

# THE SLAUGHTER OF CHRISTIANS IN ASIA MINOR

On the Cilician Plain  
To-day There Are Left  
Sufficient Evidences  
Of the Moslem Massacre  
To Warrant Estimate of  
30,000 Christians Killed.



The Adana Relief Committee in Session—C. Nesbit Chambers and  
Major C. H. Doughty-Wylie.



Remains of a Thriving Village Near Adana, Destroyed in Massacre.

By James Creelman.

Copyright by the Pearson Publishing Company.

**T**HE most appealing figure I saw in all the scene of death and destruction that stretched over the Cilician Plain for a hundred miles was a bent, white-haired Armenian of seventy years who stood among blackened ruins of his Christian village, with a skull in his wrinkled hands and a pile of bones at his feet.

"He was my son-in-law," said the old man. "The Moslems surrounded Glaour Kur, [the village,] calling on their prophet's name and screaming to us that they had orders not to leave a Christian alive in the whole country. We defended ourselves in our houses for three days, but our ammunition became exhausted. Some swam the river at night and escaped. Some got into the fields and hid in the wheat, but the Turks hunted them out with dogs and killed them all. The rest started for the City of Adana, but were hacked to pieces on the road. Our pretty girls were carried away as prisoners. Then every house in the village was plundered and burned. It is the same everywhere on this plain—there is not a single Christian house left standing."

His face was blackened by the fierce sun, seamed and puckered by age and hard work; his quaint blue and red jacket was rent, and his sturdy legs were wrapped in loose white cotton; a faded black cap covered his head, and his feet were in cowhide moccasins. He spoke in a dreary monotone, now and then glancing nervously at the Turkish soldiers who accompanied me.

"They had no pity in their hearts," he said. "They killed every Christian they found, everywhere, everywhere"—extending his arms and shaking his white head.

The venerable survivor of the ghastliest massacre in history strode a few steps and stopped beside some charred bones.

"Here they burned a Christian alive," he said. "A poor fellow who had done them no harm."

Again he walked through the flower-carpeted field, starting up the singing larks as he went, and halted beside another blackened spot.

"Here they burned another Christian alive," he said. "They used wood and kerosene."

Trudging on slowly, he brought me to the foot of a tree where skulls and bones were scattered about, and beside them blood-stained clubs.

"These ran to climb the tree, but were caught; the dogs have eaten their flesh—Christian flesh," he explained.

It seemed unreal. The wide, sunlit landscape; the glow and perfume of flowers; the never-ceasing warbling of larks and skimming of swallows; the green stretches of young cotton and sesame; the yellow surge of ripe wheat—and silent Moslems, in red fezes or dirty white turbans, cheerfully gathering in the crops of the Christians they had murdered, while a group of slattern Turkish soldiers smoked cigarettes among the ruins of the silent and empty Christian village, which only a few weeks before had sheltered three hundred contented Armenians.

The old man studied my face eagerly. "When will the American ships and soldiers come to protect us?" he asked. I shook my head.

"What!" he pleaded, his lips trembling and his breast heaving. "The Christian nations will not abandon us? The Americans will come to save us? We are helpless. The Turks will kill us all. They have no mercy."

I left him standing beside the bones of his slain neighbors with bowed head and clasped hands, still hoping and dreaming that help would come from far-away America.

It is this amazing belief in the power and swift humanity of the American people that stirs the soul of an American who goes out over the blood-stained soil of the Cilician Plain, or moves among the thin, white-faced refugees crowded in the cities.

---

For more than half a century American missionaries have been working among the descendants of the Armenian kingdom, which was established in the high lands about Mount Ararat 500 years before Christ, the first kingdom in the world to accept Christianity. The Armenian people were slaughtered and robbed by Persians, Macedonians, Romans, and Byzantines. Then the Arabs, Kurds, and Seljuk Turks alternately attacked them. In the eleventh century the Byzantines again swept into their country and extinguished their kingdom, when the unhappy people fled to the Cilician Plain, where

they founded another kingdom and maintained it for 300 years, but were finally conquered by the Egyptians.

