

Chapter XXIII: MARTYRDOM OF THE BÁB

THE tale of the tragedy that marked the closing stages of the Nayríz upheaval spread over the length and breadth of Persia and kindled a startling enthusiasm in the hearts of those who heard it. It plunged the authorities of the capital into consternation and nerved them to a resolve of despair. The Amír-Nizám, the Grand Vazír of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, was particularly overawed by these recurrent manifestations of an indomitable will, of a fierce and inflexible tenacity of faith. Though the forces of the imperial army had everywhere triumphed, though the companions of Mullá Husayn and Vahíd had successively been mowed down in a ruthless carnage at the hands of its officers, yet to the shrewd minds of the rulers of Tihrán it was clear and evident that the spirit responsible for such rare heroism was by no means vanquished, that its might was far from broken. The loyalty which the remnants of that scattered band bore to their captive Leader still remained unimpaired. Nothing had as yet been successful, despite the appalling losses they had sustained, in sapping that loyalty or in undermining that faith. Far from being extinguished, that spirit had blazed more intense and devastating than ever. Galled by the memory of the indignities they had suffered, that persecuted band clung ever more passionately to its Faith and looked with increasing fervour and hope to its Leader.¹ Above all, He who had kindled that flame and nourished that spirit was still alive, and, despite His isolation, was able to exercise the full measure of His influence. Even a sleepless vigilance had been powerless to stem the tide that had swept over the entire face of the land, and which had as its motive force the continued existence of the Báb. Extinguish that light, choke the stream at its very source, and the torrent that had brought so much devastation in its wake would run dry. Such was the thought that swayed the Grand Vazír of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. To do Him to death seemed to that foolish minister the most efficacious means for the recovery of his country from the shame into which he thought it had sunk.²



MÍRZÁ TAQÍ KHÁN, THE AMÍR-NIZÁM

Bestirred to action, he summoned his counsellors, shared with them his fears and his hopes, and acquainted them with the nature of his plans. “Behold,” he exclaimed, “the storm which the Faith of the Siyyid-i-Báb has provoked in the hearts of my fellow-countrymen! Nothing short of his public execution can, to my mind, enable this distracted country to recover its tranquillity and peace. Who dare compute the forces that have perished in the course of the engagements at Shaykh Tabarsí? Who can estimate the efforts exerted to secure that victory? No sooner had the mischief that convulsed Mázindarán been suppressed, than the flames of another sedition blazed forth in the province of Fárs, bringing in its wake so much suffering to my people. We had no sooner succeeded in quelling the revolt that had ravaged the south, than another insurrection breaks out in the north, sweeping in its vortex Zanján and its surroundings. If you are able to advise a remedy, acquaint me with it, for my sole purpose is to ensure the peace and honour of my countrymen.”

Not a single voice dared venture a reply, except that of Mírzá Áqá Khání-i-Núrí, the Minister of War, who pleaded that to put to death a banished siyyid for the deeds committed by a band of irresponsible agitators would be an act of manifest cruelty. He recalled the example of the late Muhammad Sháh, whose invariable practice it had been to disregard the base calumnies the enemies of that siyyid brought continually to his attention. The Amír-Nizám was sorely displeased. “Such

considerations,” he protested, “are wholly irrelevant to the issue with which we are faced. The interests of the State are in jeopardy, and we can in no wise tolerate these periodic upheavals. Was not the Imám Husayn, in view of the paramount necessity for safeguarding the unity of the State, executed by those same persons who had seen him more than once receive marks of exceptional affection from Muhammad, his Grandfather? Did they not in such circumstances refuse to consider the rights which his lineage had conferred upon him? Nothing short of the remedy I advocate can uproot this evil and bring us the peace for which we long.”

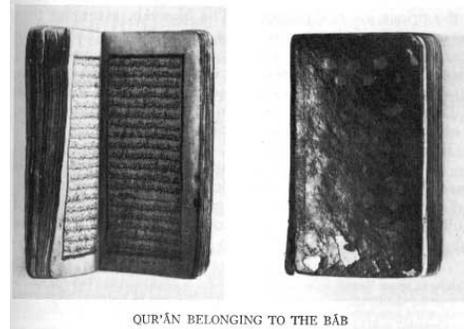
Disregarding the advice of his counsellor, the Amír-Nizám despatched his orders to Navváb Hamzih Mírzá, the governor of Ádhirbayján, who was distinguished among the princes of royal blood for his kind-heartedness and rectitude of conduct, to summon the Báb to Tabríz.³ He was careful not to divulge to the prince his real purpose. The Navváb, assuming that the intention of the minister was to enable his Captive to return to His home, immediately directed one of his trusted officers, together with a mounted escort, to proceed to Chihríq, where the Báb still lay confined, and to bring Him back to Tabríz. He recommended Him to their care, urging them to exercise towards Him the utmost consideration.

Forty days before the arrival of that officer at Chihríq, the Báb collected all the documents and Tablets in His possession and, placing them, with His pen-case, His seals, and agate rings, in a coffer, entrusted them to the care of Mullá Báqir, one of the Letters of the Living. To him He also delivered a letter addressed to Mírzá Ahmad, His amanuensis, in which He enclosed the key to that coffer. He urged him to take the utmost care of that trust, emphasised the sacredness of its character, and bade him conceal its contents from anyone except Mírzá Ahmad.

Mullá Báqir departed forthwith for Qazvín. Within eighteen days he reached that town and was informed that Mírzá Ahmad had departed for Qum. He left immediately for that destination and arrived towards the middle of the month of Sha’bán.⁴ I was then in Qum, together with a certain Sádiq-i-Tabrízí, whom Mírzá Ahmad had sent to fetch me from Zarand. I was living in the same house with Mírzá Ahmad, a house which he had hired in the Bagh-Panbih quarter. In those days Shaykh ‘Azím, Siyyid Ismá’íl, and a number of other companions likewise were dwelling with us. Mullá Báqir delivered the trust into the hands of Mírzá Ahmad, who, at the insistence of Shaykh ‘Azím, opened it before us. We marvelled when we beheld, among the things which that coffer contained, a scroll of blue paper, of the most delicate texture, on which the Báb, in His own exquisite handwriting, which was a fine shikastih script, had penned, in the form of a pentacle, what numbered about five hundred verses, all consisting of derivatives from the word “Bahá.”⁵ That scroll was in a state of perfect preservation, was spotlessly clean, and gave the impression, at first sight, of being a printed rather than a written page. So fine and intricate was the penmanship that, viewed at a distance, the writing appeared as a single wash of ink on the paper. We were overcome with admiration as we gazed upon a masterpiece which no calligraphist, we believed, could rival. That scroll was replaced in the coffer and handed back to Mírzá Ahmad, who, on the very day he received it, proceeded to Tihrán. Ere he departed, he informed us that all he could divulge of that letter was the injunction that the trust was to be delivered into the hands of Jináb-i-Bahá⁶ in Tihrán.⁷



THE BÁB'S PRAYER BEADS AND SIGNET RING



QUR'ÁN BELONGING TO THE BÁB

As to me, I was instructed by Mírzá Ahmad to proceed to Zarand and join my father, who anxiously awaited my return.

Faithful to the instructions he had received from Navváb Hamzih Mírzá, that officer conducted the Báb to Tabríz and showed Him the utmost respect and consideration. The prince had instructed one of his friends to accommodate Him in his home and to treat Him with extreme deference. Three days after the Báb's arrival, a fresh order was received from the Grand Vazír, commanding the prince to carry out the execution of his Prisoner on the very day the farmán⁸ would reach him. Whoever would profess himself His follower was likewise to be condemned to death. The Armenian regiment of Urúmíyyih, whose colonel was Sám Khán, was ordered to shoot Him, in the courtyard of the barracks of Tabríz, which were situated in the centre of the city.

