

**W.J.WINTLE, ARMENIA AND ITS SORROWS,  
LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE, 1896.**

The Chapters V-VII of the book describes the atrocities against Armenians in the Ottoman empire in 1890s, particularly in regard to the population of Sassoun and Mush based on eyewitnesses, both Armenian and foreign.

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**CHAPTER V.  
THE ORIGINS OF TROUBLE**

To appreciate the causes of the long chapter of Armenian horrors which has culminated in the fearful atrocities of the past few years, we need to recall the incidents connected with the introduction of Christianity into the country. What the people are now suffering is neither more nor less than what they endured in the fifth and following centuries at the hands of the fire-worshipping Persians. If they had then returned to Zoroastrianism, or if, two centuries later, they had embraced Mohammedanism, when the soldiers of Islam massacred thousands of them in cold blood, the whole course of their subsequent history would have been changed.

It should never be forgotten that the question is essentially one of religion. The Turks have no reason for disliking the Armenians apart from this. Indeed, we venture to assert that they greatly prefer the industrious and peaceable Armenians to the idle and turbulent Kurds. But the Kurds are nominally Mohammedans, while the Armenians are very decided Christians. Hence the Kurds are allowed to have their way, and the Armenians are subjected to every indignity and outrage.

In the fourth century St. Chrysostom described the state of affairs in terms almost identical with those which have appeared in the columns or present-day newspaper.

"Like ferocious beasts they (the Kurds) fell upon the unhappy inhabitants of Armenia and devoured them. Trouble and disorder are everywhere. Hundreds of men, women, and children have been massacred; others have been frozen to death. The towns and villages are desolated; everywhere you see blood; everywhere you hear the groans of the dying, the shouts of the victors, and the sobs and the tears of the vanquished."

The *Times* has drawn attention to the fact that in the year 1360 some Armenian refugees were in England, seeking the protection of Edward III., and asking permission to make the woes of their country known. History is repeating itself today. The rule of the Turk during the past five hundred years has been

productive of a never-ceasing stream of refugees, flowing towards happier shores.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the English traveller, Sandys, published the following description of the sights he witnessed in Armenia:-

"The wild beasts of mankind have broken in upon them and rooted out all civility; and the pride of a stern and barbarous tyrant, possessing the thrones of ancient dominion, who aims only at the height of greatness and sensuality, hath reduced so great and goodly a part of the world to that lamentable distress and servitude under which it now faints and groans. Those rich lands at this present time remain waste and overgrown with bushes, and receptacles of wild beasts, of thieves and murderers; large territories dispeopled or thinly inhabited; goodly cities made desolate, sumptuous buildings become ruins, glorious temples either subverted or prostituted to impiety; true religion discountenanced and opposed; all nobility extinguished; no light of learning permitted, no virtue cherished; violence and rapine exulting over all, and leaving no security, save an abject mind and unlooked - on poverty."

In 1843 an incident occurred at Erzeroum, which is typical of the treatment habitually meted out to the Armenians by their Ottoman rulers. A merchant was sleeping at the caravansarai, with two soldiers near him. In the morning he found that his goods had been stolen, and charged the soldiers with the theft. They were taken before the judge, when they denied the charge, and were at once liberated. A Turkish woman now appeared who had seen the soldiers burying the property at a certain place, where part of it was found after a little search. The soldiers were again arrested, and now stated that they had stolen half the property, and that an Armenian, named Artin, had taken the other half. This man was then arrested, but denied all knowledge of the affair, upon which the Pasha ordered him to be tortured till he should confess. A cord was tied round his head, two sheep's knucklebones were placed upon his temples, and the cord tightened till his eyes nearly came out. As he still declared his innocence, his teeth were drawn out one by one, pieces of cane were thrust under his toe nails and finger nails, and his thighs were torn with pincers. He was then hung up by the hands, and orders were given that he was to be tormented until he either confessed or died. This went on for twelve days before it came to the knowledge of the British Commissioners, who were then at Erzeroum, and who at once assumed an attitude which compelled the Pasha to release his victim.

It may be well here to briefly describe the old prison at Erzeroum, in which many a wretched Armenian disappeared for ever. It is now disused, though its modern substitute is bad enough.

In the floor of a dimly-lighted and ill-ventilated cell, in the basement of the old clock tower, was a heavy wrought-iron grating, made of great bars some six inches apart, and strongly hinged and padlocked. When this grating was opened, there appeared under it the mouth of a narrow well cut in the rock, about two and a half feet in diameter, which sank down into the darkness for below. When the eye became

accustomed to the gloom, a large white stone could be distinguished in the midst of the dungeon. This served as a table, and upon it the jailers threw down the prisoners' foods. Sometimes they threw down a large piece of raw flesh as well, in order that its decomposition might add to the miseries of the wretched prisoners. The dungeon was bottle-shaped, between twenty and thirty feet deep, filth and vermin forming its only furniture. Into this awful hole many and many an innocent Armenian was let down, for no offence save that he was a Christian, and there he was left to perish unless his friends could provide a sufficiently large bribe to secure his release.

In the summer of 1877 occurred the Battak massacres, and in October of the same year a band of Turkish soldiers attacked a village near Yuzgat, and ordered the inhabitants to bring out all the money and food they possessed.

