

Home of Baha Ollah

Acqa. Syria December 1st 1914

Dear friends!

Today imagination played havoc in the town of Acqa. Although from beginning to end it was a joke played by the sense of vision yet it foreshadowed the possibility of a grim and stern reality. It was about 10 A.M., the storm had subsided last night, the sea was calmed, the sun was shining gloriously over its rippling surface and the Beloved was walking in the Fakhmeh. Many people had left their narrow, damp, dark, unsanitary hovels and were revelling in the bright sunshine. This quiet hour was suddenly interrupted by the shell-like news that four cruisers have appeared in the horizon. Like lightning it travelled from lips to lips and in a few moments we saw men and women with affrighted appearances were running towards the shore and pointing with their trembling hands to the warships coming towards Acqa. From all the streets people poured out, talking aloud, swearing, gesticulating, sad and pitiful was their condition indeed. They also told us that the governor and other officials have seen the ships and have written their last telegrams to inform Beirut and Constantinople and have their horses ready under saddles to escape and leave the town to its fate. By this time hundreds of people were lined on the shore and women could be seen on the roofs - all in a state of utter consternation. All this time the Master was walking serenely and listening to the excited report of this man or that woman. "Oh Effendi! the English Dreadnoughts are coming! What are we going to do? Help us! Aid us!" were the words I heard on all sides. Surrounded by a crowd of gibbering humanity the Master walked towards the shore and ascended the steps of a ruined tower. He told me to go home and bring his telescope. In two minutes I was back and handed him the instrument. For a few seconds he looked through it and I watched his face smiling. All the people below and above were held in a kind of trance waiting for his decision. Over the calmness of his expression, the serenity of his countenance, the tranquility of his manners he towered far above them. Here was a seething, boiling, terrified humanity and it would have taken the miracle of an angel to calm them. "My friends" the Beloved broke his silence "these

are not war ships. These are the four successive ridges of a ^{submerged} mountain three hours from here which have appeared after the reflux of the tidal wave toward the Sea. They appear only when there is a great ebbing ~~back~~ of the water back to the ocean and as many of you remember a few years ago a steamer was sunk on that very spot." And he started laughing at such evident mistake of the populace. "When people apprehend disaster they are ready to believe anything without thought. They take mental pictures as real and are misled ^{through} optical illusion." he said. Then he started along the shore walking ^{amongst} the bewildered people with majestic assurance and satisfying them that their fear is perfectly groundless. He sent also word to the governor and others that the sea is clear of any cruisers. Still the people lingered on the shore but hundreds of them returned to their homes when they heard the words of the Beloved. They were assured that there was nothing. The Christians were rather glad that the cruisers were on their way, because they believe they will be protected on account of their religion, not realizing that it is the Christian nations of Europe who are shedding each other's blood. It was ^{noon} when the Master entered the house laughing heartily over this piece of ocular deception and how it struck terror at the hearts of the inhabitants. Amongst other thing he said: "These persons who are firm in the Faith during these days shine like unto the brilliant sun and are the cause of the tranquility of the hearts, but those whose hearts are not set afire with the fire of the Love of God are like fruitless trees and honey less bees. When the enemies of the Cause pillaged our home and confiscated all our properties in Teheran I was a child. My mother had rented a small house in a remote quarter of the city so that they may not find out our whereabouts. My sister was also with us. One midnight I heard some one knocking at the door. I went and opened it. It was one of the believers. He entered our room and looked into our faces. Fire emitted from his eyes. He ^{said} ~~told us~~ "Why are ye standing quiet?" I asked him: "What do you?" He answered: "My friends! Dance, be happy, these are the feast days of the Lord." Tell morning he danced, chanted, sang and ^{when} he appeared from the Eastern horizon he left the house. On that very day he was ~~taken~~ arrested and martyred. Whenever I remember the lives of

these heavenly souls and their complete severance my heart is made very happy. Through their sanctity the Banner of this Holy Cause was unfurled on the apex of the world." Then he related two more stories about the days of Bagdad illustrating the morning event. I may just as well incorporate them in this letter:- "When we were in Bagdad several believers including myself started with a large Caravan for Kaze-meyn. Each one of us was riding on a fine horse. In those days there was a rumor abroad that the road was infested with brigands and highwaymen and the men composing the Caravan were ready to believe any hearsay. Suddenly a voice was heard from some unknown quarter 'the robbers, the robbers have appeared. Look, look: they are to be seen in the far off horizon riding at a gallop and they are coming nearer and nearer.' This started a panic and the members of the splendid Caravan began to run about like wild rabbits hither and thither but being in the center of a plain there was no way of escape. When I observed they are so terrified I asked the believers to follow me so that we may reconnoiter what they called the 'riding robbers'. We galloped our horses at full speed and when we reached the end of the road we were prevented to go further by a thicket of ^{tall} brushes and bushes - and to these were the 'riding robbers'. Then we galloped back and collected the members of the Caravans and assured them that what they have imagined as robbers were no other than a tract of ^{thick} underbrushes. We had, however a hard time to convince them that what we reported was the truth but little by little they gained courage and commenced their onward journey with much trepidation. When we reached the spot they were then ready to laugh at their own incredulity."

"At another time we started for the same destination with another Caravan. The members of this Caravan were composed of very ^{wealthy} families and they travelled in state. Hence they had applied to the government to send with them 20 horsemen as escort, thus they may travel through the country in comparative safety. When we reached halfway we heard from afar the galloping of horses and the voices of men. The Caravans were very much afraid

that they are going to be robbed by the lawless brigands and probably some of them be killed in the attack. I told our friends to detach in a body from the Caravan and go forward to see who these men are? They tried to persuade me that this is not like Osterfarmer's experience, that we actually hear the movements of the brigands. I did not listen to their advice and with the force of stirrups started my horse to a full speed. The other seeing what I did joined me and in a few minutes surrounded the men like a ring. To our astonishment we found them to be no other than ten of the twenty horsemen who were acting as escort to the Caravan. They were all Arabs and wore on their heads 'gapi-yargal'. I asked the friends to alight immediately from their horses and bind fast their arms with their own 'gapi-yargal'. They were completely taken by surprise before they could recover themselves. They had entered into this plan to rob the wealthy travellers entrusted to their protection by dividing their numbers into 2 parties, the first party remaining in the Caravan, the second party acting as robbers. Their plan was, however, frustrated by us. Addressing them I said: 'You are indeed a splendid escort! We should have had another escort to protect us from your villainy. The government must be ashamed of your act and punish you severely.' They were all afraid and pleaded and cried that we may give them back their freedom. They said they did not mean what they did, that it was all a joke, and would not have touched the Caravan for anything in the world. In short they pleaded and supplicated so much that I ordered the believers to unfasten their arms on condition that they must never play such a trick on the unsuspecting travellers."

In the afternoon Sheik Salman and Sheik Youseff called on him and requested him to go to Abou Senaw. "I have some work here. God willing when I finish it I shall come. Tell to our friends there that I am under the protection of Baha-ollah."

In the evening he delivered a long talk on the sufferings of the Baha'is in Persia and how they were often persecuted by the Mahomedans. Notwithstanding this they manifested superhuman courage under the most cruel tortures and martyrdom.