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# DOCUMENTS: ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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**The Documents regarding the atrocities of the Armenian population of the Vilayet of Van in 1915. Extracted from "THE TREATMENT OF ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1915-1916)" (DOCUMENTS PRESENTED TO VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS by Viscount Bryce, with a preface by Viscount Bryce), London, 1916, p. 31-77.**

## II.

### VILAYET OF VAN.

*The Vilayet of Van had a higher percentage of Armenians in its population than any other province of the Ottoman Empire; it was also the border province of the north-eastern frontier, towards Russian and Persian territory, and as such was the earliest to be exposed to invasion after the breakdown of the Turkish offensive against the Caucasus in the winter of 1914-1915.*

*The documents contained in this section give a detailed and perfectly self-consistent account, from five independent sources, of those events at Van which led to the first open breach between the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the Turks, and which gave the Government a pretext for extending the scheme of deportation already operative in Cilicia to the whole Armenian population under its jurisdiction.*

*The evidence makes it clear that there was no unprovoked insurrection of the Armenians at Van, as the Ottoman Government asserts in its official apologia. The Armenians only took up arms in self-defence, and the entire responsibility for the outbreak rests with Djevdet Bey, the local governor-whether he was acting on his own initiative or was simply carrying out instructions from Constantinople.*

#### **15. THE AMERICAN MISSION AT VAN: NARRATIVE PRINTED PRIVATELY IN THE UNITED STATES BY MISS GRACE HIGLEY KNAPP (1915).**

*The first part of this narrative, down to and including the sub-section headed "Deliverance," has been transcribed almost word for word by Miss Knapp from a letter she wrote at Van, on the 24th of May, 1915, to Dr. Barton, and has, therefore, all the value of contemporary evidence.*

*The period of the (first) Russian occupation of Van is also covered by two further letters from Miss Knapp to Dr. Barton-a long one written piece-meal on the 14th) 20th and 22nd June, and a second dated 26th July. These contain much more detail than the three corresponding sub-sections of her narrative, but the detail is principally devoted to personal matters and to the care of the Moslem refugees. As neither subject was strictly relevant to the purpose of the present collection, it seemed better to reprint the narrative rather than the letters in the case of these sections also.*

*There is also a letter (published in the Eleventh Report of the Women's Armenian Relief Fund) from Miss Louie Bond to Mrs. Orpin, written on the 27th July, almost the eve of the evacuation; but this, too, is practically entirely devoted to personal matters.*

*For the period of the retreat there are no contemporary letters, but only an undated memorandum by Miss Knapp, which agrees word for word with the latter part of her present narrative, from the beginning of the section headed " Flight " to the end.*

### **THE SETTING OF THE DRAMA AND THE ACTORS THEREIN.**

Van was one of the most beautiful cities of Asiatic Turkey- a city of gardens and vineyards, situated on Lake Van in the centre of a plateau bordered by magnificent mountains. The walled city, containing the shops and most of the public buildings, was dominated by Castle Rock, a huge rock rising sheer from the plain, crowned with ancient battlements and fortifications, and bearing on its lakeward face famous cuneiform inscriptions. The Gardens, so-called because nearly every house had its garden or vineyard, extended over four miles eastward from the walled city and were about two miles in width.

The inhabitants numbered fifty thousand, three-fifths of whom were Armenians, two-fifths Turks. The Armenians were progressive and ambitious, and because of their numerical strength and the proximity of Russia the revolutionary party grew to be a force to be reckoned with. Three of its noted leaders were Vremyan, member of the Ottoman Parliament; Ishkhan, the one most skilled in military tactics; and Aram, of whom there will be much to say later. The Governor often consulted with these men and seemed to be on the most friendly terms with them.

The American Mission Compound was on the south-eastern border of the middle third of the Gardens, on a slight rise of ground that made its buildings somewhat conspicuous. These buildings were a church building, two large new school buildings, two small ones, a lace school, a hospital, dispensary and four missionary residences. South-east, and quite near, was a broad plain. Here was the largest Turkish barracks of the large garrison, between which and the American premises nothing intervened. North and nearer, but with streets and houses between, was another large barracks, and farther north, within rifle range, was Toprak-Kala Hill, surmounted by a small barracks dubbed by the Americans the "Pepper Box." Five minutes' walk to the east of us was the German Orphanage managed by Herr Sporri, his wife and daughter (of Swiss extraction) and three single ladies.

The American force in 1914-1915 consisted of the veteran missionary, Mrs. G.C. Raynolds (Dr. Raynolds had been in America a year and a half collecting funds for our Van college, and had been prevented from returning by the outbreak of war); Dr. Clarence D. Ussher, in charge of the hospital and medical work; Mrs. Ussher, in charge of a philanthropic lace industry; Mr. and Mrs. Ernest A. Yarrow, in charge of the Boys' School and general work; Miss Gertrude Rogers, principal of the Girls' School; Miss Caroline Silliman, in charge of the primary department, and two Armenian and one Turkish kindergarten; Miss Elizabeth Ussher, in charge of the musical department; Miss Louise Bond, the English superintendent of the hospital; and Miss Grisel McLaren, our touring missionary. Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow had each four children; I was a visitor from Bitlis.

## **BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA.**

During the mobilization of the fall and winter the Armenians had been ruthlessly plundered under the name of requisitioning; rich men were ruined and the poor stripped. Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army were neglected, half starved, set to digging trenches and doing the menial work; but, worst of all, they were deprived of their arms and thus left at the mercy of their fanatical, age-long enemies, their Moslem fellow-soldiers. Small wonder that those who could find a loophole of escape or could pay for exemption from military duty did so; many of those who could do neither simply would not give themselves up. We felt that a day of reckoning would soon come—a collision between these opposing forces or a holy war. But the revolutionists conducted themselves with remarkable restraint and prudence; controlled their hot-headed youth; patrolled the streets to prevent skirmishes; and bade the villagers endure in silence—better a village or two burned unavenged than that any attempt at reprisals should furnish an excuse for massacre.

For some time after Djevdet Bey, a brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, minister of war, became Governor General of Van Vilayet, he was absent from the city fighting at the border. When he returned in the early spring, everyone felt there would soon be "something doing." There was. He demanded from the Armenians 3,000 soldiers. So anxious were they to keep the peace that they promised to accede to this demand. But at this juncture trouble broke out between Armenians and Turks in the Shadakh region, and Djevdet Bey requested Ishkhan to go there as peace commissioner, accompanied by three other notable revolutionists. On their way there he had all four treacherously murdered. This was Friday, the 16th April. He then summoned Vremyan to him under the pretence of consulting with this leader, arrested him and sent him off to Constantinople.

The revolutionists now felt that they could not trust Djevdet Bey, the Vali, in any way and that therefore they could not give him the 3,000 men. They told him they would give 400 and pay by degrees the exemption tax for the rest. He would not accept the compromise. The Armenians begged Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow to see Djevdet Bey and try to mollify him. The Vali was obdurate. He "must be obeyed." He would put down this "rebellion" at all costs. He would first punish Shadakh, then attend to Van, but if the rebels fired one shot meanwhile he would put to death every man, woman and child of the Christians.

The fact cannot be too strongly emphasized that there was no "rebellion." As already pointed out, the revolutionists meant to keep the peace if it lay in their power to do so. But for some time past a line of Turkish entrenchments had been secretly drawn round the Armenian quarter of the Gardens. The revolutionists, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible, prepared a defensive line of entrenchments.

Djevdet Bey said he wished to send a guard of fifty soldiers to the American premises. This guard must be accepted or a written statement given him by the

Americans to the effect that it had been offered and refused, so that he should be absolved from all responsibility for our safety. He wished for an immediate answer, but at last consented to wait till Sunday noon.

Our Armenian friends, most of them, agreed that the guard must be accepted. But the revolutionists declared that such a force in so central a location menaced the safety of the Armenian forces and that they would never permit it to reach our premises alive. We might have a guard of five. But Djevdet Bey would give us fifty or none. Truly we were between the devil and the deep sea, for, if both revolutionists and Vali kept their word, we should be the occasion for the outbreak of trouble, if the guard were sent; if it were not sent, we should have no official assurance of safety for the thousands who were already preparing to take refuge on our premises. We should be blamed for an unhappy outcome either way. On Monday, when Dr. Ussher saw the Vali again, he seemed to be wavering and asked if he should send the guard. Dr. Ussher left the decision with him, but added that the sending of such a force might precipitate trouble. It was never sent.

Meanwhile Djevdet Bey had asked Miss McLaren and Schwester Martha, who had been nursing in the Turkish military hospital all winter, to continue their work there, and they had consented.

### **WAR! "ISHIM YOK, KEFIM TOHOK."**

On Tuesday, the 20th April, at 6 a.m., some Turkish soldiers tried to seize one of a band of village women on their way to the city. She fled. Two Armenian soldiers came up and asked the Turks what they were doing. The Turkish soldiers fired on the Armenians, killing them. Thereupon the Turkish entrenchments opened fire. The siege had begun. There was a steady rifle firing all day, and from the walled city, now cut off from communication with the Gardens, was heard a continuous cannonading from Castle Rock upon the houses below. In the evening, houses were seen burning in every direction.

All the Armenians in the Gardens-nearly 30,000, as the Armenian population of the walled city is small-were now gathered into a district about a mile square, protected by eighty "teerks" (manned and barricaded houses) besides walls and trenches. The Armenian force consisted of 1,500 trained riflemen possessing only about 300 rifles. Their supply of ammunition was not great, so they were very sparing of it; used pistols only, when they could, and employed all sorts of devices to draw the fire of the enemy and waste their ammunition. They began to make bullets and cartridges, turning out 2,000 a day; also gun- powder, and after a while they made three mortars for throwing bombs. The supply of material for the manufacture of these things was limited, and methods and implements were crude and primitive, but they were very happy and hopeful and exultant over their ability to keep the enemy at bay. Some of the rules for their men were: Keep clean; do not drink; tell the truth; do not curse the religion of the enemy. They sent a manifesto to the Tu ks to the effect that their quarrel was with one

man and not with their Turkish neighbours. Valis might come and go, but the two races must continue to live together, and they hoped that after Djevdet went there might be peaceful and friendly relations between them. The Turks answered in the same spirit, saying that they were forced to fight. Indeed, a protest against this war was signed by many prominent Turks, but Djevdet would pay no attention to it.

The Armenians took and burned (the inmates, however, escaping) the barracks north of our premises, but apart from this they did not attempt the offensive to any extent-their numbers were too few. They were fighting for their homes, their very lives, and our sympathies could not but be wholly on their side, though we strove to keep our actions neutral. We allowed no armed men to enter the premises, and their leader, Aram, in order to help us to preserve the neutrality of our premises, forbade the bringing of wounded soldiers to our hospital, though Dr. Ussher treated them at their own temporary hospital. But Djevdet Bey wrote to Dr. Ussher on the 23rd that armed men had been seen entering our premises and that the rebels had prepared entrenchments near us. If, at the time of attack, one shot were fired from these entrenchments, he would be "regretfully compelled" to turn his cannon upon our premises and completely destroy them. We might know this for a surety. We answered that we were preserving the neutrality of our premises by every means in our power. By no law could we be held responsible for the actions of individuals or organisations outside our premises.

Our correspondence with the Vali was carried on through our official representative, Signor Sbordone, the Italian consular agent, and our postman was an old woman bearing a flag of truce. On her second journey she fell into a ditch and, rising without her white flag, was instantly shot dead by Turkish soldiers. Another was found, but she was wounded while sitting at the door of her shack on our premises. Then Aram said that he would permit no further correspondence until the Vali should answer a letter of Sbordone's, in which the latter had told Djevdet that he had no right to expect the Armenians to surrender now, since the campaign had taken on the character of a massacre.

Djevdet would permit no communication with Miss McLaren at the Turkish hospital, and would answer no question of ours concerning her welfare, though after two weeks he wrote to Herr Spörri that she and Schwester Martha were well and comfortable. Dr. Ussher had known the Vali as a boy and had always been on the most friendly terms with him, but in a letter to the Austrian banker who had taken refuge on the German premises, the Vali wrote that one of his officers had taken some Russian prisoners and cannon and that he would cause them to parade in front of "His Majesty Dr. Ussher's fortifications, so that he, who with the rebels was always awaiting the Russians, should see them and be content." This letter ended with the words: "Ishim yok, keifim tchok" ("I have no work and much fun.") While he was having no work and much fun, his soldiers and their wild allies, the Kurds, were sweeping the countryside, massacring men, women, and children and burning their homes. Babies were shot in their mothers' arms, small children were horribly mutilated, women were stripped and beaten. The villages

were not prepared for attack; many made no resistance; others resisted until their ammunition gave out. On Sunday, the 25th, the first band of village refugees came to the city. At early dawn we heard them knocking, knocking, knocking at our gate. Dr. Ussher went out in dressing gown and slippers to hear their pitiful tale and send the wounded to the hospital, where he worked over them all day.

