

Bahai' Nest, Mount Carmel  
Haifa Syria

August 13th 1914

Dear friends:

"If the ruler pluck unjustly one apple from the garden of his subject.

His army will cut down all the trees, root and branch."

Two hundred thousand soldiers are assembled in Damascus ready to move at the first command. They are all well equipped and trained. All the hotels and private houses are lodged by the higher officers, the mosques, the gardens and the plains by the soldiers. Imagine of a city taken possession by 200,000 men! They tell me the soldiers go into the bazars and help themselves of <sup>the</sup> all things they want and the poor shopkeepers are simply helpless and cannot utter one word of protest. Every town, county and hamlet has given its share of soldiers. They are being enlisted with fists and heels. Hundreds of young men pour in Haifa and Acca every day from the surrounding villages and are immediately forced to start drilling. Crowds of these bedraggled humanity

are seen now and then in front of the government's house shouting and hurraing in the name of the Sultan but it is all feigned and hollow. There is no enthusiasm ~~within~~ their voices. They bring them in like flocks of sheep, who are however apprehensive that they are being taken to the slaughter house. Haifa and Acca and many other parts of Turkey are under martial law. They are forbidden to congregate in any place and a foreigner must carry his passport in his pocket, otherwise it will be difficult for him to travel around. This is done so that no Turkish subject may be able to escape out of the country and thus <sup>be</sup> released from this military burden. The town of Acca alone has given about 2,500 soldiers. All the streets are actually deserted and one sees only here and there old men, women and children. It is as though they are in universal mourning. The Jews and Christians are exempted from this conscription, if each person can pay \$250. Many of them cannot pay even a quarter of this sum and thus they are forced to enter the army. In Acca there is a large family of children. They had four men ~~who~~ supported them. Not one of them is left <sup>behind</sup>.

All the Banks have stopped payment and money is most scarce. A prominent person had to mortgage his house, costing several thousand pounds <sup>and could not raise</sup> ~~for~~ two hundred pounds. Public security is slack and reports are coming that owing to marauding Bedouin parties it is not safe to travel in the interior. Asca being the drilling ground of the army in these parts, one sees, without exaggeration thousands of soldiers all day. They have pitched their tents on the parapets, bastions and other parts of the fortifications and are being drilled 9 hours every day. Once they have learned enough of the military tactics they are transported on the train to Damascus and replaced by other recruits. The inhabitants are called upon to defray the expenses of the army if not willingly by force. Every person must give 80 per cent of his property and if he is poor he must go and borrow and mortgage his very soul in order to get of the pestering officials. The officers and a number of soldiers call at the house of affrighted subject or covered shopkeepers. They take bags of flour, wheat, rice, corn, barley, sugar, tea, butter, oil, straw and every thing else. Other merchants must give

worsted goods, cords, sacks etc and if they do not have  
 they must pay its equal in money or go and buy for them  
 from another store. <sup>The</sup> Horses, <sup>the</sup> mares, <sup>the</sup> mules, <sup>the</sup> asses and <sup>the</sup>  
 sheep of the people are taken by hundreds. There is a  
 committee for this wholesale plunder, ~~the~~ members  
 of which ~~have~~ their daily session in front of the  
 government house. They appraise the animals and  
 give worthless receipts to their distracted owners. Of  
 course they undervalue everything. If a horse cost one  
 hundred pounds they put it at 20 or twenty five. They  
 say to the inhabitants that next year these prices will  
 be reduced from the general taxes but no one believes  
 it. The prices of every commodity have increased  
 greatly and the affairs of the people are in utter  
 confusion. Most of the stores are closed because the  
 people have gone to war. Last night two regiments  
 were sent from Acca to Damascus. If they need  
 really 10 dollars they force the people to give them  
 fifty. The poor inhabitants are in a desperate  
 mood. It is said the officers of the army send  
 their wives to the houses as spies to find out  
 whether the people are talking against the

present so-called constitutional régime and if so, they  
 are reported and immediately thrown into prison.  
 The people are really desperate. They say even during  
 the despotic régime of Abdul Hamid there was never  
 such a wholesale confiscation of the inhabitants' belongings  
 and even during the Russian-Turkish war there <sup>was</sup>  
 was no such commotion and agitation. Now if  
 before any actual battle there is so much disorder,  
 turmoil and disturbance, what will be the condition  
 of the minds of men if the fire of war is going  
 to be ignited. I may go on and relate to you  
 the particular stories of many persons whose  
 properties were plundered in this unholy manner  
 but I wanted to dwell only on the general aspect  
 of the present day conditions that surround us  
 here - so that you may know how the things  
 stand in their proper light. Even several believers  
 in Acca were taxed in this extraordinary fashion  
 and the house of one of them was robbed of all  
 its furniture. Thus in every way one may truly  
 say that a resurrection is set up and important  
 events may transpire in the next few months.

With the first morning train Mirza Mohsen arrived from Haifa and brought us the word of the Beloved that we must all return to Haifa. With the train of 4 30pm we left Acre and after an hour and half we were safely settling in the garden of the King of Kings. This night I was not privileged to see the Master but a Mohamadan Sheikh called on him after sunset and had a long time with him on the historical development of the early Islam, its traditions and its spiritual principles. I wished we could stay a little longer in Acre but in the absence of the Master nothing is quite the same. If possible, one would not like to be away from him even for one hour.

While we were away one pilgrim had arrived from Bagdad. He is a Bahai Jew, a young man and had taken him more than a month to reach Haifa. Owing to the increasing disturbances all along line, I think there will not be many pilgrims coming from Persia <sup>and</sup> other parts.