The terrified Armenians obeyed, and in a short time the whole band of soldiers were drunk. Then, in the words of the English Consul, "they made a hell of the place." The women, young and old, were outraged in the presence of their fathers, husbands, and brothers. All the cattle and horses were killed, and the village finally burnt to the ground. The scoundrels then departed for Yuzgat, forcing the men of the village to accompany them as porters, and in some cases actually riding on the men themselves. When the old and feeble broke down, they were forced to keep up by being pricked with knives and bayonets. Truly the horrors perpetrated by the slave-hunters of Africa are not worse than these!

On the night when the present Sultan of Turkey was proclaimed in the stead of his drunken, demented predecessor, a great wave of fanatical fury swept over the town of Beridjik, on the Euphrates. The cry was raised to kill the Armenians. All through the night bands of ruffians rushed through the streets, hammering at the doors of the Christians and threatening to murder them all. No one dared to have a light, and in the darkness whole families huddled to get her in the cellars, fearing even to speak. During the awful night children were prematurely born by mothers who died from fright, and many children lost their senses through sheer terror, and are babbling idiots to this day.

Without a doubt, the whole Christian population would have been murdered but for the strange apparition of an aged Turk in the streets, who was the sole survivor of the Deré Beys, and was regarded by the Moslems with peculiar veneration.

This man went everywhere demanding silence, and proclaiming that the peoples of the West were coming to avenge their fellow-Christians. He succeeded in stopping the riot; but, alas! his prophecy is still unfulfilled.

We have given the above instances to show that the persecution of the Armenians is neither a new thing nor a mere outbreak of spasmodic fanaticism. It has been the normal state of things in Asiatic Turkey for many years past. Other Powers have protested and threatened; the Sultan has again and again promised reforms; but the outrages have continued. Latterly it has become clear that the

Ottoman Government has adopted a policy of extermination. The facts which have been published in Blue Books, and still more in the powerful article of Canon MacColl and Dr. E. J. Dillon, have made this abundantly clear.

In 1892 the Sublime Porte issued decrees prohibiting Christian worship and education. This should be especially noted in view of the fact that by the Treaty of Berlin the British Government promised toleration for all religions, and the British Government received Cyprus as a pledge, and also as a recognition of the rights of England to see that the promise in question was duly carried out. How it has been carried out, we now proceed to show.

Christians are forbidden to build churches, and only after much delay and extensive bribes can they obtain permission to repair the old ones. There must be no bells, lest the religious feelings of the Mussulmans should be wounded, and for the same reason there must be no loud singing during the service. The most insulting language is applied to Christians in all public and official documents. They are described as "dogs" and "pigs," and in burial certificates they are said to be not "dead" but "damned." Here is a specimen:-

"We certify to the priest of the Church of Mary (in Armenia) that the impure, putrid, stinking carcase of . . . ., damned this day, may be concealed underground."

The above was not the spiteful work of a petty official: it was all quite in order, and was attested by the British Ambassador.

One of the Blue Books on "Religions Persecution in Turkey" states on the authority of Her Majesty's Ambassador and Consuls, that the port has definitely refused to permit the establishment of Christian schools, and has prohibited the publication of the Bible in the Turkish tongue. In 1891 meetings for worship in private houses were forbidden. The next step was to prohibit Christian literature. So far bid the authorities go in this direction, that even the classes of English literature, such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Scott, were confiscated. When Mr. Brooke Lambert, the Vicar of Greenwich, was travelling through Turkish territory in 1892, his pocket Bible was taken from him.

Christians are forbidden to quote passages of Scripture in their writings, lest revolutionary doctrines should be thus promulgated. Any passage from the Bible is prohibited which contains such words as persecution, courage, liberty, strength, king, arms, rights, etc. Even the word "star" is excluded, on the ground that the magi were led by a star to worship the Messiah, and this might encourage the Christians to look for a deliverer. Preachers are forbidden to inculcate the virtues of manly courage, resignation under affliction, and hope in God's delivering mercy. Such expressions as the following are strongly objected to:-

"The grace of God," because Mohammedans deny that Christians can have this grace; "good news or gospel," because it is not admitted that the teaching of Christ is good news; and "apostle," because Moslems deny that the first disciples of

Christ were sent from God. On the other hand, books have been published containing the most abominable slanders about the Christian religion, and their authors have been decorated by the Sultan. It is not surprising, then, to learn that the work of Christian ministers and missionaries is beset by extraordinary difficulties.

In February 1893, Professor Thoumaian, of the Marsovan Protestant College, was arrested with several other Armenians on a charge of sedition, and for a time was treated with gross inhumanity, his hands being confined for five days in heavy manacles which cut into his flesh. He was also kept without food, and cruelly beaten. The charges against him were of the most absurd character. He had visited certain villages in connection with his mission work, and this was regarded as a cover for the spread of revolutionary teaching. No evidence whatever could be procured except the affidavits of some men who declared at the trial that they were tortured by the Government agents until they signed the documents. But notwithstanding these facts, M. Thoumaian and sixteen of his companions were sentenced to death, on the 12th of June, at Angora.

