

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S GREAT VOYAGE: CANADA



“The value and greatness of these travels are not known now but will be apparent later on,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the leader of the Bahá’í Faith, during his visit to Montreal, Canada, in 1912. As part of his eight-month North American journey, he spent about nine days in Montreal, where the first Canadian Bahá’í group had been established by May Maxwell. He spoke to crowds of people and met with many individuals, including clergymen, professors, and reporters.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent two nights at the Maxwell home, then he went to the Windsor Hotel. He delighted in two-year-old Mary Maxwell, the daughter of May and her husband, William Sutherland Maxwell, a successful architect. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told May, “Children are the ornaments of the home. A home which has no children is like one without light.” One afternoon, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was resting, Mary came in and pushed up his eyelids, saying, “Wake up, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!” Then she took a nap with him.

In addition to speaking at the Maxwell home, his hotel, and at churches, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed



The Maxwell home in Montreal, Canada, where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed, is the only Bahá’í shrine in North America.

500 people at Coronation Hall on September 3, 1912. He encouraged economic justice and care for the poor, saying, “If . . . some are accumulating exorbitant wealth and others are in dire want . . . it is impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God.” He went on, “We are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality we are one family . . . We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort . . .”

His companion, Mahmúd-i-Zarqání, said that during this talk, “the audience broke into spontaneous applause, clapping their hands with joy and excitement.”

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took questions, “Every answer evoked further applause and admiration to such an extent that the walls of the building seemed to vibrate to their foundations.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks had been widely reported in the newspapers, and as the stories were read to him, he cried out, “O Bahá’u’lláh! . . . What a wonderful Cause Thou hast founded! . . . It is the greatest force in the world of existence.”

On September 9, Bahá’ís watched sadly as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá departed by train.

Years later, Mary Maxwell grew up to marry ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s grandson, Shoghi Effendi, and became known as Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum. Mary’s father designed the magnificent superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa, Israel. Her mother traveled widely, sharing the Bahá’í Faith.

Rúhíyyih Khánum donated her family’s home, where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had been a guest, to the Bahá’í community. It is now a Bahá’í shrine. She said of the home, “For future generations, it will eventually grow in importance and sacredness, because He . . . the Greatest Mystery of God, stayed here.”

