

THE RAGE OF ISLAM

AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
MASSACRE OF CHRISTIANS
BY THE
TURKS IN PERSIA

By
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YONAN H. SHAHBAZ

TO
THAT BRAVE COMPANION
WHO BORE, WITH FORTITUDE,
OUR EVERY TRIAL

My Wife

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

INTRODUCTION

By Rev. ROBERT STUART MacARTHUR, D. D., LL. D.
President, Baptist World Alliance

A THRILLING story is this, written by my longtime friend and Christian brother, Rev. Yonan H. Shahbaz, and entitled THE RAGE OF ISLAM.

Of this notable narrative the author and his estimable wife were no small part. One cannot know Mr. Shahbaz as I have known him, during many years, without admiring him and loving him as a manly man and a sincere Christian.

The author of this book has been wise in giving us a reasonably full description of Persia. To most readers this country is largely a *terra incognita*. This land of Southwestern Asia is called by its inhabitants Iran. This is the native name of Persia. The word is derived from the legendary history of the Persian race. It is given in Firdusi's "Book of Kings " (the

Shah-Nameh). According to this authority Iran and Tur are two of three brothers from whom the tribes Iran, Persians, and Turan, Turks, with their cognate tribes originally sprang.

In the old Persian stories Turan was the land of darkness; it was opposed to Iran, or Asia, the land of light. From the name Iran, the old name of Persia, the whole people have been called Aryans. It is known to students that the Persians, ancient and modern, are historically among the most important of the Iranian group of the Aryan peoples. This ancient race played a great part in the development of Western Asia; they created monuments of lasting grandeur; they imposed their language on tribes and nations reaching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Bay of Bengal; they thus were in part creators of both the Occident and the Orient. In graphic touches Mr. Shahbaz has set this historical people before us with great clearness.

The predominance of Mohammedanism in Persia is presented, with suggestive reference

to the Parsees, the Jews, and the Nestorians. The Nestorian Church was once large and prosperous. The Nestorians claim apostolic authority for their church. Other Christian churches also come under review. It seems strange to a student of Russia to speak of the Russians as deliverers and protectors. We are accustomed to think of the Church which they represent as the embodiment of intolerance and cruelty. But certainly in the case of Mr. Shahbaz and his people, the Russians were welcomed as deliverers. The cruelties of the predatory and murderous Kurds are clearly depicted. They are a people often marked by hospitality and other good qualities; but in this case the feral Turks robbed them of their occasional virtues and increased their fiercest barbarities. They are the hired thieves and murderers employed by the savage Turks. As the Turks control the Kurds, so the Germans control the Turks. The final responsibility for all these atrocities of the Turks and their vassals goes back to the Kaiser, their master and lord.

What a joy it was to Mr. Shahbaz and his

family again to see the American flag when the storm was raging! It was an unspeakable benediction to him that he is an American citizen, and that the official representative threw about him and his family the protection of the glorious American flag.

From the day that Mr. Shahbaz first presented himself to me to this hour he has had a large place in my confidence and esteem. In a mission school in Persia he sought in vain from his teachers for full instruction from the New Testament regarding baptism; in pursuance of this aim he went to London to find Mr. Spurgeon, but the great man was dead before Mr. Shahbaz arrived. He was then sent by deacons of Mr. Spurgeon's church to New York to see this writer. After being carefully questioned and otherwise tested, he was in due time baptized, September 26, 1892, into the fellowship of Calvary Church, New York. Under the care of the church his training was secured at Colgate; he was ordained at this church and set apart, with his American wife, for mission work in Persia.

Finally, in the providence of God, he was called upon to pass through trials not unworthy to be compared with those endured by the apostle Paul and others, in apostolic days, or with those of pagan and papal Rome. It is the hope and prayer of all friends of liberty and Christianity that the recital of these trials as now published may advance the cause of truth and humanity, at home and abroad, and may honor the name of Christ who brought our brother, his wife, and all of his children but the beloved baby, who died as the victim of the cruelties experienced, off more than conquerors.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 26 1918.

PREFACE

THE author of this book desires to offer his apologies for all errors in its composition, and to state that his reasons for writing it are manifold.

A great many of my friends have asked me since my return to America, and after hearing me speak in churches or other public places, for details of my experience during those troublous months of 1915. They have also asked for specific answers to the following questions:

What were the Russians doing in Persia, an independent country? Why were the Turks permitted to overrun Persian territory, at a time when the Persian Government had definitely assumed a neutral attitude? Why did not that government take effective steps to prevent the promiscuous slaughter of its peaceful and law-abiding Christian subjects?

In these pages I have endeavored to answer these questions.

Another object I have in view is to make it plain what treatment the Christian thousands dwelling amongst Mohammedan millions are obliged to endure in this twentieth century of civilization. Equal rights to small nations is a popular cry and is a just demand. Why, then, do not the great Christian powers cast aside their jealousies and see to it that these Christian populations, of whose tribulations I write, are also protected, and that their Moslem rulers are compelled to respect their every right?

I also wish to tender my sincerest thanks to all who have assisted me in the compilation of this book, and to those authors from whose standard works I have been enabled to glean valuable historical and chronological information.

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I

THE PEACEFUL PLAIN

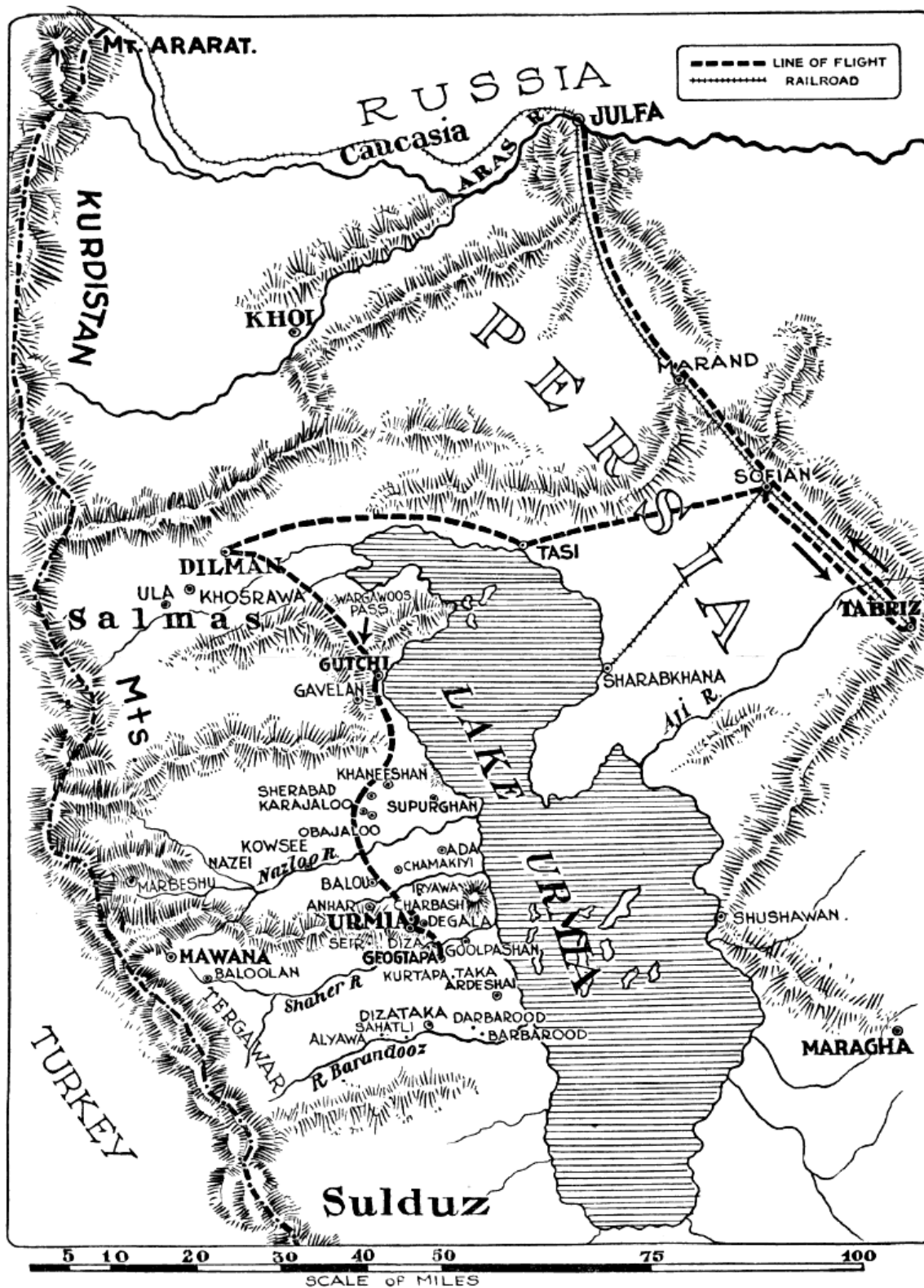
THE PEACEFUL PLAIN

ITS GEOGRAPHY

THE Urmian plain, the district in which the occurrences herein related took place, occupies a central-western position, on an elevated plateau, in the province of Azerbaijan, northwestern Persia. The region was once called by the natives Dar-el-Safa, or Gate of Pleasure, and has often been named by American and European travelers "The Paradise of Persia." It deserves the title, for it is a fair stretch of level land, sixty miles long and thirty wide in its extreme dimensions, and covered from end to end with fields of grain, orchards, vineyards, and beautiful gardens, and dotted over with a thousand towns and villages, with the city of Urmia as its central feature.

On the west this level expanse is bounded by the Kurdish mountains of eastern Turkey, spurs of which extend, on the north and the south, to the eastward, thus shutting in the level lands, whose eastern boundary is Lake Urmia, a body of water about ninety miles in length by thirty in extreme width, as salt as, or more so than, the Dead Sea. The lake is devoid of fish, but its banks are so frequented by wild fowl, especially duck and flamingo, that the shores are often whitened for miles by their presence. The imposing branches of the Kurdish range sweep down quite to the waters of the lake. The plain is well watered by three considerable rivers, besides many small streams. Its soil is extremely fertile and under a high state of cultivation. Its climate is hardly excelled by that of any other portion of the globe. The irrigation canals are shaded by a great variety of trees, among which are all kinds of fruit trees; the ditches carry water in abundance throughout the region.

Its staple products are wheat, rice, cotton, maize, beans, barley, most delicious melons,



MAP OF NORTHWESTERN PERSIA

Showing principal Christian towns destroyed by Turks and Kurds; also line of flight of author

The Peaceful Plain

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gourds, potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, capsicum, chilis, brinjals, ladyfingers, castor-oil (for burning) , madder, salsify, scorzonera, celery, oil seeds of various sorts, opium, and tobacco. The orchards are full of trees which merit the epithet "noble."

Noble, indeed, are the walnuts, and beautiful are the apricots, apples, peaches, pears, and plums. Glorious are the vineyards with their thirty-five or forty different varieties of grapes, their foliage, like that of the deciduous trees, passing away in scarlet and gold at the season when nature has perfected her work and rests. It is autumn in its glory, but without its gloom.

About ten miles from the lake, and two miles from the spurs and foothills of the mountains to the westward, lies the city of Urmia. This metropolis was known as the ancient Thebarma, the birthplace, as tradition has it, of Zoroaster, the founder of the ancient sect of fire-worshippers; a tradition rendered more credible, perhaps, from the fact that there are, on different parts of the plain, a number of artificial mounds, each covering a large area, and

rising to a height of a hundred feet or more. These are vast piles of ashes, from sacrificial and funeral fires, accumulated during the lapse of centuries under the perpetual fires before which the Zoroastrians made adoration. This, at least, is the explanation given by the Persian people for the presence of these monuments. The town of Geogtapa, where the author resided, is built in part upon the slope of one of these ash-hills.

Urmia is surrounded by a thousand towns and villages scattered about the plain in every direction. There are practically no shops or bazaars in any of these minor towns; consequently the inhabitants obtain their supplies of almost every description from the city which, with its numerous large markets and bazaars, is amply able to satisfy the wants and needs of all. There being no railroads, no tram-lines, few carriages or carts, most of the people walk to the city from their respective dwelling-places, often two or three days' foot journey distant. On every road or trail one sees a continuous procession of camels, donkeys, mules,

horses, and pedestrians coming to or going from the city, animals and people alike loaded with merchandise of every description. Those bound for the market are laden with the products of the country—fruit, fuel, vegetables, carpets, foodstuffs, etc. Those traveling homeward bear their purchases from the bazaars. One sees, also, long caravans of horses, mules, or camels, which take the place of freight-trains. These caravans are bringing to Urmia the products of European and of other Oriental lands, consigned to the merchants and traders of the city.

The population of Urmia proper is estimated at about one hundred thousand. The city is more than four miles in circumference, and, like other cities of Persia, is surrounded by a mud wall about fifty feet in average height, with several large towers. This wall is pierced by seven gates. Most of the houses are built of unburned brick, but there are many of a good quality of burned brick. The streets are wider than is common in Eastern towns, and there is an agreeable air of comfort, enhanced by the

great prodigality of beautiful shade trees about the grounds surrounding the dwellings.

This is the section of country that was attacked by the Turks and Kurds in 1915. This beautiful plateau, two thousand square miles of garden and vineyard, village and town, with a bustling city as its center, prosperous and thriving, supporting an industrious population, a considerable percentage of the Christian faith, where forethought, good example, and honorable dealing on the part of the latter for more than a generation had produced, first, toleration, and later, respect from their Mohammedan neighbors, rested at the beginning of the year in a profound peace. No thought of the clash of arms in Europe disturbed its apparent security. Scarcely one of its inhabitants was aware of the far-reaching, insidious propaganda of the remote government of the Huns.

True, the frowning heights of the Kurdistan Mountains were a constant reminder of the proximity of those nomadic Kurdish tribes—bloodthirsty, cruel, conscienceless—occupying

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the hills to the west. The outrages and massacres of former years were not forgotten, but there was no anticipation of a repetition of these horrors of the past. Why should there be? The hundreds of thousands who tilled the soil, trafficked, bought and sold, and enjoyed the pleasures and products of this rich and fertile land, where fruits and flowers grew and blossomed in greatest abundance and prodigality, heard but the faintest echo of the thunders of war, far, far away. Truly a land of the rose and the vine, where every prospect pleases. Even under the mantle of winter snows its promises of the coming spring and harvest were obvious. Yet never was the trite saying more apt: The trail of the serpent lay over it all.

Having drawn a brief outline sketch of the scene wherein those events which form the principal topic of this book took place, the writer begs permission to digress, and to give the reader some idea of the races which constituted the population of this region and the countries adjacent.

THE EARLIER INHABITANTS

Such knowledge as we possess of the earlier Persians is almost entirely derived from philological research, and from the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrian religion professed by the Persians up to the time of the Mohammedan conquest in the seventh century of our era. The Avesta tells us scarcely anything in relation to Zoroaster; and the traditions regarding him, preserved by classical writers, are not to be relied upon. He seems to have flourished about 600 B. C., and to have been a religious reformer seeking to purify the ancient Aryan faith from the corruptions inducted into it by either the Scythians or the Assyrians. Zoroastrianism is a dualism, the supreme good deity being Hormuzd, and the evil spirit Ahriman. Great importance is attached to fire (Atar) which is described as the son of Hormuzd and the most powerful antagonist of Ahriman. The adoration of fire as a symbol, at a later period, under the influence of the Magi of Media, priests of the old Scythian

nature-worship, led to the "fire-worship" which is popularly identified with Zoroaster. But not without a struggle. The favor shown by Cyrus to the Jews is attributed by some to his faith in one God, in contrast with the idolatry of Babylon. The usurper, Gomates, a Magian priest who succeeded Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, abolished the Persian cult and substituted the fire-altars of the Magi; and he it was who reversed the policy of Cyrus toward the Jews, and forbade the building of the temple. (Ezra 4.)

But the two religions seem gradually to have coalesced; and fire-worship is perpetuated to this day in the ritual of the Parsees of Bombay, the chief modern representatives of Zoroastrianism.

This cult, which the kings of the Sassanian dynasty raised to its highest level of power, was in its turn swept away by the Mohammedan conquest in the seventh century. From that time to the present Persia has been a Mohammedan country. There are now no more than fifteen thousand Zoroastrians (Gebres as they

are called) in the country, most of them in or near the town of Yezd. In India there are at present one hundred thousand Parsees, nearly all of whom live in Bombay.

THE MOHAMMEDANS

There are two great and powerful sects of the followers of Mohammed: the Sunnis, or orthodox party, who hold that the first three caliphs, Abu-Bekr, Omar, and Osman, rightfully succeeded Mohammed; and the Shiahs, who believe that Ali, who married Mohammed's daughter, Fatima or Fat'ma, was the prophet's legitimate successor, and that the three caliphs mentioned, who held the reins of power after Mohammed's death, and for a long time kept Ali from the caliphate, were usurpers. The Shiahs also claim that Hussain and Hassan, the sons of Ali, who were killed while fighting for their rights, were martyrs. The Persian Mohammedans are Shiahs, and go on pilgrimage to the tombs of Ali and his sons at Nedjef and Kerbala, in the Euphrates valley.

But most of the nomads, found in the northern provinces of Persia, the Kurds of the western provinces, and the Turks and Arabs are Sunnis, as are the majority of Mohammedans throughout the world.

THE KURDS

Shedders of blood, raisers of strife, seekers after turmoil and uproar, robbers and brigands. A people all malignant; evil-doers of depraved habits; ignorant of all mercy, devoid of all humanity, scorning the garment of wisdom; but a brave race and fearless, of a hospitality grateful to the soul. In truth and in humor unequalled, of pleasing countenance and fair cheek, boasting of all goods of beauty and grace.¹

Kurdistan, their country, is one of those names which you may find on the map without any dotted lines or other marks to define their boundaries. The word simply means "country of the Kurds."

The Kurds are very little known; within recent years they have probably never come before the eyes of the world except in their

¹ "*Buston us-Shiah*," p. 459.

traditional character of rapacious and furious fiends. Fantastic figures of savagery, peering out from impregnable mountain fastnesses, and carrying destruction before them; slaying Christians; resisting all efforts by princes or powers to subdue or even coerce them.

Of their origin less is known than of any other race in the East. Some historians think that they are descended from the ancient Medes, but we know only that the Medes were swallowed up by the Persians and lost their nationality; and we know no more of them.

The Persian legend has it that the Kurds are the descendants of those young men who were saved from the voracity of the infernal serpent offspring of the monster Zohek, of Persian mythology. These serpents were fed upon human brains at the devil's suggestion, and were deceived by having the brains of goats substituted for those of the two youths who were to become progenitors of the Kurdish race. Another, and less-known, legend is that Solomon sent for four hundred virgins from the East; these virgins having arrived in the country now designated as Kurdistan, were deflowered by the devils dwelling therein, whereupon Solomon resigned them to the devils, and the offspring were called Kurds.

These nomadic people are undoubtedly the Carduchi of Xenophon, mentioned in the retreat of the ten thousand, and have remained in

a condition of semiindependence from the earliest time. Living on the borders of Persia and Turkey, they are in subjection to neither government, and can, as occasion requires, for purposes of either plunder or of escape from punishment, move quickly from one territory to the other. There are two divisions of Kurds; some are permanent dwellers in towns and villages; others live in the villages during the winter and roam the mountains with their flocks and herds the remainder of the year.

Their language is akin to the Persian; it is rarely written, the Persian being the literary language of the Kurds of Persia; the Arabic, or Osmanli Turkish, the tongue of those living in Turkey. Few of them can either read or write. There are a number of dialectical differences corresponding to the separate districts. Most of the Kurds are shepherds, although some are farmers by occupation and warriors by profession. Yet a few live in the larger towns, such as Souj-Boulak, Sena, and other cities, and are engaged in merchandising and the trades.