Happily for him, he was well known in England as a respected missionary and philanthropist. A great storm of indignation broke forth in all directions. Meetings to protest were held in many large towns, and urgent questions were asked in the House of Commons. Representations were at once made by the British Ambassador to the Porte, and he was informed that the case would be reconsidered by the Court of Cassation. But the British nation was in no mood to be trifled with. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July, Lord Rosebery sent the following telegram to Constantinople:-

"Her Majesty's Government cannot wait for result of proceedings of Court of Cassation. The Sultan is evidently determined to add to the cruel farce already perpetrated at Angora by another mock condemnation. Every additional day, however, that passes over the heads of these innocent prisoners is a new injustice."

The effect of this was instantaneous. On the following morning M. Thoumaian was set at liberty. It may be that other iniquities in Armenia would have been checked had the British Government held equally strong language on the subject.

Another step in the process of "diminishing" the Armenians was to reduce them to a condition of semi-starvation. The Ottoman Government is notorious for its unwillingness to pay its debts, and thus it comes about that the officials in charge of the various districts of Armenia have been left to live largely by their wits; in other words, by robbery and spoliation. Thus, Tahsin Pasha, a former Governor-General of Bitlis, made a practice of imprisoning scores of wealthy Armenians without the least pretext at a trial or even an accusation. Liberty was then offered in return for large money payments. Those prisoners who refused to pay the bribe were subjected to the most horrible tortures. Some were made to stand motionless for twenty-four, thirty-six, or forty-eight hours in a narrow box, bristling all over with iron spikes, and with hardly room on the

ground to stand upon. About a hundred Armenians died in the prison of Bitlis alone.

In 1890, the village elder of Odandjor was a rich man, as wealth is reckoned in Armenia. He possessed eighty oxen, fifty buffaloes, six hundred sheep, several horses, and other property. He paid £50 a year in taxes to the Government. But he and his neighbours were plundered of their goods by the Turks, and in 1894 he was a homeless vagrant, in danger of dying from want.

In 1891 the Sultan began to form a force of thirty thousand Kurdish cavalry, officered by the most notorious brigands and criminals in Kurdistan. These men "openly state," wrote the British Consul at Erzeroum, "that they have been appointed to suppress the Armenians, and that they have received assurances that they will not be called to answer before the tribunals for any acts of oppression committed against Christians." These are the men who served as willing tools in the hands of Sultan, whenever massacres and outrages were thought desirable.

The Kurds received general permission to feed their cattle in the pastures and cornfields of the Armenians. Reuter's agent, who spent some months travelling about Armenia in disguise, states that wherever he went he found Kurdish cattle, with their attendants, in the pastures of the Armenians, who dared not resist or even complain.

The crops having been destroyed, a year's taxation was demanded in advance from the wretched Christians. When they pleaded poverty through the destruction of their crops, their cattle and household goods were promptly seized, and divided between the tax-gatherers and the Kurds. In this way thousands of Armenians have been reduced to feeding for months upon grass and roots, and hundreds have perished through sheer starvation. For a long time past, many of the people have been living upon coarse cakes, made of a mixture of roots, leaves, and grass, and looking very much like concrete.

The personal testimony of the gentleman alluded to was summed up in the following words: "I went to Armenia with my sympathies rather in favour of the Turks. I have come back with my blood boiling against their fiendish inhumanity. If the English people only realized the true state of the case, they would not endure it for a week."

The very scum of Turkish officialdom has been let loose upon the unhappy country. As an example we may mention Hussein Agha, whose doings have been thus described by Dr. E. J. Dillon, in the *Contemporary Review*:-

"Commanding a gang of Kurdish brigands, which could be increased to about two thousand men, he continually harassed the peaceful inhabitants of the province, plundering, torturing, violating, killing, till his name alone sent a thrill of terror to the hearts of all. The Armenians of Patnotz suffered so much from his depredations that they all quitted the village *en masse* and migrated to Kamkilibise, where the Kaimakan resides; whereupon Hussein surrounded the house of the Bishop of Karakilibise with a large force, and compelled him to send the people back. Even the

Mohammedans felt so shocked at his doings that the Mussulman priest of Patnotz, Sheikh Nari, complained of him to the Governor-General of Erzeroum. Hussein then sent his men, who murdered Sheikh Nari and frightened his daughter-in-law to death. In one expedition he carried off 2600 sheep, many horses, kine, etc., took £.500, burnt nine villages, killed ten men, and cut off the right hands, noses, and ears of eleven others

Early in the year 1890 he outraged five Christian girls of Patnotz, and in September and October of the same year he levied a contribution of £300 on the people of the same district. *For none of these crimes was he ever tried.* In December 1890 he sent his brother to raise more money, which was done by raiding twenty-one villages of the Aintab district, the net result being £350 and 3000 lbs. of butter. Hatsho, an Armenian of Patnotz, who could not, or would not, contribute a certain sum to his coffer, had his house raided in his absence, and his wife and two children killed. All this time the gallant Hussein occupied the post and discharged the duties of a Mudir, or Deputy Sub-Governor. One day he drove off one thousand sheep and seven yoke of buffaloes from Patnotz and Kizilkoh, and sold them in Erzeroum to a merchant, after which he confiscated a fine horse belonging to Manook, an Armenian of Kizilkoh, and sent it as a present to the son of an Erzeroum judge. One night, towards the end of February 1891, Hussein and others entered the house of an Armenian, Kaspar, for the purpose of carrying off Kaspar's handsome daughter-in-law. The inmates, however, shouted for help, whereupon Hussein, raising his revolver, shot the young woman dead. A petition was presented asking that he might be punished, but the Vali of Erzeroum declined to receive it, and Hussein was summoned to Constantinople, welcomed with cordiality, decorated by His Majesty, raised to the rank of Pasha, and appointed Brigadier-General."

