

Pleiades Sylvan Bower

Alhammeh

Lake Tiberias. Syria

May 1st 1914

Dear friends!

The night is very balmy and the spirit of quiet contemplation is stealing over me. I wish you were here to enjoy the beauty and charm of this Arabian desert. The silver beams of the moon have cast a soft and sweet spell over this enchanting scene and after having a talk with our sister Miss Edith Sanderson, I have come to my Sylvan Bower to speak with you for a little while and then sleep my first night in the Garden of Allah.

I was up this morning at 3 am, because I had so much writing to do. After half an hour some one was sent down ^{by the Master} to wake Khosro and Isfandeyar, the latter to prepare the carriage. Little by little ^{the} darkness of the night was changed into light and I came out of my garden to have a last look at the beautiful rose-garden. As I was walking around the beds of lilacs the door of the house was opened and the Master came out followed by his three sons-in-law. The

women were in the corridor, waiting to have a last glimpse ^{of} him as the carriage ^{drove} away. Amongst them was Mrs Hoagg. A few others including Ahmad Yazdi and his brother had come to bid him farewell. Mirza Jalal drove with the Master up to the station but did not go further. Mirza Hadi, Khosro and myself were the only ones who formed the members of the Beloved's party. When our carriage reached the Austrian Post office the sun arose out of the Eastern horizon glorious and resplendent. The Lord was driving in and out of the narrow streets of Haifa, many people were lounging around, others having just gotten out of their beds were hurrying along to open their dingy shops, the porters were drinking their bowls of hot milk in front of crude, improvised coffees, a few squatting on the ground smoking their hubble-bubbles - a motley procession of unthinking humanity, dull, uninteresting and dead to all the higher impulses of aesthetic life. The Commander of the army was also the guest of the Master and so they had a separate compartment all by themselves, and we three had secured ^{places} ~~rooms~~ in the second class. The train pushed out of the station at 6 o'clock and 5 minutes am and then although I was very happy in the great privilege accorded me I could not help but feel sad, for I realized

with the Beloved

how the companions of my travellings, have entered one by one on the active field, while I am being left behind. Probably the Master realizing my utter uselessness out of his own grace is keeping me beside himself. Hard as I have thought on this subject I cannot think of any other reason; for I know I am not worthy of all his infinite graces.

From Haifa to Alhammeh there are six stations, taking about 4 hours for the train to cover the distance. They are as follows:- Balad - Sheikh, Talle' Shamam, Afaule, Shat Beyzan, Gesrol - Majame', Samach and then Alhammeh. When we arrived at the station we found familiar faces to greet us. A tent was prepared for the Master and a lovely green bower for myself. The four walls and the roofs are made with slender branches which is named by Baba-Ollah the Pleiades trees. The pink flowers were ^{yet} on the branches and it made altogether a pleasing appearance. The tents are pitched quite near the station which is a fine ^{white} stone building, beside a lovely, gurgling river. We are at the gate of the great Sahore, called El Houran. This valley of Alhammeh, boasting of four sulphur baths of various degrees of heat (one as hot as boiling water) is about three miles long, and one mile broad.

The Master conducted his honored guest to the Tent and conversed with him on a wide range of subjects, philosophy, spiritual and historical. Now and then he would come out of the tent, calling for Khosro, Mirza Hadi or some one else, and ^{then} his majestic patriarchal figure with his snowy white beard and turban, his white locks falling on his shoulders, his commanding forehead and cream-white robes would bring forcibly to the mind of the beholder the picture of Abraham and the story of his hospitality. Only the Master has not to wait for the arrival of guests. They are coming all by themselves. just think of this first day. At noon the Beloved entertained at lunch the Commander of 10,000 men and at dinner more than ten Araks gathered around his table. They all sat on the ground and helped themselves heartily. Here in the desert every one is welcomed to what you have. People enter your tent and food must be prepared. You must go on without food ^{so} that your guests may be fed.

In the afternoon the judge, the collector, the chief and other minor officials of a neighboring town called on the Beloved and a veritable floodgate of conversation was set loose; now on public education again on the history of Inquisition, the dogmatism of the

middle ages of Europe, the rise of Islam and the founding of three powerful Caliphates in Bagdad, Cordova and Egypt and how through their beneficent influences science and philosophy were spread in the Orient and Europe, and how in the course of time they were fallen into decay and deterioration.

Now in Arabic and again in Turkish he continued to speak for hours and his ^{guests} listeners were listening in rapt attention, as though an angel of the Lord has descended from heaven and ^{was} speaking to them in the golden tongue of the Cherubim. Where comes all this knowledge, all this understanding, all this divine insight into the nature of things? they whispered to each other.

Right after sunset, the Master after having ^{taken} a walk through the country to see the two hot springs in which he will take daily baths - he entered his tent and his guests sat around. As though impelled by a higher power he began to speak, recounting, with telling eloquence and penetrative power, the contents of his talks in ^{the} San-Francisco Jewish Synagogue and in the Commercial Club of Minneapolis. Seldom had I seen him so animated and quick in expression. To talk so much, it would tire him a great deal.

but I know whenever the occasion calls the Beloved does not spare himself at all.

While he was thus speaking I was sitting outside the tent with Mrs Edith Sanderson, hoping many more of the Western friends were here to participate in these matchless scenes of spiritual life. She is enjoying greatly the novel experiences of the Garden of Allah!

After dinner with a few other friends we went to the hot spring and while the moon was shining over us we disported in its warm water. Returning to my Sylvan Bower I fixed my mosquito net and slept soundly on the floor. Now and then I opened my eyes and was delighted to see the silver moon streaming down through the interstices of the Oleander branches, and hear the musical lays of the breeze wafting through the green boughs. Where am I? Who has brought me here? This is indeed a strange, mystical world full of unexpected happenings. In the silence of this wonderful night I could not sleep, for I was surrounded by an ^{peaceful} army of thoughts and the names of many dear Bahai friends came to my mind. I wished for all the confirmations of the Kingdom of Allah and the Support of the Holy Spirit.