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THE SYRIAN WORLD



CHRISTMAS NUMBER

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KAHLIL GIBRAN

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Youth and Age

By KAHLIL GIBRAN

In my youth the heart of dawn was in my heart, and the songs of April were in my ears.

But my soul was sad unto death, and I knew not why. Even unto this day I know not why I was sad.

But now, though I am with eventide, my heart is still veiling dawn,

And though I am with autumn, my ears still echo the songs of spring.

But my sadness has turned into awe, and I stand in the presence of life and life's daily miracles.

The difference between my youth which was my spring, and these forty years, and they are my autumn, is the very difference that exists between flower and fruit.

A flower is forever swayed with the wind and knows not why and wherefore.

But the fruit overladen with the honey of summer, knows that it is one of life's home-comings, as a poet when his song is sung knows sweet content,

Though life has been bitter upon his lips.

In my youth I longed for the unknown, and for the unknown I am still longing.

But in the days of my youth longing embraced necessity that knows naught of patience.

Today I long not less, but my longing is friendly with patience, and even waiting.

And I know that all this desire that moves within me is one of those laws that turns universes around one another in quiet

ecstasy, in swift passion which your eyes deem stillness, and your mind a mystery.

And in my youth I loved beauty and abhorred ugliness, for beauty was to me a world separated from all other worlds.

But now that the gracious years have lifted the veil of picking-and-choosing from over my eyes, I know that all I have deemed ugly in what I see and hear, is but a blinder upon my eyes, and wool in my ears;

And that our senses, like our neighbors, hate what they do not understand.

And in my youth I loved the fragrance of flowers and their color.

Now I know that their thorns are their innocent protection, and if it were not for that innocence they would disappear forevermore.

And in my youth, of all seasons I hated winter, for I said in my aloneness, "Winter is a thief who robs the earth of her sun-woven garment, and suffers her to stand naked in the wind."

But now I know that in winter there is re-birth and renewal, and that the wind tears the old raiment to cloak her with a new raiment woven by the spring.

And in my youth I would gaze upon the sun of the day and the stars of the night, saying in my secret, "How small am I, and how small a circle my dream makes."

But today when I stand before the sun or the stars I cry, "The sun is close to me, and the stars are upon me;" for all the distances of my youth have turned into the nearness of age;

And the great aloneness which knows not what is far and what is near, nor what is small nor great, has turned into a vision that weighs not nor does it measure.

In my youth I was but the slave of the high tide and the ebb tide of the sea, and the prisoner of half moons and full moons.

Today I stand at this shore and I rise not nor do I go down.

Even my roots once every twenty-eight days would seek the heart of the earth.

And on the twenty-ninth day they would rise toward the throne of the sky.

And on that very day the rivers in my veins would stop for a moment, and then would run again to the sea.

Yes, in my youth I was a thing sad and yielding, and all the seasons played with me and laughed in their hearts.

And life took a fancy to me and kissed my young lips, and slapped my cheeks.

Today I play with the seasons. And I steal a kiss from life's lips ere she kisses my lips.

And I even hold her hands playfully that she may not strike my cheek.

In my youth I was sad indeed, and all things seemed dark and distant.

Today, all is radiant and near, and for this I would live my youth and the pain of my youth, again and yet again.

TRADITIONS OF THE PROPHET MOHAMMED

Wisdom enhances the nobility of the noble.

Hearts have a rust like that of iron, and forgiveness is the polish thereof.

They who are most thankful to God are most thankful to their fellow-man.

One of the conditions of forgiveness is to bring gladness to the heart of your brother believer.

Some men speak to please their hearers, though their speech may lead them to Hell.

God never showered a man with a greater beneficence than patience.