

The Tomb of Baha-ullah, Bahaj
Acre, Syria Oct 30th 1914

Dear Friends,

Another package of letters from America was opened today. There was about 50 letters from San-Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Portland, Eliot, Akron, Spokane, Montreal, Canada, Westmore, Michigan; Montrose, N.Y. Fresno, Calif. and other cities. The news of the progress of the Cause in these centers gave the ^{Master} much happiness, especially the contents of two articles published in the Cleveland Plain Dealer of August 18th and 19th entitled "Along Holy Bypaths," by Mr Archie Bell. Mr Bell had never seen the Beloved before he met Him in Tiberias in the month of June and I recall his interviews with much pleasure. Mr Bell's articles are so fair, impartial and to the point that every Bahai must have copies of the same. By the order of Abdul Baha they are already translated into Persian and later on will be translated into Arabic and Turkish and will be circulated all over the East, amongst millions of Bahais and the name of Mr Archie Bell will be a household word, so far as the Bahais are concerned. Because he has written the truth he will have a warm and loving place in the heart of every Bahai and when this Cause with all its spiritual and economic principles is established in the world, his memory will be honored amongst all mankind. Having seen Abdul Baha with his own eyes he has given vent to his inner feelings and cognitions and has penned such simple, deathless words and vivid descriptions that will fill a few bright pages in the history of the Bahai Movement. This is a signal service rendered to the Bahai Cause and is much appreciated by all the truth-lovers. When they were translated the Master asked all the believers to gather in the evening and they were listened to with much delight and pleasure. In a few days these copies will be forwarded to Cairo and will be published and circulated from that center. They were also read to a number of visitors who called during the day. Bearing the historical part of these articles I will quote herein only a few extracts as far as they are directly related to Abdul Baha - thus showing how an sympathetic outsider looks

upon Our Beloved. He says:- "It seemed a most fitting Christmas to my experiences in Palestine, for I was starting in two days for the great Arabian wilderness and merely lingered around the Sea of Galilee because it is a beautiful place, made doubly so by its associations with the life of Jesus Christ, who spent so much of his life there. Thus if I could have imagined some splendid ending to this pilgrimage and tour I could not have wished for better than happened near Tiberias on the shores of the lake where Jesus taught and gave to his disciples their message which was to be carried to the corners of the earth. For here I met another prophet, one who during his lifetime has millions of zealous followers, and one who his followers believe has fully as much scriptural prophecy to fortify his claims to leadership among men as did the man of Nazareth. Like Jesus Christ he has been persecuted and has suffered on account of his preaching. Like Jesus Christ he has come to the sea of Galilee and he walks up and down its holy shores, preaching and teaching his disciples, who follow him as he walks and talks. Already much myth and legend is spreading up around him, for he is the holiest man of the East, despised by many, cursed by the fanatical followers of other religions, and loved by believers in him with a love that becomes devotion itself. One day on the sands of Galilee I met Abbas Effendi, as he is known in Palestine and Persia or Abdul Baha as he is better known in America.

Abbas Effendi, a patriarch and prophet from Persia is a person of tremendous magnetism. you "feel" him when he approaches you. Irrespective of his religious teachings the wise men of the earth, who have met him, have considered him one of the wisest who lives. And he has met the distinguished men of all nations. They have visited him in his prison home at Acre, as they visited Tolstoy at his farm in Russia. Men like William G. Bryan have made it a part of their pilgrimage of Palestine to call upon him and pay their respects. Wise doctors from Europe have called upon him to discuss philosophy, as it is taught in the East and they have found that he has absorbed all the philosophy of the European Continent, knows practically all about all the religions of the world, and is able to discuss each with its leaders, while to everyone who meets him he speaks not of the errors of other men's ways, but graphically and poignantly explains to every man how his religion is but a part of that great universal religion which he himself preaches and believes is soon to cover the world.

