

Home of Abdul Baha
 Mount Carmel, Haifa Syria
 February 8th 1915

Dear friends!

At last the Ottoman subjects are feasted with a highly-flavored so-called dispatches of victory on the border of the Canal Suez. They are most improbable but as such, they are believed credulously and much jubilation manifested on the part of the public. It is reported that the Turkish army has achieved a great triumph, that Ismailieh and the railroad station are taken, three English warships are destroyed, 1800 English soldiers are killed, 800 are wounded, 6 guns and much ammunitions are seized and the "enemy" because they had arisen a whirlwind of sand, decamped the place. For the last three days many bulletins were issued morning, noon and evening, each one containing most extraordinary accounts. Demonstrations have been held in different sections of the country and much enthusiasm has been shown by the guards who are stationed in Haifa. They walked through the streets, singing popular, patriotic songs and firing revolvers in the air to give vent to their forced joy. But today the cables were toned down considerably and the number of victories reduced to minimum. They have not even reached the Canal, only an attack was made at one undefended place. It is further stated that 11 Turks are "martyred" and 10 wounded with ^{no} other casualty. All these things go to show, that the fight is started in good earnest and we must now wait with ^{all the} stoic calmness ⁱⁿ our possession to see in whose favor the gods will decide the final victory. We are indeed living in such days of storm and stress, we see the blood of our brothers ^{are} shed so copiously, people are being butchered with less scruples than the killing of animals, the possessions of those who are left behind are confiscated for military use, old men are not spared and drawn into the service, and commerce, industry, labor and production are at a standstill. We are witnessing such dire wants and miseries all around us, hundreds and thousands are thrown out of work, many stores are closed, many people are afflicted with ^{an} apathetic indifference, staring blankly into the vacant space and not knowing what will happen to them next hour. Their past has been full of sorrows, their present is black and their future unknown.

This morning while the Beloved was walking in the garden sent for me and dictated the following cable to Mr Roy Wilhelm of New York:- "Doctor Gitsinger returned America. I have not accepted one cent. Alikes" Then turning his face to Mirza Fajlollah Khan he said:- "When in the United States we were busy by day and by night. Lectures were delivered almost everyday and innumerable souls were interviewed. They are events recorded in history, we are now living in Naifa but how different our days are spent!" Then he gave an instructive talk about the religious conditions of Persia and deplored the lack of constructive intelligence on the part of the Persian political and religious leaders who fret away their precious time in unprofitable controversies and barren party disputes.

Seeing a little donkey of one of the friends in the meadow fronting the house he said half-amusedly:- "In America I did not ~~see~~ ^{see} any donkey. In the Zoological Park of Washington I saw a beautiful wild ass. There were elephants, lions, leopards, monkeys, snakes, birds of many species and hues and other kinds of animals. Amongst other caged animals I saw two black and white ^{polar} bears. They were looking at the people who had gathered around the carriage. They looked at them with sorrowful and melancholy mien as though saying: 'Why am I here? Why have they imprisoned me? Why these boys and girls are staring at me? They should have been my captives but they are now my captors. They were originally ~~to be~~ ^{to be} destined my food but now they are standing there and poking fun at me.' Indeed, it is most strange that these Westerners have collected in one garden all these wild beasts but they have been unable to find one man to gather them under the banner of spiritual brotherhood."

He sat on a chair and a big grey and white cat with shining silver hairs came near him very quietly and laid itself down on his 'Ala'. It began to clean its face and body with its paws and basking in the sunshine in the most happy, non-suspicious manner. It made a picture of perfect ease and satisfaction. Now its eyes were closed; stretching backward and forward its feet and hands. The Master looked at it for a minute; then he said:- "Look at this lovely cat. How it sleeps in the sunlight. The Kings of the earth ^{are} such poor specimens compared to the delicious happiness enjoyed by it. It has no sorrow, no pain, no worry, no trouble. Its life is so sweet and pretty"

Rising from his seat he started to walk again. A rather prominent man who is a friend of the Beloved passed by the door, carrying three bundles. Formerly he had two or three servants and would have never thought that a day will come when he will become obliged to do this kind of work for his family. Hence he stopped, saluted the Master and apologized for being reduced to this wretched state, when he departed Abdul Baha said: - "Why people should apologize for 'working' which is an axis around which revolves all the honor of mankind! Work is noble; it is not disgrace. Work is godlike and I revere ~~that~~ workman, honor the laborer. There is no other aristocracy but the aristocracy of labor; no ^{other} nobility but the nobility of work."

In the evening we had a nice meeting. Many of the believers were present. The question of the national and religious feasts as kept by different people was broached. The Master said: - "The Feast of Ridwan is the most important Bahai feast. During those days the Blessed Beauty declared Himself to His disciples. I hope we will become conformed to keep ^{this year} the Feast of Ridwan in an adequate manner. The Americans keep the Xmas season very elaborately. They send messages and presents to their friends, feed the poor and have decorated trees for their children." Then he spoke in detail about the untidiness and squalid existing amongst the poorer class of Egyptians and illustrated it with his personal observations. In order to make his picture complete he brought in Persia and their total lack of sanitary measures. Having done the subject full justice and laying bare the weak points of both nations as regards their disregard to cleanliness he became general in his remarks: - "Cleanliness" he said "is the cornerstone of every family, the light of every household. In former times the Persians were very cleanly and neat. They were immaculate and pure and were most vigilant in ^{keeping} these laws, more than other nations. One of their religious laws was that they should not build their houses in any place which has not a running, flowing stream. They had even to wash their soiled dishes etc in running water. For this reason we see today all through Persia vast remains of aqueducts which carried the water to the most distant points. No village could exist unless one of these aqueducts passed through it."

How exhilarating and cheerful it is to be welcomed by the cleanliness and tidiness of a house when you enter therein! A clean, well-ordered home is a corner of Paradise. A neat, tidy home with love in it is a reflection of heaven. On the other hand how repellent and offensive is a dirty, filthy home! It is a black, loathsome sore in a community. Its very sight is sickening and revolting. There may be some people who are used to such unpleasant, disagreeable environments but Society through her social and civic representation must teach them differently. They must be saved from such plague ridden surroundings and brought under purer and healthier influence. In the Bahai, the most scrupulous attention and ^{most} rigorous regard is paid to cleanliness, sanitation, hygiene and purity. In this dispensation every home must be an immaculate, bright gem, with many scintillating, shining facets, ^{treasures} pouring forth rays of virtue and sanctification. Each city must be like a great system of constellations, dazzling gloriously in the heaven of humanity. When the Bahai laws are put into practice, then the ideal meaning of cleanliness and purity will become fully manifest. There are certain matters which are physical in their application but are directly connected with the spiritual laws of ^{the} universe. For example, physical cleanliness is one of them. Truly I say, material cleanliness is conducive to the renaissance of the spiritual forces latent in man. Music, both instrumental and vocal, painting and ~~the~~ fine arts are included in this category. Voice is one of the accidentalities of life which is vanished after its appearance, still when it comes out of the mouth it sets the atmospheric waves into undulation and a vibration is created ^{which} reaches almost instantaneously the tympanums of the ears and if it is a sweet, fine voice it will play a marvellous effect upon the spirit! Now what ^{is this} mysterious, all-pervading connection ^{which} exist between the vocalized air and the spirit of man? Is this not an ideal sign for those who ponder? Now the same unseen, spontaneous union which exist between the voice of a rare artist and the hearts of a great audience, the same invisible connection exist between outward cleanliness and spirituality. The former assists the latter, while the latter conforms the first. "