### **THE MISSION'S FIRST-AID TO THE INJURED.**

Six thousand people from the Gardens had early removed to our premises with all their worldly possessions, filling church and school buildings and every room that could possibly be spared in the missionary residences. One woman said to Miss Silliman: "What would we do without this place? This is the third massacre during which I have taken refuge here." A large proportion of these people had to be fed, as they had been so poor that they had bought daily from the ovens what bread they had money for, and now that resource was cut off. Housing, sanitation, government, food, relation with the revolutionist forces, were problems that required great tact and executive ability. The Armenians were not able to cope with these problems unaided. They turned to the missionaries for help.

Mr. Yarrow has a splendid gift for organisation. He soon had everything in smoothly running order, with everyone hard at work at what he was best fitted to do. A regular city government for the whole city of thirty thousand inhabitants was organised with mayor, judges, and police-the town had never been so well policed before. Committees were formed to deal with every possible contingency. Grain was sold or contributed to the common fund by those who possessed it, most of whom manifested a generous and self-sacrificing spirit; one man gave all the wheat he possessed except a month's supply for his family. The use of a public oven was secured, bread tickets issued, a soup kitchen opened, and daily rations were given out to those on our premises and those outside who needed food. Miss Rogers and Miss Silliman secured a daily supply of milk, and made some of their school-girls boil it and distribute it to babies who needed it, until 190 were being thus fed. The Boy Scouts, whom thirteen-year-old Neville Ussher had helped organize in the fall, now did yeoman's service in protecting the buildings against the dangers of fire, keeping the premises clean, carrying wounded on stretchers, reporting the sick, and, during the fourth week, distributing milk and eggs to babies and sick outside the premises.

Our hospital, which had a normal capacity of fifty beds, was made to accommodate one hundred and sixty-seven, beds being borrowed and placed on the floor in every available space. Such of the wounded as could walk or be brought to the hospital came regularly to have their wounds dressed. Many complicated operations were required to repair the mutilations inflicted by an unimaginable brutality and love of torture. Dr. Ussher, as the only physician and surgeon in the besieged city, had not only the care of the patients in his hospital, the treatment of the wounded refugees and of the

wounded Armenian soldiers, but his dispensary and out-patients increased to an appalling number. Among the refugees exposure and privation brought in their train scores of cases of pneumonia and dysentery, and an epidemic of measles raged among the children. Miss Silliman took charge of a measles annex, Miss Rogers and Miss Ussher helped in the hospital, where Miss Bond and her Armenian nurses were worked to the limit of their strength, and after a while Mrs. Ussher, aided by Miss Rogers, opened an overflow hospital in an Armenian school-house, cleared of refugees for the purpose. Here it was a struggle to get beds, utensils, helpers, even food enough for the patients. Indeed all this extra medical and surgical work was hampered by insufficient medical and surgical supplies, for the annual shipment had been stalled at Alexandretta.

### **DARK DAYS.**

At the end of two weeks the people in the walled city managed to send us word that they were holding their own and had taken some of the government buildings, though they were only a handful of fighters and were cannonaded day and night. About 16,000 cannon balls or shrapnel were fired upon them. The old-fashioned balls sunk into the three-feet thick walls of sun-dried brick without doing much harm. In time, of course, the walls would fall in, but they were the walls of upper stories. People took refuge in the lower stories, so only three persons lost their lives from this cause. Some of the "teerks" in the Gardens were also cannonaded without much damage being done. It seemed the enemy was reserving his heavier cannon and his shrapnel till the last. Three cannon balls fell on our premises the first week, one of them on a porch of the Usshers' house. Thirteen persons were wounded by bullets on the premises, one fatally. Our premises were so centrally located that the bullets of the Turks kept whizzing through, entered several rooms, broke the tiles on the roofs, and peppered the outside of the walls. We became so used to the pop-pop-pop of rifles and booming of cannon that we paid little attention to them in the daytime, but the fierce fusil-lades at night were rather nerve-racking.

A man escaping from Ardjish related the fate of that town, second in size and importance to Van in the vilayet. The kaimakam had called the men of all the guilds together on the 19th April, and, as he had always been friendly to the Armenians, they trusted him. When they had all gathered, he had them mown down by his soldiers.

Many of the village refugees had stopped short of the city at the little village of Shushantz, on a mountain side near the city. Here Aram bade them remain. On the 8th May we saw the place in flames, and Varak Monastery nearby, with its priceless ancient manuscripts, also went up in smoke. These villagers now flocked into the city. Djevdet seemed to have altered his tactics. He had women and children driven in by hundreds to help starve the city out. Owing to the mobilisation of the previous fall, the supply of wheat in the Gardens had been very much less than usual to begin with, and now that 10,000 refugees were being given a daily ration, though a ration barely sufficient to



sustain life, this supply was rapidly approaching its limit. The ammunition was also giving out. Djevdet could bring in plenty of men and ammunition from other cities. Unless help came from Russia, it was impossible for the city to hold out much longer against him, and the hope of such help seemed very faint.

We had no communication with the outside world; a telegram we had prepared to send to our embassy before the siege never left the city; the revolutionists were constantly sending out appeals for help to the Russo-Armenian volunteers on the border, but no word or sign of their reaching their destination was received by us. At the very last, when the Turks should come to close quarters, we knew that all the population of the besieged city would crowd into our premises as a last hope. But, enraged as Dj evdet was by this unexpected and prolonged resistance, was it to be hoped that he could be persuaded to spare the lives of one of these men, women and children <sup>1</sup> We believed not. He might offer the Americans personal safety if we would leave the premises, but this, of course, we would not do; we would share the fate of our people. And it seemed not at all improbable that he would not even offer us safety, believing, as he seemed to believe, that we were aiding and upholding the "rebels."

Those were dark days indeed. Our little American circle came together two evenings in the week to discuss the problems constantly arising. We would joke and laugh over some aspects of our situation, but as we listened to the volley firing only two blocks away, we knew that at any hour the heroic but weakening defence might be overpowered; knew that then hell would be let loose in the crowded city and our crowded compound; knew that we should witness unspeakable atrocities perpetrated on the persons of those we loved, and probably suffer them in our own persons. And we would sing:

"Peace, · perfect peace;        the future all unknown!

Jesus we know and He i8 on the throne,"

and pray to the God who was able to deliver us out of the very mouth of the lion.

On Saturday forenoon a rift seemed to appear in the clouds, for many ships were seen on the lake, sailing away from Van, and we heard that they contained Turkish women and children. We became a "city all gone up to the housetops," wondering and surmising. Once before such a flight had taken place, when the Russians had advanced as far as Sarai. They had retreated, however, and the Turkish families had returned.

That afternoon the sky darkened again. Cannon at the Big Barracks on the plain began to fire in our direction. At first we could not believe that the shots were aimed at our flag, but no doubt was permitted us on that point, Seven shells fell on the premises, one on the roof of Miss Rogers' and Miss Silliman's house, making a big hole in it; two others did the same thing on the boys' -school and girls' -school roofs. On Sunday morning the bombardment began again. Twenty-six shells fell on the premises before noon.

When the heavy firing began Dr. Ussher was visiting patients outside and Mrs. Ussher was also away from home at her overflow hospital, so I ran over from our own hospital to take their children to the safest part of the house, a narrow hall on the first floor. There we listened to the shrieking of the shrapnel and awaited the bursting of

each shell. A deafening explosion shook the house. I ran up to my room to find it so full of dust and smoke that I could not see a foot before me. A shell had come through the three-feet-thick outside wall, burst, scattering its contained bullets, and its cap had passed through a partition wall into the next room and broken a door opposite. A shell entered a room in

Mrs. Raynold's house, killing a little Armenian girl. Ten more shells fell in the afternoon. Djevdet was fulfilling his threat of bombarding our premises, and this proved to us that we could hope for no mercy at his hands when he should take the city.<sup>1</sup>

### **DELIVERANCE.**

In this darkest hour of all came deliverance. A lull followed the cannonading. Then at sunset a letter came from the occupants of the only Armenian house within the Turkish lines which had been spared (this because Djevdet had lived in it when a boy) which gave the information that the Turks had left the city. The barracks on the summit and at the foot of Toprak-Kala were found to contain so small a guard that it was easily overpowered, and these buildings were burned amidst the wildest excitement. So with all the Turkish "teerks," which were visited in turn. The Big Barracks was next seen to disgorge its garrison, a large company of horsemen who rode away over the hills, and that building, too, was burned after midnight. Large stores of wheat and ammunition were found. It all reminded one of the -seventh chapter of II. Kings.

The whole city was awake, singing and rejoicing all night. In the morning its inhabitants could go whither they would unafraid. And now came the first check to our rejoicing. Miss McLaren was gone! She and Schwester Martha had been sent with the patients of the Turkish hospital four days before to Bitlis.

Mr. Yarrow went to the hospital. He found there twenty-five wounded soldiers too sick to travel, left there without food or water for five days. He found unburied dead. He stayed all day in the horrible place, that his presence might protect the terrified creatures until he could secure their removal to our hospital.

On Wednesday, the 19th May, the Russians and Russo-Armenian volunteers came into the city. It had been the knowledge of their approach that had caused the Turks to flee. Some hard fighting had to be done in the villages, however, before Djevdet and his reinforcements were driven out of the province. Troops poured into the city from Russia and Persia and passed on towards Bitlis.

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<sup>1</sup> *The shelling of the mission buildings is also described by Mr. Yarrow, in an interview published in the New York "Times," 6th October, 1915, the day after his arrival in America: -*

"For twenty-seven days 1,500 determined Armenians held Van against 5,000 Turks and Kurds, and for the last three days they were shelled with shrapnel from a howitzer brought up by a Turkish company headed by a German officer. I myself saw him directing the fire of the gun. "Two days before the Russians came to Van, the Turks deliberately fired at the mission buildings. They stood out prominently and could not be mistaken, and also flew five American flags and one Red Cross flag as a protection. The firing was so accurate that the shots cut the signal halyards and brought the flags to the ground."

Aram was made temporary governor of the province, and, for the first time for centuries, Armenians were given a chance to govern themselves. Business · revived. People began to rebuild their burned houses and shops. We re-open ed our mission schools, except the school in the walled city, the school-ho use there having been burned.

### **THE TABLES TURNED.**

Not all the Turks had fled from the city. Some old men and women and children had stayed behind, many of them in hiding. The Armenian soldiers, unlike Turks, were not making war on such. There was only one place where the captives could be safe from the rabble, however. In their dilemma the Armenian s turned, as usual, to the American missionaries. And so it came to pass that hardly had the six thousand Armenian refugees left our premises when the care of a thousand Turkish refugees was thrust upon us, some of them from villages the Russo-Armenian volunteers were "cleaning out."

It was with the greatest difficulty that food could be procured for these people. The city had an army to feed now. Wheat- the stores left by the Turks-was obtainable, but no flour, and the use of a mill was not available for some time. The missionaries had no help in a task so distasteful to the Armenians except that of two or three of the teachers of the school in the walled city, who now had no other work. Mr. Yarrow was obliged to drop most of his other duties and spend practically all 4is time working for our protégés. Mrs. Yarrow, Miss Rogers and Miss Silliman administered medicines and tried to give every one of the poor creatures a bath. Mrs. Ussher had bedding made, and secured and personally dispensed milk to the children and sick, spending several hours daily among them.

The wild Cossacks considered the Turkish women legitimate prey, and though the Russian General gave us a small guard, there was seldom a night during the first two or three weeks in which Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow did not have to drive off marauders who had climbed over the walls of the compound and eluded the guard.

The effect on its followers of the religion of Islam was never more strongly contrasted with Christianity. While the Armenian refugees had been mutually helpful and self-sacrificing, these Moslems showed themselves absolutely selfish, callous and indifferent to each other's suffering. Where the Armenians had been cheery and hopeful, and had clung to life with wonderful vitality, the Moslems, with no faith in God and no hope of a future life, bereft now of hope in this life, died like flies of the prevailing dysentery from lack of stamina and the will to live.

The situation became intolerable. The missionaries begged the Russian General to send these people out to villages, with a guard sufficient for safety and flocks to maintain them until they could begin to get their living from the soil. He was too much occupied with other matters to attend to us.

After six weeks of this, Countess Alexandra Tolstoi (daughter of the famous novelist) came to Van and took off our hands the care of our "guests," though they remained on our premises. She was a young woman, simple, sensible, and lovable. We gave her a surprise party on her birthday, carrying her the traditional cake with candles and crowning her with flowers, and she declared she had never had a birthday so delightfully celebrated in all her life. She worked hard for her charges. When her funds gave out and no more were forthcoming and her Russian helpers fell ill, she succeeded where we had failed and induced the General to send the Turks out into the country with provision for their safety and sustenance.

