

Home of Abdul Baha

Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria

February 2^d 1915

Dear friends!

Today the anxious inhabitants were notified by the military authorities that should the warships of the enemies attempt to land bluejackets, the town will be defended and their invasion repulsed by patriotic native soldiers. All along the shore, around the Mountain of God, in front of the harbor and the government building, a circle of trenches and dikes are dug to offer resistance to the "implacable foe". The inhabitants are advised not to leave their homes in case of foreign occupation and should they do so, their lives will be forfeited. For this reason, many people are searching through the mountain to find empty caves and caverns to hide themselves during the hours of bombardment. They are very much afraid and are in a state of consternation. Although they have not yet mounted any guns on various prominent places, still, there are rumors current that they will do this any day. Detachments of soldiers patrol the streets and the harbor at all times and most stringent rules are enforced. The town of Acca is also fortified and many trenches are dug in front of the pier. The priests and leaders of native Christians of all denominations are arrested and sent under strong guard to the interior. They are ruthlessly separated from their families without any apparent reason. For the last few days more than one hundred prominent personages are thus captured and seized by force, their homes ransacked and their wives and children thrown into the depth of utter disconsolate despair. It is also said that more 60 trains of soldiers were dispatched from Haifa to Acre to start their march for the Egyptian Campaign. About ten days ago the Turkish News Agent circulated the report that the Army has reached 30 Kilometers from the Canal. This rather unreliable report furnished a means for the manifestation of patriotic spirit of some of the citizens; but after that we have heard nothing as regards ~~of~~ the movement of the army and this, as we have learned by experience, is not a good sign. The smallest advantage would surely have been magnified, were there any ^{even} in sight. This complete silence is the

harbinger of sad events. Anyway the people are waiting impatiently to receive a word about the great army of invasion but every day they are doomed to further disappointment.

The Italian steamer still touches some of the Syrian ports and she has ^{been} ~~been~~ so for the sole means of communication with the outside world. Now and then rumors were set afloat that Italy was on the brink of war and her merchant steamers would discontinue their sea-faring - so far as Syria ^{was} ~~was~~ concerned but these rumors were contradicted by actual facts. However ^{today} the officers of the custom house received the explicit injunction that no foreigner - no matter to what nationality he may belong should be permitted to land - thus the doors for the present are shut in the face of all the newcomers. And no person will be permitted to leave the country without applying for permission to the Governor - General in Beirut and a thorough examination of his aims and motives. These are indeed the evil days of Syria; hundreds of people are out of ^{work}, thousands of young men are daily sacrificed for the caprice and whims of a few crazy patriots; the light of commerce is extinguished, the limbs of industry are paralyzed, the path of progress is blocked and the black night of poverty, injustice and tyranny has fallen heavy upon the hearts of humanity. Everywhere people are brow-beaten, humiliated and their possessions are taken away from their offices and shops without any regard to the rules of justice and equity. No one is ^{enforced} ~~care~~ of his own life. Turmoil, confusion, difficulties, idleness, and misery stare into one's face and stalk abroad in daylight. This looks more like the doomsday; no one ^{is} confident that his life will be secure. It is only through the power of the Blessed Perfection that we have been protected so far in these woeful days, but we feel so keenly all the manifest sufferings stream all around us, and we long so much to do something for these sufferers. Our Beloved is doing all he can, but there is much to be done by ^a concentrated effort of charity and philanthropy, ^{the cultivation of} which two qualities are totally neglected in these days. There must needs be devotion and loyalty to the Cause of the poor.

From morning till noon the Beloved was out, calling on different individuals but the major part of his time was spent in the government's house, meeting the officials and discussing with them the uncertain future of Syria. No sooner he entered the garden than he ordered Esfandiyar to have the carriage ready to take his three daughters, Lusa and other women of the family to Abou Senan. As their number was large another carriage was hired from the German colony. Mirza Jalal, ~~and~~ Mirza Hadi ^{and Khosro} were going to accompany them, ^{but to} return tomorrow morning with the Master's carriage. After lunch I ascended the Mountain to look over my Bahai Nest and take with me a few necessary things, to ~~be~~ ready in case we should leave also. The wind ~~was~~ was blowing with great velocity and from the ^{windows} of the Pilgrim's Home I saw the carriages departed for their destination, carrying away all the female contingents.

In the evening we had the glowing pleasure of sitting in the Presence of the Master. He dwelt on the harrowing conditions of the people and how he comes daily in contact with many souls who are needy and poverty-stricken. Many of them have been rich and prosperous a few months ago but now they are stripped of all their joy and their prospect is somber and dark. Then speaking about Egypt and her wealth and prosperity he said:—"Of late years Soudan, including Khartoum has been built up very rapidly because of the railway construction. God willing I shall send there a number of the Egyptian Bahai teachers to spread amongst the inhabitants the Glad-Tidings of the Kingdom of God." Then changing the subject he said:—"The Glorious maturity of this world depends upon the realization of two things: the establishment of the era of universal Peace and the discovery or appearance of the hidden science which shall renovate all the conditions of existence There is a recondite wisdom and divine prescience in all these universal revolutions and upheavals. God is working out His Plan through all these sweeping organic changes, destructive ^{social} cataclysms and the overthrow and downfall of all the tenacious old maxims and ideas. Without the storms, snows, hails, rains and the frozen weather of the ice-bound winter the delectable spring with

its balmy air, its sweet flowers, its green pastures, its fruitful trees its myriads of singing, flying birds shall not appear. At the end of this war the Bahais must declare their war. With the heroism of intrepid soldiers they must open fire and vanquish the enemies of humankind. There will be a vast battlefield and they must throw in their forces with earnestness and enthusiasm. For the friends of God this is a rare opportunity and they must co-operate with each other with zeal and courage. Their ammunition is the Love of God, their sword is the Knowledge of God and their trust is in the protection of God. They must arise and travel and teach and spread the Teaching and unfurl the Banner of brotherhood and Peace. Before the gathering of these clouds in the fair horizon of mankind I travelled throughout Europe and America and delivered lectures before Societies and in churches. Often I cried out at the top of my voice: O people! O people! Are you not awake? Are you unconscious of the danger which is threatening you? Are you unaware of the evils of war? Are you so heedless as regards to your future? O men! O women! Arise ye, show ye an effort, strive ye; perchance you may be able to extinguish this world-consuming fire! At that time these and similar words exercised no permanent influence, because the people were rocked in the cradle of peace and tranquillity. Now, ^{that} the fair heaven of humanity is changed and the birds of conciliation and amity have flown away, they will lend their ears to the voices of Peace and listen to the Councils of truth. The Bahai teachers must prepare themselves for active work in the Vineyard of the Kingdom and devote all their time to train the children of men in the principles of the oneness of the world of humanity and divine civilization. Like unto the stars they must shine and similar unto the joyous thrushes they must sing. They must fill the world with the ambler scent of the odorous perfume of the words of God and turn the attention of mankind to the heavenly outlook."

Then he related a lovely story about "Salman", the Persian letter carrier of Baha-Allah who died a few years ago and his peculiar habits in travelling from city to city throughout Asia to carry the Tablets