It is the fashion with the Sultan and his ministers to declare that all instances of oppression and outrage are the work of disorderly local officers, and are neither sanctioned nor approved by the authorities at Constantinople. But is it possible for any sane person to believe these protestations in view of the fact that the perpetrators of outrages not only escape punishment, but have been repeatedly promoted and decorated at the hands of the Sultan himself?

The case we have just quoted is not exceptional, but strictly typical. Everywhere throughout Turkish Armenia the same misrule prevails, and the same policy of extermination is rigorously pursued. Whole provinces have been decimated, and some - Alaschkerd, for instance- almost entirely cleared of Armenians. "Over twenty thousand woe-stricken wretches, once healthy and "well-to-do," says Dr. Dillon, "fled to Russia or to Persia, in rags and misery, deformed, diseased, or dying; on the way they were seized over and over again by the soldiers of the Sultan, who deprived them of the little money they possessed, nay, of the clothes they were wearing; outraged the "women in the presence of their sons and daughters, and then drove them over the frontier to

hunger and death. The Christians, by whose toil and thrift the empire was held together, were despoiled, beggared, chained, beaten and banished, or butchered. First their movable wealth was seized, then their landed property was confiscated, next the absolute necessities of life were wrested from them, and finally, honour, liberty, and life were taken with as little ado as if these Christian men and women were wasps or mosquitoes. Thousands of Armenians were thrown into prison, and tortured and terrorized till they delivered up the savings of a lifetime, and the support of their helpless families, to ruffianly parasites. Whole villages were attacked in broad daylight by the Imperial Kurdish cavalry, without pretext or warning, the male inhabitants turned adrift or killed, and their wives and daughters transformed into instruments to glut the foul lusts of these bestial murderers. During the year 1894, in the districts of Boo1anyk and Moush alone, upwards of ten thousand head of cattle and sheep were driven off by the Kurds.

This was the method in vogue all over the country; the details varied according to the condition of things, places, and kinglets, but the means and ends never varied. The result is the utter disappearance of wealth, and the rapid spread of misery, so intense, so irremediable, so utterly loath some in its moral and physical effects as to have inspired some of its victims with that wild courage akin to madness, which always takes its rise in despair. This has been the *normal* condition of Armenia ever since the Treaty of Berlin.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SASSOUN MASSACRE AND THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

"I seek refuge with Allah from Satan the accursed. In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the

Merciful! O Lord of all creatures! O Allah! Destroy the infidels and polytheists, thine enemies; the enemies of the religion! O Allah! Make their children orphans, and defile their abodes! Cause their feet to slip; give them and their families, their households and their women, their children and their relations by marriage, their brothers and their friends, their possessions and their race, their wealth and their lands, as booty to the Moslems, O Lord of all creatures!"

The above pretty sample of cursing is a literal translation of the official prayer of Mohammedanism, which is used daily throughout the Turkish Empire. It should be noted that Christians are included amongst the "infidels" referred to in the prayer. How the Turks have endeavoured to fulfil their own petition has been shown in the previous chapter, and will now appear in even more lurid colours.

We have seen how, ever since the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottoman Government had been taking steps to finally settle the Armenian question by the simple expedient of exterminating the nation. They had reduced the milder and less



spirited inhabitants of the plains by extortion, robbery, and imprisonment; now they began to turn their attention to the hardier and braver tribes dwelling in the mountainous districts of the Bitlis vilayet. It is practically impossible to arrive at exact facts, but it appears certain that secret orders were issued to exterminate the Christians of Sassoun. Rumours to this effect were abroad for many months, and a long report was sent by the Abbot of Moush to the British agent at Erzeroum, informing him of the plan, and appealing for aid from the English people. Nothing, however, was done, and in the autumn of 1894 the fearful massacre took place which has shocked the conscience of the entire civilised world.

In May 1893 an agitator named Darnatian was captured near Moush, and this was made a pretext for massing the Kurdish irregular cavalry in the district. During June the people of Talvoreeg saw the Kurds gathering clay by clay, to the number of several thousands, and began to make preparations to defend themselves. On the eighth day a battle took place, and the villagers succeeded in holding their own, about a hundred of the Kurds being slain. Upon this, the Governor-General of Moush announced that the Armenians were in revolt, and set out with troops and two field-pieces. He did not, however, attack the village, but contented himself with besieging it. This state of things was ended by the breaking up of summer, and all through the terrible winter the villagers were left alone.

In the early spring, it appears that the Kurds were encouraged to attack the various villages of the Sassoun district, while troops were sent from Moush and Bitlis to restore "order." It is a significant fact that they took with them ten mule-loads of kerosene. Then the villages were again besieged, the inhabitants occasionally making sorties to obtain food. "The Kurds on one occasion stole several oxen, and their owners tracked their property to the Kurdish tents, and found that one ox had been butchered. They asked for the others, and were refused, whereupon the villagers left, and later returned with some companions. A scrimmage ensued, in which two or three were killed on either side. The Kurds promptly took their dead to the Government at Moush, and reported that the region was filled with Armenian and foreign soldiers. The Government at once sent in all directions for troops, gathering in all from eight to ten regiments, and the Kurds congregated to the number of about twenty thousand, while some five hundred of the irregular Kurdish cavalry were brought to Moush.