### **THE PESTILENCE THAT WALKETH IN DARKNESS.**

Our Turkish refugees cost us a fearful price.

The last day of June Mrs. Ussher took her children, who had whooping cough, out of the pestilential atmosphere of the city to Artamid, the summer home on Lake Van, nine miles away. Dr. Ussher went there for the week-end, desperately in need of a little rest. On Saturday night they both became very ill. Upon hearing of this I went down to take care of them. On Monday Mr. and Mrs. Yarrow also fell ill. Ten days yet remained till the time set for closing the hospital for the summer, but Miss Bond set her nurses to the task of sending the patients away and went over to nurse the Yarrows. This left me without help for five days. Then, for four days more, two Armenian nurses cared for the sick ones at night and an untrained man nurse helped me during the daytime. Miss Rogers had come down on Thursday, the day after commencement, for the cure of what she believed to be an attack of malaria. On Friday she too fell ill. Fortunately, there was at last a really good Russian physician in town, and he was most faithful in his attendance. The sickness proved to be typhus. Later we learned that at about the same time Miss Silliman, who had left for America on her furlough on the 15th June, accompanied by Neville Ussher, had been ill at Tiflis with what we now know was a mild form of the same disease. Dr. Ussher might have contracted it from his outside patients, but the others undoubtedly contracted it from the Turkish refugees.

Mrs. Yarrow was dangerously ill, but passed her crisis safely and first of all. Miss Bond then came to Artamid, though Mr. Yarrow was still very ill, feeling that the Usshers needed her more on account of their distance from the doctor. Miss Ussher took charge of the Yarrow children up in Van; Mrs. Raynolds managed the business affairs of the mission.

Mrs. Ussher had a very severe form of the disease, and her delicate frame, worn out with the overwork and terrible strain of the months past, could make no resistance. On the 14th July she entered into the life eternal.

We dared not let the sick ones suspect what had happened. Dr. Ussher was too ill at the time and for more than two weeks longer to be told of his terrible loss. For three months preceding his illness he had been the only physician in Van, and the strain of

over-work and sleeplessness told severely now. After he had passed his typhus crisis, his life was in danger for a week longer from the pneumonia which had been a complication from the first. Then followed another not infrequent complication of typhus, an abscess in the parotid gland which caused long-continued weakness and suffering, at one time threatened life and reason, and has had serious consequences which may prove permanent. Mr. Yarrow was so ill that his life was quite despaired of. It was by a veritable miracle that he was restored to us.

### **FLIGHT.**

Meanwhile the Russian army had been slowly advancing westward. It had not been uniformly successful as we had expected it to be. Indeed, the Russians seemed to fight sluggishly and unenthusiastically. The Russo-Armenian volunteers, who were always sent ahead of the main army, did the heavy fighting. By the last week of July the Russians had not yet taken Bitlis, only ninety miles distant from Van. Suddenly the Turkish army began to advance towards Van, and the Russian army to retreat.

On Friday, the 30th July, General Nicolaieff ordered all the Armenians of the Van province, also the Americans and other foreigners, to flee for their lives. By Saturday night the city was nearly emptied of Armenians and quite emptied of conveyances. Nearly all our teachers, nurses, employees had left. It was every man for himself and no one to help us secure carriages or horses for our own flight. We at Artamid, with a sick man to provide for, would have had great difficulty in getting up to the city in time, had not Mrs. Yarrow risen from her sick-bed to go to the General and beg him to send us ambulances. These reached us after midnight.

There was little question in our minds as to our own flight. Our experience during the siege had shown us that the fact of our being Americans would not protect us from the Turks. Had not - our two men, Mr. Yarrow and Dr. Ussher, been absolutely helpless we might have debated the matter. As it was, women could not assume the responsibility of staying and keeping them there, and even if we had stayed we could have found no means to live in a deserted city.

We were fifteen Americans and had ten Armenian dependents - women and children - to provide for. The head nurse of the hospital, Garabed, plucky and loyal little fellow that he was, had sent on his mother and wife and had remained behind to help us get out of the country. Dr. Ussher's man-cook, having been with us at Artamid when the panic began, had been unable to secure conveyance for his sick wife. We greatly needed his help on the journey, but this involved our providing for a third sick person. We had three horses, an American grocer's delivery cart really not strong enough for heavy work on rough and mountainous roads, and a small cart that would seat three. Our two other carts were not usable.

We begged the General to give us ambulances. He absolutely refused - he had none to spare. But, he added, he was to be replaced in a day or two by General Trokin;

we could appeal to him when he came; the danger was not immediate. Somewhat reassured and not knowing how we could manage without help from the Russians, we made no effort to leave that day. But the next day, Monday, we heard that the volunteers who were trying to keep the road open to Russia would not be able to do so much longer-there was no time to lose. We set to work.

One of our teachers who had not succeeded in getting away before Monday morning, kindly took a small bag of clothing on his ox-cart for each of us. We spread the quilts and blankets we should need on the way on the bottom of the delivery cart, intending to lay our three sick people on these. Garabed, who had never driven a team in his life, must drive two of our horses in this cart. Mrs. Raynolds would drive the third horse harnessed to the small cart, and take the babies and what food there was possibly room for; no provisions could be bought on the way. The rest of us must walk, though Mrs. Yarrow and Miss Hogers were newly risen from a sick bed and the children were all under twelve. We put loads on the cows we must take with us for the sake of the babies and the patients. But the cows were refractory; they kicked off the loads and ran wildly about the yard, tails up, heads down, whereupon the single horse broke loose and "also ran," smashing the small cart.

At this moment, the "psychological moment," two doctors of the Russian Red Cross rode into our yard. Seeing our plight they turned and rode out again. They returned a little later and on *their own responsibility* promised to take us with the Red Cross caravan. Thank the Lord!

We now put our loads on the delivery cart; put the wheels of the smashed cart on the body of a wheelless cart, and now that we might take a little more with us than food and bedding, packed in bags what we felt to be absolutely necessary. What we left behind we should never see again; we felt certain that the Russian soldiers before they left would loot our houses and perhaps burn them to forestall the Turks.

The Red Cross provided us with two ambulances with horses and drivers, and a stretcher carried between two horses for Dr. Ussher. He was usually taken into one of their sick tents when we camped at night; most of the rest of us slept on the ground in the open.

We left on Tuesday, the 3rd August. The Russians appeared to have received news that made them very uneasy, and, indeed, General Trokin himself left Van that very afternoon, as we learned later. The next day at sundown we heard the firing between the Kurds and the volunteers who were so gallantly trying to keep them at bay, to keep the road to Russia open as long as possible. It sounded startlingly near. We travelled till two a.m. that night in order to reach Bergri, where we should be, not safe, but beyond the line along which the Turks would try to intercept travellers. We were just in time. General Trokin's party, that had left Van only a few hours later than we, were unable to reach Bergri, and had to return and get out by the longer route through Persia. Had we with our slower rate of travel been obliged to do this, we might not have been able to get out at all.

### **THE ARROW THAT FLIETH BY DAY.**

That afternoon-Thursday afternoon-we forded a wide and deep river, then entered a narrow valley, from the mountains commanding which Kurds suddenly began to fire down on the Red Cross caravan and the thousands of foot travellers. One man in an ambulance was killed, others wounded. The drivers of ambulances and litters whipped up their horses to a mad gallop. It was a race for life. The sight of those gasping, terror-stricken thousands was one never to be forgotten. The teacher who had taken our bags of clothing threw everything off his ox-cart in order to escape wj.th his life. The Armenians on our long wagon threw off much of the luggage to lighten it, and thus we lost most, of what we had brought with us.

Once out of the valley we were comparatively safe. We met a force of volunteers and Cossacks who entered the valley to engage with the Kurds. Mrs. Raynolds had been riding in the small cart. After the danger was-over, while getting out of the cart, she fell and broke her leg below the knee. The Red Cross physicians set it at once, but she suffered greatly during the remainder of the journey over the rough roads, though lying at full length in one of our ambulances. She was quite helpless. Mr. Yarrow lay, too, in his ambulance, which he was unable to leave day or night during the journey, except when he was carried into a Red Cross tent on Sunday.

On Friday all but the four helpless ones and the babies walked over Mt. Taparez. On Saturday we again climbed on foot a high mountain, from sundown till three o'clock the next morning. The caravan rested on Sunday at a Red Cross camp near the top of Tchingli Mt. at the foot of Mt Ararat. Here Dr. Ussher had two severe operations on his face without anesthetics. On Monday at sunset we reached Igdir. Dr. Ussher was taken to a military hospital for officers, and the military sent him on to Tift.is on Thursday. We could not secure carriages until Wednesday morning to take us to the railway station at Etchmiadzin. We arrived in Tiflis the next morning.

### **SAFE!-BUT SORROWING.**

Most of us had lost nearly everything but the clothes we stood in, and these we had worn day and night during the ten days' journey. Small wonder that the first hotel we went to had "no rooms." Mr. Smith, the American Consul, was most kind and did everything he could for us. He secured a room in a private hospital for Mrs. Raynolds and a bed in the city hospital for Dr. Ussher.

Dr. Ussher was again brought to death's door by very severe dysentery contracted on the road. He had become a nervous and physical wreck and in appearance the ghost of himself.

Dysentery was epidemic among the scores of thousands of refugees from Van Province who had crowded into Transcaucasia. The very air seemed poisoned; our children were all ill, and it seemed to us that they would not get well until we could leave

Tiflis.

Mrs. Raynolds' broken bone refused to knit. She seemed also to be suffering from a collapse of her whole system. She would lie there patient, indifferent to what was going on about her, sunk in memories of the past, perhaps-who can say?

On the 24th August we were astounded at receiving a telegram from Dr. Raynolds. We had not heard of his leaving America and here he was at Petrograd! It seems he had started for Van as soon as he had heard of the Russian occupation, in company with Mr. Henry White, who was to teach in our college. At Petrograd he learned from the ambassador that the Van missionaries were in Tiflis, but of the reason therefor he had heard not a word, nor had he heard of his wife's condition.

Mrs. Raynolds brightened for a moment when told that her husband was on the way to her. Then the things of earth seemed to slip away from her; she might not tarry even for the dear one's coming. On Friday, the 27th August, her tired spirit found rest. Two days later Dr. Raynolds arrived to find wife gone, house gone, the work of his lifetime seemingly in ruins, the people he had loved exiles and destitute.

On Tuesday Mrs. Raynolds was laid to rest in the German Lutheran cemetery, and around her were gathered many of those whom she had lived to serve'.

Then Dr. Raynolds and Mr. White decided that there was nothing left for them to do but return with us to America, and we left that week for Petrograd. There the American managers of what corresponds to our Y.M.C.A. were exceedingly kind and helpful. The city was so full of refugees from Poland that we had to sleep on tables in the Association halls the first night, but succeeded in securing rooms the next day. The children recovered, and Dr. Ussher's improvement in health from the time of our arrival in Petrograd was simply wonderful. Mr. Yarrow seemed now quite himself again, although in reality he had not fully regained his strength.

Travelling up by rail round the Gulf of Bothnia, we spent a few days in Stockholm and sailed from Christiania on the 24th September, on the Danish ship "Hellig Olav."

We had had absolutely no news from any station in Turkey since the middle of April, and from America only what information Dr. Raynolds had brought us. On our arrival in New York, on the 5th October, we heard of the massacre of the Armenians in Bitlis by Djevdet Bey as soon as he had reached there after having been driven from Van. We heard of Miss Ely's death there in July, and of my brother's death, on the 10th August, in Diyarbekir<sup>2</sup>; we heard that Miss McLaren was ill with typhus in Bitlis, and later that she was well; we learned of the massacre of Armenians all over Turkey and of their deportation. The Van refugees have been fortunate by comparison in that they could flee. Money for their relief has been sent to Transcaucasia; a few of them have succeeded in securing passports and getting to America.

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<sup>2</sup> See Doc. 23, page 89.



**16. VAN: LETTER DATED VAN, 7th JUNE, 1915, FROM MR. Y. K. RUSHDOUNI; PUBLISHED IN THE "MANCHESTER GUARDIAN," 2nd AUGUST, 1915.**

The day after Germany's declaration of war on Russia, martial law was proclaimed in Van, and the Turkish Government set about the work of mobilisation. The Armenians responded to the call in a better mood than the Moslems, many of whom either ran away or did not present themselves for service. But from the very beginning the authorities adopted a harsh attitude towards the Armenians in the Vilayet. Under the pretence of requisitioning, they ruthlessly plundered and looted the Armenians. Business was brought to an absolute standstill, and the import and sale of wheat in the city was forbidden on the plea that it was needed to provision the armies-though ways and means were always found if the applicant was a Moslem. As for the Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army, they were neglected, half-starved, set to do all the menial work, and, worst of all, disarmed and left over to the mercies of their Moslem comrades, who managed to kill a few hundreds altogether in various parts. It became evident that the Government was bent on the systematic destruction of the Armenian population. A feeling of despondency seized hold of all.

