

Home of Abdul Baha
Mount Carmel, Haifa Sy
May 10th 1915

Dear friends!

Tonight the Beloved called on Mr. Michel, the Treasurer of the Ottoman Bank. His daughters played a few lovely pieces on the piano and praised their skill and cleverness. Then he gave an interesting talk on the theory of music and its gradual development from the foundation of the world. He believed that Persia was the earliest conservatory of music and the home of vocal sounds, that the system as taught and developed in that country was carried to other parts of the world and slowly perfected by other artists and composers. What is music? It is but ^{the} vibrations or movements excited in the air which surrounds us. The fundamental notes of music consisted (in Persia) of 12 tones, each tone containing in it a group of notes. Of course every musical sound was accompanied by other sounds called its overtones and harmonics. Each one of these ~~tones~~ belonged to one of the provinces of Persia, such as 'Esphahan', 'Dagah', 'Segah', 'Bayat' etc. and when the Arabian philosophers translated these musical text books, gave to the original twelve tones their own names without changing. Thus it is well-known that the early music had for its harmony octaves and fifths but ^{with} later developments came the idea of intervals of three notes. Musical sounds being the result of rapid and regular vibrations of the air, there was born a conscious desire on the part of the earliest singers and players to represent them on paper, thus they may be produced by voice or instrument at will. Hence the 'notation' of music came into being. It has been claimed that the science of notation was discovered by the Egyptians but one of the most celebrated philosophers and musicians of Persia by name Faraby wrote the first 'note-book' which it is stated has been translated into Latin. The very word 'note' comes from Arabic 'Nag' showing clearly that like so many other words it has been borrowed from the philosophical language of Saracene Cordova and Andalus. In providing a written language for music, naturally two main essentials had to be considered. First, the pitch and second the length

or the duration of these sounds and the seven forms of note, *Brave*, *Semibreve*, *Minim*, *Crotchet*, *Quaver*, *Semiquaver*, *Demisemiquaver* were evolved. This was the ^{next} outline of his preliminary talk on music. Then he said:—
 "When I was travelling in Europe and America I attended some concerts and oratorios and was delighted with the progress of the vocal and instrumental art in those parts. Although it seems to them they have exhausted the the subtle, chromatic resources of music yet they are on the threshold of the revelation of celestial, universal music, which shall revolutionize the present system and usher in a new era of musical progress. The musical consciousness of future generations will become so rarified and trained that today's masterpieces will be as dissonant noises in their ears. At one time I was walking along the shore of Euphrates. Absorbed in my thought I suddenly heard the most charming and sweetest sound. I turned my head and saw a simple Arab lad riding on a donkey, loaded with under-bushes and playing on his flute. I was so intoxicated with the melody of his faultless tone that I requested him to get down from his donkey and play for me. I helped him to unload his donkey and ^{then} quietly we sat under the inviting shade of a tree. Then he began to play with such depth of feeling and beauty that my whole heart went to him. I drank deeply the sweet cadences and harmonies of his flute to such an extent that I was entranced thereby. When he finished playing I assisted him again to load his donkey, gave him a present and the address of our house and asked him to call on me next day. At the appointed hour he came and played for us and as there were several prominent men in the room they all liked his music and asked him ^{in turn} to go to their homes one night a week and entertain them and their guests. In a short while he became famous throughout all Bagdad and leaving his hard labor of thorn picking he devoted his career to the inspiring art of music. With his growing popularity he grew in wealth and position and became a respected, loved and honored member of the community. He was still in Bagdad when we were exiled to Constantinople and used to call on me almost every week antecedent to our departure."

The Beloved was walking in the garden this morning and then he ordered the carriage to be ready to go up the mountain and visit the Holy Tomb of the Bab. He asked me to accompany him and I did with joy and happiness. At the door of the Pilgrims' Home we alighted from ^{the} carriage and he walked straight into the room of Haji Mirza Haydar Ali. He was busy with the writing of the biography of Mirza Abul Fazel and therefore was not aware of the entrance of the Lord. "Zehabe Haji! I have come to enquire about your health." The unmistakable voice startled him and he arose from his seat precipitately to welcome the Centre of the Covenant. After an hour of personal conversation we went to the Holy Tomb and the Master chanted the Visiting Tablet with such loud, rich voice that its clear echo reverberated throughout the whole building. His voice sounded like the harmonious music of a cathedral chime, each word distinct, melodious, mellow and resonant. Oh! I wished so much we had a phonograph in ^{the} other room to capture this voice of his! Coming out of the Sacred Abode Aga Mohamed Hassan begged him to stay for lunch and so he did. At noon, in the Pilgrims' Home in his holy presence, we sat around the table. There were altogether ten of us. At about 2 P.m. we descended the mountain and inhaled the fresh, sweet flowers of the perennial garden surrounding this divine habitation. In the future every minute of these days will be counted a year. To me they will be like unto the blissful dreams of heaven, the angelic experience of the springtime of Manifestation, the ecstatic visions of the poets and seers, the ripened fruits of the tree of existence and the actual realization of the yearnings of bygone prophets and patriarchs. I am somehow ^{conscious} of the fact that I shall never have happier days in my life. Is there a greater sovereignty in this world than to live, day and night in the home of Truth, smelling the fragrance of the garden of Truth, being encircled with the atmosphere of Truth, receiving the shining effulgences of Truth, swimming in the sea of Truth, looking into the Countenance of Truth, standing in the presence of the Lord of Truth and associating with the majestic King of Truth?