Never since the Apostle Thaddeus went from Christ to the Armenians have they abandoned Christianity, and through war after war, massacre after massacre, they have proclaimed their religion openly.

Hundreds of American lives and millions of American money have been sacrificed in the attempt to raise the Armenians out of the dead ritualism of their ancient church into the active spiritual and moral life of modern Christianity, and to-day more than a half million dollars a year are spent through the American missions.

It makes one's blood leap to see the glorious work that has been done by brave American men and women in the heart of Asia Minor, a work of education, of compassion, of active rescue from poverty and despair.

The scene of this last great massacre—more terrifying and unspeakable even than the bloody sweep of Tamerlane and his Asiatic horde—is filled with monuments of American courage and devotion—missions at Mersina, Tarsus, Adana, Hadjin, Talas, Kassab, Antioch, Marash, Aintab, and Lattakia, and more than a hundred native Christian churches scattered about the towns and villages of the great plain over which the armies of Xerxes, Cyrus, Mithridates, Alexander, Caesar, Pompey, Harun-al-Rashid, Saladin, and Ibrahim Pasha moved through centuries of conquest.

It was here the Moslem Arabs barred the way of Christian pilgrims to the sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem and drew from Europe the mail-clad Crusaders under Godfrey de Bouillon, who camped on the very soil where whole Christian populations have been ruthlessly destroyed this year.

Nowhere in the world is there such a confusion of races and religions to be found as in this ancient battlefield where Europe and Asia have contended for thousands of years.

I have seen American missionaries feeding and comforting the refugees of five different religious sects in Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul, beside the little hill where Marc Antony received Cleopatra when the Egyptian queen, disguised as Venus, sailed up the Cydnus, whose waters were, only a few weeks ago, filled with mutilated Christian corpses.

And out of this dreadful country, where I have traveled for fifty miles without seeing a single Christian house standing, and where I have seen dogs eating the bodies of murdered Christians, there rises a cry of appeal to America from widows and orphans and from men who starve and hide while the murderous Turks gather their crops and make worse than slaves of their wives and daughters.

It is easy for American statesmanship to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But that was the answer of Cain to God.

Come with me to old Tarsus, whose buried magnificence lies beneath the grounds of an American mission founded by a New Yorker, and, in the sight of whole streets of burned Christian homes, stand beside me and listen to the gentle voice of a young Armenian widow of 24 years, Paka Sarajian, of the near-by mountain village Kozolook.

She is slim and as graceful as a deer as she leans against a crumbling wall, clad in a red jacket and loose blue native trousers, her small oval face tanned by the sun, her great brown eyes shining with devotion and her pretty little childish mouth trembling as she talks. A white cloth is wound around her shapely head to conceal the fact that her hair was burned off. Her left arm is in a sling. She holds her ragged little son by the hand.

As she talks, a squad of dirty Turkish soldiers leer at her and groups of hungry and ragged Christians, who only a few days before were living in good houses, pass and repass between the American mission and the Turkish court-martial.

"There were eighty Christian families in the village of Kozolook," she says, "and I lived there with my husband, who was a carpenter, and my four children, one a baby."

Her face twitches, and a big tear rolls down her face.



