

Home of Bahá'í Olláh
 Acco Syria
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Dear friends!

Caesarea, a New Testament town on the shore of Mediterranean was bombarded a few days ago. It is about 3 hours from Acco, seventy miles from Jerusalem and during the days of Christ it was an important city on the great road from Tyre to Egypt. The warship attempted the landing of a boat full of soldiers probably to cut the telegraphic wires, the ^{Turkish} guards stationed there prevented them from carrying out their object and a struggle ensued. It is stated that as a result of this two soldiers were killed and the rest precipitately returned to the war vessel. Then they opened fire and laid waste the place with 16 shells. However the present Caesarea is a ruined place in itself and boasts only a few inhabitants a few Bosnian exiles who have built their houses among the old buildings. Caesarea has long been a mass of ruins and more like a mere quarry for procuring materials with which other places have been built. It owes its origin to Herod the Great, who spared no pain or expense in its erection and named it after Augustus Caesar. Previous to this time there was simply a landing-place here, and a tower mentioned by Strabo as "Strato's tower". In the time of Tacitus, Caesarea had become the chief town of the Roman province of Judea. It was the royal dwelling-place of the Herodian family and the official residence of Festus, Felix and other Roman Procurators, and the headquarters of the Roman troops charged with the security and tranquillity of this part of the Empire. It was the bishopric of Eusebius in the fourth century A.D. In the time of the Crusades the town was still of importance, Baldwin I took the city from the Saracens in 1102, but it was recaptured in 1187 by Saladin. In 1191 it was again won by the Crusaders and given to Frederick II of Germany in 1229. Bihars finally took it in 1265. St Louis had rebuilt the walls in 1251. Since that time Caesarea has sunk into utter decay.

There are allusions to Caesarea (or Cesarea) in the New Testament, all tending to show its importance at that epoch. When Paul had been let down in a basket from the Wall of Damascus to save him from the Jews, it was

to Caesarea that the disciples hurried him, and shipped him for his own city of Tarsus (Acts 18.30). At Caesarea dwelt Cornelius, the Centurion, who with his family was the first Gentile convert after Peter's vision at Joppa (Acts 10, 11). To Caesarea came Peter when his prison doors at Jerusalem had miraculously opened to him (Acts 12). Here Paul landed on his way to Jerusalem, after his first missionary journey in Greece (Acts 18.18, 22). In this city dwelt "Philip the Evangelist," with his "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy," in whose house "Paul's company," who had come by ship from Ptolemais, "tarried many days." On this occasion Paul was visited by Agabus the prophet, with a sign of Paul's approaching capture at Jerusalem. But in vain his friends counselled fly, Paul was ready "not to be bound only, but to die, and with certain of the disciples of Caesarea" he went up to Jerusalem (Acts 21. 7-16).

The Apostle's next appearance in the city is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Agabus. He is brought by 200 soldiers, and "horsemen three score and ten, and spear-men two hundred," and arraigned before Felix, the Governor (Acts 23-35). In chapters XXIV, XXV, and XXVI, are detailed these wonderful conferences between the great Apostle and the highest dignitaries of the province, during which as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled"; and subsequently Agrippa declared, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Hence having "appealed unto Caesar," Paul was sent "in a ship of Adramyttium on his way to imperial Rome (XXVII, 2).

On all these things the reader may pause and think as he reads of the bombardment of the desolate Caesarea and conjure up the pomp and splendor of the Roman city in its palmy days, when its streets and ports were alive with commerce and its temples and palaces gay with festivity and when the invincible legions of Rome dwelt in their pride on this forsaken shore. The present ruins include the small Crusader town with its Cathedral, walls and towers; and to the east the foundations of the Roman walls of a large city, with a theatre to the south and a race-course with a fine granite goal to the East. Two rock-cut aqueducts brought water to Caesarea from the Crocodile River on the North.

For the last three weeks many and long trenches are being dug on the plain of Acca and beyond the hills. We have had the battle of the Trenches on the Continent of Europe and we may have a repetition of the same deadly struggle in and around the Holy Land as an everlasting shame to the greedy Powers. Hundreds of farmers are pushed into this kind of service and I have seen them several times digging the ground in various places. The inhabitants of the towns who could not possibly enter into this kind of work have been heavily taxed - so that other laborers may take their places. All these preparations are in anticipation of the landing of Foreign soldiers. The Turkish government cannot defend the many open, unfortified towns and cities built on the Mediterranean shores and for this reason she is retiring into the interior and leaving these cities to their fate. Consequently without any heavy loss, a Foreign force can occupy any of these towns but for a long time they will be unable to go into country because of the ^{resistance} of the Turks behind their trenches and hills. Hence it is the opinion of many people that in any case we are confronted with a long protracted war of offence and defense entailing untold sufferings and bloodshed.

The Mutasarrif of Acca, the Gaemmagam of Haifa and the governors of other Syrian ports were summoned to be in Jerusalem a few days ago and receive their last instructions from Jamal Pasha, the Commander in chief of the Army of invasion ^{now} on its march to Egypt. They are now back in their posts armed with the most definite commands from their superior and bent on carrying them out.

The present Khedive of Egypt is declared to be the "Sultan" of Egypt and the "Khaliph" of the Muslim world and he is pronounced as such from religious pulpits and platforms. The Turkish newspapers call him an "infidel" and "atheist" because he has sold his religion to the Foreign "usurpers" and "perfidious English". The Ulemas have issued the sentence of his execution and one of the acts of humanity that the Turkish army must render on its entrance into the Land of Pharaoh is to hang the present Khaliph and a number of newspaper editors who are pro-English. For the latter have exiled all the members of the family of the former Ruler and every Turk connected with him in

the administration of public affairs.

Another recent official order is to the effect that all ^{primarily} Foreigners must leave Turkey within two weeks. This of course applies to those nations who are at war with this country but the sufferings will be none the less for those who prefer to stay rather than to leave.

The small garrisons stationed at different ports are commanded to resist the landing of Foreign armies and defend the country with the last drop of their blood. They must also shoot at any aeroplane flying above the towns.

The newspapers such as "Infeel", "Akhbar", "Adl", "Attehad-i-Osmani" and a number of others published in Damascus and Beirut contain most venomous articles against the Europeans and incitations of the most fanatical brand to the millions of Moslems to arise and kill the infidels wherever ^{they} are found. Thus the minds and the hearts of the public are fed on such poisonous foods and kept at fever heat of zealous prejudices. In Constantinople a monthly magazine is edited by the religious Council whose president is no less a personage than Sheikh-ul-Islam. This magazine is printed in several Eastern languages and dialects - so that the 300 millions of Mussulmans may become informed with its contents. I saw a copy of this Magazine the other day and found its articles are all on the question of Jihad, ~~and~~ its various aspects and its present adoption as a supreme remedy to check the avalanche of English, French and Russian barbarians, idolaters and the neutralization of their aim in destroying the religion of Islam.

This morning the Beloved descended from his ^{sanctuary} ~~sanctuary~~ and took his room in front of the door. For two hours he was engaged in conversation with this one and that person and then he took a walk in Fakhouri. Before coming down Motasarrif and Modere-Fahreerat called on him and stayed with him for one hour. In the afternoon he became a judge and listened to the complaints of two parties - Persian and Arab. When evidences were produced and both sides were listened with attention he decided the case in favor of the Arab. I might relate the details of this case but it will take many pages. Enough it is said when I say the Master judged between them with justice and equity and both parties were happy to ~~obey~~ ^{obey} by his divine decision.