

Home of Baha Ollah Aca.
Syria. February 26th 1915

Dear friends!

My fondest dream became fulfilled to-day. From the time that I became fairly acquainted with the dramatic history of the Bahai Movement and interested in the promotion of its humane principles I dreamed one dream: To see with my own eyes the Military barrack and the rooms wherein Baha Ollah and His Family and Companions were huddled together. Since my arrival in the holy land I attempted to do this several times but I did not succeed. Either our Bahai guide was busy or the barrack was crowded with soldiers and prisoners or a permit could not be secured from the Commander. But this morning, undoubtedly my fortunate star was on the ascendent, for the whole thing came out so naturally and without any pre-arrangement. I was walking and thinking in my room when I heard the voice of Fir-Andaz calling my name. "Mirza Farazollah is in his store and wants you to go to him immediately." Well, to tell you the truth I was just a little annoyed. Why should some one break upon my musing! This was a secret confession and I got over it very quickly. Descending the stairs I walked through the narrow streets till I reached the store. Here I found Mirza Anayetullah and Mirza Fazlollah Khan and they told me they were going to see the Barrack and thinking that I would be also interested to accompany them they sent for me. Great was my rejoicing and profuse my gratitude. At first we were served with thick cream, ^{honey} [like Swiss cheese] and bread, then we left the store and after 3 or 4 minutes we were in front of the ancient building. It was with deep emotions that I ascended the same stairs that the Blessed Beauty, Abdul Baha and others ascended on the afternoon of August 30th, 1868 A. D. In front of the gate there is an open porch wherein Baha Ollah used to come out in the latter part of his imprisonment and sit. When we entered the building, to our surprise, we found not a single soul in it. In the center of the large court there was a tank of water and all around, long, damp and dark corridors and then still the darker rooms. We entered a few of these rooms but there were so much dirt ^{and evil odor} that we could not

stand it. Our guide, Mirza Taraz Allah, then directed our steps toward the north-western corner of the Court. Here we ascended again many stairs and entered an apartment containing a hall and seven small rooms. The north-western rooms with windows toward the sea and the country are those in which Baha-Ollah and his holy family were confined for exactly 2 years and 12 days. From these windows the Blessed Perfection showed himself to the sore-footed pilgrims, standing beyond the moat and the rampart of the fortification. After three or ^{four} months of journey they were satisfied to get only one glimpse of the King of Kings and then return refreshed and illumined with the light of His Countenance. The rooms were all empty and in one of them we found a bushel of documents relating to the army. Then we ascended again the stairs and found ourselves on the terrace and saw with sadness the aperture from which in 1870 A. D. the Purest Branch, Aga Mirza Mehdi, fell down on the pavement of the hall below, while walking and praying. All the rooms have ^{high} ceilings, the floor covered with bricks and are still in good condition. What were the struggles and hardships of the Manifestation of God in this most great Prison as recorded in history - nay rather they are engrained deep on the tablets of the hearts of men! It was in 1869 that Aga Bozork Khorassani, entitled Badi, entered the Barrack and met Baha Ollah. And it was from this very prison that in that year he became the bearer of the glorious Tablet to the King of Persia. The sufferings and trials of these spiritual people were untold and indescribable in this prison but out of it was issued the laws of Peace and arbitration, the laws of love and brotherhood, the spirit of joy and happiness. Who could confine the spirit of God? Those Kings and rulers who imprisoned Baha Ollah were themselves prisoners of self, despotism and tyranny and they knew it not. After 2 yrs and 12 days Baha Ollah, his family and companions ^{were} removed from the Barrack to the house of Andrawas El Malek situated on the north side of fortification. Eight months after this, they rented the house of Mansour El Khawam where they lived four months. From here they went out and lived four months more in the house of El Raheah. Then they moved to the present