"At first the Kurds were set on, and the troops kept out of sight. The villagers, put to the fight, and thinking they had only the Kurds to do with, repulsed them on several occasions. The Kurds were unwilling to do more unless the troops assisted. Some of the troops then assumed Kurdish dress, and helped them in the fight with more success. Small companies of the troops next entered several villages, saying they had come to protect them as loyal subjects, and were quartered among the houses. *In the night they arose and then slew the sleeping villagers, man, woman, and*

*child*. By this time those in the other villages were beginning to feel that extermination was the object of the Government, and desperately determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Then began a campaign of butchery that lasted some twenty-three days, or, roughly, from the middle of August to the middle of September."<sup>1</sup>

The above Quotation from the testimony of an American citizen at that time resident in Armenia, affords a significant comment upon the official explanation of the Ottoman Government that the

Armenians were in a state of insurrection, and that the outrages were the work of the nomad Kurdish tribes. Notwithstanding the utter - and obviously intentional - failure of the Commission of inquiry to clear up the facts, it is evident from the testimony of Armenian Christians, of native clergy, of Protestant missionaries, of British consuls, and of special commissioners who visited the district, that the massacres at Sassoun were the work of Turkish soldiers, both regular and irregular, and were executed under the direct orders of Ottoman officials. When it is remembered that the Sultan shortly afterwards decorated Zekki Pasha, who led the troops in the work of extermination, and also sent silken banners by special messenger to the four leading Kurdish chiefs, it is impossible for any man in his senses to believe that the Armenian atrocities were either disapproved or regretted by the Government at Constantinople.

The first intimation that something was wrong reached the British Government on 31<sup>st</sup> August, at which time the massacre was at its height. Sir Philip Currie, Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Porte, telegraphed as follows: "I have been informed at the Porte, in answer to an inquiry, that Armenians at Talori, in the vilayet of Bitlis, have risen, and that in order to quell the revolt a small number of troops are being sent to the scene." Again, on the 4th of September: "I have questioned the Grand Vizier on the subject, and he stated that the Armenians had risen, and that considerable bloodshed had taken place." Rumours soon began to spread that shocking barbarities had been committed, and Vice-Consul Hallward was instructed to proceed at once to the scene. The Turkish officials then endeavoured to seclude the district from all outside intercourse by a report of cholera, and actually prevented the British representative from visiting Sassoun. He, however, succeeded in ascertaining the general facts, as will appear from the following extract from his report, dated Moush, October 9, 1894: -

"Last year the Vali of Bitlis summoned some of the chief men from these villages on some pretext to Bitlis, but they did not appear, His Excellency Hassan Tahsin Pasha being notorious for his skill in exploiting 'the Armenian question.' There is, I believe, scarcely a single well-to-do Armenian in Bitlis or Moush who has not been either imprisoned or threatened with imprisonment on charges of sedition with a view to the extortion of money. The individuals on question, fearing similar

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<sup>1</sup> From Rev. F.D. Greene's *Armenian Crisis*, by kind permission of Messrs Hodder & Stoughton.

treatment, preferred to remain at home. This appears to have exasperated His Excellency, and, taking advantage of certain disturbances that occurred last year between the Kurds and Armenians, he in the middle of June last sent a battalion of soldiers to that district, nominally to protect the Armenians. At the same time, a certain Kurdish sheikh, Mehemet by name, was brought to Moush from the Diarbekir region, and commissioned to collect large numbers of tribal Kurds, who accordingly assembled in July last in great numbers in the Talori district.

"Meantime the battalion of soldiers had lived on peaceable terms with the villagers for some six weeks, when, about the beginning of August, some Bekiranli Kurds from Diarbekir stole some cattle from one of the villages, and on the Armenians attempting to recover them a slight affray ensued, in which two or three were killed and wounded on either side. Thereupon the Kurds came to Moush to complain to the Government, saying that all the Armenians were up in arms, and that there were foreigners among them instigating them to remit. The commander of the troops is said to have reported to the same effect.

The Vali then demanded large reinforcements of troops, which were accordingly sent from Erzinjian, Kharput, Diarbekir, Erzeroum, and Van. When they appeared on the scene, the Armenians surrendered to them on promise of protection against the Kurds. The troops then proceeded to massacre those who had surrendered, and everybody else they could lay hands on - men, women, and children. They plundered all the property they could carry off, and then burnt the houses. The work of massacre and pillage is said to have continued for several days, and some twenty-five villages were almost entirely destroyed. The Kurds drove off enormous quantities of sheep and cattle, *but did not assist in the massacre to any great extent*. They are said to have carried off a number of girls, and many others were raped by the soldiers. Churches were sacked and burnt, and priests' robes and church ornaments were publicly sold in the market of Moush. I have heard that shocking atrocities were committed, such as burying men alive, blowing them up with gunpowder, etc. A woman from Talori told me that thirty men had been buried alive by soldiers, and I have heard the same thing repeated in different quarters, but I am not in a position to sift the truth of such stories.

