

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S GREAT VOYAGE: LAST GLIMPSE



For nearly eight months, 'Abdu'l-Bahá journeyed across North America, sharing the Bahá'í teachings of peace and unity. He met with thousands of people, sometimes giving four talks a day. He often traveled simply, got little rest, and gave generously to the poor.

Now the time had come to say good-bye. He spent his last weeks in New York City, and people eagerly gathered to see him.

On November 23, 1912, a banquet was held at the Great Northern Hotel. Over 300 guests met in a beautifully decorated ballroom,

the tables adorned with flowers, sweets, and sparkling crystal glasses. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared, everyone rose and called out, "Alláh-u-Abhá!" ("God the All-Glorious!").

'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to the group about the oneness of humanity and other Bahá'í teachings. He also walked among the guests and perfumed each person with attar of rose. A Bahá'í named Mahmúd-i-Zarqání wrote, "It was a banquet for a king and a source of awakening to every person of insight."

Sadly, however, the owner of the hotel refused to allow African Americans to attend, in spite of



'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at a banquet in New York City in 1912. He said, "This meeting ... serves the oneness of the world of humanity and promotes international peace."

the Bahá'ís' efforts to change his mind. Because of strong prejudice between blacks and whites, the owner said that if African Americans were seen entering his hotel, his business would be ruined.

The next day, a special gathering was held at a private home, and white Bahá'ís served their black friends.

'Abdu'l-Bahá praised them, saying, "Behold what an influence and effect the words of Bahá'u'lláh have had upon the hearts, that hating and shunning have been forgotten and that prejudices have been obliterated to such an extent that you arose to serve one another with great sincerity."

That afternoon, a group of children visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He showered them with kindness, giving them

candy and flowers and perfuming them with attar of rose. He said, "I hope that you will be educated as you ought to be and that each of you will become the pride of your family . . . Truly, the hearts of the children are very pure."

Many Bahá'ís longed to give gifts to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He accepted the gifts, then returned them and asked that they be sold and the money used to help build the Bahá'í House of Worship that now stands near Chicago, Illinois.

On December 5, 1912, friends crowded onto the S.S. Celtic for their last glimpse of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Mahmúd wrote, "The sobs and lamentations of both the young and the old could be heard from afar."

'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to them with love and compassion. He encouraged them to see the human race as one family, end prejudice of all kinds, and care for those in need. He said, "The earth is one native land, one home; and all mankind are the children of one Father . . . It is the wish of our heavenly Father that every heart should rejoice and be filled with happiness, that we should live together in felicity and joy . . . Manifest gratitude and thankfulness to God, and the best way to thank God is to love one another."