

Home of Baba O'leah
Aca Syria
December 24th. 1914

Dear friends!

If I am not mistaken tomorrow will be Christmas and I so much long for the companionship of my friends across the waters. Now I wish I could send them a token of my lasting friendship and show them by act as well as by word that I remember them, that I yearn to look into their sympathetic faces, that I have not forgotten their kindnesses, that I love them with all my heart and with all my soul. Day by day their love becomes to me dearer and more precious. I commune with them in the spirit of love, I talk with them in the language of love and I behold their happy countenances engraved on the tablet of my heart. Beloved friends! For many years I lived in your midst and witnessed the wondrous signs of your love. In all my life I have never had any place to call my home but if I can ever claim a "home", it is America and more especially, Washington, where I spent, Oh! many a Christmas day. There I never felt I ~~was~~ a foreigner, stranded in a foreign land. I was amongst my own brothers and sisters. I was in my own "home". Their spirit of Christ brotherhood and Bahai love enfolded me in the loving arms of celestial communion. Now that I am away from them every ^{evening} Christmas I open the casket of my memory and my eyes are brightened by the brilliancy of the jewels of their love and the splendor of the gems of their affection which I have preserved therein as the most cherished possessions of my life. Oh! Never will I forget them. Wherever I happen to be, I always pray for their spiritual progress and I hope they will also pray for me. It is true that I miss their physical association, their genuine comradeships but while I am serving at this Divine Threshold I am likewise serving them and looking to the future for union after this long ^{and} memorable separation. Not a day passes that you are not remembered. Our silent but eloquent communion has drawn us nearer to each other. We have not seen each other's defects and shortcomings but dwelt only on the perfections and virtues of human nature and its infinite possibilities. Each one of us has been a living

impersonality drawn together by the irresistible force of the supernal Idea. ^{Long} distances of land and sea, mountains and plains ^{has} served only to increase our unity, purifying the atmosphere of our converse and heightening the grandeur of our intercourse. Have you not been to me a heavenly seraph, living in the upper sphere of light and ever beckoning me to rise higher and higher? Were you not my guiding star, shining in the yon amethystine dome and illuminating the dark recesses of my heart? Were you not my melodious-singing nightingale whose musical tones and harmonious lays taught me the subtler realities of the spirit? Were you not my sweet-scented, never-fading rose whose blushing color and poetic sentiment suffused all around the rhythm and dignity of freedom and vitality? Have you not been my source of inspiration from which I have daily received fresh points of view and broader visions for the solution of personal and human problems? Are you not my inexhaustible fountain of ideas out of which I have drawn now and then only a few small glasses to allay my thirst after knowledge? Are you not my delectable gardens decorated throughout the year with the blooms of divine conceptions and the flowers of resplendent thoughts? Are you not my perennial springtime adorned with green forests and changing sceneries, inviting me to enjoy thy rich panoramas and walk along thy verdant meadows? Have you not been my eyes of Beauty through the light of which I have beheld the majestic processions of ethereal sentiments and by the help of which I have studied the dramatic and tragic ideas? Were you not my intimate companion and friend with whom I conversed on the spiritual gifts of our century and the further realizations in the near future? Long have we lived together and beautiful and serene has been our unseen friendship and invisible fellowship. I hope this golden chain will be strengthened and this inter-play of relations become more universal aspects. "Invent or perish" was the keynote of Ruskin's artistic maxim. Let us make this noble thought the underlying principle of our lives and ever spend our effort in the exploitation of new domains of thought and find new channels and inlets of communications on the plain of matter and spirit.

Because this is the Xmas night I cannot entertain you ^{better} than to relate three most charming stories dropped from the holy lips of the Master this evening. To me they are very interesting because they are about his ^{own} childhood days. He knew that tomorrow will be Xmas and most everyone welcomes the recital of stories pertaining to the infant Christ. He knew also that these are the days of gift-offerings and remembering one's friends with messages of love and peace. He knew that these are children's days and the festive spirit of holiday is abroad. Through the spiritual power which became incarnate 1900 years ago, people forget for the time being their fixed animosities and crooked prejudices and enter into the joy and ecstasy of the abounding life of Truth. Taking into consideration all these points he related to us with the tenderest feeling and delicate appreciation these little stories of his earliest childhood which are most appropriate to the occasion.

"When I was in Mazanderan I was a wee-bit of a child and enjoyed all the fun and plays incident to that age. In our town we had a man by the name of Aga Raheem who was the overseer of our shepherds. One day he came to our house and asked my mother to let him take me to a pastoral Barbecue given by the shepherds. After some persuasion on his part the permission was granted and I was glad for the opportunity of participating in an outdoor entertainment where animals are roasted in whole. Aga Raheem took me with him and soon we were out in the country. He led me through green valleys and beautiful pastures till we reached at the foot of a lofty mountain. Here we had to walk through a narrow defile and then by a zigzag ^{and} and with much difficulty ^{slowly} ascend to the summit. When we arrived at the top I was surprised to find myself on a vast, verdant table-land which was no other than the pasturage-ground of our cattle. I still feel the exhilarating breeze which greeted my cheeks on that clear day. Exclusive of cows and horses there ^{were} about 4000 sheep and goats belonging to us and a few thousand more were the property of other landlords but all of them grazing peacefully on this large plateau. It was a most charming, ideal pastoral scene and from afar I could see many shepherdesses. We rode a few minutes more and then under a spacious bower I was welcomed by more than 80 shepherds, all of whom were clamoring to salute me. They wore their best clothes for this was a gala day and to me a noble and attractive sight. On that morning they had killed about 15 sheep and having cleaned and prepared them in the cold flowing spring near by, they had