The prince expressed his consternation to the bearer of the farmán, Mírzá Hasan Khán, the Vazír-Nizám and brother of the Grand Vazír. "The Amír," he told him, "would do better to entrust me with services of greater merit than the one with which he has now commissioned me. The task I am called upon to perform is a task that only ignoble people would accept. I am neither Ibn-i-Zíyad nor Ibn-i-Sa'd⁹ that he should call upon me to slay an innocent descendant of the Prophet of God." Mírzá Hasan Khán reported these sayings of the prince to his brother, who thereupon ordered him to follow, himself, without delay and in their entirety, the instructions he had already given. "Relieve us," the Vazír urged his brother, "from this anxiety that weighs upon our hearts, and let this affair be brought to an end ere the month of Ramadán breaks upon us, that we may enter the period of fasting with undisturbed tranquillity." Mírzá Hasan Khán attempted to acquaint the prince with these fresh instructions, but failed in his efforts, as the prince, pretending to be ill, refused to meet him. Undeterred by this refusal, he issued his instructions for the immediate transfer of the Báb and those in His company from the house in which He was staying to one of the rooms of the barracks. He, moreover, directed Sám Khán to despatch ten of his men to guard the entrance of the room in which He was to be confined.

Deprived of His turban and sash, the twin emblems of His noble lineage, the Báb, together with Siyyid Husayn, His amanuensis, was driven to yet another confinement which He well knew was but a step further on the way leading Him to the goal He had set Himself to attain. That day witnessed a tremendous commotion in the city of Tabríz. The great convulsion associated in the ideas of its inhabitants with the Day of Judgment seemed at last to have come upon them. Never had that city experienced a turmoil so fierce and so mysterious as the one which seized its inhabitants on the day the Báb was led to that place which was to be the scene of His martyrdom. As He approached the courtyard of the barracks, a youth suddenly leaped forward who, in his eagerness to overtake Him, had forced his way through the crowd, utterly ignoring the risks and perils which such an attempt might involve. His face was haggard, his feet were bare, and his hair dishevelled. Breathless with excitement and exhausted with fatigue, he flung himself at the feet of the Báb and, seizing the hem of His garment, passionately implored Him: "Send me not from Thee, O Master. Wherever Thou goest, suffer me to follow Thee." "Muhammad-'Alí," answered the Báb, "arise, and rest assured that you will be with Me.¹⁰ To-morrow you shall witness what God has decreed." Two other companions, unable to contain themselves, rushed forward and assured Him of their unalterable loyalty. These, together with Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí-i-Zunúzí, were seized and placed in the same cell in which the Báb and Siyyid Husayn were confined.

I have heard Siyyid Husayn bear witness to the following: "That night the face of the Báb was aglow with joy, a joy such as had never shone from His countenance. Indifferent to the storm that

raged about Him, He conversed with us with gaiety and cheerfulness. The sorrows that had weighed so heavily upon Him seemed to have completely vanished. Their weight appeared to have dissolved in the consciousness of approaching victory. ‘To-morrow,’ He said to us, ‘will be the day of My martyrdom. Would that one of you might now arise and, with his own hands, end My life. I prefer to be slain by the hand of a friend rather than by that of the enemy.’ Tears rained from our eyes as we heard Him express that wish. We shrank, however, at the thought of taking away with our own hands so precious a life. We refused, and remained silent. Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí suddenly sprang to his feet and announced himself ready to obey whatever the Báb might desire. This same youth who has risen to comply with My wish,’ the Báb declared, as soon as we had intervened and forced him to abandon that thought, ‘will, together with Me, suffer martyrdom. Him will I choose to share with Me its crown.’”

Early in the morning, Mírzá Hasan Khán ordered his farrásh-báshí¹¹ to conduct the Báb into the presence of the leading mujtahids of the city and to obtain from them the authorisation required for His execution.¹² As the Báb was leaving the barracks, Siyyid Husayn asked Him what he should do. “Confess not your faith,” He advised him. “Thereby you will be enabled, when the hour comes, to convey to those who are destined to hear you, the things of which you alone are aware.” He was engaged in a confidential conversation with him when the farrásh-báshí suddenly interrupted and, holding Siyyid Husayn by the hand, drew him aside and severely rebuked him. “Not until I have said to him all those things that I wish to say,” the Báb warned the farrásh-báshí, “can any earthly power silence Me. Though all the world be armed against Me, yet shall they be powerless to deter Me from fulfilling, to the last word, My intention.” The farrásh-báshí was amazed at such a bold assertion. He made, however, no reply, and bade Siyyid Husayn arise and follow him.

When Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí was ushered into the presence of the mujtahids, he was



RUINS OF THE HOUSE OF MULLĀ MUHAMMAD-I-MAMĀQĀNÍ, THE MUJTAHID OF TABRÍZ

repeatedly urged, in view of the position which his stepfather, Siyyid ‘Alí-i-Zunúzí, occupied, to recant his faith. “Never,” he exclaimed, “will I renounce my Master. He is the essence of my faith, and the object of my truest adoration. In Him I have found my paradise, and in the observance of His law I recognise the ark of my salvation.” “Hold your peace!” thundered Mullá Muhammad-i-Mamaqání, before whom that youth was brought. “Such words betray your madness; I can well excuse the words

for which you are not responsible.” “I am not mad,” he retorted. “Such a charge should rather be brought against you who have sentenced to death a man no less holy than the promised Qá’im. He is not a fool who has embraced His Faith and is longing to shed his blood in His path.