"Nor is it possible for me to estimate the loss of life, but from all I have heard I suppose there must have been a thousand or more killed. I saw one old man who had been wandering for about three weeks in the mountains with a small boy, and had at length taken refuge in a monastery. He was from the village of Ghelieguzan, and was a rich man, there being forty persons in his house. He did not know for certain what had become of any of them except the boy, but he supposed most of them must have been killed. In another case I heard of, six escaped out of a household of fifty. There are a few women and children in a destitute state in the town, and a few in some of the villages in the plain, and some have taken refuge with the Kurds of Sassoun.

Others are wandering about the mountains, as the Armenians about here are afraid to receive them in their houses . . .

"Had it not been for the attitude of the authorities in refusing to allow me to visit the district, and preventing me as far as possible from having any communication with the population here or elsewhere, by putting police to watch this house and to follow me wherever I go, I might have supposed there was some exaggeration in the accounts I have heard. But their object, evidently, is to stave off any close inquiry into the matter till winter, when all the mountainous districts will be under snow, and communication with the outside world extremely difficult: by the spring they, no doubt, calculate the whole affair will have blown over."

The same gentleman, writing on 6th November, was able to give the following additional particulars:-

The General, who came from Erzinjian, read an Imperial Firman, authorizing the punishment of the villagers, and exhorted the soldiers not to fail in their duty. It is said that at first they hung back, not relishing their task, but their officers urged them on with threats, and the work of destruction and butchery was carried through without mercy or distinction of age or sex.

A large number of the leading men, headed by a priest, went out to meet the commanding officer with their tax receipts in their hands, by way of proving their loyalty to the Government, and begging for mercy. They were surrounded and killed to a man.

"At Ghelieguzan a number of young men were bound hand and foot, laid out in a row, had brushwood piled on them, and were burnt alive.

"At another village a priest and several lending men were captured and promised release if they would tell where others had fled to; they did so, but were killed. The priest had a chain put round his neck and pulled in opposite directions, so that he was nearly throttled; finally, bayonets were placed upright in the ground, and he was tossed in the air so that he fell on them.

"The men of another village fled with their women and children to a grotto, where they remained for several days, till the weaker ones died of hunger; the remained were at last discovered by the soldiers and put to the bayonet, which was the weapon principally employed throughout.

"Some sixty young women and girls were driven into a church, where the soldiers were ordered to do as they liked with them, and afterwards kill them, which order was carried out.

"A larger number of the most attractive women were set aside and invited to accept Islam and marry Turks; they refused, and were accordingly killed.

"The petroleum brought from Bitlis was utilized for burning the houses, together with the inhabitants inside them. A soldier related in Bitlis how he had seen on one occasion a little boy run out from the flames, and pushed back into them with a bayonet by another soldier. It was also used to burn the corpses." Many other disgusting barbarities are said to have been committed, such as ripping open pregnant women, tearing children to pieces by main force, etc.: but the above will

serve as examples of the way in which this campaign of extermination was carried out . . . .

"The final scene "as enacted in the valley of Talvoreeg, where a large number of men, women, and children had collected; they were surrounded by Kurds and soldiers, and first thinned out by rifle-shots, and then the rest despatched with sword and bayonet. The operations lasted some twenty-three days, from about the 18th of August to the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, having been begun by the Bitlis and Moush garrisons, who were gradually reinforced by other troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army Corps . . . .

"The details given above were principally collected from soldiers who took part in the massacre, and I have heard the main facts substantiated from various different quarters, among others by a Turkish zaptieh, who was there and saw the whole affair."

These terrible statements are not the exaggerations of Armenian agitators, or the wild rumours of fanatical and ill-informed partisans; they are the official report of the British representative on the spot, after careful and discriminating inquiry in many directions. At the risk of horrifying the reader, we must add a few further details, gathered in the neighbourhood by American citizens and missionaries, who took them down from the lips of reliable eyewitnesses, and published both in England and in the United States by the Rev. F. D. Greene, M.A., who was for many years a resident in Armenia:-

"Children were placed in a row, one behind another, and a bullet fired down the line, apparently to see how many could be despatched with one bullet. Infants and small children were piled one on the other and their heads struck off"

"A large and strong man, the chief of one village, was captured by the Kurds, who tied him, threw him on the ground, and, squatting around him, stabbed him to pieces."

"Children were frequently held up by the hair and cut in two, or had their jaws torn apart. Women with child were cut open; older children were pulled apart by their legs. A handsome, newly-wedded couple fled to a hilltop; soldiers followed, and told them they were pretty, and would be spared if they would accept Islam, but the thought of the horrible death they knew would follow did not prevent them from confessing Christ."

"Many of the dead were thrown into trenches, which the rain had washed out, and were covered with earth. Where no such trenches existed, the bodies were piled up with alternate layers of wood, saturated with kerosene, and set on fire."

"In one place, the women, after being forced to serve the vile purposes of a merciless soldiery, were taken to a valley near by and hacked to pieces with sword and bayonet."

"To some of the more attractive women in one place, the proposition was made that they might be spared if they denied their faith. 'Why should we deny Christ?' they said, and pointing to the dead bodies of their husbands and brothers

before them, they nobly answered, we are no better than they; kill us too,' - and they died."

"The soldiers talk quite freely about matters at Sassoun. There was great spoil, - flocks, herds, household goods, etc., - but their chief work was to dispose of the heaps and heaps of the dead. The stench was awful. They were gathered into the still standing houses and burned with the houses."