When Turkey went into the war the distress of the people reached an even higher pitch, especially when the Government armed all the males of the Moslem population between the ages of 15 and 60 and gave up Christian villages to fire and sword at the slightest pretext. Pelou, the largest village of the Kavash district, was reduced to a heap of ruins. Twelve villages in the Gargar district, on the Persian frontier, Bashkala, and Sarai, with the Nestorian and Armenian villages round, were ruthlessly wiped out after the Russian retreat<sup>3</sup>\*, and of their population only a few old crippled women were left as survivors. News of this sort was constantly being brought to the town by refugees from distant places like Boghaz-Kessen, Hazaren, Nordoz, &c. This pouring in of the refugees aggravated the problem of living in the city of Van.

On the other hand, the three leaders of the former Revolutionary Party called Dashnagists, who since the proclamation of the Constitution had been changed into a political party and had come to an understanding with the Young Turks, exhorted the people to endure in silence. Better, they said, that some villages be burned and destroyed unavenged than give the slightest pretext to the Moslems for a general massacre. One of the first villages to defend itself was Bairak, whose inhabitants succeeded in keeping the soldiers and Kurdish mob from entering the village. The Turkish Government sent a peace commission composed of Armenians and Turks to quiet down matters there, which was done. At the same time a message was sent to the Governor-General, Djevdet Bey, a brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, then on the border, to come to Van. Djevdet Bey, on his arrival, demanded 4,000<sup>4</sup> soldiers from the

<sup>3</sup> The Russians had made a preliminary incursion over the border after the Turkish declaration of war.-  
*Editor*

<sup>4</sup> Miss Knapp gives the number as 3,000 (Doc. 15)

Armenians. The Armenians were so anxious to keep the peace that they promised to accede to this demand under an altered form approved by the Government. But at this juncture trouble broke out between Armenians and Turks in the Shadakh region. Some say that this was started at the instigation of Djevdet Bey. This Governor had requested Ishkan, one of the three Dashnagist leaders, to go there as peace commissioner, accompanied by three other notable Armenians. On their way there, however, on Friday, the 16th April, all four were treacherously murdered.

The Armenians now felt that they could not trust the Governor, and instead of giving him the 4,000 men, they told him they would give 400 and pay the exemption tax for the rest, in instalments. In the meantime they asked the American missionaries, Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow, and the Italian agent Signor Sbordone, to try to mollify the Governor. The attitude of the Governor was wavering. At times he would be moderate and swear that peace would be kept. At other times he was harsh and irreconcilable, declaring that he intended to put down "rebellion" at all costs. First he would punish Shadakh, then he would attend to Van; if the rebels fired one shot it would be a signal for him to attack, and neither Turks nor Armenians would be left in the Vilayet<sup>5</sup>.

Things continued in this suspense till the 20<sup>th</sup><sup>6</sup> April, when some Turkish soldiers tried to seize some village women on their way to the city. The women fled. Two Armenians came up and asked the Turks what they were doing. The Turkish soldiers fired on the Armenians and killed them. This served as a signal. The booming of cannons and rattle of rifles began from every side, and it was realised that the Armenian quarter was besieged. In the evening houses in the Armenian quarter could be seen burning in every direction. The Governor-General had sworn that not a single house should be left in Van, except the one where his father had lived as Governor-General. Under the command of Armenag Yegarian, of the Ramgavar Party, the Armenians, nearly 30,000 in number now, began to man and barricade houses and open trenches. Eighty such barricaded positions, called in Armenian "teerks," were held by the Armenians, and the enclosed area of about two square miles was gradually connected in between by deep trenches. To assure regularity, a Provisional Government was set up, and a military court was appointed to deal with military affairs. Everyone capable of doing something, male or female, young or old, was set to work. Women and girls were busy cooking, mending, sewing, making bedding for homeless refugees and soldiers, and nursing wounded people and motherless children. About 1,300<sup>7</sup> young men were under arms day and night trying to hold the enemy at bay. Lads were employed as

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<sup>5</sup> Miss Knapp makes the following observation at this point: –

"The fact cannot be too strongly emphasised that there was no 'rebellion.' As already pointed out, the Revolutionists meant to keep the peace if it lay in their power to do so. But for some time past a line of Turkish entrenchments had been secretly drawn round the Armenian quarter of the Gardens. The Revolutionists, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible, prepared a defensive line of entrenchments."

<sup>6</sup> At 6.0 a.m. (Miss Knapp).

<sup>7</sup> *About 1,500 trained riflemen possessing only about 300 rifles.* (Miss Knapp).

messengers between the "teerks." The rest of the men were used as workmen to dig trenches and build new walls and barricades, as the old ones crumbled before the cannon-fire. About 16,000 cannon-shots were fired at the handful of inhabitants in the old city under the Castle Rock.

After some days, refugees began to pour in from near and far.<sup>8</sup> The Government had not succeeded in besieging the eastern side of the Armenian quarter, and it was still possible to enter the city. On the 16th May no less than 12,000 bread-tickets were issued to refugees. At the same time, owing to privation and exposure, an epidemic of measles broke out among the children, and dysentery and pneumonia among the adults, and many who had escaped the sword of the Moslem fell victims to disease.

As the supply of ammunition was very meagre and the intention of the Armenians was to prolong their defence till help might come from Armenian volunteers, they were very sparing in its use. They used pistols when they could, and employed all kinds of devices to draw the fire of the enemy and waste his ammunition. At the same time they began to devise means of making bullets and cartridges, and manufacturing smokeless gunpowder and bombs, and succeeded in turning out daily 4,000<sup>9</sup> cartridges, and even in making three mortars for throwing bombs and bursting shells. In the meantime the Provisional Government issued strict orders for keeping the neutrality of foreign institutions and premises, forbidding armed men to pass through these parts or carry the wounded Armenian soldiers to the American Mission Hospital. A manifesto was also sent to the Turks to the effect that the quarrel was with one man, Djevdet Bey, not with their Turkish neighbours. Governors come and go, but the two races must continue to live together. Gradually, however, the Armenians succeeded in ousting the Turks from their positions. On the 17<sup>th</sup> May, after nearly four weeks' resistance, it became obvious that the enemy was putting forward his last efforts.

At sunset a daring dash put to flight the remaining Turkish soldiers in the two northern barracks on Toprak-Kale Hill and below. These two barracks were at once burnt. About midnight another attack put the southern great barracks in Armenian hands, and these, too, were set on fire. Towards morning the news spread that the Turks and soldiers had left the city. It was understood that the Government, on hearing of the approach of the Russian army and the Armenian volunteers, had ordered a systematic retreat some days before, and the last regiment, with the Governor, had evacuated the town on the night of the 18th May. Immediately hungry and starved people rushed toward the Turkish quarters to satisfy their feelings of justice by

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<sup>8</sup> "A man escaping from Ardjish related the fate of that town, second in size and importance to Van in the Vilayet. The Kaimakam had called the men of all the guilds together on the 19th April, and as he had always been friendly to the Armenians they trusted him. When they had all gathered, he had them mown down by his soldiers. Many of the village refugees had stopped short of the city, at the little village of Shushantz, on the mountain side near the city. Here Aram bade them remain. On the 8th May, we saw the place in flames, and Varak Monastery nearby, with its priceless ancient manuscripts, also went up in smoke. These villagers now flocked into the city." (Miss Knapp).

<sup>9</sup> 2,000. (Miss Knapp).

plundering and burning. Shortly after, news came that the Russian army, with Armenian volunteers, was in sight. The joy of the people was boundless; tears of gladness and of emotion for what they had suffered during the past month, rolled down their cheeks as they made them welcome. The keys of the captured city and of the castle were immediately taken and laid at the feet of the Russian General, who gave orders to the Armenians to organise a Provisional Government for the affairs of the town.

#### **17. VAN: NARRATIVE BY MR. Y. K. RUSHDOUNI, PUBLISHED SERIALY IN THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "GOTCHNAG," OF NEW YORK.**

Van is a city built on a level plain, and has at the present time an area of about ten or twelve square miles.

The Old City is small (scarcely a single square mile in area); its centre is the market place and an ancient rock fortress. The real Van is the Aikesdan (the Vineyards), which rises slowly towards the East on an imposing scale. In Aikesdan each house, with few exceptions, has a vineyard and a garden. Its streets are broad and tree-lined. On each side of these trees run small rivulets, which are bordered by rows of willow and poplar trees. Van is in reality a beautiful, extensive and attractive garden. On its western side, about two or three miles distant, there stretches the beautiful blue lake of Van, surrounded by high, snow-clad mountains, the most prominent of which are Sipan, Nimroud, Kerkour and Azadk.

On the eastern side of Van rise the mountains of Varak, on the slopes of which stand the village of Shoushantz (named after Shoushanig, the daughter of Sennacherib), and also the famous monastery of Varak, with its seven altars, where Khramean Hairik published his "Ardsouig Vaspouragani" ("The Eagle of Vaspouragan"). On the slopes of these mountains are also found the monasteries of Garmeror and St. Gregory, the chapel of St. Lousavorich (The Illuminator), and Gatnaghpur, Khachaghpur, Salnabad and Abaranchan, fountains of historical fame. There are also the Upper Varak villages-the historic summer resorts of Sultan Yailassi and Keshish Göl.

On the north side of Van there is the ancient and famous Toprak-Kale (Earthern Fort). Again in the same direction are the villages of Shahbagh and Araless, behind which extends the district of Van-Dosh.

On the southern side of the city, beyond the hills of Artamid, one reaches the Valley of Haig; Vostan, the capital of Rushdounik; and the mountains of Ardosr, with the tomb of Yeghishe on their slopes.

The Armenian and the Turkish quarters in Van were divided, and, except for a few streets, were all at some distance from each other. These two elements in the population had no relations with each other except those of a commercial nature. The Market and the Old City were in the hands of the Armenians, but were surrounded by Turkish quarters. There were Armenian houses which were eight miles away from the

market-place, and to go there and back it was necessary to pass through the Turkish quarters. The Armenians covered this distance on foot, horse- back or spring-wagons- these being the only means of transportation.

The day after war had been declared by Germany against Russia, Turkey declared a "state of war" in Van, and called all the young men between 21 and 45 to the colours, without distinction of race or religion. For the needs of the Army the Government requisitioned all the goods and provisions in the Market. In some cases they made partial payments, but afterwards they gave promissory notes to all the owners, which were payable after the war. This was a heavy loss to the Armenians, as the whole Market was practically in their hands. They lost all their petroleum, sugar, raisins, soap, copper, European clothing and various other commodities, besides almost half their remaining goods.

Owing to the sudden declaration of war and the requisitioning of the Market, it was impossible for the Armenians to transfer their goods elsewhere or to hide them, especially as the Market was an hour-and-a-half's distance from the Armenian quarters of Aikesdan.

All the tradesmen, shopkeepers, farmers and men of all vocations immediately answered the call to arms. A crowd gathered in front of the Government Building in such a way that it was impossible to keep order. There were some people who waited for three days continuously, from morning till night, and were unable to get a chance to register their names. The Dashnakist party encouraged the Armenians to do their duty faithfully as citizens. Mr. Aram, one of their leaders, collected together 350 to 400 fine young men, and, to the accompaniment of Turkish music, songs and dances, led them to the Government Building to register. The Government officials were considerably surprised at this willingness on the part of the Armenians; they held them up as an example in upbraiding the Turks, and particularly the Kurds, who had answered the call very reluctantly.

The Government treated the Armenians very liberally, exempting all the Gregorian and Protestant teachers of 25 years of age, and allowing them to continue their schools, on the condition that they would all go to the Government Building and register, so that in case of necessity they might be called up as militia for the protection of the City.

During the first two weeks this impartial treatment by the Turkish Government filled the Armenians with gladness and trust, and the Armenian soldiers that had deserted returned and gave themselves up. The only thing which gave rise to anxiety was the financial crisis. Trade and farming had completely stopped. The merchants were robbed, and all the traders were in the hands of the Government. It was the time to prepare for the annual taking of stock, but there were no available means.

Under the pretence of supplying the needs of the Army, the Government confiscated all the provisions. This was the first symptom of injustice and partiality. The understanding was that every man would be entitled to buy a certain amount of food and wood after informing the Government of the number and needs of his family, and

after obtaining permission from them, and that every month those families whose men were on active service would receive 30 piastres (5s.) per head.

