

Bahajee, Acca, Syria ⁴⁰
May 28th 1915

Dear friends!

The spiritual experiences of a Bahai pilgrims to the holy land will blossom ^{into} the variegated and fragrant flowers of ideality and perfection, should he ^{or she} be privileged to spent the Night of the ascension in the companionship of Abdul Baha within the sacred precinct and holy Shrine of Beha-Ollah. The experience laden with the sweet odor of the paradise of spirit, renews consciousness, strengthens the will, illuminates with the rays of the ineffable light the dark paths of the brain, encircles the inaccessible heights of the heart with the fluttering white wings of the doves of peace and goodwill, confers the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of Love and brotherliness, fills the cup with the exhilarating ambrosia of real meekness and self-alienation, moves the mind from its centre of indifference and lethargic habits, reminds the worshipper of the necessity of greater zeal and more contagious enthusiasm in ~~promoting~~ the universal principles of divine Civilization, and teaches him in the languages of the angels, the urgency of a whole-hearted consecration to the service of the cause of God and the upholding of the rights of man.

If the Blessed Beauty departed on this night to His Supreme Abode of eternity, He left amongst us His glorious Son; if He concealed His Countenance from the dazzled eyes of mankind, He disclosed the shining Face of His Centre of the Covenant; if He withdrew the consolation and comfort of His Celestial Presence, He gave us the sinless and luminous body of His laws and precepts, if the Sun of His Personality sunk below the horizon of this Temporal world, It dawned with greater splendor and majesty from the pure temple of His ^{appointed} Successor; if the soft, murmuring breezes of His garden were hushed, the winds of His mighty Will began to blow with ~~the~~ velocity and force from the mountains of the Mystery of God and if the nightingale of the divine spring became silent and still, the Bird taught by Him started the sleepy and heedless world with the melodious songs and joyous hymns of spiritual truths.

Passing over the many interesting incidents that transpired during the day let us go directly to the threshold of Baha Ollah and see with our own eyes what has happened on this eventful night. An hour before sunset the believers directed their steps toward the holy Tomb and Badi Effendi and myself found ourselves amongst them. The carriage brought from Haifa the members of the holy Family and then returned again to Acca to bring the Beloved of our hearts. The sun had just set behind Mount Carmel in the liquid deep of the golden sea when the Master alighted from the vehicle and greeted the believers who had gathered outside the garden to welcome him. At first he entered the holy shrine alone and chanted the Visitation Tablet for women who had gathered there to worship. When they went out the men were called in and we found him sitting in one corner of the room, sublimely patient, silent, still, pure, meek and holy - a wonderful picture of the heavenly ^{being} who has subdued every inclination, every appetite, every desire, every prompting of self and has thus found within the empire of his ^{eternal} heart the Kingdom of love, ^{humane} service and the joy that never fades. His eyes were closed and in the mirror of his countenance one could easily see the reflection of the sorrowing, prostrated world. The atmosphere was also colored with the sad and obscure shades of grief and unnamable distresses. Here, yea, here, there is all peace, all unity, all redolent sweetness but there, there, what about there! Our brothers are killed and being killed on the battlefields, our mothers are widowed, our sisters are weeping over the deaths of their dear and near ones, towns are destroyed, the precious flood of the innocent is flowing and many atrocities are perpetrated in the name of religion and patriotism. How could our hearts find rest while the spirit of hatred and murder has filled the hearts of humanity! How could we feel happy, how could the ethereal atmosphere of this sacred place be joyous, how could the face of the Prince of Love be radiant, while mankind is ⁱⁿ the grip of a deadly struggle! No indeed! None of us ^{could} lay a claim to happiness. We were all suffering. The heart of the universe is pain-stricken, how can the limbs and the members be whole! For more than one hour we sat around the Divine Candle while it burned silently with the light of pity and compassion! Then we

left the holy Shekinah with the same solemn silence and quietness.
 For about 5 and 6 years the Master was not in Acca and consequently these meetings ^{on the nights of the ascension} lacked the dynamism of his presence and benign influence of his personality. From this standpoint the friends were happy in having him in their midst and receiving from him the blessing of heaven. They were all his guests for supper and at 9 o'clock two large tables were set and we were served with roast meat and other delicious eatables. According to his usual custom he walked around the tables, spoke with this or that believer, ordered Aga Mehdi and Khosro to fill the plates with more meat, and serve ice-water. His three sons-in-law were also serving. He saw me eating with a spoon and he came and stood behind me. "Hast thou not yet learned to eat with thy hand?" he asked humorously and slapped me hard on my shoulder. "I am most glad to be able to serve the believers of God. This I consider to be my highest attainment and my greatest glory. The real friends must be the servants of each other and arise in mutual helpfulness and cooperation. The hallmark of spiritual illumination is service, love and fellowship. Let the believers adorn their inner beings with these qualities and advance step by step along the path of ideal progress. We are all the servants of humanity and must endeavor to fulfill the law of self-sacrifice in its perfect and most complete form."

