

Home of Baha-Ollah

Acca, Syria. Nov. 20th 1914

Dear friends!

I witnessed ^{today} a living picture of the life of the Beloved with which many of you are familiar. About one o'clock P.M. I saw a number of poor men and women gathered in the front door of the Home and their number was increasing at every moment. There were old women with sallow faces, young women, bearing their children in their arms, young girls with tattered clothes, men with crutches under their arms, lame and blind - a motley crowd of poverty stricken humanity that only the town of Acca in its present peculiar conditions can produce. By 3 o'clock there were more than one hundred - many mothers whose sons are in the war, many wives whose husbands are already killed, many girls and boys who have lost for ever their fathers. Why these people have gathered here? Why are they waiting so patiently? Why are they looking so steadfastly towards the door? What do they want and whom are they expecting? What are they chatting amongst themselves? Oh! Some one whispers into your ears. This is Friday and these nondescript people are waiting for the "father of the poor". Immediately you become interested and you go out and watch their faces and listen to their tales of sorrow. How calmly they are resigned to their fate. You in the West call it 'Kismet'. They do not murmur nor complain. Moslems and Christian they mingle together freely. Poverty has obliterated all the traces of prejudice and distinctions and they talk and laugh quite contentedly. Moreover, have they not come at the Court of their "Father" who loves them all and honors them as the children of one God? Why should they not associate with each other? Are they not standing before the door of the King of Joy? Why should they ^{not} laugh? One of them standing in front of the door sees the "Father" coming down and in less than a twinkling of an eye every one knows about it and rushes towards the gate, pushing others hither and thither. A confused, shrill sound for help and succour is raised from the assembly, the Beloved at the same time ^{examining} their faces and directing their movements. In a minute the Master was at the corner of the street asking Khassro to keep the crowd in check. An Eastern crowd is the most disorderly, each person desiring to be

the first, Natanz standing this, Khesro arose to the occasion and made them pass one by one before the Beloved, each person receiving a few Matalack in the palm of his hand. Now and then he ^{would} ~~stop~~ ^{stop} one of them, inquired about his health or the rest of the family who ~~are~~ ^{were} ~~no~~ ^{presently} more. He was especially tender towards the women who carried their suckling babes in their arms. He looked into their faces, smiled into their eyes, asked their names and pleaded the mothers to keep their babes clean and sweet. For more than half an hour this crowd passed in review, each soul receiving his share of material and spiritual goods. I feel sure that if the Sultan of Turkey came to this town, these people would not have gone to him with this ^{same} trust and confidence. The other day the Master was coming out of a store. Right in the street a very old woman whose eyes had grown dim, her hairs white and her back bent passed by him. She raised her eyes and looked intently at the Master. At first she could not recognize him because she had not seen him for 3 or 4 years. But suddenly it flashed through her mind that he is the "Father of the poor." Such a change came over her face that I shall never forget. It seemed to me that the thought of recognizing the Master so exhilarated her that she straightened her bent back, opened wide her eyes, raised her hands up in the air and exclaimed with an ecstatic pleasure: - "Oh! Oh! Thou art Abibas Effendi, thou art my old protector and guardian! Where hast thou been? Why did I not recognize thee at first sight? Now I have looked forward to the day of meeting thee ^{again}! My heart was dark but now it is illumined by the light of thy face. Oh! Thou art the father of the poor, the mother of the poor, the guardian of the poor, the provider of the poor, the Lord of the poor." She went on speaking in this strain but the rest of her words became ^{un}intelligible to me. Then the Master spoke with her, gave her some money and promised to call on her at his first opportunity.

This morning the Beloved sent for us and with Sheik - or Rais and others had tea in his Divine Presence. After a while the Police Commissioner called on him. It seems that all the prisoners in the jail of Acca are transferred to the towns in the interior of Syria and some departments of the local government are removed to Tiberias. A day before

yesterday there was a remarkable religious demonstration in Acre in which a regiment of 1000 soldiers took part and some fiery lectures were delivered on "Jahad". A fanatical Mullah delivered a sermon and quoted a number of Koranic verses which ~~could not~~^{must be} applied to the present conditions. For example this verse:—"When ye encounter the infidels strike off their heads till ye have made a great slaughter among them, and of the rest make fast the fetters." And again: "Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for his cause in served lines." These verses in reality do apply only to the time of antiquity but the zealous preachers of today in the light of the recent declaration of jahad give to them a universal interpretation. Sheik Asad, the former ^{deputy} to the Turkish Parliament being a liberal man, in his speech calmed the fear of the Christians residing in Turkey that their persons and rights as Turkish subjects will be preserved irrespective of their religious creeds and jahad is only against those Powers who are at war with this country.

Afterwards the Beloved went out and called on his old friends and was back about noon. We ate our lunch with him. He asked from ^{Sheik} or - Rais a number of questions about the old dishes of Persia and whether they are cooked today or not.

The second day of the month of Moharram according to lunar reckoning is the anniversary of the birth of the Blessed Perfection and therefore all the friends were invited to a feast in Bahajee. After distributing money amongst the poor the Beloved and the rest of us rode in the carriage and was in Bahajee in half an hour. For awhile we tarried in the rest-house of Aga Mehdi where oranges, candies and tea were served. Then we walked towards the Holy Tomb. The Master ordered us to sit on the floor of the room in the middle of which is the lovely green-house. Aga Abdor Rassoul was directed to chant Tablets revealed for this heavenly day and we were surrounded with the calm atmosphere of deep reverence and worship. When he finished chanting the voice of the Master arose out of silence and in sweet cadences he chanted the revisiting Tablet, leaving behind the indescribable effect of the most heavenly music.

This part of the rewritten program being also over he asked

Isfandiyar to take the believers first to Acca and return for him. Then he entered the apartment in which we were living a few weeks ago and may still spend part of our winter there. When he came out he was beaming with smiles. "Murza Ahmed! Thou art quite an important personage. Thy room is covered with nice carpet and looks very inviting. Thou hast now four rooms, one in ^{Alban} Senan, one in Acca, one in Bahajee, and one in Haifa - a string of lovely dwellings to lay thy head wherever thou happen to be. I have prepared all these rooms for thee. Hast thou such hospitable rooms in America?"

Then he walked over to the rest-house and sat amidst fragrant flowers while the dusk of ^{the} evening was falling over us like an envelopping mantle of mystery. I could see only the outline of his face and long Alias. An Acca believer told him that they have come to his store and have taken almost everything. The Master said: - "We are not here to enjoy rest, comfort or any social immunities. We are here as the servants of the Holy Threshold of the Blessed Perfection. For us there is possible no greater haunty than this. We must sacrifice our lives in the Path of Baha - Ollah. In a few days the spirit will leave behind this house of clay. Oh! that we could ascend the cross in this path and drink the cup of martyrdom for His Sake! Can there be a greater boon than this! No, by the Lord of Mankind! If we fall sick on the bed we shall become the cause of much trouble to those who take care of us, but if we attain to the station of sacrifice quicker than a flash of lightning, the spirit will wing its way to the Apex of glory....."

We started to walk and after a few hundred paces the carriage ^{arrived} and took us home. Having rested for half an hour the Beloved came down and gave a talk on sundry subjects and told us two more stories about the Oriental conception as regards the integrity and probity of judges. He was not hungry, because he ate of the Abgousht today, neither did I have any appetite. He sent Murza Hadi and others to the dining room and continued his talk on the Jahad from the Islahamadan standpoint. The soul is always hungry for the spiritual table which he spread before us everyday.