Kurds are Sunnis, but only nominally, for they are for the most part entirely unacquainted with Mohammedanism, and scarcely observe its slightest external forms. They do not even abstain from forbidden food, and many go so far as to satisfy their appetites with the flesh of swine.

A Kurd, who one day had entered with freedom into conversation with an Englishman, observed that for his part he thought the religion of his tribe resembled that of the Franks (Europeans) more than that of the Persians. "How so?" inquired the Englishman. "Why," replied the other, "we eat hog's flesh, drink wine, keep no fasts, and say no prayers." He had observed no public acts of worship among the British, and imagined that they never performed any.

Their religious leaders are called sheiks, and the people have very great faith in them, believing that the sheiks have a special divine inspiration, and that God communicates with them directly, and that they, therefore, are cognizant of almost everything that is happening

One sees the people coming to these leaders with presents in hand, wishing to know the whereabouts of their lost animals; others, to find out where lost property is concealed, or expressing a wish to discover the thief. Still others come who are ill or childless. All go away satisfied with a written prayer or a pill, as the sheik may prescribe. Others look upon the sheik as a mediator, and through his merits expect to obtain forgiveness of sins. They often attribute to the sheik, even when absent, power to assist and benefit. It is the sheik's duty to administer to both body and soul, as well as to settle lawsuits and to take the field as leader in battle.

Whether the Kurds live in villages or towns, their hearts yearn for all that belongs to the open field. The boldest spirits long for prey and spoil, and gladly seize whatever plunder fortune may throw into their hands. The wandering hordes glory in the name plunderers, but resent the appellation of thief. The difference is obvious; robbery implies an open and successful exertion of strength; stealing is a

consciousness of weakness. Next to being engaged in scenes of pillage, they love to recount those they have witnessed and to boast of most atrocious deeds as heroic and praiseworthy. "I happened, one day," says Sir John Malcolm, "when on the march to Sultanieh, to ask a chief of one of the tribes, 'What ruins are those upon the right of our road?' His eyes glistened at the question. 'It is more than twenty years,' said he, 'since I accompanied my uncle upon a night attack for the purpose of plundering and destroying that very village. It has never been rebuilt. Its inhabitants, who are a bad race and our enemies, have settled near it and are again grown rich. I trust to God that these days of tranquillity will soon be over, and if old times return I shall have another blow at these gentlemen before I die.'"

The Kurds, from north to south, are monogamous, and a family seldom exceeds three or four. The wife has remarkable freedom, and does not wear a veil like Persian or Turkish women. Kurdish women are a fine class; unaffected, brave, deserving as much praise for



KURDISH LADY FROM PLAIN

their domestic qualities as for the physical beauty so often theirs. Many are fine, bold riders, and can handle a rifle, and among the more warlike tribes the women join in the fray. The Kurdish name is found in almost every place connected with robbery and destruction. No matter where he is living, in a flat country or in the mountains, in villages or in cities, everywhere he is the same. A good gun and a good horse are his greatest desires. He is willing and ready to trade even his wife for a good gun. He is willing to risk his life in order to rob a man of a gun in the other's possession.

The Kurds are fatalists; they believe that their hour of birth was preordained, as is the day of their death; nothing can alter it. They are the dogs of the Turks, who depute to them their dirty work. The Turks set them on, and the task of outrage and rapine is performed. Their number is in excess of two million; more than one-half live in Turkish territory, the rest in Persia, with a scattered few in Russian Transcaucasia. There are several

leading tribes among the many; the more powerful have seldom acknowledged any government; some, like Hackery, have maintained entire independence.

THE NESTORIAN CHRISTIANS

The parts west of Lake Urmia, and especially the districts of Urmia and Salmas, are occupied by a Christian population, generally known as Nestorians.

Nestorias, from whom the sect derives its name, was born and educated in Syria, was an elder at Antioch, and was made Bishop of Constantinople, A. D. 428. Being bishop of the seat of empire made him conspicuous. His boldness in attempting to correct some popular superstitions drew upon him the envy and hostility of contemporary bishops, particularly of the ambitious Cyril, then bishop of Alexandria. Arraigned for alleged heresy, Nestorias was excommunicated at Ephesus by the third general council in A. D. 431, only three years after his elevation to the see of the renowned capital. First banished, for a time, to Arabia, and subsequently transferred to the Oasis of Libya, he finally died in Upper Egypt. He was excommunicated on the charge that he refused to apply to the Virgin Mary the title "Mother of God."

His cause, being by many regarded as that of an injured and persecuted man, created extensive sympathy

and found numerous and efficient advocates. It was warmly espoused by his countrymen in the East, particularly in a celebrated Syrian school in Edessa (modern Orfah) in Mesopotamia, in which a great number of Christian youths were at that time educated. The first Christian sect, thus severed from the general church, by prejudice and oppression, taking firm root in that central position, spread rapidly in all directions. It soon became powerful, especially in Persia, and through all its vicissitudes has remained permanent from that day to this in some of the regions now occupied by its adherents.

The Nestorians are at present a small but venerable remnant of a once great and influential Christian church. They are the oldest of the Christian sects, and in their better days were numerous through all the vast regions from Palestine to China. They carried the gospel into China itself. Their history is a checkered one. Sometimes, as under the tolerant policy of the mighty Genghis Khan, they were raised to high places in camp and court; while at others, as by the crushing arm of Timour (Timour Lang, Timour the lame), they were cut down and swept away until scarce a vestige remained save in certain mountain fastnesses. "But in both prosperity and in adversity,

during more than twelve hundred years of their history, they furnish the brightest examples of persevering toil and self-denial, and often of heroic martyrdom, cheerfully encountered in the profession and zealous promulgation of the gospel, to be found in the record of Christianity since the days of the apostles."

Although they are known as "Nestorians," the term is but a nickname given them by their enemies, and there is no reason why we should use a name which attaches to a people the stigma of an ancient heresy. A part of them live in Turkey, a part in Persia. In the latter country they occupy the rich province of Azerbaijan, in our Urmian plain. The date of their settlement in this district is unknown, but Urmia is mentioned as early as the eleventh century as the see of a Nestorian bishop. But the majority of them reside in the Kurdistan mountains, on Turkish soil, mainly in wild and extremely rough territory. In these places they have dwelt along with the uncivilized Kurds from a very early period, and in some instances they live exactly the same as their

Kurdish neighbors, whose dress they have adopted, and against whom they are quite able to hold their own under ordinary conditions. Like the Kurds, they are broken up into tribes. They have an hereditary patriarch, who bears the title of Mar Shimun (Saint Peter), and who makes the same claim to spiritual infallibility as does the pope of Rome. He resides at Kochanis, far up the Zab valley, where his people are well able to protect him from incursions on the part of the Kurds.

These Christians are also called Chaldeans, a designation which is applied to those of the Syrians who have been converted to the Roman Catholic belief. The title was given to them by the pope of Rome in 1778, to distinguish the Catholics of the East from those of the West and also from the Nestorians. They have sometimes been called Assyrians, simply because they have lived on the soil of ancient Assyria. But among themselves, in the mountains of the Kurdish range and on the plains of Azerbaijan, they bear the name *Su-ra-yi*, i.e., Syrians. By racial descent they are in fact

Syrians, and the language they use is modern Syriac, derived from ancient Syriac, just as modern Greek has descended from the ancient classical tongue of Hellas. The classical Syriac is in use among them as a kind of sacred language, their Scriptures being in that elder form of speech. There are scores of Syrian writers, like Bar-Hebræus, Ephraem Syrus, Simeon bar Saba'e, Jacob of Nisibis, Mar Narsai, Mar Mari, Yacob Burdeana, Isho-Yobb, John of Beth Garmi, Isho Maru Zaya, and many others whose works have been written in Latin, Greek, and many of the modern languages. These are called only Syrians. In fact, all impartial writers call them Syrians, and use no other racial name. Another designation for the Syrians is "Saint Thomas Christians." They refer to the apostle Thomas as having been associated with Adai (Thaddeus) and Mari (of the number of the Seventy). Several of the Christian Fathers inform us that Thomas traveled eastward into India, preaching as he advanced. The people were converted and called by his name,



NESTORIANS FROM THE PLAIN

No matter whether they were Assyrians, Chaldeans, or what not, it is now 2,500 years since the Assyrian nation was broken up, and but little less since the second Chaldaic period was brought to an end by Alexander the Great. Since then these people have been in subjection to alien rulers. Their powerful and tenacious nature has won for them a premier place in the civil life of all ages, and is to-day the means of furnishing a great part of Western Asia with a class of merchants and villagers far higher in the scale of civilization and culture than the people among whom they live.

A fair estimate of the number of Nestorians in Turkey and Persia, previous to the recent massacres, is two hundred thousand. As indicated by the foregoing, it will be seen that Persia, in comparison with other lands, has a very small Christian population.

Modern missions were first established in the sixteenth century by Roman Catholic fathers, and there are in the neighborhood of eight to ten thousand adherents of that faith. The earliest Protestant missionaries were Moravians, who came in 1747, their special purpose being to labor among the Parsees. Owing to the disturbed condition of the country they were unable to remain. The first permanent Protestant

mission was established by Rev. Justin Perkins and Dr. Asahel Grant, in 1835; these gentlemen had in view the winning of the Nestorians to the evangelical church. Some twenty years ago the author, a native of Persia and educated in an American college, returned to his home as a Baptist missionary; the first one known since the days of the apostles. The total number of Protestants in 1914 was estimated at three thousand communicants and ten thousand adherents. A few years ago the Russian Orthodox Church sent priests to Urmia, who established a mission. They claimed to have sixty thousand members.

It is greatly to be regretted that the different Christian societies in Persia are not and never were on friendly terms. Although the numbers for whom they labor were but small, each society had its own representative at the Persian court, to plead the cause of his particular adherents. At times the bitterness was so great that various factions have actually fought together to the point of inflicting wounds upon one another. On such occasions they were

forced to appear before Mohammedan judges who fined them heavily.

The Mohammedans were, of course, pleased to see the Christians fighting one another. In the towns the latter were always at variance; each sect claimed that the others had no right to be there, and they opposed one another with great animosity. Each despised the other, very often on the mere ground that one had been the longer in the country. These bitter and outrageous feelings have been held for years, many years. The complaints were transmitted from one generation to the next. Alas! one may see a similar condition of affairs among them in this country, where a difference of religious opinion, often of smallest consequence, leads to open breach and a reign of hate. How vastly better it would be if their petty religious jealousies were made to give way to a grand unity of thought, a part of the fine feeling of national patriotism.

The author has an earnest hope that some arrangement may be made, through American Christians, whereby a much more effective

work may be carried on among Oriental peoples. There *are* means which, if adopted, would accomplish a great deal toward the evangelization of the followers of Mohammed. But it is an almost insurmountable task for American or European missionaries. It belongs more properly to the natives of those lands; to those who are akin to them in customs, characters, and habits of thought. "Orientals to Orientals."

It is really pitiable that native talent and understanding, of which there is a plentiful supply, is not utilized to a much greater extent to prosecute a work practically beyond the powers of Occidentals. In more than one instance Persian youths of great promise have been prevented from giving scope to their abilities, although without question they could and would have accomplished much if given an opportunity.

II

PRE-RUSSIAN CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS

II

PRE-RUSSIAN CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS

THE ruling powers of this country, being Mohammedan, oppress their Christian subjects in the most cruel manner, treating them very often worse than slaves. As a rule, the Christians live in towns, or in rural communities, by themselves, although in some instances in the same village with Mohammedans; but they are always surrounded by Moslems. The landlords, or aghas, of the villages are usually Moslems, who govern their tenantry in something of a feudal style. As land is a favorite investment in Persia, and as the Mohammedan landowner is very tenacious of his holdings, the aghaship of a village commands a high price, enhanced by the fact that the Christian tenant is an industrious person. The tenant has to

pay for the privilege of building a house on land belonging to the landlord, and therefore becomes a sort of vassal of the latter.

In addition to the payment of ground-rent, he must pay a tax for every female buffalo (the commonest beast of burden for farm work), for every cow, for every ewe, and for every she-goat. He must pay to the agha from one-half to two-thirds of all the produce of his farm. Besides a poll-tax, his hay-fields, his vineyard, and his fruit trees are all taxed. Nor is this all, for since he is practically at the mercy of his landlord, the latter may require three days' labor from each of his rayats without pay. In reality he forces them to devote as much of their time to him as he may see fit. He receives from each householder a load of fuel, so many eggs, three fowls, and a fee on the occasion of every marriage. Besides this, every house must pay to the *ser perest*, the Mohammedan governor of Christian communities, a load of wood. No favors are granted without some sort of payment being first made. The master sells his tenants grain and flour at a price above

the market. He ties them up and beats them for slight offenses. He carries off the most beautiful of the Christian girls for his harem. To all this and more the poor peasant must submit for fear of worse persecution if he dares to complain.

Across the border, in Turkey, the peasants sometimes own the land, otherwise they are tenants of the agha. In either case their condition is deplorable, for they have no rights that a Turk or Kurd is bound to respect. In some of the villages they have been robbed until they are absolutely without the means of paying taxes; then they are beaten until the fact of their inability to pay is established beyond dispute. Squeezed between the rapacity and violence of the Kurds and the exactions of the Turkish officials (who connive at outrage so long as the victims are Christian), their condition is the most pitiable conceivable.

They have no representatives in the cities of Europe or Asia. Hemmed in by mountain ranges, they are at the mercy of their oppressors. Without leaders, advisers, or friends;

rarely visited by travelers; with no voice that can reach Europe; with a present of intolerable bondage and a future without light, yet through it all they cling passionately to the faith received by tradition from their fathers.

The following incident will illustrate the manner in which they keep their faith under terrible persecution:

A deacon of a Nestorian church stopped at a certain village, lodging, according to custom, in the chief's house. When he had supped a servant summoned him to attend the lady of the house. In great surprise he followed the messenger. He was led into the presence of an old woman who fairly wept with joy at sight of him, the first Christian she had seen during sixty years of captivity. She had been taken captive during the great raid of 1845, and had been made a scullion in the house of her master. By sheer force of character and personal honesty, she had raised herself to the position of mistress of the house, in which capacity all were agreed that she had been a blessing. Nor had she relaxed her Christian observances during all those years in the household of a Moslem, but carefully kept the Sabbath and the fast-days of her sect. Having secured from the deacon a morsel of bread blessed at the Eucharist, without which no Nestorian sets out on a journey, she bade her visitor adieu, confident of possessing the blessing of the church against the time when her soul should be required of her.

THE COMING OF THE RUSSIANS

The Russian Government has been constantly endeavoring to follow the program which Peter the Great mapped out for Russia many years ago. One of the items of this program was that they must find an outlet to the Persian Gulf; and they have always been working toward that end. Persia has been a center of European politics for more than a century. The writings of Sir John Malcolm show that more than a hundred years ago England and France were working, tooth and nail, to gain the favor of the shah-in-shah. The Persians were crafty enough to get money and gifts from both parties. As the years rolled by Russia began to gain in power, and France gradually withdrew from the contest. The rivalry between England and Russia increased. England must keep an eye on Persia to protect her Indian Empire. Her way she must have, or foil others. This state of affairs lasted for many years, each country sending its shrewdest diplomats to the Persian court.

Nasr-ed-Din Shah died in 1896; his son, Muzaffar-ed-Din, was proclaimed ruler. He was a good man, but a weak ruler, and very unlike his father. During his reign Persia became a debtor nation; Muzaffar not only spent the large accumulations inherited from his father, but borrowed money from Russia, England, and the two foreign banks of Teheran; sums equivalent to twenty million dollars. Most of this money was spent on journeys to Europe. Muzaffar was beloved by his people, yet he unconsciously drove his country into bankruptcy.

During his reign a demand was made by the people for a better government, one of the demands being for the dismissal of the prime minister, whose quarrels with the priesthood were the root of the trouble.

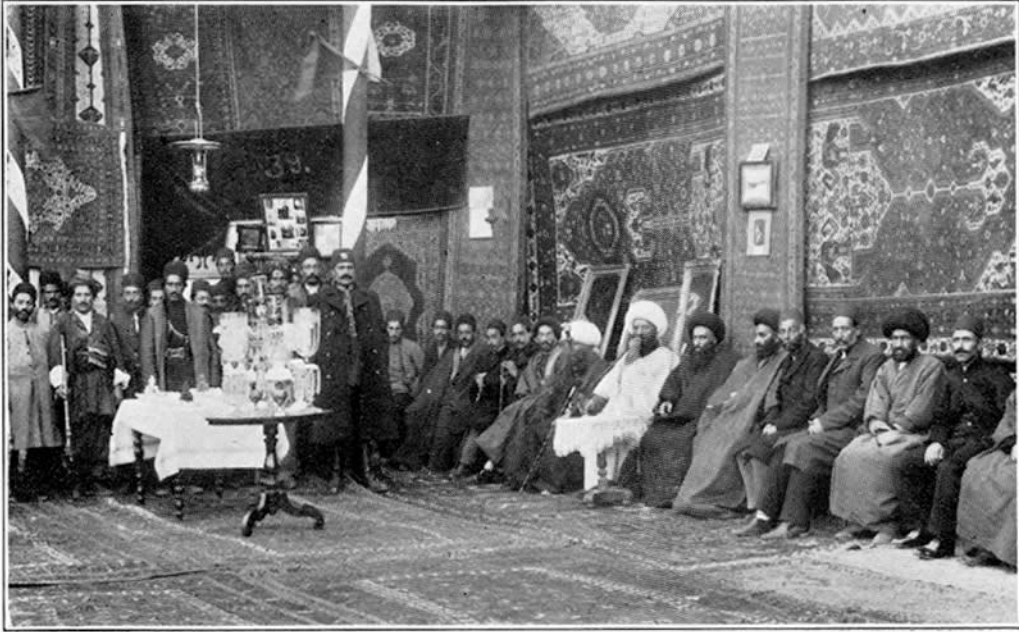
In all Mohammedan countries the clergy has much to say relative to governmental affairs. The mullahs went in large numbers from one holy place to another, inciting the people to action. The bazaars of Teheran were closed for a time, this being one of the simplest and most common forms of protest in Persia. They

were again opened by the prime minister. Public gatherings were organized in support of the grievances, and at one of these a sayid (descendant of the prophet) was shot. Agitation grew in intensity, but the government finally subdued the mobs. Fifty mullahs and merchants went to the British legation for *bast* (protection), and were followed by others until the number reached fourteen thousand. Why they went they scarcely knew, their purpose being vague. Finally some one made use of the word *mashruteh* (constitution). Then others began to explain its meaning to the multitude. Great interest was displayed; once aroused, it spread throughout the province. Soon a constitution was demanded. Through the influence of the British minister this was promised by the authorities, the *bastis* were satisfied and returned to their homes.

But the hated prime minister came back again, and the shah refused to sign the regulations for the assembly. Then negotiations between the Russian and British representatives began, and for the first time the nations cooperated,

taking measures which issued in material form a year later by the signing of an Anglo-Russian agreement. While things were thus at a half-way stage, Muzaffar-ed-Din died, January 8, 1907, and his son, Mohammed Ali, was crowned shah, January 19, 1907. All Europe was now interested at the prospect of an Anglo-Russian rapprochement, and there was talk of a division of Persia into spheres of influence as an item among the terms of a possible definite arrangement between the two powers.

