**Think not of your weakness, but of the Bounty of God**

Two pilgrims were at the Master’s luncheon table one day in 1908. He asked them if they were glad to be in ‘Akká and if they were happy. They replied that they were very happy to be there with Him, but unhappy when they thought of their own faults. ‘Think not of yourselves,’ He said, ‘but think of the Bounty of God. This will always make you happy. ’ Then with a smile He referred to an Arabic saying about the peacock, who ‘is contented because he never looks at his feet - which are very ugly - but always at his plumage which is very beautiful.’12

**Never Argue or Assume Authority**

25

Howard Ives wrote, ‘In all of my many opportunities of meeting, of listening to and talking with Abdu’l-Baha I was impressed, and constantly more deeply impressed, with His method of teaching souls. . . . He never argued, of course. Nor did He press a point. He left one free. There was never an assumption of authority, rather He was ever the personification of humility. He taught “as if offering a gift to a king. ” He never told me what I should do, beyond suggesting that what I was doing was right. Nor did He ever tell me what I should believe. He made Truth and Love so beautiful and royal that the heart perforce did reverence. He showed me by His voice, manner, bearing, smile, how I should be, knowing that out of the pure soil of being the good fruit of deeds and words would surely spring.’3^

**Not worry about ones appearance.**

36

The husband of Amelia Collins, a devoted American Baha’i, was a very sociable man. He could take part in any discussion with perfect freedom and ease. But once, before entering the Master’s home, he was so excited that he arranged his tie just right, smoothed his clothes and repeatedly asked his wife what he should do when they arrived there. She told him, ‘Nothing! In the family of ‘Abdu’l-Baha simplicity reigns, and nothing but love is ever accepted.’44

31

Juliet Thompson has given us a sweet picture of the Master in ‘Akka: ‘He had sent for us that afternoon to meet Mr Sprague and the Persian believers and, not being ready, I put on a dress I could slip into easily. As I passed the Master standing in His door: ‘I am afraid I am not dressed well-enough,’ I said.

He touched my arm, smiling with the utmost sweetness.

‘The Persian believers do not look at the dress, My child. They look at the heart.’41

54

**Kindly Tongue**

To Juliet Thompson the Master said, ‘Never let anyone speak of another unkindly in your presence. Should anyone do so, stop them. Tell them it is against the commands of Baha’u’llah, that He has commanded: “Love one another.” Never speak an unkind word, yourself, against anyone. If you see something wrong, let your silence be your only comment . . .’7

8

Need for Diverse Personalities

Juliet Thompson was painting the Master’s portrait in America. Lua Getsinger and May Maxwell came into the library, crossed over to where she was sitting and stood behind her.

The Master looked up and smiled at May. ‘You have a kind heart, Mrs Maxwell.’ Then he turned to Lua. ‘You, Lua, have a tender heart. And what kind of heart have you, Juliet?’ He laughed. ‘What kind of a heart have you?’

‘Oh, what kind of heart have I? You know, my Lord. I don’t know.’

‘An emotional heart. ’ He laughed again and rolled His hands one round the other in a sort of tempestuous gesture. ‘You will have a boiling heart, Juliet. Now,’ He continued, ‘if these three hearts were united into one heart - kind, tender and emotional - what a great heart that would be!’15\

**FORGIVE AND FORGET**

14

One day in 1906 it was about the Bab, His work and message, that He spoke. For the occasion over two hundred guests were to dine at the Master’s table. Since dawn He had been busy helping with the work involved, Himself kneading dough to be put in the ovens, ‘in gay spirits, inspiring, uplifting, cheering all His helpers’. Later He ‘assisted in passing the platters ... the rice ... the lamb . . . the fruits of the region (of such large size, such colour, and such fragrance as only the sunshine of the East produces and paints). Moving among His two hundred guests, He spoke to them as He served them, such Divine words of love and spiritual import . . . “If one of you has been wounded in heart by the words or deeds of another, during the past year, forgive him now; that in purity of heart and loving pardon, you may feast in happiness, and arise, renewed in spirit.” ’2I

See with sight of forgiveness.

