

Home of Bahá'í.

Acc. Syria. May 30th 1915

Dear friends!

An interesting incident in the life of the Bab before he declared his mission to the world and while he was living as a merchant in Bushir was related by the Beloved. Those who have lived in the East and have become familiar with the immemorial custom of haggaining and haggling between the seller and the buyer enjoy this story, for it clearly shows how the Bab in that early period acted on the principle of "Prix Fixe", a radical procedure, setting at naught the time-honored commercial code of centuries prevalent amongst merchants and traders. The public expects to haggle and the storekeepers knowing this ingrained custom invariably advance the price, - leaving a margin for reduction, in order to attract the whimsicality of the people.

The Master said: "One day in the course of conversation Haji Sayad Javad said to me: 'I was a good friend of Haji Sayad Ali, the maternal uncle of the Bab. During my travellings I reached Bushir and inquired about him. They directed me to his office and to my chagrin I found that he has left for Shiraz but the Bab who was then in the efflorescence of his youth was appointed in his place to manage the business of the office. His mustache was just beginning to grow and the signs of manhood appearing in his whole being. As I looked into his young countenance I was wonder-struck with his spiritual dignity, staidness of manners and the nobleness of his deportment. At the time his holiness was engaged in the business of indigo. After a short conversation I left him impressed with the loftiness of his ethical standard and the purity of his personal character.'

"Another day I called on him and while I was sitting in his presence several commission men entered the office. He received them with due courtesy and bade them be seated. After a few preliminary remarks they ^{expressed} the news that letters are being received from India that the market value of indigo ~~has~~ ^{has} dropped one or two points. Other merchants were also present and they refuted strongly the assertion made by the commission agents. Pro and Con the conversation lasted for two

hours, each side trying to down the other. While the bitter controversy was raging the Bah sat silent and still and seemed to be not at all interested in the talk which has been going on with such animation. This was rather a crafty device for they intended to buy indigo from the Bah in the absence of his uncle at a lower price than the market value. When they finished their talk, one of them addressing him said: 'Malek-ottojjar has heard that you have in your office many boxes of indigo and he desires to buy some of them from you at the current price. Will you be kind enough to specify your terms?' Up to this moment the Bah had not said a word but now with the utmost calmness and dignity and with a few words and as simple as possible he told them the price and the terms by which the different installments were going to be paid. Loudly and vociferously they protested against the ^{high} price and the terms, as it were their wont, stating that there must be a reduction. He listened to their words silently and at last getting exasperated at his serene imperturbability they cried: 'What is your wish?' He answered: 'I have already told you. Have I to repeat again the same propositions?' Now they were indeed exasperated. 'What is this new custom?' they bemoaned. 'We have an inherent right to bargain. This shall never be. Are you going to dictate to us? Do you, a young man, know the commercial laws of the country better than we do? Who has ever heard of such strict adherence to one idea? We will not have it. We warn you that if you want to carry on business amongst us you must change this novel, peculiar custom, otherwise no one will approach your office.' The Bah just looked into their faces and did not answer them. When they got tired with their harangues and realized that their words produced not the slightest effect they left the office with disgust and grumblings. In an hour they were back with a message from Malek-ottojjar that he says the price of this indigo is quite high and he begs him to make at least a slight reduction for his sake. 'I have stated in so many words' he said 'the last fixed price and reduction is an impossibility. you are wasting your precious time uselessly.' The commission men were beside themselves with fury and

~~man~~ and attributed this one-sidedness to his stubbornness and obstinacy. Seeing how futile would be their rage they betook themselves away but soon returned in a chastened mood that the hyer has surrendered and ^{undoubtedly} like to have so many ~~cases~~ ^{cases}. The full terms were drawn up and the cases of indigo were transferred to the store of Malek-ottojjar. A few days passed and in order to gain their point they turned another leaf of double dealing and pretended the papers were tampered with and certain conditions were incorporated therein by the force of circumstance. Boisterous and noisy they came to the Bab, shouting for a considerable reduction of price and insisting that it must be done immediately. Without heeding their heated protestations he gently said: "Are you not satisfied with our former stipulations?" They all answered: "Of course not. We are duped, we are hoodwinked." "Very well, then, you may send back the goods." "What! Sending back the goods!" "Who has ever heard of such a thing? You are insulting the dignity and honor of Malek-ottojjar." [the King of the merchants] "Then you do not intend to send them back." "No, indeed. We will be considered worse than fools." ~~Calmly turning~~ ^{only his face} to his servant he said: "Go and take with thyself a number of porters, call at the store of Malek-ottojjar and ask, in my name, ^{for} the cases of indigo. Do not return till you bring them." These men were so stupefied at this thunderous command that they could not utter a sound and preferred to sit there and see the result. In an hour they were more than amazed to see the servants back with the goods.

"This incident was widely circulated in Bushir that Mirza Ali Mohamed has had the daring and courage to precipitate a commercial altercation with the King of the merchants and that his career will be brought to an end by the secret machinations of the powerful man whose dignity has been so sorely wounded. The intimate friends of Aga Sayad Ali called and begged him to go to the enraged man and beg ~~for~~ his apology and pardon, intimating that the result of this injured feeling will probably ~~will~~ be ruinous to the trade of his uncle. The Bab listened to their advice and said simply: - 'Do not worry about our business. There

a God who will protect it from all outside encroachments."

After two months the same cases of indigo were sold at a good profit and in cash. When his uncle arrived from Shiraz and heard the story in all its bearing he was not a little puzzled and agitated and thought it was ^{no more than} a commercial obligation to offer his apology to Malik-ettojar in order to soothe his anger, but the Bab forbade him not even to dream of such a humiliating course, that the episode had been closed and needed no more ventilation."—

During the day we had only a few glimpses of the Beloved, for he was busy, going out to call on his friends and receiving those who came to see him. Whenever he comes to Acca there is always a long procession of callers who come either to inquire about his health or to relieve them out of their manifold distresses. In these days the latter class prevail over the former.

In the evening he received the believers in his room for a few minutes and exhorted them to be patient and forbearing under the heavy loads of present misfortunes and troubles. He promised them that better and happier days are coming and assured them of the protection and preservation of the divine Powers.

Toward the afternoon two big warships were seen on the horizon cruising back and forth which they continued ^{to do} ~~since~~ till long after sunset. There was something threatening in their appearance and many people were troubled in their dreams.

The plain of Acca is a swimming sea of locusts. They have entered the town and filled the streets. The aqueduct is contaminated by them and this source of the supply of water is shut to the distracted inhabitants for the next fifteen or twenty days. They enter the rooms and every conceivable place. As many of them are being trampled under the feet, a most fetid and poisonous odor is diffused which may become the source of some epidemic disease. Oh Lord! How Thou hast abandoned Thy servants and encircled them with unimaginable trials!