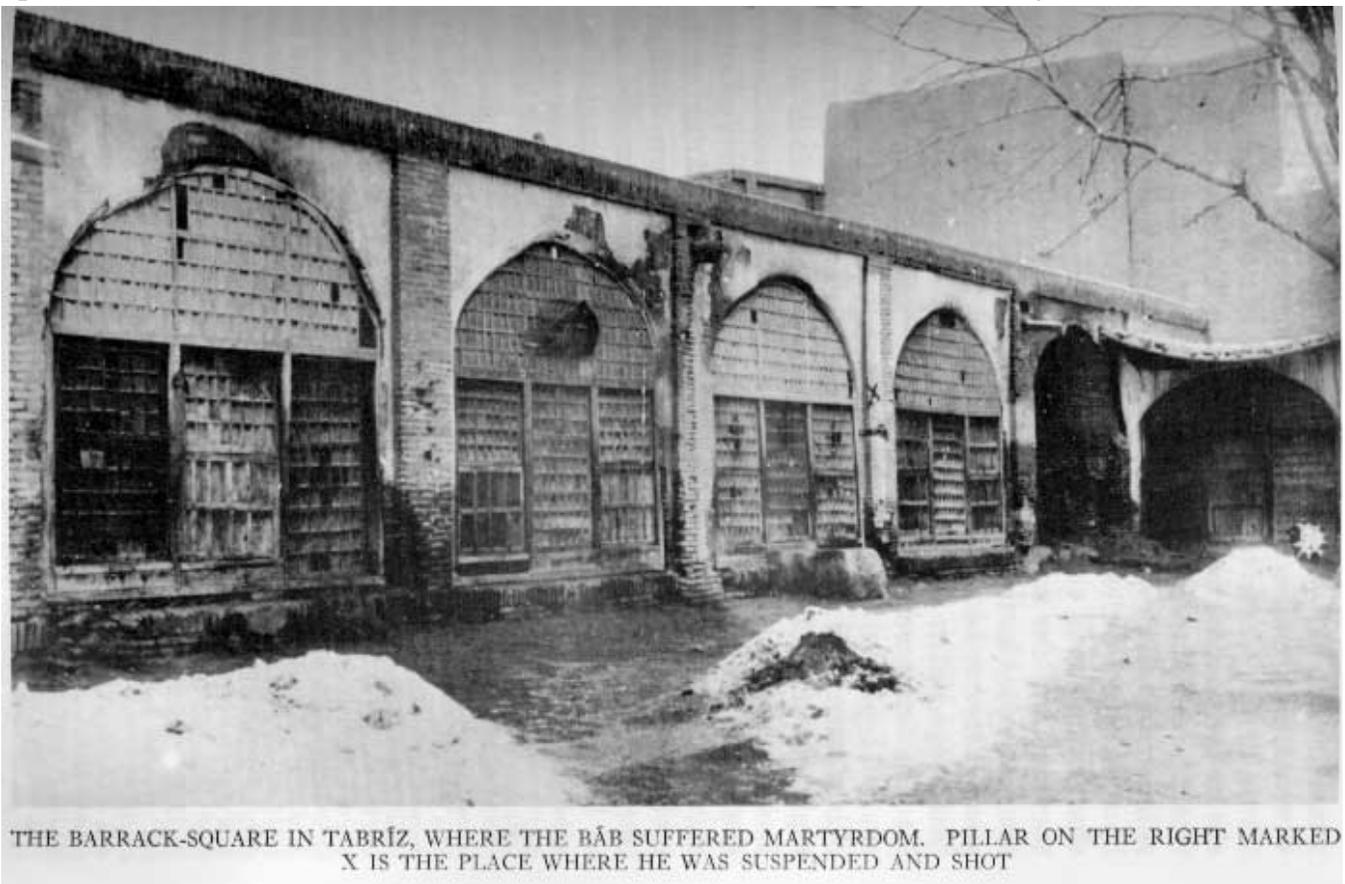
The Báb was, in His turn, brought before Mullá Muhammad-i-Mamaqání. No sooner had he recognised Him than he seized the death-warrant he himself had previously written and, handing it to his attendant, bade him deliver it to the farrásh-báshí. “No need,” he cried, “to bring the Siyyid-i-Báb into my presence. This death-warrant I penned the very day I met him at the gathering presided over by the Valí-‘Ahd. He surely is the same man whom I saw on that occasion, and has not, in the meantime, surrendered any of his claims.”

From thence the Báb was conducted to the house of Mírzá Báqir, the son of Mírzá Ahmad, to whom he had recently succeeded. When they arrived, they found his attendant standing at the gate and holding in his hand the Báb's death-warrant. "No need to enter," he told them. "My master is already satisfied that his father was right in pronouncing the sentence of death. He can do no better than follow his example."

Mullá Murtadá-Qulí, following in the footsteps of the other two mujtahids, had previously issued his own written testimony and refused to meet face to face his dreaded opponent. No sooner had the farrásh-báshí secured the necessary documents than he delivered his Captive into the hands of Sám Khán, assuring him that he could proceed with his task now that he had obtained the sanction of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the realm.

Siyyid Husayn had remained confined in the same room in which he had spent the previous night with the Báb. They were proceeding to place Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí in that same room, when he burst forth into tears and entreated them to allow him to remain with his Master. He was delivered into the hands of Sám Khán, who was ordered to execute him also, if he persisted in his refusal to deny his Faith.

Sám Khán was, in the meantime, finding himself increasingly affected by the behaviour of his Captive and the treatment that had been meted out to Him. He was seized with great fear lest his action



should bring upon him the wrath of God. "I profess the Christian Faith," he explained to the Báb, "and entertain no ill will against you. If your Cause be the Cause of Truth, enable me to free myself from the obligation to shed your blood." "Follow your instructions," the Báb replied, "and if your intention be sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you from your perplexity."

Sám Khán ordered his men to drive a nail into the pillar that lay between the door of the room that Siyyid Husayn occupied and the entrance to the adjoining one, and to make fast two ropes to that nail, from which the Báb and His companion were to be separately suspended.¹³ Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí begged Sám Khán to be placed in such a manner that his own body would shield that of the Báb.¹⁴ He was eventually suspended in such a position that his head reposed on the breast of his Master. As soon as they were fastened, a regiment of soldiers ranged itself in three files, each of two hundred and fifty men, each of which was ordered to open fire in its turn until the whole detachment had discharged the volleys of its bullets.¹⁵ The smoke of the firing of the seven hundred and fifty rifles was such as to turn the light of the noonday sun into darkness. There had crowded onto the roof of the barracks, as well as the tops of the adjoining houses, about ten thousand people, all of whom were witnesses to that sad and moving scene.

As soon as the cloud of smoke had cleared away, an astounded multitude were looking upon a scene which their eyes could scarcely believe. There, standing before them alive and unhurt, was the companion of the Báb, whilst He Himself had vanished uninjured from their sight. Though the cords with which they were suspended had been rent in pieces by the bullets, yet their bodies had miraculously escaped the volleys.¹⁶ Even the tunic which Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí was wearing had, despite the thickness of the smoke, remained unsullied. “The Siyyid-i-Báb has gone from our sight!” rang out the voices of the bewildered multitude. They set out in a frenzied search for Him, and found Him, eventually, seated in the same room which He had occupied the night before, engaged in completing His interrupted conversation, with Siyyid Husayn. An expression of unruffled calm was upon His face. His body had emerged unscathed from the shower of bullets which the regiment had directed against Him. “I have finished My conversation with Siyyid Husayn,” the Báb told the farrásh-báshí. “Now you may proceed to fulfil your intention.” The man was too much shaken to resume what he had already attempted. Refusing to accomplish his duty, he, that same moment, left that scene and resigned his post. He related all that he had seen to his neighbour, Mírzá Siyyid Muhsin, one of the notables of Tabríz, who, as soon as he heard the story, was converted to the Faith.

I was privileged to meet, subsequently, this same Mírzá Siyyid Muhsin, who conducted me to the scene of the Báb’s martyrdom and showed me the wall where He had been suspended. I was taken to the room in which He had been found conversing with Siyyid Husayn, and was shown the very spot where He had been seated. I saw the very nail which His enemies had hammered into the wall and to which the rope which had supported His body had been attached.

Sám Khán was likewise stunned by the force of this tremendous revelation. He ordered his men to leave the barracks immediately, and refused ever again to associate himself and his regiment with any act that involved the least injury to the Báb. He swore, as he left that courtyard, never again to resume that task even though his refusal should entail the loss of his own life.

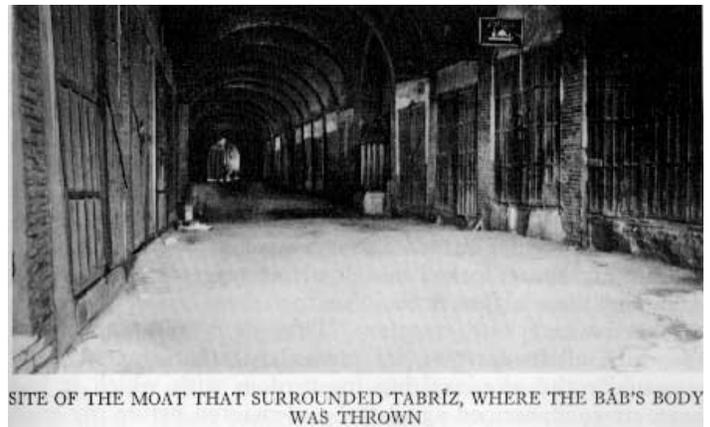
No sooner had Sám Khán departed than Áqá Ján Khán-i-Khamsíh, colonel of the body-guard, known also by the names of Khamsíh and Násirí, volunteered to carry out the order for execution. On the same wall and in the same manner, the Báb and His companion were again suspended, while the regiment formed in line to open fire upon them. Contrariwise to the previous occasion, when only the cord with which they were suspended had been shot into pieces, this time their bodies were shattered and were blended into one mass of mingled flesh and bone.¹⁷ “Had you believed in Me, O wayward generation,” were the last words of the Báb to the gazing multitude as the regiment was preparing to fire the final volley, “every one of you would have followed the example of this youth, who stood in

rank above most of you, and willingly would have sacrificed himself in My path. The day will come when you will have recognised Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you.”¹⁸