17

Speaking to a group of friends at a meeting in Chicago in 1912, He said: ‘Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another. Let your eyes be directed toward the kingdom of truth and not toward the world of creation. Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy. Therefore do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness.’24

**Not backbiting**

May Bolles, a pilgrim in Haifa wrote, ‘We had learned that to be with ‘Abdu’l- Baha was all life, joy and blessedness. We were to learn also that His Presence is a purifying fire. The pilgrimage to the Holy City is naught but a crucible in which the souls are tried; where the gold is purified and the dross is consumed. It did not seem possible that anything but love could ever again animate our words and actions. Yet that very afternoon, in my room with two of the believers, I spoke against a brother in the truth, finding fault with him, and giving vent to the evil in my own heart by my words. While we were still sitting together, our Master, who had been visiting the poor and sick, returned, and immediately sent for my spiritual mother, Lua, who was with us. He told her that during His absence one of His servants had spoken unkindly of another, and that it grieved His heart that the believers should not love one another or that they should speak against any soul. Then He charged her not to speak of it but to pray. A little later we all went to supper, and my hard heart was unconscious of its error, until, as my eyes sought the beloved face of my Master, I met His gaze, so full of gentleness and compassion that I was smitten to the heart. For in some marvelous way His eyes spoke to me; in that pure and perfect mirror I saw my wretched self and burst into tears. He took no notice of me for a while and everyone kindly continued with the supper while I sat in His dear Presence washing away some of my sins in tears. After a few moments He turned and smiled on me and spoke my name several times as though He were calling me to Him.

**Strive to Develop our Qualities**

To Ethel Rosenberg, the first English woman to embrace the Baha’i Faith in her native land, ‘Abdu’l- Baha said, while she was on pilgrimage in the Holy Land in 1901, ‘We must strive to change our bad qualities into good ones, quick temper must be changed into calmness, pride into humility, falsehood into truth, deceit into frankness, laziness into activity . . ,’73

**Overlook other’s shortcomings**

There is no need to belabour the fact that ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s every act spoke of love - a love for every human being, each created by God. His abundant love, universal and divine, transcended limited, ‘semi-selfish’ loves - loves often born of race or religion, colour or country, family or friendship. Because His love of God and Baha’u’llah ran deep, His love for human beings followed naturally and sincerely. He knew what it meant when He said: ‘When you love a member of your family or a compatriot, let it be with a ray of the Infinite Love! Let it be in God, and for God!’102

He advised pilgrim Anna Kunz and her husband in 1921, ‘Just like a shepherd who is affectionate to all his sheep, without preference or distinction, you should be affectionate to all. You should not look at their shortcomings. Consider that they are all created by God who loves them all.’103

**Trust in God. Not look at own weaknesses**

The Master’s positive approach to life and to people encouraged His friends, good as they may have been, to become even better. They were to ‘see no evil’ in others, nor were they to see it in themselves, except in so far that it encouraged them to grow spiritually. The Master said, ‘Do not look at thy weakness; nay look at the power of thy Lord, which hath surrounded all regions.’162 This advice is found repeatedly: ‘Do not look at your weakness, nay, rely upon the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. Verily, It maketh the weak strong, the lowly mighty, the child grown, the infant mature and the small great.’163

And again - ‘Trust in the favor of God. Look not at your own capacities, for the divine bestowal can transform a drop into an ocean; it can make a tiny seed a lofty tree.’164

Super-psychiatrist that He was, He taught that, ‘We should not be occupied with our failings and weakness, but concern ourselves about the Will of God so that It may flow through us, thereby healing these human infirmities.’165

**This too shall pass. God never places a burden greater than we can handle.**

Encouragingly He explained, ‘God never places a burden on us greater than we can carry. Each burden we endure is for our own good and development. Should anyone at any time encounter hard and perplexing times, he must say to himself, “This too will pass.” ’ He added, ‘When experiencing difficulties, I would say to myself, “this too will pass away”, and I would become calm again.” ’74

**It is good to laugh**

He said that. . . It is good to laugh. Laughter is a spiritual relaxation. When they were in prison, He said, and under the utmost deprivation and difficulties, each of them at the close of the day would relate the most ludicrous event which had happened. Sometimes it was a little difficult to find one but always they would laugh until the tears would run down their cheeks. Happiness, He said, is never dependent upon material surroundings, otherwise how sad those years would have been. As it was they were always in the utmost state of joy and happiness.’

