

Tiberias, Sea of Galilee

Tiberias

May 21st 1914

Dear friends!

Those who are familiar with the biblical history know that the sea of Galilee is as old as the bible itself. Mighty events have transpired in and around this sacred sea. Its surrounding mountains, hills, plains and valleys are mentioned in the Bible under various names and are blessed with the feet of the prophets and Patriarchs. In the old Testament it is called "the sea of Chinnereth". According to the contents of Numbers 34. 11-13) this sea with all its border going down to Jordan as far as the Salt sea and with all the coasts thereof were to be the inheritance of nine tribes and half by lot. The same injunction is reiterated in Deut 3.17. "The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast thereof from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea . . . " In (Joshua 11. 3) it is named the "sea of Chinnereth" from a town which stood somewhere on its margin called Chinnereth (Joshua 19. 35.) As we all know in the new Testament it is called the "sea of Galilee" or the "sea of Tiberias".

(John 6. 1) from the town of that name; and the "Lake of Gennesaret" (Luke V. 1) from the beautiful Plain of Gennesaret: (The modern name is Bahr Tabariyeh.) In this region, round about the shores of this sea, Christ spent the principal part of His public life. Then these beautiful shores were dotted with prosperous, thriving communities all of which are now destroyed. Capernaum, Chorazin, Magdala, and Bethsaida were some of the most important referred to in the Gospel. Cast out from Nazareth, Capernaum became henceforth the "home" of Jesus. "Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon, and Nephthaliem: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthaliem, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. (Math 4. 13. 16). Here he called Peter, James, and John, the 3 most intimate of His Chosen band. "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

And saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets (Luke v. 1, 2.) Then He entered into Simon's ship and taught the people on the shore and after he had performed the miracle of the draught which so astonished Peter, James, and John, "Jesus said unto Simon, Fear Not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

In his lectures throughout America Abdul Baha often repeated the wonderful parable of the sower and the seeds. It was from a ship on the waters of this sea, Jesus delivered that marvellous discourse on the Kingdom of heaven and the other parables, each one of which shines like a brilliant star in the firmament of the Gospel. "The same day ^{went} Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he ^{went} into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on shore," (Matt chapter 13.), and heard those matchless, spiritual parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven, and the net cast into the sea.

It was here when the sea was calmed by the Command of

the Master: "And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was sleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." (Matt VIII. 24 - 26) At Gergesa, "there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass to that way." And he cast out the devils. (Matt VIII. 28) Near here He fed the five thousand, (Matt XIV. 15-21; John VI. 1-13) and afterwards seeing His disciples toiling in rowing on the lake, for the wind was contrary "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." (Matt XIV. 25). When the collectors of tribute came to Him at Capernaum, Christ, in the exhibition of His perfect humility, linked Himself with His disciples in one of His most touching utterances. Having elicited from Peter that the tribute should be taken from the strangers, and that the children should go free, he added, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and ~~when~~ when thou ~~hast~~ opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; take that, and give ^{unto} them for me and thee."

(Matt XVII. 27.) Here he "performed many mighty works" and "spoke many things," and here was the scene of those touching incidents which occurred soon after his resurrection.

Early one morning, in the grey dawn, the disciples who were in their boat, after having toiled all the night and caught nothing, saw a dim figure standing "on the shore—" probably the beach of the Plain of Gennesaret. A voice, strangely familiar, yet unrealized came to them, "Children, have ye any meat?" And when they replied "No", and the first miracle on their entry to the discipleship was repeated, then, "that disciple whom Jesus loved," first with the quick instinct of love, said, "It is the Lord," while Peter, first with the impetuosity of a love of service cast himself into the sea, and swam to Him. ^{And} there on the shore where the mysterious fire of coals burned, and the farewell meal was spread, the Lord made them dine. Then followed that significant, pregnant dialogue between Jesus and Peter, showing clearly his command that his lambs must be fed and his Cause be spread in all parts of the world. "Simon Peter, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" He saith unto him, yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." For three times this command was repeated