The very moment the shots were fired, a gale of exceptional severity arose and swept over the whole city. A whirlwind of dust of incredible density obscured the light of the sun and blinded the eyes of the people. The entire city remained enveloped in that darkness from noon till night. Even so strange a phenomenon, following immediately in the wake of that still more astounding failure of Sám Khán's regiment to injure the Báb, was unable to move the hearts of the people of Tabríz, and to induce them to pause and reflect upon the significance of such momentous events. They witnessed the effect which so marvellous an occurrence had produced upon Sám Khán; they beheld the consternation of the farrásh-báshí and saw him make his irrevocable decision; they could even examine that tunic which, despite the discharge of so many bullets, had remained whole and stainless; they could read in the face of the Báb, who had emerged unhurt from that storm, the expression of undisturbed serenity as He resumed His conversation with Siyyid Husayn; and yet none of them troubled himself to enquire as to the significance of these unwonted signs and wonders.

The martyrdom of the Báb took place at noon on Sunday, the twenty-eighth of Sha'bán, in the year 1266 A.H.,¹⁹ thirty-one lunar years, seven months, and twenty-seven days from the day of His birth in Shíráz.

On the evening of that same day, the mangled bodies of the Báb and His companion were removed from the courtyard of the barracks to the edge of the moat outside the gate of the city. Four companies, each consisting of ten sentinels, were ordered to keep watch in turn over them. On the morning following the day of martyrdom, the Russian consul in Tabríz, accompanied by an artist, went to that spot and ordered that a sketch be made of the remains as they lay beside the moat.²⁰



SITE OF THE MOAT THAT SURROUNDED TABRÍZ, WHERE THE BÁB'S BODY WAS THROWN

I have heard Hájí 'Alí-'Askar relate the following: “An official of the Russian consulate, to whom I was related, showed me that same sketch on the very day it was drawn. It was such a faithful portrait of the Báb that I looked upon! No bullet had struck His forehead, His cheeks, or His lips. I gazed upon a smile which seemed to be still lingering upon His countenance. His body, however, had been severely mutilated. I could recognise the arms and head of His companion, who seemed to be holding Him in his embrace. As I gazed horror-struck upon that haunting picture, and saw how those noble traits had been disfigured, my heart sank within me. I turned away my face in anguish and, regaining my house, locked myself with my room. For three days and three nights, I could neither sleep nor eat, so overwhelmed was I with emotion. That short and tumultuous life, with all its sorrows, its turmoils, its banishments, and eventually the awe-inspiring martyrdom with which it had been crowned, seemed again to be re-enacted before my eyes. I tossed upon my bed, writhing in agony and pain.”

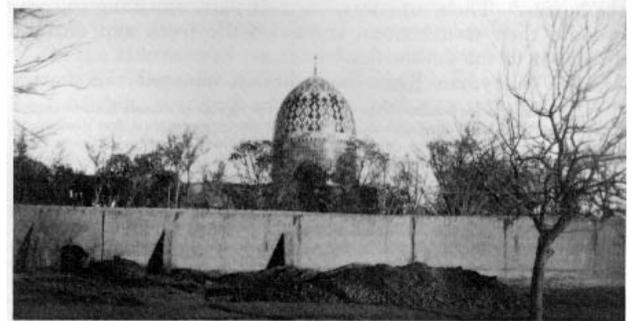
On the afternoon of the second day after the Báb's martyrdom, Hájí Sulaymán Khán, son of Yahyá Khán, arrived at Bagh-Míshih, a suburb of Tabríz, and was received at the house of the Kalantar,²¹ one of his friends and confidants, who was a dervish and belonged to the súfí community. As soon as he had been informed of the imminent danger that threatened the life of the Báb, Hájí Sulaymán Khán had left Tihrán with the object of achieving His deliverance. To his dismay, he arrived

too late to carry out his intention. No sooner had his host informed him of the circumstances that had led to the arrest and condemnation of the Báb, and related to him the events of His martyrdom, than he instantly resolved to carry away the bodies of the victims, even at the risk of endangering his own life. The Kalantar advised him to wait and follow his suggestion rather than expose himself to what seemed to him would be inevitable death. He urged him to transfer his residence to another house and to wait for the arrival, that evening, of a certain Hájí Alláh-Yár, who, he said, would be willing to carry out whatever he might wish him to do. At the appointed hour, Hájí Sulaymán Khán met Hájí Alláh-Yár, who succeeded, in the middle of that same night, in bearing the bodies from the edge of the moat to the silk factory owned by one of the believers of Milán; laid them, the next day, in a specially constructed wooden case, and transferred them, according to Hájí Sulaymán Khán's directions, to a place of safety. Meanwhile the sentinels sought to justify themselves by pretending that, while they slept, wild beasts had carried away the bodies.²² Their superiors, on their part, unwilling to compromise their own honour, concealed the truth and did not divulge it to the authorities.²³

Hájí Sulaymán Khán immediately reported the matter to Bahá'u'lláh, who was then in Tihrán and who instructed Áqáy-i-Kalím to despatch a special messenger to Tabríz for the purpose of transferring the bodies to the capital. This decision was prompted by the wish the Báb Himself had expressed in the "Ziyarat-i-Shah-'Abdu'l-'Azim," a Tablet He had revealed while in the neighbourhood of that shrine and which He delivered to a certain Mírzá Sulaymán-i-Khatib, who was instructed by Him to proceed together with a number of believers to that spot and to chant it within its precincts.²⁴ "Well is it with you," the Báb addressed the buried saint in words such as these, in the concluding passages of that Tablet, "to have found your resting place in Rayy, under the shadow of My Beloved. Would that I might be entombed within the precincts of that holy ground!"

I was myself in Tihrán, in the company of Mírzá Ahmad, when the bodies of the Báb and His companion arrived. Bahá'u'lláh had in the meantime departed for Karbilá, in pursuance of the instructions of the Amír-Nizám. Áqáy-i-Kalím, together with Mírzá Ahmad, transferred those remains from the Imám-Zádih-Hasan,²⁵ where they were first taken, to a place the site of which remained unknown to anyone excepting themselves. That place remained secret until the departure of Bahá'u'lláh for Adrianople, at which time Áqáy-i-Kalím was charged to inform Munir, one of his fellow-disciples, of the actual site where the bodies had been laid. In spite of his search, he was unable to find it. It was subsequently discovered by Jamál, an old adherent of the Faith, to whom that secret was confided while Bahá'u'lláh was still in Adrianople. That spot is, until now, unknown to the believers, nor can anyone conjecture where the remains will eventually be transferred.

The first in Tihrán to hear of the circumstances attending that cruel martyrdom, after the Grand Vazír, was Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí, who had been banished to Káshán by Muhammad Sháh when the Báb was passing through that city. He had assured Hájí Mírzá Jání, who had acquainted him with the



VIEWS OF THE IMÁM-ZÁDIH-HASAN AT TÍHRÁN, WHERE THE BÁB'S BODY WAS KEPT

precepts of the Faith, that if the love he bore for the new Revelation would cause him to regain his lost position, he would exert his utmost endeavour to secure the well-being and safety of the persecuted community. Hájí Mírzá Jání reported the matter to his Master, who charged him to assure the disgraced minister that ere long he would be summoned to Tihrán and would be invested, by his sovereign, with a position that would be second to none except that of the Sháh himself. He was warned not to forget his promise, and to strive to carry out his intention. He was delighted with that message, and renewed the assurance he had given.

