

Steadfastness

Perhaps you know that Bahíyyih Khánum was the younger sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She was only six years old when their beloved Father, Bahá'u'lláh, was arrested and sent to prison by an unjust government, that was fearful of the truth of the divine message He proclaimed. Her family had been one of the wealthiest in the city. Now all of their possessions were taken away. At times she had only a handful of flour to eat in place of bread.

When her Father was released at last and forced by the government to leave their homeland, Bahíyyih Khánum and her family set out on mules for the city of Baghdád, in a neighboring country. The journey took three months in the bitter cold of winter. Never again would she return to the land of her birth.

For ten years, the family remained in Baghdád, where Bahíyyih Khánum passed the rest of her childhood. Then, suddenly, her Father was ordered by the authorities, still threatened by His growing influence, to leave Baghdád, and Bahíyyih Khánum, now a young woman, went with her family, first to far off Constantinople and then to Adrianople. Danger was at its height. Opposition to her Father grew, and eventually an attempt was made on His precious life. After almost five years in Adrianople, living under such stress and strain, dear Bahíyyih Khánum was uprooted once again when the government banished her Father to the prison-city of 'Akká. For some forty years, that gentle soul lived with her family as a prisoner among the worst of criminals within the walls of the desolate city.

During that time the Father she so loved departed this world, and with His passing, it now became Bahíyyih Khánum's duty to support her beloved Brother, Who had been appointed the Head of His Father's Faith. Many of their friends and relatives, jealous of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, turned against Him. But Bahíyyih Khánum faced each blow with quiet patience and fortitude.

And when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed into the next world many years later, Bahíyyih Khánum became the greatest supporter and staunchest defender of His grandson, young Shoghi Effendi, as he took over the duties that fell on him as his Grandfather's successor. Bahíyyih Khánum was now an old woman, some seventy years of age. Her life had been filled with turmoil and upheaval. It moved from adversity to adversity, from calamity to calamity. But her spirit remained constant, and her heart always filled with the love of God. She was steadfast and firm. The dignity and joy, the kindness and grace, that were hers as a child stayed with her until the final days of her life.