

Falling in love with Lebanon is so easy, instead of our monthly editorial we have selected an article by our philosopher Gibran Khalil Gibran which was written in late 1920's as is still applicable and will be so until the end of days. Please enjoy reading it word by word.

Eng. Abdallah Hayek

You Have Your Lebanon and I Have My Lebanon

Gibran Khalil Gibran (1920s)

You have your Lebanon and its dilemma. I have my Lebanon and its beauty.



Your Lebanon is an arena for men from the West and men from the East.

My Lebanon is a flock of birds fluttering in the early morning as shepherds lead their sheep into the meadow and rising in the evening as farmers return from their fields and vineyards.

You have your Lebanon and its people. I have my Lebanon and its people.

Yours are those whose souls were born in the hospitals of the West; they are as ship without rudder or sail upon a raging sea.... They are strong and eloquent among themselves but weak and dumb among Europeans. They are brave, the liberators and the reformers, but only in their own area. But they are cowards, always led backwards by the Europeans. They are those who croak like frogs boasting that they have rid themselves of their ancient, tyrannical enemy, but the truth of the matter is that this tyrannical enemy still hides within their own souls. They are the slaves for whom time had exchanged rusty chains for shiny ones so that they thought themselves free. These are the children of your Lebanon. Is there anyone among them who represents the strength of the towering rocks of Lebanon, the purity of its water or the fragrance of its air? Who among them vouchsafes to say, "When I die I leave my country little better than when I was born"? Who among them dare to say, "My life was a drop of blood in the veins of Lebanon, a tear in her eyes or a smile upon her lips"?



Those are the children of your Lebanon. They are, in your estimation, great; but insignificant in my estimation.

Let me tell you who are the children of my Lebanon.

They are farmers who would turn the fallow field into garden and grove.

They are the shepherds who lead their flocks through the valleys to be fattened for your table meat and your woolens.

They are the vine-pressers who press the grape to wine and boil it to syrup.

They are the parents who tend the nurseries, the mothers who spin the silken yarn.

They are the husbands who harvest the wheat and the wives who gather the sheaves.

They are the builders, the potters, the weavers and the bell-casters.

They are the poets who pour their souls in new cups.

They are those who migrate with nothing but courage in their hearts and strength in their arms but who return with wealth in their hands and a wreath of glory upon their heads.

They are the victorious wherever they go and loved and respected wherever they settle.

They are the ones born in huts but who died in palaces of learning.

These are the children of Lebanon; they are the lamps that cannot be snuffed by the wind and the salt which remains unspoiled through the ages.

They are the ones who are steadily moving toward perfection, beauty, and truth.

What will remain of your Lebanon after a century? Tell me! Except bragging, lying and stupidity? Do you expect the ages to keep in its memory the traces of deceit and cheating and hypocrisy? Do you think the atmosphere will preserve in its pockets the shadows of death and the stench of graves?

Do you believe life will accept a patched garment for a dress? Verily, I say to you that an olive plant in the hills of Lebanon will outlast all of your deeds and your works; that the wooden plow pulled by the oxen in the crannies of Lebanon is nobler than your dreams and aspirations.

I say to you, while the conscience of time listened to me, that the songs of a maiden collecting herbs in the valleys of Lebanon will outlast all the uttering of the most exalted prattler among you. I say to you that you are achieving nothing. If you knew that you are accomplishing nothing, I would feel sorry for you, but you know it not.

You have your Lebanon and I have my Lebanon.

Gibran Khalil Gibran

From: THE TREASURED WRITINGS OF KAHLIL GIBRAN, edited and translated from Arabic by Martin L. Wolf, Anthony R. Ferris, and Andrew Dib Sherfan

May 2008