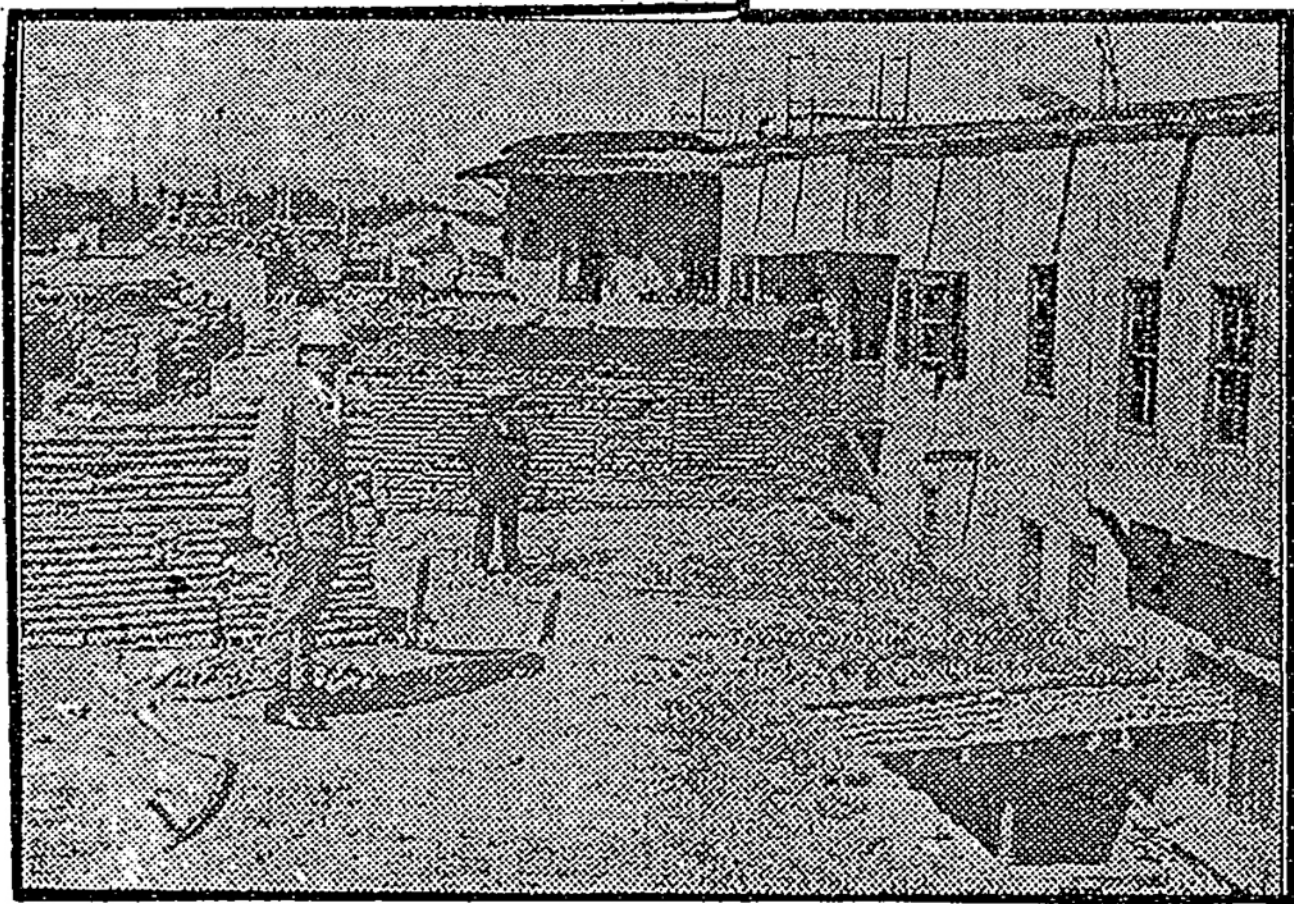
"On Friday, in the week of the massacres, the Turks from the surrounding villages came and persuaded all the men of our village to give up their arms, promising that they would protect them.

"Then they took us in different parties to their villages, telling us all the time that Christians would be safer with them. There were thirty-six persons in my party, and they took us to the village of Chavooshlu, about a mile away. I trembled all the time, because I learned that they had murdered my husband. They shot him nine times before he died."

The forlorn little peasant beauty shivers and touches her son on the head with inexpressible tenderness.

"When we reached Chavooshlu we were shut up in a Turk's house until Sunday. Then a crowd of Turkish villagers, people who had always been our neighbors, came and said that they had orders from the government to kill us all. They had guns and swords and clubs. We begged for our lives. We kissed their feet. But they said we must die. It was the order of the government—all Christians must die. We had done nothing, nothing at all. It was because we were Christians.

"They took us to a field to kill us, and when I saw that there was no escape I threw my little baby in a mountain river and saw it drown."



Mr. Trowbridge and Mr. Dodds at Adana After Massacre.

Tears gush from the brown eyes, and a sob shakes the light, graceful figure.