"Feed my sheep; feed my sheep; feed my sheep." This was the last solicitude of that divine Shepherd! This was his heavenly Covenant! His sheep - the whole human race - had to be fed on the word of the living God. With this last message, the disciples could not forget the Cause of Christ. Whenever, they wanted to rest or stay quiet for awhile the explicit command of their Lord surged through their whole frames: "Feed my sheep." Inspired with the spiritual import of these 3 simple words they would rise again and go forth to spread the Glad-tiding of the Kingdom. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying Go ye therefore, and teach all nations Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28. 16-20.)

Such was the extraordinary faith of these consecrated disciples that facing all manner of calamities they unfurled the Flag of the Kingdom on every house-top. May we also be filled with this divine determination.

After drinking his tea and speaking with Ali Mansour Pashe and a Persian gentleman who arrived last night he left the Hotel to pay his visits to various government functionaries. It is very easy to see, how the Beloved Towers far above these men, and how reverently they listen to every word he utters and how they come to him with all sorts of questions, Koranic, Biblical, theological and philosophical. With a marvellous felicity of expression, a thorough understanding of human nature, an all around knowledge of the questions involved he satisfies all. At 10 o'clock Mirza Ali Akbar of Russia arrived from Haifa. His wife has been sick with fever for the last 20 days but she is recuperating. He is going to live as long as he stays here in Mirza Moneer's house. In the afternoon Mirza Hadi, Mirza Zekrollah, Haji Mohamad and Bahram received permission to return.

While I had my notebook in my hand I stood near the door of the Beloved's room talking with Mirza Ali Akbar to the effect that I want to ask the Master to dictate an article on certain topic. He must have heard, because when he came out he looked at me with a laughing twinkle in his wonderful eyes.

"Not now, not now. Although I am supposed to be ^{resting} here. Dost thou not see me speaking with all these men all the time? But my health is well and I am sleeping much better. The weather of Tiberias is very dry and agrees with me. Does it agree with thee too?" And he came near and smote on both my cheeks. I had just shaved, so he said: "yes, yes, it is not bad. It agrees with thee. We are going to stay ^{here} for a while, away from the world and its confusing noises—just me and thee. Dost thou ^{not} like this?" "As long as thou art staying here, my Lord, it is the delectable paradise to this servant at thy threshold. Only I wish I ~~was~~ ^{were} endowed with a greater capacity to appreciate fully these heavenly blessings."

About 4.30 p.m., because the Beloved was away, Mirza Ali Akbar and myself thought the best thing we could do was to take a long walk beside the shore of the sea of Galilee extending to the North of the town. Passing by the Scotch mission-hospital and the Latin Convent we descended a declivity toward the shore. The road is not bad, it is rather smooth and wide, for nearly

two miles we walked, always new arms, arms of the sea,
 new hills and new scenes opening before our delighted
 eyes. At last we sat on the shore, drank of its water and
 washed our faces and started to return homeward. As we
 approached the town from far off we spied with an un-
 bounded joy the majestic figure of the Beloved walking
 toward us. He was dressed in his cream-colored robe
 and with his white turban and white hair and beard
 he was the picture of Abraham and Moses and ^{our} Christ.
 When he reached us we fell behind him and he
 continued his walk as far as the spring over which
 there are probably about a dozen large fig trees. All
 along the way both going and returning I tried to walk
 in his footsteps in a literal sense, but it was so difficult
 notwithstanding I succeeded in a measure. Several
 Franciscan priests passed by and raised their caps to
 him; Arabs, men and women saluted him; pic-nic
 parties along the shore left their singing and turned
 their eyes toward him. The question was trembling on
 every wondering lips: "Who is he?" Who was the one
 who walked nineteen hundred yrs along these shores?
 Truly these are glorious days.