**A Story about Joy**

In the United States, in August 1912, Mrs Parsons, a devoted Bahá'í of Washington DC, invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Dublin, New Hampshire, where she had an estate. During the summer months, many people prominent in the life of the capital visited that resort. Mrs Parsons arranged a luncheon party at her home and asked some twenty people, all outstanding in various walks of life, to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Culture, science, art, wealth, politics, achievement -- all were represented. The hostess was eager that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should tell these leaders of society about Bahá'u'lláh and the Faith He had proclaimed to mankind.

Probably the guests thought that they were in for a lecture. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them a story which made them laugh. He Himself laughed heartily, and again with them when they, encouraged by the lead He had given, also told amusing stories. 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His guests were full of mirth throughout that luncheon. It was 'good to laugh', He told them: 'Laughter is a spiritual relaxation.'

At that point He referred to His years in prison. Life was hard, He said, tribulations were never far away, and yet, at the end of the day, they would sit together and recall events that had been fantastic, and laugh over them. Funny situations could not be abundant, but still they probed and sought them, and laughter.

Joy was not, He told them, a by-product of material comfort and affluence. Were it so, dejection would have ruled every hour of their lives in those days, whereas their souls were joyful.

Those Americans, distinguished in public life, had received the impact of truth, often absent from their daily experience, and they looked with new eyes at the visitor from the East, eyes that mirrored deep admiration and respect. And the great heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá enveloped them all. Afterwards He asked His hostess whether she was pleased with Him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá - The Centre of the Covenant, p31, by H.M.Balyuzi