At this time the Armenians' claims were very often ignored; and because the Government was aware that the Armenians would not, whatever happened, go hungry and without clothing or wood for fuel, it collected from all the Armenian quarters and villages, in the form of a heavy tax, a certain quantity of wheat, wood, sheep, fat, and clothing. In addition the majority of the Armenian and Syrian soldiers were left without arms and clothing, and very often without anything to eat, under the pretence that the clothing and the arms were not yet ready, and that they had no means of transporting food in so short a time. This caused the desertion of many from the Army, and some remained away altogether. Others borrowed money and asked the Government, through influential officials, to be allowed to pay exemption money, and it seems that the Government also was trying to find a means to come to an understanding with the Armenians. It therefore published a special notice announcing that all the non-Moslems above 26 years of age would be exempted from the Army by payment of a special fee. The Armenians sold everything to pay the Government, that they might profit by this occasion. The period of exemption was extended by the Government to the following spring.

It is worth mentioning here that, according to the Turkish officials, there were about the same number of deserters among the Turks and Kurds, but they never paid as much exemption money as the Armenians did.

The Government sided with the Germans even when they were neutral, whereas the Armenians-unfortunately-sympathised with the Allies. But even then no special injustice was done. The Government showed kindness to the Armenians, at least on the surface, while the Governor, Tahsin Pasha, had such close relations with the leaders of the Dashnakist party that people thought he was their special friend. Besides this, it was arranged that two Armenian Members of the Ottoman Parliament who were the representatives of Van, Messrs. Vahan Papazian and Vremyan, should stay with the people to keep them and the Government on good terms with one another.

After the entry of the Turks into the war, however, the situation assumed a different aspect. The Government began to adopt a cold and suspicious attitude towards the Armenians, who had performed their duty towards the Government to the best of their ability, and even after the abolition of the "Capitulations" had joined the Turks in their celebrations of the event. In spite of all this, the coolness between them was very marked, and this became especially apparent after it was found that the Armenians had supplied volunteers to the Russians, and that they were the very troops who had occupied Bayazid. It was then, reported that all the Kurdish tribes had gone over to the side of the

Russians and had caused great prejudice to the Turks. This terrified the Turks to such a degree that many rich women went to the American missionary ladies of Van to ask their protection, saying: "We are not afraid of the Russians as much as we are of

the Kurds." But the unfortunate part was that, in Government circles, the dominant topic of conversation was the Armenian Volunteers.

It was before this that Tahsin Bey summoned the heads of the Dashnakists (the heads of the Hunchakists were already in prison) and pointed out to them that the Armenians had begun a volunteer movement, and that this movement would be dangerous to them; and afterwards in a special letter he suggested to them, and especially to Mr. Vremyan, that they should write to the heads of the Dashnakists of Bayazid and stop this movement. This letter was sent to Mr. Toros, the head of the Dashnakists of Ardjish, but Mr. Toros was killed by a Turkish gendarme. At the same time it was stated that the Turkish Government had made special overtures to the Dashnakists and proposed that they should form bands of chettis composed of Turks and Armenians and raid Caucasia, but I do not know how it happened that this was refused by the Armenians<sup>10</sup>.

A short time after the Turks intervened in the war, all the Armenians in the Turkish Army were disarmed and employed as ordinary labourers. The arms of the Armenian gendarmes in the local districts were taken and given to the Turks, while the latter were left free on the understanding that they would be called up, though this never actually took place. This general disarming filled the Armenians with fear and suspicion. Those of the disarmed Armenians who found means of escape, deserted, and some whom I knew personally were sent back by the officials.

Turkey had not yet declared war, but she was mobilising her forces, when the members of the Armenian Reform Committee came to Van with M. Hoff, the Inspector-General. The Government did not carry out the plan, which was prepared and announced to the Armenians, for receiving the Inspector-General and his party with pomp and ceremony, but they sent them to the beautiful little village of Artamid on the southern side of the city, situated on the shore of Lake Van. After they had stayed there a few days they were sent back again, carrying with them the scheme of Armenian Reforms.

Shortly after Turkey had declared war, Tahsin Pasha was called to Erzeroum, and in his place Djevdet Bey, the brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, was selected as Governor for Van.

About the end of the autumn, when the Russian Army had annihilated the Turkish Army on the Persian border, had taken Bashkale and Sarai, and was moving towards Van, there was a violent panic among the Turkish officers and general public. Many of the officers sold their property and transferred their families by boats to Bitlis. Other prominent families, like the Hamoud-oglou-who had done great harm to the Armenians-took the same course. Among the rank and file those that were afraid addressed themselves to the Armenians, who received them very kindly. The object of the Armenians was to teach some dangerous officers a good lesson, but they had no intention whatever of harming the innocent officers and the Turkish public.

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<sup>10</sup> See Doc. 21.

I met many who said very plainly: "Here is a good opportunity for us to show our Turkish compatriots and neighbours that we Armenians never harboured any bad intentions towards them, but had always demanded simply a state of equality, which would be beneficial to all who wished to live a peaceful life."

At the time when the Turkish army was annihilated on the Persian border, and there was not even the militia in Van and less than 400 gendarmes between Van and Bitlis, it would have been very easy for the Armenians to occupy the greater part of the provinces of Van and Moush, if they had wanted to revolt and massacre the Turks (who were in fear of their lives) or do what the Turks had done in the past to the "Giaours" ("Infidels").

The Government knew this, and for this reason treated the Armenians very flatteringly. The Armenian people was thankful to be able to live without fear and to have friendly and sincere relations with their Turkish neighbours. The Dashnakist Party also, who had been in close touch with the Government, were content with this situation, and were satisfied now that the Government considered them of importance and asked their advice on the welfare of the "Vatan" (Fatherland).

Unfortunately this state of affairs was of short duration. Suddenly the Russian army retreated. The different fragments of the Turkish Army rallied again, and instead of pursuing the enemy, they exterminated the Armenian and Syrian population of Bashkale, Sarai and all the surrounding villages. They had massacred all the male population, and in certain places-according to the reports of a Turkish commander who was a Russian subject-had thrown them into wells. The most beautiful of the women had been distributed among the Moslems, and some of them were even sent to Van; the old and weak women who remained were collected together and driven to various places like a herd of cattle. The Armenian Bishop of Van sent a Turco- Armenian delegation to the Government to ask its help for the sufferers, but the Government entirely ignored the request, or postponed it from day to day.

The Governor of Van went to the front, leaving an assistant in his place, and by his patriotic exertions he re-organised the Turkish Army. He succeeded in winning to the side of the Turks the rebellious Kurds and even Smgo the Chief, who lived under Russian protection. This news was immediately telegraphed to Van and Constantinople. Djevdet Bey, the lion general of the Turks, with his reorganised army, followed the Russians up to Tabriz, and occupied it. It is unnecessary to repeat that the Turkish Army, wherever it went, carried with it fire and sword and all kinds of terrible tortures, which were inflicted upon the "*Infidels*." Regarding this, the American missionaries are the best informed eye-witnesses.

Owing to these Turkish successes on the frontier and the Armenian volunteer movements, the Government and the Turkish public changed their attitude towards the Armenians. The Government was more civil in its demands and asked all the deserters to appear before it, although without actually promising them arms and their restoration to the Army. To all questions concerning this; the answer was: "That is for us to decide."



The war taxes were doubled, and to all the petitions and objections regarding this, the answer was: "The Army is more important than the populace."

The Government began now not to attach much importance to their friends the Dashnakists, and there was a time when the Assistant Governor refused even to receive Mr. Vremyan in audience, saying: "I cannot stand his rudeness and blustering." A little distance from Van all the country places like Nordouz, Hazaren and Boghaz-Kessen were destroyed. Part of the inhabitants were massacred, others found refuge in Van, and the remainder altogether disappeared. The horrors spread to the other districts and villages round Van. Garjgan was evacuated; the village of Pelou, which had 120 houses, and the ten villages of Gargar were sacked.

In a semi-civilised country it is an easy matter for a Government to find pretexts for its acts, when the Governor so desires. For instance, in Pelou a drunken young man had a fight with a gendarme, pulled out his revolver and killed him. In the mountains above the village of Shoushantz, six Kurdish deserters were killed-but none of the authorities ascertained by whom they were killed, or who they were. These and similar events gave cause and pretext to the Turkish Government for censuring the Armenians. But no one was censured for the massacres and general unrest at Sarai, Bashkale, Nordouz, Hazaren and Boghaz-Kessen. Then new army corps and machine guns were brought up to Van to be transferred to the frontier; all the Turkish and Kurdish citizens from 15 to 60 years of age were armed with these weapons, and when the Armenian Bishop protested to the Government, the answer was: "We are arming them to organise them into militia; after a little while we will collect them all and put them into barracks. If the Armenians are also willing to volunteer and come to the barracks, let them come and we will give them arms."

After the events at Pelou and Gargar, it was reported that a Turkish mob from Bitlis had devastated the district of Garjgan with fire and sword, and was advancing on Kavash and Haiotz-Tzor, and that after destroying these places they would 'proceed towards Van. Upon the arrival of this report, some Dashnakists went out towards Ankegh and Antanan in Haiotz-Tzor and destroyed the bridge near Ankegh, to prevent the Turks sending help to the mob which was advancing from Bitlis, and also to stop the mob from marching upon Van. After this the Armenians also killed a few gendarmes and Kurds. Among those killed was reported to be the Judge of Vostan. As far as I remember, seven persons were killed at this time. This event caused fear among the Turks and Kurds. The Government therefore sent Mr. Vremyan as a mediator. Mr. Vremyan settled the question, putting the blame on the Kaimakam of Vostan, who had sent for the mob from Bitlis. The Government superseded the Kaimakam of Vostan and promised to find and return the booty from Pelou and to restore the people who were deported to their homes. This was never done. An Armenian proverb says that "A thief is afraid of himself," and the Turks also were afraid of themselves on account of what they had done. While travelling through Haiotz-Tzor and Kavash they assumed Armenian names. Yet the officials, whenever they got a chance, protested to foreigners

that the Armenians were ungrateful, that they furnished volunteers to the Russians, and wanted autonomy; "And therefore," they said, "we will not leave this country to them. Let the Russians take the country, but we refuse to let the Armenians rule over our families and our kin." It is unnecessary to add that there were as many Moslem volunteers as Armenian in the Russian forces.

The Turkish Government was very prudent. So long as it was weak it flattered the Armenians and praised them to their faces; the leaders of the Dashnakists, Vremyan, Aram and Ishkhan, were treated as advisers of the Government. The Armenians on their part tried not to be the cause of any disturbance in the country. The only ground for anxiety in the relations between the Government and the Armenians was the question of the Armenian deserters. After the Armenian soldiers were disarmed, they did not dare to remain in their posts, and used to desert. When it was discovered that the Turkish Government had armed all the male Mohammedans from 14 to 60 years of age, they were no longer willing to give themselves up, and decided to die with their wives and children. A few Turkish officials confessed that it was wrong to disarm the Armenians because there were more Kurdish deserters than Armenian, but the Government refrained from attaching as much blame to the Kurds as they did to the Armenians.

To consider all these problems, a meeting was called under the presidency of Yeznig Vartabed, the Assistant of the Bishop, in which all sections of the Armenian population of Van were represented. The meeting was held at the house of Kevork Agha Jidajian, and came to the following conclusions: That the Turkish Government was treating the Armenians with suspicion; that all work, trade, and farming had stopped; that certain districts such as Nordouz, Gargar and Garjgan had been cleared of their inhabitants, and that the Armenians of Sarai and Bashkalé had been annihilated when the Russian army retreated; finally, that in case of a revolution the Armenians at Van would be able to hold out for some time, but that taking into consideration the whole of Armenia, it was necessary to maintain peace with the Turks at all costs.

As certain deserters could not give themselves up at the moment for important reasons, they decided to ask the Government to accept exemption money for them. The meeting decided to negotiate on these lines through Mr. Vremyan as their Deputy, with Avedis Effendi Terzibashian as an adviser experienced in Turkish psychology. The meeting also proposed to open negotiations through some merchants on similar lines. A week later the Armenians held a joint conference with the Turks at Jidajian's house. At this conference they decided to live together as neighbours without taking account of any changes of policy in the Government. The Turks promised to ask the Government not to give any cause for revolution.

However, the situation was far from being satisfactory, and unrest was in the air. All the workmen were working for the Government; the tradesmen would go to their shops, hear rumours, and go home again, to stay at home for four or five days; and the attitude of the Government kept changing like a weathercock, in conformity with the successes or failures at the front. Some- times it was very severe and unreasonable,

and sometimes very smooth and peaceful. Everyone was uneasy, as they did not know how long such a situation would last. We were afraid of massacres. We were afraid of the retreating Turkish army, which would undoubtedly devastate everything on its way. We were afraid of famine, as the Government had not given the people a chance of provisioning themselves, and we knew that the villages and farms had been robbed. A part of the working class was in the army. The cattle and sheep belonging to the refugees had been confiscated and sold. Many people confided to me that they wished that whatever was going to happen would happen quickly and relieve them from their suspense. Meanwhile, the people of Van armed themselves, and kept secret watch day and night at different street corners, to be prepared for any eventuality.

