

Home of Abdul Baha
Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria
February 5th 1915

Dear friends!

Mullah Abou Taleb is a nice old man. He is the St. Claus of Mount Carmel. He tells me himself he is 97 yrs old but I tell him he is more ^{than} one hundred years old. He has been living in this sacred spot for about 12 years. His sons are also old and are active servants of the Cause in Bakou. He descends the mountain every day to meet the Beloved and attend the meeting in the evening. He reads to us some of his funny, blank poems and thus we spent an hour or two in happy association. The Master loves him very much and often calls him "my friend," "father", "associate." He is a type, the like of which can seldom be found anywhere else. We all like him, and if he finds ready and sympathetic listeners he would go on talking on old time, old believers, old books and old things. Like a child he loves picture-books and magazines and whenever I have one I loan it to him. He expresses his wonder and amazement at the funny caricatures, fantastic drawings and grotesque etchings. The other day while he was walking through the street ~~the~~ ^{he} him muttering something to himself. I asked him what he was saying. He did not want to tell me, but I insisted that he should share with me his secret. Hummingly and joyfully he sang the following lines:-

"Old man I; chest trouble have I; lost my appetite a long while ago,
With a plane-tree I made a spoon; with a camel I made a stew and
how I ate the same with a tango!

Ah! how old am I; chest trouble have I; lost my appetite a ~~very~~ long while ago."

I laughed heartily over this and when it was repeated to others they were also amused and thought it was quite clever of the old father. They wanted however, to hear him sing it with their own ears. When he entered the room this afternoon they all gathered around him and importuned him to sing to them the "woes" of his life. He looked at me reproachfully but they did not gave him time to speak. He had to give in at last and sing his song with a gusto.

This afternoon the Beloved entertained five officers of the army who have^{received} their commission to proceed to the theatre of war. The question of Peace on a universal plane was the subject of his conversation and the insecurity of fate the topic of his talk. The vicissitudes of the ancient Empire of Rome, the battles fought against each other by the jealous Caesars and Emperors, the unfortunate end of all those ambitious, cruel sovereigns, their vices and corruptions, their internecine strifes and civil wars, the licentiousness of the guards and legions were brought^{out} with perspicuity and penetration, amply demonstrating the uselessness of victories and the despair and rashness of defeat. He deplored the present state of affairs and the ominous directions they have taken on every side. While he was speaking with a wonderful glow of animation and picturing the victories of Peace and love, the Indian tradition of the "Peace pipe," so wonderfully immortalized in the Song of Hiawatha by Longfellow came to my mind when the chief called all the tribes of men together, and in a moving speech exhorted them to a course of friendship, closing it with these vigorous lines:-

"I am weary of your quarrels,	All your strength is in your union,
Weary of your wars and bloodshed,	All your danger is in discord;
Weary of your prayers for Vengeance,	Therefore be at <u>peace</u> henceforward
Of your wranglings and dissensions,	And as <u>brothers</u> live together."

In the evening we found again our way into the presence of the King of Kings who received all of us with unaffected courtesy and undisguised esteem. In the presence of Abdul Baha one feels unconsciously the innate nobility of his^{own} nature and the beauty and spirituality of a rich, cultivated, simple life. He opened his talk with the plain, direct remark:- "May God bestow a little pity and compassion to these artful, deceiving Kings and emperors who style themselves lords and masters of the world and who have debased the sense of justice and humanity! In their estimation to imperil the lives of a hundred thousand men is no more important than a mild amusement. For the settlement of their private disputes they are capable of perpetrating the most heinous crimes"

against the unoffending, innocent mankind. Two months ago I heard ^{practically} that ^{all} the inhabitants of Paris are in mourning! Just think of this one public misfortune! How it has affected all the people without exception! Mothers have lost their sons; wives are deprived of the protection of their husbands; sisters weep over the death of their brothers! Man has become so thoughtless, for he is sacrificing his life for a shovel of earth, but he would never think to characterize himself with the attributes of the Merciful! A heedless soul will rather lose a thousand dollars at a game of Roulette than to give five cents to a poor man. The country to which most every Westerner ascribes his allegiance is no other than a 'cage', wherein the souls are imprisoned. Instead of giving perfect freedom to the birds of their minds and hearts to soar in the infinite space of 'world patriotism', they are strengthening and decorating the bars of their 'gilded cage'. Is this not short-sightedness! Is this not a foolish dream out of which they will be awakened ~~tomorrow~~ ^{some day}! This 'cage' is not a delectable paradise to require so much care and attention. It is a dark and gloomy abode, airless and rayless. Why are they sacrificing their lives for this nothingness? With palpitating hearts, aching brains, tiring hands and weary feet they are spending the precious hours of their lives for the embellishment of this 'cage' and at last it becomes their own tombs. Is not this utter folly? Is not this sheer stupidity? Is not this heavy doltishness? Is this not pure imbecility? God has created man in His own image and likeness and endowed him with reasoning faculty, intellectual powers and cognitive sense. He has kneaded his original constitution with the water of holiness and sanctity; He has destined for him a life of celestial freedom, measureless and boundless; He has ordained for him the indefinable state of Blessedness; He has decreed for him the loftiest ^{heights} of spirituality and illumination; and yet he causes himself to be thrown into the abyss of darkness, ~~to~~ ^{to become} a prisoner of his own ego, degrading his noble nature to the station of the beasts, polluting his ideals with baseness and despicability and depriving himself of the Graces of the Almighty. One day he is a prisoner of wealth, another day he hankers for fame; now he is moved by the love of glory, then he aspires for distinction. To-day he is bound with the ties of family, ^{tomorrow} he is caught in the fire of concupiscence, now he is a slave to his anger, and a thrall to passion and fury. Indeed God has fashioned him with majestic splendors