

Home of Abdul Baha
Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria
December 21st 1914

Dear friends!

The carriage was waiting. It was about 2.30 P. M. The wind was blowing and the sky was overcast. The Beloved having finished his work was going to leave for Acre. I was standing near the gate when a carriage stopped and out of it came out the brisk German officer von Kalkkrenth, followed by the Consulate attache. The officer was young, with red cheeks, tall, smooth face, agile, self-assertive and warlike. He came to me and asked in polished French about Abbas Effendi. The Master was notified and both of them were ushered into the reception room. After preliminary greeting the Beloved asked him: "What news have you ^{received} from Europe?"

Von Kalkkrenth: "For the last week on account of disturbance of the telegraphic wires we have received no news."

Abdul Baha: "So far which side has been at least partially successful?"

V. K. It cannot be definitely stated.

A. B. How long will it last?

V. K. If I had it in my power I would have ended it tomorrow, but there ^{already} exist so many complications and these may still arise fresh, unforeseen difficulties that it is well-nigh impossible to predict.

A. B. Any of your relatives in war?

V. K. We were five brothers. Two are sacrificed for the Fatherland; the third has lost his feet, the fourth is seriously wounded and in the hospital, and I am the fifth. I am going to be the first German officer to enter Cairo. For bravery my two brothers have been decorated with the Cross of Iron.

A. B. How many German commanding officers are in the Turkish Army which is going to invade Egypt?

V. K. At present there are sixty.

A. B. In military experiences and knowledge are the German officers superior to the Turkish officers?

(Here the translator made a mistake and instead of "Turkish" said "English".) Von Kalkkrenth with reliant confidence cried out: -

Of course the German Officers. There is no doubt about this. The whole world has testified that the German Army is invincible and its morale superior to any other army."

Here I interposed that His Excellency Abbas Effendi did not mean the English but the Turkish officers. Then the following non-committal answer: "This is not yet tried. It will be found out in the oncoming contest."

A.B. When the Turkish Army will march from Acresh?

V.K. It may take us between 20 and 30 days before we are fully prepared and all the regiments gathered in Acresh. Then we have to face the march through the desert which will consume at least two weeks. Hence the real battles between the Turkish and English armies will not occur before 50 days.

A.B. I have heard that the Turkish guns carried by the army are not more than fifteen inches.

V.K. Yes, it is true. Larger guns than these cannot be conveyed through the sandy deserts.

A.B. What are the sizes of the English guns?

V.K. In the beginning of the war their guns were 28 1/2 inches but their new type of guns are 30 inches.

A.B. Are you acquainted with the Badenian manner of warfare?

V.K. I have heard much about their valor and intrepidity and I am looking forward to lead them into victory.

A.B. True. They are valorous but ignorant of the science and tactics of modern warfare and easily discouraged and routed at the first sign of defeat.

A few more questions and answers and with the drinking of tea the meeting was brought to a close. Meanwhile a heavy rain started pouring down and the Master postponed his departure for today. About 5 P.M. he came out and with four or five believers walked towards Carmel Hotel to pay back the visit to the German officer. Because the mountain was so verdant he spoke about the days of Rizwan in Bagdad and the wave of happiness which surged through the hearts of the believers. "Look at that greensward. It was emerald. It is a symbol of those hearts who have just heard the Message of the Kingdom, so youthful, so hopeful - so pure, waving by the passing of the gentlest breeze."

An old man passed by. The ~~Master~~ called him and asked about his health. Then he put in the palm of his hand one English pound and prayed in his behalf: "May thy body be at peace, thy mind be at peace, thy thought be at peace, thy soul be at peace and thy spirit be at peace." When he left us he said: "The name of this old man was Rustam Effendi. He has served me in many different ways. He has now become very poor. I was looking for an opportunity to help him and this was the proper time. While he was talking a carriage stopped in the middle of the street and the stout occupant jumped down and came towards us. He greeted the Master and after a minute exchange of greeting he returned to his carriage. X This man ^{name} was Asaad Bey. When we were in Acca years ago one day he came to me and said: 'Master! I am the most miserable man! I am seeking fortune but it eludes me at every turn. I want to be prosperous but ill-luck pursues me. If I touch gold it will turn into copper. If I hold a green leaf in my hand it will become sere and yellow. I have lost all my possession and with it my faith. Please pray for me that God may help me.' I gave him some money and that night I supplicated at the Threshold of the Blessed ^{God} Perfection to assist him. The next day he was offered a government position with a good salary. Negligence overtook him and he became so proud that he would not even speak with me. When a Kurdish Motosarraf came to Acca he intrigued against us, carried false reports and was so offensive as to wish me offer him bribe as the price of silence. I did not say anything to him but he repented his doing afterwards. X

When we entered the hotel ^{and} while we were drinking our coffee, he spoke about severance from and detachment to the things of this world. "The realization of these two extreme aims in a single individual is very rare. In the Bahai Cause it is thought that we must devote the utmost attention to the pursuit of our worldly affairs and at the same time be severed from ought else save God. How can the mind and the heart be entirely disengaged and free from any occupation while both of them are occupied with the solution of material problems is a most subtle ~~fact~~ psychological subject. To be in the water and not to get ~~dry~~ wet; to go through the fire and not to burn are two opposite, irreconcilable facts. Still in the spiritual world these two poles must meet and the two qualities of 'severance' and 'attachment' be combined together harmoniously."

When Von Kalkrenth entered the hotel he saw the Master was waiting for him and regretted very much his being kept away on account of his many duties. He told us a special train will come to Haifa tomorrow morning to take him to Damascus. Then he requested the Beloved for his photograph and he sent me to bring one for him. With much difficulty I got one from Mohamad the son of Nassem Aga and hurried back in the carriage. When the photograph was given him he desired to be autographed which was done by the ever-kind Beloved. Meanwhile in my absence the conversation was carried between them through the assistance of the Attache who knows Arabic. Gasmagam was also present and as I took with me two photographs the smaller one went to him as a "souvenir".

On our return home there was quite a large meeting and the Beloved said: - "I went out to pay back the morning call of the German officer and while I was there Gasmagam entered the room. According to what they said hundreds of thousands of people are killed during the past few months, what fiendish heads are there! What demonic hearts are found! What diabolic thoughts are portrayed! What devilish engines are at work! What black souls are displayed! What satanic schemes are unearthed! What dark imaginations are brooding over infernal plans! All their hellish policies work for the destruction of the Conqueror and the conquered; the countries of both sides are laid waste; the people of both nations are butchered in cold blood, the homes of both governments are ruined and the civilization of both lands are annihilated" Then for another half hour he spoke about some of the phases of the Bahai Cause in Paris and his various conferences with the then Turkish officials.

In the morning he ascended the holy Mountain to visit the Holy Tomb of the Bab. I was in the bazaar but when I returned and heard about it I followed him. The last torrential rain had cut all the streets and deep fissures are made, washing away one or two yards of earth and leaving bare the ~~rock~~. When I arrived he was still in the reception room but he came out and with believers entered the Holy Place, chanting ^{aloud} the visiting Tablet. Coming out he went to the Pilgrim Home and talked with the friends. I had only a peep at my Nest and then descended the Mountain with the Nightingale of the ~~heart~~.