After dinner he sat down himself and partook of the same food while Khosro served him. Then he retired to his room to rest, leaving the friends to their own devices. It was a most beautiful moonlight night and we were divided into different groups, some of us took our chairs under the olive trees, others went under the pine trees, and still a number of young ones took a long walk in the moonlit plain along the sea-shore, dreaming of the past events and visualizing the future bliss and serenity of their fellow men. The old believers of the days of Baha Ollah related for my benefit the details of the last hours of the Ascension and what happened afterwards. In the ^{same} and soft light of the moon I took notes of these things and I hope to incorporate them in a separate article ^{someday} in the future. Because the Beloved was sleeping we did not sing Bahai songs but we would

have done so under any other circumstances. Thus we spent the hours
 of the night till 3 A.M. The few sleepers awake and Aga Mehdi was seen
 busy preparing tea to arouse and refresh the drowsy ones. No sooner ^{we}
 drank two or three small cups than we found ourselves fully awake ^{and}
 in the possession of all our faculties, although we did not close our ^{all night} eyelids.
 After a few minutes the Master came out of his room and in his
 majestic yet humble way led us again to the holy Tomb. All night
 the lamps and candelabras were burning, sending out into the moonlight
 space, streams of soft, gentle light. The inside of the "Holy of Holies"
 was redolent with the sweet fragrance of exotic flowers and plants
 and the delicate odor of orange blossoms made the air subtle and
 ineffably beautiful. Again the Beloved sat in his unobtrusive
 corner and two of the believers started to chant Tablets ~~scattered~~
 in ~~a~~ lovely voices. On and on they continued chanting verses of holy
 filling our hearts and minds with the charming whisperings of
 the Spirit. Although, you, dear reader, were far away, yet we
 all prayed for and remembered you. We sent you through ether
 the silent messages of love and affection and hope you have
 received them. The Master was praying for the whole Bahai world,
 supplicating at the threshold of his divine Father to pour upon
 them the confirmations of the Kingdom of Peace and encircle
 them with the angels of the Realm of Night. We are all sure
 that his devout prayers will be borne directly to the footstool
 of the throne of the Lord and his earnest desires will be
 fully granted. The whole world is nowadays dependent on his
 spiritual supplications, for they are uttered from the depth of his
 heart. Quietly the hours slipped by in this sacred communion
 and silent worship. There was no music, no choir, no organ,
 no vocal expression of adoration but all the hearts were turned
 to God begging Him to keep us firm and steadfast in His ^{Covenant}
 while we were thus praying the sun arose from the Eastern
 horizon and flooded the plain with its rays. ^{As} we left the holy place
 we were greeted by the twittering birds heralding the arrival of another
 day

This morning we drank tea in the Presence of the Beloved and he dwelt on the extraordinary heat of the past few days ~~and~~ emphasized the fact that in such a hot ~~environment~~ ^{climate} the Blessed Perfection lived for nine consecutive years

Aga Mehdi and Abul Gasem came in and reported that the locusts have entered the gardens and are eating the flowers and the trees. They wished him to order them to go away. He was silent for a few minutes and then he said :- " These locusts are your guests. Is it quite in accord with the law of decorum to send them away, especially now that they are quite hungry? What would you have done ^{were} you attacked with hunger and nothing in sight to eat? They are the armies of the Lord. If you give a banquet or a feast to the King's army, would he not be pleased with you and ^{send} you a decoration and express his satisfaction. And now would not the Lord be pleased with you, because you have so beautifully entertained his numberless legions? " Poor Abul Gasem was very disconsolate, for he knew that in a few days the lovely Rizwan will be changed into a barren waste with not one green leaf in it. For the last few days he had worked himself to the point of utter exhaustion to keep out the "guests" but they were knocking from all sides and finally breaking through all barriers, they rushed in from every direction like the torrents of water.

In the afternoon ^{The} Motosarref, Gaemmagaw, the German Consul and five other officials called on him and they kept him busy talking to them for more than one hour. With the utmost deference and respect they sat in his presence, listening to his words. Then three Catholic and Orthodox priests ^{called} and he spoke on the interpretation of certain passages of the Holy Scriptures and instructed them in the mystic ^{signi-}fications of the Words of God. Then he made ^{for us} ~~four~~ ^{tea} with his own blessed hands, and served us in his own ^{inimitable} natural, spontaneous manner.