

Peiades Sylvan Bower
 Alhammeh
 Lake Tiberias, Syria
 May 5th 1914

Dear friends!

To sit in the shade of the cool arbor in the early morning and watch the green slope of the opposite mountain with its waving curvatures and deep-cut fissures, while its summit is gilded with the ^{first} rays of the rising sun, the warblings of the sweet birds mingled with the plaintive notes of the shepherd - the mantle of spiritual ecstasy spreading over all these delightful scenes - and above all the Beloved of the world, sitting in his tent close-by - praying - is a rare pleasure, a unique experience that to all probability will never be repeated in one's life. I wonder whether I would have found so much happiness and contentment, were I camping in this oasis all by myself or even with a number of friends! Sometimes - to be frank - I think I could not endure even the sight of Paradise without the presence of the Beloved. In other word my Paradise is his presence; my joy is his good-pleasure; my rose-garden is his world of ideals; my heaven is his contentment. Without his constant help and assistance I could not write one word nor you would have been interested to receive a letter from one

so unworthy.

These were my day-dreams when suddenly the Beloved appeared at the door of my Areesheh. "Didst thou sleep well last night?" he asked. "I did." When I returned from my bath I fell into a sound sleep. Then I awoke and had my supper and slept again." Seeing that I was busy writing he smiled and commanded me to continue my work, and he walked away to join the stationmaster and a few others whom he desired to introduce them to him. For half an hour he spoke to them about certain traditions of Islam and their explanations. Then he joined the ladies in the tent and for the benefit of Mrs Hoagg and Miss Sanderson detailed the customs and manners of the Arabs and how the women are treated and subjected to all manner of menial labors. I could hear his clear voice borne over to my Areesheh by the breezes.

At ten o'clock the train arrived. There were many soldiers and the whole train was decorated with flags and bunting. These days the Turkish authorities are very active in the enlistment of new recruits and they are being drilled with vigor and feverish haste.

From the station the Beloved retired to his own tent and laid down himself on the ground. He was lying in such a manner that half of his body was under

the sun, the other half under the shadow of the tent. He was up after half an hour. Something in my heart told me to leave the work aside for the present and go out of my Areeshe and pass by the tent of the Master. Probably he might call me in. When I neared the tent I saw him ^{but} reclining against the chair and looking towards the slope of the opposite mountain. "Come in" he said. "Sit down. Look towards that half brown, half-green mountain! What a fine picture it makes! Look at ^{that} large flock of goats passing through ^{the} ravine, winding in and out! Is this not a charming pastoral scene! Although it is now verdant owing to the recent unexpected fall of rain, yet in one month one cannot find one blade of grass. Everything will be dried to the very root, owing to the intense heat. The heat will be so great that no one ^{will} be able to stay here and in the middle of the day it is as though columns of smoke rise to the sky. The only tree that stands the heat of the summer in this desert is - "Gaz". The life of the Arab in the interior is most simple. Their principal food does consist of the milk of the camel and a few dates. They do not like the atmosphere of the city. They revel in the expansiveness of the desert. The other day a few of the Bedouen ^{women} taunted our women because they are living in the town while they were happy to breathe the fresh air of the desert.

X When years ago I travelled from Acca to Tiberias in our Caravan there was a beautiful Bedouin woman riding on a camel. She was listless and thoughtful. In the same Caravan there was a young Christian who was struck with the beauty of this Arab maiden and her dark eyes. After some futile attempts he succeeded to establish himself in her favor. As I was near I could hear their conversations. He was telling her :- 'Thou art so beautiful, why dost thou not come to the city?' 'Why?' 'Oh! Thou wilt be married to a rich man.' 'What will he do for me?' 'He will build for thee a lovely house, thou wilt be served as a queen; servants and maids will wait on thee, thou wilt walk through green gardens, thou wilt sleep on soft beds instead of sands, he will buy for thee many precious jewels with which thou wilt decorate thy body, he will surround thee with such wonderful objects that thou hast never seen them even in thy dreams.' The girl straightened herself on the camel and looked at the youth with pity and contempt in her whole demeanor. 'I have my beloved desert, vast, broad and immeasurable. What do I want to do with your cane-like, cage-like and box-like houses. There the air is stuffy, here it is always fresh. The streets are

dingy, dirty and narrow; here the whole expanse of the Sahara is ^{my} your avenues and boulevards. Here is my home - the palace of immensity, the residence of God's own children. The on your town and your civilized, snobbish manners! I hate them. I cannot bear to look at them. They are all cheap tricks sanctioned by your so-called society. You come abroad to display your crafty etiquettes of mock modesty and respectabilities while in reality you are ^{physically} ^{and} morally, intellectually corrupt, afflicted with loathsome diseases. Away from me! Let me stay where I am. My home is the Sahara, my couch is the soft sand, my decorations are God's virtues, my lamps by night, the moon and the stars!" "X

He continued to tell me other such wonderful stories and I wish I had time and space to write them. After his lunch and rest he called me to his tent and dictated a few Tablets in Turkish. The weather has already become warm and beads of perspirations were streaming down from my forehead. After this he went to the station. No matter what time he goes there, the Arabs are sympathetic listeners. "Let me acquire knowledge" an Arab said as he pushed his way through the crowd to come near the Beloved. The Master does not mince at words and this afternoon

he enumerated their failures, their predatory instinct, their tribal
 strifes, their lack of feelings as regards the study of sciences^{and}
 arts and their present ignorant states. They were struck with
 the force of his authority, the lucidity of his talk and the
 truthfulness of his advice. "Why are you so slothful?" he
 pleaded them. "Why do you not make an effort to raise the
 educational standard of your women? Are they not your
 mothers, your sisters, your wives? Why do you hug ignorance
 so long to your breasts? Hail, friends, hail the light of knowledge.
 Welcome the bride of understanding and carry in your hands
 the torches of wisdom."

After this talk he went to bath. There also he spoke
 and counselled before going on.

We ate our supper under the moonlight. We had
 an Arab guest who related two lovely stories with a
 moral lesson to them. Then we walked towards
 the spring and saw the wonderful sword-dance
 by more than 400 Arab men and women.
 It was very weird and sensational.

The members of the Master's Camp including ^{men} women
 and servants have reached to 30. As the days roll on
 we may have more guests.