This very thing made the Persians suspicious, and developed an intense jealousy of everything and everybody of foreign blood, irrespective of nationality. All non-Mohammedans, in every part of the country, suffered persecution; Christians, Jews, and Parsees were murdered. A number of secret societies were organized, called *anjumans*. They formed a sort of Tammany, corrupt motives being the mainspring. The situation in the provinces went from bad to worse; anarchy became supreme; robbery and murder were unchecked.



PERSIAN ANJUMAN

The national *mejliss* (parliament) and the king were far apart. Fighting took place between the shah's followers and the nationalists. Many were killed on both sides. At last the Russians stepped in, with a thousand Cossacks and heavy artillery, under an eminent general. They sided with the monarch; the parliament buildings were destroyed; order was established, and the Russian general was made governor of Teheran. For about a month thereafter comparative quiet reigned. Then the shah, ascertaining who most of his opponents were, destroyed them. Tabriz, the second largest city in Persia, was in a turmoil. Rioting took place; more fighting occurred between the governmental forces and the nationalists. Foreigners were handled roughly; Russia and England worked in harmony. An alarm was spread to the effect that the local national assembly was planning an attack upon all foreigners unless the powers intervened. At this juncture the Cossacks on the border were ordered to Tabriz, and their appearance acted like oil on troubled waters. All Persian factions

immediately made peace with one another. In answer to the question as to what right England or Russia had to interfere with Persia when she was engaged in a civil war, the reply was that they proposed to protect, at all costs, the lives and property of foreigners and Christians. The Russian troops now occupied all the larger centers in northern Persia. This accounts for their presence in Urmia at the outbreak of the present war in 1914.

The Christian people of northern Persia had been hoping and looking for the advent of the Russians for many years; in fact, for more than a century. I have heard old men say that they wished they might live long enough to see the Russians. Indeed, their coming was the commencement of a new era in the lives of these persecuted, downtrodden, and despised Christians. So great was the change that it was noticed in a short time. Like the seed placed under a stone in the ground and left there, the Christians were suppressed in growth by their taskmasters. The Russians lifted the stone, and the Christians quickly increased

in prosperity and strength. Many changes were made by landlords in the reduction of taxes. A large number of the people registered as members of the Russian Orthodox Church. No doubt some of these were in sympathy with the tenets of this sect, but the majority had different motives; they desired to get rid of the load under which their backs had bent, and the most effective plan, according to their ideas, was to join the Greek Church.

In that way they secured the championship of the Russian bishop, at the time a very violent man, and through him of the Russian consul, and finally of the Russian Government. The landlords were stripped of their former power; the prosperity of their tenants increased accordingly. The well-to-do built large and handsome residences outside the walls of the cities.

In a few years the crooked Oriental town of Urmia became a modern European city, some of its streets really beautiful. Rich merchants erected modern shops, and brought great quantities of European goods to display on their

shelves. They were much more ambitious than the Mohammedans and more progressive. The Christian section was kept neat and clean; doctors increased in numbers and skill; a number of Christian schools were opened, and the Russians saw to it that they were protected. The author opened a school for Mohammedan girls in Urmia; in a few months it was closed by order of the Persian governor. The author, being an American citizen, complained to the Russian consul, who immediately wrote the official, who instantly surrendered the key, and the school was reopened and conducted without further difficulties. Thanks are due to the Russians. Some of the wealthier Christians now became landlords. The Christians, learning of the distress of Christian residents of the territory affected by the Turko-Balkan war, quickly collected the sum of ten thousand dollars and sent it as a relief fund.

MOHAMMEDAN ANIMOSITY

There are great varieties of singular religious practices and superstitions amongst the Persian Mohammedans.

Their law of clean and unclean meats is copied after that of the Jews. Oysters, lobsters, hare, and pork are all abominable. According to their strict notions, it is pollution for a Christian to enter the house of a Mohammedan. The touch of a Christian makes food unclean; hence a Mohammedan will not buy meat that has been slaughtered or handled by one of the despised sect. Some village children, their clothes in tatters and covered with dirt, were given a few grapes by a Christian. Their parents would not allow them to eat the fruit until it was washed. If the strict Shiah is under the business necessity of entering a Christian's house, he will not drink tea from the latter's cups, or even in the house, unless made by a Mohammedan servant. He will not smoke a pipe after a Christian nor accept his hospitality in any way. Indeed, Mohammedans have been abused and beaten for taking service with a Christian. A Mohammedan who was traveling with Christians asked for a drink of water from another Moslem. In reply he received a blow in the face with the remark that he was worse than the Christians because of his journeying in their company.²

One day I was about to enter a bazaar. The air was a little damp. I was stopped by a Moslem because, he said, my moist clothes would come into contact with theirs and they would therefore be defiled.

² Quoted by permission from S. G. Wilson, "Persian Life and Customs," Fleming H. Revell Co.

Vessels, also, if used by a Christian, are defiled and unfit for use. A copper vessel may be purified by immersing and praying over it, or by repeating the creed, but an earthen utensil must be broken. *Sakaus*, or water-carriers, will sometimes give a Christian a drink for a price greater than the value of the mug, then break the mug. They have even been known to break a bowl from which water was poured out onto a Christian's hands to wash them. Wash-water poured where the sun cannot shine upon it makes the place unclean forever. On such an occasion the owner of a house consulted a mullah as to what he should do. He was told that he would have to rebuild; he therefore demanded the price of the house, saying that he would be obliged to tear it down.

An American scientist, ignorant of the language, approached a lunch-stand, and putting down a piece of money reached for some kabab. The proprietor gave a shriek of dismay, fearing that pollution would result in the eyes of his customers. The same traveler drank water by having it poured into his hands. On account of these notions travelers in many parts of Persia are obliged to take their own cooking and drinking-vessels along with them. Often these difficulties are overcome

by the offer of a little extra money. A Persian proverb says, "By giving money the mullah can be cast out of the mosque."³

The love of money overcomes many of the orthodox Shiah's prejudices.

This defilement is supposed to extend not only to food and drink and their containers, but to other things as well. A street gamin, with not a clean square inch on his body, has been known after asking alms of a Christian, to wash the money carefully before putting it into his pocket. A Mussulman who was having a suit made by a Christian tailor, cautioned him not to press it as that would necessitate dampening it, nor to thread his needle by putting the thread in his mouth, nor to cut the thread with his teeth. For these reasons Christians are rarely permitted to enter a mosque or a shrine. A Mohammedan will not sell a Christian a copy of the Koran, or anything containing a verse from this sacred book. Nor will the unbeliever be allowed to touch it. The more bigoted will not give a Christian the polite

³ Wilson, " Persian Life and Customs."

greeting, "Peace be with you." For the infidel there is no peace; to him the expression is, "May God keep you" (*Allah sakh lasun*).

Sometimes the nature of these customs provokes retaliation. An English consul called upon a Persian. They shook hands. Then the Persian reached his hands out of the window to be washed by a servant. When the consul left he parted with the same greeting, then proceeded to the fountain in the courtyard, ordered his own servants to bring a towel and soap, and thoroughly washed his hands in the presence of his host. However, such extreme examples are becoming rarer.⁴

Of course Mohammedan law is opposed to Christian rulers, therefore the coming of the Russians meant, in the minds of many, a general doing away with Mohammedan customs. It was feared that their women would be made to go about unveiled, as Christian women are. A great many Christian girls having been restored to their friends and relatives, and the offenders punished, the Moslems looked for a general infringement of their religious laws. However, the Mussulman looked forward to a time when he might settle the score with the

⁴ Wilson, "Persian Life and Customs,"

Pre-Russian Condition of Christians

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Russian, and made secret alliances with the Moslem Turks, beginning as far back as the commencement of the present war. His hatred was raised to the greatest intensity by the kindly feeling of the Christian Persians for the Russians.

III

THE STORM-CLOUDS

III

THE STORM-CLOUDS

THE GERMAN PROPAGANDA

AT the outbreak of hostilities the Germans worked with all their power to incite the Mohammedan world. They had special agents even in Urmia. There were not only German and Austrian propagandists, but many Persian Mohammedans took part in these measures. The plan was to start a holy war, as in that way it would be possible to stir into action millions of Moslems from Persia, India, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Arabia, Turkestan, and other Mohammedan countries. With a force of from ten to fifteen million armed Mussulmans they planned to march against Russia first. Naturally, the Russians being occupied in fighting such an army, this would give the Germans better

opportunities on the Western fronts. At that time the entry of America into the contest was not counted upon. It was not supposed that the giant republic would step into the arena. To foster the feelings of bitterness against Christian nations generally the ablest German writers were enlisted, their efforts being directed toward inducing the Mohammedan to believe that Germany and Austria favored the Moslem cause. It was declared that the " Holy War " was in full swing all over the world, to the great discomfiture of unbelievers. It was reported that the English were destroyed and their greatest generals captured. The Moslem crusade, they said, was being carried on in Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, India, the Sudan. These utterly false reports constitute one of the principal reasons why the Mohammedans, in Turkey and in some other parts of the Moslem world, have been led to take sides against the cause of the Allies.

Here is a sample of one of the Holy War proclamations:

Mohammedans everywhere are fighting on the side of Germany; French, English, Serbian, Russian, and Japanese forces are being defeated. The Turks, under the Padishah of Stamboul, have beaten the Russians in many encounters. They have sunk a great number of French and English ships. The French are practically driven out of Morocco; the Italians have been soundly thrashed by Mohammedan troops. Our Russian enemies having been driven out of Persia, the English have fled from Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Now the children of the Padishah are coming into power. The soldiers of the holy war are fighting in India. Everywhere the Germans and Austrians have defeated the French and Russians. In fact, they are beaten to a standstill. The English are not yet entirely defeated, but have lost most of their soldiers and a great many of their warships have been sunk.

Every Mohammedan, knowing that he must die, also knows that he dies for Allah. Allah has seen the flag of the holy war with his own eyes.

Proclamations setting forth all of the above declarations were sent to the most trusted men, who were asked to use wisdom in guarding their secrets, and in conclusion were assured that by so doing they would find favor in the eyes of the government. What would have happened if the Moslem world had responded to the call of the Kaiser for a holy war? The past gives many examples of great struggles

for the domination of certain civilizations, a certain ideal, or a certain religion, and the fate of the world and the destiny of man and of the lives of untold millions have rested upon the triumph or failure of this or that cause. Take, as an instance, the time of Turkish military power in the past; of the Saracens' attempt to trample down and overrun the civilization of the West. Think for a moment what the Mongols accomplished in Asia; of what happened when Timour came with his fanatic hordes, almost exterminating the Christian world. One gets some idea of the magnitude and the ferocity of his period of successful conquest when it is realized that in 1380 he built a tower of mortar into which two thousand live men were molded in its construction. Seven years later he piled up seventy thousand human heads in the public square of Ispahan, then the capital of Persia; in 1401, ninety thousand in Bagdad. Three years before he massacred one hundred thousand prisoners in his invasion of India; and in 1400 buried alive four thousand horsemen whom he had taken prisoners. Nations

were wiped out, great countries devastated. Untold misery and wretchedness reigned throughout the vast tracts of territory for ages. The tide was finally stemmed by the superhuman efforts of the Poles, the saviors of Europe, and by internal dissensions. But suppose that these measures had met with failure? Where would have been the European civilization of to-day? What has happened in our own time to the millions of Armenians, Syrians, and others? All this might have been the consequence to Europe and even to the Americas. The storm of fury which broke upon the plain of Urmia is a specimen of that diabolical cruelty which turns a paradise of beauty into an inferno of tortured souls. And when reading of the atrocities in Belgium, Servia, and the other afflicted nations, one may readily understand that the Turks, in their war for loot and lust, have found congenial partners in the German soldiers. The Huns, akin to Genghis Khan and Timour in thought and mind, were and are the instigators of all this frightful slaughter.

The coming of the Russians was not unlike

the advance-guard of cloudland's forces which precede the approaching storm. The Christians of Urmia found shelter for a time from the heat of the Mohammedan sun under the shadow of these clouds; but alas! it was but the forerunner of tempest.

The summer of 1914 will never be forgotten as one of the most prosperous for the Christians. It was a time of utmost quiet and peace. The people everywhere went about their accustomed tasks without being molested. They planted new vineyards and orchards, planned new buildings, new homes, expecting fully that the era of prosperity would continue. They knew nothing whatever of the storm that was gathering in darkening and threatening form. Soon the clouds would twist and writhe, discharge their lightnings upon this plain of peace until a hurricane of horrors would harrow it, a hurricane which was to destroy hundreds of towns and villages, while thousands of people were to be massacred in cold blood, and other thousands of women and little children starved to death.

Long before Turkey declared war the Turkish Government, egged on by Germany, induced the Kurdish tribes on the Persian side of the frontier to descend into Persian territory and attack the towns of Azerbaijan, at the time garrisoned by Russian troops. On October 1, 1914, the real trouble began. That day a large force of Kurds came down from the hills to Tergavar, a Persian district adjoining Turkey's eastern boundary, and drove out the small force of Cossacks acting as a garrison. They then began to plunder and burn the Christian villages roundabout. Most of the Christians escaped, however, and fled to the city of Urmia. Every night we heard a continuous fusillade, and from the near-by hilltops could plainly see the villages on fire. Every day the refugees poured into the city and into the larger Christian towns of the plain.

It soon became evident that this was no ordinary Kurdish raid, but the attack of an organized army, thousands strong. It was, in fact, an expedition deliberately planned and organized by the Turks, whose object was to

drive out the Russians and take possession of northwestern Persia. But there can be no doubt of the scheme having been originally planned by Germans. There were Turkish officers amongst the Kurds, and German ammunition had been supplied to all. Moreover, an agreement had been effected with the Moslems of the city, who, when the Kurds entered, were to rise and join them in the plundering and massacring in the Christian quarters. About a month after this attack war was declared between Russia and Turkey. At the same time the Russians closed the Turkish consulates at Urmia, Tabriz, and Khoi. They expelled the Kurds and other Sunni Moslems from the villages near Urmia. The Turks, in retaliation expelled several thousand Christians from adjoining regions in Turkey.

It soon became clear that the small force of Cossacks was not sufficient to repel the enemy. Fearing this, my people became a prey to fresh anxieties, but the Russian consul encouraged us and assured us that reinforcements were coming. Day after day passed, yet no reinforcements



ASSEMBLAGE OF KURDS

arrived. At that critical period the Russians raised a very useful additional force by serving out rifles and ammunition to Christian inhabitants of the region, in that way increasing their effectiveness by some three thousand men.

The climax was reached on Sunday, October eleventh. All day large bands of Kurds could be seen coming down the mountain slopes. The Russians, besides having but a limited number of Cossack soldiery, had very few guns. Nevertheless they used these to the best possible advantage, and shelled the enemy as they approached within range. This checked the attack for a time, but after the darkness fell the Kurds came on again, and during the night made a determined attack on Charbash, a village inhabited by Christians, and located only about half a mile from the city wall.

Firing began about ten in the evening and continued throughout the night, but the Russians and Christian natives made a good defense, and in the morning the enemy retired, leaving many dead behind them. One of the

slain was a Turkish officer of high rank, and some valuable documents were found in his pockets. Although there was a good deal of skirmishing in the neighborhood, this was the last attempt in force for the time. It was generally believed that an attack on the city had been planned for the Monday night, for behind the enemy lines were a great many women and children with baskets and bags for carrying plunder.

Very soon after this the Russian reinforcements arrived, bringing guns of large caliber and an ample supply of ammunition. The Turks and Kurds disappeared while the Russians advanced toward the mountains. They pushed the Kurds closely, and upon their return brought with them huge droves of sheep, herds of cattle and oxen, etc. Meanwhile the city was being fortified by Russian troops, and thousands of people were employed in digging trenches. These acts of preparation made us feel a sense of security, and we never imagined that our protectors would be compelled to leave us.

But while these preparations were in progress a disturbance started in the district to the southeastward. Several Turkish and Kurdish chiefs rallied their followers and assembled an army of some thousands. Marching north toward Urmia they were met by the Russians and their Persian allies near Souj-Boulak; this was in the latter part of December. Two engagements took place; the Russians were successful in the first, but at Miandoab, at the south end of Lake Urmia, they were routed by the Turks and Kurds. About the same time Enver Pasha invaded Transcaucasia, which borders Azerbaijan on the north, from Armenian Turkey, at Sarikamysh, in the Kars region. This threatened to cut off communication between Russia and Persia, and orders were given for the evacuation of Urmia, Tabriz, and Khoi. That of Urmia took place on January second, of Salmas a day or two later, and of Tabriz on January fifth.

Meanwhile the situation in Transcaucasia changed; Enver Pasha's army was routed, and the evacuation of Khoi did not take place.

While these disturbances were going on, with constant fighting on all sides, the Christian people of Urmia became more and more nervous over the situation. Yet they had the utmost faith in the Russian prowess, and did not for a moment think that we should be left unprotected and at the mercy of so cruel and unscrupulous an enemy. Alas! we were mistaken.

On December twenty-ninth we heard that our friends in Urmia were to leave, withdrawing their troops to the north. At the town of Geogtapa, where I was living at the time, the Russians had a telephone station. It was located in the house of Mam-Yoseph, a neighbor of mine. Hearing the rumor of evacuation I rushed to the station, and entering in an agitated manner asked if the report were true. The soldier in charge replied, "Oh, no! No! We will never leave this place!" Said I: "My friend, if you do leave us without warning you may be sure that every Christian here will be butchered!" He repeated his assurances in the most emphatic manner. "Well," said I, "possibly

you do not know. I wish you would ask your general." He took up the telephone and spoke to some one. The answer came back: "Nonsense! We will not leave that place in which we have been so long."

I was quite satisfied with the assurance, and went to my home and ate my supper in peace. Yet that same evening the Russian telephone operators, being on the outskirts of the town, stole quietly away, going several miles northwest to join the Russian main army. During the same night the entire Russian force left our section, withdrawing toward Transcaucasia.

IV

THE CLOUDBURST

IV

THE CLOUDBURST

ON Saturday morning when we arose we heard that the Russians had gone. The telephone station had been vacated and the telephone was gone. The excitement among our people became so great that some of them began to leave at an early hour. Those who did were immediately robbed and murdered by the Mohammedans. As for ourselves, we dared not leave our homes. Thousands of Moslems were out with their swords, guns, and daggers in an eager search for Christians. We were trapped, and could think of no way of escape. That night a number of our young men, who possessed some sort of firearms, went to certain roads leading to the town and built barricades on the roofs of houses facing the roads and there stood watch, as we fully expected an attack

at any moment. The Mussulmans would have massacred us at once despite our feeble defenses, but feared a return of the Russians.

That very day a meeting of the city officials and the leading Mohammedan clergy was held, and it was unanimously voted that every Christian must be destroyed at once. Yet after some discussion of the matter, and consideration of what they might eventually have to answer for, it was decided that the better plan was to send for the Kurds, who were in the near-by mountains, as if the Russians did return and threw the blame upon the Moslems of the city, a severe punishment was certain to follow. Therefore they sent special messengers to a number of Kurdish chiefs representing thousands of warriors, asking them to come down to the plain at once, offering them the Christian inhabitants as a gift, to do with as they pleased.

On the night that the Russians left, taking roads that led through many Christian villages and towns, the residents of these places, knowing what the Kurds would do once they were cognizant of what had taken place, left



THE HEARTLESS KURDS
(Types of the men who surrounded Geogtapa.)

their homes and followed the troops, hoping for protection and escape from Kurdish savagery. I doubt whether the story of that awful flight can ever be adequately told. Few tales that I have ever heard can compare with it in heartrending interest.

The entire northern section of the Urmian plain learned of the departure of the Russian troops on Saturday night, January 2, 1915.