"In the field they told us to lie down in a line from east to west, and made their swords ready. We got on our knees and put our faces in the dirt. We crawled before them and kissed their feet. We begged them for the sake of God to let us die some other death. We asked them to shoot us in the head so that we might die at once. They answered that cartridges cost money and they did not propose to waste money on Christians. The government had ordered them to kill us, and it was cheaper to use swords than guns—they would cut our throats; it was a good way for Christians to die."

She writhes, bites her lips, and cuddles her son. Her voice sinks to a whisper. Her eyes roll upward.

"Then we all stretched ourselves on the ground, I and my three little children, too—oh, my God, all I had left!—and the Turks raised their swords and hacked at the necks—oh! oh!"—she covered her eyes and bent her head—"and I heard my little ones cry out to me. They chopped the arms of one of my boys. They chopped the neck of another. How I escaped death I cannot tell. But I kept one boy by my side. Then they made a pile of wood and hay and put all the bodies on it, some of them still living, and set fire to the pile; and I heard my two dying children calling to me in the flames. But I held my other boy and kept still, pretending to be dead. Even when my little ones were burning to death I did not dare to move. They threw hay over me and set fire to it, and my hair was burned off, yet I did not move or speak. Then a Turk helped me and my boy to get away and—" she hung her head.

Poor little Christian woman! She was in her rescuer's hands for three days before she reached Dr. Christle and his wife at the American mission of St. Paul's Institute in Tarsus.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Is that to be the reply of Christian America to the widows and orphans of the thirty thousand Christians murdered in Asia Minor? All, all look across the contending European nations to America for some sign. That is the tremendous fact of the situation. Priests, bishops, merchants, peasants, old men, women, the starving, the wounded, the homeless, and the hunted have all asked me what America is going to do now for Christ's people.

There is no doubt that Abdul Hamid secretly ordered the massacre of Ar-

menians in Asia Minor from his palace in Constantinople. That fully explains the indifference or complicity of the public authorities of Adana. The fact that massacres began in Adana, Hamidieh, and Osmanieh simultaneously on the very day that the garrison of Constantinople murdered its officers and seized the Parliament building, shows an exact concert between the despot and his agents in Asia Minor.

But the command of the guilty Sultan does not account for the indescribable barbarity of the mobs on the Cilician Plain, where men were burned alive in the presence of their wives and daughters, where not one Christian house was spared, and where Christian fugitives in the fields were for days hunted with dogs by men who had been their neighbors and had worked for years side by side with them. One Turkish farmer near Adana killed in cold blood Armenian laborers who had been in his service for twenty-five years.

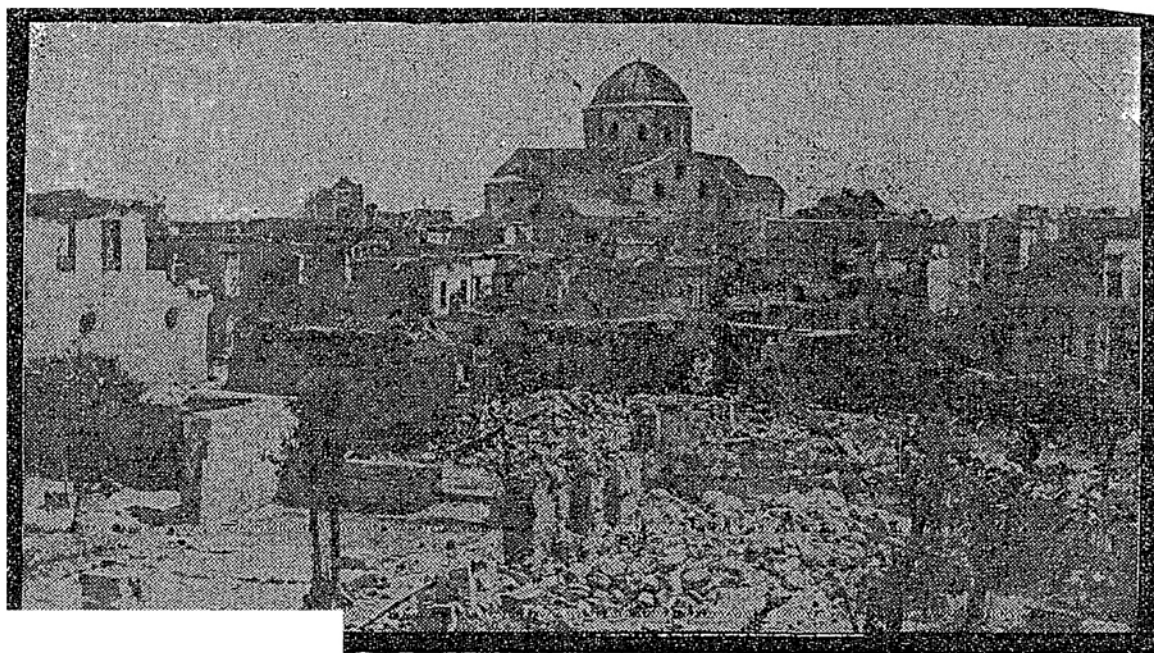
No words can describe the horror of what occurred. The details are unprintable. I have heard stories from the few survivors on the spot that actually sickened me. There is nothing in the history of the most savage Indian tribes of America comparable to this outburst of cruelty and lust in which the Christian population of a widespread, fertile country was almost totally annihilated.