When the news of the Báb's martyrdom reached him, he had already been promoted, had received the title of I'timádu'd-Dawlih, and was hoping to be raised to the position of Grand Vazír. He hastened to inform Bahá'u'lláh, with whom he was intimately acquainted, of the news he had received, expressing the hope that the fire he feared would one day bring untold calamity upon Him, was at last extinguished. "Not so," Bahá'u'lláh replied. "If this be true, you can be certain that the flame that has been kindled will, by this very act, blaze forth more fiercely than ever, and will set up a conflagration such as the combined forces of the statesmen of this realm will be powerless to quench." The significance of these words Mírzá Áqá Khán was destined to appreciate at a later time. Scarcely did he imagine, when that prediction was uttered, that the Faith which had received so staggering a blow could survive its Author. He himself had, on one occasion, been cured by Bahá'u'lláh of an illness from which he had given up all hope of recovery.

His son, the Nizámu'l-Mulk, one day asked him whether he did not think that Bahá'u'lláh, who, of all the sons of the late Vazír, had shown Himself the most capable, had failed to live up to the tradition of His father and had disappointed the hopes that had been reposed in Him. "My son," he replied, "do you really believe him to be an unworthy son of his father? All that either of us can hope to achieve is but a fleeting and precarious allegiance which will vanish as soon as our days are ended. Our mortal life can never be free from the vicissitudes that beset the path of earthly ambition. Should we even succeed in ensuring, in our lifetime, the honour of our name, who can tell whether, after our death, calumny may not stain our memory and undo the work we have achieved? Even those who, while we are still living, honour us with their lips would, in their hearts, condemn and vilify us were we, for but one moment, to fail to promote their interests. Not so, however, with Bahá'u'lláh. Unlike the great ones of the earth, whatever be their race or rank, he is the object of a love and devotion such as time cannot dim nor enemy destroy. His sovereignty the shadows of death can never obscure nor the tongue of the slanderer undermine. Such is the sway of his influence that no among his loves dare, in the stillness of night, evoke the memory of the faintest desire that could, even remotely, be construed as contrary to his wish. Such lovers will greatly increase in number. The love they bear him will never grow less, and will be transmitted from generation to generation until the world shall have been suffused with its glory."

The malicious persistence with which a savage enemy sought to ill-treat and eventually to destroy the life of the Báb brought in its wake untold calamities upon Persia and its inhabitants. The men who perpetrated these atrocities fell victims to gnawing remorse, and in an incredibly short period were made to suffer ignominious deaths. As to the great mass of its people, who watched with sullen indifference the tragedy that was being enacted before their eyes, and who failed to raise a finger in protest against the hideousness of those cruelties, they fell, in their turn, victims to a misery which all the resources of the land and the energy of its statesmen were powerless to alleviate. The wind of adversity blew fiercely upon them, and shook to its foundations their material prosperity. From the very day the hand of the assailant was stretched forth against the Báb, and sought to deal its fatal blow, to His Faith, visitation upon visitation crushed the spirit out of that ungrateful people, and brought

them to the very brink of national bankruptcy. Plagues, the very names of which were almost unknown to them except for a cursory reference in the dust-covered books which few cared to read, fell upon them with a fury that none could escape. That scourge scattered devastation wherever it spread. Prince and peasant alike felt its sting and bowed to its yoke. It held the populace in its grip, and refused to relax its hold upon them. As malignant as the fever which decimated the province of Gílán, these sudden afflictions continued to lay waste the land. Grievous as were these calamities, the avenging wrath of God did not stop at the misfortunes that befell a perverse and faithless people. It made itself felt in every living being that breathed on the surface of that stricken land. It affected the life of plants and animals alike, and made the people feel the magnitude of their distress. Famine added its horrors to the stupendous weight of afflictions under which the people were groaning. The gaunt spectre of starvation stalked abroad amidst them, and the prospect of a slow and painful death haunted their vision. People and government alike sighed for the relief which they could nowhere obtain. They drank the cup of woe to its dregs, utterly unregardful of the hand which had brought it to their lips, and of the Person for whose sake they were made to suffer.

The first who arose to ill-treat the Báb was none other than Husayn Khán, the governor of Shíráz. His disgraceful treatment of his Captive cost him the lives of thousands who had been committed to his protection and who connived at his acts. His province was ravaged by a plague which brought it to the verge of destruction. Impoverished and exhausted, Fárs languished helpless beneath its weight, calling for the charity of its neighbours and the assistance of its friends. Husayn Khán himself witnessed with bitterness the undoing of all his labours, was condemned to lead in obscurity the remaining days of his life, and tottered to his grave, abandoned and forgotten, alike by his friends and his enemies.

The next who sought to challenge the Faith of the Báb and to stem its progress was Hájí Mírzá Aqásí. It was he who, for selfish purposes and in order to court the favour of the abject ‘ulamás of his time, interposed between the Báb and Muhammad Sháh and endeavoured to prevent their meeting. It was he who pronounced the banishment of his dreaded Captive to a sequestered corner of Ádhirbayján and, with dogged vigilance, kept watch over His isolation. It was he who was made the recipient of that denunciatory Tablet in which his Prisoner foreshadowed his doom and exposed his infamy. Barely a year and six months had passed after the Báb had reached the neighbourhood of Tihrán, when Divine vengeance hurled him from power and drove him to seek shelter within the inglorious precincts of the shrine of Shah-’Abdu’l-’Azim, a refugee from the wrath of his own people. From thence the hand of the Avenger drove him into exile beyond the confines of his native land, and plunged him into an ocean of afflictions until he met his death in circumstances of abject poverty and unspeakable distress.

As to the regiment which, despite the unaccountable failure of Sám Khán and his men to destroy the life of the Báb, had volunteered to renew that attempt, and which eventually riddled His body with its bullets, two hundred and fifty of its members met their death in that same year, together with their officers, in a terrible earthquake. While they were resting on a hot summer day under the shadow of a wall on their way between Ardibíl and Tabríz, absorbed in their games and pleasures, the whole structure suddenly collapsed and fell upon them, leaving not one survivor. The remaining five hundred suffered the same fate as that which their own hands had inflicted upon the Báb. Three years after His martyrdom, that regiment mutinied, and its members were thereupon mercilessly shot by command of Mírzá Sádiq Khán-i-Núrí. Not content with a first volley, he ordered that a second one be fired in order to ensure that none of the mutineers had survived. Their bodies were afterwards pierced with spears and lances, and left exposed to the gaze of the people of Tabríz. That day many of the inhabitants of the city, recalling the circumstances of the Báb’s martyrdom, wondered at that same fate

which had overtaken those who had slain Him. “Could it be, by any chance, the vengeance of God,” a few were heard to whisper to one another, “that has brought the whole regiment to so dishonourable and tragic an end? If that youth had been a lying impostor, why should his persecutors have been so severely punished?” These expressed misgivings reached the ears of the leading mujtahids of the city, who were seized with great fear and ordered that all those who entertained such doubts should be severely punished. Some were beaten, others were fined, all were warned to cease such whisperings, which could only revive the memory of a terrible adversary and rekindle enthusiasm for His Cause.