About the beginning of spring, rebellion started in the district of Van-Dosb, or Timar, a few hours' distance from Van. The inhabitants of the village of Erer in this district were massacred. When the turn came for the village of Bairak, the local Armenians defended themselves with the help of the Armenians in Van against the Kurds and the gendarmes. When the Government saw that people were getting ready and that things would drift from bad to worse, it went to the Bshop and expressed its regret for the events that had taken place, and asked the Armenians to send their representatives to stop the fighting at Bairak. This was immediately done. Some blamed the Vice-Governor, who had taken Djevdet's place, for these affrays. Mr. Vremyan and the Vice-Governor fell out, the Vice-Governor having refused to receive Mr. Vremyan in audience, but as Mr. Vremyan was a Deputy (Member of the Ottoman Parliament) he was allowed to remain in the district with the sanction of the Government. Mr. Vremyan blamed the Vice-Governor for the situation, and sent a telegram to this effect to the Governor, Djevdet, who was at the front. Djevdet answered him thanking him, and asking him to preserve peace until his return, when he would put everything in order, "Inshallah" ("God willing").

It was the last week of Lent when Djevdet Bey reached Van with 400 trained soldiers, called Lez<sup>11</sup>, and a few field guns, and was received by the Armenians with royal honours; but while passing through Armenian villages he shut his eyes to the barbarous behaviour of his soldiers towards the Armenian women. In the new village of Upper Haiotz-Tzor a number of women were violated, a man was killed, and others were beaten almost to death, on the pretence of having arms. For this, one of the young men wanted to follow Djevdet and kill him, but the Armenian revolutionists did not allow him to do so. As soon as Djevdet Bey reached the city, he thanked Vremyan and all those who had done their best for the peace of the city, and started negotiating with the Armenians concerning the deserters. He persuaded the Armenians to give themselves up, or at least a certain part of them, so that he might have less difficulty in getting back the Turkish and Kurdish deserters.

During Passion Week the negotiations with the Government were postponed on account of a terrible snowstorm. At this time there was an army of 4,000 with some

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<sup>11</sup> *Of Lazic nationality (?) - Editor.*

artillery in Van. There was no special cause for anxiety, but everybody felt there was something in the air, which turned out to be the case. After Easter, when the negotiations were taken up again with the Government, it was reported that there had been conflicts at Shadakh. The general impression was that the Government was behind it. The Government wanted to arrest a member of the Dashnakist party called Joseph. The Armenians would not allow him to be arrested, and that started the trouble. Shadakh is about 24 hours' journey from Van, towards the south, on one of the tributaries of the Tigris. During the massacres of 1895 and 1896, the Armenians of Shadakh had succeeded in defending themselves with great success and honour. After that, the Government had wanted to trap the Armenians and massacre them, and fill their places with Kurds and Turks, but it was not successful, and now in April the massacres had started from there. The liberty-loving Armenians of this place defended themselves bravely for about two months, until the end of May, when the Volunteers went to their assistance.

Djevdet Bey asked the Dashnakists to send a delegate and put a stop to these occurrences. The members of this deputation were Mr. Ishkhan and three young Armenians, a Turkish Prefect of Police, and a few gendarmes. On the evening of the 16th April, in the Kurdish village of Hirj, the Armenian delegates were all assassinated - a trap laid by the Government. Some trustworthy people from Haiotz-Tzor (Armenian Valley) reported that the very day that Mr. Ishkhan was going to Shadakh as a peace delegate, the Armenians of Upper Haiotz -Tzor came to him and said: "For how long shall we endure it? They have not spared anything. There was only Shadakh left, and they massacred even the people of Shadakh." Mr. Ishkhan, who was fighter by nature, had declared to the Armenian villagers that they must keep the peace *at all costs*) and had ordered them to give the Government everything that was asked for; if one village was burnt, they were ordered to escape to another village.

Here I would like to explain in parenthesis the reason why I always mention the Dashnakist party. They were the people who were mixed up with politics; they were the friends and advisers of the Young Turk Party, and, having formed a "bloc" with them, they always sided with the Turks in parliamentary conflicts. The Government on their part wanted to keep them on their side, knowing that they had great influence over the villagers, in the Episcopal Court, and in the Chancery of the Catholics of Aghtamar. The Ramgavars (Democrats) were not mixed up with politics. They had their own paper, "Van-Dosp," and were busy with their own propaganda and their own trade and teaching, only once in a while fighting against the Dashnakists. They did not, like the Dashnakists, have special members who gave all their time to political affairs. The Hunchakists were very few in number, and during mobilisation their leaders, Messrs. Ardashes Solakhian and Proudian, were arrested and afterwards killed.

On Saturday morning, the 17th April, Djevdet Bey asked the following leaders of the Dashnakists-Messrs. Vremyan, Aram) Avedis Effendi Terzibashian (a merchant), and Kevork Agha Jidajian-to visit him for a conference. Aram could not go, for one reason or

another; the others went and were retained. After that it was reported that all those that went as peace delegates were killed by the Government. This started a panic among the Armenians, and young men under arms took up special positions. Father Nerses of the New Church, Set Effendi Kapamajian and myself went to the American missionaries to ask them to intercede with the Government on our behalf to maintain peace. Before the missionaries had reached the Government Building, Terzibashian and Jidajian were freed, so that they could advise the Armenians to go and surrender, but Vremyan was kept to be sent to Constantinople. Djevdet Bey told the missionaries that he had already sent for them. He also added that: as the peace of the country was disturbed, the American missionaries must make room for 50 soldiers for their own protection. If they could not do that, then they must all go to the Government Building, with their whole households. The missionaries came back with the impression that everything was over, and that Djevdet Bey had changed altogether. The same night the Armenians had a meeting in the New Church, where Terzibashian Effendi told them what Djevdet Bey had said and communicated to them the result of the negotiations. He said that it was impossible to influence Djevdet; sometimes he was quite reasonable, and at other times he was harsh and immovable and wanted all the deserters to surrender either that day or the following, and all the Armenians to give up their arms. Again it was decided to ask him to accept part of the deserters and receive exemption money for the rest. Signor Sbordone (the agent of the Italian Consul), the American missionaries and the Armenian merchants made proposals to Djevdet Bey to this effect, but they were unable to find out what his intentions were. Sometimes he declared on oath that he would not bring dishonour on his father, Tahir Pasha, who ruled over Van in peace during a time of great disturbances, and sometimes in a fury he would say: "There will either be nothing but Turks or nothing but Armenians left in this city. After I have finished Shadakh I will overthrow Van. I will not leave a single house standing except the house of my father. I will not spare either male or female, youth or old age. The Armenians must give up their arms and their deserters, and they must pass in front of my window to go to the barracks. If I hear the report of a gun or revolver, I will consider that a signal to carry out what I have just told you."

On Monday, the 19th April, Djevdet Bey was in a slightly different mood. He issued an order for everybody to go about their business, saying that nothing would happen. We had been isolated for a whole week from the districts outside the town and were ignorant as to what was going on there, and we did not even know that we were surrounded by Turkish trenches and troops. On the very day that Djevdet Bey told us that "All was well," Agantz, a big town in the district of Van, was sacked and ruined.

Prominent inhabitants of Agantz, like Abaghtzian, Housian and Shaljian, were invited to go to the Government Building to receive orders from the Kaimakam. The other Armenians were collected from the streets and from their houses. At night, after dark, they took these men in groups of fifty with their hands tied behind their backs, brought them to the river bank at the back of the city, and there killed them all. Only

three were able to unloose their hands and escape at night, after pretending to be dead. One of them went to an Armenian village nearby and was the cause of this village's escape; another of them went to the boats that were on the shore and saw that most of the sailors had been killed, but told the rest about it, who thereupon launched their boats into the open lake and rowed for the Monastery Island. The third disappeared altogether.

Haroutune Agha Housian was wounded in three places, but escaped to his home. When the Turkish officers counted the wounded, however, they found, by their list, that Mr. Housian was missing, and when they found him in his house they killed him. All the male inhabitants of Agantz were killed except these three, and, by the permission of the Government, the Armenian households—that is, the women and children and property—were divided among the Turks. In order to secure their property, the Turks betrothed themselves to Armenian girls and women, with the intention of marrying them.

Djevdet Bey announced to everybody that "Asayish ber Kemal der" ("Peace was perfect"), and at the same time he put pressure on the American missionaries either to sign a statement that they had refused the protection of the Government, or agree to accept a guard of 50 soldiers for the missionary compound. He laid more emphasis on this latter proposition, saying that he would send the same number of soldiers to the German missionaries. The American missionaries were so considerate as to ask the advice of the Armenians, and the latter, especially Mr. Armenag Yegarian, saw in the proposal a plot to seize the Armenian quarters and homes. Accordingly they made the missionaries understand that the only thing which would protect them would be the American flag and the order of the Government, and that, even if 5,000 soldiers were there, it would be impossible to be protected against the Government. With this in view, they told the missionaries that, if Djevdet sent more than 10 or 12 soldiers, they would be obliged to open fire on them and would not let one into the Armenian quarters. Taking all these points into consideration, the missionaries informed the Government that they were willing to accept as many soldiers as the Government sent them, but that they would not be responsible for their safe arrival and were very unwilling to start a conflict on that account. "We are not afraid of the Armenians," they said, "and we think that 10 or 12 soldiers and an order from you will be sufficient to protect us."

On Tuesday morning, the 20th April, at six o'clock, some Turkish soldiers saw a few Armenian women coming to the city from the village of Shoushantz, half-an-hour's distance from Van. They attempted to violate them, and when two Armenian young men went to remonstrate with the Turkish soldiers, the latter opened fire on them and killed them. This was not very far from the German Mission, and the Principal of the German missionaries, Herr Spörri, and his wife witnessed this incident. He also was kind enough to write explicitly to Djevdet, stating that it was the Turkish soldiers who attempted to violate the women and then killed the Armenian young men who had tried to save the women's honour.

But Djeddet had received his signal, and as soon as the reports were heard from Ourpat Arou (where the women had been violated), artillery fire was opened upon the Armenian quarters of Aikesdan, and was also turned upon the inhabitants of the Market-place, which was surrounded by Turkish quarters.

Then we understood that we were really surrounded, and so the armed Armenian young men held the street corners and did not allow the Turkish or Kurdish mobs to enter. The Armenian lines protected an area of about two square miles, which was held by 700 Armenians, 300 only of whom had regular arms and a certain amount of military training. The others were simply civilians who had revolvers and a few ordinary weapons. All the fighters had decided to fight to the bitter end in defence of their families.

Even the American missionaries confessed that they could not conceive how a Government could display such meanness and treachery towards citizens who had been so faithful in their duties. It is important to mention that the sympathies of the American missionaries had been with the Armenians at all times. They not only opened the doors of their compounds and houses, but also placed families and property in security, and began to give their personal services to the sick and the children.

All the people of Van, without exception, began to work with one soul. Those who had arms and were able to fight rushed to take their stand and stop the Turks from entering the Armenian quarters, and those who were able to work took spade and shovel to go and strengthen the fighting men's positions by constructing trenches and walls. The little boys worked as scouts, the women and girls undertook the care of the sick and the children. Besides that, the women did all the sewing and cooking for the fighters.

With the object of caring for the wounded, a Red Cross detachment was raised with the assistance of Dr. Sanfani (Khosrov Chetjian) and Dr. Khatchig. To secure law and order, a local Government was formed, with judicial, police and sanitary branches. Its administration was conducted in perfect order the whole month through. The Americans said that Van had never had such a good Government under the Turkish rule. An end was put to revolutionary disputes; only such expressions as "Armenian soldier," "Armenian Self-defence Committee" and the like were heard; and they named their positions "Deve Boyi," "Dardanelles," "Sahag Bey's Dug-out," and so on.

For the better organisation of the defending forces they appointed a military council, which was formed of the representatives of the revolutionary parties and the non-party Armenians, and which carried on the work very successfully. This body was in communication with the lines and supplied soldiers wherever and whenever it was necessary. The Supply Committee also did good work in supplying food and beds for those who were working in the different stations. Under the presidency of Bedros Bey Mozian, the ex-Mayor of Van, and with the leadership of Mr. Yarrow, they formed a Relief Society whose object was to collect supplies and provide the necessaries of life

for those who were destitute and had lost their homes. This committee was a great assistance to the fighting forces.

