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1920

Tuesday morning the permission to enter. Palestine had come. We devoted the day to preparations or leaving on the evening train. Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí with Mírzá Tofik called on us in the morning. A Cairo believer sent a large basket and asked sent it to the Master. He spoke of it as small, but when it appeared, it seemed large to us. It was very heavy, filled probably with fruit. The hall porter at the hotel was not a little surprised to see travellers from the Occident having so many callers from the Orient.

At the railroad station in the evening several Bahá'í friends appeared to bid us farewell. Mítrza Muḥammad Taqí bought a ticket to the first station in order that he might come out on the platform from which our train left. He presented us with beautiful flowers and with a tray full of little cakes. How happy he looked in rendering these services. We saved out some of the most beautiful roses to present to the Master.

We arrived at Kantara about eleven in the evening. Here we had to get porters to carry our many pieces of baggage to the customs officer. We were entering Palestine. After another exciting melee of porters officers, crowds, all enveloped in wellnigh English soldiers had been evicted from our berth, settled down for the night. The train stayed at Kantara until six in the morning, when it started on its long day's journey over the desert of the Sinai Peninsula.

The desert is rolling, not perfectly level. About the only vegetation is cactus, except that now and then there is a small oasis with date palms and a cluster of tents with bronzed and rather wild looking people.

In the afternoon, we approached the hill country. At first, vegetation on the hills was sparse, but as we went on, it became thicker. We saw large flocks of sheep and goats. Then we came to the country which is cultivated. The fields are stony and stone walls have been built. This reminded me of New England. The orchards too reminded me of New England apple orchard. The hills though

are rather bigger and bolder than the New England hills. I thought it a very beautiful country. Its beauty seemed to me homelike, quiet and peaceful.

After a time, the train came near the sea. The sunset colors were beautiful. We were now approaching Haifa. Partly, it seemed to me the Land of Hearts desire, partly I was filled with a feeling of nameless awe, as of one approaching an unknown land. If I could have looked ahead, I should have known it to be the Land of Love, but a greater, more perfect Love than humanity of itself could ever conceive.

About six o'clock in the evening of a day in early September, 1920, we arrived in Haifa. Rúhí Effendi, a grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Fugeta, a Japanese Bahá'í, Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, a Jewish Bahá'í and an American Bahá'í were at the train to meet us. Said Effendi, an Egyptian Bahá'í had come on the same train with us. All were so kind to us, wishing to do more than they could show their love. Fugeta climbed into our compartment through the window, grasped the two heaviest of our many pieces of luggage and walked off with them, looking smaller than ever (He is no taller than a child) between the suitcase and the large basket. Said Effendi ran into our compartment and began to carry out pieces of luggage, but was advised by the others to go and find his own. We rode up in the Master's auto to the Western Pilgrim House. This is on the outskirts of Haifa, opposite 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house, on a street leading up Mt. Carmel. It is attractive in its simplicity. The large central room, which one enters first, is used as a dining room. It contains an oval extension table, bentwood chairs and a sideboard. Out of the dining room open three sleeping rooms and passageway. Out of the passageway open another sleeping room and the kitchen. We occupied the bedroom opposite the entrance. It contained two iron beds with mosquito nettings, two rugs, a medium-sized table with looking glass over it and an iron washstand. There were four windows, two opposite of the door, looking up Mt. Carmel and one in each of the other two sides of the room. There were outside blinds and dotted Swiss curtains. The windows had iron grating on the outside and against one of these was a clay water bottle. The water in this was always of a delightful coolness.

The atmosphere of the Pilgrim House is that of a quiet beautifully clean and fresh place in the country. When I looked out the windows up Mt. Carmel to the shrine of the Báb, I realized that I was surrounded by an atmosphere even more intensely beautiful. As the days passed we learned that we were in the abode of love, service and fellowship, ever and an even more beautified by the presence of the Master.

We were told that the Master was resting at the Shrine of the Báb.

After a little, we were invited to cross the street to the Master's house. It was evening now. The sky seemed very near, as we went across the narrow street, unlighted save by the brilliant stars, which seemed to hang so low.

At the Master's house we met the ladies of His household (His sister, His wife, two of His daughters), two grandsons and two granddaughters. All greeted us

lovingly, the ladies embracing and kissing us. We sat in the reception room, a large room simply furnished with reed chairs and tables. There were no rugs on the tiled floor. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife, the Holy Mother, spoke most, Rúhí Effendi, one of the grandsons, acting as interpreter.

She said that their whole life was in meeting the pilgrims from the East and from the West. She asked most kindly about our journey, our homes, the condition of the Cause in America. When we said that we had to spend two months in coming from New York to Haifa, she replied that the Eastern pilgrims have even more difficulties than those from the West. One family of pilgrims, she said, had been in Haifa three months waiting an opportunity to leave. This family we met later. It consists of a man, wife and an eleven year-old daughter from Baku, Russia. Shortly after they arrived at Haifa, Baku was taken by Bolsheviks. In this day the man had lost his home and business and must find a new place in which to live and work.

Another group of Oriental pilgrims after enduring many hardships on the way thither, on their return were unable to obtain passage on the boat, although they had paid their passge in advance, until they said the price again.

When the Holy Mother heard that two of our party were teachers, she said that that was a class especially praised by Bahá'u'lláh in the Aqdas. He recommended that they be given inheritances by the state. She spoke of the martyrs in Persia. Whole families were wiped out, families of prominence. She asked if there were persecutions in America. I said that perhaps the Cause would spread.