By midnight the terrible exodus had begun, and by morning most of the Christian villages were deserted. People left their cattle in their stables and all their household goods in their homes, just as they were, and hurried away to save their lives. If any one possessed a horse, a donkey, or any other beast of burden he was fortunate; and if he happened to have ready cash in his house he was even more so. But well-to-do though one may be, he does not always have money on hand. Therefore many who, according to the standards of the country, were rich, started on their long journey with no more than a mere pittance, and the vast majority were on foot, tramping through

snow, slush, and mud. Before the seven long days of terrible travel through the cold and dampness to the Russian border were accomplished, all encumbrances had been cast aside—bedding, extra clothing, even bread—for it soon became a question with the misery-racked, weary, struggling crowds which they should carry, their bedding and clothes, or their babies. Very many of the weaker ones never reached the border, but lay down by the roadside and died. Those who did succeed in holding out to the end were so haggard and emaciated that their own friends and relatives failed to recognize them.

Yet worse than the weary tramping by day were the awful nights. In the villages by the way every possible shelter was so crowded that there was no room to lie down. Before morning the air would become so foul that the occupants were almost suffocated. And yet those who found no shelter were in a worse plight, lying out in the mire, exposed to the searching cold and dampness. Some of the children were carried off by wolves and devoured; many died

from exposure. Parents became separated from each other and lost their children in the darkness, and in the masses of hurrying, frantic, and demoralized people were unable to find them again. Hoping against hope that they might find them during the ensuing day they staggered on. At every stopping-place exhausted fathers and mothers ran anxiously from group to group, and house to house, seeking lost children.

At one place seventy people were found in the mud, frozen and dead. One young man found his mother in such a plight, frozen in the mire, and shot her through the head, rather than leave her to the slow torture of death by exposure or to be eaten by wolves. As one heard these sad tales repeated again and again, with only slight differences of detail, one could but wonder what human flesh and blood can not withstand under the stress of such a crisis.

Many terrible stories have come to my ear (says one writing of the occurrence), but the following is sufficient to give the reader some faint idea of the horrors of that dreadful flight. One old man, accompanied by two daughters-in-law and six grandchildren, started on that fatal night from the village of Karagoz, a place with which I am well acquainted. All were afoot, the women carrying their little ones by turns, while the old man stumbled along as best he could, unable to bear any burden. He soon gave out, lay down by the roadside,

and died. The two women and their little charges pressed on for a day or so longer, when one of them gave birth to an infant in the half-frozen mire by the roadside. The mother tore off her dress, wrapped the baby in the pieces of cloth, and resumed her weary tramp. Fortunately the women found their husbands awaiting them at Djoulfa, a hamlet on the Russian border. It was a sorrowful meeting, made more so as during the complications arising from the arrival of the baby two of the other children had been separated from the party and lost. Imagine their feelings of satisfaction and thankfulness when two days later a wagon-load of waifs were brought in, and the two missing youngsters found amongst them.

Kind-hearted Russian soldiers had rescued them. But the hardships they had endured were too much for youth to withstand, and two days afterward the children died.⁵

People dying and children being born by the wayside were but commonplaces of this exodus, though not many had to undergo a combination of these ordeals. The night of January second about twenty-two thousand persons left their homes in Urmia city and district; it is as yet impossible to ascertain how many of the number perished.

Meanwhile, on Sunday morning the news

⁵ Bulletin No. 12, Board of Foreign Missions, 1915.

was brought that the town of Diza-taka was being ravaged by Mohammed Bek, a Kurdish chief. By this time all the Christian villages in the Baranduz River section were deserted. The Kurds had taken possession and were pillaging them, aided by Mohammedan Persians.

This information created great excitement in Geogtapa, at the time crowded with refugees, who had poured in from twenty-eight neighboring villages.

The majority had brought a portion of their effects with them. The people of Geogtapa, having compassion, opened their houses to the strangers and shared with them whatever they had, supplies being plentiful. Every hour brought more distressing news. By evening the mission building and our home were packed with women and children. Because we were American citizens the people thought that the Kurds would not attack us; therefore they brought all their valuables with them and filled our large and commodious cellar.

All Sunday night I was up and out in the

streets with others, visiting those who were watching, doing my best to lessen the excitement. About two o'clock Monday morning some of the town leaders met in one of the houses to consider what means were best to pursue in protecting ourselves. While this conference was going on two Kurds, who lived in a near-by village and whom we knew very well, came in. One of them was, in fact, employed as a collector of taxes in our town. He told us that Mohammed Bek demanded two thousand dollars from Geogtapa, or would order an attack. We said that we should be glad to see the chief personally as soon as morning dawned, and that we were willing to accede to his demand. The two Kurds departed; later we learned that they were merely spies, sent to ascertain whether the Russians had really left or not; the Kurdish fear of the Russians was very great.

We felt a little easier now and went to our homes again, hopeful that some kind of settlement might be arrived at. During the entire night almost everybody remained in the streets,

and the excitement was at its height. Some left the town for the city of Urmia, others went to Goolpashan, yet others to more distant places where they thought a greater chance of safety lay.

A few of the leaders in Geogtapa conceived it to be advisable for all the people in the town to leave at once for the city, taking nothing with them; but the majority objected to this plan, as not all of the women and children could be gotten ready upon such short notice. However, we kept them quiet by telling them that we would meet the Kurdish chiefs and possibly might prevent an attack by the payment of a certain sum of money. This had a soothing effect, so that most went to their homes before morning had far advanced, encouraged by a belief that something would be done to obviate, or at least lessen, the danger. I returned finally to my own house, finding it still crowded. I told those there what had happened in regard to a settlement with the Kurds, whereupon nearly all left, feeling more tranquil.

I said to my wife that I was hungry and she

prepared me a meal. I sat down, but before I had taken a mouthful I heard firing in the southwestern portion of the town. I put down my cup of coffee and started up; I knew what the firing portended.

It was a very cold morning. The ground was covered with snow to a depth of several inches. Without waiting to put on either overcoat or rubbers, I hurried out into the street. There I saw hundreds—yes, thousands—of men, women, and children running from all parts of the town toward the hill. Geogtapa, as I have previously stated, is partly built upon a slope. All were crying and shrieking: " The Kurds have come! They are here! They are going to kill us! What shall we do? Where shall we escape? " Louder and louder rose the cries, " Oh, save us!! "

I watched these poor wretches, but before I could utter a single word of consolation the Kurds were upon us.

The firing was intense now. While I thus stood trying to collect my thoughts, wondering what I could do to aid these poor people, I



MRS. SHAHBAZ

thought I heard my wife call to me and looked back. There she stood upon the roof of our mission building. We had in our home a large and beautiful American flag. My wife had thought of this flag and had placed it on the top of the mission structure, praying aloud as she waved it to and fro. It soon attracted the attention of the crowd running in every direction below, bewildered and confused, not knowing which way to turn. At once they conceived the idea that the American flag could in some way succor them, and began to pour into the mission yard. Every inch of space in the building, yard, and roof was soon filled; I followed the crowd. I was told that more than twenty-five thousand Kurds and some thousands of Persian Mohammedans had surrounded the town. Many were carrying sacks and ropes. Some even had ox-carts in which to carry off the plunder.

My wife joined me in a moment; she was extremely nervous and frightened, but had not lost her presence of mind. She told me that in her opinion it was bad for the people to gather

in this manner, for if the Kurds came all might be butchered in one mass, whereas if they were scattered about it would be easier for at least a part to escape. So I told all I could make hear what my wife had said and advised them to leave at once, and I led the way out of the enclosure. Some then ascended the hill to the church at its summit; some crossed the street to another church, while the rest of us, perhaps a thousand in all, tried to leave the town through the northeast section. But we found our way blocked, so turned and entered the churches. If I remember correctly, I was the last man to go into the church. Looking in from the door I found that the edifice was jammed full, everybody standing up, praying and weeping. I even heard little children offering up such heart-breaking prayers that I could not bear to remain to hear any more. So I went out into the street and stood in the shadow of a wall. I listened to the firing which was now *a* continuous fusillade, and to the crying and wailing of those inside. Several of the Christians who possessed firearms were now engaging

the enemy from behind barricades; some from the tops of their houses; while nearly a hundred were on top of the church on the hill, the highest place in the region. From this point they could keep the Kurds in check in every direction except one. The southern portion of the town was already in the hands of the marauders, the houses there making a fine place of defense, those on the hill being unable to see them. The Kurds had set the western part of the town on fire. When it was realized that the safest place was the church on the hilltop, defended by our men, the refugees again flocked toward it, endeavoring to enter. I may explain, by the way, that this church was surrounded by a large yard with a wall about ten feet high. But the entrance to this yard was in such a conspicuous place that those seeking its shelter were shot down as they neared the gate. Scores were killed in this manner, the majority women and children.

Several hundreds now left by the northern side, the men on the hill having cleared the way with their guns. That portion of the country

is very level and open, therefore it was not difficult to clear it. No Kurds were in that locality as yet.

I was still in the street. There were many wounded on all sides. Suddenly I realized that I had lost my wife and children in the excitement and confusion. There was no time to lose in an effort to find them again. "Where shall I go? Where shall I look for them?" I said to myself. My wife was a foreigner, and my four boys who were with her, small and unable to help themselves. I rushed into the church, forced my way through the dense mass of people, and was fortunate enough to find my entire family grouped together near the platform. All were weeping and praying. My wife, being known as an American, was surrounded by a score of our Christian Persian women, who were begging her to pray. They were saying: "Khanim, we know that you are a Christian woman. Pray! God may hear your prayers, and we may be saved," at the same time striking their breasts. My poor wife was crying bitterly while offering her prayers.



THE CHURCH ON THE HILLTOP, GEOGTAPA
(X indicates the entrance where scores were shot. The cemetery is in the foreground.)

It is difficult for me to convey to the reader a mental picture of the scene of these experiences. The church surmounting the hilltop, an elevation of about one hundred and fifty feet, was a strong edifice of brick, with walls forty-two inches thick, and covered with a heavily timbered roof, shingled, parapetted, and overlaid with earth. It was impregnable to any firearm excepting cannon. A large yard and a wall surrounded it. The church wherein we last took refuge was immediately below that of the Russians, on the southern slope of the hill. It was of similar construction, although larger. Its seating capacity was seven hundred. The wall encompassing its grounds was about twelve feet high at the rear and fifteen feet at the front. A gateway some seven feet wide faced the front entrance to the church, and a smaller one pierced the wall on the south. Both these gates were composed of heavy planking thickly studded with iron rivets. The town lay mostly to the south of the hill, the northern side being near its limits, so that to one viewing the country from the height the town was

spread out below, like a panorama, to the west, south, and east; while to the northward, over the tops of a few scattered dwellings, one gazed upon a broad expanse of level plain covered to the horizon line with vineyard and orchard, now all lying under a mantle of snow. These vineyards were separated from the roads and fields by mud walls.

Above the din of rifle-fire, above the cursing and yelling of the fiends below, now in possession of a greater part of the town, arose the cries of those within the church, in an agony of mortal terror. The spat of bullets striking the walls was but a too frequent punctuation of the steady volume of sound.

In this turmoil, of course, the children were necessarily neglected. We soon found that our youngest, Wilbert, but a little over two years old, had strayed and was lost. He was just beginning to speak a few words, and it was unlikely that he could render any assistance in identifying himself to those who might find him. A hurried but careful search failed to locate the child, and ten minutes later we left

the church and grounds through the south gate, went round the hill, and down into the northeastern part of town, our progress concealed by friendly walls until we had arrived at the confines of the settlement.

The firing was now terrific, and Moslems of every sort were pouring into Geogtapa from all points of the compass. I said to those who were with me: " We must go at once. We are almost surrounded!" But my wife began to weep again, and declared that she would never leave the place until she had found her little lost baby. My feelings were intensely wrought upon. I said to her: " Very well. I will go back and look for him once more." I came farther round the hill, trying to reach the top from the southeastern quarter. I was perhaps halfway up the slope when some one fired at me. The bullet missed, but so narrowly that I imagined I had been hit, and fell to the ground half senseless. After a few moments I put my hand to my ear and finding no sign of blood was greatly relieved. After some minutes' rest, to gather fresh strength and courage, I crept back

to our party. I told my wife that it was impossible to make further search for the lost one, as we were encompassed by our enemies on all sides. So we picked our way round the hill again, and started on our journey of escape, walking between the vineyards and beside an irrigation ditch. The borders of the canals and ditches are planted with trees in almost every instance. These sheltered us to a certain extent.

V

FLEEING FROM THE STORM

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THE scene about us was a most pathetic one. The Kurds had come upon us so quickly that a majority of the women had had no time to put on shoes or stockings, and many were very scantily clad. They were, of course, terribly frightened, and half of the poor creatures were walking barefoot in the snow. We were going very slowly, and as we passed along we saw a great number of children wandering about in the vineyards, helpless and crying, because separated from their parents.

No one waited for any one else; everybody looked out for himself. I told those of our party that I thought it best to head for Goolpashan, which we did. We had traveled but a short distance when I espied some three hundred armed Mohammedans just ahead of us,

behind a little wall. A number of them had handkerchiefs tied over their faces, and their caps and turbans pulled down so that we should not recognize them. We learned later that they were from villages in our neighborhood, people whom we knew. As soon as we neared them they opened fire. Our people began to shriek and cry aloud, dropping their belongings. I told my wife to run quickly and get behind a wall to the west of us. We ran, but my wife suddenly stopped. I looked down, and there on the snow saw two little babes, wailing and crying. Some of the mothers had had so much to carry and to care for that they had left these helpless ones in preference to leaving their older children, thus giving the latter more of an opportunity to escape. Upon seeing the infants my wife looked at me and exclaimed: "My God! What is going to become of us!" Then I cried aloud. My feelings revolted. I wondered why we, a Christian people, should be thus forsaken and abandoned to the mercy of the wretches who persecuted us. The devil seemed to possess me for the moment. I



GATHERING GRAPES

imagined him to be saying: "Christ has been your Master, and you claimed him for your Master. You have been serving him a long time. Where is he now? Why has he left you?"

There is a limit to human endurance, and it seemed to me that I had reached it. I experienced the anguish of Job. All about me, amidst the snow and the piercing cold, were hundreds of refugees, thinly clad or only half-clad, suffering from the winds and the cold, from wounds and the keenest torment of every kind. Surrounded by the most fiendish and heartless of enemies, whose very creed is cruelty, whose religion teaches that paradise awaits the destroyer of the unbeliever, there I was in the center of this great mass of humanity herded like sheep, unprotected by the slightest barrier, wailing, shrieking, moaning, in an agony of utmost despair.

There seemed to be no possible means of escape. My very soul revolted as I gazed round upon my little family and the host of kindly neighbors and relatives, all suffering from the same nightmare of terror and desperation.

But the soul knows no defeat. At such supreme moments, panic quickly gives way to a species of calm, and reason as quickly reasserts itself. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and memory, resuming her seat, exerts her soothing influence. The revolt against the justice of God was soon dispelled. My mind looked inward, and I thought of the thousands of Christian martyrs, dying amid surrounding elements as terrifying as those I now experienced. The words of a compassionate Saviour rose to my mind: "Child, think of the many who have died for my name's sake. Possess thy soul in peace."

This and kindred thoughts comforted me instantly; a calm succeeded the disturbed mental condition. "Thy will be done!" I exclaimed, and gathering my wife and little ones, together with the two babes in the snow, we plodded on. We were fortunate enough to deliver the infants to their parents the following day.

Our party was now split into halves by the cross-fire of the Moslems, one half fleeing to the northeast, toward the vineyards of the

Goolpashan region, as we had originally planned, while the others turned directly west. We joined these later, climbing over a wall, and crossing a road on the farther side. Glancing around I saw Shams-ul-la-Bek, who had been sent to urge the people to remain within the town. This man was dispatched to assure us that the Kurds would not be allowed to enter the town at all. As soon as I recognized the governor's agent, I called to him, asking where he was going. "To the city," he replied. "Won't you take us with you?" said I, at the same time promising him a present if he would assist us. Of course I had nothing with me to offer him. My wife, upon learning that Shamsul-la-Bek was on his way to Urmia, grasped his bridle and cried, "I won't let go until you promise to take us with you." I stepped forward and seized the horse's bridle upon the other side, so that for the time being the official was virtually our prisoner. After considering for a moment he said that we might accompany him. I called to those about us, bidding them to go ahead or to follow us; and so began our

journey to Urmia, a slow progress, for there were so many of the sick, the aged, the wounded, and of children that we could not proceed rapidly.

We had not gone very far when we met thousands of Mohammedans on the road, coming from every direction, bound for Geogtapa. Fortunately for us, when they saw us in the company of a government official, whom they recognized by his uniform, they made no demonstration against our party.

But when we reached Wazerabad, a Christian village, we found other thousands of Moslems engaged in gathering loot. They were breaking in the doors of houses and committing other acts of violence, while the streets were literally filled with plunder of every description. Now the Kurds had not arrived at this town as yet; the plunderers were all Persian Mohammedans. One treacherous-looking beast tried to rob some of our party, but my wife snatched a gun from the hands of some one and pointing it at the marauder threatened to shoot. He looked at her in astonishment and with



THE ONLY HOUSE REMAINING IN WAZERABAD

some amusement. What! A woman with yellow hair, and with foreign attire, daring to threaten him! But he let go of his victim and walked away, often turning to look behind him, apparently dumbfounded by the boldness of the American woman. The women of that country are so restrained and kept down, by custom and tradition, that they never dare to assert themselves. We pressed on and on, constantly meeting fresh hordes of Mohammedans coming from the city. Amongst one group I saw a man whom I knew, an agent of the government in a neighboring community. I called to him: "Ali Baba, come with us as far as the city." He acquiesced, and I bade him go ahead and lead the people. The nearer we approached the metropolis, the greater the number of Moslems! Upon arriving at the river bridge, about midway between Geogtapa and Urmia, we saw at least ten thousand gathered together.

Looking to the eastward from this point we perceived at a distance of about a mile a crowd composed of several thousand Christians. They had been wandering through the fields and

swamps, in the snow, trying to avoid the roads on account of the bands of murdering Mohammedans. When the Mussulmans in the neighborhood of the bridge saw that we were protected by native officials, they turned upon this other multitude of refugees and opened fire. It was a frightful attack. They shot down the men and looked about eagerly for comely girls and women to carry away. Those to the right of us turned to flee, but did not come directly toward us, in their efforts to escape the onslaught. All were screaming and yelling. Probably each individual was at the mercy of two or three, or more, armed Mohammedans. A great number of young girls, some not more than seven or eight years old, were openly assaulted there upon the roads and in the fields by these demons. Oh, it was a hellish scene! No pen-picture of the most infamous debaucheries of the infernal regions could adequately describe it!