One of the local papers began to publish the news of the fighting and distribute it to the people. The Normal School band, under the leadership of Mr. K. Boujikianian, played Armenian military airs, the "Marseillaise," and other tunes, to hearten the fighters. The greater the intensity of the Turkish artillery fire and the louder the roar of the guns, the louder the band played, and this made Djevdet more furious than the bullets of the Armenians; he did not even restrain himself from expressing his feelings in his bulletins.

During the first days of the fighting, the Military Committee, by special bulletin, made a public appeal to the Turks, reminding them of their pledges to one another, and proclaiming that Governments change but the people always remain neighbours, and that there was no reason why they should be at enmity with one another. By this they put the whole of the blame on Djevdet, who possessed nothing else in Van but a horse, "and he could ride off on that and escape." After making this point, the proclamation suggested to the Turkish inhabitants that they should force Djevdet to desist from the bloodshed. I do not know the result of this announcement.

The Military Committee also gave orders to the Armenian soldiers not to drink, not to blaspheme the religion of the enemy, to spare women, children and unarmed men, to respect neutrals, and to prevent anyone from entering their compounds under arms. They also ordered that all the wounded should be taken to the American Hospital, and that only true reports should be given.

During these dark days the Armenian people were very full of life. Everybody did his or her best. They all had good hope that Djevdet would not succeed in annihilating the Armenians of Van. The spirit of the fighters was enough to inspire those that were in despair. I have seen young men who had fought the enemy day and night, without sleeping. Their eyesight had been so affected that they were practically blind, and they were transferred to the Red Cross Station to be treated. Even then they were very cheerful. While the shrapnel was raining upon Van, the Armenian children were playing soldiers in the streets.

Armenag Yegarian, with his cool and able leadership; Aram, with his constant presence and advice; P. Terlemezian, with his great heart; Krikor of Bulgaria, with his indefatigable industry and inventive genius—they were very able leaders. To save their lives and honour all the Armenians of Van had placed their services at the disposal of the Military Council, who awarded crosses and medals to encourage those who were worthy of them. I was present when a little girl received one of these medals. During the retaking of a position in Angous Tzor she bravely went ahead, spied out the ground and brought back news that the Turks had laid no traps for the advancing Armenian soldiers.

From the very first day of the fighting the Turks burned all the Armenian houses that were outside the Armenian fighting zone, but the village of Shoushantz and Varak Monastery were still in the hands of the Armenians. Mr. H. Kouyoumjian was in charge



of the entrenchments at Varak, and he came down to Aikesdan once in a while to report everything that was going on there.

After a week all the Armenians in the surrounding country came in to Aikesdan by way of Varak and Shoushantz, bringing with them famine, sickness and terrible news. Those that came from Haiotz-Tzor (Armenian Valley) reported that two Turkish armies had passed through the Armenian villages with artillery. The first army paid for everything that they took, and the people were encouraged by this act to issue from their retreats, but the second army surrounded them and massacred them. The Government carried out its work on such a well-planned system that villages were massacred without having had warning of the fate of their neighbours only a mile away. All the inhabitants of the villages that surrendered were massacred. There were villages that succeeded in removing their people and taking them to the mountains, but in general we must confess that the villagers did not prove very brave. They were not able to co-operate for their common defence, and there were even some who did not like to oppose the Government. In comparison with the city people they were short of ammunition, and they managed to convoy their families into the city by simply firing in the air, which was one of the reasons why the city people rather looked down on them. But the fact is that if they had had enough ammunition and the right leaders, they would have been able very easily to drive the enemy out of Haiotz-Tzor, Kavash and Tamar.

During the first two weeks the Government massacred the men and had all the women kidnapped, and deported the remainder from village to village to give the Turkish population a chance of wreaking their vengeance. But afterwards, in order to strike at the defensive powers of Van and to starve the Armenians into surrender by making them use up their provisions, they collected all the survivors from the villages and sent them to Aikesdan and to the city proper. The people in the city refused to pass anybody through the lines of defence; the enemy therefore sent them to Aikesdan, telling them that those who returned would be shot. The people of Aikesdan recognised their terrible straits and took them in; there were a large number of wounded among the women and children. I saw a woman from the village of Eremer, whose husband was serving in the Turkish army and whose twelve-year-old boy was slain before her eyes. She was wounded herself, as well as her two remaining children, one four years and the other eleven months old. I shall never forget the drooping look of the little one and the wounded arm that hung by his side, nor the woman herself, who was almost mad. All these were given over to Dr. Ussher, who treated them immediately. I also remember a woman who had lost seven of her children and had gone out of her mind. She lay on the ground clutching her hair. She threw dust on her head and cursed the Kaiser all the time.

The American 'Hospital, which could accommodate only 50 patients, had 150 sick and they were obliged to fill every available place with the wounded. Scarlet fever, whooping cough and smallpox carried off many of the little ones.

Besides the fighting and working forces, we had to supply food for about 13,000

people. At the beginning it was possible to give one loaf of bread to each individual every day, but afterwards we were obliged to cut it down to half a loaf, supplemented with other food. All the oxen and cows in the city were slaughtered, and when we had lost all hope of procuring cattle from outside there were even people who suggested killing the dogs. The lack of ammunition was also severely felt, so that in Aikesdan for every thousand rounds fired by the Turks the Armenians could only reply with one.

After a few days the Turks occupied the positions of Shoushantz and Varak, and burned the library of old manuscripts at Varak Monastery. All the Armenians and Syrians from these occupied villages came over to the city and consequently increased the famine and plague. Up to this time women between 65 and 70 years old carried letters backwards and forwards between Djevdet and the Austrian banker Aligardi, Signor Sbordone, and the German and American missionaries. These women carried a white flag in one hand and the letter in the other, and passed to and fro in safety, with the exception of one who was shot by the Turks because she was unfortunate enough to fall down and lose the flag, and another one who was wounded by the Turks. Djevdet tried to discourage the Armenians by descriptions of Turkish successes, and also suggested that they should give up their arms and receive a complete amnesty, like the people of Diyarbekir. In a letter addressed to Mr. Aligardi, the Austrian, he wrote: "Dear Aligardi, Ishim yok, keifim tchok" ("I have nothing to do but amuse myself"). In another, addressed to Dr. Ussher, he said: "I will parade the prisoners and guns I have taken from the Russians in front of His Majesty Dr. Ussher's fort, so that he may see and believe."

But the Armenians did not let Djevdet do as he pleased. They severed communications and did not allow any more letters to pass through the lines. Then, under the direction of Professor M. Minassian, they succeeded in making smokeless powder, cartridges and three guns, whose reports were heard with great rejoicings by all the Armenians. They made about 2,000 cartridges a day, and the blacksmiths made spears, so that, if necessary, they could fight with spears when the ammunition was all gone. The Armenians also dug underground passages, through which they blew up certain Turkish barracks and entrenchments.

Thus they burned and destroyed the great stone barracks of Hamoud Agha; the Telegraph and Police Station of Khatch Poghotz (Cross Street); half the police station of Arar, and the English Consulate, which was one of the chief Turkish strongholds. This encouraged the Armenians a great deal, so that there was a time when Djevdet was obliged to send 500 soldiers against a position held by only 44 Armenians, who after fighting for three or four hours left 33 dead on the field and retired. A young man called Borouzanjian, the only son of his widowed mother and the support of his orphan sisters, resigned his post as hospital orderly and went to fight in the trenches. He killed four Turkish soldiers and was finally killed himself. He praised God while dying that he had done his duty, and asked his comrades to sell his revolver and other personal belongings and to give the proceeds of them to his mother, so that she could live on

them for a little while.

During this time they sent word to the Armenian Volunteers in Russia, asking them to come to their aid.

When the villagers came to Aikesdan and thus increased the number of labourers and fighters, the trenches were elaborated and increased in number, so that they now covered two square miles. When the Turkish artillerymen destroyed one line they found a second fortified line at the back, which was stronger than the first. Besides this, the Armenians had organised a body of cavalry, so that they could send help in all directions. Not only Aikesdan was defended with success, but also the city proper and Shadakh. The Americans, seeing the spirit of the Armenians, declared that it would not be far wrong to say that this beat Marathon.

The Turkish soldiers were good shots, especially the artillery- men, who could direct their shrapnel by accurate sighting upon the desired point. Who could imagine that their commanders were civilised and Christian Germans! This fact became known to the Armenians after the fall of Van.

On the 9th and 10th May we saw the white sails of boats on the Lake of Van. Without heeding the flying bullets, the people flocked on to high ground to watch them. We did not know whether they were some of the Turkish population or officers who were escaping. They continued the shooting until next morning. After the 10th May the fighting became more intense, both during the daytime and at night, and on the 15th and 16th May the guns were directed upon the American Institutions, where all the people were. Although during the whole period of fighting they had fired upon the American compound, the Hospital, the Church and Dr. Ussher's home, and wounded thirteen people, it was only during the last two days that the bombardment was confined to the compound alone. It was then that a bomb struck Dr. Raynold's house and killed Mr. Terzibashian's three-and-a-half-years-old daughter.

On the evening of the 17th May the Armenians succeeded in destroying the upper and lower barracks of Toprak Kale, which raised their spirits vastly; but in the evening the joy of the Americans surpassed that of the Armenians. About midnight, in a strong attack, the Armenians seized and burned the largest Turkish barracks, Hadji Bekir's Kushla, which dominated the American compound. At midnight the town criers went through the town crying victory: "We have taken all the Turkish positions; they have run away: come out." On this report the Armenians, especially those who were in a starving condition, came out and attacked the Turkish quarters to rob and burn them. The revenge of centuries was being taken. The Armenian soldiers did not participate in this movement for twenty-four hours, but held their positions so that the enemy might not take them by surprise. The booty that the people took from the Turks consisted mostly of wheat, flour and bread.

I asked one of the villagers to show me her booty. She did so, and I was surprised to see that it consisted of clothing that the Turks had robbed from Armenian women and girls. They found in the house of Mouhib Effendi, a member of the Ottoman Parliament,

a chalice and other sacred vessels from an Armenian Church. The Turks were in such a panic that some left their tables laid and took to flight. The hungry women of yesterday were carrying away booty without stopping, with a new strength. It was the story of the seventh chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings that was repeated word for word. The American compound was now deserted except for the boy scouts, who, with the help of one of our teachers and Neville Ussher, remained to look after the sick. The whole city was in an uproar. Some went to look at the entrenchments; others went to look at the burned Turkish quarters, and others to look at the booty. There were others also who visited the fortress, which was captured that same night, and over which a flag with a Cross on it was waving. No Government was left, no authority: The soldiers had marked out their position from Arark to Khatch Poghotz as a military centre. They took away all the valuable vessels and property from the people. They were afraid that there would be fighting, but fortunately nothing happened. In Aikesdan there were still armed Turks in certain positions, who killed some Armenians, but they were finally found and killed. It was very pitiful to see Armenian soldiers leading Turkish women and children and unarmed men to the American compound for safety, and saying to them: "Do not cry; nothing will happen to you; we are only looking for Djeddet, who destroyed both your homes and ours." Nobody touched these Turkish women, some of whom had from £30 to £95 (Turkish) on their persons. Some of the Armenians went to look for their wounded in the Turkish hospitals, and when they did not find them they were so infuriated that they killed some of the Turkish wounded and burned the building. Mr. Yarrow asked me to go and wait there until he came. I stayed there. The scene was dreadful. For four days the Government had given them no bread and no care, so that many of them had already died from neglect. Interspersed among the dead there were also some still living, but the Armenians did not raise their hands to touch them. Before the arrival of the Americans, many came and helped me to put out the fire and attended to those that were alive. Mr. Yarrow, seeing all this, said: "I am amazed at the self-control of the Armenians, for though the Turks did not spare a single wounded Armenian, the Armenians are helping us to save the Turks-a thing that I do not believe even Europeans would do."

The scene in the prison was dreadful, as all the Armenian prisoners had been massacred. The wife of Mr. Proudian had completely lost her reason, and cried out: "Show me at least the bones of my dear one." The unveiling of these dreadful deeds of the Turks so hardened some of the Armenians that they followed the doctrine of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," to the great sorrow of the others.