"I saw an eyewitness to some of the Sassoun destruction. He passed through three villages. They were all in ruins, and mutilated bodies told the horrible tale. For four or five days he was in one village. During the day parties of the scattered inhabitants would come in and throw themselves upon the mercy of the officer in command. About two hours after sundown each evening, these prisoners of that day were marched out of camp to a neighbouring valley, and the air was rent with their pitiful cries. He saw nothing more of them."<sup>2</sup>

The following additional particulars from Armenian sources have appeared in the London press: -

"The Kurds killed people with bullets and daggers, but the soldiers delighted in torture. They put some to death with scissors, cutting them and opening veins in the neck. Others were sawed, others had their tongues cut out, eyes gouged out, and several fingers removed before death. I saw men and women thus mutilated, and they lay about the camp for two hours before they died."

"I saw a Turkish sergeant bind an old Armenian, head downwards, to two or three branches, and slowly cut him through with an axe. From this hiding-place I saw soldiers torturing Priest Ohannes of Semal, and Priest Der Arakel. Their eyes were gouged out, and they uttered horrible cries, and implored the soldiers to put them out of pain. But the soldiers made them dance, and for some time they danced, screaming with pain. Then the soldiers bayoneted them. When the dead were examined, the body of Priest Ohannes, whose corpse had still a rope round the neck, was identified. The eyes had been gouged out, and nose, ears, and lips cut off; and the skin flayed from both sides of the head."

"Just fancy such a picture as this, which actually occurred at Sassoun:- 'I bet you ten *tshireks* I'll cut clean through the necks of four Christian puppies at one stroke of my *khama!*' exclaimed one Turkish soldier. 'Done!' cry half a dozen of his comrades. And the trial is made at once. Four Christian children are pulled out of their mother's arms amid heartrending screams and piteous prayers, and are then tied one on top of the other, head upon head, neck upon neck. Then the man who made the het approaches with his sharp scimitar, touches the neck of the topmost just to measure his stroke, raises his trusty steel, and, with a swift sweep and a deft backward movement, produces a rivulet of blood, which runs along between the quivering little trunks and the bloody heads which have rolled on to the thirsty earth."

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<sup>2</sup> Rev. F. D. Greene's *Armenian Crisis*.

Amid all these horrors one deed of woman's heroism railed forth the admiration of the world. It has thus been described:-

"The women of one village defended their position for twenty-four hours against the besiegers, but finally yielded to greater numbers. They scarcely left their camp when they found that they were surrounded on all sides. Their condition was terrible; many carried their babies on their backs, while the elder children stood by their mothers in the fight. They soon saw that they could never fight their way through the ranks of the enemy. Then the wife of Grgo stepped on a rock and cried, 'My sisters, you must choose between two things. Either fall into the hands of these Turks, and forget your husbands, your hollies, your holy religion, and adopt the Mohammedan faith, and be dishonoured, or you must follow my example.' With these words, holding her year-old baby in her arms, she dashed herself from the rock into the abyss. She was followed by a second, a third, a fourth woman. Without a sound, one body fell after another. The unhappy children followed like lambs the example of their mothers. Very soon the ravine was strewn with corpses . . . The heroine who fast cast herself from the rock was called Schakhe, and her name deserves to be known throughout Europe."

Surely we have told enough. The very pages seem to drip with blood, and yet we have not told all. There are other incidents within our knowledge so awful that we cannot bring ourselves to write them down. What we have here recorded is surely enough to make the blood boil in the veins and the tears flow from the eyes of even the most callous reader.

When information of the Sassoun massacre reached the British Ambassador at Constantinople, heat once made formal representations to the Sultan, who promptly contradicted the reports, and charged Vice-Consul Hallward with instigating the Armenians to revolt. This charge was duly reported to the British Government, and Colonel Chernside was ordered to proceed at once to Sassoun and investigate the whole affair. But investigation by an impartial authority was precisely what the Porte most feared, and after considerable manoeuvring to defeat the intentions of England, the following message was delivered to Sir Philip Currie on the 15th of November:-

"His Imperial Majesty will send before tomorrow week a Commission to inquire in to the events which have taken place in the Sassoun district, as well as into all the reports mentioned in the Memorandum presented to His Imperial Majesty by Her Majesty's Embassy on the 1<sup>st</sup> November.

"The Sultan considers that it is in his own interest to inquire into the facts as reported, and assures Her Majesty's Ambassador that the inquiry will be carried out in a just and impartial manner, and that punishment will fall on the guilty. The Commission will be composed of two or three Imperial aides-de-camp and of a civil functionary, all trustworthy men, who will be sworn to give a true report. His Majesty does not believe in the charges which have been

brought against Vice-Consul Hallward of inciting the Armenians to rebellion; he considers them null and void, and withdraws them."

No sooner had this proposal been accepted by the British Government than the wiles of the Turk became apparent. An official notice was sent to the papers, announcing that there had been no outrages, and that the Commission was only sent to inquire into the criminal conduct of Armenian brigands. This policy was pursued until the patience of England was exhausted, and on 30th November the Cabinet sent the following intimation to the Sultan:-

"In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government, feel it their duty to protest formally against an inquiry so entirely unsatisfactory, as insufficient to fulfil the engagements entered into by the Sublime Porte under the 61st Article of the Treaty of Berlin, and in presence of the grave situation thus created they must reserve to themselves entire liberty of action in regard to the whole matter."