I could endure it no longer; I turned away and pressed on with my people toward the city. For we could render no aid to those poor sufferers;

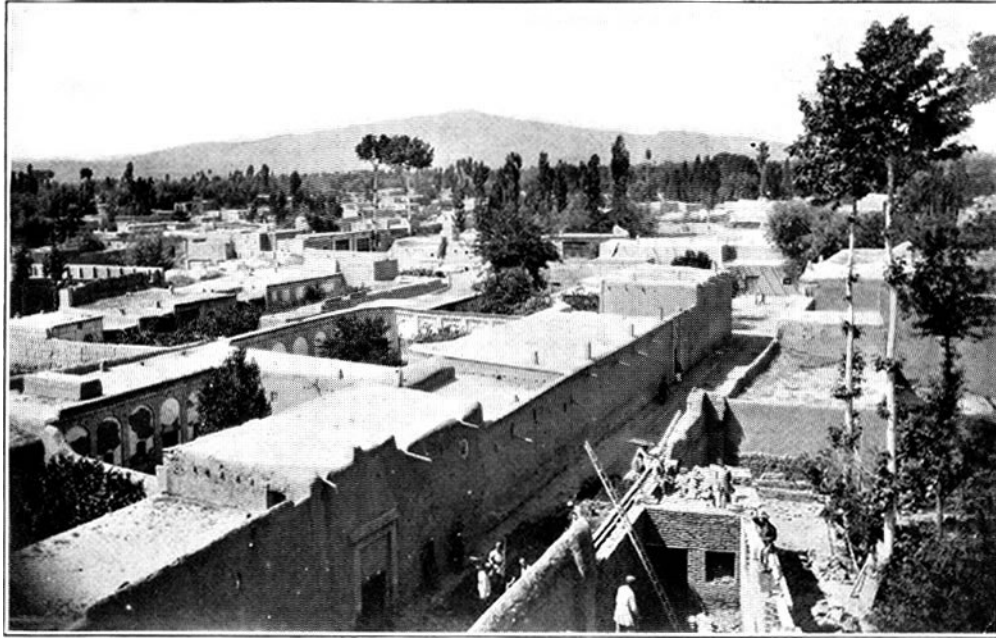
we could make no effort—could not raise a hand to succor a single soul!

About a quarter of a mile farther on I saw, in the distance, half a dozen horsemen coming toward us. They were riding furiously, one of them bearing in his hand something resembling a piece of cloth. I wiped away my tears that I might see the better, and thought that I recognized the cloth. I turned to my wife and asked, " Doesn't that look to you like an American flag? " It was! My joy was beyond expression, and I broke down and wept again. I felt as if America's hundred millions were following that flag to come and save us. Then the reaction came, and great hunger, thirst, and weariness overcame me. I wanted to recline in the snow and slush, and rest. I noted a bank of snow on the far side of the road, staggered over to it, and threw myself down at full length. Meanwhile the horsemen arrived. The flag-bearer was Doctor Packard, an American missionary, on his way to meet a Kurdish chief, Karaini Agha, to beg protection for the Christians. When he saw me he

inquired why we were fleeing. I could not talk to him, through excess of feeling. He turned to my wife who explained why we were leaving Geogtapa, and what was happening there. I beckoned to him to hasten on, for if he did not, thousands more would be murdered. He dashed away and I watched until he disappeared from sight. " God bless you and your dear little flag," said I fervently. Doctor Packard arrived at Geogtapa and at the risk of his own life saw the Kurdish chiefs. Then he went into the town and managed to persuade the Kurds to spare the lives of the people, provided they would deliver up their arms. Thus, by this brave man's action probably two thousand or more lives were saved.

After resting a few moments longer I rose from the snow, and we continued our mournful progress.

We reached the city, and upon entering found immense crowds assembled. Some were gloating over the wretched condition of the Christians, but others were beating their breasts (the sign of sorrow) and mourning over our



GENERAL VIEW OF A SECTION OF URMIA

miserable plight. We did not know where to go for protection. I thought that the governor might be willing to help us. Ascertaining from an official that the governor was then at the house of Vali, an ex-governor and one of the highest nobles of the city, I left our party and went to see him. My wife followed me into Vali's premises, the others remaining outside. Two or three times we were stopped by servants, but we pushed our way through and back into the inner court. There I found the governor with a large number of the higher city officials, some fifty in all. Among them was the mayor, the Sheik-ul-Islam, head of the clergy, together with others of the priesthood.

A dead silence followed the entrance of my wife and myself into the court. My feelings again overcame me and it was with the utmost difficulty that I could speak at all, my voice being so broken that I could scarcely articulate. I looked at the governor, forced back my tears, and said, "Come out and see what has happened to your family" (part of the town of Geogtapa belonged to him) . He stared at me

but said not a word. "Be sure," said I, "that this thing will not go without question!" At any other time I should not have dared to address him in such manner, but after the scenes I had witnessed, and the loss of my little child, I was determined to have my say even though it cost me my life. Of the fifty officials present none broke the silence, and so we turned and went away again.

Joining those who had remained in the street we wandered about for perhaps an hour. Finally we met an American missionary, Doctor Shedd,⁶ who, after he had questioned us concerning our flight, invited us all to his mission. May God bless this man; he has done much for the Christians of Persia.

We were given a room about ten by fourteen feet in dimensions. The day following so many of the refugees came to the place that twenty-three people were crowded into this room. Think of it!

The next day our little boy was found again. He had been taken in charge by some friends

⁶ Died of cholera, August 7, 1918.

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of ours, who brought him to us as soon as they ascertained our whereabouts. He was in a terribly frightened state and very hungry, having had nothing to eat for forty-eight hours. We were quite unable to go outside again and find him food, or milk, for the Kurds had now entered the city, and while we watched, he slowly passed away.

VI

THE SHELTER FROM THE STORM

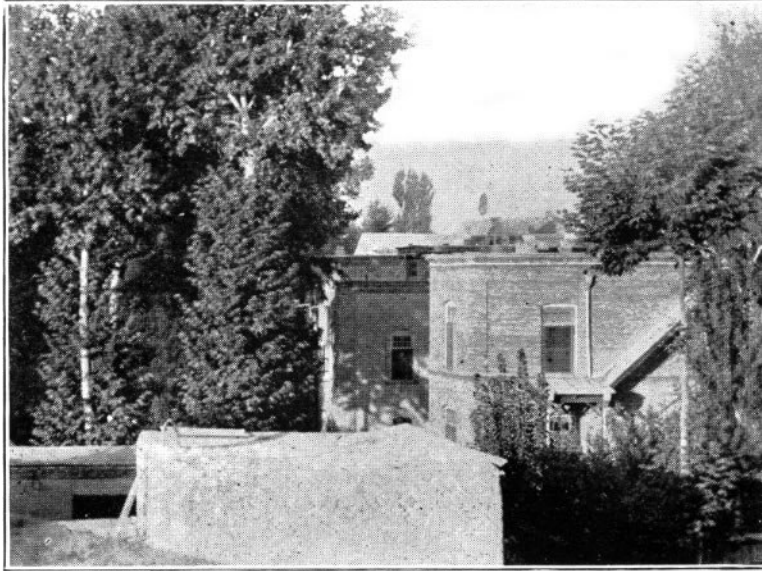
VI

THE SHELTER FROM THE STORM

WHAT the city of refuge was to the ancient Israelites this mission compound, in which we were now herded like sheep in a crowded fold, was to about twenty thousand Christians, who found within its confines a shelter from the tempest of Moslem hatred. Its walls were by no means powerful enough to keep back the hordes of Mohammedan wolves roving the streets and alleys on every side. The thing that really saved us from annihilation was the presence of nineteen American flags, placed upon the walls and over the one gate. Flying to the breeze the Stars and Stripes added a new glory to their luster, again becoming the savior of the weak and the oppressed.

And now, reader, join me in thought for a while, and try to imagine the scene where, for

five long and dreary months we had to endure, with what patience and fortitude we could command, the double anguish of mental and physical suffering. Let us view the picture, in imagination, from some near-by elevation. Looking down we see immediately below us the American mission compound, ground and buildings belonging to Americans, the property purchased with American money. The houses are but one and two stories in height, the entire premises being surrounded by a wall twenty feet high and three feet thick. A large gate forms the one entrance. The whole place is no greater in size than a city square; perhaps about as much ground is enclosed as is occupied by John Wanamaker's New York City store. There are several mission buildings, including a church, a school, a printing-office, and other minor structures. The grounds were beautifully kept, containing all sorts of trees and flowers, much resembling a handsome city park. Two wells supplied clear, cold water, while through the premises ran a small brook. In summer it was indeed a lovely spot.



THE MISSION COMPOUND
(Where twenty thousand found shelter)

But there were no sewers, hence no sanitation. Imagine the condition of things with twenty thousand people, men, women, and children, living there for five long months!

Let us now look out from the wall of the compound: what do we see? A large city spreading away upon all sides of us; its houses, not unlike those of ancient Pompeii, each within its own walls. It is a little world within itself. Nearly all of the streets are narrow and crooked. They are filled with Mohammedans of every description. Kurds from Mesopotamia, with their peculiar dress; from the Persian borders, with oddly shaped turbans; from the mountains of Kurdistan, with their baggy trousers. All have sharp and fiery eyes; all are armed to the teeth, ready to strike instantly if they can but catch sight of a Christian. There are Persian Moslems also, some of them from the mountain districts, some from the rougher sections of the city itself. All are roving about on a mission of murder, loot, and arson, ready to spring upon their prey whenever the least opportunity offers. Mingling with these

crowds one occasionally sees Jews, not, at the time, objects of hatred to the Mussulmans. Read this interesting story of a certain Jew:

As soon as the Turks and Kurds took possession of Urmia, this man, who was a Russian subject, suddenly disappeared. It was rumored that he had fled into Russian territory. Not so. Fearing capture he had dug a grave in his own garden, covering it over with a huge flat stone. In this hole he concealed himself, receiving sufficient air through a small hole he had made at one side of the stone. He lay throughout the day, retiring to his house for the night, but rising before the dawn to reenter his excavation. For more than five months he lived in this manner. When the Russians came back he emerged. I heard the story from his own lips the first morning after the danger was over.

During all this period the shops of the city were busier than ever, for extraordinary crowds were pouring in from all directions daily, hoping for bargains in the way of purchases, or in the disposition of spoils. The

rapine, burning, and robbery never ceased, as long as there was anything left to destroy or steal. All this was done quite openly, and the buying and selling was carried on briskly at all times.

Persian sheep are larger than American varieties. So many sheep, cows, and other domestic animals were taken from Christian dwellers that the Kurds could not convey them all to their mountain homesteads. Therefore they sold them to Persian Mohammedans. And at what prices! Sheep were often disposed of at five cents apiece, and cows as low as forty cents. Persian rugs worth one hundred dollars were sold for five dollars. Nearly everything went at corresponding rates.

Two Kurds saw a handsome yellow metal padlock attached to a door. They immediately began a quarrel over its possession. Not being able to come to an agreeable arrangement they decided to fight a duel over the article, and thus decide the matter of ownership. They wrenched the padlock from its fastenings, not without considerable difficulty by the way, and

laid it on the ground. Then they took their places at a distance of twenty-five paces from one another, and fired. Both were killed. This sort of thing is not uncommon. These people often fight to the death over mere trifles.

My own home was looted, then burned. The intruders burned all of my books, my most valued treasure.

While I was yet in captivity a Kurdish chief came to consult a doctor. He was accompanied by his five servants. The chief removed his rubbers before crossing the threshold, as is the custom. I was present and noticed something glistening in one of the rubbers. I made a hasty examination and found the shining object to be the letters in gilt, "Holy Bible," the Kurd having used the cover of my best Bible to fit his shoe to his foot. The book itself had been burned, but the leather cover was utilized as a patch for his rubber.

Almost immediately after we had taken refuge in the mission compound the people began to die off like sheep, from the combined effects of hunger, anxiety, wounds, and the

fearful crowding. As I have stated, there were twenty-three persons domiciled in the little room we had assigned to us as sleeping quarters. As for myself I slept under an office table. Actual suffocation constantly threatened. It seemed to me as if the ground, the walls, the stones—everything in the compound —were poisoned. After a few weeks of this sort of thing I finally said to my wife one day, "Every one of us is going to die if we remain here in such quarters." The reader can imagine how she looked at me. "But," said I, "there *is* a way of escape." She brightened up and asked, "What is it?" "Why," I replied, "to get out of this compound." "But where can we go?" she inquired; "they will capture you." Now at this time those confined with us were dying by scores daily. I thought of a house across the way from our gate, belonging to a rich man, Nazar Khan, a Christian and a Russian subject. Nazar could not stay in his own house, but was located in a yard adjoining the compound. So I went to him and asked that he give me a room in his

house. He was astonished to learn that I desired to live there, but after a long talk, and much thinking, I had come to the conclusion that it was the best I could do. He therefore gave me permission to occupy a room. His Mohammedan servant, Haidar Ali, had remained quite faithful to his Christian master, the chief reason being, perhaps, that he had not been paid. But I think that after all he was a kind-hearted fellow. Almost every day Haidar Ali came to pay a visit to Nazar Khan, and upon his appearance that day I told him that I was coming to live in his house. He was amazed to hear that I dared run the risk. "Nevertheless, we will," said I, "despite the dangers." So the arrangement was made. We were to go very early in the morning, before dawn, when no one else was in the street. He was to leave the door open. We were to have some one watching from the roof for Turks, and when none were in sight we would run across the narrow street. I was to make a certain sign, whereupon Haidar Ali would open the door for us. The plan worked

satisfactorily and we entered the house the next morning.

It was a beautiful red brick building, but there was neither furniture nor carpet in it. We occupied a room on the ground floor with absolutely nothing in the way of contents. This room was paved with bricks and cement. Such was our future home. We took with us five or six pounds of bread only. We were not obliged to eat the bread from the Mohammedan bake-shops, a Mohammedan friend of mine supplying us with better.

The weather was very cold, and we of course suffered greatly in our bare room. As a result my wife was suddenly seized with such a serious illness that we did not expect her to survive. What could I do? Where could I look for aid? I was greatly perplexed, for I dared not go into the streets to seek a physician; if I ventured out I was certain to be murdered.

At last I recollected that a physician, Doctor Sargis, was staying in a house nearby, and though not sure of finding the right spot, I conceived the idea of going over the roofs and

endeavoring to communicate with him. So I went onto our roof to investigate, taking with me a small ladder, which I had found in the yard, in order to scale the higher roofs adjoining. I reached the doctor's house in this manner, finding him asleep. From where I was I could not waken him without danger of being overheard by Turks, so I went round another way in order to call to him through the window. My effort was successful and the doctor came, ministered to my wife, and without doubt saved her life, as he afterward saved the lives of many others.

The fourth day after this some one knocked at our gate. As soon as I heard the knock a terror seized me and I exclaimed, "Surely they (the Turks) have found out that we are here, and are after us!" The children overheard me and began to cry. "Boys," said I, "just keep quiet for a minute." I then went to the gate and said, in the Turkish language, "*Kim-di?* (Who is there?)" The answer came, "Man-am (It is I.)" "*San kim san?* (Who are you?)" I called. "Man *sanin dosti-yam* (I am

your friend.)" Who, thought I, is a friend, using the Turkish language at this time? So I did not open the gate, but ascended to the roof and looked down into the street. There, standing at our gate, was Mashadi Ismael who had been many times at my house. I rushed down again and opened the gate. He entered and I quickly locked the gate behind him and conducted him to our room. He looked all around and, seeing us sitting on the bare floor, with no adequate clothing, inquired, "Where are your rugs?" I had had a large number of very fine Persian rugs in my home. I replied: "Surely you must know that everything in my house is gone; my home looted and burned; our church destroyed."

"Everything is gone!" he exclaimed. "Yes," I replied, "everything, everything, except what you see on our backs." He looked at us in a most pitiful way and his eyes filled with tears. Then he rose, measured the room, and without another word went out. In the afternoon he returned, bringing with him a beautiful Persian rug that exactly fitted the

apartment, also some bread, cheese, and beans. This man came almost every day for nearly four months, always bringing something in the way of food. "Thanks to the Lord," thought I many times, "the God of Elijah still lives." As it happened, his raven was this time a bloodthirsty Mohammedan. Yet he came each day to feed us, sent, I do not doubt, by the Father, who knows best how to comfort the distressed.

During the dreary months that we endured the confinement of these narrow and uncomfortable quarters I scarcely slept at all at night, and but little in the daytime. Throughout the nights I stood watch upon the roof, listening! listening! Each drop of my blood seemed alert, for I expected every moment that the Turks or Kurds would surprise, capture, and hang or kill us all. Many, many times, while on watch, I would see in the streets armed bands prowling about, looking into every nook and cranny for Christian victims. Often when a knock upon my door warned me, I would rush down the stairs, gather my wife and children together, and convey them to the

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roof, there to remain until the danger had passed. Pretty women were made slaves forever to Turkish lust; others were killed in the most horrible manner conceivable; yet death was preferred to the alternative of such degradation as was offered.

Stand with me upon my roof. Below us in the compound is safety. There is lack of comfort, lack of food, lack of everything essential to human happiness; but it is a shelter. "A shelter in time of storm." Grateful expressions to God are heard from all around. These people are hungry, they are heavy-hearted, they are mourning, each of them, the loss of loved ones. They are in direst distress; always their eyes are wet with tears. Hardly one who has not lost a part, or all, of his family! Indeed their position is beyond compare, one of despair and supreme misery.

Yet running through it all is a note of sincere gratitude to God, that he has at least delivered them from a greater evil.

Looking from my roof we can see the distant tower of the Greek church of my home town.

After Doctor Packard left Geogtapa with his refugees it was supposed that no Christians remained within the place. But a handful had hidden in the second story of a two-storied house, a place that could be reached only by ladders. This house was in so dilapidated a state that the Kurds had taken no notice of it. On that terrible night when the Kurds burned the best buildings in the town, the people in this house, terror-stricken, for the structures next door were in flames and the smoke penetrated the apartment they were in, remained where they were. They had nothing to eat and dared not look out of their windows. Here they were confined for twenty-four hours, suffering greatly from thirst, and not expecting to escape at all. Some were in such desperate case that they drank their own water (urine). Forty thousand Mohammedans looted the place for six days and nights, securing immense quantities of plunder. As I have said, our mission buildings were burned and everything that we had owned was stolen.

Some of those that had been hiding in their

own homes left in the night and took shelter in summer houses in the vineyards. As they had nothing to eat in these cold and drafty quarters, they dug into the snow and pulled up roots of grass, subsisting, in a way, upon these. Others fled to the near-by swamps and hid themselves in the mud, even covering their heads with mud, that passers-by might not see them. Yet others hid in wells. The local Catholic priest conveyed his flock and his family, wife and children, (for Catholic priests marry in that country) to his church. The Kurds burst into the edifice and slaughtered most of the inmates at the altar. One or two of the children were not killed but were taken away to captivity.

A lady, a relative of mine, escaped with her two daughters. Soon after, they were recaptured, and the two girls were carried away to slavery. Their mother died. A neighbor of mine, in whose house the Russians had established a telephone, was soaked in oil and burned. A minister, more than eighty years of age, had his legs and arms sawed off. An-

other minister was murdered in the most horrible and revolting manner while his wife was compelled to witness the foul deed from the roof of their home; she died from the shock a little later. On the road, while we were trying to reach the city, many women gave birth to children, right in the snow. How dreadful and how pathetic, where in frequent cases the mother would dig a little hole in the snow and place her infant therein, then walk on, often to fall and die by the wayside a few paces farther on! Scenes of this kind were but too numerous. And there were none to care for or assist these poor mothers; all were obliged to look out for their own.

Seven men, all well known to me, and all in well-to-do circumstances, banded together, determined to escape. They were every one shot down before proceeding more than a few miles. These are some of the pictures I see again as from my roof in the city I look out upon the horrors of the situation.

Let us return now to the compound, to the sorrowing fraternity of Christians who have

been fortunate enough to escape thus far. Here they are packed like sardines in a box, but one thing greatly appeals to them. Their thoughts are not centered on worldly affairs, but upon the death for which they pray, day and night, as a release from affliction. Before these sufferers had been long confined within the compound a kind of religious fervor took possession of them. So strongly grew the feeling that many lost their minds entirely. It was arranged to have preachers hold meetings in all of the rooms, and when warm enough, to hold out-of-door services as well. In fact, religious services were going on all the time now, the most interesting feature being that all denominations, quite irrespective of creed, joined together; Catholic, Nestorians, Greeks, Protestants. They held communion services together. It was a real fraternity.

One day some one suggested that certain days be set aside for fasting and prayer! As if every day were not an enforced fast-day. All were hungry all of the time; most of them looked like walking corpses.

What has happened out over the plain during this period? We shall see.

On the twenty-fourth of February came the news of a most hellish massacre at Goolpashan, a Christian town. I doubt whether this tragedy has a parallel in any history. At the time of the attack upon Geogtapa, Goolpashan, located three miles to the northeast, was greatly upset. That town was supposed to be the wealthiest place, for its size, in the district. A group of its most prominent people went to the Turkish officials and Kurdish chiefs and paid them a large sum of money to keep their place safe. Several Turkish soldiers were sent to protect it. Meanwhile I had written to a number of friends there, and to most of our church-members, for we had a flourishing Baptist church in Goolpashan, asking them not to remain there, but to come to Urmia and abide with us. But they assured me that everything was all right, that a German agent there, Herr Neumann, whose wife had relatives in the town, was personally interesting himself in the protection of its inhabitants. He would look out

for their safety. Nevertheless I wrote again saying, "If you don't come yourselves, at least send on your wives and children." A few did so, but the majority remained in Goolpashan. As a matter of fact several of our Geogtapa people thought that Goolpashan was a safer place than Urmia.

Well, things were quiet enough for a time, but on the night of February twenty-fourth a body of Kurds, Turks, and local Persian Mohammedans entered the town. The Turkish police began to resist their entry; these policemen were thereupon called aside and cajoled by the intruders; and shortly afterward they left the precincts. The Turks and Kurds then came on to the city square and called upon all the men to meet them for a discussion, as they were there to protect them and their families. Since, therefore, the newcomers meant to look out for their safety, it was only right that they, the new protectors, should be paid for their service. They were going farther south, they said, to fight, and asked each one to pay a certain amount. This was the

first move; they drained the inhabitants of practically their last cent.

" Now," said they, "we are in need of ropes for various purposes connected with war. Bring us what you can." A great quantity of rope was immediately furnished them. Then, with the aid of their rifles, the fiends herded the unarmed innocents in the center of the square, from which escape was made impossible, and bound their victims' hands behind their backs.

They next drove them into a graveyard about half a mile outside the town and shot and killed every single one. Then the bloodthirsty butchers returned, this time to wreak their will upon the defenseless women.

What a black story is this! My pen trembles in my hand, and my eyes are dimmed as I write it.

It was night. All the women and girls, some" of the latter but seven or eight years old, were most barbarously treated. Little children though they were, many died that night at the hands of these monsters. Those of the women

who thought it possible, tried to escape to Geogtapa. Naturally they dared not follow the straight path, where they would be sure to meet people, so made their way through rough country and swamps, finally reaching a small Mohammedan village, where they begged for shelter and protection, but were promptly refused both. After they had gone, scores of men disguised themselves, took a short cut, headed off the women, captured them, and did shame to them.

Women whose ages ranged from seventy to eighty were repeatedly outraged with the younger ones. Those who have done these devilish acts have openly boasted of it since, exulting as they told of the numbers of their respective victims.

The next morning one of the best men in Goolpashan, and one of the best Christians, a devoted friend of mine, and treasurer of the local Baptist church, was captured on his roof, robbed of his clothes, and immersed in icy water. He was then dragged out, beaten with a heavy horsewhip until the blood streamed

from his body, then led away. Before his captors had proceeded far some one shot him from behind, the bullet passing through his head and coming out of his right eye. His body was then thrown into a well and covered with bricks and stones.

The Christians of Goolpashan, who had put their trust in a German agent, found no fraternity between Persian Christians and Christian Germans, so called.

Once more let us take our places upon my little roof, behind the parapet. We hear music. It is a band playing, and we recognize the tune as " Die Wacht am Rhein." We learn that it is the Kaiser's birthday, and that the musicians are at the German consulate close by. They are having a celebration! Who are present? Germans, Turks, Kurds, Persian Mohammedans. Birds of a feather. What a combination! What a bunch! What a community of interests! All plotting together to decide upon the most efficacious way in which they can destroy more Christians. They are drinking wines; the finest of champagnes; while our

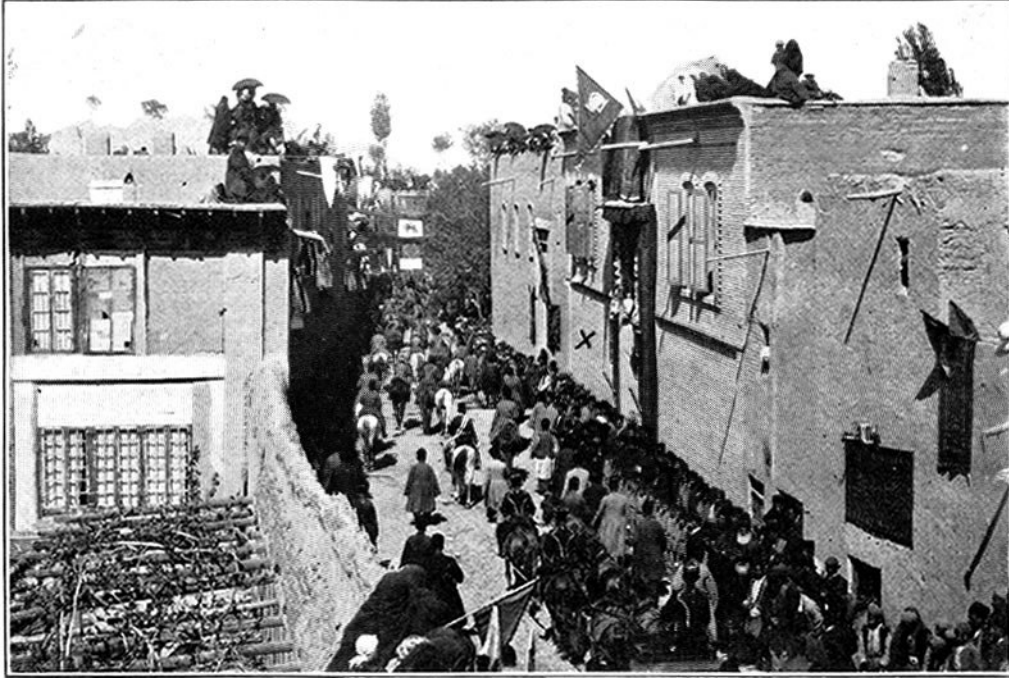
people, in close proximity, are suffering for the most meager ration of life's necessities. Drinking to the Kaiser's health, dancing adding to the merriment!

While this jollification is going on we look outside the walls again in another direction. The Turks have entered the French Catholic mission yard and seized some two hundred of its inmates. After beating them soundly they drive them into the Turkish consulate, a stone's throw from where we are living. Each day the friends and relatives will plead, and pay large sums for the release of these unfortunates. Some are released, but most are detained, promises being usually given that they would be let go the next day.

It is early morning and I am at my station, watching from the roof. All at once I hear groans and cries of "Save us!" A half-hour or more passes. Then I hear shots, perhaps fifty or more, in rapid succession. I shudder as I think of what these shots may portend. Daybreak comes, and I learn that their enemies have taken fifty of these men of the mission,

stripped them, and with straps, sticks, and the butts of rifles, beaten and driven them along the road, like cattle, to Mount Gajin, near the city.

With their hands tied behind them they are placed in rows and shot down. But three escaped death; these dragged themselves to our mission compound, were admitted, and told their sad tale. They were soaked in blood. We learned that among the slaughtered were a Nestorian bishop and a Catholic priest. At the time of their burial it was found that besides other cruelties practised upon them, many had had their fingers chopped off, their ears cut off, their bodies so mutilated in some instances that they were unrecognizable. It is not of the professed Christians of your land that we are thinking now, Kaiser Wilhelm; it is the sorrow brought upon those who respect the memory of those martyred Christians of Persia, not one of whom had fought, or dreamed of fighting, against Germany. How much of the responsibility for it are you and your people willing to assume?



STREET IN URMIA

(On the right the x indicates the house in which the author and his family were confined.
The high roof on the left is one of the mission buildings.)

At Salmas eight hundred Christians were killed by Kurds as the latter were retreating from Khoi, where they had been defeated by the Russians. Some of these townspeople of Salmas were skinned alive, others left with the skin of their arms hanging loose in shreds.

A seventeen-year-old girl remained at the side of her aged father when the rest of her family fled north from Salmas. The Kurds entered her house and killed her father. The brave girl, with a boy of about eighteen, fled to the roof, and from that point of vantage shot and killed the murderers of her parent. Then, fleeing from roof to roof until she came to the confines of the village, she took the road to Dilman. She shot five Kurds who started in pursuit. One followed her on horseback; she shot his horse from under him, and he desisted from the pursuit. Continuing her way undaunted, she finally took refuge with a Karguzar, an official. The Moslems tried to persuade her to become a Mohammedan, promising her a rich husband. She replied that she would first kill

the one who tried to make her change her faith, then destroy herself. The Turkish commandant sent for her, had her gun taken from her, but declared that she was much braver than any of his soldiers. She was allowed to return to the Karguzar's house, but the Turks soon sent word to kill her. The Karguzar hid her, and this plucky maid was saved later by the return of the Russians.

The mother of our Bible-woman, Rabi Sara, was very aged. During the flight into Urmia, the mother was unable to keep up with the crowds, and had, at last, to remain by the roadside. Then her daughter, though not strong, took her old mother upon her back and managed to carry her until they reached a place of safety. Alas! Rabi Sara died suddenly, from fright. How we have missed her! She was so faithful.

A poor woman, whose husband and son had both been killed, became insane. There was no fit place to keep her, so she was put into a small room under a stairway. Here she died two days later.

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A girl, whose father was a schoolmate of mine, was captured by Kurds, but managed to escape by jumping into a well, where, immersed to her chin for hours, she remained quiet until by good fortune she was rescued. She joined us in the mission compound.

A woman with twin babies was so frightened that she left them and ran to a place of safety. Later the two little babies were found, cut to pieces.

Many of the Christian dead were dug from their graves; some had been buried for twenty years. The ghouls took the skulls, placed them on poles, and paraded the streets with them.

A woman who was soon expecting to be confined, was sitting beside her *tanoora* (stove) with her six children and her brother gathered round her. They were attacked by Kurds, the children slaughtered before her eyes, and she herself then murdered.

Hundreds of Christian people were killed and left in the snow for more than three months unburied. Many, found in this condition round Geogtapa, had been eaten by dogs.

For this reason the Geogtapa people paid a large sum for the mere privilege of burying the dead.

It may seem strange, but during the time these horrors were being committed we were called upon to witness a wedding; in fact, two weddings took place during one week.

Hakim (Doctor) Shimmon was a friend of mine. He had studied medicine in the United States and was also a citizen of that country. He fled to the mountains with others but was captured. He was asked to renounce his faith and become a Mohammedan, but in a manly way, and like a true Christian, refused. His captors told him that as he had been good to them they did not wish to kill him. He said, as did most of our people under like circumstances, " There is no power on earth that can shake me from my faith! " The demons then poured oil on his clothing, but before setting it afire offered him one more chance. He again refused. They then applied the torch, and while he was running about in agony from the flames they shot him several times. After he

had fallen to the ground they hacked his head off. His body was found afterward, half-eaten by dogs. Thus this man received his martyr's crown.

In Geogtapa the wife and daughters of the old minister whose legs and arms were cut off with a saw were all murdered and mutilated beyond recognition.

Some men were found with their eyes gouged out with knives. They were left to wander about for a time, then shot.

Women were found with their backs broken from having been doubled up and thrust into an earth-oven. Pregnant women were cut open and the unborn babes taken from them.

A man seventy years of age, who was confined to his bed through illness, was dragged from his couch and his mouth used as a toilet. Another, still older, was taken from his house, tied to a horse by a long rope round his neck, and the horse beaten to a gallop. His head and back were scraped almost clean of flesh from contact with the rough ground. Of course he soon died from the effects of this treatment.

Men were made to stand in lines and bullets fired to see how many they would pass through. Others were laid in long rows, kerosene was poured on them, and they were set afire. A boy was found with his body perforated with needles.

One of the most dreadful things coming to the notice of the physicians was the treatment of the young girls. A great many no more than seven or eight years old died from various barbarities at the hands of their tormentors.

There were several Russian priests among us in the compound. A rumor was noised about that the Turks intended to make an effort to capture them. Within a month or so most of these priests died from sheer fear.

Some Christians were made to put their heads through the rungs of a ladder and were suspended over a well. Then their heads were cut off and dropped into the well.

A sad case was that of the mother of a girl of twelve, whose daughter was being led away to a life of slavery. The mother protested and tried to save the child who was ruthlessly torn

from her arms. As the daughter was being led away the mother created so much annoyance for the oppressors, clinging tenaciously to their garments, that they stabbed her twelve times, then left her, powerless to aid her child.

Women with babies at the breast were almost always shot and killed, but usually the infants were left to starve to death. Women were stripped of their clothing, abused and maltreated, then turned out into the cold air to perish, naked.

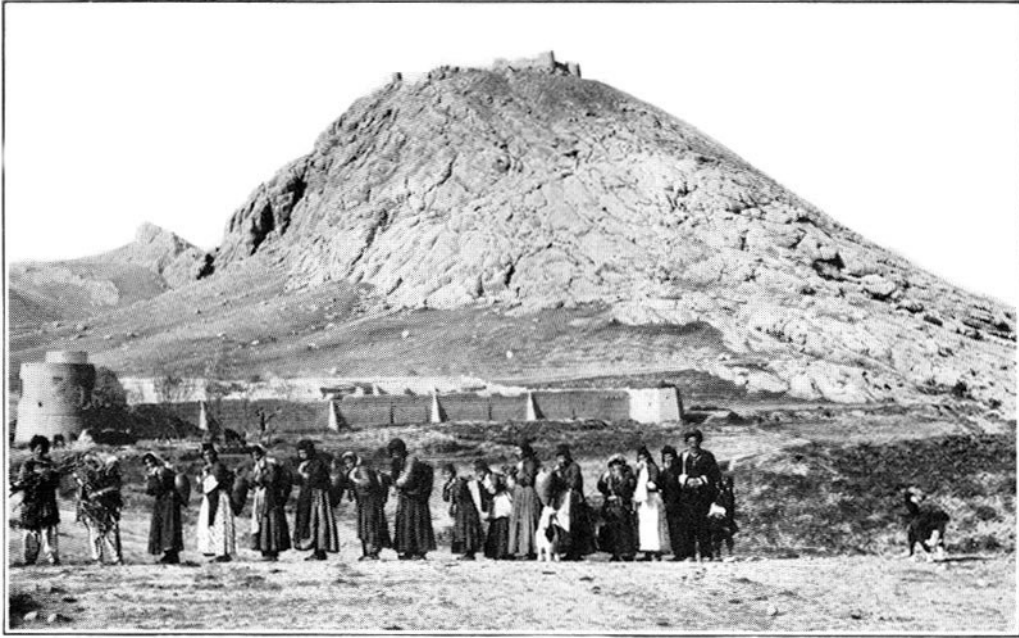
In Geogtapa an aged woman found herself unable to keep up with the crowd, on account of her infirmities. Her husband and daughter remained with her. The Kurds overtook them, killed the old people, then as the daughter persisted in refusing to become Mohammedan, they murdered her also.

Between Shim-sha-jian and Geogtapa, a distance of about three miles, one Mohammedan killed forty-three men, women, and children with his rifle. One of the missionaries left the city at this time and had been absent for three days when

my wife espied him returning. She at once ran to his wife and told her the good news. An hour after the man's arrival they brought my wife a loaf of bread. When a member of a family has been for some time absent, and any one announces his arrival, it is the custom to make a present to the bearer of the good tidings. In this instance the present was a loaf; and it was most certainly acceptable.

Yet by no means let it be supposed that all of the Mohammedans were parties to these evil deeds I have enumerated. Indeed it gives me much satisfaction to record the fact that thousands of our people found refuge with Moslems who were friendly. The number of these good Samaritans is not small. Most of them were humble villagers, but some were of the highest caste.

Again, there were others who took no part in the massacres but who, when entrusted with the care of goods, food, etc., afterward claimed the articles as their own property. A certain minister, having been plundered of all of his possessions was cared for at the house of a



KALA ISMAIL AGHA, OR CASTLE OF ISMAIL

(The great massacre mentioned on page 135 took place near the base of the mountain.)

Mohammedan neighbor. Imagine his astonishment when he ate his own food, from his own dishes, and afterward slept in his own bed, but no longer his.

Sixty Christians were commandeered by Turks to perform a certain piece of work. They were employed to carry telegraph wire from Urmia to Turkey, across the borders. On the outward journey they were unmolested, but upon the return trip, in a lonely valley, they were all shot down. By what might seem almost a miracle three of the number were not so badly wounded but that they made their way back to the city again. In this way we learned of the occurrence.

Relating another incident an eye-witness said:

In Kala, of Ishmael, was a gruesome sight. A group of seventy-two Christians were murdered there. Six months afterward we were able to get to the place. Some of the bodies were in fair condition, dried like mummies; others had been eaten by wild beasts. Some had been dragged about, as was evident from cuts in the skin. The majority had been shot. The ground was covered with cartridge-shells. The scene was some distance from Kala, in a rugged and rocky gorge.

Ada, one of the larger Nestorian towns, suffered most severely. It is quite a distance from Urmia. It was surrounded by Sunni Mohammedans and attacked in the most savage manner. A part of the inhabitants escaped into Russian territory, while others were hidden by Moslems who kept them and later compelled them to accept the Mohammedan faith and to give their daughters to Mohammedans. More than a hundred young men were killed there. A whole company were made to stand in line, and the curiosity of their oppressors satisfied as to how many could be killed with one bullet. There was in the town of Karajaloo a fine young fellow, over six feet tall, who was a model Christian. He had been to America, was in fact baptized in Chicago. From him they demanded a large sum in cash, and because he could not pay it over immediately, stood him up against a wall and riddled him with bullets. Even a Bible in his pocket was shot full of holes.

The Greek Orthodox bishop was unable to leave when the Russians withdrew. He was

kept for a while by some Mohammedans who planned to deliver him over to the Turks. They told him, one day, that it was impossible for them to keep him any longer, that he must find another place. They tried to convince him that they feared the Turks. There was nothing for him to do but to leave, which he did. His former guardians thought that they knew what road he would take and where he would seek shelter. One Friday afternoon he was captured by Turks. I was watching from my roof at the time and saw every detail of the proceeding. The bishop was hiding in a church garret, behind a parapet, and when he made an attempt to escape was stopped by an askar (Turkish soldier) who raised his gun and threatened to shoot if the bishop attempted to run. Thus he was taken. It was reported that he had more than two thousand dollars in gold on his person, and that was taken from him at once and a demand made for ten thousand more. After a long imprisonment and the payment of this ransom he was allowed to go free.

More than two thousand of those who fled to Russia died, either upon the road or after their arrival, from the effects of the hardships they were forced to undergo. When the rich merchants of the towns saw the Russians preparing to leave they brought all their money to the missionaries and then fled with the Russians. It was with this money that the missionaries were able to buy bread and save many of the poor people from actual starvation.

The Christian town of Ardeshai was attacked. A great number of its women, to escape capture and worse, fled to the icy salt waters of Lake Urmia, for Ardeshai is situated upon the borders of the lake, and immersed themselves to the neck. Here they were discovered and all shot, as well as some eighty-nine men of the town.

Our private physician, Doctor Lokman, who was sent by a missionary to a certain house to ascertain if there were typhoid cases there, was captured by askars and obliged to pay a fine of a thousand dollars. He was then released, but died soon after, probably from the

effects of the fright. He was one of the most prominent Christians, and very influential with the Persian officials.

Within the compound things are going from bad to worse. There is no room for all to sleep; in a church having a seating capacity of six hundred, four thousand souls are crowded at one time. They are dying by scores now; some days thirty, some fifty, some even more. Very few children between the ages of one and eight survived. The food consisted almost entirely of dry bread. There were no Christian bakers, and the Mohammedans frequently mixed all sorts of dirt with their dough; even steel shavings and dust. Neither was the bread well baked, but the people ate it. Soon sickness of the alarming kinds started; typhus and measles of a malignant type. One-fourth of the twenty thousand within the compound died of starvation and disease. Few could lie down in such crowded quarters, so slept, perforce, in a sitting posture. Those who could no longer endure the fetid air, the stench, the cramped position, would go outside and lie on the bare bricks

and stones, thinly clad as they all were, exposed to the damp and freezing atmosphere.

Thus it was while outside the Turks and Kurds were constantly engaged in their hellish work. "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Those who died could not be removed to the cemeteries. Most were buried in the compound, rich and poor alike, in great ditches. In one instance, at least, seventeen hundred were buried in one ditch. Nevertheless, permission was finally granted to inter a few outside the walls.

Of course there were no coffins; all were laid, just as they died, in rows. When a deep ditch was covered at the bottom, earth was thrown in to the depth of a few inches, then another row commenced on top of the lower.

The pest of vermin became a torment. On warm days all would sit in the yard and pick the beasts from one another's heads and bodies. One morning when I entered the church I saw lice, like colonies of ants, on the people and on the stones. The smell almost knocked me down.

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The Turks demanded two thousand pajama suits for their army; shirts and drawers. We had to furnish them.

Reader, how would you enjoy making pajamas for Turks and Kurds who had murdered your parents or children, ravished your daughters, starved, beaten, and tortured your families? But we had to do it. And we did.

We always had a number of watchmen in the compound. One night a certain one of these was found asleep at his post. The next morning he was tied to a tree and a placard placed above his head bearing the inscription, "Unfaithful Watchman." This as a warning to others.

Take another look from my roof. Now we see, just across the city gate, a gallows with seven nooses. Many times those nooses were placed round the necks of Christians. I think that I can hear their groans and see their struggles now. In the same direction, but nearer by, stand the Russian mission buildings, now a headquarters for Turkish officers. I can best express the truth by naming it a hall and dungeon

of lust. The Russian church in that group is used as a lavatory.

The following incident was related to me by a clergyman: After the return of the Russians a group of Christians accompanied them to investigate conditions in a number of the ravaged Christian villages. My informant was with them. "To my amazement," said the narrator, "I saw the forms of some of the people impaled upon sharpened stakes thrust into the rectum and penetrating their entire bodies. Death by this means is a lingering one. The bodies were so firmly fixed, in some instances, that the stakes could not be withdrawn; it was necessary to saw them off and bury the victims as they were. Several of these were women.

But we will look no longer either into the compound so full of misery, or at the city roundabout. We will look into the hearts of the Christian people, whose fortitude and faith is not broken. We do not understand why God has permitted these things to come to pass, and again we cry, "How long?" but we know

The Shelter from the Storm

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that Christ shall be triumphant in the end, and that the Cross is more powerful than the Crescent. From our roof we see the spire of the desecrated Russian church upon the distant hill, its cross glittering in the sun. For long the Turks have tried to destroy it by shooting at it, but it stands fast, and is prophetic of our deliverance!

VII

FROM STORM-CENTER TO LIBERTY LAND

VII

FROM STORM-CENTER TO LIBERTY LAND

OUR DELIVERANCE

WHILE we were all hoping that the Russians would soon return and set us free, we were amazed, one day, to see a large Turkish army entering the city. There were in the neighborhood of twenty thousand of them, with eight thousand animals carrying food, ammunition, and baggage. They were joined, shortly, by about the same number of Kurds. With this army of forty thousand they intended to invade Caucasia. They marched through Urmia and on north to Salmas, where they attacked the Russians at a point near Dilman. Here the Turks were badly defeated and retreated into Turkish territory again.

When we saw this vast aggregation of troops how we were disheartened! And when we learned of the result of the battle at Dilman how our hopes revived! The Russians followed them for nearly a hundred miles into Turkey, and the entire force of forty thousand was almost annihilated. All, with scarce an exception, were either killed or captured.

From the moment when the last of this army of our enemies left the confines of our city we were more than ever on the alert for news; more than ever on the lookout toward every point of the compass. What anxious thoughts passed through our minds! We knew nothing as to the location of the Russian forces; nothing as to the intentions of the Turks and their auxiliaries. We could only wait, as we had waited so long, praying for relief.

We often wondered whether any of the American people knew of the strait we were in? Probably not. They were ten thousand miles away, and communication uncertain if not absolutely cut off. We had thought of the possibility of a British army coming to our assistance

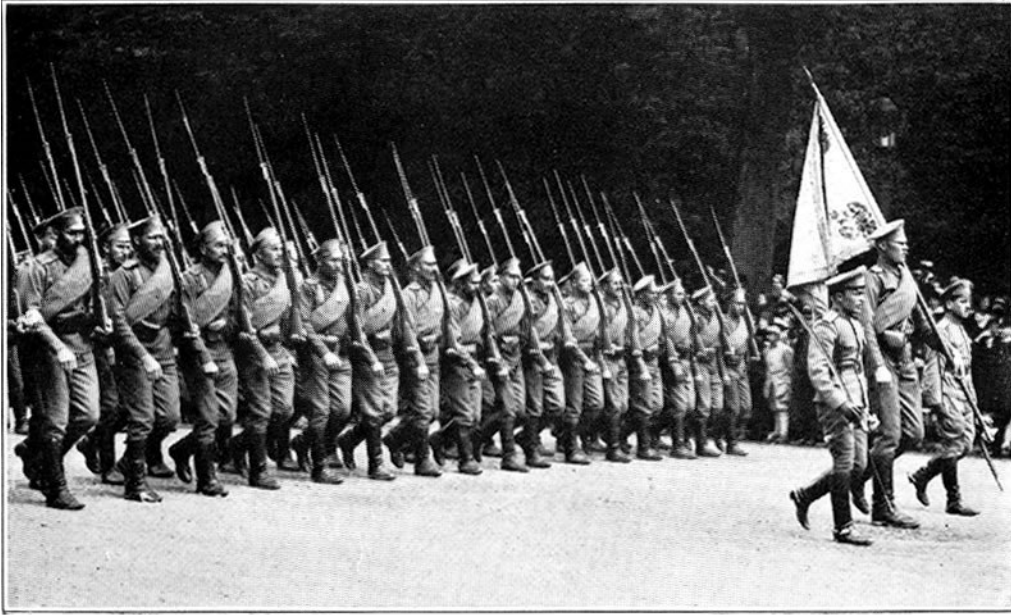
from the south; but the Britons were eight hundred miles from us, engaged in a most desperate struggle.

Are we all to perish here? Will no help be sent from anywhere? Looking! Always looking! At the time when the Russians had prepared to leave us one of them had said, "We shall return in one week." A week! One month, two months, four months, had passed, and still they came not. Instead, when the dreary period of waiting had made us feel that the limit of endurance had been reached, a great Turkish army sweeps through the city, jubilant over the prospect of defeating our friends.

Now we had, among ourselves, given a nickname to the Russians. We called them "The blue-eyed people." At last, there came a morning when, as I was stationed at my accustomed post upon the roof, a man who was watching from another roof close by put his hands to his mouth, trumpet fashion, and called to me. I raised my hand as a signal for him not to speak until I had reconnoitered to see if any

Kurds were about. No one was in sight in the street in front of our building. I signaled again and asked, "What is it?" "Have you heard?" came the answer, "the blue-eyed people are only fifteen miles from here! "Can it be true? Shall I believe it? All day long I remained on the roof, impatient, and saying to myself over and over again, "Only fifteen miles away!" The next morning the same man appeared again, and in accents of jubilation called out to me, "They are only ten miles away now!"

Peering through a roof drain-pipe I now saw long lines of Kurds and Turks hurrying through the streets, traveling west and south, evidently in retreat. Many were running; many of those on horseback galloping furiously. A ceaseless stream of humanity was soon passing, filling every street. This rout continued without cessation for twenty-four hours. When morning came again at last, I was early at my post, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the bearer of the good news. He came, and called out: "They will be here by



RUSSIAN SOLDIERS
The coming of the Russians.

two o'clock to-day!" I looked over the parapet; not a soul was in sight; everything was quiet. "Surely," thought I, "something is about to happen!" The hours passed more slowly than ever now; I was in a fever of impatience. Noon came, and lo! my gladdened eyes beheld the gates of the compound opened wide, for the first time in five months. The imprisoned and starving people began to come out. Oh, what a sight! I knew most of them. Many there were who had been prosperous, rich; who had had lovely homes, beautiful palaces, some of them; whose wives dressed in silks. Now all, rich and poor alike, were clad in the filthiest rags of direst poverty. I can never forget the awful scene! The faces. The marks of hunger and suffering, many of them ineffaceable. The new, long-absent look of hope, mingled with the shadow of fear yet present. Doubt, hope, keenest anxiety, wonder, uncertainty; a dozen mingled feelings depicted on those emaciated, fearful countenances.

Out they poured, a tumult, a torrent of human souls. But more than five thousand

of this sad army did not pass through those gates. No. Under the earth they lay, in the loathsome ditches where they had been buried; victims of the curse of Islamism.

All now impatiently waited for the arrival of the Blue-eyed People. About one o'clock I joined the throng in the streets. I leaned against a wall and watched closely the city gate. Suddenly it opened and twenty-five blue-eyed Cossacks rode through.

No pen could describe that welcome! No one could put into words the overwhelming flood of our feelings. There are no words to express them. Some of our people actually prostrated themselves on the ground and kissed the hoofs of the horses; then rose and hugged and kissed the big boots of the riders until they were fairly wet with tears. Almost the only thing said to the Cossacks, at first, was, "Why did you not come sooner?"

And the Cossacks! When they saw the dreadful plight of us poor wretches, their own eyes shed the drops of sympathy, and instantly they opened their bags and boxes and gave

their last crumb of bread; they opened their pocketbooks and gave their last cent. May God bless those Cossacks! In their actions we once again saw displayed the better side of humanity. Soon after that the last of the Turks and Kurds vanished. Immediately the people departed for their homes in the towns and villages round about. When they arrived most of them found neither home, nor town, nor village. Nothing but heaps of smoldering and blackened ruins; heaps of ashes.

Four days after the Russians arrived I was standing in the street watching the soldiers when I espied, amongst the crowd, two of my schoolgirls. I called to them and said, "What are you doing here, girls?" They had walked six miles to see me. One of them, who was rather bashful, said to me, stammeringly, "My m-m-m-mamma sent me." "Why?" I inquired, and she replied, "My mamma said, 'Go to your teacher and ask him if he can let us have five cents.'" I hung my head in a kind of shame, for all that I had in the world was a twenty-cent piece; that is, a Persian coin of

that value. However, knowing the girl's father and mother, and remembering what a nice home they had had, I put my hand in my pocket and handed her the twenty cents.

She took the coin and went away. I noticed that this girl's feet were badly swollen. This came from eating grass. In the town where they were they had found absolutely nothing else, and had lived on grass and its roots. From this cause many died, through lack of proper, or rather, through improper, nourishment. I have myself seen women picking out the oats from the excreta of horses, and eating them. Scores came to me daily asking for a cent. In every case I had-to turn away in grief. I said to myself: "I cannot stay here any longer; I must get away somewhere." As I had no money at all, I endeavored to borrow. For a month I made constant efforts to secure a loan. If it had not been wartime I could have obtained one thousand dollars on short notice, but now the Mohammedans refused to let me have any money. However, after a long-continued search I was able to borrow thirty dollars

lars in American money. For this I had to agree to pay one hundred per cent interest. I would have paid one thousand per cent, so desperate was I.

I took the money and next day rented a carriage, and started on our journey for America. It was a hot day in June. We headed for Caucasia, by no means sure that we should ever get there. With my wife and children I went north, round the end of the lake, then east, then south again until we arrived at the city of Tabriz, a great town, second in size to Teheran, the capital. Here we have an American consul, Mr. Gordon Paddock. As I am an American citizen I went to him for aid. When he saw me he looked at me with a curious expression on his countenance. I wondered why, but soon found out. When I had last seen him, seven years before, on my way from the United States to Urmia, I had stopped in Tabriz to register at the consulate, as every citizen is supposed to do. I was then in excellent physical condition, and well dressed. Now I had greatly lost in weight, and the coat I wore had

been my coat, my quilt, my bed, for about six months. I need say nothing as to my other articles of apparel. When I understood why he scanned me curiously I said: "Never mind, Mr. Paddock. I am on my way to America and want some money. I wish you would cable to my friends for some." He was very kind and did as I requested.

And now came further annoyances. We waited nineteen days for a reply to my request for money, when an answer came from the Department of State saying that before anything was done proof must be furnished that I was an American citizen. It afterward happened that instantly on receipt of my first cable my friends had sent money for me to Washington. Another cable was sent. I waited nearly a month, and still no response. Our sufferings and hardships in Tabriz were great, but I shall refrain from going into particulars. I became discouraged at last; apparently my citizenship was challenged. I told my wife that we must leave Tabriz. "Our friends," said I, "may have sent us money, but in all probability

it is delayed or being held in Europe somewhere, on account of the war." We had learned something, though not a great deal, of the status of affairs in the world, while in Tabriz. Of course, during our confinement in Urmia, and for a considerable time before, we had been able to ascertain nothing.

Well, I told my wife to get ready and we would attempt to walk to Russian territory, a distance of about a hundred miles. As we had no baggage we started early the next morning on our long and wearisome trip. I thought that Mr. Paddock should know of our leaving, so I wrote a note telling him of our contemplated departure. There being no postal system, I delivered the note at the consulate myself, leaving it with one of the servants at the gate. Then my wife, myself, and our three children started for Russia, on a hot July morning. But we did not go very far.

As soon as Mr. Paddock rose that morning he went to his office and read my letter. At once he summoned a servant and despatched him with a communication for me, telling the

man, "Go and find Mr. Shahbaz, wherever he is, and give him this." The messenger overtook me on the road and handed me the following:

July 20, 1915.

MY DEAR MR. SHAHBAZ:

I received your note and was on the point of writing you. I wish to announce the good news that a telegram has reached me, last night, from the Department of State, instructing me to pay to you the proceeds of a draft on the Secretary of State for five hundred dollars.

I am sending the draft to the bank, and will be able to give you a check for the amount if you will call this afternoon.

Sincerely yours,

GORDON PADDOCK.

As soon as I had read the letter I told the servants to go; that we would follow shortly. We then sat down by the roadside and wept. In an hour or so we retraced our steps to the city.

If we had gone on we should have been killed, for our route lay through several Mohammedan villages, and at that time they still thirsted for Christian blood. But thanks to God and to our good friends we were saved from this danger.

I went to the consul and received the money, and the first thing thereafter I gathered my family together and purchased for them a square meal. What a feast! I cannot tell how many pounds I gained by that meal.

When we had finished eating I said to my wife "Now we will ride." There being no railways at that time, the best means of conveyance was by way of the Russian post. At the post station we came upon a big, strapping fellow, a Russian, standing beside the gate. "Well," said he, "where do you come from?" "Urmia," I answered. "Oh," he exclaimed, "and were you in the city when it was besieged by the Turks?" I answered in the affirmative, whereupon he looked again at our shabby clothes and said, "Then I suppose you lost all your property?" "Yes," I replied, "everything." He looked at the children then and remarked that we were fortunate to have saved our children. "Yes, indeed!" I said, "but we lost one." He wanted to know all about our troubles and the story of what we had undergone, and while I was telling it he shed tears like a child. Then he

pointed to my wife and asked who she was. I told him, whereupon he wanted to know if she was a Persian. "No," I answered, "she is an American." He was greatly astonished, and could not get over the idea of my wife's nationality. Then he invited us to his house, and when we got there related our story to his wife and family. All showed the utmost sympathy, and cried over our misfortunes as if they had been their own.

Finally our host asked, "Why are you here?" I explained that we wanted to go to Russia, hoping that means might be found there for in some way reaching the United States again. "Oh!" said he, "then you want tickets to go by the post?" "Yes," I answered. So he rose and went to his desk and filled out the tickets and handed them to me. "Now," said I, "how much are these?" He lifted up his hands and replied in choked utterance: "Nothing! Not one cent." Then this kindly man ordered a beautiful carriage for us, and sent one of his very best servants with us as driver. He also bought for our consumption

both fruit and other eatables; then came down to the station to bid us farewell. Ah! Those Russians are a kind-hearted people!

On the way to the borders of Transcaucasia, Russian territory, we were forced to witness more terrible scenes nearly throughout the entire journey. Another eye-witness thus describes them, in brief:

We saw the great Erivan plain (Transcaucasia) black with a slow-moving mass of humanity. The refugees must have numbered close to two hundred and fifty thousand, wandering aimlessly about in the torrid heat. Children were dying by the hundred, the frenzied mothers sometimes flinging their children over into the fields in their helpless, mad grief, so as not to witness their dying agonies. Cossack transports picked up scores of little children left by the roadside, carrying them in their wagons, and sharing with them their frugal rations. We were compelled to close the windows of our compartment in the train, to shut out the sounds of wailing and moaning.

We too saw thousands of Christian people lying in the fields and everywhere, dying for lack of bread. Every place was choked with refugees from everywhere and anywhere. What a hell this war has brought to the world!

It was the same at all of the Russian railway stations.

The first important Russian city we came to was Tiflis, a place of between four hundred thousand and five hundred thousand inhabitants. There were two Baptist churches there, one of them in charge of pastor Bacile Pavlof, whom I had met at the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance at Philadelphia. Mr. Pavlof had heard of our capture, and also heard that we had been massacred, but not feeling certain regarding the information had gone many times to inquire about us in the Persian quarter of Tiflis, leaving word that the people there should notify him if they heard anything of Mr. Shahbaz. Therefore, as soon as we arrived Mr. Pavlof heard of it and hastened to visit us. He and his wife were kind to us in every way. But that is a matter of course, for the Russians are certainly a hospitable people.

He invited me to preach for him the next Sunday morning and evening. I told him I was in too shabby a state to occupy his pulpit and stand before his people. He said he would

see what he could do to rectify that trouble, and in a little while sent me a shirt. This garment resembled a nightgown, and was several inches too large for me, but I put it on on Sunday morning and went to the church and preached for Mr. Pavlof. I found a large congregation ready to listen to a simple gospel sermon. Many in the audience were very much affected, especially when I touched upon our sufferings in Urmia. On Monday and Tuesday we were invited to the homes of several different people, Russian Baptists.

We left for Petrograd in a few days, Mr. Pavlof having written in advance to some of our people, advising them of our intended visit. On reaching the capital city I called at the Baptist mission house and met Madame Yosnacovsky and some brethren who asked me to preach for them in the tabernacle the following Tuesday evening? Mr. Fetler, their pastor, had been banished, together with his assistants. The church was left, like a flock without a shepherd, to maintain themselves as best they could. On Tuesday night I found a very good-sized

congregation awaiting me. At the close of the services I was asked to shake every one by the hand. Then I was requested to preach for them again on Saturday, which I did. There I met Mr. Reading, pastor of the Baptist church at Riga.

