at the Israeli Embassy in London, Mr Gershon Avner, to attend the funeral on behalf of the Government (the Ambassador being absent from his post). It had been decided that, owing to the great mourning of the Bahá'í world, the short time available, and the restricted space at the cemetery Chapel, the funeral should be entirely private. The spontaneous gesture of esteem, however, which the Israeli Government had made, by requesting its representative to attend the funeral officially, could not be turned aside. The presence of this non-Bahá'í had therefore to be taken into consideration in connection with suitable readings, and the moving of the beloved Guardian's coffin. As this weighed almost half-a-ton it was considered that, in permitting the Bahá'ís to have the honour of taking turns in carrying it, a very grave risk would be run of its being jostled, tipped, or even slipping from their hands. Special bearers were therefore chosen who carried out their task with the utmost dignity.

While these events were taking place, the National Headquarters of the Bahá'ís in London was becoming the focal centre of many agonized hearts, seeking information, asking details,

receiving what comfort other broken hearts could give and being directed as to how they could reach the cemetery upon their arrival in London. The telephone at the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds rang almost all day without stopping, and John Ferraby, Secretary of the British National Spiritual Assembly, with the constant help of his wife, also a member of that body, attended to telephone calls from such distant spots as Djakarta, Bombay, Kuwait, Israel, the United States and several European countries, to the ceaseless flow of cables and letters that poured in and out, as well as to Press releases and interviews. It began to be clear that the funeral would be attended by many more of the friends than it had been thought could possibly get to London in time. Not only were the British Bahá'ís attending practically *en masse*, but Hands of the Cause, various National Spiritual Assembly members and Auxiliary Board members, as well as individuals, were pouring in from overseas. As the Bahá'ís arrived in ever-increasing numbers, a great flood-tide of love and sorrow was rising about the silent figure of the Sign of God on earth, preparing to bear his sacred remains befittingly to the grave.

Arrangements had been made to have the funeral cortège assemble about ten o'clock before the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, at 27 Rutland Gate, opposite Hyde Park; from here, those believers who were not going direct to the cemetery would be driven by special cars which would follow the hearse. More than sixty automobiles, accommodating over three hundred and sixty people, moved off in solemn file at 10.40 and journeyed to the place where they were joined by the hearse bearing the coffin of the revered Guardian. This was preceded by a floral hearse and followed by the car in which rode Ruhiyyih Khanum accompanied by Amelia Collins; cars bearing the other Hands; National Spiritual Assembly members, Auxiliary Board members and believers followed behind. It was probably the largest column of vehicles seen in London for many years in attendance



on a funeral of any denomination. The journey to the Great Northern Cemetery at New Southgate, where the sacred remains of Shoghi Effendi are now interred, was accomplished in under one hour's time, the laws of the Aqdas being thus fulfilled.

Through Leroy Ioas having promptly informed the Israeli authorities in a befitting manner of the sudden passing of the Head of the Faith, conditions at its World Centre were calm, and he decided it would be safe for him to leave the Holy Land over the weekend, and attend the funeral of the beloved Guardian. This was very fortunate, because it made it possible for him to bring with him, at the request of Ruhiyyih Khanum, a small rug from the innermost Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí, with which to carpet the floor of the vault, and a covering, which had rested likewise in that inner Shrine, for the coffin itself. He also brought a bouquet of white jasmine and a box of flowers gathered from the Gardens at Bahjí, the Riḍván, Mazra'ih and Haifa.

Already a great crowd of believers was waiting at the door of the Chapel when the funeral cortège drove up; on every face was written its own measure of heart-break and many sobs were heard. The casket was gently handed down, on it a beautiful sheath of deep-red roses with fragrant white gardenias, lily of the valley and fuchsias, in the centre, and a simple card with the inscription "From Ruhiyyih and all your loved ones and lovers all over the world whose hearts are broken".

The Great Guardian was carried in and laid on the soft green covering of the catafalque. The Chapel was crowded to the doors, and many had to remain outside. All stood while the wonderful prayer, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh for the dead, was chanted in Arabic. Six other prayers and excerpts from the Teachings were then read by friends with beautiful voices, some in English, some in Persian, and representative of Bahá'ís from Europe, Africa, America, Asia—Negro, Jew, and Aryan.