The prime mover of the forces that precipitated the Báb’s martyrdom, the Amír-Nizám, and also his brother, the Vazír-Nizám, his chief accomplice, were, within two years of that savage act, subjected to a dreadful punishment, which ended miserably in their death. The blood of the Amír-Nizám stains, to this very day, the wall of the bath of Fín,²⁶ a witness to the atrocities his own hand had wrought.²⁷

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1. “It was only too well known that Bábí’s were to be found everywhere. Persia was full of them and, if the minds concerned about transcendental questions, if the philosophers in search of new formulas, if the bruised souls shocked by the injustices and weaknesses of the present day—had given themselves up eagerly to the thought and to the promises of a new and more satisfactory world order, one could properly think that the turbulent imaginations eager for action, even at the price of failure, the brave and militant hearts, and finally the daring and ambitious would easily be tempted to throw themselves in with an army which revealed itself so well supplied with soldiers fit to constitute dauntless battalions.

“Mirzá Taqí Khán, cursing the laxity with which his predecessor Hájí Mirzá Aqási had allowed so great a peril to grow, realized that this weak policy should not continue and decided to destroy the evil to its very roots. He became convinced that the main cause was the Báb himself, father of all the doctrines which were arousing the people, and he decided to remove that cause.” (Comte de Gobineau’s “Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale,” pp. 210–11.)

2. “In the meantime, Hájí Mirzá Taqí resolved to strike at the very head of this monster of Bábism and he imagined that, after such a blow which would definitely remove the instigator of that agitation and silence his appeal, the old order would be restored. Nevertheless, strange phenomenon in an Asiatic government, and especially in a statesmen like Mirzá Taqí Khán who could indulge in excessive severity without scruple, this minister did not order the death of the reformer! He thought that the most effective way to destroy him was to ruin him morally; to bring him out of his retreat in Chihriq where a halo of suffering, holiness, science and eloquence made him radiate like a sun; to show him to the people just as he was—that is to say, just as he thought he was—was the best way to render him harmless by destroying his prestige.

“He was picturing him as a vulgar charlatan, a weak dreamer who did not have courage enough to conceive, still less to direct the daring enterprises of his three apostles, or even to take part in them. Such a man, taken to Tihrán and brought face to face with the most subtle dialecticians of Islám, could not but surrender shamefully. His influence would vanish the more rapidly than if while destroying his body, one allowed to linger in the minds of the people the phantom of a superiority which death would have consecrated. It was therefore decided to arrest him and bring him to Tihrán and, on the way, to exhibit him publicly in chains and humiliated; to make him debate everywhere with the Mullás, silencing him whenever he would become too audacious; briefly, to engage him in a series of unequal encounters in which he would inevitably meet defeat, as he would have been previously demoralized and heartbroken. It was a lion that they were eager to unnerve, hold in chains and strip of claws and teeth, then turn him over to the dogs to show how easily they could overpower him. Once defeated, his ultimate fate was of little importance.

“This plan was not devoid of sense, but it rested upon premises which were far from proven. It was not enough to imagine that the Báb was without courage and firmness, it was necessary that he be really so. But his conduct in the fort of Chihriq gave no such evidence. He prayed and worked unceasingly. His meekness was unyielding. Those who came near him felt in spite of themselves the fascinating influence of his personality, of his manner and of his speech. His guards were not free from that weakness. He (the Báb) felt that his death was near and he would frequently refer to it as to a thought that was not only familiar but even pleasant. Suppose, for a moment, that thus exhibited throughout Persia he would still remain undaunted? Suppose he would display neither arrogance nor fear but would rise far above his misfortune? Suppose that he succeeded in throwing into confusion the learned, subtle, and eloquent doctors arraigned against him? Suppose he would remain more than ever the Báb for his old followers and become so for the indifferent and even for his enemies? It was risking much in order to gain much, without doubt, but also perhaps to lose much and, after having weighed the matter with care, they dared not take the chance.” (Comte de Gobineau’s “Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale,” pp. 211–213.)

3. “The prime minister, having summoned Sulaymán Khán, the Afshar, asked him to carry to Tabriz, to the Prince Hamzih Mirzá, governor of Ádhirbayján, the order to take the Báb out of the fort of Chihriq and to imprison him in the citadel of Tabriz where he would later be apprised of his fate.” (Comte de Gobineau’s “Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale,” p. 213.)
4. June 12–July 11, 1850 A.D.
5. According to “A Traveller’s Narrative” (p. 42), the Báb had produced no less than three hundred and sixty derivatives from the word “Bahá.”
6. Title by which Bahá’u’lláh was designated in those days.
7. “The end of the Báb’s earthly Manifestation is now close upon us. He knew it himself before the event, and was not displeased at the

presentiment. He had already 'set his house in order,' as regards the spiritual affairs of the Bábí community, which he had, if I mistake not, confided to the intuitive wisdom of Bahá'u'lláh.... It is impossible not to feel that this is far more probable than the view which makes Subh-i-Azal the custodian of the sacred writings and the arranger of a resting-place for the sacred remains. I much fear that the Azalí's have manipulated tradition in the interest of their party." (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions," pp. 65–6.)

8. See Glossary. [Below]

9. Persecutors of the descendants of Muhammad.

10. "It is no doubt a singular coincidence that both 'Alí-Muhammad and Jesus Christ are reported to have addressed these words to a disciple: 'To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.'" (Dr. T. K. Cheyne's "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions," p. 185.)

11. See Glossary. [Below]

12. "On the following day, early in the morning, the people of Hamzih Mirzá, having opened the doors of the prison, brought out the Báb and his disciples. They made sure that the irons which they had around their necks and on their wrists were secure; they tied to the iron collar of each one a long cord the end of which was held by a farrásh. Then, so that everyone could see them well and recognize them, they walked them about the town, through the streets and the bazaars, overwhelming them with blows and insults. The crowd filled the streets and the people climbed upon each others' shoulders better to see this man who was so much talked about. The Bábí's, scattered in all directions, were trying to arouse among some of the onlookers a little pity or some feeling of sympathy which might have helped them to save their Master. The indifferent ones, the philosophers, the *Shaykhís*, the Súfís, turned away from the sight with disgust and returned to their houses, or on the contrary waited for the Báb at a street corner and simply watched him with silent curiosity. The tattered crowd, restless and excitable, flung insulting words at the three martyrs, but they were all ready to change their minds with any sudden change of circumstances.

"Finally, the victorious Muhammadans pursued the prisoners with insults, tried to break through the guard in order to strike them in the face or on the head and when they succeeded, or when a missile thrown by some child would strike the Báb or one of his companions in the face, the guard and the crowd would burst into laughter." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 220.)

13. "The Báb remained silent. His pale handsome face framed by a black beard and small mustache, his appearance and his refined manners, his white and delicate hands, his simple but very neat garments—everything about him awakened sympathy and compassion." (Journal Asiatique, 1866. tome 7, p. 378.)

14. "Proof of the devotion and steadfastness of this noble man is afforded by a letter in his own blessed writing which was in the possession of his brother Mullá 'Abdu'lláh, who still lives in Tabriz. This letter he wrote from the prison, three days or two days before his martyrdom, in reply to his brother, who had written to him counselling him to turn aside from his devotion and thralldom; and therein he makes his apology. And since the martyr was the younger of the two brethren, therefore he adopts a respectful tone in his letter. The text of this letter of reply is as follows: 'He is the Compassionate. O my Qiblih! Thanks be to God, I have no fault to find with my circumstances, and "to every travail rest succeeds." As to what you wrote, that this matter hath no end, what matter, then, hath an end? We, at least, have no discontent therein; being, indeed, unable sufficiently to express our gratitude for this blessing. At most we can but be slain for God's sake, and, oh, what happiness were this! The Lord's will must be accomplished through His servants, neither can prudence avert predestined fate. What God wills comes to pass: there is no strength save in God. O my Qiblih! The end of the life of the world is death: "every soul shall taste of death." If the appointed destiny which the Lord (mighty and glorious is He) hath decreed should overtake me, then God is the guardian of my family, and thou art my trustee; act in such wise as accords with God's good pleasure. Forgive any failure in the respect or duty owed to an elder brother of which I may have been guilty, seek pardon for me from all those of my household, and commend me to God. God is my portion, and how good is He as a guardian!'" (The "Tarikh-i-Jadíd," pp. 301–3.)

