

Moonbeam Bahai Cabin
Abou Senan, Acca, Syria
November 2^d 1914

Dear friends!

Abou Senan is a small village of a few hundred inhabitants. They are all farmers and their agricultural implements are of the most primitive kind. They are divided into two religious sects; half of them are Christian Orthodox and the other half Druises. They live with each other in the most amicable terms. The Christians have a small church built for them by the Russian government, attached to the church is a school maintained also by Russia for the implied purpose of increasing her political and religious influence. Their school in this village as well as all ^{their} other schools in the Turkish Empire are being now closed on account of the war. Another remarkable policy of the present regime is the official pronouncement that all the American colleges and schools in Turkey must first teach the history of Turkey and second be included under the administration of the Ministry of Education. The importance of this startling rule is most important and its future gravity is only clear to those who are well-acquainted with the history of the progress of American education in this country. In fact, the Presidents of these colleges have been notified that they should either presumptively accept these two rules or close their doors. The Druises have a room for their worship called "Khalvat-Bah." This peculiar sect conforms to many general rules and ceremonies of Islam but have numerous laws and doctrines which are kept very secret. They are handed down from father to son orally and any one disclosing the least of these secrets, the ^{now} sentence of death hangs over his head. Sheik Saleh who is the owner of this village is an influential Druise and his eldest son Sheik Yousoff is a great spiritual leader amongst them. In Syria there are, altogether 150,000 Druises and ^{they} are law-abiding citizens. They do not drink nor do they smoke. They are valiant, strong, moral and courageous. Practically all their women can read. Those who are illiterate are required to memorize a few verses every day. Their positions and conditions are secured amongst the men and ^{they} are much respected and honored by them. They do not teach their religion nor do they convert any one to their faith. Their own people are divided into two kinds, "the learned" and the

"ignorant." Before their initiation into the mysteries of their religion, the leaders give them a period of probation from 3 months to one year, to show themselves worthy of the trust and confidence. They believe that no Druise will ever embrace another religion, and therefore they are a community well-knit together. Intermarriage with other sects and religions is strictly forbidden and it has ^{seldom} been ~~heard~~ ^{known} that a Druise ^{has} married out of his community. They are very hospitable and kindly and certainly practice the Bahai principle ^{by} consorting with all nations and religions with joy and fragrance, although they ^{do} not mix or intermingle with them. All their leaders and Sheiks have the most enthusiastic admiration for the Beloved and their followers demonstrate the same genuine respect. Sheik Saleh who knows much about the Bahai history and teachings on account of his years of association with the Master told me, the Druises are very near the Bahai Cause. Both himself and his three sons are whole-heartedly attached to the Master. He is a very wealthy man and has built for himself and his family 2 large Mansions next to each other. The first one of these mansions he has offered it to the Beloved and his holy Family. Therefore all the members of the Blessed household ^{and} Miss Sanderson live in that house. Under the house that Sheik Saleh and his family live is a big ^{hall} ~~hall~~ around which is the soft comfortable Turkish divan. Here all the guests gather both in the morning and in the evening, drink coffee and listen to the words of the Master. The Beloved came down this morning, Sheik Saleh and his sons were present, and all the believers were there. They were all happy because Abbas Effendi has come. They believe that their village is under Divine Protection for our Beloved is living ~~at~~ ^{near} Ashu Siran. In fact Sheik Salman expressed the general feeling when he said to the Master: "Owing to the arrival of the disturbing news of war & night before last we did not sleep at all and were in a state of nervous agitation; ~~but~~ now that His Holiness the Master has come we felt quite at peace and slept soundly." Sheik Yousoff was a little downcast and low-spirited and the Master knowing well his mood started to inspire him and causing him to forget the present dark conditions. "Although these are like doomsday and the people are in a state

