



News, Insight, and Shredded Wheat

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“FOR THE SUMMER DAYS,” the advertisement went, “when the appetite needs to be coddled with fresh fruits that nourish and strengthen without disturbing the digestion. There is nothing so deliciously satisfying as Shredded Wheat Biscuit With Strawberries and Cream.”

The ad ran on the front inside cover of the June, 1912, issue of the *American Review of Reviews*, a magazine edited by Albert Shaw. Every month, for twenty-five cents, Shaw offered his readers original stories, and summarized noteworthy articles from other news sources around the world, providing an editorial perspective on each subject. In the June issue, which was about 130 pages long, one of Shaw’s “Leading Articles of the Month” was about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Many daily newspapers had covered ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s first two months in America, but the popular magazines, which had a longer editorial schedule, only began to appear in June. The *American Review’s* story on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá — “Will Baháism Unite All Religious Faiths?” — appeared on the 107th page of the issue. It reported on his 1911 trip to London, and began by quoting an English magazine, the *Fortnightly Review*:

“Surely the dawn of a new day was heralded on that Sunday evening when the Archdeacon of Westminster walked hand in hand with Abdul Baha up the nave of St. John’s Church.”

Then Shaw’s writer chimed in with his own opinion: “Considering . . . the fact that this little-known Persian prophet has come to the western world to proclaim the dawn of the millennium, to announce that the Messiah awaited by all nations has actually lived, taught and died upon this earth in the past century, to preach what he and his followers believe to be the new world religion, destined to include an supersede all others and to unite all nations under the banner of a common faith, this would hardly seem an extravagant statement.” The “Messiah” they meant was not ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but his father, Bahá’u’lláh.

The story was embedded among dozens of other stories on Progressive subjects. The forty-seventh page of the edition offered a posthumous tribute to William T. Stead, one of the first investigative journalists. He had gone down on the *Titanic*. An article ten pages later explored “Roosevelt and the Third Term,” complete with cartoons. The page carried a piece by Frank B. Kellogg, a Federal prosecutor, who wrote about the results of his successful 1911 antitrust case against Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, which found the corporate behemoth guilty of manipulating the petroleum industry.

The article on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggested that humankind took priority over national ideals. “There is something above and beyond patriotism,” he had said, as the *American Review* quoted him. “When we see this, and know in very truth the brotherhood of man, war will appear to us in its true light as an outrage on civilization, an act of madness and blindness.”

“Baha’u’llah announced this half a century ago in the slaughter-house of Persia,” the story read, “and it is not less forcible because to-day it is the slogan of Peace Societies in every civilized country in the world.”

The *American Review of Reviews* seemed to offer its reader everything, from war, politics, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, all the way to Shredded Wheat. “No cooking or baking — no culinary skill required.”

In tomorrow’s feature: W. E. B. Du Bois prints his account of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at last month’s Fourth Annual Conference of the NAACP.

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FOOTNOTE / ENDNOTE:

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