**Share humorous stories. Share love and joy.**

Dr J. E. Esslemont, author of the often-printed Baha’u’- llah and the New Era, was Abdu’l-Baha’s guest in Haifa for two and a half months in the winter of 1919-20. He observed, ‘Both at lunch and supper He used to entertain a number of pilgrims and friends, and charm His guests with happy and humorous stories as well as precious talks on a great variety of subjects. “My home is the home of laughter and mirth,” He declared, and indeed it was so. He delighted in gathering together people of various races, colours, nations, and religions in unity and cordial friendship around His hospitable board.’106 As He said on another occasion, ‘My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whoever enters through the portals of this home must go out with gladsome heart.’107

**Fighting over the same thing**

Abdu’l-Baha told another story pointing out the necessity of one common language: ‘At the city gate four travelers sat, a Persian, a Turk, an Arab and a Greek. They were hungry and wanted their evening meal. So one was selected to buy for them all. But among them they could not agree as to what should be bought. The Persian said angoor, the Turk uzum, the Arab wanted aneb and the Greek clamored for staphylion, green and black. They quarrelled and wrangled and almost came to blows in trying to prove that the particular desire of each was the right food. When all of a sudden there passed a donkey ladened with grapes. Each man sprang to his feet and with eager hands pointed out: “See uzum!” said the Turk. “See aneb!” said the Arab. “See angoor!” said the Persian. And the Greek said, “See staphylion!” Then they bought their grapes and were at peace. ’118

**As ye have Faith, so shall your powers and blessings be.**

What ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s friends said of Him is inspiring. His life, His words and deeds have already had a profound effect upon countless thousands who were blessed to hear and to see Him. The Master’s influence will be felt by unborn millions as His soul-stirring life touches their hearts. They, too, will strive to be as He was and they will cherish, as do we, the divine love story, An Early Pilgrimage, in which May Bolles (Maxwell) lovingly quoted ‘Abdu’l-Baha: ‘Pray that your hearts may be cut from yourselves and from the world, that you may be confirmed by the Holy Spirit and filled with the fire of the love of God.’33 ‘. . . I say unto you that anyone who will rise up in the Cause of God at this time shall be filled with the spirit of God, and that He will send His hosts from heaven to help you, and that nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith. And now I give you a commandment which shall be for a covenant between you and Me - that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock that no storms can move, that nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end. ... As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance - this is the balance - this is the balance.’34

**19 Love one another even as I love you, Look at me follow me.**

‘Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but on one condition: that their hearts are filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony like one soul in different bodies. If they fail in this condition the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; look at Me, follow Me, be as I am; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all of these things ye must care not at all. Look at Me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.’35

**Be imperturbable**

‘So imperturbable was Abdu’l-Baha’s equanimity that, while rumors were being bruited about that He might be cast into the sea, or exiled to Fizan in Tripolitania, or hanged on the gallows, He, to the amazement of His friends and the amusement of His enemies, was to be seen planting trees and vines in the garden of His house, whose fruits when the storm had blown over, He would bid His faithful gardener, Isma’Aqa, pluck and present to those same friends and enemies on the occasion of their visits to Him.’64

The Master knew what He was talking about when He wrote: \ . . O ye lovers of God, make firm your steps in His Cause, with such resolve that ye shall not be shaken though the direst of calamities assail the world. By nothing, under no conditions, be ye perturbed.’65