house of Oudi Khammar. Nine years passed during which Baha Ollah did not go outside of the city but through the pleadings of Abdul Baha he went outside of Acca in May 25, 1877 A. D. To be brief, we walked and talked about those wonderful days for several minutes and then descended the stairs. By a causeway we crossed ~~the~~ the moat and walked over the embankment. We saw shells of ancient guns lodged in the thick walls of the barrack, big muzzle-loading cannons thrown hither and thither over the ramparts, undergrounds, containing old, heavy balls, big and small. We saw a system of smaller and smaller ramparts, bastions and moats, each protecting and defending the barrack as the enemies would have taken possession of each one of these defensive works. According to the old strategical rules this Fort was well nigh-impregnable and often we read in ancient records that Acca was besieged for several months and years and still gave no sign of surrender. Then we walked all over the embankment and found ourselves in front of the gate of the tower. With these new experiences and the stirring of new emotions we returned home.

Having partaken of our lunch in the presence of Our Beloved he told me to be ready to go with him to the Rizwan in the afternoon. I was delighted with this and kept myself in readiness. This was in honor of our brother Mirza Fazlollah Khan. At two and thirty the carriage was ready in front of the door and the Master came down and asked us to follow him. When we were outside of the gate of Acca he came across the Manager of the Telegraph Bureau and his family. He is a Christian native. The Beloved invited him to come to ^{the} garden but realizing he was accompanied by his wife, sister and children and the way was rather long he told them to wait at the station and the carriage will be sent to carry them. When he reached at the gate of the garden of Ferdouss he alighted and told Isfandiyar to go and bring the guests. Then he walked through the Ferdouss followed by the Zoroastrian farmers. Here I took his photograph while he was walking. He taught them how to plant the small branches of the fig tree, how to cut the vines - so that more grapes are produced. In order to show them ^{well} he took ^{up} a piece of green branch, squatted on the ground and with his own hands went through the various phases of plantation and then

explaining each process. While he was in this position I was going to take another photograph but he was so surrounded by the eager farmers eager to learn his points that it was impossible to do anything. "When Peace will be settled between the present warring nations" he said as he rose and continued his walk toward Rizwan, "many Pilgrims will come from the different parts of the world and I want you to entertain them with delicious when they will visit these blessed gardens ^{hall} ^{owned} by the holy presence of Baha Ollah. Personally I like to see the fruits ^{hang} on their trees, like oranges and grapes. They manifest such wonderful beauty and charm. Giving is a divine quality. Blessed are those who give! When we ^{were} in Bagdad we had an Arab Bahai who lived nine miles out of the city. On his farm he had 3 or 4 date-palms. Although dates were very cheap in the Bazaar yet he would come and invite the friends to go to him and eat of his ^{own} dates. He was so loving and enthusiastic that ~~now~~ ^{one} had the heart to refuse him. They often hired asses to ride on and in doing so they had to pay 2 or 3 Bashleeks for each quadruped and when reaching there no one could eat more than $\frac{1}{2}$ or one $\frac{1}{4}$ of a Matallek dates. It was therefore his love that attracted them. In the same manner we must have less regard for material things and give more importance to the love that prompts the hearts."

In the Rizwan Abul Gasem was very happy and soon his big Samovar was boiling with water and the tea prepared for the guests. The Torastran farmers brought fine lettucees from the Ferdous and served every one abundantly. We sat under the mulberry trees and enjoyed every minute of this divine afternoon. The Master talked with the Telegraph Man ^{about} America and contrasted the progress and development of that country with the backward state of Syria. "There, the people have learned the art of construction, here they are adepts in the anarchy of destruction" he said. Our guests had brought out their supper with them and ^{therefore} retired to the end of the Rizwan, near the room of the Blessed Beauty in front of the lovely stream to eat. The Beloved then walked around the garden and gave a few directions to Abul Gasem in flower culture. It was after sunset when we returned home and then a number of native christians and Mohamadeans called and kept him engaged till ^{into} the night. He is so good and gracious to all these people that they do not realize how much of a burden they are on him.