The Turkish Government may protest that the figures have been exaggerated, but I have seen enough with my own eyes to know that the Consular estimates of 30,000 deaths are moderate. In the country districts the massacre was not confined to Armenians, but Greeks, Chaldeans, Syrians, Mesopotamians; and other Christians were slain without distinction and their houses looted and burned.

In my journey among the destroyed villages I asked many Turks to explain how it came that in a single day the people of a prosperous farming country

could change into wild beasts. The answer invariably was that the Armenians intended to rise in arms and establish an independent kingdom, and that it was only fair that loyal Turks should defend themselves. Here and there a Moslem spoke of photographs representing Armenians dressed as Kings, Princes, or armed warriors.

Six weeks before the first massacre—if the first fight may be called a massacre—there was a powerful reactionary agitation among the Moslem masses all over the country. The Constitution was bitterly criticized. The Christians were getting too pretentious. The Armenians were organizing a revolution. Islam was in danger. So the story ran from city to city, village to village, and farm to farm. Turk, Arab, and Circassian looked with deadly, greedy eyes upon his Christian neighbors. The subtle mind and matchless methods of the Armenian-hating monster in the Yildiz palace was at work everywhere. The Mohammedan League spread exaggerated accounts of what the Christians were doing and intended to do. The air was full of suspicion and hatred.



**Burned Streets in Tarsus.**



Early in April there was a brawl in the city of Adana between an Armenian and some Turks over a disreputable woman. The Armenian wounded three Turks, and one of them died. His funeral was made the excuse for a great demonstration against the Armenians, and threatening speeches were made by excited Turks. There was a great Turkish mass meeting on the night of Tuesday, April 13, near the Konak, or government building, under the direction of the Mohammedan League. An Armenian who ventured near the scene was caught by the crowd and clubbed to death. His friends carried the news about the Armenian quarter of the city, and the 200 oath-bound Armenian riflemen, the Fedayee, got themselves in readiness.

The whole city was in a thrill of excitement on Wednesday morning. All Moslems appeared in white turbans—a dreadful signal that Christians have learned to understand—a Turkish mob gathered in the streets near the Armenian shops, armed with knives and clubs, which they tried to hide under their coats. The Armenians began to close their shops. The Turks put marks on their own shutters to distinguish them from the property of Christians—another fearful sign.

Soon the narrow streets of Adana were filled with screaming, armed mobs, all moving toward the Armenian bazaars, the finest shops in the city. All wore white turbans, and all were armed. The rush of their feet and the angry roar of their voices could be heard for a great distance. They brandished daggers, pistols, and clubs. The crush of their bodies almost filled the streets from wall to wall. One mob was led by a mullah, or Moslem priest, in a huge green turban. Another followed a mullah who shook a green banner and cursed all Christians.