The veiled threat thus conveyed had the result of securing promises from the Porte that the Armenian outrages should be investigated, and it was arranged that Consular representatives of England, France, and Russia should be present at the sittings of the Commission. But it must be distinctly understood that they formed no part of the Commission, and had no power to examine witnesses, except through the Turkish officials who conducted the inquiry.

The Commission held its first meeting at Moush on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1895, and completed its inquiry on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. The whole business proved to be a complete farce; the selection of witnesses was left in the hands of local Turkish officials, and the Commissioners exhibited most discreditable bias in their proceedings. Only with the greatest difficulty could the Consular Delegates obtain permission to examine Armenian witnesses, and when this was done, the officials promptly brought forward a mass of rebutting evidence. Most of the Armenians examined were plainly in a state of extreme terror, and refused to give evidence, while some admitted that they had been tortured as a foretaste of what they would receive if they told the truth. Nothing is more manifest, from a careful reading of the *proces-verbaux*, than that the inquiry was altogether one-sided and inadequate. The most absurd and contradictory evidence was accepted on the Turkish side, while evidence on the other side was promptly discredited. As a specimen of the methods by which witnesses were prepared for the Commission, the following quotation from a letter from the Vice- Consul at Van is significant:-

"A Sassoun prisoner was so beaten on his way here that he died soon after. Two others have since died. They had been repeatedly beaten, half starved, and, in this cold weather and in these damp dungeons, had on only a coarse, ragged cotton shirt and drawers. Inquisitorial methods are being used to get these prisoners to testify that the leading Armenians here now in prison have been in league with them. Now that the Commission is afoot, they want



them to testify that the Government had nothing to do with destroying villages, but merely stepped into restore order between them and the Kurds."

On 29th April the three Consular Delegates telegraphed to their Ambassadors as follows:-

Hebo, of Shenik, was summoned by us to-day, and deposed that the Chief of Gendarmerie yesterday threatened him with death if he accused the soldiers instead of the Kurds of killing the Armenians; that by means of Nadir Agha and the Mufti acting as interpreters, he received a similar recommendation from the Mutessarif in the presence of a Pasha, *and of the Secretary of the Commission.*

"Further promises were made by the Mutessarif that he would give him 1000 piastres, 10 oxen, and 500 sheep, reconstruct his house and his village, making him Headman of the latter, and restore the £T. 360 taken from his brother, on condition that he would acknowledge that he had seen Mourad, whose revolutionary counsels had been followed by the Armenians; that he would attribute the burning of the villages to the Kurds, declare that Mourad and his band had fought with the troops at Ghelieguzan; and, finally, that he would refuse to reply when questioned about the massacre of the women in the church, or about the priest of Semal."

Without any investigation, the Commission declared this statement to be false, on the bare denial of some of the persons accused. What possible value can attach to an Inquiry conducted on such principles?

On 8<sup>th</sup> May the Commissioners were at Ghelieguzan, and, after much objection, allowed the Consular Delegates to open some of the trenches. We give the result in the words of the official report:-

"Two of these trenches were opened in their presence. In the first they found only fragments of clothing. Round the second, a space of some thirty yards by ten was strewn with pieces of human bones and bits of clothing; amongst other things they saw two skulls, and in the trench they found, among fragments of bone and clothing, a putrefied corpse clothed, and three skulls, one of which had still some hair adhering to it, and contained a portion of the brain. The peasants, however, refused to continue the digging on account of the nauseating smells. . . .

They, however, made the villagers dig up a fourth place near the village, and this brought to light a decapitated trunk, an arm with its hand, three skulls, and some small bones. The smells here were again overpowering. The villagers stated that on their return they had themselves removed many bodies from the three trenches, and buried them near the church.

"The Delegates found the village itself, which had contained something like one hundred and twenty houses, entirely burnt out, and the thirty families still left living in a destitute condition in huts. . . .

The Delegates left on the 9th of May, and for the first three hours Mr. Shipley reports that their line of march was dotted with hamlets of from five to

twenty houses completely ruined, not even the walls being left standing."

It is needless to say that when the official report of the Commission was issued, it proved to be utterly inconclusive and worthless. Many trivial matters had been threshed out at wearisome length, but the main charges, to investigate which the Commission was professedly appointed, had been in every case practically ignored. How the British representative, Mr. Shipley, was impressed by it, may best be gathered from an extract from his report:-

"I do not think, seeing as I did, in company with my colleagues, the entire ruin of a whole district, not a house being left standing, the fields even having been wantonly devastated, as well as the abject misery and destitution to which these Armenians have been reduced, that the epithets applied to the conduct of the Turkish soldiers and Kurds by the press are in any way too strong. We have in our Report give it as our conviction arrived at from the evidence brought before us, that the Armenians were massacred without distinction of age or sex; and, indeed, for a period of some three weeks, it is not too much to say that the Armenians were absolutely hunted like wild beasts, being killed wherever they were met, and if the slaughter was not greater it was, I believe, solely owing to the vastness of the mountain ranges of that district, which enabled the people to scatter, and so facilitated their escape. In fact, and speaking with a full sense of responsibility, I am compelled to say that the conviction has forced itself on me what it was not so much the capture of the agitator Mourad, or the suppression of a pseudo-revolt, which was desired by the Turkish authorities, as the *extermination, pure and simple*, of the Ghelieguzan and Talori districts."