of dismay, still you have not felt the hard blows of misfortune nor received the harsh treatment of the time. The utmost that the government will do is to charge you a number of pounds for military expenditures or a few heads of cattle for the commissariat department of the army. At a time of war these are considered to be the normal demand of the government. You have not gone through any revolutions but we have seen with our own eyes many kinds of revolutions. We have witnessed great titanic steamers sunk to the bottom of the sea and have been through faith-shaking upheavals and turmoils. In the evening we possessed everything, palaces, villages, horses, wealth, jewels, servants and what not; in the morning we had nothing, even driven out of our home into the street. All our material possessions were confiscated ^{and} pillaged. My mother rented a small house in another quarter of the city and we were so poor that she gave me a handful of flour to eat. After awhile we were exiled from Teheran. I was at that time a child. On our way to Bagdad we reached a village. The inhabitants were so inimical that they did sell us any foodstuff. My uncle said he ^{might} cook for us Halva (a kind of Persian pudding). He got a few handfuls of flour and put them in the pan, then mixed it with a little butter. Then, because it was dark, instead of getting the bag of sugar he took the bag of pepper and seasoned it with a generous ^{quantity} of this hot spice. This was not found out till the dish was served. The first morsel burned my mouth down to my navel, and others experienced the same pain. ^{What} ^{can} we do now? We had no other food. Well, when the mistake was discovered we had a hearty laugh over it and commenced eating and laughing and enjoying the dish. We were happy in spite of these reverses. Hundreds of our people went through the tortures and sufferings of execution with the utmost serenity and joyousness. There was a ^{man} who was arrested. They asked him to divulge the names of his co-religionists. He did not know anyone. They started to pinch his body with a pair of tongs. Blood flowed from the wounds, but he was calm and peaceful. They then scalped the skin of his head, and poured boiling butter over it, perchance he might reveal the addresses of other Bahais. In this manner he died heroically. Another Bahai was ^{The body of} ^{thrown} under the hoofs of a thousand horses and his remains thrown into the sea. In the evening of martyrdom, while

in his ^{holy} lady was inserted ignited candles. For more than one hour he spoke along this line, when the door was opened and Sheik Ibrahim Akki with 7 other Sheiks ^{from Amgeh} entered the room. They made a striking picture and manifested the utmost deference and respect toward the Beloved. He knew each one of them by name and inquired about their health. It is simply a miracle to see the Master amongst these children of the desert and with what awe and love they look at him and listen to every word falling from his lips. It is here that one realizes faintly the tremendous, moral and spiritual powers that the Master wields by the Grace of God. He solves all their difficult problems and gives them practical suggestions on every phase of life.

At noon we were the guests of Sheik Saleh. He sent his youngest son, Sheik Saleem to inform us that the Master is in his house. We hurried up and found a very spacious hall on the second floor. Soft narrow ^{mattresses} were placed round the hall on the floor ~~and~~ ^{on which} the Beloved and the Sheiks sat ~~on them~~. He was speaking to them about the American custom of hospitality and its contrast with the same immemorial custom in the Orient. "In America the houses are decorated with costly portraits and pictures of men and women. They pay fabulous prices for these works of art and ancient paintings which are not at all appreciated by the Eastern people. Raphael is one of their most celebrated masters in painting and his portraits are almost priceless. During the Arab invasion of Persia, the treasury of that empire boasted of two most valuable treasures. ^{The} First was a parchment over which was drawn ^{by hand} in miniature - forms 400 pictures of animals and the second was a royal rug the texture of which was woven with the gold ^{and silver} threads and the precious stones. In the confusion incident to general rapine, the first was lost for ever and the second was brought to Arabia. In order that every ^{might} General ~~may~~ receive something they cut the rug and every one received a small piece. The small piece which went to Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet was valued at 20,000 Dinars."

Other stories were related while they brought in a very big table which was only one foot high. They placed all the dishes on the table rice, chicken, sour milk, several kinds of meats cooked à la Turk

fried fish and other delicious eatables. Loaves of bread were put under the table on the floor and then we were asked to sit around and help ourselves. It was indeed very amusing to see the Sheiks taking bread from under the table and every now and then the servants ~~put~~ replenished the floor with some more loaves. I enjoyed it very much. When we finished our meal on another low stool was placed trays of fruits, and while standing each person ate as much as he could. Then the ewer and water-pitcher with soap and towels were brought in and all of us had to wash our hands and mouths. Most everyone ate with his hand but for those who preferred otherwise there was one single soup-spoon and nothing more. After thanking the host we retired from the room but the Master stayed there to talk with them some more.

In the morning the Beloved came to our Cabin, walked around it for a few minutes, inquired from me whether I like the place and if we slept well last night. When last month he came to Abou Senan to find ~~and~~ rooms for all the friends, he picked this for these servants and gave to the owner one English pound - so that he ^{might} ~~may~~ put iron bars outside the windows and make other repairs which were done to our satisfaction.

A ~~an~~ official report is circulated that the Turkish fleet has bombarded one of the forts of Sebastopol and caused the sinking of several ships. Those who did not like to see Turkey dragged into this war, think Germany has at last accomplished her aim. Now indeed the whole world is burning with this universal conflagration and not even the most daring imagination can predict what is going to become the outcome. Far away from the current of news and out of touch with those daily dramatic events, we shall wait patiently and watch the final issue. If the war continues for several months we may be obliged to live in this village all during the coming winter. When the rainy season begins, the roads will be extremely muddy and ^{at times} all communications may be blocked for weeks. I went to bed with a heavy and depressed heart, sad and helpless before this gigantic outburst of the volcano of human misery.