

Home of Baha Ollah

Acre, Syria

March 16th 1915

Dear friends!

Who was the man who asked many ages ago: What is truth? You remember his name? Very well, then. I do not ^{need} repeating it. But I wish you were here in Abdul Baha's heavenly presence this morning and listen to his wonderful talk which was all started by the entrance of the little Labeed into his room. It was not a philosophic exposition of what is truth? but far better; it was a vivid exemplification and concrete portrayal of truth; - so that even a child ~~could~~ know and understand it. As Labeed sat beside me the Beloved looked at him sweetly, tenderly and then he said: "Because the children are truthful one would love them even if they did something mischievous. The father may punish them for their ^{mis}deeds but will not carry any ill-feeling against them. He knows that they would have acted otherwise, did they know better. The children live in the impregnable fort of truth and in every instance utter the words of truth. They are free from every form of guile and deceit. As people grow up they must carry their child-nature of truthfulness with them and let its unfoldment be constant. During the time of Mohamad one of the disciples had attracted unto himself many enemies. They awaited every favorable opportunity to waylay and capture him. As he was well-known they did not dare to attack him in the public. Thus adding fuel to their silent-working grudge they kept it alive and watched the turns of events. At last one night they surrounded his house and lying low in different corners, were ready to pounce upon him as soon as he emerged out. Some one ^{notified} him of the siege and he was quite alarmed. Salman, the Persian, the well-known disciple of Mohamad was at the time in the house as a guest and he was appealed to, to find a means of escape. "Get into that large basket" Salman answered him calmly "and I will carry thee beyond the zone of danger." The man obeyed the order ^{without} hesitation and hid himself in the basket. When the

head, Salman walked fearlessly out of the house. No sooner he was in the street than he was surrounded by the besiegers. 'Oh Salman!' they cried 'Tell us, what is this in thy basket?' 'The man whom you are trying to find,' he answered. 'What! thou art indeed fooling us. Come tell us the truth,' they rejoined. 'I declare by Allah' that I have told you the truth.' 'Bah! Who would believe you telling such a story!' The man would not dare to leave his house, how much more impassible to sit in a basket and be carried around on thy head. Go. We are not so simple-minded.' By this time Salman was out of their power and continued his walk till he reached a safe spot. Placing the basket on the ground the man jumped out with palled face and full of agitation. 'Oh Salman! how didst thou dare to declare so plainly and ^{clearly} by Allah that I was in the basket?' They might have searched and arrested me,' he asked still trembling with fear. 'Fear thou not' Salman replied 'hast thou ^{not} heard the wise saying of the holy Prophet, 'Salvation is in truth'?' "

"After the death of Mohamad one of the noblemen of Syria embraced the religion of Islam. Considering himself as unfortunately deprived for ever of the blessed presence of the Prophet of God, he thought the next best blessing that will be showered upon him is to travel to Arabia and meet, associate and converse with those immediate disciples who have had the privilege of years of closest intimacy with the Divine Messenger. After a toilsome journey he reached his destination and was pleased to meet the life-companions of the prophet. 'You have had the spiritual fortune of associating with the Chosen One of God, you have listened to his sage words and advices, you are illumined by the light of his utterances, you have strung the pearls of his exhortations. I have accepted the religion of Islam and have journeyed all the way from my home to this holy city;— so that I may see you and that you may relate to me his admonitions.' One of them reported the prophet as saying: 'Be ye trustworthy.' Another 'Submit everything into the hand of God', a third: 'Be ye faithful', a fourth: 'Be ye resigned to the Will of the Almighty, a fifth, 'Be ye patient under the shock of cala-

a sixth: 'Bridle your anger,' a seventh: 'Forgive the men for God loveth the beneficent,' an eight: 'Promote peace among men' and a ninth: 'Let there be no compulsion in Religion' and a tenth: 'Wrong not any and ye shall not be wronged.' The nobleman listened to all these sacred sentences with holy zeal and appreciation. Then he went to Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet and asked him also to tell him something of the sayings of the prophets. Ali answered: "Salvation is in truth" was the oft-repeated advice of the Messenger of God! At first he was not satisfied with this short epigrammatic advice. When he reached his room he started to ponder over it and then it flashed across his mind that all the other sayings he had heard so far are included in the concise phrase: 'Salvation is in truth'. For example he could not be trustworthy or faithful or bridle his anger if he was not truthful. He realized that truthfulness is the foundation upon which the edifice of other qualities is raised and supported. He returned then to Ali and exclaimed with the joy of a man who has found a new precious jewel: 'All the disciples told me one of the praiseworthy attributes but you have guided me to the fountain-head of all the virtues of the world of humanity: 'Salvation is in truth'" In reality truth is the spring of all the lordly qualifications, truth is the shining sun of the brilliant stars of good manners, truth is the sea and all other commandments are the rivers."

He related three longer stories which I will share with you later on. Today noon another commander of the General Army of Syria came to Acca. Although his name is Jamal Pasha he is not to be confounded with the supreme Commander. Today's guest is next to him in Command. The inhabitants poured out of the town to welcome him. There was a long procession of the school children, both Mohammedans and Christians who sang for him patriotic songs and a detachment of gendarmes saluted him. For lunch he was the guest of Motosarref and in the afternoon with about 20 other officers, Germans and Turkish, he drank tea in the garden of Rizwan. They were entertained by the Beloved. He went himself ahead to see everything was prepared and when

they arrived he received them with courtesy and indulgence. They stayed ^{for} one hour, walked around the garden, drank tea, ate oranges and lettuce and then departed to be the guests of another citizen for the night. Amongst such a crowd there was no opportunity nor the occasion of any systematic conversation and the Master knowing full well their agitated and disturbed condition of mind did not press them into a regular exchange of views.

The frequent visits of the warships, the bombardment of Dardanelle and Smyrna, the useful defeat of their forces in Egypt, the circulation of the wild, unauthenticated news from unknown sources have created a state of panic amongst the inhabitants. The frequent ^{visits} of these officers are to see the shores and how best they can defend them in case the foreign warships land soldiers. They seem to be sure that these places will be occupied soon. Within a circumference of 50 miles they have stationed 22 regiments of soldiers, ready to take up the defensive measures. The large boats in the harbor are taken ^{inside} some of them hidden in the coast and the rest are pulled away one or two miles inside the country. Men were driven from the streets and their shops to do this work. It was a pathetic sight to see honorable men forced away by the civic guards - the lowest element Tagrag and hob-tails - to labor and menial service.

They are again exacting money from the ^{poor} inhabitants for two hundred fifty thousand sacs. This is the lot cast for the Valayat of Beirut and an equal number is demanded from Damascus. No one is willing to tell us what they want to do with 500,000 sacs, unless the old ridiculous idea is revived - to fill the Canal Suez with sand. Another news circulated by irresponsible fellows is that England has forwarded an ultimatum to Turkey that if she does not give up the idea of a ^{second} attack against Egypt nor disband the regiments in 15 days, she will take possession of Syria. But Turkey is daily increasing ^{her} army and enlisting her reservists up to 48 years of age. Everybody is suffering and there are many families who have all their sons 5 or 3 - in the war. Acca alone has lost in the recent defeat in Egypt