15. "When the condemned are shot in Persia, they are bound to a post looking away from the spectators so that they are not able to see the signals for execution given by the officer." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p. 377.)

16. "An intense clamor arose from the crowd at this moment as the onlookers saw the Báb freed from his bonds advancing towards them. Amazing to believe, the bullets had not struck the condemned but, on the contrary, had broken his bonds and he was delivered. It was a real miracle and God alone knows what would have happened without the fidelity and calm of the Christian regiment on this occurrence. The soldiers in order to quiet the excitement of the crowd which, being extremely agitated, was ready to believe the claims of a religion which thus demonstrated its truth, showed the cords broken by the bullets, implying that no miracle had really taken place. At the same time, they seized the Báb and tied him again to the fatal post. This time the execution was effective. Muhammadan justice and ecclesiastical law had asserted themselves. But the crowd, vividly impressed by the spectacle they had witnessed, dispersed slowly, hardly convinced that the Báb was a criminal. After all his crime was only a crime for the legalists and the world is indulgent toward crimes which it does not understand." (M.C. Huart's "La Religion du Báb," pp. 3–4.)

"An extraordinary thing happened, unique in the annals of the history of humanity: the bullets cut the cords that held the Báb and he fell on his feet without a scratch." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb," p. 375.)

"By a strange coincidence, the bullet only touched the cords which bound the Báb, they were broken and he felt himself free. Uproar and shouts arose on all sides, no one understanding at first what it was all about." (Ibid., p. 379.)

17. According to "A Traveller's Narrative" (p. 45), "the breasts [of the victims] were riddled and their limbs were completely dissected, except their faces, which were but little marred."

18. "Praise be to God who manifested the Point [the Báb] and caused to proceed therefrom the knowledge of all that was and shall be.... He is that Point which God hath made to be an Ocean of light unto the faithful among His servants, and a Ball of Fire unto the deniers among His creatures and the impious among His people." (Bahá'u'lláh, the "Ishráqát," p. 3.) "In His interpretation of the letter 'Ha,' He craved martyrdom, saying: 'Methinks I heard a voice calling in My inmost being: "Do Thou sacrifice the thing which Thou lovest most in the path of God, even as Husayn, peace be upon him, hath offered up his life for My sake." And were I not regardful of this inevitable mystery, by Him in whose hand is My soul, even if all the kings of the earth were to be leagued together, they would be powerless to take from Me a single letter; how much less can such servants as these, who are worthy of no attention, and who verily are of the outcast? that all may know the degree of My patience, My resignation and self-sacrifice in the path of God.'" (Idem, the "Kitáb-i-Iqán," p. 195.) "The

Báb, the Lord most high, may the life of all be a sacrifice unto Him, hath specifically revealed an Epistle unto the ‘ulamás of every city, wherein He hath fully set forth the character of the denial and repudiation of each of them. Wherefore, take ye good heed, ye who are men of insight!” (Ibid., p. 193.) “This illustrious Soul arose with such power that He shook the supports of the religion, of the morals, the conditions, the habits and the customs of Persia, and instituted new rules, new laws, and a new religion. Though the great personages of the State, nearly all the clergy, and the public men, arose to destroy and annihilate Him, He alone withstood them, and moved the whole of Persia.... He imparted Divine education to an unenlightened multitude and produced marvellous results on the thoughts, morals, customs, and conditions of the Persians.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “Some Answered Questions,” pp. 30–31.) “Christians believe that if Jesus Christ had wished to come down from the cross he could have done so easily; he died of his own free will because it was written that he should and in order that the prophecies might be fulfilled. The same is true of the Báb, so the Bábi’s say, who, in this way, gave a clear sanction to his teachings. He likewise died voluntarily because his death was to be the salvation of humanity. Who will ever tell us the words that the Báb uttered in the midst of the unprecedented turmoil which broke out as he ascended? Who will ever know the memories which stirred his noble soul? Who will reveal to us the secret of that death.... The sight of the baseness, the vices, the deceptions of that clergy shocked his pure and sincere soul: he felt the need of a thorough reform in public morals and he undoubtedly hesitated more than once, at the thought of a revolution, which seemed unavoidable, to free the bodies as well as the minds from the yoke of brutishness and violence which weighed upon all Persia for the selfish benefit of a minority ... of pleasure lovers, and to the greatest shame of the true religion of the Prophet. He must have been much perplexed, deeply anxious, and he stood in need of the triple shield of which Horace speaks, to throw himself headlong into that ocean of superstition and hatred which was fatally to engulf him. His life is one of the most magnificent examples of courage which it has been the privilege of mankind to behold, and it is also an admirable proof of the love which our hero felt for his fellow countrymen. He sacrificed himself for humanity, for it he gave his body and his soul, for it he endured privations, insults, torture and martyrdom. He sealed, with his very lifeblood, the covenant of universal brotherhood. Like Jesus he paid with his life for the proclamation of a reign of concord, equity and brotherly love. More than anyone he knew what dreadful dangers he was heaping upon himself. He had been able to see personally the degree of exasperation that a fanaticism, shrewdly aroused, could reach; but all these considerations could not weaken his resolve. Fear had no hold upon his soul and, perfectly calm, never looking back, in full possession of all his powers, he walked into the furnace.” (A. L. M. Nicolas’ “Siyyid ‘Alí-Muhammad, dit le Báb,” pp. 203–204, 376.)

“The head of the new religion was dead and, according to the provisions of the prime minister, the minds of the people would now be at peace and there was no room for further anxiety, at least from that source. But such political wisdom was baffled and, instead of appeasing the flames, it had fanned them into greater violence.”

