KAHLIL GIBRAN

THE BLESSED CITY

In my youth I was told that in a certain city every one lived according to the Scriptures.

And I said, “I will seek that city and the blessedness thereof.” And it was far. And I made great provision for my journey. And after forty days I beheld the city and on the forty-first day I entered into it.

And lo! the whole company of the inhabitants had each but a single eye and but one hand. And I was astonished and said to myself, “Shall they of this so holy city have but one eye and one hand?”

Then I saw that they too were astonished, for they were marveling greatly at my two hands and my two eyes. And as they were speaking together I inquired of them saying, “Is this indeed the Blessed City, where each man lives according to the Scriptures?” And they said, “Yes, this is that city.”

“And what,” said I, “hath befallen you, and where are your right eyes and your right hands?”

And all the people were moved. And they said, “Come thou and see.”

And they took me to the temple in the midst of the city. And in the temple I saw a heap of hands and eyes. All withered. Then said I, “Alas! what conqueror hath committed this cruelty upon you?”

And there went a murmur amongst them. And one of their elders stood forth and said, “This doing is of ourselves. God hath made us conquerors over the evil that was in us.”

And he led me to a high altar, and all the people followed. And he showed me above the altar an inscription graven, and I read:

“If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that the whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

Then I understood. And I turned about to all the people and cried, “Hath no man or

woman among you two eyes or two hands?”

And they answered me saying, “No, not one. There is none whole save such as are yet too young to read the Scripture and to understand its commandment.”

And when we had come out of the temple, I straightway left that Blessed City; for I was not too young, and I could read the scripture.