Butchers waved sharp cleavers, carpenters held aloft their axes and knives. Some chanted verses from the Koran, some shrieked for vengeance, others called for the looting of the shops. Soon the street of the Armenian bazaars was packed with a raving, furious multitude of Turks, Arabs, Circassians, Afghans, the most ignorant, fanatical, and bloodthirsty mob that the world could furnish, faces contorted with rage, eyes blazing, and voices swelling shriller every moment.

Ordinary Armenians withdrew from that spectacle. The oath-bound secret soldiers of the Fedayee gathered in the middle of the market place. Their young, boyish captain, with his long blond hair streaming from under a red-topped cap, stood among them, white-faced but resolute. He called upon them to show themselves to be true Armenians and true Christians.

The Moslem mob pressed closer and closer. It howled and leaped in the air.

Suddenly a few Armenian shops were attacked, the crashing of shutters was heard, and the mob began the work of looting.

Instantly the Fedayee began firing their revolvers in the air. At this the mob surged forward and began a general pillage of the Armenian shops.

Under the direction of their leader, the members of the Fedayee and their friends now fought a regular battle in defense of the Armenian quarter. They posted marksmen in the windows commanding strategic points. They threw up barricades in the streets. They poured volleys from the roofs. Scores of Moslems fell under this steady and careful fire. The mob wrecked many



of the shops, but it could not penetrate into the Armenian residential quarter. As the young Armenians picked off their enemies the streets were red with Moslem blood.

There was no government left; the city was given up to anarchy, save where the consecrated Fedayee kept the Armenian quarter from invasion and slew Moslems without ceasing. Men claiming to be reservist soldiers received military rifles from the arsenal and at once joined the mob. The attack on the Armenians now became more terrible as the Government rifles were brought into play, but they stood their ground; and in the midst of the battle squads of the Fedayee were sent even into the Turkish quarter to conduct Christian women and children to places of safety in the churches and schools.

The battle went on, night and day, for two days and a half. Thousands of Armenians, mostly women and children, took refuge in the American mission school, in the house of Dr. Chambers, in the house and factory of the British dragoman, in a German factory, and in the schools of the French Jesuits and nuns.

In time the Moslems mounted rooftops and climbed into the minarets of the mosques. They also took possession of a clock tower. From these high points they were able to kill the Armenians with ease. The tide of battle seemed to be changing.

Then the long-haired captain of the Fedayee and a band of his most trusted comrades disguised themselves as Moslems by winding white turbans about their heads. They made their way to the nearest mosque, killed its keepers, and, mounting the minaret, opened fire on the men in the other

minarets and in the clock tower. For hours the battle in the air went on, and roars of anger went up from the mob as it saw Moslem after Moslem fall in the minarets. When his ammunition was exhausted, the Armenian captain withdrew his men from the minaret, rejoined his comrades, took the turban from his head, and, with his fair hair tangled about his face, resumed the battle in the streets.

It is said that this one Armenian fighter killed thirty-seven Turks with his own hands in a single place on the second day of the struggle, and that at times his white, pinched face and blue eyes would light up as though he were inspired. Yet he was but a boy of 20 years, who had closed his shoemaker's shop to teach Christian children in the Gregorian school, and then had abandoned his books and scholars to strike for liberty.

The whole world has heard the story of how Major Doughty-Wylie, the gallant soldier, who was serving as British Vice Consul at Mersina, went to Adana on the first day of the fighting, forced the trembling Turkish Governor to give him a small body of soldiers, posted guards at the American mission and school, furnished protection to imperiled foreigners, and rode about the crazed city, entreating, threatening, and persuading the Moslem mob, until a bullet broke his arm on the second day. The world also knows how the two American missionaries, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Maurer, were murdered in cold blood while trying to save a widow's burning house that threatened the American school with destruction—murdered by Moslems who were plundering a Christian house and who had promised not to harm them.

Before night Dr. Chambers and a Jesuit priest signed a petition to the Governor asking for protection.

The mob, which had burned several buildings, was threatening the American school and attempting to set fire to it. An Armenian preacher had been murdered in Dr. Chambers's arms. The Moslems were insisting that the Armenian refugees in the American Mission should be surrendered to them for slaughter.

