

**THE SWORD OF ISLAM OR SUFFERING ARMENIA. ANNALS OF
TURKISH POWER AND THE EASTERN QUESTION
BY J.CASTELL HOPKINS
BRANTFORD AND TORONTO 1896**

**CHAPTER XVIII
THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD IN ARMENIA**

With the incidents surrounding the inception and progress of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 came the first warning and shadow of what might ultimately be expected in Armenia. The horrors perpetrated in Bulgaria at that time not only roused England from end to end, and shocked the sense of the civilized world, but indicated the worn and slender thread by which Christian lives and homes were protected throughout the Turkish Empire. In Armenia, which became the Asian theatre of the war, evidences of misgovernment and oppressive cruelty had already been so numerous as to prove only second in extent and volume to what had transpired in the miserable European province.

Every now and then throughout the present century stories have reached civilized Europe concerning the state of things in Armenia, as well as in Bulgaria, and Bosnia, and Greece. Mr. Robert Curzon, for instance, writing in his journal on August 2nd, 1843, tells us of an incident which came under his own observation at Erzeroum. A Turkish soldier had been seen stealing and concealing some merchandise. He was arrested, but only one-half of the goods were found. The rest, he alleged, had been taken by an Armenian named Artin. The latter, on the word of this admitted thief, and against the evidence of several Christians - which was of no avail under Moslem law - was dragged before the local Mahometan tribunal. The result may be left to Mr. Curzon to describe:

"The Pasha ordered him to be tortured. A metal drinking cup of hot brass was put upon his head; afterwards a cord was tied around his head, two sheep's knuckle-bones were placed upon his temples, and the cord tightened till his eyes nearly came out. As he would not confess, his front teeth were then drawn one at a time; pieces of cane were run up under his toe nails and his finger nails. Various tortures have been inflicted on him in this way for the last twelve days, and he is now hung up by the hands in the prison of the Seraskier."

This occurred fifty years ago, and is given, in passing, merely as an ordinary illustration of the treatment meted out to Christians in many parts of Turkey under the auspices of local governing bodies. What can be expected under such circumstances from lawless bands of Bashi-Bazouks or Kurds? When the law itself is thus utilized and administered for purposes of cruel oppression, it is not difficult to understand what lawlessness must mean. During 1876 the condition of Turkish Armenia became more and more deplorable. It had always been in a state of more or less disorder, but in this

year matters seemed to get worse - if that were possible. Perhaps it only appears so because of the evidence given us in a British Blue Book dealing with the condition of the Christians in Turkey during this period. The oppression, therefore, looms up more distinctly and vividly. Just as the lurid flash of 1894-5 lit up the Eastern sky and revealed the Armenians in their desolation and suffering, so in a more limited degree we are able, from the pages of those reports, to see the state of affairs twenty years ago, and perceive its preliminary bearing upon the massacres of to-day.

The first witness who may be quoted is Mr. Consul Zohrab of Erzeroum. He draws a graphic picture of the crushing taxation under which the population groaned, and which included arrears of taxes impossible to collect in any court of modern law, current taxes, taxes in advance, aid in money for the coming war, contributions in kind for the army, means of transport for munitions of war and provisions, besides various exactions of the most unscrupulous nature. This "systematic spoliation of the people," which extended, so far as taxation was concerned, to the Moslem peasant as well as the Christian, was intensified by the personal demands of the corrupt officials, until thousands of families were so reduced as to live only by public charity. But the plundering in this extreme degree was not limited to taxation, and was directed far more against the Armenian than the Turk. In a fire, for instance, which took place at Van in December, 1876, the officials and soldiers openly broke into the burning houses and carried off any property they could conveniently seize. It was, indeed, nothing unusual. During the Damascus massacres of years before, the officers of the Sultan had been seen by Europeans returning from the Christian quarter laden with plunder.

There appears to have been a perfect reign of terror at this time. On January 30th, 1877, Consul Zohrab telegraphed Sir Henry Elliot, the British Ambassador in Stamboul, to the following effect: "Panic in Bitlis district, several murders, many villages devastated, others deserted by inhabitants from dread of Kurds, who threaten the towns." On the 14th of March he telegraphed that 175 Turkish Redifs, or troops, on their way Erzeroum, had stopped in three villages of the district of Bunis, desecrated the churches, maltreated the priests, beaten the Christians, and brutally ill-treated the women. He adds significantly: "Christians begin to suffer severely. Acts of oppression and cruelty occur daily." It must be remembered amid all these occurrences, and the chronic condition of the country, past and present, that no Christian was allowed to carry arms, while the Christian oath was of no value against a Mahometan. This in itself is sufficient to reveal the horrible helplessness of the Armenian inhabitant as regards himself, his family, and his goods.

Mr. Consul Taylor, in his reports, covers wide ground. He gives details of the condition of the Western Armenians in the range of heights occupied by the Kurds between Turkish and Persian Armenia. Cruelty and outrage were, of course, common occurrences, plunder was the ordinary method of transacting business, several villages he had seen were pillaged of literally everything, and a varied array of crimes had been committed by the Kurdish "Government Police." On more than one occasion the Turks

or Kurds yoked Christian women to their ploughs. In the district of Moosh, he describes a society of holy men called Sheiks, who preached war incessantly against the infidels or Christians, and represented every outrage as being lawful and meritorious. As far back as 1868 these people had stormed and plundered the venerable church and convent of Moosh, which dates from the time of Gregory the Illuminator. Of course no redress was possible, although the injury had been intensified by the wanton destruction of an invaluable manuscript library. In the country around the collection of hovels which represented the once splendid Armenian city of Klat, Mr. Taylor saw nothing at the time of writing but "deserted villages, ruined churches, crumbling mosques, abandoned fields." The ruthless conduct," he adds," of these ruffian Kurds have rendered what ought to have been a paradise a desert." Here, as elsewhere in unfortunate Armenia, "great crimes always unpunished, grievous oppressions unredressed," developed into a condition of lawless wickedness which the Kurds seemed to consider warranted by custom, and entirely permissible.

As an illustration of what might occur in any populous place where Mahometans and Christians live together, the Consul gives us the following incident. Khachatoor Effendi was a wealthy Christian of Erzeroum, living in an Armenian district, and under the shadow of a British consulate. He was, like a few opulent Christians in other lands, anxious to improve the material condition of his fellow-beings, and therefore purchased a portion of the city covered with mean and poverty-infested buildings, and erected in their place rows of excellent houses, shops, and public buildings. Their completion, including repairs to a ruined mosque, was signalized by an evidently incendiary fire, in which the whole quarter and \$100,000 of capital went up in smoke and flame. During the conflagration not a Moslem offered aid, though many plundered wherever the opportunity offered. But Khachatoor Effendi was a determined as well as a rich man, so he set himself to the work of rebuilding his quarter. Shortly afterwards, however, while seated in a café, a Mahometan rode up and shot him dead. Not a finger was raised against the murderer, and the Consul states that he was known to be one of a gang to which the important official in the Vilayet - or administrative province - corresponding with a British Chief Justice, himself belonged.

Such was the state of affairs in Armenia when the Russo-Turkish war began, and it became once more the battle-ground of struggling nations. To the miserable Armenians the war offered neither relief nor prospect of relief. It enhanced the exactions of the Turks and the power of the Kurds. In periods of Russian success it gave an additional burden for local towns and villages to carry, and where they had before to feed the Moslem they had now to purvey for the Russian. The invaders were kinder and less addicted to individual acts of cruelty than the Turks, but the weight of armed men proved almost crushing to the unhappy population.

It was on the 24th of April, 1877, that the forces of the Czar entered, simultaneously, the territory of the Turk in European Roumania and in Asiatic Armenia. Under the Grand Duke Michael and General Loris Mekoff (Melikoff – ed.), they invaded

this latter and historic region of Eastern warfare, defeated the Turks, stormed Ardahan, invested Kars, and were in turn defeated at Kizel-Tepe. After prolonged battles, advances and retreats, successes and failures, they took Kars by storm, entered Erzeroum, and became masters of Armenia about the time the Russian armies in Europe had reached the hills around Stamboul and forced the Treaty of San Stefano from the now helpless and beaten Turk.

The net result of the war to Armenia and its suffering people was the transfer of a portion of their territory and of several important fortified or strategic places, such as Kars and Batoum, to Russia. It may be said here that the condition of the Armenian Christian in the land of the Czar is infinitely better than it is upon Turkish soil. It could not, of course, be worse. But the kindness shown by Russia in this case is purely political. Neither its government nor its people have any fondness for sectaries, and some of the most cruel religious persecutions in history have taken place upon their soil. Had the Armenians been of the orthodox Greek Church the situation might be somewhat different, but even then they would be used simply to forward Russian ambitions.

Years ago, Armenians, as elsewhere mentioned, suffered considerably at their hands, and it was not until the occupation of the entire country - the ancient Asiatic path to Stamboul - loomed into view as a possible future policy that this kindly treatment of resident Russian Armenians became apparent.

One deplorable consequence followed the cessation of the struggle. The Kurds, to the number of fifteen thousand or more, had been freshly armed and uniformed by the Sultan during the war, and had signalized their services by blood-curdling atrocities upon all enemies, or suspected enemies, who fell into their hands. Without discipline or object, aside from plunder and lawless liberty, they had been a curse to the country while hostilities lasted, and, now that they were over, became a still greater and more pressing infliction. Unable to obtain their full and regular pay, many of them became scattered through the land in bands of disaffected and ruthless robbers - nominally soldiers, but really thieves and murderers.

Aside from this terrible fact, the Armenians, in the ten or fifteen years preceding the immediate present, have had to face a majority of armed Moslems; a system of absolute helplessness in the Mahometan courts; a weakness intensified by the inability to carry arms; an absolute lack of privacy, comfort, or safety in their homes; the confiscation of all works by their national authors; the proscription even of leading English books; the destruction of their cherished printing processes; the imprisonment of their young men for reading a poem or singing a song the constant and indescribable dangers to their households and families at the hands of either Turk or Kurd, soldier or Moslem civilian.

Upon this latter subject something must be said, unpleasant as it is to either discuss or read. During these years no Christian woman could depend upon preserving either honour or life. They were both at the mercy of travelling Turks, visiting officials, or

marauding Kurds. The husband who endeavoured to protect his wife, the brother who sought to save his sister, were alike slaughtered without mercy. Helpless, unarmed, and cowed, what, indeed, could the men do, and what had the women to hope for? Writing on January 30th, 1891, three years before the recent massacres, Mr. Charles S. Hampson, British Consul at Erzeroum, narrates the following amongst a long list of similar instances:

"A band of thirty mounted police which were on the march were billeted for the night in a small Armenian village of ten houses, a few miles distant from Bitlis. Four of them were quartered in the house of a young married Armenian. Overhearing them discussing plans against his wife's honour, he secretly sent her to the house of a neighbour. When the Zaptiehs learnt this they ordered him to send for her, and, on his refusing to do so, beat him most cruelly. He fled to a neighbour's house, but two days later died from the effects of the ill-treatment he had received. In the houses where the other Zaptiehs were quartered their designs against the female members of the family were carried out without resistance."

A few months later, the same Consul reports that Hussein Agha, the district Governor of Patnos, with his nephew, had entered by night the home of a local Armenian named Caspar, in order to carry off the latter's beautiful daughter-in-law. On the people of the house being aroused and crying for help, this Turkish governor drew his revolver and shot the young woman dead. A little later he was raised to high rank in the Hamidieh forces. Under date of September 19th, Mr. Hampson describes a case in which several Turks entered the village of Havar and seized and outraged a number of Armenian women in broad daylight. So also in Zartarich, a village near Kharput. The Consul gives numerous similar instances of brutality and violence. But the evidence of Dr. E. J. Dillon, who has spent months on the spot, and dealt in detail with the whole subject - especially with this most horrible feature of it - in the columns of the *London Daily Telegraph*, is as ghastly as it is reliable. He gives a large number of cases where Kurdish police have taken possession of some village, seized and dishonoured the women, and killed any men who opposed them. Dr. Dillon sums up his statements in this particular connection by describing the manner in which these fiends levy taxes upon a community, give a receipt, and return again in a week to seize another instalment or anything they can lay their hands upon. "Then they demand the surrender of the young women and girls... and refusal is punished with a series of tortures over which decency and humanity throw a veil of silence. Rape, and every kind of brutal outrage conceivable to the diseased minds of Oriental profligates, varied, perhaps, with murder or arson, wind up the incident."

Torture and robbery, murder and outrage, have, indeed, been the lot of Armenian men and women for years before the last lurid light was let in upon their conditions. Tahsin Bey, the late Governor of Bitlis, used, for instance, to imprison scores of wealthy Armenians, and then torture them until they surrendered such of their money or goods as he might desire. His methods were as ingenious as they were cruel. "Some men,"

says Dr. Dillon," were kept standing up all day and all night, forbidden to eat, drink, or move. If they lost strength or consciousness, cold water or hot irons soon brought them round, and the work of coercion continued. Time and perseverance being on the side of the Turks, the Armenians generally ended by sacrificing everything that made life valuable for the sake of exemption from maddening pain."

This species of financial pressure was naturally hard to resist. In 1890, the village elder of Odandjor was a wealthy man in local estimation. He owned fifty buffaloes, eighty oxen, six hundred sheep, besides horses, etc. In 1894 he was a poverty-stricken peasant, familiar with misery and accustomed to hunger, while his once prosperous village and the entire surrounding district had been plundered and stripped absolutely bare, under the smiling approval of the Turkish authorities. As an illustration of Mahometan justice, the following incident is also instructive: During August, 1893, the Kurds attacked and plundered the village of Kaghkik, wounding a merchant named Oannes in the course of their raid. The latter went next day to the Deputy Governor of the district and lodged a complaint, but was promptly put in prison - a hotbed of typhoid and filth - for "lying." A week later his neighbours brought a Kurd (their own oaths being valueless) to prove that the unfortunate prisoner was not lying. Then the authorities actually consented to let the people pay a bribe of fifty dollars for the release of the wounded man.

This same village of Odandjor, and several neighbouring ones, were flourishing and prosperous places in 1890, but in 1894 did not contain a single sheep, or buffalo, or horse. The stables were empty, the houses in ruins, the stacks of corn in ashes. Yet during all this period two hundred cavalry of the regular forces were stationed at half an hour's distance. But these Imperial troops are as bad as the Kurds. In 1893 a couple of hundred entered one of the villages, under the command of Rahim Pasha. After being quartered with reckless brutality upon the people, they remained there some forty days. The following incident of their stay is a striking but not uncommon one: "Rahim Pasha, angry with his host, Pare, for grumbling, had a copper vessel hung over the fire, and, when heated, ordered it to be placed on Pare's head. Then he had him stripped and little bits of flesh nipped out of his quivering arms with pincers."

The tale of the village of Avzood in the Moush district sounds incredible, but has been fully verified. In 1892 a young Armenian who had been working, and was now settled in Russia, came back on a visit. Hearing of this, Isaag Tshaush was sent to arrest him. Entering the house alone, while his troops guarded the entrance, pistol shots were shortly heard, and Isaag and the young Armenian were both found lying dead. The authorities in Bitlis at once sent a Colonel of the Zaptiehs, or police, to Avzood to see that justice was done - in Turkish style. The Colonel sent for the men of the village and threw them temporarily into prison. All the girls and the young women were then dealt with in the way characteristic of Zaptiehs and Turks. Some of the prisoners were permanently retained, and it was decided to charge a young Armenian named Markar, belonging to another village, with the murder of Isaag. There was, of course, no

evidence, but the prisoners were tortured in order to obtain some. "They were stripped, and burned in various parts of the body till they yelled with pain. Then they were prevented from sleeping for several nights, and tortured acutely again, till, writhing and quivering, they promised to swear anything, everything. A document declaring that Markar was in the village when Isaag arrived there, and had shot Isaag in their presence, was then drawn up in their names."

Meanwhile, Markar himself was being tortured in another part of the prison. When the trial came on the signatories to the document stripped themselves in Court, detailed the torture to which they had been subjected, and declared the statements a lie. Markar swore that he had not been in the village that night at all, but was none the less hanged for his alleged crime, while some of the women in the village died about the same time, from the brutal treatment received at the hands of the Zaptiehs. Such are some of the preliminaries to the recent massacres.

But they do not fully illustrate the responsibility of Constantinople, and the share taken in this organized harrying of the Armenians out of Armenia by the Turkish authorities. It will be remembered that Bedir Khan Bey had, in the early fifties, organized some regiments of irregular Kurdish troops in Kurdistan. These had expanded during the Russian war, but had afterwards been more or less disbanded, or been quartered upon the miserable Christians as "police," or Zaptiehs. In 1891, however, it was resolved to organize them into a military force of cavalry under the generic name of Ertoghrul regiments; and the subsequent official announcement stated that the initiative of this happy idea, and the great success which will certainly crown its execution, are due to the wisdom and foresight of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan." This "happy idea" was received with unmixed terror by the Armenians, while the British Foreign Office was advised by the ambassador at Stamboul that he received it with apprehension." And Mr. Hampson reported to the latter from Erzeroum regarding the proposal that:

"This measure of arming the Kurds is regarded with great anxiety here. This feeling is much increased by the conduct of the Kurds themselves, many of whom openly state that they have been appointed to suppress 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.

"The Armenians in this town are very uneasy, and very many of those who are in a position to be able to do so have expressed their intention of leaving Erzeroum as soon as the roads are open."

On March 30th, the interesting announcement was made that a contingent of the new Kurdish cavalry had embarked on board a special steamer for Constantinople, in order to be presented to the Sultan. Along the route they were everywhere fêted, and at Trebizond were greeted with civic and military honours. It was also stated that that this "new auxiliary force of the Ottoman army is to find its own equipment and depend on the State for its arms and ammunition only," which meant that some 30,000 Kurds, after being armed by the Government, were to live upon the Armenian Christians. Then comes

the further official description of their reception by the Sultan, their welcome by Dervisch Pasha, and the Caliph's orders that "their smallest wants are to be attended to."

The general result of this new military formation was the organized effort at destroying the Armenians; the immediate consequence was an increase of outrage and crime. In July, 1892, a captain of the Hamidieh cavalry, Idris by name, went with his brother to demand a contribution of fodder from the villagers of Hamsisheikh. They accosted two of the local head men, and ordered them to provide the hay. "We do not possess such a quantity in the whole village," was the reply. Produce the hay or I'll shoot you dead," said Idris. They replied that it did not exist, and that they could not create it. "Then die," said the captain, and shot them both on the spot. The people were, however, lucky if the village was spared, or their families and property were allowed to remain safe from destruction and outrage. It did not often happen so, even before the massacres of 1895. For instance, five villages east of Kara Kilisse had a population of some 3,000 Christians. But, in 1893, Eyoob, a general officer in the Hamidieh, sent his three sons - also officers - to take possession of these villages. To-day they have not an inhabitant, and their houses are ruins.

But it is not necessary to say more. At a moment when the horrors of Sassoun were beginning to reach Europe, 306 of the principal residents of the district of Khnouss signed the following statement, addressed to the "humane and noble people of England":

"We now solemnly assure you that the butchery of Sassoun is but a drop in the ocean Armenian bloodshed gradually and silently all over the Empire since the late Turko-Russian war. Year by year, month by month, day by day, innocent men, women, and children have been shot down, stabbed, or clubbed to death in their houses and their fields, tortured in strange, fiendish ways in fetid prison cells, or left to rot in exile under the scorching sun of Arabia. During the progress of that long and horrible tragedy no voice was raised for mercy, no hand extended to help us."

And this pictures truly, though sternly, the situation which had grown by official encouragement and natural Turkish and Kurdish depravity, until it burst into the flaming atrocities of the recent Armenian massacres.

CHAPTER XIX THE SWORD OF ISLAM FALLS

From 1878 onwards, there had been little of peace, happiness, or security in Armenia. Its Christian population lived under the shadow of that awful prayer breathed daily from millions of Moslem throats throughout Turkey, and which embodies the creed of Islam, and the condition of Christians under its control, as no amount of learned exposition or fierce denunciation could possibly do:

"I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed. In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful! Oh, Lord of all Creatures! Oh, Allah! Destroy the infidels

and the polytheists, thine enemies, the enemies of the religion! Oh, Allah! Make their children orphans, and defile their abodes, and make their feet to slip; and give them, and their families, and their households, and their women, and their children, and their relations by marriage, and their brothers, and their friends, and their possessions, and their race, and their wealth, and their lands, as booty to the Moslem. Oh, Lord of all Creatures!"

It is true that during many centuries the Armenians, as well as other Christians in Turkey, have lived and suffered and been slaughtered in isolated batches under this Islamic injunction. It is true that in an extract from a private letter, dated April 3rd, 1894, five months before the first of the recent massacres, the writer stated that there was "no computing the lives that are going, not in open massacre, as in Bulgaria, but in secret, silent, and secluded ways." But as yet the Armenians had not been revealed to a world which seemed to have forgotten them and their Christian heroism and endurance, in the fall glare of the national holocaust upon the altar of Mahometan cruelty.

To those who followed British Parliamentary proceedings, or were interested in the Eastern Question, or read Blue Books, or sympathized with the exertions of Eastern missionaries, something was known of the dangers menacing the suffering Armenian race. Mr. Clifford Lloyd, at one time Consul-General at Erzeroum, summarized in an official despatch, as late as October, 1890, the condition of the country under the following heads:

I. The insecurity of the lives and properties of Christians.

II. The insecurity of their persons, and the absence of all liberty of thought and action.

III. The unequal status of Christian and Mahometan in the eyes of the Government.

But the instructed inaction of European Consuls; the delicate and difficult position of the missionaries under a despotic government, and amid a hostile, ignorant, and all-powerful Mahometan population; the absolutely false reports of the Turkish authorities; combined to keep Armenia in the shadow of the Moslem sword, and away from the help and countenance of international Christianity. When, therefore, late in 1894, rumours reached Constantinople from distant and mountainous Sassoun of some terrible massacres and cruelty to the Armenian Christians in that district, the news was at once suppressed, so far as the Sultan's Government could do so. But, gradually, intelligence of the frightful nature of the occurrences crept into English and American newspapers: private letters began to come to hand by messengers who had eluded Turkish surveillance; missionaries, though afraid to give their names, described incidents coming within their own experience; British Consuls reported concerning the atrocities they had heard of, and, in some cases, seen. Isolated as Sassoun was; despairing as were the miserable survivors of the massacres; emphatic as was the denial of Turkish Ministers, the truth could not be long concealed.

At first the reports were disbelieved in England. British newspapers, of Conservative complexion, did not wish to amplify or dwell upon stories which gave another hard blow to the British friends of Turkey. The Liberal press was not particularly anxious to add another foreign complication to the many which Lord Rosebery then had to deal with. The terrible news was therefore minimized and discredited, and, even when reliable information came to hand, it was thought that Armenian revolutionists might have had a considerable hand in provoking the massacres. And British political leaders were still more limited in their expressions of belief or sympathy, with the notable exceptions of Mr. Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll, and the Duke of Westminster. But eventually conviction came to every one that a great national crime had been committed. To quote the *London Times*, early in December, 1894:

"There seems to be no longer any possibility of doubting that revolting cruelties have been committed on a very large scale, not by fanatical villagers or savage Bashi-Bazouks, but by regular troops, acting on the express orders of a Turkish general, and regardless of the protest of a Turkish district-governor. Worst of all, the conduct of the general has been not only condoned, but rewarded by an imperial decoration, while the human protesting official has been summarily removed from his post."

The first massacres seem to have risen out of a temporary alliance between the lamb and the wolf - the Armenian peasant and his Kurdish oppressor - for the purpose of enabling the former to refuse payment of certain additional Turkish taxes. The Armenians in this isolated Sassoun district, having to pay the almost intolerable exactions of the Kurds, seem to have thought that through the latter's help they might defy their Ottoman oppressors, and thus let wolf eat wolf. Hence the driving away of the troops sent to collect certain taxes, and the immediate representation to Constantinople that a serious Armenian rebellion had broken out. Orders were at once sent to Zekki Pasha, the military commander at Erzinjan, to proceed to the disturbed district with a force sufficient to suppress the alleged troubles. What his orders were will perhaps never be exactly known, but they were enough to inspire the commander with a brutally unique vigour, and to draw to his aid the Kurds themselves. Both the troops and Kurds seem to have then fallen upon the villagers - unarmed, it must be remembered, as a rule - and to have murdered, tortured, and pillaged to the very extreme point of Moslem cruelty.

Such, at least, was the immediate origin of the troubles, according to what the *London Times* termed "the best authenticated account." But refugees have since stated that for eighteen months prior to the massacres the district of Sassoun was surrounded by Turkish troops, who allowed no one to pass their lines. Upon one occasion, however, they learned that people in the village of Vartimis, just outside the district, had managed to smuggle some food through the lines into the neighbouring village of Dalvorig. For this offence Vartimis was raided, and the majority of its inhabitants slaughtered - 25 Armenian houses out of 325 being left standing as memorials of mercy. There have, of course, been many other and varied versions of the first cause of the massacres, outside of the generally accepted belief amongst local Turks, and Kurds, and

Armenians, that they formed part of an official scheme of prearranged extermination. One story is that the Armenians fought and drove away the Kurds in 1893, and that the latter came back with the regular troops in 1894, and performed the horrible work they had before attempted.

But whatever the exact origin of the occurrences, there is no doubt as to their nature. The details indeed are too horrible to be more than briefly indicated. A letter dated Bitlis, October 9th, declared that some of the Turkish soldiers actually shrank back shuddering from the picture and record of what they had themselves done, and claimed that the Kurds had committed the worst of the crimes. No compassion," says the writer, "was shown to age or sex, even by the regular soldiery - not even when victims fell suppliant at their feet. Five to ten thousand met such a fate as even the darkest ages of darkest Africa had hardly witnessed." The torments which were inflicted on the helpless women and children are as indescribable as they are inconceivable to Christian minds. The letter concludes by saying that the writer could not further prolong the sickening tale. "There must be a God in heaven who will do right in all these matters, or some of us would lose faith."

Another letter declares that twenty-seven villages were annihilated in Sassoun, and six thousand men, women, and children massacred by the Turks and Kurds. It adds October 31st - that "the awful story is only just beginning to be known in Constantinople, though the massacres took place early in September. The Turks have used infinite pains to prevent the news leaking out, even going to the length of sending back from Trebizond many hundreds from the Moush region who had come this way on business." An epistle published in the "Artzakank" of Tiflis, and written by one whom the *Times* described as an "able and careful correspondent in Armenia," gives the following account of a portion of the slaughter:

"Zekki Pasha, that prowling enemy to the peace and life of mankind, who was quite recently rewarded with the Osmanieh of the first class, marched against Sassoun with the troops under his orders, consisting of regulars and the Hamidieh rabble, and, having been repulsed, could only attack the eleven villages in the Shadakh district between Sassoun and Moush. ... The inhabitants of these villages consisted of unarmed, defenceless, decrepid old men, old women, housewives, boys and girls. The Pasha has pitilessly hacked to pieces and stabbed these people with swords and bayonets, some 900 souls, and about 150 of them were led as prisoners horribly maltreated and half dead, in heavy chains - and incarcerated in the central prison at Moush... The villages were given up to pillage and fired."

These Turkish-Armenian prisons, by the way, have been described by Dr. Dillon as the home of filth, disease, deformity, pain in forms almost inconceivable to civilized peoples, torture, and madness - "the whole incarnated in grotesque beings whose resemblance to man is a living blasphemy on the Deity." Reports such as the above continued to pour in upon private individuals at Constantinople, in London, and in New York, from men of undoubted position and probity, the use of whose names, however,

would have placed them in the greatest danger. One letter, for instance, states that the details which had then reached Bitlis - a few miles from the scene of massacre - indicated a repetition of the sickening horrors of 1876 in Bulgaria. Another adds the statement that the massacres, even as reported by the regular soldiers themselves, were "most fiendish." Many of the latter admitted to him, without any particular shame, of having disposed of a hundred persons each - by torture, outrage, and the bayonet. "Twenty to thirty villages were wholly destroyed; people were burned with kerosene in their own homes." The London *Times*' correspondent reported a number of individual cases of Turkish cruelty which illustrate the horrors of the more general massacres.

In the village of Semal, for instance, a Kurd commander of regular troops, named Selo Bey, took the local priest from his church, placed him and the sacred vessels upon a donkey, and then, going a little distance away, shot the man dead. Selo also forcibly seized a number of Armenian girls in the village, and sent them to his harem at Quitzoum. The village of Kelichuzen was set on fire by a body of troops in the early dawn, before its people were stirring, and priest named Margos, with twenty other persons, were burned alive in a single house, not one being allowed to escape. The chief of the village - Cheneg by name - was bound up with his two daughters, and all three scalded to death. A man named Arakiel and his wife were tortured with red-hot irons and then killed. Ibo Bey, another Kurd brigand and a Colonel in the regular army, took his troops to the villages of Bahlow, Hatzgent, and Komk, and there committed outrages of the most abominable and indescribable nature. In one case two hundred women were collected together, brutally maltreated, and then shot or bayoneted.

A number of letters, necessarily anonymous, but written by Americans resident in Turkey whose standing has been vouched for by the Governor of Massachusetts and others, have been recently published, and throw considerable detailed light on these scenes of horror. In some cases small companies of troops entered the villages declared their intention of protecting the people, and then, in the middle of the night, "arose and slaughtered the sleeping villagers, man, woman, and child." Upon one occasion a priest and some leading men went out to meet the officer, declared their loyalty, presented their tax-receipts, and pleaded for mercy. But "the village was surrounded, and all human beings put to the bayonet." A large and strong man, the chief of another village, was captured by the Kurds," who tied him, threw him on the ground, and squatting around him stabbed him to pieces. "By this time," says a correspondent:

"Those in 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. And then began a campaign of butchery that lasted some twenty-three days, or, roughly, from the middle of August to the middle of September. The Ferik Pasha (Marshal Zekki Pasha), who came post-haste from Erzinjan, read the Sultan's firman for extermination, and then, hanging the document on his breast, exhorted the soldiers not to be found wanting in their duty. On the last day of August, the anniversary of the

Sultan's accession, the soldiers were especially urged to distinguish themselves, and they made it the day of the greatest slaughter."

The details of torture and death are awful. At Galogozan, for instance, many young men were tied hand and foot, laid in a row, covered with brushwood, and burned alive. "Others were seized and hacked to death, piecemeal." The men of another village, when fleeing, took the women and children, some 500 in number, and concealed them in a sort of cave. "After several days the soldiers found them, and butchered those who had not died of hunger." Children were massacred without mercy, sometimes literally torn to pieces. In one instance a little boy ran out of the flames of his burning home, but was caught on a bayonet and thrown back. A portion of the doomed population, about 1,000 in number, sought refuge on Mount Andoke, and for fifteen days, despite almost continuous attack by fresh relays of Kurds, managed to hold their own. But food and ammunition gave out, and exhaustion finally enabled the enemy to capture their position. Hardly an Armenian survived to tell the tale of the result.

The troops and Kurds then turned their attention to the Dalvorig district, where some 4,000 survivors still clung together. They were soon decimated, however, by rifle shots, and the remainder slaughtered with sword and bayonet. The fate of the women during these occurrences cannot be described. But in nearly every case they refused to accept Mahometanism and a Turkish harem as the price of life. In one village 400 women, in another 200 women, in another 60 girls, and hundreds of isolated individuals throughout these districts, accepted their dreadful fate, rather than repudiate Christianity. The Armenian estimate of the total number slaughtered in these preliminary massacres is 16,000; the Turkish admission is about 1,000; the probable number is about 10,000.

As soon as these facts became reasonably substantiated and publicly known, steps were taken in the English-speaking countries to express sympathy, proffer aid to the survivors, and urge international action. In London the Armenian Relief Committee was formed, with the Duke of Argyll as President, and the Duke of Westminster and the Archbishop of York as Vice-Presidents. Amongst its members were the Bishops of Salisbury, St. Asaph, and Hereford, Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, Mr. James Bryce, M.P., Canon McCall, Rev. Dr. Guinness Rogers, and Mr. Edward Atkin (Secretary and Treasurer). Thousands of pounds were soon collected and sent out to the starving people still scattered over the Sassoun district, and wandering amid the ruins of their homes and the wrecks of household happiness. In the United States a large Committee was also organized, to which New York contributed its leading men, and the great republic many thousands of dollars. The Hon. Seth Low, Mayor Strong, Bishop Potter, Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott, General Horace Porter, and many others took an active interest in the work, which was supervised by Mr. Bleecker Miller, the chairman; Mr. C. H. Stout, the treasurer; and an earnest Armenian resident, Herant Mesrob Kiretchjian, as general secretary. Canada was not behindhand in its aid, and through the energetic

efforts of Dr. Walter B. Geikie, of Toronto, as treasurer of a large Committee, it contributed as much proportionately as the richer and more populous countries.

But, naturally, this work of sympathy and Christianity did not have immediate effect. Many delays occurred in the organizing of relief, owing to Turkish deception and intrigue, while the funds themselves did not grow as rapidly as was the case when, a year later, there came the news of still more awful massacres if such were possible. Meanwhile events and knowledge alike progressed. At a mass meeting in New York, Mr. Varton Dilloyan, a survivor and witness of the Sassoun horrors, explained the nature of the occurrences, and pleaded for aid to the starving remnant in that once beautiful district. "I saw with my own eyes," said he, "how the soldiers rushed through our village – Dalvorig - and picked up the little children and cut them to pieces, and then rushed on to slay others, calling to those behind them, "Come on! Come on!" After going into some other details, he went on to describe how the Moslems had desecrated their churches, murdered their priests, tied the Cross to the necks of dogs, and tortured and killed the women.

In January, 1896, more than a year after these events, two large British blue-books were issued dealing with them, so far as it was possible for the Consular Delegates accompanying the farcical Turkish Commission of Inquiry to do so. They were, of course, hampered by the presence of the Turkish officials, and prevented from obtaining any really serviceable information by the fact that no Armenian could dare to tell the truth, while all Moslems felt bound to tell the reverse. They, therefore, found hundreds to have been slaughtered where the private evidence of myriads of witnesses - European and American residents, missionaries and Armenian refugees - proved thousands to have been openly massacred. Still, they found that the details were sufficiently atrocious, and Mr. H. S. Shipley, the British Commissioner, in a report which was presented to Sir Philip Currie and Lord Salisbury, says:

"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 given 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 three weeks - August 12 to September 4 - it is not too much to say that the Armenians were absolutely hunted like wild beasts, being killed wherever they were met."

He goes on to say that the story of revolt on the part of the Christians is false, and that all indications favour the belief that the Turkish authorities desired the extermination, pure and simple, of the Christian population of these districts. And he adds his own conviction that "whether they instigated the above attack or not they were responsible for it; it took place with their knowledge and consent, as is shown by the fact that the soldiers sent nominally to keep order sided with the Kurds, and so contributed

to the ruin of the Talori Armenians." It might well be asked where in all Armenian, or, indeed, Turkish history was the Moslem soldier ever known to side with, or defend, his Christian fellow-subject? In addition to the analysis of the evidence received, the Consular Delegates had been instructed to take depositions from certain reliable Armenian witnesses, and six of these sworn statements are included in the blue-books. They furnish the most horrible accounts of outrage and massacre, describe events which have either been already referred to, or the nature of which may be easily understood from what has been previously stated.

To return to an earlier stage of the subject and when news had reached the authorities at Constantinople concerning the suppression of this "rebellion," the Sultan at once despatched a special officer to Zekki Pasha, the "hero" of Sassoun, and chief representative of military power in that division of the empire, with a message of thanks, and a very high decoration set in brilliants. Accompanying this were new flags to be given, as a special token of honour and appreciation, to the Kurdish cavalry, or Hamidieh. This action was in reality a challenge to Christendom, and a more open approval than even that accorded to Chefket Pasha for the Bulgarian massacres of twenty years before. And it should have been accepted as such, when the proofs came fully to hand of the atrocities which it practically approved and praised. But, although universal sympathy in all English-speaking countries was aroused, this sentiment did not assume the form of a sufficiently acute indignation to make the Sultan feel that he had gone too far - or let his myrmidons go too far. The result was seen in the massacres of 1895. Yet these events, even as far as they had gone in December, 1894, amongst the valleys and hills of Sassoun, were worse than any recorded of the Reign of Terror or the Sicilian Vespers. These latter occurrences are famous amongst the tragedies of history, although the estimated direct deaths in neither case exceeded 2,000 in number, and were certainly unaccompanied by the unique brutalities of the Kurd and Turk. True, indeed, is the sentiment of William Watson in those forceful lines:

"The panther of the desert, matched with these,
Is pitiful; beside their lust and hate
Fire and the plague-wind are compassionate,
And soft the deadliest pangs of ravaging seas."

Still, Abdul-Hamid denied the massacres, and made great protestations in appointing his Committee of Inquiry, when their truth was publicly forced upon him. And England, as well as America, hoped that he would prove not only innocent of all complicity, but determined in the prevention of further crime. Events and investigations already described have, however, indicated how greatly the authorities at Constantinople were in reality responsible, and even at that time thoughtful persons must have seen and felt the strength of the ties binding the Sultan and his officials, to say nothing of the significance of his having so speedily rewarded the chief criminal. The light of many other occurrences have, since then, shown the Sultan's true position in these Sassoun horrors.

He was, in fact, directly responsible through his creation of the Hamidieh or Kurdish cavalry, and the share of his officered and regular troops in the deepest depths of murder and outrage. He was indirectly responsible through the general disarmament of the Christians over a long term of years; through his knowledge of preceding and multitudinous crimes against the Armenians; through his memory of many historic Turkish massacres, especially the Kurdish one of 1846; through his refusal to accept the advice and requests of Christian ambassadors regarding Armenian reform; through his intimate knowledge of the character of Turkish officials, and the particularly villainous character of those in Armenia. And these proofs of responsibility were enhanced a thousand times by the circumstances surrounding Turkish policy and the Eastern Question during the ten or twelve months which succeeded Sassoun, and preceded the still more widespread slaughter.

CHAPTER XXII

RENEWAL OF THE OUTRAGES

Meanwhile a year had slowly passed since the massacre of Sassoun - a year of trembling terror amongst the Armenians; a year of vigorous and sympathetic exertion amongst a few earnest men in England and the States; a year of diplomatic doubts, delays, and futile declarations. But as the month of October, 1895, brought the annual Christmas celebration of "Peace on earth, and good will toward men," into the minds of the Christian world, reports came from Armenia of horror upon horror; of murder, misery, and the very madness of crime and cruelty. All the concentrated evils of Mahometanism, in its most barbarous and brutal mood, seemed to have been poured out upon the Christians of Armenia. The dark and wretched annals of the Turk appeared to have been ransacked for methods of maltreatment and the expression of a malignant hatred.

It was not for want of warning that the people of this beautiful land were now to be destroyed by thousands, with every accompaniment of pitiless ferocity. The records of Bulgaria and Greece, Crete and Syria, should have been sufficient to make the powers realize that the Turk never undertakes a work of massacre in any half-hearted way, and that the events in Sassoun were sure to be repeated in other and worse forms. As far back as February, 1878, Dr. Humphrey Sandwith, the well-known authority upon Asiatic Turkey, had protested against the giving back of Armenia to the Turk, declaring it to be a crime, and one which showed that the English people did not understand what Turkish rule meant for the helpless populations who were subject to its tender mercies. How much more fierce would have been his denunciations had he known that the saving clause in the Berlin Treaty the British protectorate over Asia Minor and its Christians was to be abandoned by the succeeding English Government! But to him and others, who understood the evils of Moslem rule, Turkish occupation of these naturally lovely, fertile, and resourceful countries was not unlike Shakespeare's "dragon in a cave of beauty"; a ravening wolf amongst sheep and lambs.

The massacres, which began early in October, and included Trebizond, Bitlis, Erzinjan, Marash, Kharput, Cesarea, Orfah, Aintab, Erzeroum, Zeitoun, and a myriad minor places in their terrible scope, are, like those of Sassoun, indescribable in detail. Dr. E. J. Dillon, the Armenian correspondent of the *London Daily Telegraph*, writing from the spot, under his own signature, and in the responsible pages of the *Contemporary Review*, declared that butchery to have been "a divine mercy compared with the hellish deeds that are being done every week and every day of the year. The piteous moans of famishing children; the groans of old men who have lived to see what can never be embodied in words; the shrieks of mothers made childless by crimes compared with which murder would be a blessing; the screams, scarcely human, of women writhing under the lash; and all the vain voices of blood and agony that die away without having found a responsive echo on earth or in heaven, combine to throw, Sassoun and all its horrors into the shade."

The occurrences at Trebizond are described by a *London Times* correspondent at Odessa, who obtained the facts from a reliable eye-witness on board a Russian vessel in the harbour. About ten o'clock in the morning a terrible noise was heard in the town, and then the report of firearms. Suddenly a number of Armenians appeared flying before a horde of Turks, who were shooting them down or stabbing them as they caught up. Upon reaching the shore the Christians were, of course, helpless, being without arms, and were butchered before the very eyes of the persons on the vessel. Some attempted to escape by swimming, but were pursued in boats and hacked to pieces in the water. Later on, the Armenians who had been hiding were driven out of the town in a body and massacred by hundreds. The neighbouring Armenian villages were set on fire at the same time that the murders in Trebizond commenced, and in these outlying places the same system of destruction took place. Some 800 people, chiefly men, were killed in this neighbourhood. The troops and police - when they did not actually assist - looked on and approved the proceedings.

The scenes at Sivas were even worse. The outbreak of the Turks began on November 12, and was allowed to continue seven days, during which 1,200 Armenians were slaughtered. Suddenly, at noon on the date mentioned, and as if by a given signal, the Turkish labourers seized their tools, clubs, or whatever was at hand, the soldiers, Circassians, and police, took their arms; and all, under the command of officers, rushed into the market place and commenced the work of murder and pillage. No resistance was possible by the Armenians, who were killed in their offices, at their desks, and in their houses, with indiscriminate cruelty and outrage. In the Erzinjan district the Christians had sent some of their priests to the infamous Zekki Pasha, expressing their fears and asking for protection. On the morning of the day upon which the local massacres occurred an order came from the authorities to disarm any Armenians who might possess weapons of any sort. The latter thought that the order applied also to the Turks, and quietly gave up what was demanded. During the massacre which ensued in

Erzinjan, and in surrounding villages, more than 1,000 men and women were killed, over 800 wounded or maltreated, and thousands rendered homeless.

The events at Erzeroum, where there are 10,000 Armenians and over 30,000 Mahometans - including a large body of Turkish troops - were still more atrocious. For some time there had been open threats of violence by the Turks, and, as the fatal day approached, it was generally rumoured and believed that the Government officials had given orders to the soldiers to soon begin killing. Preparations were commenced by the troops being placed in front of the various Consulates, in order to prevent any victims from finding refuge there. The English Consul stopped this in his vicinity by threatening some shooting on his own account. His "dragoman," who passed through the streets about this time, heard an officer of one of the bands of soldiers say to an unruly Turk: "Can't you keep quiet now? Wait until it begins, and then you can do what you like." It was in the market that, as usual, the massacre opened. There the troops fired steadily on the defenceless people, and the dragoman already mentioned saw one Armenian run up to a Turkish officer, throw his arms around his feet, and beseech him for protection. But the brute only pushed his suppliant away and shot him with his own hand.

In the afternoon of the day on which the massacre took place, the English and Italian Consuls, accompanied by Tewfik Bey, made a tour of the Armenian quarter. Hardened as the latter was, the surrounding rain and misery affected even his equanimity and characteristic Turkish calm. The soldiers had fired volley after volley into the houses and then looted them, slaughtering any survivors - men, women, or children who might be found cowering in the corners. In one home were seen two young brides who had been brutally murdered, lying on carpets saturated with their blood. Detailed description of the horrors perpetrated can hardly be given. "What I myself saw this Friday afternoon," writes a correspondent of the *Times*, "is forever engraved on my mind as the most terrible sight a man can see. I went to the Armenian cemetery. Along the walk on the north, in a row, lay 321 dead bodies of the massacred Armenians. Many were fearfully mangled and mutilated. Everybody seemed to have at least two wounds, and some a dozen." His estimate of the total killed in Erzeroum is 1,000, with possibilities running up to double that number. His concluding remarks are very pathetic:

"This Erzeroum slaughter was purely a massacre of innocent inhabitants by enraged Turks. The Armenians in this city kept quiet by the solicitation of foreigners living in the city, who said, 'Have patience: England, France, and Russia will help you.' But as month after month rolled by, the Moslems became more rabid, until the helpless Armenians fell victims. Had it not been for the Consuls in this city, the British particularly, I believe things would have been far worse. Now, winter is before those penniless people, the bread-winners of the families are gone, and the misery will, I think, be terrible."

In the village and district of Kharput, a large number of Christians fell victims to the local massacre; eight of the American missions in the village were burned down and great distress and desolation were caused in the surrounding district where thousands of the inhabitants were murdered, outraged, or deprived of even the barest means of subsistence. At Caesarea, on Saturday, November 23rd, the Turks organized, and for three hours murdered, burned houses, and plundered, undisturbed by the local troops. Only a few houses immediately surrounding that of Reuter's correspondent - a schoolmaster - found immunity, and he, apparently by orders from Constantinople, was allowed to go unscathed, though sheltering upwards of a hundred refugees. He described the condition of the corpses as "literally hacked to pieces," and estimated the number killed as anywhere from several hundred to 1,000. Turks came from neighbouring villages to help, and many Christian women were maltreated or carried off. Some perished in the flames of their burning houses. At least one local preacher - Dr. Avedis - his wife and eldest son, were killed, while his two daughters were afterwards reported as "missing."

Another correspondent, who is described as entirely trustworthy, wrote from Caesarea, that, "to judge from the wounded," all kinds of weapons must have been used, and he mentions axes, sickles, and daggers. "The first wounded person I took care of was an old man who had a large wound made by a meat-axe on the back of his neck. Besides this, there were seven or eight other wounds about his head and face. He lived fifteen days, and died in great agony. His wife and son also were wounded severely, and his two young daughters were maltreated." In another case which he refers to, Mr. Yeretian, a medical man and preacher, his wife, son, and brother-in-law, were all ruthlessly butchered, and thrown into the flames of their burning home. A pathetic incident is also told of four young women whose house was attacked by the Turks. Two of them were carried off, and the marauders promised to return shortly for the others. Seeing that there was no hope, the latter filled the Oriental oven - dug in the floor of the kitchen - with and threw themselves into the flames.

Still another witness wrote to the *New York World* that the mob in this case had divided into four parts. The first plundered the Armenian stores, the second looted the houses, the third secured the young women, while the fourth, whom he describes as "fiends incarnate," attacked the public baths for women, killing some, dragging others through the streets by their feet, and maltreating all. "My hand almost fails me to write the awful particulars. It took three or four days to remove the bodies of the dead with forty carts. Add to this the want, the desolation!"

The massacres at Harpoot and surrounding villages were of a most horrible nature. The Rev. O. P. Allen wrote shortly after the event that they were hardly themselves aware of the full extent of the outside pillage and murder, and abduction of women and girls. But the pressure upon the people to become Mahometans was known to be terrible, and "large numbers have been instantly shot down or butchered who would not abjure their faith". He had already heard of the murder of thirteen of their

native pastors and preachers. The story of one amongst the 176 villages which had been plundered or burned in this district is typical. About 400 Kurds surrounded it and commenced firing at random into the place. Thinking their object was plunder, the head men appeared and proffered £100 (Turkish) as ransom. This they took and then demanded all the watches in the village, then any weapons which might be there, then the grain, the oxen and the cattle. All of these they received, and then proceeded to go through the houses so as to take any other valuables which might be left. And after all this they drove the people out of the houses; stripped them - men, women, and children - of their clothing, and even shoes; burned down their homes, and killed the pastor because he would not change his religion. Finally, they took forty-five of the young men away in the night, and two by two offered them the choice of Islam or death. All but five, who managed to escape, were slaughtered because of their prompt refusal to deny Christianity.

In this Province of Harpoot an estimate of the massacres, published in February, 1896, gives the total number of men, women, and girls murdered as being about 29,000; persons burned to death in the fires as 1,300; ministers, preachers, and school teachers killed as 51; deaths from hunger and cold as 3,200; deaths from exposure in the mountains and snow as 4,000; the number wounded as 8,000; the number of persons forcibly circumcised and converted to Islam as 15,000; the number of violations as 5,500; the number of women forcibly taken in marriage by the Moslems as 1,500; the number of men, women, and children in destitute condition as 54,000. Of course, these figures are purely approximate, and could not in existing conditions be exactly verified, either then or afterwards. But they are probably as near the truth as it will ever be possible to get - Sultan's commissions and European official investigations of the future notwithstanding. And whether within or without the mark they indicate the horrible nature of the crimes committed as well as the wholesale and widespread character of a slaughter which covered not only this entire province, but a whole country. At Marash the murders and outrages were much like those of Caesarea and Erzeroum, and so many other places. But an especially full and authentic account is available from the pen of Miss Hess, in a letter written to a friend in Constantinople, and by her forwarded to Miss Barker, of Toronto. "For four weeks," she writes, "we have been having a reign of terror. Armenians were shot down at night in the streets, shops and houses were plundered, children disembowelled (I know of two), men's heads put on poles or used as balls in the streets, and every other horrible thing. The city was first filled with soldiers - estimated at 7,000 - and then the Turks were let loose. Fire and murder and outrage soon filled the air with shrieks of pain and fear, and the hearts of the trembling girls in the Missionary College with more than terror. Miss Hess herself saw from its windows a band of ruffians seize two theological students of the neighbouring and now blazing Seminary, and beat them and shoot them over and over again.

Afterwards, when a guard of soldiers had been sent to the College - the presence of women of other nationalities alone saved its inmates from a horrible fate - these two

wounded students were brought in, and the narrator describes them as being a perfect mass of wounds. Instances are given in which whole families were slaughtered; two churches were burned in which a large number of women and children had taken refuge, and Miss Hess adds pathetically that "they were all lost, of course." She heard an estimate of 4.700 as the total number killed, and describes the plunder as being something tremendous. From the victims everything was taken, "dishes, clothes, provisions - every single thing." The letter concludes with an appeal for aid: the statement that ten cents a week will keep body and soul together amongst these people; and the charge that "we have every reason to think that the order (for the massacres) came from the Capital."

The events at Aintab took place three weeks after those at Marash, and were commenced in the markets by a mixed mass of Turks and soldiers, armed with either axes or clubs, or stones, or knives, or guns, or pistols, rushing through the city in a storm of plunder and murder. After the massacre Dr. Caroline T. Hamilton declared that: "It was a sight to sicken the bravest. Most of the wounds were made with axes and large knives, and little children, women, and old men, as well as the young and strong, had been attacked as they fled. Covered with blood which had dried on head and hands and clothing, weak from lack of food and the pitiless cold, frightened so that several were wildly insane, one could not endure the sight of the survivors. Efforts are being made to provide food and clothing. Industry is paralyzed, and there are multitudes to be cared for."

The slaughter which took place at Orfah on the 28th and 29th of December included some five thousand victims and a peculiarly awful scene in the Armenian church. Like a similar building at Batak, in Bulgaria, some twenty years before, it proved too strong for the party of Moslems which sought to enter it and massacre the three thousand people within, or to burn it to the ground. The result was that they climbed upon the roof, got down to the galleries surrounding the interior of the church, and there poured thirty cases of petroleum oil upon the writhing mass below. Into the midst of them they then threw lighted torches, and hardly a hundred escaped from the ensuing hell of fire and murder. The Kurds, who in this case were the criminals, afterwards cast one hundred and fifty wounded Armenians down a well, and the correspondent of the London *Times* adds the almost incredible statement - incredible regarding any but Kurds or fanatical Turks - that they poured petroleum over this mass of living human beings and set it on fire. Terrible as this slaughter was, it had been in some measure anticipated, and several days before it occurred the Armenian clergy of Orfah - most of whom were afterwards killed - sent out a secret message and warning. It was a most pathetic document, and the following passages deserve respect and consideration:

"We are doomed to die. Everywhere it is whispered that the Armenians of Orfah have but the fearful alternative of Islam or the sword. Before this reaches you we may have joined these who have gone before to the city of God. The attitude of relentless hostility in the Sultan and the ferocious aspect of our Moslem neighbours has not

abated. We are as sheep waiting to be slaughtered, and, while waiting with bleeding hearts for the last act in this tragedy, we desire to send a farewell message to our fellow-men.

"To our sovereign, the Sultan, Abdul-Hamid, we say: For such as you this destruction of a whole people, no doubt, an easy task, and in accomplishing it you will perhaps win from your admirers the proud title of The Victorious. For ourselves, we can only make our last solemn protest that we are not, and never have been, rebels, and we regret that your energy and valour, and that of your soldiers, should have been displayed, not against the enemies of your Empire, but in the massacre and plunder of your unarmed and loyal subjects.

"To our Moslem fellow-countrymen our message is: Our complaints and appeals have been based solely on the sentiment of humanity, and the common rights of men. It was Britain who arranged the Scheme of Reforms and urged it upon our Sultan, till he was irritated to the extent that he seems to have adopted the plan of ridding himself finally of this annoyance by exterminating our nation. With some of you humanity has been stronger than passion and prejudice, and for this we honour and thank you.

"To the Christians of the United States of America, we say Farewell! We have been strenuously opposed to your mission work among us, on the ground that it was divisive and subversive of our national Church traditions, but these bloody days have shown us that some of our Protestant brethren have been staunch defenders of our honour and our faith. You have laboured to promote among us Christian intelligence and purity; it is not your fault that one result of your teaching and example has been to excite our masters against us."

This remarkable letter contains more than one subject for thought. It shows the general belief entertained by intelligent Armenians that their extermination was, in reality, the policy of the Government; it reveals the horror of the situation during the weary months of waiting between Sassoun and its dreadful aftermath; it indicates one of the chief difficulties encountered by all missionaries in these Turkish countries - the popular knowledge that their faith is peculiarly obnoxious to the Porte. Meantime other massacres were steadily taking place. At Biredjik the British Vice-Consul - Mr. Fitzmaurice telegraphed that 150 Christians had been killed, and 1,500 persons compelled to embrace Islam in order to avoid its deadly sword. Other despatches indicate that terrible cruelties were practised here in order to force conversion. In one case the Turks found twenty people in a cave, and murdered the men and boys on their refusing to profess Mahometanism. They put live coals upon the body of one old man, and, as he lay writhing in torture, held a Bible before his face and taunted him.

Near Baibourt a body of 500 Mahometan soldiers of an irregular type attacked several small villages, set fire to the houses, schools, and sheds, and drove the people back into the flames of their blazing homes when they endeavoured to escape. Some young men and women are said by the *Times* correspondent to have been here burned alive at stakes. And the Governor of Baibourt refused to send protection when appealed to. At Diarbekr the number of victims was estimated to be at least 5,000, and a traveller

who arrived at Trebizond shortly afterwards reported that he had encountered 300 women near the city who fell on their knees before him, saying that their husbands were killed, and imploring his protection in the name of God. In the village of Akhissar the Armenians were attacked on October 9th, and twenty dead bodies were afterwards recovered from a well, and buried by the Bishop of Ismid.

Between the Persian borders and the city of Van more than fifty villages were destroyed by Hamidieh cavalry, large numbers of Christians killed with every kind of barbarity, and crowds of women carried off by these Kurdish "soldiers" to their mountains. Many Armenians, here as elsewhere, were compelled to embrace Islam - and it must be remembered that under the laws of the Koran, and the principles of the Turk, any one relapsing from such a profession of faith is doomed to death. The Rev. Mr. Chambers, in a letter to Principal Grant, of Kingston, tells how dreadfully these "converts" to Mahometanism felt their fate. They wrote asking him not to blame them, and described their situation in words like these: "We were, and are, ready to undergo torture and submit to death for the sake of our religion, but (God forgive us) we could not hand over our wives and children to the Turkish soldiers."

Around Bitlis, some 4.300 forced Moslem conversions were effected after the massacres had been completed. In one case, however, fifteen Armenian families of Tchabakeiour (Tchapaghjour – ed.) retracted their profession and returned to Christianity. They were promptly murdered by the Kurds. But the list of massacres need not be further extended. Fully 50,000 Armenian Christians during two months had been put to death, in ways of such awful cruelty as even the instances recorded in these pages can only indicate. To quote the Stamboul correspondent of the London *Speaker*: "The destruction of the Armenian communities has been completed amid scenes of fiendish barbarity which no pen can describe: Those left alive are left without anything." And if 50,000 were massacred during the special days devoted to that occupation by the Turks and Kurds, at least as many more died of starvation, of wounds, or, in the case of many women, from heart-broken misery at the loss of everything which made life worth living, or prevented it from becoming utterly unbearable.

Meantime, the craze for slaughter had been early aroused in Constantinople, if, indeed, it was not originally created there and in Armenia by orders from its government. During one of the first days in October, about 3,000 Armenians had assembled in the Karum Kapou Cathedral for religious purposes. At the conclusion of the service, some kind of petition was presented to the Patriarch, asking him to lead a Christian procession or deputation to the Sultan in favour of reforms in Armenia. He refused to do so, and urged his people not to attempt any demonstration at that particular time. But he was unfortunately unheeded, and the congregation seems to have streamed into the street with a vague intention of marching to the Palace.

Of course, the idea was never realized. Such things as peaceful popular movements are not understood in Stamboul, and the ever-convenient soldiers at once intervened. Just how the massacre started can only be guessed at, but pistol shots

were fired, and in the ensuing mêlée some Turks, as well as Armenians, were killed. The opportunity, however, was quite sufficient, and during the next two days the "rioting," as it was called, continued. It was presently ended by the interference of the Ambassadors, and the Armenians, who had meanwhile crowded into the churches for protection - as a rule, of course, they were without arms - gradually obtained confidence and liberty. But some hundreds had been slaughtered, and many of the bodies afterwards recovered were most terribly wounded. One corpse had twenty knife cuts, and others were fearfully battered with clubs. Numerous victims were thrown into the sea and the bodies never recovered. The *Times* correspondent says, that:

"At some points veritable man-hunts took place, and several Armenians who became the quarry of the ferocious bands were cruelly ill-treated and bludgeoned to death. Thus, shortly before noon on Tuesday, two Armenian porters passing down the street through which the tram way runs to Galata were set upon, and, in the presence of a number of spectators, cudgelled to death with indescribable ferocity... No police were present, and the assassins, after completing their work of butchery, withdrew unmolested."

So in other cases. And it must not be forgotten that these disturbances arose under the very shadow of the Sublime Porte - almost within sight of the absolute ruler of these people in both a religious and national sense. Yet the murderers did not fear his displeasure, and certainly went unpunished, while the jails became literally filled with innocent Armenians, who in many instances were bastinadoed, and in others, according to general belief, were tortured. If such things could occur in the capital of Turkey, while the gunboats of foreign Powers were patrolling neighbouring seas, and foreign ambassadors were daily going through the farce of demanding reforms and protection for the Christians of the empire, what might not - and did not - occur in distant Asiatic provinces ?

During the succeeding months, and well into 1896, murder and outrage continued, though not upon the wholesale plan. In Armenia it has indeed been going on even while British and American relief funds are being distributed; and, in Constantinople, the correspondent of the *Speaker*, already quoted from, declared late in December that every day numbers of Armenians disappear, and what becomes of them no one knows." This is really typical of all these horrible events. Open massacre when there was no fear of immediate external force; prolonged murder and outrage where there was no power of individual defence or concerted local resistance; secret assassination where there was a possibility of international interference. The Sassoun massacres had deserved Christian intervention at the point of the bayonet: the horrors of the succeeding year merited the annihilation of Turkish power and the overthrow of the Ottoman race. But destiny - and Russia - decreed that nothing should be done, and no present punishment be inflicted.