

Tiberias, Sea of Galilee
Syria

June 2^d 1914

Dear friends!

Baha Allah

The Blessed one said :- "His holiness the Blessed

Perfection has raised the station of woman ^{in the East} and hath glorified her before the eyes of all the world. On her head He hath placed the crown of the Everlasting Glory, and in her hand He hath put the scepter of equality. From the lowest degree of humiliation He hath uplifted her to the highest realm of heavenly brightness. He hath bestowed upon ^{her} a ray of His Supreme Intelligence ^{where} to grapple with modern social problems and at the end come out triumphant with the garland of victory on her noble brow. In Persia, Arabia, India, Turkey and other Asiatic countries woman was a negligible personality, a creature not to be trusted - belonging to the lower order of creation. One of the most opprobrious insults that could be heaped upon a man of some spirits was to call him a "woman". The person making such an abusive remark was severely called into account and often an enemy.

lasting for years would be the outcome. However ~~His Holiness~~
 Baha-Allah hath breathed a new Breath in the mon-
 umentary body of the East and is slowly changing the an-
 cient thoughts of ages into modern ideals. In short ~~He~~
 hath illumined the world of womanhood."

The New woman in the Orient is working hard to assim-
 ilate ~~in her constitution~~ the "modern ideals" and to equip
 herself with all that science and education ~~are~~ ^{are} offering
 to her. Here and there you will find a number of educated
 women ^{who} impatient with the weight of restrictions laid
 upon them by the ~~immemorial~~ ^{inherited} customs of ages, try
 to shake them off - but unfortunately, the bulk of
 men's prejudices is too much for them. The men ~~state~~ ^{say}
 the time has not yet come in the Orient, even for
 the partial emancipation of women and the wo-
 men? What do they say? Of course, it is ^{so} difficult
 to read the thoughts of woman, especially in the East,
 where social intercourse is ~~a matter of impossibility~~ ^{an}.

If you allow me I will produce herein a talk which
 occurred between two educated women - one from
 the West and another from the East, which may
 or ~~may not~~ give you a glimpse of the undercurrent

revolution going on in the Harem. ^{The} ~~we~~ may name the
 of Eastern woman ^{is} Jamileh Khanom and the western woman
 Miss Mary ^{Powell} ~~Queen~~. A marriage had been arranged long ago
 for Jamileh Khanom's brother - Ezzeddin Khan - with the
 little daughter of Reza Khan living in another city and
 the wedding would take place when the bridegroom reaches
 his eighteenth year.

"My grandfather arranged it," said Jamileh Khanom, playing
 with the bits of red stuff which were sewn to her baby's
 cap to keep off the Evil Eye. "My father is a man of the old
 school, and a very rigid Muslim, so he has consented
 to this arrangement."

"But have they never seen one another, poor little things,"
 asked Mary in surprise. "What a pity that you couldn't
 have asked the little girl to stay with you while we were
 here. They might have taken a fancy to each other."

"Oh Miss!" laughed Jamileh Khanom reproachfully. "This
 shows that you are not yet acquainted with our customs.
 If others have heard you saying such a thing they ^{would}
 have ^{been} struck with horror! you don't think
 that the girls' parents would ever have allowed
 such a thing! This is sacrilege in their estimation."

"But how can they ever love each other without seeing ^{one another} ~~each other~~ before marriage? How can your laws yoke two human beings together, who have their own likes and dislikes and who have never spoken one word to each other? Where is the element of love in such marriages?" asked ^{Mary} passionately, while her whole being quivered with revolt and protest.

"Love!" answered Jamileh Khanom "is not to be ^{taken into} accounted. The girls must curb their wills to the will of their superiors. They must bow down before the iron decision of the parents. Why should a girl exercise a choice? Is it not enough that she gets a husband? Oh! my blood boils when I think of the shame and ignominy heaped upon us ^{during} ~~all~~ ^{these past} ~~years~~ generations! What greater shame is ~~it~~ possible for a girl than to be taken to a man whom she ~~has~~ not known in all her life and whom she may never love! What has the old religion for a woman anyhow?"

Mary was astonished at this unexpected outburst from the calm and dignified Jamileh Khanom and could not help but look at her twice.

"Have you felt this, Khanom?" she asked at last.