In solemn file the friends followed the casket as it was borne out, placed in the hearse again, and slowly driven the few hundred yards to the graveside. There it was gently deposited at the head of the grave, so that when the beloved Guardian's remains were lowered into it, he would face east to the Qiblih of the Faith. The flowers were removed from the casket, revealing an engraved tablet on which was written:

Shoghi Effendi Rabbani

First Guardian

of the Bahá'í Faith

March 3rd, 1896–November 4th, 1957

As all stood, silently waiting for the coffin to be lowered into the grave, Ruhiyyih Khanum felt the agony of the hearts around her penetrate into her own great grief. He was their Guardian. He was going forever from their eyes, suddenly snatched from them by the immutable decree of God, Whose Will no man dare question. They had not seen him, had not been able to draw near him. She decided to ask for it to be announced that before the coffin was placed in the grave, the friends who wished might pass by it and pay their respects. For over two hours the believers, eastern and western, filed by. For the most part they knelt and kissed the edge or the handle of the casket. Rarely indeed in history can such a demonstration of love and grief have been seen. Children bowed their little heads beside their mothers, old men wept, the iron reserve of the Anglo-Saxon—the tradition never to show feeling in public—melted before the white-hot sorrow in the heart. The morning had been sunny and fair; now a gentle shower started and sprinkled a few drops on the coffin, as if nature herself were suddenly moved to tears. Some placed little flasks of Persian attar-of-rose at the head; one hesitatingly laid a red rose on the casket, symbol no doubt of the owner's heart; one could not bear the few drops



of rain above that blessed, hidden face, and timidly wiped them off as he knelt; others with convulsed fingers carried away a little of the earth near the casket. Tears, tears and kisses, and solemn inner vows were poured out at the head of the one who had always called himself their "true brother". When the last believers in this grief-stricken procession had filed by, Ruhiyyih Khanum approached the casket, kissed it and knelt in prayer for a moment. She then had the green pall spread over it, laid the blue-and-gold brocade from the innermost Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh on top of it and arranged the still-fragrant jasmine flowers over all its length. Then the mortal remains of him whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá designated "*the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin Surging Seas*" were slowly lowered into the vault, amid walls covered with evergreen boughs and studded with flowers, to rest upon the rug from the Holy Tomb at Bahjí. A prayer was then chanted in Persian, and the Afnán Hand of the Cause, Hasan Balyuzi, read the closing prayer in English.

All this time—a service that had lasted almost four hours—the representative of the Israeli Government, obviously deeply moved, had been in attendance, himself stepping beside the coffin and, with bowed head, paying his solemn respects. He and the majority of the mourners now left, the Hands of the Cause, the National Spiritual Assemblies and Auxiliary Board members remaining behind by previous arrangement to see the vault sealed.

Prayers were then said in many foreign languages and by friends from distant countries, and the orange and olive leaves brought from the Garden of the Ridván in Baghdád by Tarázu'lláh Samandarí—the only living Hand of the Cause who was privileged to enter the presence of Bahá'u'lláh—were placed on the grave, as well as the flowers brought by Leroy Ioas from the Bahá'í Gardens in the Holy Land; these were sufficient for

## *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi*

---

each person present himself to put some on the Guardian's resting-place. Over the tomb, at his feet, like a shield of crimson and white, lay the fragrant sheath of blooms which had covered his casket, and heaped about was a rich carpet of exquisite flowers, symbols of the love, the suffering, of so many hearts, and no doubt the silent bearers of vows to make the Spirit of the Guardian happy now, to fulfil his plans, carry on his work, be worthy at last of the love and inspired self-sacrificing leadership he gave them for thirty-six years of his life.

RUHIYYIH

in collaboration with John Ferraby

Haifa.

December 9th, 1957



## PROGRAMME OF PRAYERS AND READINGS

1. Prayer for the departed (chanted in Arabic). . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*
2. The Hidden Words, Nos. 32 and 11 (read in English). Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, page 345, beginning *Death proffereth unto every confident believer . . . to . . . of all worlds* (read in English). . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*
3. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, page 341, beginning *All praise be to God . . . to . . . the All-Compelling, the Almighty*. And beginning *The fierce gales . . . to . . . is based* (read in English). . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*
4. The Hidden Words, Nos. 12, 14, 32 (chanted in Arabic). . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*
5. Prayers and Meditations, CXLV, page 234 (read in English) . . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*
6. Prayers and Meditations, XCII, page 155 (read in English). . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*
7. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, first two paragraphs (read in English). . . . . *'Abdu'l-Bahá*

### AT THE GRAVESIDE

8. Prayer of Shoghi Effendi; Dar in Layliyi Layla (chanted in Persian). . . . . *Shoghi Effendi*
9. Prayer *Glory be to Thee, O God, for Thy manifestation of love to mankind* (read in English). . . . . *Bahá'u'lláh*

SET IN 12-POINT ALDINE BEMBO AND  
PRINTED IN ENGLAND  
BY THE BROADWATER PRESS LTD  
WELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTFORDSHIRE