

THOSE ARMENIAN MASSACRES.

Statement Concerning Them and the Delicate Position of the American Missionaries in Turkey Given Out by the American Board.

A statement in regard to the recent troubles in Armenia has been issued by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, which more than any other missionary organization in America centralizes its work in behalf of the Armenians in Asiatic Turkey. Its three missions there comprise 281 stations and out stations, 944 American and native laborers, 112 churches with a membership of 11,481, 264 Sunday schools with 46,864 adherents, and a number of colleges and theological, high and boarding schools, with a total of 19,886 persons under instruction. The statement is in substance as follows:

We are not unconcerned about the reports of massacres in eastern Turkey. The position of the 177 missionaries of the American Board within the Turkish Empire is an extremely delicate one. Sympathizing deeply on the one side with all who are suffering by reason of poverty, oppression and misrule, they have yet been loyal to the Government under which they have lived, and have never countenanced sedition or rebellion.

In the Sassoun region, south of the Moush Plain, there are, or recently were, many villages inhabited by Armenians. These people were systematically robbed of their flocks by Koords, and in the latter part of the summer the Armenians pursued the robbers in the endeavor to recover their property. In the fight which ensued a dozen of these Koords were killed, among whom were some enrolled as Turkish soldiers.

When information was given that the Armenians had killed some of the Sultan's troops the charge of rebellion was made and orders were sent to put down the insurrection. The result was that these lawless and uncontrolled soldiers made indiscriminate slaughter of the people who had sought to defend their property. In the horrible massacres which followed thousands were slain, some state six thousand, others ten thousand. The details of this wretched affair are not obtainable even by those near the scene. They never will be obtained unless foreign governments insist upon a thorough investigation conducted by foreigners. The poor people are in terror and dare not state the truth unless under protection.

Though our missionaries in eastern Turkey are often upon the Moush plain, where there are many out-stations in which evangelical work is conducted by them, yet their work has not extended into this Sassoun district, and hence they have no direct reports from the scene of the massacre. Papers from Constantinople, printed in that city and entirely under the control of the censors of the press, announce that the sultan has sent one of his imperial guards to the city of Erzingan, in Eastern Turkey, to carry a decoration to Zeki Pasha, the commander of the Fourth Army Corps, which is located there. Zeki Pasha is the military commander who led the troops against the defenceless villages in the Sassoun region at the time of the massacre. Another envoy carries four banners from the sultan to the four leading Koordish chiefs who were associated with the military commander in the reported massacre, and who probably were the instigators of it. After the sultan has thus approved of the action of his troops and of the Koords, it will be impossible for any commission appointed by the Turkish Government to investigate the outrage and bring in any report that reflects upon the action of either the Koords or the army. By this act the sultan seems to assume all the responsibility of what has been done.

We are glad to learn that our Government has directed one of its consuls to make an independent investigation of all matters connected with the reported massacres. But our Government does not stand in the same relation to Turkey as do the European powers that under the treaty of Berlin secured the right of seeing that good government was maintained throughout the Turkish empire. The right thus guaranteed ought now to be exercised, and the first step should be a most thorough investigation as to the condition of affairs throughout Armenia.

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