

Home of Baha Ollah, Acca
 Syria February 17th 1915

Dear friends!

During the last week a sirocco has been blowing day and night, causing much damages to the gardens and uprooting many a strong tree. According to the story of the friends who come every day from Abou Senan the olive orchards have suffered much as well as the orange groves. This Eastern gale is terrific in its results and its effect on human constitution is lassitude and languor. The state of affair has given the government authorities a pretext in not issuing any daily communiques, on the ground that the telegraphic wires are disturbed through this atmospheric revolution. Indeed they have succeeded to a ^{remarkable} degree in closing all the channels of communications with the outside world. Never before has Turkey been isolated so completely as now. This may be an illustration of the power of a Monarchy, wielding such sway and absolute control over all the national affairs. The people's will is not regarded in the least degree. They are only here to fill the coffers and stomachs of the functionaries and corrupt and licentious officials. While the government itself is threatened from all sides and the organic life of nation is being disrupted by silent, explosive discontent, these officers are engaged in convivial pleasures and gay entertainments, satisfying their carnal desires and salacious appetites. With these conditions they are also praying to God for the success of their arms and the defeat of the "enemies". Nowadays every city and town in the Turkey is honeycombed with spies and if a person is in the least suspected he will be arrested and sent to Damascus and Lebanon to be court-martialed. Unhappy is the man who has an action or even a passive enemy amongst the officials. The slightest accusation will brand him as a dangerous man. It will be enough if a man has said something against the government 3 or 4 yrs ago. If it is imagined that such and such a prominent citizen has spoken favorably of England, France or Russia, this will be enough to accuse and seize him. Already many Christian and Mohamadan priests and merchants in Acca or Haifa are arrested and sent away. Many are thrown into prisons and a number of them have to live in jail and wait till their cases are brought up.

after the consummation of war. The wives and children of these men are also living in constant dread and anxiety, never hearing a word from their husbands and fathers. Those who have lived many years in Turkey bear testimony to the fact that the reign of the cruel and tyrannical Abdul Hamid was a golden age in comparison to the present conditions. They state that they have ^{heard} of "war tax" but they had never witnessed before a more systematic exaction of private properties of the nation for the consumption of an army. It seems that the present regime has made up its mind to defray all the expenses of the great army out of the already exhausted pocket of the impoverished people. The stores and magazines are regularly looted almost every day and the demands of the officers are well nigh infinite. Two or three ^{soldiers} come to the shops and take away what they need. Thus the poor people have become the commissariats of the army. The latest demands from Haifa are about 200 oxen, one hundred thousand kilo sugar, and many ^{thousand} pounds tea, coffee, rice etc. Not one cent is paid for any of these extortions, even the believers have to contribute towards these military expenses. Soon the stores will finish their supplies, because no commodity enters the country. Then, I believe, the officers may enter the houses and ^{ransack} sack whatever of provisions ^{people} they might have hoarded for the evil days of scarcity. The inhabitants are utterly helpless. They ^{cannot} even whisper a word against these extraordinary proceedings, for ^{then} they may be caught any minute and dispatched to their doom. The ^{worst} part of it is, that they have barricaded all the probable roads of escape. Not a single Turk can make his way out of the country.

The sounding reports of their victories in Egypt turned out to be a complete fiasco, a rout of their force back to the Sinai Peninsula. A long dispatch from Jamal Pasha, the generalissimo of the army, explained in a round about way the victorious retreat. The telegram ended by announcing that they shall ~~soon~~ make another attack as soon as fresh supplies reach them and then surely God will give them victory over their implacable foes.

Of the war in Europe we ^{have} heard practically nothing. There are not even rumors or hearsays, because there are no ways to get them. So much the better.

The health of the Beloved is very satisfactory. This ~~is~~ from our standpoint is the most important. For in this manner these strangers who are heart-broken and sad when they come into his presence, receive joy and happiness and ^{at least} for the time being the veil of despondency is raised off their hearts. Moreover he is thus enabled to lighten the loads of misery and poverty which is becoming heavier and heavier every day. In these days he does not ^{speak} much when with the believers but he goes out into the byways and hovel of the people to cheer them up and carry to them substantial assistance. He never disappoints those who come to him and beg for help. His hands are always open and his generosity unrestricted. All that he has belongs to the friends or the needy inhabitants in these parts. I know he could do much more if he had an ample fund at his disposal but he is doing all that he can under the circumstances. During the hours of the day and in the evening I was in his company and the subject that engrossed his mind was the alleviation of the necessary wants of the people. All day the poor veiled women called at the door and asked for Akhas Effendi. If they were told that he was not in, they signalled on the earth and waited with resigned patience till he came and distributed amongst them small pieces of coin. Once, when the Master was not in, I tried to give them something, but they would have none of it, they preferred to wait and receive from his own hand. While we are thus besieged in this country I often wonder what the believers are thinking and doing all over the world? Are they serving the Cause of Baha Ollah? Are they spreading His Message of Peace? Are they working whole-heartedly for the progress of Truth? Are they helping the poor, and the unfortunate ones as the Master is doing daily? Are they lifting up the outcasts? Are they welcoming the newcomers with a smiling face and a sincere heart? Are they associating with all mankind with joy and fratricide? Do they promote goodwill and fellowship amongst humanity? Are they ^{ex-pan-}ding the bounds of their sympathy? Are they Bahais as Akhbar Bahá is a Bahai? Are they always hungry for the bread of Life and thirsty for the water of Immortality?