

Home of Baha Olla⁴¹
Acca Syria May 27th 1915

Dear friends!

Yesterday and to-day the heat in Acca has been something quite unbearable and of the most nerve-shattering nature. I could neither eat, sleep or walk. It affected markedly the brightness and vivacity of the Beloved. I was limp and spiritless and the heated weather had so affected my disposition that I would have quarrelled without any cause with whosoever crossed my path. This time the very atmosphere of the place is extremely depressing, the faces are joyless, the hearts are heavy, the spirits are dead; the flowers of happiness have withered away, the green leaves of mirth ~~have~~ have sere'd by the oppressive winds of a multitude of cruelties, the birds of serenity have become silent and flown away and the sky of prosperity is beclouded. My heart moved with pity at the sight of this miserable, wretched and woe-begone humanity! I felt sad and grieved and totally powerless before this awful scene of walking, and living charnel-house. Over the houses there broods the ominous spirit of rayless gloom, the eyes are pallid and colorless, the heads are drooping and the hopes are sinking to the bottomless pit of despair. The blooms and flowers of this generation are blown away by the sharp sword of this calamitous war, leaving behind bereft mothers and fathers. The daily exactions of a pitiless, military government have brought the starving residue of the people to the verge of open rebellion. God hath sent to them the countless legions of locusts, changing in one night the verdant gardens - the result of years of patient, arduous labor - into plain deserts. They are also threatened with bombs and shells from sea and from the upper sphere. Truly they are encompassed on all sides with all the trials and calamities. Never ^{before} Syria has been afflicted with so many disasters at the same time and in the same year. The scourge of God and man are administering an unheard of punishment to the harassing people. This is indeed the year of tribulations, wars, plagues, woes, earthquakes and tremblings, the most unlucky year in the history of humanity. Day by day the fire of prejudices and hatred is kindled with greater intensity, burning thousands upon thousands.

Tonight the Master gave a long spiritual talk containing the short history of one of the celebrated Bahai teachers and I may share its translation with you:- "In the world of creation every cause has a magnetic focus, a centre of attraction around which revolves its powerful activities and interests. The magnetic centre of the Bahai Cause which attracts unto the personality of the holder all the spiritual benedictions and privileges is steadfastness. Whosoever has gotten a firm hold of this spiritual principle, divine Confirmations shall descend upon him and attainment to eternal Good will be made easy. Especially when with this supreme quality is joined the practical and altruistic ability to serve and teach the Cause of Reality. This is the magnet of real attraction; otherwise the end of every success is failure, the goal of every rest is trouble, the laurel of every immortality is mortality, the purpose of every glory is disgrace, the conclusion of every affluence is poverty and the termination of every union is dispersion.

"Ponder for a moment by whom this house was built and with what pride and self-assertion he walked on the face of the earth. While he was alive all the people of Acca envied his wealth and position and longed to receive one twentieth part of his comfort and riches. He walked on the earth as though he bestowed upon it a great favor. What did become of him. He died and passed away as though he had never been born, named or lived. Thus it is evident that the end of that honor which is not gained in, for and through the Cause of God is identical with degradation, collection is similar to scattering and the accumulation of riches will be followed by destitution. Where is the sovereignty of Nassir-Eddin Shah? Where is the imperial haughtiness and arrogance of Sultan Abdul Hamid? Where is the overbearing egoism of Ali Pasha? Where is the ministerial deceptions and corruption of Mirza Aga-ssi? Where are the tactics of the commandership of Masherid-Doulet? Where is the splendor and magnificence displayed by Ameen-es-Sultan? Like unto the unreal ghosts they appeared upon the stage and vanished away. But had these men served at the Divine Court they would have illumined the vast majestic audience of humanity. This is no other than truth.

"Similarly in the religious world there lived in Najaf Sheikh Morteza

who was the chief Pontiff of fifty million Shiites. Before him there was Sheikh Mohamad Hassan who became famous for his theological learning. He was revered and respected by the Mahamaden world. Likewise great metaphysicians like Ayatallah of Khorassan and Mirza Habibollah of Shiraz became well-known for their religious erudition. Above and beyond all these towered high Haji Mohamad Karim Khan of Kerman who held in his hand the sceptre of temporal and spiritual powers. By virtue of his being a prince he lived as a King and having reached the position of an authoritative religious leader he wielded an overwhelming moral force. Whenever he made a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Mashad more than one thousand knights dressed in gold and silver-plated cuirasses, bucklers etc, followed and served him! All these pomps, ostentations and flourish have passed away as the bad dreams of a feverish brain.

