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Nature's studio
Ahsan Sanam, Acrea. Syria
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Dear friends!

My Cabin is taken out of my hand. It is turned into a Bahai school with Badi Effendi and Mirza Inoos as teachers. I have been always a homeless wanderer and as a bird of passage attached not my heart to any abode. Let me live in God's own nature, in the studio of the Almighty, with the blue dome above my head and the green, velvety grass beneath my feet. For the last two days I have been staying out in the country, from morning till evening and communicating with you my thoughts and impressions. As soon as the pupils start coming to the "school" I take my paper, pen and a book or two with a small sapper and enter after a few minutes walk into my "Nature's studio" prepared by the Greatest Artist. I am sitting now on a broad, flat rock under "my own fig tree" and the view before my eyes is a deep, hallow valley on the other side of which is an undulating hill and the sea. All around me are olive and fig gardens and the plain is beautifully verdant. For this reason the Blessed Beauty has said: "the country is the world of spirits, the city is the world of bodies." Here I meditate and work the best hours of the day with no interruption, peace and the love of nature being the prevailing note; the sweet twittering of birds are always in my ears and the cool breeze is most refreshing. The weather is most moderate and spring like and if I had searched for months I could not find a better quiet abode. It is a Gift of God and its splendor is never worn off. Man builds dark houses and expensive mansions and after a few years they are filled with the smell and odor of old things and humidity, the dust and the cobwebs filling all the corners and the ceilings. How much more poetic and artistic it would be if we could perch on the twigs and branches of the trees and like the birds be satisfied with a few grains, but even raise higher and higher the music of divine life, and sing louder and louder the melody of symmetrical and harmonious thoughts! One span of nature, left in its unadorned beauty, is better than the palace of the Kings and to those who admire the handiwork of God, the music of the winds, the trees and the air is more divine than any played on wood or iron instruments! Is it not so, my friends?

The significance of colors in the world of nature is most impressive. Every color presents a sentiment, an idea, full of suggestive beauty and idealism. Here is a red Anemone, there a white narcissus and further a yellow golden rod - love, purity and faithfulness mingling their odors and bringing to man's mind the true path of salvation. The world of nature is a University whose President is God and whose faculty and professors consist of myriads of unobserved little plant lives and wondrous small creatures and mankind are the students. After the patient researches of the scholars of many ages with the results of their lifetime studies in the labyrinths of this vast field - how little indeed we know and how eager we are to delve deeper into the mysteries of the laboratory of nature! What with the numberless volumes on Botany, Zoology and Geology contributed towards our general knowledge of these various departments of nature! Still when we stand ^{before} a little fresh flower, just pushing its head above the earth, we are struck with its symmetrical perfection and the scheme of its coloration and the rosiest of its complexion! To the simple and open hearted student nature ever speaks in unequivocal tongue. The hue of each leaf, the shade of every plant, the murmur of the little stream, the growth of the tiny acorn into the over shadowing oak, the sacrifice of the seed so that its ~~progeny~~ ^{progeny} be multiplied, the soul-refreshing smell of the variegated flowers, the gentle blush of the rose at the early dawn while receiving the dewdrop kisses on its delicate petals - all these and many others teach us lessons that we ought not to forget. Hence we must ingraft into our dispositions the youthfulness and juvenile ardor and loyalty of nature, for nature with all its manifold varieties seldom deviates from the path outlined for its eternal course by the immutable laws of God. How wonderful it would have been if the nature within us could be so developed and perfected as to manifest the same varieties and richness as the nature outside of us displays every year! A nature so bounteously gifted will be able to render great services to the world of humanity and will promote all those altruistic causes which tend to the happiness of mankind. Therefore let us be devout and sincere students at the shrine of nature which is the visible garment of God, ever increasing and increasing in the loom of time. Then the meaning of the Greek axiom of "Know thyself" will become clear to us

The Bahai school of Abou Seman boasts of more than 30 students and they are all the children of our own believers. Although the curriculum of the school is not yet fully planned, yet it has started under good auspices. The Beloved is the Founder and as long as we are in this village it will be open. The pupils are from 15 to 6 years old and still the various classes are not organized. I am sure it will be a great success and a blessing to our children, ^{most of} whom have been taken away from the school in the town and brought here since the trouble began. For this reason the Beloved said this morning to Mirza Badi: - "I know thou art exerting thyself in the instruction of the children. The life of man must be productive of some results, otherwise his non-existence is better than existence. As I said before this teaching of the children is a service to the Blessed Perfection. Whosoever serves the world of humanity in this or any other way he is serving His Holiness Baha-Allah, your heavenly reward is with him. The education of the children is one of the most great services. All these children are mine. If they are educated and illuminated, it is as though my own children are so characterized. They will become the servants and the maid-servants of the Cause of God, the gardeners in the Vineyard of the Kingdom and the lights of the assemblage of mankind."

Then he spoke with Sherk Jussuff about his own schooling, how he was an exile and a prisoner since he was 9 years old and consequently never entered even the common school. This is a historical fact and there are many people still living who bear witness to this matter. Then he explained in detail the puzzling question of trinity and demonstrated from a religious and scientific standpoint that "trinity" not only exists in ^{every} religion but in philosophy as well. In the Mosaic dispensation there was Elohim - "I am" - the Everlasting Light and the Moses; in Christianity, the Father, the Holy Ghost and the Son; in Islam, Allah, the Gabriel and Mahomed. In the philosophic term we say, the mover, the motion and the moved; the Cause of causes, the cause and the effect; the Illuminator, the illuminations, the illuminated; the Creator, the creation, the created; the teacher, the Knowledge and the student; the Giver of bounty, the bounty and the recipient of bounty. In principle every religion believes in this explanation - so far as it applies to the founder of his own faith but when the same principle is applied to the Founder

of another religion he will refuse to accept. Thus while they are agreed to reality, they disagree in mere names and historical personalities.

Then the Beloved, Sherik Salah and Murga Galal rode away to Jules - a village about 2 miles above Abou Senou. They were the guests of Sherik Taref and returned before dusk. They had a very enjoyable time and the Master liked his horse back riding through the valleys and mountains. He looked so majestic and Kingly on his horse as he rode away. They ate their dinner and drank their tea in the house of the ^{old} Chief of Druses.

The believers were forlorn all day but they all gathered in the reception room when he arrived, because he is the light of their lives and the never-fading rose of their ideal garden. For an hour various incidental subjects were discussed, all of them interesting but too fleeting to have taken hold of. When the Master is in the midst of a group a host of subjects become the topics of discussion, no one knows how and it is more difficult to note where one is ended and another taken up. These sudden conceptions of the spirit, these glittering sparks of the intellect can seldom be inscribed on paper or immortalized in writing. Their very scintillations and successive flashes dazzle the mind and the eyes and deprive one's tongue of the virtue of eloquence and balanced description. It is very easy to translate a talk given on a definite subject but most difficult to convey to the reader the enjoyment that is one's share when he listens to the rapid fire reports, bonhomies, jokes, witty replies, penetrating remarks, proverbial sayings, ancient quotations of celebrated Oriental writers, poems and stories of the Beloved as he goes on all too unconsciously piling them one upon another and filling the hearts and the minds of the people with joy, delight and pleasure. It is indeed the "Feast of the gods". Often one inconsequential remark by some one in the audience puts the Master on the train of a most brilliant talk. ~~Why~~ On such occasions one sees the loving preminence of the Lord, for he identifies himself so remarkably with the emotions and longings of the audience that all of them become his devoted servants and lovers. Thus step by step he raises them into the height of real culture which is no other than the culture of the spirit and the refinement of the soul.