

Pleïades Sylvan Bower
 Alhammeh
 Lake Tiberias, Syria
 May 3d 1914

Dear friends!

The breezes favor us in the mornings and evenings, but in the middle of day the wind is hushed and the weather grows ^{very} warm. Hence those who desire to take ~~and~~ short walks ~~into the country~~ must do it either very early in the mornings or after sunset in the mystic moonlight. Generally I take my walks all alone, but they tell me I must not go too far away from the camp as I might be attacked by the Arab Bedouins. I tell them I have nothing to be attacked for, that I can manage to get along with them very well, and that those that I have seen in the camp and with whom I have conversed are quite gentlemanly and polite. Many people are unnecessarily afraid of the Arab Bedouins, but notwithstanding all their failings they are a simple good-hearted community. They will never render evil for good. Whosoever ^{renders} treats them with kindness ~~they~~ will not only not harm him but ^{will} protect him ~~and his interests~~ to the very last drop of their blood. Their love or hate goes to the extreme point of manifestation. When a person has incurred their hatred they will rest till they have avenged themselves. Time is of no account to them. If the

father of the family or the tribe has been unable to mete out the desired punishment on the culprit, the object of their enmity will be bequeathed intact to the rising generation, ^{will be} inculcating their hearts and minds with its deadly poison and abjuring them to deal the blow whenever possible. The result of this feudal tradition has been ^{always} ruinous to the steady progress of these Arabs, for no sooner one of the numerous tribes became strong and powerful, ^{then} the bone of vengeance rankled in his mind and war ~~was~~ declared against the object of its hatred. They have not yet learned the mighty lessons of union and co-operation - so much needed for the steady advancement of any country and the enlightenment of any nation.

Thus it so happened that when ^{I was ready early} this ~~early~~ morning ~~when~~ I was ready to start for my walk the Master called me. I joined him immediately in his walk towards the hot spring. Let me tell you right here that although there are many hot springs in this valley, there are only three which are used by the public. One is called Jarab, for skin diseases etc, The other is Magleh for many forms of ills which I do not need to enumerate here. The third is Reeh, also for many kinds of sicknesses. ^{water of the} The first is hot, the second is very hot, the third tepid and lukewarm. There are no buildings in the neighborhood of these springs and no sanitary regulations whatsoever. People bathe themselves in any one of

these springs by number. There are no different quarters for men and women. The Arab Bedouins whether men or women bathe with no stitch of cloth on - in an Adamite state but the time for the bathing of each sex is different. Often one sees fifty to one hundred men enjoying the hot water, naked - unashamed, not knowing what modesty means. This whole place is rented ^{from the government} by two Kurds for the insignificant sum of \$2.50. They in turn charge the bathers from one to ten cents for day, and you may take as many baths as ^{one} your constitution can stand. Several wealthy persons realizing the dazzling possibilities of a place like ^{unto} this have approached the government to get a concession for its material development but they have been uniformly refused. On the other hand, were this place developed it will enter into concurrence with Lake Tiberias baths ^{which are} about half an hour from here, and greatly decrease the income of that company by attracting a large number of Western tourists for its natural advantages. Around the spring of Magleh there are vast ruins of ancient buildings with tall colonades, high arches, etc. I could not get anyone to tell me how far they date back. They may ^{have} been baths built by the Roman Conquerors of Syria in ancient time, where the ^{Roman} generals, nobility and their wives took baths. Popularly, it is said, these buildings were constructed by Solomon and he came here from Jerusalem to bathe

in these hot springs. Be it as it may, it is quite clear that ^{over} these springs wonderful domes and arches were built, but the Arabs have quite destroyed them. This afternoon I stood over one of these stone walls of wonderful masonry. On the half-demolished wall one sees hundreds of tattered shreds of clothes in many colors are hanging. What does this mean? Because popular belief has attributed the construction of these buildings to Solomon, the superstitious Bedouin women have come to believe that if upon their arrivals they tear a piece of their clothes and hang it on the wall all their secret wishes and hopes will be realized. How many, sweet womanly hopes are tied up and centered around one of these shreds ^{more} no man can even remotely guess. But let me acquaint in strict confidence my men's friends that the heart of the Bedouin woman is stirred with no other emotion as the dread of sterility and divorce. Many a woman comes from ^{her} long distance to bathe ^{herself} in Solomon's spring, that her life may be crowned with a son, and many a woman ties the shred to the rock with the prayer that her lord ^{may} might not divorce her, and the quibe of the other wives might not work in her ruination.

While I sat on the wall I watched the strange procession of the Arabs passing ^{ing} by. A more, nondescript, odd, novel, Kaleidoscopic procession I had seen nowhere. I fail to find

to find proper adjectives to describe these multi-colored clouds, constantly changing and shifting into a mass of rainbow hues. In front of me is the hot spring, the Arabs have gathered around it; a little further is a broad green plain with large, wild trees. Here they live by day and sleep by night with their horses and donkeys. The drollest scenes, comic, melodramatic, Bedouin dances, singing and sports are enacted by night in the light of the moon. To me they looked more like abnormal beings coming out of the nether world to make the night disturbed.

As we walked this morning toward the spring the Master asked me: "How art thou? Art thou feeling well in this desert? This is the Sahara and the comforts of the city are lacking. Dost thou mind ^{it} ~~them~~?" I answered: "Not at all. I love it very much. There are thousands of people who would have loved to be here, but the Beloved Abdul Baha has made it possible for this unworthy servant. This is through his Bounty and Favor."

Several Arabs passed with their wives carrying the heavy loads on their heads. Looking at them he said: "Look how the men walk ahead straight and confident while the backs of their wives are bent under the heavy load. What a contrast between the social customs of the West and this country!"

When we returned to the camp the train ^{had} arrived from Haifa, bringing with it Mrs Hoegg, Touba Khanom and about four or five more believers. They had brought with themselves a great deal of baggage. Because my Syrian nook is much cooler than the tent, one of the daughters of the Master desired to spend a few hours with the other women. With much pleasure I transferred ^{it} into their hands and joined the Arabs gathered under the "hair house." I asked them many questions about their habits and customs and received satisfactory ^{answers}. The Master also joined the members of the Holy Family in the Areesheh and had his lunch with them.

In the afternoon we followed the Beloved to the English Spring where he took his bath, but the water being too hot he could not stay there as long as he would have liked. When he came out of the tent and walked towards the little Arab store where he rests a few minutes every day, all the Bedouins ^{were} gazing at him with wonder and amazement. At ^{the} first glance they see that he is a superior being, apart from all the rest of mankind. Never had they seen a more majestic and spiritual figure than the Master. "He is a saint." "He is a godlike man." "He is a prophet," "He is a the Master of men" are a few comments they whisper into each other's ears.