The gray missionary, haggard with anxiety and grief, had gone out into the mob and argued with it.

"You have spilled enough blood," he cried. "Be satisfied."

Until one old Moslem, moved by the courage of the Christian, had put his back against the wall of the American school and shouted, "My life for this building!"

The petition was taken to the Governor by a friendly Turk, a body of troops appeared, the mob was dispersed, and order was restored.

It was found that about 600 or 700 Moslems had been killed by the Armenians, whose own losses amounted to something like 1,000.

Then the members of the Fedayee and their blond-haired captain promptly fled from Asia Minor. It was the absence of this trained body that made the Armenians so helpless in the great massacre which followed. The general leader, Bezdikian, and one of his associates, were sheltered by the wounded British Vice Consul in the house of his dragoman, but, search as they might, the Turks could find no trace of the little army that had defended the Armenian quarter so bravely.

While the fight in Adana was drawing to a close on Friday, about 200 Moslem ruffians seized a railway train and went to Tarsus. They killed two unarmed Armenians at the railway station and, rushing into the town with shrieks and curses, were joined by native Turks and Afghans, when a general massacre and pillage of the Armenian quarter began. The mob first went to the government armory, where it was supplied with hundreds of rifles and plenty of ammunition.

Here the Armenians made no attempt to resist, but, such as were caught in the streets or houses, died like sheep. Three thousand fled for refuge to the American school, which had a guard of four soldiers.

More than 300 Christians were murdered in Tarsus and its surrounding fields and farms. But for the shelter of the American school the massacre would have been many times greater. At the time of the attack there were seven ladies there, including Mrs. Christie, Mrs. Gibbons, and Mrs. Rogers, whose missionary husbands were absent in Adana, and two sisters of Justice Brewer of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Cut off from communication with Adana or Mersina, with 3,000 wailing men, women, and children huddling about them; with the flame and smoke of the doomed Armenian quarter rolling toward them; sparks constantly starting small blazes in their buildings; men and women shot, stabbed, or clubbed by the mob, being carried to them for help; these ladies saw the Moslems plunder the splendid stone houses of their victims, systematically pour kerosene on the floors, and then burn them.



All day long in Tarsus the stabbing and shooting went on, the violation of women, the wrecking and burning of homes. The government did nothing to stay the mob. Men who knelt and begged for mercy were literally cut into pieces. Children were dashed to death against stones. Fourteen victims were tied and thrown into the river alive.

The massacre spread to the fields and farms and to the village of Kozolook in the mountains. Five victims were bound and burned alive. Nineteen young Christians were circumcised by force and had turbans put on their heads, while their torturers feasted and mocked them as converts to Islam; after which they were murdered in cold blood, lest they should repent. Even one of the students of the American school was compelled to submit to circumcision and wear a turban, but when he escaped to the school he tore the white wrapping from his head and declared himself a Christian. One old woman of Kozolook described to me how her husband and two sons were deliberately beaten to death before her eyes, and, when 138 of the villagers had been killed, she was told that, as all the Christian men were dead, she had better give her two daughters-in-law to Moslem husbands.

I have walked among the ruins of Armenian houses in Tarsus, splendid, solid stone buildings, street after street filled with wreckage, and it seemed almost impossible that human hands could have wrought such destruction in one day. The jumble of shattered masonry and tumult of overturned walls suggested an earthquake. In the Armenian church, about which Christian women and children of good families were living in tents or crouching in corners, the savagery of the Moslems was shown in the broken marble altar railing, the slashed pictures of Christ and the Madonna, the charred wood of the altar, and the torn Bibles.

At the American school, where Dr. Christie, one of the snowy-headed veterans of Shiloh, and his wife had been working day and night among the refugees, comforting widows and orphans, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, nursing the sick and dying, the survivors of the massacre told me stories of atrocities almost unbelievable. Here, too, the appeal was always for protection from America, the country that had done so much for oppressed Christians.

## **The New York Times**

Published: August 22, 1909

Copyright © The New York Times