Without a doubt he is the most impressive person in appearance I have ever seen. He has long white hair, a long snowy beard, his face is of a dusky whiteness and he dresses in white robes & wears a white turban. When I first met him he was walking along alone, but he was closely followed by Three or four of his Persian followers, who like himself are exiled from their native land. No doubt I stared at him, for he had a commanding presence. His carriage was majestic and I felt instinctively that he was a person of importance. But as I stared, he kindly saluted me and murmured a friendly greeting in Persian which I did not understand. Instinctively, I raised my hat to him. He has a compelling personality which radiates something that commands respect and I wondered who he was. With me at the time was my dragoman, who seeing what I did, looked in the direction of the one we were passing and quickly, with oriental politeness he held his hand to his forehead and remained stock still until the old gentleman had passed. 'That is Abbas Effendi,' he said to me, 'the prisoner from Acre. I wonder how he happens to be walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee!' 'Abbas Effendi' I repeated 'the man for whom I inquired at Acre. I must speak to him.' Then I addressed one of his followers in English. Certainly he would present me. There was no hesitation, as he quickly took me to the side of the Master, bowed profoundly and introduced me. The old man held out his hands and touched mine. 'I am pleased,' he said 'very pleased to meet one from one from far away America. I am very glad when you have come to these foreign countries to learn and observe, that you may go back to your own country knowing more of the world than you could know if you remained in one country, I am glad that I have met you in this hallowed and beautiful place, the Sea of Galilee's shores. I trust that your visit here will be pleasant, and that you will continue your journey and return to your home in safety! There seemed to be finality to his words. It seemed that my "interview" which I craved, was over, for the old man, started along, after raising his hand to his forehead as a sign of farewell. So I pressed ~~him~~ to request another interview for me, at a more convenient time, perhaps, when I could talk to the other man and learn something of his teachings. 'Abdul Baha will be pleased if you will call upon him at his home at there at three o'clock this afternoon.'

said as he pointed out to a little white house near the lake with an overhanging balcony that had a view over the whole extent of the sea. This ended my first meeting.

"Fortunately for me there were three others. Together we walked slowly along the sands and together we sat on his little balcony near sunset and I heard of that new religion which is to reconcile the whole world. About America he said: 'America is a new country, one that is not weighed down by superstitions and prejudices which are so difficult to overcome. America is a receptive country, capable of seeing and hearing and believing.'

Abbas Effendi is a dynamo of energy. He was born in 1844 and is therefore an old man. His life as a prisoner, for he has been closely confined for forty years, might have left him a physical wreck; but instead of that he seems to have undergone an almost super-human ~~renewal~~ recuperation. He rises early in the morning, receives visitors of all nationalities and creeds during the day, often attends the services of the Jews in the Synagogues, goes to pray with the Moslems in their mosques and attends Christian churches. He carries on a correspondence with his followers in all parts of the world and directs any number of momentous affairs. ^{But his} tells ^{that} me after the affairs of his busy days are over, he will often call him, assure him that he is not weary and will either read, dictate or talk until far into the hours of the night. He knows no fatigue, but attendance upon him often wears the younger men who should be stronger When I inquired as to his health, he ^{assured} me that he had not felt so strong for many years. Instead of undermining his constitution, his long imprisonment at Acre seems to have had the opposite effect. All of latent energy of his young manhood seems to have been stored up for the present. He is preaching a universal religion which includes almost every known creed of the well-known religions. His aim seems to reconcile everything. He preaches equal suffrage to men and women. He would have a universal language and told me that he believed Esperanto would do, after a few changes had been made in the present system. Oh, this man can discourse learnedly upon the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, Kant, and Schopenhauer. And also he can speak learnedly of those eastern philosophers of whom we of the West

have never even heard the names. He went to prison a young man and he was released an old man. He was thrust into a Turkish jail before he had the rudiments of education but he came out so learned that the sages of civilized nations were astonished at his grasp of affairs and knowledge of the world and its life, religion, science, history and practical reforms which were needed at once. And that in a nutshell was what I gained from my interview with Abbas Effendi. He believes that Christ taught "love thy neighbor as thy self." He believes that Mahomads, Jews, Buddhists and Zoroastrians were taught to believe the same thing and that not one of them are doing as they were taught. Thus he would be seen the great "Renovator" or ~~re~~conciliator. He would bring all men together in a spirit of brotherly love — and he would raise the status of women — particularly in the east, so that they might have an equal standing with males. "

I would ^{have} quoted more extracts but these are enough to show you how the great Heart of Abdul Baha is pulsating in the body of the world and how those who have only met him once are inspired by his holy words and wisdom. All that he has told us about the magnetic presence and wisdom of his Father is true of himself.

This evening at the table he said: — "Consider how the people bear testimony to the fact that this Religion is universal and its principles are conducive to the welfare of humanity. This is the testimony of an outsider, of one who is not a Bahai. The Christians have never praised so highly the Mahomadan religion nor a Jew has had a good word to say about Christ. But today other nations confess the greatness and catholicity of the Bahai Movement and are struck by its all-inclusive teachings. Practically all the European and American newspapers have been unanimous in declaring that these humane principles will in the long run have a most profound influence in shaping the ideals of brotherhood and establishing the Cause of Universal Peace. Therefore we must be very happy that we are living in this glorious era."