“We shall see shortly, when I shall examine the religious dogmas preached by the Báb, that the perpetuity of the sect did not in the least depend upon his physical presence; all could proceed and grow without him. If the premier had been aware of this fundamental trait of the hostile religion, it is not likely that he would have been so eager to do away with a man whose existence, after all, would not have had any more significance than his death.” (Comte de Gobineau’s “Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale,” pp. 224–225.) Such a prophet,” writes the Rev. Dr. T. K. Cheyne, “was the Báb; we call him ‘prophet’ for want of a better name, ‘yea, I say unto you, a prophet and more than a prophet.’ His combination of mildness and power is so rare that we have to place him in a line with super-normal men.... We learn that at great points in his career, after he had been in an ecstasy, such radiance of might and majesty streamed from his countenance that none could bear to look upon the effulgence of his glory and beauty. Nor was it an uncommon occurrence for unbelievers involuntarily to bow down in lowly obeisance on beholding His Holiness—while the inmates of the castle though for the most part Christians and Sunnis, reverently prostrated themselves whenever they saw the visage of His Holiness. Such transfiguration is well known to the saints. It was regarded as the affixing of the heavenly seal to the reality and completeness of [the] Báb’s detachment.” (“The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,” pp. 8–9.) “Who can fail to be attracted by the gentle spirit of Mirzá ‘Alí-Muhammad? His sorrowful and persecuted life; his purity of conduct, and youth; his courage and uncomplaining patience under misfortune; his complete self-negation; the dim ideal of a better state of things which can be discerned through the obscure and mystic utterances of the Bayán; but most of all his tragic death, all serve to enlist our sympathies on behalf of the young Prophet of Shíráz. The irresistible charm which won him such devotion during his life still lives on, and still continues to influence the minds of the Persian people.” (E. G. Browne’s art. “The Bábi’s of Persia,” *Journal of J. R. A. S.*, 1889, p. 933.) “Few believe that by these sanguinary measures the doctrines of [the] Báb will cease from propagation. There is a spirit of change abroad among the Persians, which will preserve his system from extinction; besides which, his doctrines are of an attractive nature to Persians. Though now subdued, and obliged to lurk concealed in towns, it is conjectured that the creed of [the] Báb, far from diminishing, is daily spreading.” Lady Sheil’s “Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia,” p. 181.) “The story of the Báb, as Mirzá ‘Alí-Muhammad called himself, was the story of spiritual heroism unsurpassed in Svabhava’s experience; and his own adventurous soul was fired by it. That a youth of no social influence and no education should, by the simple power of insight, be able to pierce into the heart of things and see the real truth, and then hold on to it with such firmness of conviction and present it with such suasion that he was able to convince men that he was the Messiah and get them to follow him to death itself, was one of those splendid facts in human history that Svabhava loved to meditate on... The Báb’s passionate sincerity could not be doubted, for he had given his life for his faith. And that there must be something in his message that appealed to men and satisfied their souls was witnessed to by the fact that thousands gave their lives in his cause and millions now follow him. If a young man could, in only six years of ministry, by the sincerity of his purpose and the attraction of his personality, so inspire rich and poor, cultured and illiterate, alike, with belief in himself and his doctrines that they would remain staunch though hunted down and without trial sentenced to death, sawn asunder, strangled, shot, blown from guns; and if men of high position and culture in Persia, Turkey and Egypt in numbers to this day adhere to his doctrines, his life must be one of those events in the last hundred years which is really worth study.” (Sir Francis Younghusband’s “The Gleam,” pp. 183–4.) “Thus, in only his thirtieth year, in the year 1850, ended the heroic career of a true God-man. Of the sincerity of his conviction that he was God-appointed, the manner of his death is the amplest possible proof. In the belief that he would thereby save others from the error of their present beliefs he willingly sacrificed his life. And of his power of attaching men to him the passionate devotion of hundreds and even thousands of men who gave their lives in his cause is convincing testimony.” (Ibid., p. 210.) “The Báb was dead, but not Bábism. He was not the first, and still less the last, of a long line of martyrs who have testified that even in a country gangrened with corruption and atrophied with indifferentism like Persia, the soul of a nation survives, inarticulate perhaps, and in a way helpless, but still capable of sudden spasms of vitality.” (Valentine Chiról’s “The Middle Eastern Question,” p. 120.)

19. July 9, 1850 A.D.

20. “The Emperor of Russia,” he [Hájí Mirzá Jáni] says, ‘sent to the Russian consul at Tabriz, bidding him fully investigate and report the circumstances of His Holiness the Báb. As Soon as this news arrived, they, i.e. the Persian authorities, put the Báb to death. The Russian

consul summoned Áqá Siyyid Muhammad-i-Husayn, the Báb's amanuensis, who was imprisoned at Tabriz, into his presence, and enquired concerning the signs and circumstances of His Holiness. Áqá Siyyid Husayn, because there were Muslims present, dared not speak plainly about his Master, but managed by means of hints to communicate sundry matters, and also gave him [the Russian consul] certain of the Báb's writings. That this statement is, in part at least, true is proved by the testimony of Dorn, who, in describing a M.S. of one of the Báb's 'Commentaries on the Names of God' (which he calls 'Qur'an der Bábí') says, on p. 248 of vol. 8 of the Bulletin de l'Académie Imperiale des Sciences de St. Petersburg, that it was 'received directly from the Báb's own secretary, who, during his imprisonment at Tabriz, placed it in European hands.'" (The "Tarih-i-Jadid," pp. 395-6.)

21. See Glossary. [Below]
22. "Following an immemorial custom of the Orient, usage exemplified at the siege of Bethulie as well as at the tomb of our Lord, the sentinel is a soldier who sleeps, to his heart's content, at the post which he is expected to guard." (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 166.) "We have been able to see throughout this history what the Persian guards are; their functions consist principally in sleeping by the trust that they are given to watch over." (A. L. M. Nicolas' "Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb," p. 378.)
23. "M. de Gobineau, in agreement with the authors of the Nasikh-t-Tavarih, of Rawdatu's-Safá, of Mir'atu'l-Buldan, in a word with all the official historians, relates that after the execution the body of the Báb was thrown in a moat of the city and devoured by dogs. In reality it was not so, and we shall see why this news had been spread by the authorities of Tabriz (little eager to draw upon themselves a rebuke of the government for a favor dearly sold) and by the Bábí's, desirous to prevent any further investigation by the police. The most reliable testimony of the actual witnesses of the drama or of its actors do not leave me any doubt that the body of Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad was carried away by pious hands and, at last, after various incidents which I shall narrate, received a burial worthy of him." (Ibid., p. 377.)
24. "Tihrán is thus endowed in respect of the mausoleum and sanctuary of Sháh 'Abdu'l-'Azím. Reposing beneath a golden-plated dome, whose scintillations I had seen from afar while riding towards the city, the remains of this holy individual are said to attract an annual visitation of 300 thousand persons. I find that most writers discreetly veil their ignorance of the identity of the saint by describing him as 'a holy Muslim, whose shrine is much frequented by the pious Tihránis. It appears, however, that long before the advent of Islám this had been a sacred spot, as the sepulchre of a lady of great sanctity, in which connection it may be noted that the shrine is still largely patronised by women. Here, after the Muslim conquest, was interred Imám-Zádih Hamzih, the son of the seventh Imám, Músá-Kázim; and here, flying from the Khalif Mutavakkil, came a holy personage named Abu'l-Qásim Abdu'l-'Azím, who lived in concealment at Ray till his death in about 861 A.D. (This is the account given by the Persian Kitáb-i-Majlisi, quoting Shaykh Najashi, quoting Barki.) Subsequently his fame obscured that of his more illustrious predecessor. Successive sovereigns, particularly those of the reigning dynasty, have extended and beautified the cluster of buildings raised above his grave, the ever-swelling popularity of which has caused a considerable village to spring up around the hallowed site. The mosque is situated in the plain, about six miles to the south-southeast of the capital, just beyond the ruins of Rayy, and at the extremity of the mountain-spur that encloses the Tihrán plain the southeast." (Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question," pp. 345-7.)
25. A local shrine in Tihrán.
26. "It is true," writes Lord Curzon, "that his [Násiri'd-Dín Sháh's] reign has been disfigured by one or two acts of regrettable violence; worst among which was the murder of his first Prime Minister, Mirzá Taqí Khán, the Amír-Nizám.... The brother-in-law of the Sháh, and the first subject in the kingdom, he owed the vindictiveness of court intrigue and to the maliciously excited jealousy of his youthful sovereign, a disgrace which his enemies were not satisfied until they had fulfilled by the death of their fallen, but still formidable victim." ("Persia and the Persian Question," vol. 1, p. 402.)
27. "Every one knew that the Bábí had foretold the death of the prime minister and predicted the manner of his going. It happened precisely, it is said, as the martyrs of Zanján, Mirzá Ridá, Háji Muhammad-'Alí and Háji Muhsin had announced. Fallen into disgrace and pursued by the royal hatred, his veins were slashed open in the village of Fin, near Káshán, as the veins of his victims had been slashed. His successor was Mirzá Áqá Khán-i-Núri of a noble tribe of Mázindarán, and erstwhile minister of war. This new official took the title of Sadr-i-'Azam which is the privilege of the grand viziers of the Ottoman Empire. This occurred in 1852. (Comte de Gobineau's "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," p. 230.)

Adapted from *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 500-517

Glossary terms referred to in *The Dawn-Breakers*

- 8 farmán – "Order," "command," "royal decree."
 11 farrásh-báshí – "Footman," "lictor," "attendant."
 21 Kalantar – "Mayor."
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