"Amongst the many students of Sheikh Morteza there was a brilliant fellow by the name of Aga Mahamad of Gaiin, whose title in the Bahai world is 'His holiness, Nabeel, the Great'. Having finished his theological studies in the college of Sheikh Morteza he investigated and accepted this revelation. When he received his diploma from his master he came to Bagdad. Here we met him. He was in reality the flame of the Love of God. He stood or sat in the Presence of Baha Ollah with the utmost lowliness and humility and listened to His utterances of wisdom. One day he was thus sitting with gentle submission while the Blessed Perfection was talking to him when the door ^{was} opened and Haji Mirza Hassan Amman, the unquestioned leader of the Mullahs of Karbala, accompanied by Zein-el-Abeddin Khan (title, Fakhrod-Doulet) entered the room. Amman was surprised to see Nabeel sitting with such humility in the presence of Baha Ollah. Sheikh Morteza had not given in his life a religious diploma to any of his students save Nabeel and through this particular distinction he had become a well-known scholar for his extraordinary intellect and acumen. Therefore Amman asked him with wonder in his eyes, what he was doing there. Nabeel answered meekly: 'I am here after the same quest that has brought you.'

"From Bagdad Nabeel returned to Gaiin, his native town in Persia. The Armeer of Gaiin, Mir Alam Khan received him with marked respect and distinguished honor. He showered upon him much love and attention. When the people observed their chief honoring Nabeel in such a whole-hearted manner they all followed in his footsteps and paid him unprecedented homage. The flame of the Love of God was so enkindled in his heart that he could not keep it hidden for a long time and thus it bursted out in glowing coruscations. Truly I say he illumined the district of Gaiin and guided many souls to the fountain-head of Reality. When he became known as a standard-bearer of the revelation, the fanatical clergy arose against him and incited the mob to persecute him. Mir Alam Khan also followed the crowd and manifested the greatest opposition. The affairs reached to such a height that they finally banished him from the town and after a long and arduous journey he reached Teheran. Here he removed the turban and placed a simple lambskin hat on his head, - so that no one may recognize him and he may become better able to teach the Cause and spread the Holy Fragrance. Of a truth he was the brilliant lamp of guidance and the Celestial torch of spiritual illumination. Dangers encircled him on every side, the minions of darkness searched after him to arrest and execute him but the hand of destiny directed his steps toward Ashkabad and Bokhara while he was engaged in the latter city in the service of the Cause he departed to the Kingdom of Abha. He has composed a very eloquent book to demonstrate the validity of this dispensation. It is my hope that that book will become ere long available, published and circulated.

"In short, the point is this: these great religious pontiffs like Sheikh Mortaza, Mirza Halibollah, Ayatollah Khorassani, Ayatollah Mazandrani disappeared like clouds, leaving behind no eternal trace nor any permanent landmark no result and no fruit. Millions of Sheikhs, pontiffs and

clergymen have come into this world and each and all have disappeared from the face of the earth, but the star of his holiness Ismael will shine for eternity from the horizon of everlasting glory. Why? Because he was steadfast in the Cause of God till the end of his life, was occupied in the service of the King of Heaven and was teaching the people the statutes of the Lord. Day and night he was engaged in the diffusion of the Graces of the Merciful. Hence it became evident ^{that} every honor which is not gained in the Cause of God will be followed by degradation, every tranquility is disrupted by confusion and the fortune is ended by misery. Indeed his holiness Ismael was the sign of guidance. In the Cause of God he lived up to the requirement of the law of self-renunciation. He also, donned the glory of this world, forsook the affluence of position, relinquished the comfort of home, renounced the fame of ecclesiastical leadership and even parted with his life - in order to become a real servant at the Holy Threshold of Baha Ollah.

"He was a learned and wise man. He had studied deeply the different branches of Knowledge. He was a theologian, a philosopher, a Sufi and a Bahai. The eloquence and fluency of his tongue was matchless and when he began to speak he moved the hearts of men with the power of the Spirit. In brief, he was a symposium of finely-balanced intellectual and spiritual knowledges and his death deprived the Cause of one of his most sincere defenders."

In the morning we took our tea with the Beloved and he related to us the interesting story of Baha Ollah in prison. In the afternoon the Matosarras, the deposed Gaemmagam of Haifa, the German Consul and several other prominent citizens called on him and he spoke to them at length about the spiritual conquests of Peace and amity and the destructive effects of war.

The rest of the day was spent in calling and receiving the people and relieving the dire wants of a number of ^{the} utterly destitute families. Lunch and dinner were consumed around the table of the Lord.