"How can I help it? I have read your books, I have associated with many American and European cultured women and I have seen the difference between your life and ours." said Jamileh Khanom. "Our boys, like my brother, read your books, see your laws and their results and they think it is all very good. They are also taught the old religion, and they say: 'It is destiny. I was born a Mussulman. My father and all my ancestors were good Moslems. Why should I change a religion that was good enough for them?' In this way they agree together to dismiss the subject. They have many things to occupy their thoughts and they go into the world and do pretty much what they please. They have all they want, friends, companions and freedom; but with us it is different. All the long, long days, months and years - what can we do but sit in the Androun and never leave ^{its} the precinct - Oh! the weariness of those idle hours! Our life is like a blank page and we have few things to talk about. What can we do but think and wish and dream of a freedom which is so far away from us. Oh! They should not have educated us, have let us read about

your beautiful life in Europe and America, if they wished us to remain still contented with what satisfied our grandmothers. I have myself a daughter and she is being educated in one of your schools. The very thought that she must marry a man without seeing him, without conversing with him, without knowing and loving him is repellent to me. And yet I cannot help it. I cannot protest against this dreadful custom. I am too weak for such a mighty task. We need women of Amazonian type. We need women like your Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, Frances E. Willard, ^{and our} Kurrat Ul, Ayn.

Oh, we are tired of our jewels, and our fancy dresses and our housekeeping and our embroidery; tired of making sweetmeats and eating them; we are so tired - you ^{cannot} imagine how tired - of being shut up always in the same rooms, with the same faces around us. We are not like birds and wild animals to be kept in cages, we have minds and hearts, and we want to be able to go out in the world with our fathers, brothers and husbands, and enter into all they do."

"But couldn't you do that now - partially at least?" suggested Mary still more surprised.

"How can we?" she asked. "Our husbands go out into the society without us. They meet the European and American ladies, talk to them, dance with them, admire them, and then come home to us, poor ignorant creatures, who cannot talk to them of the things they care for, and don't know how to please them when we are most anxious to do it. Our husbands are the sun to us; we are less than the moon to them."

"But how can anyone help you if you don't help yourselves?" asked Mary.

"What are we to do?" asked Jamileh Khanom. "They say that our rights are secured by law, which is not true, but what we want most is the right to select our own husbands. Often we are actually sold to the highest bidder. With that right of selection once secured, we might be able to do something, but how dare a woman be anything but submissive when she may find herself divorced, or set aside for another wife, on account of the slightest effort for freedom. As I told you we need martyrs in our cause, but who will be the first and the second and the third? How can a woman who has grown after years to love her

husband, and for whom there is no other opportunity in life, slight as her hold is on him, alienate herself from him deliberately."

"But you cannot fear anything of the kind with your husband," said Mary, losing sight of the general question in this particular case. "He would never set you aside for another wife."

"No, because I am the Khan's daughter. But he has the right. Suppose my father fell into disgrace or anything happened to my boy, who would stand for me then? No one."

"And what can remedy all these things?" asked Mary. "Only the Bahai ^{Religion} ~~Revelation~~ for it is the only religion which teaches the perfect equality between man and woman. It will set us free from the prison of ages and usher ^{us} into the new era of culture and enlightenment. There are so many selfish men who do not care to raise us even to their own level, but this wonderful Cause is enjoining upon them to respect and honor womanhood and give the best education to the girls - so that as mothers, they may shape the character of the rising generation and lay a firm foundation of universal happiness."

Today three pilgrims arrived from Haifa, - Aga Mehdi, Aga Abdossamad and Mirza Yausoff. They brought with them fruits and candies etc. The Master was out when they arrived, so he received them in the afternoon. Having met and talked to them he left the hotel to call on the Governor who loves and respects him very much. It was about sunset when he returned from his walk along the shore. Bath at noon and in the evening he sat at the table and partook of the fare prepared by the hotel, often Khosro prepares his food and brings it to him.

Before the Zoroastrians left for Haifa and Bombay he called them into his own room, embraced and kissed them and said:- "While you are travelling on the broad sea I will pray for you and will never forget you. I hope through the activity and work of the friends India may become the home of spirituality, that the believers may show forth such deeds and words as to attract the people to the Cause. I hope you may become the main springs of human perfection, that the fame of your sanctity may be spread throughout all the regions, that the fragrance of your pure thoughts may be diffused in all parts, that you may become conducive to the eternal glory of the Cause of God and the means of the guidance of the souls. This is my prayer for you in the morn and in the eve."