**18. VAN AFTER THE TURKISH RETREAT: LETTER FROM HERR SPORRI, OF THE GERMAN MISSION AT VAN, PUBLISHED IN THE GERMAN JOURNAL "SONNENAUF GANG," OCTOBER, 1915.**

There lies Artamid before us, adorned by its delicious gardens; but how does the village look? The greater part of it is nothing now but a heap of ruins. We talked there with three of our former orphan protégées, who had had fearful experiences during the recent events. We rode on across the mountain of Artamid. Even in time of peace one crosses the pass with one's heart in one's mouth, because the Kurds ply their robber trade there. Now it is all uncannily still. Our glance swept over the magnificent valley of Haiotz-Tzor. There lay Antananz before us, now utterly destroyed like the rest. We gave shelter, at the time, to the people from Antananz who had managed to escape. Further on in the magnificent green landscape lay Vostan. At first sight one might call it a paradise, but during these latter days it has also been a hell. What rivers of blood must have flowed there; it was one of the chief strongholds of the armed Kurds. At the foot of the mountain we came to Angegh. There again there were many houses destroyed. We found here a young woman who, after many years of widowhood, had married a native of the village. Things have been going well with her; now her husband, too, was slaughtered. One hundred and thirty people are said to have been murdered thus. We pitched our camp here in face of the blackened ruins. Straight in front of us stood an "amrodz," a tower built of cakes of manure-a common enough sight in these parts. We were told that the Kurds had burnt the corpses of the slaughtered Armenians in it. Horrible! And yet that is at least better than if the corpses of the slain, as has happened in other places, are allowed to lie for an indefinite period unburied, so that they are devoured by dogs and poison the air. There we were met by some soldiers; they were Armenian "Volunteers" who had come from Russia and were now fighting on the side of the Russians for the liberation of their Haiasdan. They were coming now from the neighbourhood of Bitlis, where heavy fighting was in progress. They had brought some sick back to the town, and proposed to rest here awhile. After that we rode on to Ten, where people we already knew came out to meet us from the village and informed us of what had happened there. There, too, the scenes of our former activity, the school and the church, lay in ruins, and many dwelling houses as well. The man who used to put us up was also among the slain; his widow is still quite distraught. Here about 150 are said to have been murdered. There were so many orphans in the place, they said to us-Should we now be inclined to take charge of any again? We were unable to give them any definite answer. As we rode on and on over the mountain s, the splendid air did us much good and we thanked God for it, for little by little we have come to be in sore need of recuperation. We had a wonderful view from the mountain heights, but everywhere in the villages one sees blackened and ruined houses.

**19. VAN AFTER THE MASSACRES: NARRATIVE OF MR. A.S. SAFRASTIAN, DATED VAN, 2nd DECEMBER, 1915, AND PUBLISHED IN THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "ARARAT" OF LONDON, JANUARY, 1916.**

"I have seen the ravages of the Crimean war, the Russo- Turkish war of 1877-78, the Armenian massacres of 1894-96, and the reign of terror which then followed until the year 1914; but the massacres which have been going on since April of the current year are simply appalling, and by far the most terrible blow which the Armenian nation has ever been subject to throughout the course of its long history."

So spoke to me Hagop Boghossian, an old Armenian peasant of Van, a sturdy octogenarian who, after three forced flights from his home in the rear of the Russian Army, was once more returning to his home to tide over the winter in his native village north of Lake Van; and as he was walking along the muddy pathway, he was telling me the story of the recent massacres as he knew them, and as he understood them from his own point of view. His account in its main outline corresponds with what has been proved beyond all doubt. Before arousing any suspicion among the Armenians residing in the central provinces of Asiatic Turkey about its intentions, the Turkish Government wanted to dispose of the "rebellious" Armenians of Van, which lay far away from its grip, and the Armenian element of which had generally been considered by the Turks as a doubtful quantity. One Djevdet Bey, a brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, happened to be the governor and the military commander of Van. In February he was routed in the battle of Diliman and Khoi, in Azerbaijan, a battle in which the Armenian volunteers under Andranik played some part. When he returned to Van, he told his friends that while he was at the front he had to battle throughout the time against Armenians, both as regular troops of the Russian army and as volunteers. The report says that Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, expressed almost the same opinion when his army was defeated early in January in the battles of Sarikamysh and Ardahan. However exaggerated these estimates may have been, they seem to have served well the purpose of the Turkish Government in its efforts to destroy the Armenian population within its territory; and Djevdet Bey was commissioned to begin the massacres at Van, where the best relations existed between the Armenians under Vremyan, the Deputy for Van in the Turkish Chamber, and Djevdet himself, who for years had enjoyed the hospitality of the natives.

On the 15th April the young Armenians of Akantz, north of Lake Van (Ardjish), were mustered by the gendarmes to the sound of the bugle, to hear the recital of an order which had just arrived from the Sultan. At sunset these 500 young men were shot outside the town without any formality. During the following two days the same process was carried out with heartless and cold-blooded thoroughness in the 80 Armenian villages of Ardjish, Adiljevas, and the rest of the district north of Lake Van. In this manner some 24,000 Armenians were killed in three days, their young women carried away and their homes looted. After that, Djevdet Bey immediately proceeded to destroy

the able-bodied Armenians on the south side of the Lake in the same way. Kurds were let loose upon the peasants of the *Kazas* of Moks and Shatakh, but there these hardy mountaineers proved somewhat hard nuts to crack. They put up a stout resistance and frustrated the Turkish plan.

In the town of Van itself the Armenians had already made all the concessions they possibly could to conciliate the Government in the matter of deserters from the army and the military requisitions. Djevdet, however, demanded unconditional surrender; he treacherously caused the death of four Armenian leaders, and detained Vremyan, who was killed later. These acts, in combination with the massacres of Ardjish, cleared up all doubts. The Turks had made up their minds to annihilate the Armenians by all the means in their power, as they had shown by killing thousands of absolutely innocent peasants in Ardjish. The experience of the past had taught the Armenians of Van that an appeal to arms was the only argument which could save their life, honour and property, and they collected together all the arms they possessed. From the middle of April they were besieged by a Turkish army of about 6,000 men, equipped with artillery and reinforced by numberless Kurds of all types. Twenty-five thousand Armenians of the town, who had only some 400 good rifles and double that number of arms of a medley character, fought for four weeks against great odds. They organised all their resources through an improvised staff and various committees for medical help and distribution of relief. They constructed some mortars and made smokeless powder to repel the furious Turkish attacks. Every man, woman and child did their bit to help in the work of liberation; they held their positions to the last and captured several enemy positions by blowing up barracks in which the Turks had entrenched themselves in the middle of the Armenian quarters. After seeing something of their positions and walking over the scenes of the fight, one can well understand that it must have been a heroic battle indeed. The Turks under Djevdet despaired of overcoming Van and fled hastily at the approach of the Armenian volunteers followed by the Russian army. Van was captured by the Armenians, who saluted the entry of the Russian army by the booming of the guns they had taken from the Turks. An Armenian provisional government was established in the town and the province from early June. Excesses of an avenging nature could scarcely be avoided under the circumstances; yet such excesses by no means overstepped the passion excited at the moment.

During June and July, almost the entire Armenian population of Bitlis, Moush, Diyarbekir, and the remaining provinces of Turkish Armenia was ruthlessly massacred or deported. Of this unparalleled tragedy the later events at Van, which suffered the most lightly of all, may serve as an illustration.

After two months of self-government in Van, the fortunes of war turned against the Armenians. Towards the end of July the Turks took the offensive on the Transcaucasian front. The Russians retreated from the Euphrates and Moush towards their own frontiers in order to counter-attack the enemy under more favourable conditions. But in this game of strategy, the quarter of a million Armenians of Van, Alashkerd, etc., the last remnant

of the Armenian element in Eastern Turkey, had also to retreat towards the Russian frontier. Men, women and children, who had bravely defended themselves against the Turks, fled in a panic under the most adverse circumstances. There were no means of transport, except a few ox-carts, horses, donkeys and cows, and the distance to be traversed varied from 100 to 150 miles through a waterless and trackless country; while only a few hours' notice was given to the unsuspecting people to quit their homes, abandon all they possessed, and walk to Transcaucasia. Every one burdened himself with some clothing and provisions, and, followed by exhausted women and children, walked for 10 days under the burning August sun, smothered in dust and overcome by thirst and fatigue. On the Bergri bridge (north of Lake Van) the rear of the caravan was attacked by mounted Kurds. A frightful panic ensued, in which women and girls threw themselves into the river Bendimahu, while others threw away their infants in the effort to escape, and entire families were precipitated into the waters owing to the rush caused by the panic. The sick, the infirm, and hundreds of children were abandoned on the roadside, where they died in lingering agony or were massacred by the Kurds.

On my way to Van along the north-eastern shore of the Lake, I witnessed revolting evidence of the recent events. Several search parties had already buried the dead and cleared the ground; nevertheless, here and there I saw remains of human bodies, of men and women, under piles of stones or scattered about the roadside. I discovered decomposing and horribly disfigured bodies of children; and on the shores of the lake and on the banks of streams skeletons, pieces of clothing, bones of human beings and animals lying all around. The stench of putrefaction was simply sickening. The country from Igdir to Van had indeed been a slaughter-house but a few months before. Entire villages had been completely wiped out. Except for some casual travellers, not a single human soul was to be seen there- there were but vultures and howling dogs who fed upon the putrefied human remains.

The town of Van itself is mostly a heap of ruins. Since last August it has changed hands several times; all churches, schools and the best houses have been burnt down. The pulse of life seemed to have ceased from beating, where a few months ago the natives had turned it into a beehive after capturing it from the Turk. On the other hand, the remnant of the Armenians from Turkey is being greatly diminished owing to destitution and sickness across the borders of Transcaucasia. The whole country is devastated beyond any description. Perhaps nowhere on the European battlefields has the civil population been so sorely tried as in the Armenian highlands, and no race has suffered so much as the Armenians in Asiatic Turkey. At present only some 200,000 of them can be accounted for; and these are dying by hundreds in Transcaucasia in consequence of the terrible sufferings they have gone through since last spring.



## **20. VAN: INTERVIEW WITH A REFUGEE, MRS. GAZARIAN, PUBLISHED IN THE "PIONEER PRESS," OF ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, U.S.A.**

A story of the flight of terror-stricken Armenians from the city of Van, from the persecution of the Turks who massacred thousands of Armenian women and children and forced the men into their armies, was told last night by Mrs. Sylvia Gazarian. She has just arrived from Armenia after suffering great hardships and persecution during a journey through Russia, and is with her son, Levon Gazarian, a North St. Paul piano builder.

Mrs. Gazarian during her flight saw her husband die of typhoid fever, and left seven of her grandchildren lying along the roadside, victims of starvation and exhaustion. Her son Edward, a Red Cross surgeon, made the journey with Mrs. Gazarian: He is at his brother's home here.

Mrs. Gazarian founded the Christian school at Van, and devoted many years to educating Armenian children. Her story, which is perhaps the first uncensored news of the cruelties inflicted by the Turks in Armenia, was told through Arsen K. Nakashian, an interpreter: -

"I spent a month in Van while our school was the target of the Turks. I saw them kill, burn and persecute," she said. "I saw our town become a part of a barren waste. I saw Turks bury Armenian victims with the dogs, divide the women among them as wives and throw babies into the lake. The school was burned, the missionaries fled, and 35,000 of the 75,000 inhabitants of the Van district were killed or starved "to death.

"Djevdet Bey, Governor-General of Van, started the whole trouble when, early in April, 1915, he demanded that the Armenians should support the Turkish army.

"When the Armenians resisted, Djevdet Bey ordered them to be shot. He demanded that we and the American and German missionaries should leave Van and seek protection from the Turkish Government. We all refused. Our valley had been a garden. The Turks did their worst to make it a morgue.

"For miles around the Armenians congregated at Van, drove out the Turks and made trenches. Stones, earth and sand-bags were piled over the school buildings. The Turks attacked, and for more than a month in April and May kept up a steady fire.

"Finally the Russians came. We were under their protection for a month. The Turks, fleeing before the Russians, killed all Armenian prisoners and wounded.

"Russian treachery became evident when they evacuated the town. They pillaged every standing home. When we demanded that they should stay and protect us, the general said: 'If you don't want us to leave you, come along.'

"Only old men and feeble women refused the invitation. Fifteen grandchildren of mine, three daughters and their husbands, my son and myself made up our forlorn party. We travelled towards Russia on foot. There was no other way to go. We walked for twelve days-like dead men and women. As far ahead as we could see, there were women carrying or dragging their babies and wounded men staggering along at their sides. Death was common.

"First one and then another of the children died. Typhoid was doing its work everywhere. We buried the babies where we happened to be. Seven of them in all died on the journey. When we arrived at Tiflis my husband died.

"More than a month ago my son and I started for Northern Russia. Round the Caucasus mountains, across the Russian steppes and into Moscow, where the Russian troops were assembled in thousands, we went by train.

"Every Russian official wanted money, and we paid. We reached Archangel on the Arctic ocean and started for America."

Just as the woman finished her story her son Edward came in.

"Germany is responsible for the cruelty in Armenia," he declared: "She is not a friend but an enemy of Turkey. She covets the Dardanelles. She aims at making Turkey a German province; but she knows the power of the Armenians, and she wants Turkey without them. That is why she permits the Turks to burn, murder and ravage. The young Turks are educated criminals. They are worse than the older ones. America is beautiful and peaceful. We will always live here."