forked through them long iron rods. Then they made as many huge camp-fires and in a spectacular way while they sung wild primitive songs and played circular rustee, peasant dances they roasted them. At noon they sat on the green grass and helped themselves of the seasoned, toothsome meat with an extraordinary appetite. In the afternoon they performed another function and that was the branding of the sheep with red hot irons to indicate in the future their quality, ownership etc. There were some of the sheep which bleated and baa-baaed when branded only a few times and then grew quiet; they were quite sheep-like. But others rent the air with their baa-baas for more than one hour. I stood there laughing to my heart's content ~~When the Beloved laughed also very heartily~~ at their strange noises, because I had never seen before such a funny ^{confusing} scene. When the sheep were released from the hands of the shepherds branding them they run hither and thither like distracted animals and their dull cries were very amusing and comical to the ears of the little child. I laughed so much on that day that tears flowed from my eyes. When the evening drew nigh and the hour of our leave-taking approached all the shepherds gathered around me and in their farewell, spontaneous talks hinted that they expect me to give them some gifts as is customary amongst the landlords in these parts. I asked Aga Rahseem what was all about ^{this} and I am only a child and they ought not expecting me to give them presents, moreover I have brought nothing with me. He answered: 'This is impossible. You are the master of all these shepherds and I do not like to say what they would think if you leave this place without giving them some gifts'. I was indeed in a dilemma but I thought for a moment and then the idea came to me to give to each shepherd a few sheep out of our own flock. I communicated this idea to the Overseer and he was rather pleased with it and in a solemn tone announced to them which was immediately ^{acted} upon. When at last we reached home and my act of generosity ^{was} related to the ~~Beloved~~ ^{Baba Allah} he laughed very much over it and said: 'You must appoint ^{an overseer} a ~~guard~~ to protect Aga - master - from his liberality otherwise some day he may give up himself.'

"When all our estate was confiscated by the government and ~~the~~ ^{the} Beloved ~~Beauty~~ arrested and thrown into the dark prison all our ~~Beloved~~ ^{Baba Allah}

of sheep were plundered by the neighboring landholders. However a strange thing happened that no sooner our sheep were taken into other flocks than they started to die. When the Ulemas heard about this continual occurrence they requested the plunderers, the sheep be sent to them; so that at least they might kill and eat their flesh. After the release of Baha-ollah from the prison, Raheem came to Teheran and called on us. He reported that out of the many thousand sheep only 70 or 80 have been left and he wished to know what disposition he should make of them. These Baha-ollah gave to him as a reward for his faithfulness and having tarried a few days with us he returned to Mazanderan. Many years afterwards while we were still in Bagdad we heard that Aga Raheem had become a prosperous farmer and the number of his flock of sheep, beginning with the 70 or 80 offered to him by ~~these~~ Landholders my Father, had reached to eight thousand.

"The name of one of our shepherds in Mazanderan was Abol. He was short, square, fat and somewhat queer and singular. He had an iron constitution and whenever he appeared anywhere and started his comic ways, peals of laughter greeted him. All the children, including myself were attached to him and often teased him with boyish delight. One day he came to me and said: 'Little master! I wish one thing in this world and that is to get up very early in the morning while a heavy snow is falling and the temperature below zero; then around my feet with a woollen shawl, put on my boots, dress my warmest clothes and then go out walking for ten, fifteen and twenty miles till I reach that village on the other side of the mountain!' I replied: 'Abol, thou art a wise man and I have never seen thee acting so rashly. Why shouldst thou put thyself through all these inconveniences? Art thou not afraid to catch cold? Tell me frankly, what is on the other side of the mountain that attracts thee so irresistibly?' He answered impatiently and warmly: 'Oh little master! Why art thou teasing me? Dost thou not know that my wife and children live there? Thou art yet too small to see the light of love in the eyes of a noble, devoted woman who is waiting and waiting for the arrival of her husband. I love her and the children. Whenever I go to see them those little ~~scamp~~ kiddies walk all over me and prattle into my ravished ears a

thousand childish questions. My wife is also a dear, sweet, obedient woman and such an excellent housekeeper.

"This Abul had a curious habble-bubble made of wood. One day out of pure fun I went to his room, took his habble-bubble and threw it on the floor, thus the water contained in the lower part ^{of it} splashed all around. Poor Abul became terribly angry and cried out despairingly: 'Oh little master! Oh little master! what didst thou do! I had kept unchanged this water for ^{the last} six months, in order to relish more my smoke. Now thou hast come and destroyed all my anticipated pleasures.' When I heard this explanation of his I stood there and laughed more till I was almost exhausted, because the water in the habble-bubble is changed every time the tobacco is smoked therein. Abul had kept the water for six months thinking the more stagnant the water becomes the more he would enjoy his smoke."

"During the winter season many of us children gathered in the open square after the falling of a heavy snow and played with a joyous abandon at snowballs. I used to take a big chunk of the white fluffy thing and press it hard against the palms of my hands shaping it into snowballs. Then each of us took a vantage ground and ~~with~~ pelted each other with much enthusiasm and glee. What I loved most was the feeling of the pressure of snow against the palms of my hands and its ~~from~~ - from sound while I rounded it into balls." X

This morning we drank tea in his holy Presence and then he went out to call on friends. In the afternoon Sheikh Taref and few others called on him to discuss their affairs and receive his advice. Then the brother of the Doctor in Kofre Yassif was announced and he requested the Master to give him an introduction for Zakki Bey in Jerusalem so that he may be given a position in the army. This Talelet the Beloved dictated to me and then signed and gave to the man. In a happy, grateful mood he left the room.

In the evening the officials who have returned from Damascus to welcome the "Holy Flag of the prophet" and gave a vivid description of the mammoth meeting held in the Mosques and the oratorical lectures delivered to raise the fanaticism and patriotism of the people against the enemies of their religion.