He spoke very good English. At the Saturday meeting the house was packed to the doors. The singing was excellent. At the close of the service the question arose as to whether I should address them on the following Sunday. It was against the law for a minister to come from one city to another to preach, and I, coming from Persia, a foreign country, would surely be arrested, they thought, by the authorities. After the matter had been explained to me I told them that if I was arrested, the worst the officers could do was to put me out of the country, and as I wanted to go away, I should be glad to have my fare paid. Seeing that I was not afraid they smiled and expressed themselves as glad to have me stay and preach. So on Sunday morning I met a large congregation, though I had to speak through an interpreter.

A very fine-appearing man and his wife had been waiting for some time to receive baptism, so it was arranged that I should baptize them, which I did, and after the baptismal service we had communion. At the opening of the communion service one of the deacons rose and asked if there were any strangers in the congregation who were Baptists and not members of that church and who would like to commune with us. Twenty-seven Russian soldiers stood up, five of them officers. Every one of them testified. Some of these soldiers had come five thousand miles from Siberia to engage in the war. It was, I think, the most impressive communion service I had ever attended. At its close every one came forward and shook my hand and saluted me with the holy kiss, in the manner, I suppose, that the brethren greeted Paul on his journeyings. Only men took part in this salutation.

I was asked to preach again on the ensuing Tuesday, but had made my arrangements to leave for Archangel to take steamer for New York. I shall never forget the hospitality of

our good Russian friends. When freedom of conscience is attained by the people, thousands of churches will spring up everywhere, for the Russians are a most religious people.

We left Petrograd at nine o'clock of an August evening, and after a two days' journey arrived at Archangel. There we took passage in the steamer Dwinsk (since torpedoed by a German submarine) and set sail. We went along all right for ten or eleven hours when the vessel came to anchor in the strait connecting the White Sea with the Arctic Ocean. In answer to our inquiries as to the reason for our stopping we were informed that the channel ahead was filled with mines, and that we could proceed no farther. We thought that it was perhaps better to stand a siege of Turks and Kurds than to go down to the bottom of the White Sea. We became quite nervous over the prospects, for we might be sunk at any moment by a floating mine. But after six days of lying at anchor we perceived ships coming toward us from the northward, and discovered them to be British trawlers. God bless the British navy!

The next morning the trawlers ran the channel and exploded seven mines, an operation which we witnessed with interest. The trawlers returned the way they had come and we proceeded on our course, going farther and farther into the north until the coast of Greenland, at latitude seventy-four, only sixteen degrees from the pole, was visible ahead. We went to the north of Iceland, and off the eastern coast of Greenland changed our course for a southerly one and headed for New York.

At last, on a certain morning, as we neared the western shores there suddenly burst into view, out of the mists, a vessel with the American flag flying from her masthead. It was to me the first indication of the proximity of the land of my adoption, the native land of my wife and family. My home! I shouted aloud. Gone now, truly and beyond recurrence are those dreadful days of physical torment and mental agony. To those aboard who expressed surprise at my antics, for I danced about and became very noisy, I fear—I insisted that there were ample reasons for my actions. I felt that

I was indeed an American, and for all time. I had returned to my home. When we landed (after having been just three months on our journey) and I once again set foot on American soil, I uttered a prayer of thanksgiving. After ten months of endurance of an earthly hell, our feet were once again planted on the shores of an American heaven.

SECOND EXODUS

Not long after we left Persia for the United States war conditions made it necessary for the Russians again to evacuate Persian territory. But this time they notified those dwelling in the vicinity of each garrisoned town, so that nearly every one had warning of the proposed move.

And so, another great exodus began. It is said that the scenes of the second flight were worse than those of the first. The aged, the sick, and those with young children, were terrified at the prospect. Yet day after day, and night after night, a procession thirty-five miles

long painfully crept northward, under the fierce rays of the sun in a country where it never rains in summer and where the heat is intense. All classes, rich and poor alike, were reduced to a common level of misery. The majority started with huge bundles upon their backs. These they were soon forced to cast away, or to reduce in size to lessen the weight. Many, unaccustomed to rough traveling, were able to make but poor progress; therefore groups of lingerers soon lined the roadsides, groaning over aching bones and swollen feet. It was hard to walk in shoes, while without shoes the sun blistered their feet until they bled. They were like unto the Israelites in the desert, with no Moses to guide them.

Again the little ones and the aged were left behind to die. Again hunger, thirst, and weariness reaped their harvests of thousands. Notwithstanding, after the first day the procession moved onward with a rapidity surprising under the circumstances, driven by the fearful goad of terror, for the Kurds had again swarmed down from the hills and opened fire on the

rear of the columns. The August heat was so intense that multitudes took to mountain fastnesses, subsisting upon grass and roots.

ATTACK ON NESTORIANS IN THE MOUNTAINS

Here is an account of an attack upon Nestorians whose dwelling-places were in the Kurdistan range, in Turkish territory—made for no other reason than because they were Christians.

The town of Kochanis, in which the prelate, Mar Shimun, resided, was entered first. Practically every one the enemy met was killed. Fortunately many escaped into the interior, including a few who, until their ammunition gave out, fought the Turks and Kurds for two days and nights, then fled, at night, to the plain of Salmas, Persia.

Meanwhile the patriarch's home in Kochanis was looted and burned, and churches, there and elsewhere, some of them fourteen hundred years old, were battered down by the powerful artillery of the Turks. The defenders, armed



NESTORIANS FROM THE MOUNTAINS

for the most part with flint-locks and homemade ammunition, resisted bravely, but their efforts were futile.

For forty days they carried on an unequal warfare against tremendous odds, until they at last took refuge, with their families, on the top of a high mountain, in the Tal country. The patriarchal family were sheltered in the famous church of Mar Oudishu; others who had been able to effect an escape, settled roundabout, thus making a big camp. The Turks and Kurds, after having destroyed the Christian towns in the valleys below, carrying away the crops and plundering everything, endeavored to drive the fugitives out. Near the church a small fountain gushed from a rock, but the supply of water was hardly sufficient for the more urgent needs. The people remained here for nearly three months, never removing their clothing, always on the lookout for night attacks. The few sheep they had brought with them were eaten up; they had no salt at all; soon hunger and sickness made terrible ravages.

Mar Shimun, with a handful of followers, stole out by night and made his way to the Russian encampment at Salmas, Persia. He was received with great distinction, but the only aid the Russians could afford was an offer of some rifles. These were accepted and Mar Shimun and his party again set out for the Turkish interior to rejoin their people. These were relieved in time, and Mar Shimun left for the plains again, this time accompanied by twenty-five thousand; later ten thousand more joined their fellows. Starvation and disease again decimated their ranks; more hundreds and even thousands were added to the long lists of the dead.

But I must cease from penning further accounts of these ravages and murders. The list is endless. One more instance of the enormity of ruthlessness will suffice: In one district of forty towns only seventeen persons were known to have escaped. Those who remain pray for death as a release; and this statement applies to entire districts, so exhausted are the resources.

THE TERROR RENEWED-THIRD FLIGHT⁷

And now, as I write these closing pages, comes the news of a third, and more appalling, list of disasters to those regions. It is as if the Evil One himself, in a last and more desperate effort, were utilizing all the powers of hell to break down and destroy the faith of the Christians.

With an immense army, equipped with all modern implements of warfare, Turkish, Kurdish, and Persian Mohammedans have recently overrun all northern Persia and the Caucasus.

As is well understood, as soon as the Bolsheviki came into power, they caused the withdrawal of Russian troops from all those sections. The telegraph-wires were cut; the Christian people were left in a most dangerous position.

In the summer of 1917 the political situation in Russia brought about a great change in the army. No efforts availed to prevent disorganization

⁷ These facts are gleaned from letters that in one way or another have reached America.

and collapse. It was announced that the army all along the Caucasus and PersoTurkish frontiers had given up the conflict and were soon to leave for Russia. One could not fail to see the gladdening effects of this on the Moslems of Persia, where German propagandists had completely swayed public opinion. The Allies, and more especially Great Britain, became very anxious about the Caucasian front which was exposed. The rise of Islam throughout the Near East was probable, and in consequence India would have been endangered.

The Christians anticipated a dangerous position as a result of the Russian evacuation, and were contemplating moving away. Late in the fall a commission of three prominent men was delegated to Tabriz and to Tiflis, to present before the Allies the situation, and to ask either that help be sent or that they be removed to the Caucasus. They were encouraged in Tabriz and given letters of recommendation to the representatives of the Allies in Tiflis. After explaining the conditions in Tiflis the delegates were encouraged and were asked to maintain

themselves for a month longer, when military help would be sent to them. And at the same time Captain Gracy, an English officer, came to give his aid to the general situation.

At this time one could not fail to see that the attitude of the Urmia government in particular, and of the Moslem inhabitants in general, became very hostile to Christians. This became more evident when the governor, Ijlal-ul-mulk, sent for the Christian leaders and in an inflamed speech warned them not to try in any way to help the Allies, threatening that if they tried to oppose in any way the Turks and their allies, they would be punished. Then the Christians pleaded that they were only defending themselves from being massacred by the Turks and Kurds, and that as Persian subjects they had always been loyal to the Persian government, and that if the government would assure them protection of life and property they would be grateful. To this the governor answered that the Persian government was not in a position to guarantee any protection, and that he would advise them to send a delegation to

Mosul, Turkey, accompanied by a few of his men, or that even he himself might go there and plead with Khalil Pasha (the Turkish commander) for the desired protection.

Affairs were assuming an increasingly dangerous aspect from day to day. The Moslems of Urmia and villages were growing restless. Every now and then some one would be found dead in some street. Reports from several sources showed that secret meetings were being held and plans being prepared for attacking the Christians.

On March 23 Mar Shimun was assassinated by Simku (Ismael Agha Shekak, a Kurd) in Salmas, and some scores of his followers were murdered by the Kurds; and all the Christians of Salmas were in great danger.

At this time the Turkish army was reported advancing from the south to Urmia, another army was advancing from the northwest, having defeated the Armenians at Van, and was coming swiftly toward Urmia; in fact, all the northern part of Persia was occupied, including Tabriz; thus the Christians were besieged

in Salmas and Urmia with no communication from the outside world; no help came from the Russians or English. The Turks knew all their circumstances and pressed upon them from all sides and directions, and in a few days the Christians from Salmas came to Urmia in great haste. Many sick and feeble were left behind, all of whom were killed or massacred. Now the Turks and Kurds came from the north and southwest, and were only four or five miles from the city. There was nothing left for the Christians but to escape, if possible, if they could fight their way through.

In two previous flights these Christians escaped north to Russia, but this time it was impossible for them to go thither, for their way was cut off by the Russians, whose government was now disorganized. No hope lay in that quarter. Could they go west? That would be impossible, for the distance is eight hundred miles to the Mediterranean Sea, and the journey would take them through a wild country, inhabited by Kurds and other bloodthirsty Mohammedans. Could they go south? The

south also was inhabited by the same class of people. Where, then, could they go? No-where! They were surrounded on every side by their enemies, and expected every moment that the latter would fall upon them.

While thus worrying over their ill destiny this restless and trembling mass of humanity suddenly noticed an aeroplane circling about, several feet above them. Destruction of all was threatening—and immediately! A cloud of sorrow lowered; the atmosphere was filled with shrieks and tearful prayers. At this very moment of emotion, when every one in awful suspense was expecting shells to burst in the midst of the crowd and exact a heavy toll in human lives, the officer commanding the aeroplane unfurled an English flag.

The realization that this messenger in the sky was English brought hope and courage and assurance to the distressed people. They knew then that their rescuers, the valiant and heroic Tommies, were only a few miles away, marching on to battle to defeat the foes of civilization. But the English, being so few, could

not by themselves alone break a way through, as the enemy was very strong; therefore means must be found for opening the way to enable the English to come to the rescue. Peter Ellow, with twelve hundred men, cut through the enemy in order to reach the English. Arriving in Sain-Kaleh, where the English had been encamped, he found that they had left.

The Christians, finding their fighters gone, lost courage. Frightened, bewildered, desperate, they started on their fatal flight.

Therefore at about midnight, July 31, 1918, telephone messages were sent to all, warning them that the enemy was upon them. There was no time to lose. Without delay, every one in the community hurried his family out and left his property behind. It was flight for life. Each face spoke despair.

The Armenians of Van and the mountain Syrians (Nestorians) had left a day or so previous, leaving behind the Urmia people to suffer the violent attacks of the enemy from the rear. By ten o'clock in the morning of July 31, the bulk of the people were on their way,

but about one o'clock the enemy was blocking the road in the neighborhood of Urmia, and many were caught and killed. A few thousand sick, infirm, and helpless persons who were not able to proceed took refuge in the American school; some hundreds entered the French mission; and some were given shelter by Moslem friends. About seventy-five thousand men, women, and children rushed along the narrow tracks, some with carts and wagons, some with carriages, some on horses or donkeys; in fact, every available animal was used either for riding or for burden, while the majority walked on foot, forming a vast procession requiring three days to pass by. Now bring to your imagination the march and the terrible sights, the cry of sheep, the braying of donkeys, the neighing of horses, the groaning of little children, the shrieking of women, the curses of men full of fear and of hurry, tramping one on the heels of another, a line of march of humanity, from the city gate of Urmia all the way to the Diza-d-doli (fifty miles), day and night without rest. Imagine the thousands of carts of every description

congested before a bridge which was broken to pieces, or in front of a swamp.

Can human pen adequately describe the condition, agonies, tortures of this blasted people?

For the first three or four days of the journey they hurried and rushed forward ceaselessly, without pause, day and night, from fear of the pursuers. They were able to endure at first because they were strong; presently, however, they had lost all the flour and foodstuffs, and in most cases even their money was lost. They left wagons and carts loaded with goods; thousands of samovars, bundles of goods, silver utensils, quilts and carpets, and household articles of every description were thrown away all along the road in an effort to save a precious life. The groanings of the women and children marching on foot through the stone and gravel were unimaginable. All were hungry, thirsty, and fatigued from heat. Diseases of every description were raging amongst them.

From Sain-Kaleh onward the scene changed and became hideous and dreadful; hunger, weariness, sickness, and fear reduced the people

to bones and skin. Rich and poor, young and old, all alike were in the melting heat. Instead of goods, hundreds of human bodies, dead and dying, were left heedlessly on the roadside. Little infants forsaken or lost were seen walking up and down the hills unconcerned about what was going on. A little boy about three years old, probably left by the panic-stricken mother, was seen on a mountainside near a Kurdish village, walking up and down as in a trance and dragging his girdle behind in his hand. He did not cry nor look to any one. Turning again, he walked upward to the mountain alone, very likely hoping to meet his mother. Babes were left under rocks or bushes. Women lay speechless on the ground, pointing their fingers to their parched mouths.

In Sain-Kaleh they were met by one hundred and fifty English troops, who saved the rest of the people from being massacred. They used their machine-guns very effectively on the enemy. We mention with gratitude the British officers and soldiers who picked up hundreds of the unfortunates and helped them along the

road to Hamadan. Thousands of refugees were sick, and many of them died, as they could not be pushed on to Bijar, the next station. The roadsides were strewn with the bodies of many who were too weak to hold on to the camels that the British had procured, and fell off to perish, too exhausted to go farther. Vainly did they lift pleading hands for aid. Nothing could be done for those who were too sick to sit on an animal. The bodies were stripped by the Moslem villagers or by the Kurds. Most of those who suffered worst were the Urmia Christians. After all these hardships the poor refugees did not escape the wrath of the enemy. At many points they were attacked, as, for instance, on the river Shaar bridge about two miles from Urmia; in Heydarabad; in Sulduz, near Muhammed Shah, on the bridge of the river Gadar, where they were attacked by the Turks with cannon; in Miandaub and Karaveran, by Majid-el-sultaneh and a large force of Persians from that district; in and around Sain-Kaleh, again by Majid-el-sultaneh and many Persians and a few Turks with cannon.

In this neighborhood thousands of people were cut off from the procession and surrounded. The enemy entered among the helpless women and children pell-mell, creating havoc, killing right and left. Infants were snatched from their mothers' breasts and crushed to the ground. Hundreds of women were taken away. A band of Christians drew together, and under their leader, Azarya, attacked the enemy, and inflicted on them a crushing defeat, driving them precipitately and capturing their cannon. Azarya saved about ten thousand women and children and some American missionaries from murder or captivity.

Out of seventy-five thousand that left Urmia, according to the reports of the American Persian relief committee, about thirty-five thousand are in Bacuba, near Bagdad; about five thousand in the labor camps on the road, and about five thousand in Hamadan, Kasvin, and other places. The remaining thirty thousand are either dead, lost, or captured. Surely a great sacrifice for such a small people.

At the time of the great flight at midnight



MAJID-EL-SULTANEH
A Persian General. Turkish spy in Tiflis for many years.

of July 31, 1918, most of the American missionaries stayed at their mission. The escape of eighty-five thousand Christians from Urmia took place only a few hours before the Turks entered the city. The French mission was the first to be destroyed. Arshad-i-Humayoon, a Persian, at the head of a fanatical band of Mohammedans, entered one gate of the mission while the Kurds entered the other. The first man to fall was Bishop Sonntag, of the Catholic Church—a man who the preceding winter had bravely protected the Persian assassin and twelve of his followers from death at the hands of mountaineers. Fully six hundred in the mission were murdered, every one stabbed.

The American orphanage, in charge of Miss Bridges and Mr. and Mrs. Pflaumer, all of Philadelphia, was next attacked. When a Kurd tried to carry off Miss Bridges, Mr. Pflaumer intervened and was killed. Turkish officers stopped the Kurd at the gate, and Miss Bridges and Mrs. Pflaumer were taken to the commanders and some days later were sent to the

mission, where the other missionaries were held under guard, and afterward were taken to Tabriz. The request of the Americans to be allowed to take some native Christians with them was refused, and the poor creatures were left behind crying most bitterly, feeling that they had lost their last chance for life.

John Mooshie, with whom the author spent some happy years of student life in Colgate University, was lying on a sick-bed in his own house, when he was set upon and murdered.

After the Turks had effected permanent lodging in Urmia, they hunted the Christians from their hiding-places, discovering and imprisoning about twenty-five hundred of them, deporting them to Salmas. Among these victims were many women and girls. About two thousand died or were lost on the road. Five hundred women and girls were taken captive in Khoi, and distributed among the Turks and Kurds and other Mohammedans of low types. Four thousand were massacred at Khoi, some thousands died in the battle of Urmia and Salmas.

One hundred and fifty young men were drowned in a ship on the lake.

Will there ever be peace? Will there ever be safety in this fair and fertile land, now under the dread shadow? God alone knows. Yet my faith is firm, and it is my belief that a great, though as yet uncomprehended, good will come out of all this war and disaster. There is an Unseen hand that guides the destinies of humanity, and the result will make for a vast betterment of the world and a revival of true Christianity.

And while other devastated countries are making plans to rebuild and restore their destroyed towns and villages, I hope that the Christian church will rally its forces, and put into action a great missionary movement to carry the truths of the gospel to the mighty hosts of Europe and Asia alike, not excepting the misguided and misled people of Germany, woefully in need of the lesson of Christian charity, that they may see the futility and falseness of the doctrines they have been taught by their rulers.

I can never express my heartfelt gratitude toward those who, never sparing themselves, tireless in their efforts, often risking fearlessly their very lives in seeking to aid, comfort, and rescue, so bravely remained steadfast to the end. Full payment to these staunch hearts can never be made: to the American Protestant missionaries; to the noble brotherhood of the French Catholic Mission, whose sympathies were boundless. They are of the grand souls who never know defeat.

I wish, in closing, to tender my most heartfelt thanks to those Americans who have generously contributed in aid of the remnant of the Christians in Persia, in answer to appeals made through various channels. Yet I hope that all may realize that there are to-day many thousands in Persia still suffering from lack of the barest necessities of life.

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